

OMAN PACER FASTEST TO REACH 100 ODI WICKETS

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Nearly three months after earning the distinction of being the fastest from an Associate nation to reach 100 T20I wickets, Oman's Bilal Khan has achieved yet another remarkable career milestone. This time around, he has set a world record by becoming the pace bowler to reach 100 One-Day International (ODI) wickets the fastest.

Bilal surpassed the previous record set by Pakistan's Shaheen Afridi by claiming his 100th wicket against Namibia during an ICC World Cricket League 2 game in Dundee, Scotland on July 24.

He reached the milestone in just 49 ODIs, dismissing Namibia's Jan Frylinck to achieve the feat. Bilal's effort bettered Afridi's 100-wicket haul in 51 ODIs, and also surpassed Australia's Mitchell Starc (52 ODIs) and New Zealand's Shane Bond (54 ODIs).

Overall, Bilal is the third fastest to 100 ODI wickets. The record is held by Nepal's leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane, who achieved the feat in just 42 ODIs, followed by Afghanistan's leg-spinner Rashid Khan, who took 100

ODI wickets in 44 games.

Speaking from Dundee after achieving the milestone, Bilal thanked team coach Duleep Mendis, bowling coach Champaka Ramanayake, Oman Cricket board chairman Pankaj Khimji, and other OC personnel and support staff.

Born in Peshawar, Pakistan, Bilal informed that his elder brother, who played domestic cricket in their hometown, has been a source of inspiration



Achieving this feat is very satisfying. There can't be bigger joy for me than putting Oman in the spotlight with two world-class achievements in a span of three months

BILAL KHAN

and influence in his cricketing career.

"I hope I am remembered as a bowler who represented Oman at the highest level. Breaking these records as an Oman bowler has been a proud moment for me. Achieving this feat is very satisfying. There can't be bigger joy for me than putting Oman in the spotlight with two world-class achievements in a span of three months," he said.

On the latest record, Bilal recounted, "I knew going into the match that I needed two more



wickets for the record. I had Namibia captain Gerhard Erasmus dismissed for my 99th and then trapped Jan Frylinck leg before for my 100th wicket. It was definitely a special moment."

Besides Bilal's 100th ODI wicket, Mendis' boys also secured their first win in the ongoing ICC Cricket World Cup League 2 by defeating Namibia by four wickets, earning their first full two points. Bilal ended

the match with figures of 3/50. In the four matches played, Oman has lost two - one each to Scotland and Namibia - while the opening match of the tri-series against Scotland was washed out.

Chinese solar PV firm signs deal to set up 10GW factory in Suhar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A Chinese company specialising in production of solar photovoltaic (PV) modules has signed an agreement with Oman's Bakarat Investment to build an advanced solar PV module and cell production facility in Sohar Free Zone.

Q-SUN Solar stated in a LinkedIn post that this collaboration will provide significant production support for its expansion into new international markets. "This move will not only enhance Q-SUN Solar's global presence but also meet the growing global demand for solar modules. By setting up a production base in Oman, Q-SUN can better serve the Middle East and other international markets, thereby increasing our competitiveness in the global solar industry."

The facility will have 8GW capacity for PV modules and 2GW capacity for PV cells.

The signing marks close cooperation between the two companies in the field of renewable energy and will propel Oman to a leading position in the global re-

newable energy market, a press release stated. The collaboration not only enhances Bakarat Investment's capabilities in the renewable energy field but also aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which promotes local manufacturing and the transformation of regional and international renewable energy facilities.

"The collaboration with Q-SUN Solar is a significant milestone for Oman's renewable energy sector," said Ahmed bin Saud al Salmi, CEO of Bakarat Investment. "It demonstrates our commitment to introducing cutting-edge technologies, supporting the goals of Vision 2040 with concrete actions, and promoting economic growth through job creation and technological advancement."

Qin Wenming, Chairman of the Nanjing-based firm, stated, "Q-SUN Solar's investment in Oman reflects our determination and commitment to drive the global PV industry through innovation and strategic partnerships. We hope this cooperation will position Oman on the global stage of renewable energy production."



13 China take first gold in Paris Olympics



16 French ambassador bids Oman farewell



THIS SUMMER Gear Up to Fly With Chery



ARRIZO 6 PRO



TIGGO 4 PRO



TIGGO 8 PRO MAX

The season, begin a winning journey with Chery! Own a Chery and get a chance to win an all-expenses * paid trip to Azerbaijan. Also get assured benefits like Free Service, Insurance and more. Visit a Chery showroom today and enjoy a memorable journey with your new Chery!

GRAND RAFFLE \$\$\$
Holiday Package

INSURANCE*
1 Year Comprehensive

TEST DRIVE & WIN \$
5 winners Samsung S24 Ultra

FREE SERVICE**
up to 5 Years 50,000 kms
(whichever is earlier)

ENGINE WARRANTY
10 Years / 1,000,000 kms

RAFFLE \$\$
4 Winners (1 500 Litres of Gasoline)

REGISTRATION***
1 Year

14 OUT OF TOP 50 CHINESE GLOBAL BRAND BUILDER

Tiggo 8 SUV Tops 2023 China Automotive User Satisfaction Index

2023 J.D. POWER SATISFACTION AWARD

For Test Drives & Bookings Call / Whatsapp 24579541 92616598

Campaign Period: 01.06.2024 - 01.08.2024. Benefits applicable for all purchases except Government Organizations & Ministries. *Cash gift in lieu of insurance. Cash Gift is given in lieu of insurance only as applicable for respective models. In case customer chooses insurance (as applicable), he/she will not be eligible for "Cash gift in lieu of insurance" offer. **Comprehensive 1 Year Insurance (Oman only) on all Chery models (insurance benefit) under the campaign would be given upto the extent applicable for Private vehicles only. Additional premium as per insurance norms will have to be paid by the RAC, Taxi & Driving School Company. *5 Years / 50,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier) covering 4 services with the first & second service at 5,000 kms & 10,000 kms and then 4 services at 10,000 Kms service interval based on normal operating conditions on all Chery models. *** Free 1st year Registration for all Chery models. \$ Test Drive & Win: 5 winners can win Samsung S24 Ultra S24 phone. Anyone taking a test drive of Chery vehicles during the campaign period are eligible to participate in the test drive & win rally. \$50000: 4 winners can win 1500 Litres of Gasoline (cash) as a prize. The rally will be applicable for all Chery customers who purchase cars during the campaign period. \$50 Grand Raffle: 1 winner can win a Holiday Package to Azerbaijan for 2 adults which includes flight tickets (Economy class) to take and back to Muscat, 4-star hotel stay for 4 nights, 10 days with breakfast and 1 local sightseeing tour. Termination date of rally: 04th Aug 2024. Vehicles may include dealer-installed items. For further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Chery showroom. Pictures and colours shown above are for illustrative purposes only. Campaign will not be applicable for reseller and government dealerships. All Conditions Apply. Credit approval is based on sole discretion of Financier. DM is calculated for a tenure of 10 years.



SAUD BAHWAN Group



NEW WORLD AUTOS LLC



NEW WORLD AUTOS LLC
P.O. Box 3168, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24578000, Fax: +968 24561831, C. R. No. 1347521
E-mail: sales@new-worldautos.com



Scan QR Code to Book a Test Drive



Scan QR Code to Book a Test Drive



cheryoman
cheryoman
amanchery

Dhofar prepares for over 1mn tourists

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Dhofar is set to see an uptick in visitors and revenue in the 2024 khareef season, with expectations of increased tourism and economic activity. This follows a successful 2023 season, which saw a significant rise in tourist numbers and spending.

Dhofar Municipality, in cooperation with both public and private entities, is focused on setting up new tourist sites, improving waterfront areas, and implementing several road projects. These initiatives aim to enhance the governorate's appeal and infrastructure.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, said, "Dhofar Khareef 2023 achieved great success in stimulating tourism and commercial activity, with the number of visitors reaching about 1mn, up 18.4% compared to 2022. The volume of spending exceeded



(Supplied photos)

RO100mn."

Ghassani expects the 2024 season to see a further increase of ten to 15% visitors, with spending projected to surpass RO115mn.

New tourist attractions are

being developed in the governorate, including Return of the Past, Atten Square, Up Town and Razath Boulevard. These sites will be operated in phases, with some open for at least six months each year and others

becoming year-round attractions.

The government has invested significantly in Dhofar's development, particularly in improving traffic flow and implementing road projects worth over

RO30mn this year. Additional projects include rainwater drainage and development of tourist and waterfront sites.

Ghassani also informed about ambitious plans to implement numerous infrastructure projects

across the governorate. These projects will be announced soon and focus on enhancing the road network, improving rainwater drainage, and supporting youth development initiatives.

The last two years have seen the introduction of successful ac-

and Algeria, as well as Asian countries including China. The winter season sees visitors from European and Eastern European countries.

He stressed the fact that commercial, economic and tourism activities in Dhofar are thriving,

The last two years have seen the introduction of successful activities and events post-khareef, such as the 'sarb' and winter season events, which have expanded the geographic scope of visitors to Dhofar

DR AHMED BIN MOHSEN AL GHASSANI

tivities and events post-khareef, such as the 'sarb' and winter season events, which have expanded the geographic scope of visitors to Dhofar.

According to Ghassani, during summer, most tourists come from Oman and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, while the sarb season attracts tourists from Arab countries like Egypt, Libya

driven by various strategies. "These efforts aim to stimulate growth in these sectors, provide opportunities for small and medium enterprises, and support Omani youth and innovators. The governorate continues to enhance investment in both tourism and its natural resources, contributing to its overall development and prosperity."

Traditional Omani cuisine spices up Khareef Dhofar 2024

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Khareef 2024 is poised to delight visitors to Dhofar with the rich flavours of traditional Omani cuisine. Restaurants and food stalls serving dishes like 'madhbi' and other local delicacies are becoming the star attraction, drawing tourists who are eager to savour authentic Omani flavours.

Dhofar's food scene, particu-

larly during khareef, is vibrant with madhbi stalls and meat kiosks spread across tourist hubs. A popular dish throughout the sultanate, madhbi involves grilling camel, beef or sheep meat on heated stones, which impart a distinctive flavour. It is typically served with rice or traditional bread.

Madhbi stalls, especially those in tourist areas and popular markets, offer fresh food prepared in front of visitors, adding



(Supplied photo)

to the overall dining experience.

The appeal of these food stalls extends beyond the meals.

Visitors can observe the preparation of madhbi, enjoy the aroma, and dine in the open air

amid Dhofar's lush green monsoon beauty. These stalls are not just places to eat but are tourist attractions that blend the past and present, offering a taste of authentic Omani cuisine in picturesque settings.

Muhad bin Ahmed Jaboub, owner of Bin Sobar Restaurant in Ain Arzat, shared his vision for his establishment. "The idea was to create a restaurant that offers Omani meals and foods to local residents and visitors

throughout the year," he said. The menu features a variety of dishes, including madhbi, maqadeed, ma'ajeen, mafoor, qasabiya, mishakeek and various rice and baked preparations. Meals are prepared traditionally, with fresh local meat available for sale and grilling done in front of customers.

Ahmed bin Abdullah al Shari, owner of Wadi Dhirut Restaurant in Ateen, highlighted the seasonal appeal of

his menu. "Our restaurant offers varied meals preferred by locals and visitors, especially in the khareef season," he said. Notable dishes include madhbi of different kinds of meats, as well as rice dishes like white rice with local ghee, mandi, makbous and other spiced varieties. One of the standout local meals is maajeen, made by drying meat and cooking it with animal fat and salt, then storing it for long periods.



صندوق مزون الأول
The First Mazoon Fund

THE FIRST MAZOOM FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD FOR 30 JUNE 2024

The Chairman's Report for 30 June 2024

The primary objective of the fund is to achieve capital appreciation through a diversified portfolio of equity and bond investments in public companies listed at GCC Markets and MENA region.

A summary of financial results is as follows:

Figure 1	For the Year/Period ending June 30th, 2024 (OMR)	For the Year/Period ending June 30th, 2023 (OMR)
Total Income	105,149	1,045,062
Total Expenses	(153,985)	(182,187)
Profit (Loss) for the Year/ Period	(48,836)	862,875
Profit (Loss) per Unit for the Year/Period	(0.006)	0.113

Fund Performance:
For the period ending June 30th, 2024 the performance of First Mazoon Fund is as follows:

Figure 2:	For the Year/ Period ending June 30th, 2024	For the Year/ Period ending June 30th, 2023
Net Asset Value (OMR)	8,461,847	8,974,164
Number of Outstanding Units	7,567,241	7,613,136
Net Asset Value per Unit	1.118	1.179
FMF Performance for the Year/Period	-0.58%	10.68%
FMF Performance Annualized Return 5 Years	6.74%	7.22%
Benchmark Performance for the Year/Period	-4.07%	2.87%

The First Mazoon Fund's has reported a decline of 0.58% return with a NAV of RO 1.118 per unit as of 30th of June 2024. This compares with a decrease in the benchmark Index S&P GCC Composite index of 4.07% resulting in an outperformance of 3.49%. Markets were under pressure owing to liquidity concerns emanating from large regional issuances.

Market Performance
Figure A: Index Returns

Index	June 30th, 2024
Muscat Stock Exchange	3.8%
Bahrain Bourse	2.7%
Boursa Kuwait	1.8%
Dubai Financial Market	-0.7%
Saudi Stock Exchange (Tadawul)	-2.4%
S&P GCC Index	-4.07%
Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange	-5.4%
Qatar Exchange	-8.0%

Economy and Markets

On a macro basis, purchasing managers' indices for KSA and UAE, have shown slowing regional economies; For Qatar, North field expansion has had an expansionary affect. As Brent crude oil prices have stayed steady in US\$ 80-85 range, the increase in world oil demand forecast has been steady at 104.5 mn bpd.

On a sectoral basis, the second quarter of 2024 results are likely to witness trends in the banking sector which could reign in profitability of regional banks- the heaviest weight in the S&P GCC index. In Saudi Arabia, expectations are that net interest margins have likely peaked as the heavy weighted retail banks have a large concentration of fixed rated loan book, which would do better with an inflection of the interest rate cycle. In UAE, market participants expect corporate taxation introduction would pressurize bank earnings. This might get magnified if operational expenditure, due to digital transformation, increases. Qatari banks cost of risk might continue to remain high. Overall, banking sector earnings might see pressure in Q2.

On the real estate front, UAE based developers will likely report robust earnings on the back of good execution. Cement Sector in KSA is expected to exhibit good price realization. Finally, insurance sector in Saudi Arabia will likely witness rise in health premiums as medical inflation continues to trend upwards.

In the third quarter, markets will likely focus on dynamic probabilities revolving around US elections. With inflation outlook becoming more benign, probability of one rate cut in September is around 88%. For the moment long duration bets appear to be a safer bet but it would be at risk in the event of a Republican sweep. Post results, if global inflation data trends lower, GCC retail banks might

start to gain traction, particularly in KSA.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Fund Management Body, I extend my thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq bin Taimur for his government's progressive policies and constant encouragement to the financial services sector.

I also take this opportunity to thank the FSA, MSX & MCD for their support and cooperation, our valued unitholders, members of the Fund Management Body for their valuable time and guidance, for your continued support and trust and the fund manager and service providers for their efforts.

On behalf of the Fund Management Body
Chairman
The First Mazoon Fund
July 23rd, 2024

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income For 30 June 2024

	30 June 2024 RO	30 June 2023 RO
INCOME		
Dividend income	212,437	204,198
Interest income	28	40
Net realised (loss) / gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	(221,786)	758,408
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	114,470	82,416
	105,149	1,045,062
Expenses		
Management fees	62,762	58,763
Brokerage expenses	48,936	79,180
General and administration	18,157	14,849
Custodian and administrator service fees	6,725	6,296
Fund Management Body fee	17,404	17,356
Performance fees	--	5,743
	153,985	182,187
Net (loss) / profit and total comprehensive income for the period / year	(48,836)	862,875
Net (loss) / profit per unit	(0.006)	0.113

Statement of financial position As 30 June 2024

	30 June 2024 RO	30 June 2023 RO
ASSETS		
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	7,299,099	8,985,646
Cash and cash equivalents	1,205,678	38,340
Dividend and other receivables	11,306	12,319
Total assets	8,516,083	9,036,305
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Accruals and other payables	54,236	62,141
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	8,461,847	8,974,164
Net asset value per unit	1.118	1.179

For more information please contact:
P.O. Box 1137, PC 111 - CPO, Sultanate of Oman, CR No. 1279406, Tel: +968 24949001, Fax: +968 24949099, Email: fmf@u-capital.net, Web: www.u-capital.net



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No.(19 / 2024)

International Companies specialized in the field and registered with Tender Board, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date
PRE-24-203	Providing , Installation and operations ADVERTISEMENT SCREENS FOR Muscat Festival 2024	17/08/2024	03/09/2024
PRE-24-202	Supply , install and operate of theaters at Al Qurum , Al Naseem And Al Amirat Parks For Muscat Festival 2024	17/08/2024	03/09/2024
PRE-24-201	Design and Construction of theaters at Al Qurum , Al Naseem And Al Amirat Parks For Muscat Festival 2024	17/08/2024	03/09/2024
PRE-24-200	Providing and operation of Drone Show For Muscat Festival 2024	17/08/2024	03/09/2024
PRE-24-199	ENTERTAINMENT ACTIVITIES For Muscat Festival 2024	17/08/2024	03/09/2024
PRE-24-198	Providing and Operation of Fireworks For Muscat Festival 2024	17/08/2024	03/09/2024
PRE-24-197	Providing and Operation a Hybrid Experience Activity For Muscat Festival 2024	17/08/2024	03/09/2024

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.

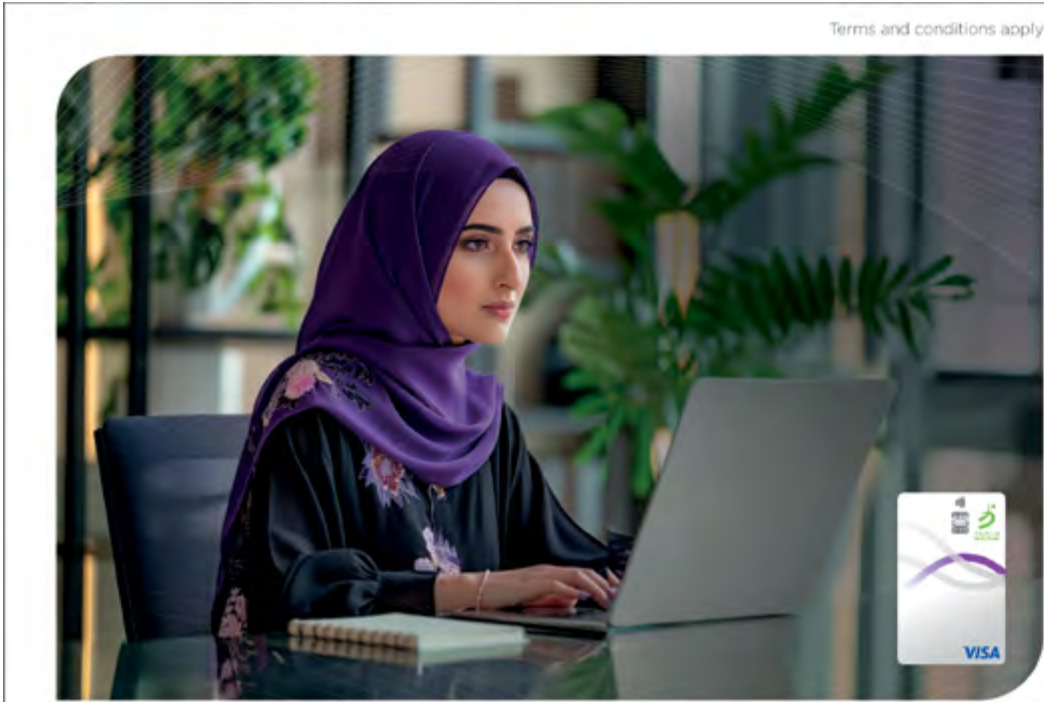
2. Clarification and Support:

• For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

• For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).

SEND YOUR REQUEST FOR

Birthday/ Anniversary wishes to wish@apexmedia.co.om with your resident card copy (It's free of cost)



We help your deposits grow for a brighter future!

Higher returns on deposits for customers of the Ladies account at BankDhofar.

Scan to learn more



bankdhofar 2479 1111 www.bankdhofar.com

Relocated street vendors demand enhanced services



Our Correspondent Muscat

Muscat Municipality's decision to relocate street vendors in Seeb has elicited mixed reactions from citizens and street vendors, who are demanding improved basic services in the new site.

In an effort to regulate street vendor activities, Muscat Municipality recently relocated food truck operators from Al Mouj Street and Al Khoud to Seeb Beach.

Ali al Balushi, a resident of Seeb, praised the decision, stating that it has minimised traffic congestion on the 18th November Street, especially at night.

"The step aims to create a conducive environment for street vendors, addressing concerns related to cleanliness, hygiene and public safety," he added.

Ahmed al Nadabi from Mabela commented positively on the new site, appreciating its easy accessibility and essential services. "The site has been equipped with dedicated cleaning staff, waste containers and

Muscat Municipality recently relocated food truck operators from Al Mouj Street and Al Khoud to a new site in Seeb

efficient waste removal services."

However, Sultan al Hashemi, who relocated from Al Khoud 6, highlighted the challenges they were facing after they were moved from Al Khoud area to the new location.

"Business got badly affected after moving from Al Khoud 6. While the new location is having ample parking, we need additional services like portable toilets and recreational activities to enhance our offerings."

Another vendor Osama al Rahbi, who has been in the profession for over three years, said, "The new site is good, but we

need mobile toilets and better lighting in some areas. Hosting various events would also attract more customers."

Hadi Nasser, another vendor, noted the high consumer demand at the new location. "One of its key features is its proximity to Seeb market and picturesque shoreline setting. With over 180 parking spaces available, it is more convenient for both vendors and customers."

He advised young entrepreneurs to persevere in their goals and embrace challenges.

In 2023, Muscat Municipality reorganised the mobile vending controls and requirements. According to the regulation, only Omanis can engage in mobile vending businesses.

'Vendors must apply for an initial approval for the required activity, and commit not to practice it without obtaining a final approval from the municipality located in the requested wilayat.'

All licensed vendors must adhere to the stipulated health requirements while doing their business, the civic authority said.

Al Mazyunah Free Zone attracts RO5mn in H1 2024, total investment reaches RO140mn

Our Correspondent Salalah

Al Mazyunah Free Zone, Oman's first free zone affiliated with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), has attracted investments worth RO5mn in the first half of 2024. This brings the total investment in the zone to RO140mn.

Located on the land border with Yemen, Al Mazyunah serves as a key Gulf gateway for transit trade to Yemen and East African countries.

Eng Ahmed bin Khamis al Kasbi, Director General of Al Mazyunah Free Zone, highlighted the zone's strategic significance in enhancing the trade between Oman and Yemen. He noted that the zone, covering 15mn sqm, has seen strong interest from investors, particularly



Yemeni businessmen.

"The zone has secured 185 lease contracts in various sectors, including 102 projects that are currently operational. Our focus is on attracting investments in the industrial sector to sustain the investment momentum in the region," he said.

A unique feature of Al Mazyunah Free Zone is its approved dry port, which handles all port operations linked to export and import. In the first half of 2024, the zone received over 100,000

tonnes of goods. The commercial movement and transfer of goods through the zone have increased significantly, from 33,000 tonnes in 2014 to 220,000 tonnes by the end of 2023.

Kasbi detailed the numerous incentives offered to investors in the zone, including a 30-year exemption from income tax, no requirement to submit income declarations, ease of trading and transferring foreign currencies, exemption from the Commercial Agencies Law and customs du-

ties, and the ability for investors to own 100% of their project capital. Other benefits include a reduced Omanisation rate, and the use of Yemeni customs data for imported goods.

The zone also provides national certificates of origin to factories, facilitates the granting of residence and visas to non-Omani investors, and allows the establishment of representative offices within Oman's customs territory.

Additionally, Yemeni workers can work in the zone without needing work or entry visas.

Kasbi emphasised the zone's commitment to infrastructure development, stating that RO5mn has been invested in recent infrastructure projects. These include road networks, sewage and rainwater drainage systems, and a security fence built to the latest standards.



صندوق غراس الوقفي للاستثماري

Gheras Endowment Investment Fund



Capital

أمانة رأس المال

The Chairman's Report For the Period ending June 30th, 2024

The primary objective of the fund is to achieve capital appreciation and protection through a diversified, low-risk portfolio through investments in fixed income instruments and Sharia-compliant stocks at GCC Markets and MENA region.

A summary of financial results is as follows:

Figure 1	For the Year/Period ending March 31th, 2024	For the Year/Period ending June 30th, 2024
	(OMR)	(OMR)
Total Income	27,129	168,003
Total Expenses	(10,532)	(23,395)
Profit (Loss) for the Year/Period	16,597	84,608
Basic profit (loss) per unit	0.012	0.059
Profit (Loss) per Unit for the Year/Period	1.012	1.059

Fund Performance:
For the period ending June 30th, 2024 the performance of Gheras Fund is as follows:

Figure 2:	For the Year/ Period ending March 31th, 2024	For the Year/ Period ending June 30th, 2024
Net Asset Value (OMR)	1,442,578	1,510,588
Number of Outstanding Units	1,425,980	1,425,980
Net Asset Value per Unit	1.012	1.059
Gheras Performance for the Year/Period	1.2%	5.93%
Benchmark* Performance for the Year/Period	0.42%	0.28%

*The blended benchmark index comprises of a 70% weight given to S&P GCC Sukuk index during the period and 30% weight for the performance of the S&P GCC Shariah Index (for equities).
Gheras Fund achieved a 5.93% return, as of 30th June 2024, resulting in a NAV of RO 1.059 per unit. This compares with an increase in the blended benchmark index, for the fund, comprising of S&P GCC Shariah index (for equities) and S&P GCC Sukuk index, equating to 0.28% and resulting in an outperformance of 6.21%.

Market Performance
Figure A: Index Returns

Index	June 30th, 2024
	(OMR)
Bourse Kuwait	1.8%
Dubai Financial Market	-0.7%
Saudi Stock Exchange (Tadawul)	-2.4%
Bahrain Bourse	2.7%
Muscat Stock Exchange	3.8%
S&P GCC SHARIA Index	-3.62%
S&P GCC SUKUK Index	0.79%
Blende Index as of June 2024	-0.53 %
Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange	-5.4%
Qatar Exchange	-8.6%

Economy and Markets
The first quarter of 2024 witnessed extremely volatile shifting of expectations on both growth as well as inflation. The recently released world economic outlook by the IMF expressed an expansionary global economic growth of 3.2% for 2024, which is similar to 2023. Global headline inflation is expected to decline to sub 6% relative to its high of 8% in 2023.

From a market's perspective, global inflationary expectations have risen recently which is contrary to IMF's expectations as mentioned. Subsequently, the rate reduction expectations by the Federal Reserve have moved downwards from five cuts in 2024 to two. High frequency data on Chinese economy has been the driving force for an increase in commodity prices globally. Additionally, regional geo-political uncertainty has raised the geo-political premium in the oil futures curve.

In the region, there is a possibility of scaling back some large projects such as NEOM which is likely to impact staffing services firms. However, reconstruction activities in Riyadh and Jeddah will cushion the impact of this scale back. Qatar's roll-out of North field gas expansion will likely witness cascading of growth stimulus to banks, shippers, and contractors. From an overall perspective, risk version owing to geo-political perspective is likely to drive sentiments in the

regional and global stock markets.

The Red Sea Shipping crisis' impact on the regional exporters and importers will be known once first quarter financials are released.

Acknowledgements
On behalf of the Fund Management Body, I extend my thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq bin Taimur for his government's progressive policies and constant encouragement to the financial services sector.

I also take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, FSA, MSX & MCD for their support and cooperation, our valued unitholders, members of the Fund Management Body for their valuable time and guidance, for your continued support and trust and the fund manager and service providers for their efforts.

On behalf of the Fund Management Body
Chairman
Gheras Endowment Investment Fund
Muhrrm 16th, 1445AH
June 22th, 2024

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income For 30 June 2024

	30 June 2024
RO	
INCOME	
Dividend income	7,212
Net realized gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	63,352
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	9,319
Profit from wakala call account	28,120
	108,003
Expenses	
Brokerage commission	4,803
Management fee	6,355
Administration and custodian service fee	2,404
General and administration	9,833
	23,395
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the period	84,608
Net profit per unit	0.059

Statement of financial position As 30 June 2024

	30 June 2024
RO	
ASSETS	
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	754,150
Cash and cash equivalents	785,200
Receivables	6,558
Total assets	1,545,908
LIABILITIES	
Current liabilities	
Accruals and other payables	35,320
Total liabilities	35,320
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	1,510,588
Net asset value per unit	1.059

For more information please contact:
P.O. Box 1137, PC 111 - CPO, Sultanate of Oman, CR No. 1279406, Tel: +968 24949043/061, Fax: +968 24949099, Email: gheras@u-capital.net, Web: www.u-capital.net



مستشفى الحياة الدولي

AL HAYAT INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL

Quality Care Without Compromise



NEW VISA MEDICAL SYSTEM "IGRA"

NOW AVAILABLE SAT - THU 8:00 AM-10:30 PM



SCAN FOR LOCATION



SCAN TO WHATSAPP

طبيبنا استرلجى ليلكم - أتمتعوا بصحة أفضل
Opp. Bank Muscat, Ghubra roundabout

MOH NO.- 1640238/24 2200 4040 9551 0632 9241 3639

Oman announces new LNG train to boost production

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals announced on Saturday the plan for the development of a new liquefied natural gas (LNG) train at the Qalhat Industrial Complex in Sur.

The new liquefaction train, with an annual production capacity of 3.8mn metric tonnes, will raise Oman's LNG production capacity to 15.2mn metric tonnes per year, according to an Oman News Agency report.

The new train will improve operational efficiency and maximise the benefit from the existing infrastructure of Oman LNG Company. The construction of the new train is expected to be completed and operational by 2029, according to the Oman News Agency report.

The new liquefaction train is expected to enhance annual LNG production and its derivatives, enabling optimal utilisation of available reserves.

As per the report, the government will proceed with completing the initial engineering design study for the new LNG train project. This step is expected to pave the way for making the final investment decision for the project, which is driven by the growing global demand for clean energy and is part of Oman's commitment to energy security.



H E Eng. Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, said, "The plan to launch a new train represents a pivotal addition to the strategy

The plan to launch a new LNG train represents a pivotal addition to the strategy adopted by the sultanate to sustain its position as an important supplier and a major, safe, and reliable source of energy globally

H E SALIM AL AUFİ

adopted by the sultanate to sustain its position as an important supplier and a major, safe, and reliable source of energy globally."

H E Aufi pointed out that the Ministry of Energy and Minerals is working to support infrastructure and available resources to respond to the increasing de-

mand for clean energy sources, contributing to diversifying sources of support for the national economy and ensuring its sustainability in the long term.

He explained that the new LNG train project will be built alongside the current trains at the Qalhat LNG Complex, which will enhance the ability to meet the increasing demand for LNG in the global market.



Photograph for illustrative purpose only

Oman REIT acquires 7 warehouses worth RO5.9mn in Rusayl

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Real Estate Investment Trust (Oman REIT) Fund has acquired a portfolio of seven warehouses in the Rusayl Industrial Area for a total amount of RO5.93mn.

'As we continue to implement our business plan, we are pleased to announce the acquisition of a new portfolio of seven warehouses located in the Rusayl Industrial Area for a total consideration of RO5,931,636,' Oman REIT said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The acquisition price includes a cash payment of RO4,152,145, funded through Oman REIT's existing credit facilities with Muzn Islamic, the Islamic banking arm of the National Bank of Oman. The remaining RO1,779,491 will be paid to the seller via a private placement of units in Oman REIT

at 100bz per unit, to be issued following an upcoming extraordinary general meeting, which will be announced shortly.

Oman REIT noted that the newly acquired warehouse assets are multi-tenanted by renowned commercial tenants in the local market, boasting an unexpired lease term of over four years. This new portfolio aligns with the fund's strategy of stabilising future returns, increasing overall portfolio value, and diversifying the asset composition.

'At Oman REIT, we remain committed to maximising returns and delivering long-term value to our investors. This new acquisition represents a significant milestone in our journey as we continue to expand and diversify our portfolio in line with our business plan and enhance Oman REIT's risk-adjusted returns,' the disclosure added.



India home to 140,000 registered startups: Govt

New Delhi, India - The number of startups in India has increased to more than 140,000, highlighted Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Jitin Prasada, in Rajya Sabha.

According to a written response by the minister in the house on Friday, the number of Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) recognised startups state-wise has shown that Maharashtra tops the list with 25,044 registered startups.

Karnataka is second with 15,019 registered startups, followed by Delhi with 14,734 startups. Uttar Pradesh has secured the fourth place with 13,299 startups, while Gujarat is in fifth place with 11,436 startups.

The minister also informed that the government has undertaken various efforts to promote and support startups in the country. He stated that the government, with the objective of building a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation, startups, and encouraging investments in the startup ecosystem

of the country, launched the Startup India initiative on January 16, 2016.

The minister also added the 'Startup India Action Plan' comprises 19 action items spanning across areas such as "Simplification and handholding," "Funding support and incentives," and "Industry-academia partnership and incubation."

The Action Plan laid the foundation of government support, schemes, and incentives envisaged to create a vibrant startup ecosystem in the country.

In the other scheme 'Startup India: The Way Ahead' includes

actionable plans for the promotion of ease of doing business for startups, a greater role of technology in executing various reforms, building capacities of stakeholders, and enabling a digital Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

The Indian government has also established a Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS) with a corpus of Rs100bn to meet the funding needs of startups. DPIIT is the monitoring agency and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) is the operating agency for FFS. The total corpus of Rs100bn is envisaged to be provided over the 14th and 15th Finance Commission cycles based on the progress of the scheme and the availability of funds.

The minister stated that the government has not only made capital available for startups at the early stage, seed stage, and growth stage but also played a catalytic role in terms of facilitating the raising of domestic capital, reducing dependence on foreign capital, and encouraging homegrown and new venture capital funds.

ANI

Arab Monetary Fund forecasts 6.2% growth for UAE economy in 2025

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The UAE's economy is expected to grow by 3.9% in 2024, rising to 6.2% in 2025, according to the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF).

In its Arab Economic Outlook report issued on Thursday, the AMF stated that the expected growth of the UAE's economy this year is driven by continued improvements in tourism activity, real estate, and international trade, increased capital spending, and ongoing efforts to support the economy, including developments in high-tech industries.

The report added that the UAE's economy shows strong fundamentals supported by a dynamic non-oil sector and robust public and monetary policies aimed at maintaining economic development, financial stability, and the soundness of the financial sector.

The country's growth relies largely on its strategic initiatives to strengthen its position as a global hub for trade and finance,



continuous infrastructure development, a strong regulatory framework that attracts foreign investments, and a focus on innovation, growth, and technology-based sectors.

The report explained that the UAE witnessed significant economic growth in 2022, amounting to 7.5%, driven by a successful response to the COVID-19 pandemic, supportive

financial measures, and the enhancement of a business-friendly environment implemented in previous years.

Additionally, there was strong growth in the fuel sector and a significant recovery in the tourism sector. The country also achieved a positive growth rate of about 3.6% last year.

The report projected that the growth rate of Arab economies

would improve in 2024, reaching about 2.8% compared to 0.3% in 2023.

The pace of economic growth in the region is expected to further improve to 4.5% in 2025, with declining interest rates and tightly controlled inflation. This is in addition to the stability of oil prices at relatively high levels and the stability of commodity prices.

WAM

G20 agree to make sure super-rich effectively taxed

Istanbul, Turkey - The G20 said Friday that the group agreed on working to make sure super-rich individuals around the world are effectively taxed, but stopped short on elaborating on methods.

The group said it is important for all taxpayers, including ultra-high-net-worth individuals, to contribute their fair share in taxes.

"Aggressive tax avoidance or tax evasion of ultra-high-net-worth individuals can undermine the fairness of tax systems, which comes along with a reduced effectiveness of progressive taxation," according to a



G20 Ministerial Declaration on International Tax Cooperation.

"No one should be able to evade taxation, including by circumventing transparency stan-

dards. Therefore, greater efforts should be made to ensure full compliance with domestic tax obligations," it added.

Despite the consensus on tax-

ing super-rich, mechanisms of achieving the goal remain vague.

"Each jurisdiction should work autonomously or, if necessary, through capacity-building initiatives to improve the effectiveness of revenue collection for taxes, which already today could be levied based on domestic law," said the group.

"Cooperation could involve exchanging best practices, encouraging debates around tax principles, and devising anti-avoidance mechanisms, including addressing potentially harmful tax practices," it added.

Anadolu Agency

KHAREEF DHOFAR 2024

Vodafone Oman to connect every moment of Khareef fest this year

It's the season, and Vodafone Oman has lined up unforgettable experiences to ensure customers enjoy Khareef to the fullest with its 'Catch the Moment' campaign.

From immersive pop-ups and store activations to fun-filled bus rides, exclusive adventures and promotions, the digital operator promises this to be the most epic Khareef yet.

"We are excited to launch our 2024 Khareef season campaign, which will include a variety of activities that have been designed to engage, entertain and inspire people of all ages. This year, we're pushing boundaries to deliver a series of unforgettable experiences that promise to engage our customers on a deeper level and create lasting memories," said Usama al Saifi, Vodafone Oman's Brand Manager.

"Beyond bringing joy, we aim to build on last year's partnerships, ensuring that SMEs and businesses in Dhofar continue to thrive and grow. Working together, we aim to create a supportive ecosystem that encourages creativity and resilience contributing to the long-



Vodafone Oman has lined up unforgettable experiences to ensure customers enjoy Khareef to the fullest with its 'Catch the Moment' campaign

term prosperity of the governorate." Together with its partners, Vodafone will bring the spirit of Khareef to life through curated content, activities, and competitions. In partnership with Mwasalat, Vodafone will be transforming the bus journeys for the travellers southbound offering unforgettable experiences filled with entertainment, Wi-Fi, and interactive games.

Once in Salalah, customers will have much to see and do with Vodafone starting with the

enabling more growth and development is evident in the diverse opportunities it is creating within the season's activities. Continuing its partnership with the Youth Center for the second consecutive year, the two like-minded organisations have planned a full calendar of summer programs designed to empower youth across Dhofar.

Additionally, a hackathon is planned to encourage creativity and problem-solving among future leaders.

Leveraging Vodafone's digital prowess, an immersive pop-up store is set to take centre stage at this season's events in Al Haffa. The purpose-designed store is inviting visitors to enjoy a variety of transformational experiences that are guaranteed to engage them from the moment they step foot into the Vodafone world.

Exciting activations are also planned at key locations including Wadi Darbat, Al Dahariz, Ittin, Al Haffa, Maghsail, Ain Jarzeez, Taqah, and Sahalnurt in addition to Salalah Garden's Mall. With walk shows, kids' entertainment, competitions, and giveaways, Vodafone is set to make the season even more enjoyable.

Adding to the fun adventures awaiting visitor in Dhofar, Vodafone will be issuing Khareef passports and customers will be required to stamp them at different locations to enter draws for exciting weekly prizes.

Throughout the season and powered by its 5G NEXT-LEVEL network, Vodafone customers and international visitors will be able to enjoy an all-together elevated mobile experience.

OOMCO fuels adventures with 'Lets Dhofar' campaign

Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) launched its annual 'Lets Dhofar' campaign to enrich the Khareef season experience for visitors of Dhofar. With new stations, enhanced services, and added conveniences, OOMCO is fulfilling its promise to go the extra mile by providing outstanding fuelling experiences that exceed customer expectations, ensuring convenience and comfort at all times.

To cater to the influx of visitors and tourists during the Khareef season, OOMCO has



introduced two mobile service stations in the wilayat of Haima

and Seih al Khairat, providing greater access to fuelling ser-

vices. In addition to new facilities

and staff members, OOMCO has upgraded its existing stations to enhance its services. The Al Saada station now offers twelve fuel pumps, and the Salalah stations have been modified to serve vehicles on both sides of the pumps, significantly improving efficiency and reducing wait times.

"The Khareef season is a significant period for Dhofar, attracting tourists from around the globe. We are dedicated to being their companion on the road, delivering exceptional ser-

vices that enhance their overall experience," said Jaber Mansoor al Wahaibi, General Manager of Corporate Planning Business Development, International Retail & Marketing & Digital at OOMCO.

"Our latest upgrades and services are designed to ensure comfort, safety, and convenience for every journey, but especially as visitors discover new paths during this exciting season."

OOMCO provides comprehensive station offerings, includ-

ing high-quality petroleum products and multiple fuelling options such as Ultimax 98 octane fuel, and EV chargers conveniently located en route to Salalah. Car wash services, tire check facilities, restrooms and convenience stores are also available for an all-together elevated customer experience.

The seasonal enhancements in Dhofar for Khareef reinforce the company's position as the preferred choice for customers across the length and breadth of the sultanate.



Bank Muscat-Oman Air Visa credit card offers 'rewarding experience'

Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to provide distinctive services to its customers using Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum credit card offer, which aim to provide a unique banking experience during travel and summer holiday season, through a range of exclusive benefits and rewards.

This card brings together the best of banking convenience and lifestyle privileges tailored for travellers, the bank stated.

Customers can still benefit from the 10% cashback on air ticket fares purchased using the Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum credit card for round trips to Salalah. The offer is valid

for travel period until August 31.

The credit card provides many benefits and rewards when shopping, dining, and purchasing necessities and leisure amenities. The card also supports secure electronic payment for purchases locally and internationally.

Cardholders have the chance to earn 2 Sindbad miles for every ROI spent, welcome bonus Sindbad miles within 30 days of the first usage of the card, fast track to Silver tier upon completion of 2 return trips within six months of getting the card. Customers will also be able to benefit from free travel insurance covering personal accident insurance, loss of baggage and funds, travel can-

cellation, baggage delay, personal liability and legal expenses, a convenient payment plan, free access to 25 airport lounges around the world and a free shuttle service to and from Muscat and Salalah airports.

Cardholders can also benefit from easy installment plans to purchase products and pay later with zero interest, no additional fees and an interest-free period of up to 52 days on all purchases.

Customers may also benefit from a wide range of Bank Muscat's credit cards including Bank Muscat & Lulu Credit Card, Asalah Signature Credit Card, Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card, and others.

Omran Group honours first cohort of trainees from Eidaad programme

Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) celebrated the successful graduation of the first cohort of trainees from the Eidaad programme. This milestone exemplifies the commitment to empowering future leaders with essential skills and knowledge. The graduation ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Hashil Obaid al Mahrouqi, Chief Executive Officer of Omran Group.

The Eidaad Program is a collaborative initiative with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation (MOHERI), and Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). This intensive on-the-job training programme aims to equip participants with the skills, knowledge, and experience required to excel in their respective fields. The national programme, lasting a full academic year, targets students in their penultimate year of study at both public and private higher education institutions.

Hilal al Jadidi, Chief People and Change Officer, commented on the occasion: "We congratulate the trainees on their hard work and dedication. We are confident that their efforts will pay off in the future."

He added, "This programme



aligns closely with the #IAM-Tourism strategy, which serves as a comprehensive roadmap for all training and development programs by incorporating fresh perspectives, supporting sustainable growth and high standards of professionalism, as well as raising awareness about the opportunities and offerings of the promising tourism sector as a key economic driver."

Roaa al Kathiri, Eidaad trainee at Finance Department said: "I could not be more grateful for this opportunity. The pro-

gramme has shaped my soft skills in communication, leadership, decision-making, and problem-solving. It has prepared me professionally for my future career, and now I feel more confident that I will be able to apply what I learned in the program to my university studies."

According to Rashid al Lamki, Eidaad trainee at Financial Planning & Reporting Department: "My experience with the Eidaad programme was incredibly special. I deeply appreciated the relationships I built, and the time I

spent at Omran Group, and the valuable lessons I received. The programme gave me the opportunity to apply the theoretical aspects of my studies, which gave me deeper insight and effective skills in preparing report."

This initiative highlights Omran Group's commitment to building national capacity and aligns with its strategies to focus on human resource development and fulfil the demand for qualified national professional to support the development of the tourism sector.



Oman Visitors Portal appoints Anisa al Hooti as CEO

The Oman Visitors Portal has appointed Anisa al Hooti as the new CEO of the portal.

Anisa brings over 20 years of experience in tourism and aviation, alongside her active roles in sports, culture, and literature, reflecting her diverse skills and innovation capabilities. She has held numerous leadership positions, currently serving as the Director of Travel Operations and Holidays at SABCO Group, one of the largest business conglomerates in Oman.

Additionally, she holds the position of CEO at 'PSF', an organisation focused on organising friendly tournaments and sports camps for Paralympic sports across various countries. Her professional journey began with German Airlines, followed by EgyptAir, and later managing roles at the main branch of Majan Travel and Tourism Agency from the Muscat Overseas Group. She has also held several leadership positions in sports.

Hamoud bin Mohammed al Azri, chairman of the Board of Oman Visitors Portal, said, "Her cumulative expertise will undoubtedly contribute to achieving the future aspirations of the portal."

BYD makes impressive mark in World Car Awards this year

Seal and Dolphin models secured top spots in 'World Car of the Year', 'World Urban Car' categories

Earlier this year, at the Geneva Motor Show the World Car Awards announced the top three finalists for 2024. BYD's models, the BYD Seal and the BYD Dolphin, excelled among a host of competitors, securing spots in the top three for the 'World Car of the Year' and 'World Urban Car' categories, respectively, and progressing to the final round of the competition.

BYD makes history as the first and only Chinese carmaker to be shortlisted in the top three for the 'World Car of the Year' category.

Regarded as the top three automotive accolades globally, the 'World Car Awards', 'European Car of the Year', and 'North American Car of the Year' are highly esteemed. Dubbed the 'Oscars of the automotive world', the 'World Car Awards' is particularly celebrated for its emphasis on international models, positioning it as a highly anticipated event within the global automotive industry.

BYD's exceptional performance highlights its status as a global leader in the New Energy Vehicle space.

These two models, with their distinctive design, cutting-edge technology, and robust safety features, captured the interest of over 100 automotive media experts from 29 countries. In 2023, the BYD Seal and BYD Dolphin achieved five-star ratings in Euro NCAP and ANCAP tests. Notably, BYD SEAL was also nominated for the final European Car of the Year 2024.



These two models, with their distinctive design, cutting-edge technology, and robust safety features, captured the interest of over 100 automotive media experts from 29 countries. BYD's performance highlights its status as a global leader in the New Energy Vehicle space

As a frontrunner in the new energy vehicle sector, BYD achieved a milestone with over 3 million new energy vehicle sales in 2023, securing the top spot in global sales, for the second year in a row and breaking into the top ten global automotive brands.

So far, BYD's new energy vehicles have a substantial presence across over 70 countries and regions on six continents, encompassing more than 400 cities.

In 2023, BYD emerged as a

frontrunner in new energy vehicle sales across various international markets, including Thailand, Singapore, Colombia, and Brazil, garnering extensive consumer acclaim and preference.

Aligning with the World Car Awards' mission to foster continual innovation in the automotive sector, BYD is committed to building a comprehensive zero-emission new energy solution through technological innovations. It aims to enhance consumer travel experiences, spearhead the new energy vehicle industry's growth and actively contribute to the automotive industry's transformation and progress. Looking ahead, BYD will steadfastly pursue its vision to 'Cool the Earth by 1°C', continually driving the industry's green and low-carbon transformation and global sustainable development.

Genetco wins Canon ME & Turkey awards

Canon Middle East & Turkey (CMET) recognised Genetco once again for their excellence in sales and product management functions through their most prestigious award in this regard - The Nujoom Honors.

Canon launched the Nujoom Honors in 2021 to recognize the sales and product management professionals in their partner community across Middle East & Turkey region. This includes structured training sessions, rigorous evaluation, and recognition through the Nujoom Honors platform.

Professionals across the region compete over their sales or product management skills and overall performance against budgets. Genetco team has bagged six awards across multiple categories which was a stellar performance in the region.

Awards were handed over to the winners by Canon management in a recent ceremony held in Muscat. Madhu Dokka, Regional Sales Manager - CMET; Dr Ambuj Khare, COO -



Genetco; and Ashish Nagar, Channel Manager - CMET presided over the honours ceremony. The recipients of Nujoom Honors - 2023 from Genetco are Rajeev T R, Pradeep Nair, Sujith R, Basharat M and Satish S.

"I am incredibly proud of our team at Genetco who seriously focus on professional excellence, trade relations and customer delight through continuous learning and improvement," said Dr Ambuj Khare said.

91% beneficiaries satisfied with OPAZ services: Survey

The electronic survey to assess the level of satisfaction offered by the institutional proficiency system revealed that 91% of beneficiaries were satisfied with the services given by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

There were four primary questions on the questionnaire, along with one asking for ideas and recommendations on how to improve the services offered.

A number of indicators were evaluated, such as the length of time it took to obtain the service, the degree of satisfaction with the documentation and requirements needed to provide the service, the efficiency and manner in which OPAZ staff dealt with the client while delivering the service, and the possibility of praising friends or family for the services rendered by the Authority.

The report OPAZ Call Center (toll free 1919) indicated that it handled more than 1,565 incoming local and international calls, including calls related to investment and inquiries about services and permits, during the period from the beginning of January to the end of June this year. The Call Center regularly publishes reports and communications proposals and satisfaction levels of beneficiaries with the services provided.

Notably, the Call Center is equipped with modern technical systems and operates interactively to record the transactions requests and transfer them to the competitive authorities in the zones supervised by OPAZ.

The Call Center has protocols in place that show how to receive and manage reports and proposals, improve the quality of services provided based on the evaluation of investors and recipients.



talabat Oman signs MoU with MoL, Oman Logistics Association, Tashgheel

talabat Oman has entered into a partnership with the Ministry of Labour (MoL), Oman Logistics Association (OLA) and Tashgheel in a memorandum of understanding to introduce an unprecedented training programme aimed at providing employment opportunities for Omani nationals in the delivery sector.

The partnership includes a training program equipping 20 job seekers with the necessary skills for employment opportunities in the food delivery sector. OLA will oversee the training, in accordance with the Food Delivery Driver National Occupational Standard developed by the Logistics Sector Skills Unit.

In reference to the partnership, Stephane Berton, talabat Oman's Managing Director, expressed, "This partnership underscores our dedication to nurturing growth, generating employment prospects, and empowering communities in Oman. With approximately 13,000 indirect employment opportunities already established in the country, this initiative reaffirms our commitment to sustaining this positive growth momentum."

This initiative is part of Tashgheel's commitment to finding sustainable solutions for different sectors in Oman and creating employment opportunities for Omanis. The program aims to enhance freelancing opportunities for Omani youth in the food delivery services sector through registration with talabat and contracting with 3PLs to provide express delivery services.

Dr Abdulsallam Ambusaidi, Acting General Manager & Logistics Skills Sector Unit Manager stated that this partnership underscores the government's commitment to empower Omani nationals by providing them with the necessary skills and opportunities to thrive in the rapidly growing delivery services sector. Together, we are committed to building a sustainable framework that uplifts individuals and contributes to the overall advancement of Oman's workforce and economy. Since its launch in Kuwait in 2004, talabat, the region's leading platform for everyday delivery, has been offering convenience and reliability to its customers.

talabat's local roots run deep, offering a real understanding of the needs of the communities we serve in eight countries across the region. We harness innovative technology and knowledge to simplify everyday life for our customers, optimise operations for over 65,000 restaurants and local shops, and provide tens of thousands of riders with reliable earning opportunities daily.

At talabat, we foster an innovative environment where our 5,000 talabat can strive to create a positive impact across the region through the use of our platform. We leverage our technology to give back, by partnering with over 35 charities and NGOs around the region.

OLA is the first Society in Oman's Logistics Industry to be officially approved and registered in Oman, under the regulations governing the formation of societies with the Ministry of Social Development.

OLA provides a single umbrella body to agree and promote standards of work competence and professionalism, with the vision of raising the standards of Oman's Logistics Industry to become world-class.



through registration with talabat and contracting with 3PLs to provide express delivery services.

Dr Abdulsallam Ambusaidi, Acting General Manager & Logistics Skills Sector Unit Manager stated that this partnership underscores the government's commitment to empower Omani nationals by providing them with the necessary skills and opportunities to thrive in the rapidly growing delivery services sector. Together, we are committed to building a sustainable framework

Harris officially declares her candidature for US presidential elections

Washington, D.C., US - US Vice President Kamala Harris signed the forms, officially declaring her candidature for the US presidential elections, assuring that her people's-powered campaign will win in November.

Harris took to social media X, and emphasised that in November, her people-powered campaign will win.

She further reiterated that she would work hard to earn every vote.

"Today, I signed the forms officially declaring my candidacy for President of the United States. I will work hard to earn every vote. And in November, our people-powered campaign will win," Kamala Harris said in her post.

The upcoming US presidential election on November 5 will see Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic nominee, following Biden's endorsement.

Earlier on Friday, former US President Barack Obama publicly endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris for the US presidential post after Joe Biden ex-

ited the race recently.

Obama said he and former US First Lady Michelle Obama will do everything they can to make sure Harris wins the presidential election in November.

In a post on X, Barack Obama said: "Earlier this week, Michelle and I called our friend @KamalaHarris. We told her we think she'll make a fantastic President of the United States, and that she has our full support. At this critical moment for our country, we're going to do everything we can to make sure



US Vice President Kamala Harris

she wins in November. We hope you'll join us."

Earlier on Wednesday, actor and prominent Democratic fundraiser George Clooney publicly endorsed Harris for the US Presidential post.

Trump leads poll

Meanwhile, former US President Donald Trump led Kamala Harris by 2 points in the latest Wall Street Journal poll.

Trump received 49 per cent support among 1,000 registered voters, while Harris garnered 47 per cent, according to the poll.

Published on Friday, the polls suggest Kamala Harris's performance marked a significant improvement over Biden's, who trailed Trump by six points in a Wall Street Journal poll earlier this month.

That poll followed Biden's poor debate performance, which led to increased calls for him to withdraw from the race.

Biden ended his campaign last weekend after weeks of internal party debates.

Agencies



The tanker sank amid heavy rains fuelled by Typhoon Gaemi (DW)

Philippines: Sunken tanker starts to leak

Manila, The Philippines - Fuel oil from a Philippine tanker that sank amid bad weather in Manila Bay on Thursday has begun leaking from the vessel, the coast guard said on Saturday.

A coast guard spokesman said divers had discovered a 'minimal leak' from the ship's valves, but said it was 'not alarming yet'.

Previously, the coast guard had said leaking oil appeared to be only the diesel fuel used to power the vessel.

The sinking of the MT Terra Nova, which is carrying some 1.4mn litres (370,000 gallons) of industrial fuel oil, has the potential to become the worst oil spill disaster in the country history.

The capital Manila and surrounding shoreline are considered at risk.

The tanker is currently on the sea bed, some 34 metres (116 feet) under water.

One crewmember died and 16 were rescued after the vessel capsized and sunk on Thursday.

The spokesman, Rear Admiral Armando Balilo, said there was only a 'small volume' of oil emanating from the ship.

"We're hoping that tomorrow we will be able to start siphoning the oil from the motor tanker," he said, adding that a vessel had been sent to the area to carry the recovered oil.

He called for a temporary halt to fishing in the waterway, which thousands of fishers and tourism operators rely on for their livelihoods. The oil slick has reportedly more than tripled in size from Thursday, reaching an estimated length of 12-14km (7.5-8.7 miles) across the bay.

Poor spill record for Philippines

The Philippines has suffered a number of oil catastrophes in recent years.

In 2023, a tanker with 800,000 litres of industrial fuel oil on board sank off the central island of Mindoro, with the resulting contamination devastating the fishing and tourism industries for months.

Another tanker sank off the central island of Guimaras in 2006, causing a massive oil spill that destroyed a marine reserve and ruined local fishing grounds.

DW

Venezuela: Change looming as Maduro trails Gonzales Urrutia

Caracas, Venezuela - Venezuela will elect a new president on Sunday or reelect Nicolas Maduro to lead the country after 11 years in power.

Polls will open at 6am and close at 6pm local time.

Maduro, who is seeking a third term, is trailing opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzales Urrutia. Polls show he has a 40-point lead against the president.

The 61-year-old president was elected in 2013, after the death of his mentor, Hugo Chavez, and won again in 2018 in an election that was dismissed as a sham by the opposition and several countries. This time, experts say, the opposition has a real opportunity to take the presidency after the country was led for years by a leftist government.

"This election will allow them to try to resolve the political conflict that the country has been experiencing for several years through an electoral contest that will lead to the return of democracy in Venezuela," Ronal Rodriguez, a professor and researcher at the Venezuelan Observatory, a think-tank at the University of Rosario in Colombia, told Anadolu.

Thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets in Venezuelan cities, which had not been seen before, to show support for Gonzales Urrutia, a 74-year-old retired diplomat who was virtually unknown months ago, but now represents the resurgent opposition.

"The ruling party did not consider him dangerous and believed that nobody would support him, but today he has had the best polls from the opposition side," said Rodriguez.

Opposition leaders put Gonzales Urrutia on the ballot after party leader Maria Corina Machado, who won the opposi-



Opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia is seen campaigning for upcoming presidential election in Caracas

The ruling party did not consider him (Gonzales Urrutia) dangerous and believed that nobody would support him, but today he has had the best polls from the opposition side

RONAL RODRIGUEZ

position side," said Rodriguez.

Opposition leaders put Gonzales Urrutia on the ballot after party leader Maria Corina Machado, who won the opposi-

tion's primary last year, was disqualified from the race, as well as Corina Yoris, who was named as her replacement.

Machado had the support of massive mobilisations throughout the country.

The opposition promised to 'reconcile' the country and return millions of migrants who fled the worst economic crisis in Venezuelan history - almost eight million - according to the UN. About 2,000 continue to leave daily.

"The situation in Venezuela is critical," said Rodriguez. "It is the only country in the region that has experienced a demographic decline of such magnitude. Those who have re-

turned have ended up leaving again, including young Venezuelans, due to a battered educational system and with a quarter of the population abroad, it still has no way of satisfying the supply of energy and of drinking water of the population."

The government has cited sanctions imposed by the US in 2019 for the country's problems.

Rodriguez said that although the crisis is the result of poor management by the government, 'international sanctions have worsened the situation'.

'Hold a fair vote'

Washington has maintained talks with Caracas, but the US

administration of Joe Biden has warned Maduro about the need to hold a fair vote in exchange for sanctions relief.

The US also wants to avoid a possible new migration wave on its soil if Maduro is reelected, a key issue in the American electoral campaign that will end in November with its presidential election.

When sanctions against Venezuela were announced again in February, Maduro halted flights of migrants deported from the US. The Biden administration has insisted on restoring the flights because they were a tool to deter illegal migration.

Anadolu Agency

Russia tightens 'undesirable organisations' law to silence critics

Moscow, Russia - Life is becoming more and more difficult for Kremlin critics in Russia, with a number of laws passed in recent years criminalising open criticism of Moscow's official policy.

The law on so-called 'undesirable organisations' is one of those laws - and this has now been tightened. Lawmakers in the lower house of Russia's parliament, the State Duma, passed the amendments on the third and final reading of the bill on Tuesday. Once the draft legislation has been approved by the Federation Council and signed by President Vladimir Putin, it will come into force.

The law states that organisations would be considered undesirable in Russia if their activities 'pose a threat to the foundations of the constitutional order, defence, or security of the state'. The law prohibits such organisations from 'conducting any financial transactions, disseminating information materials, including

in the media or on the internet, establishing legal entities, and implementing programmes.'

Until now, the law only applied to non-governmental organisations, particularly oppositional institutions such as political foundations, human rights groups and environmental associations. Under the amended law, any foreign organisation could be declared 'undesirable' if its 'founders or stakeholders are state bodies of a foreign country'. It would no longer matter if the organisation were founded or run by an individual, a limited-liability company, a registered association, a party or a state or government institution.

Any collaboration with such an organisation is deemed criminal. Participating in the activities of an 'undesirable organisation' in Russia or abroad would initially be considered an administrative offense, punishable by a maximum fine of approximately



Police officers patrol Red Square after it was closed to the public (DW)

1,600 (about US\$1,740). Repeat offenders may be fined up to 5,300 or imprisoned for up to four years. Founding or leading 'undesirable organisations' is punishable by up to six years in prison.

'Collaboration' covers the dissemination of quotes and links to

texts and videos from an 'undesirable organisation', as well as participation in any of their public events. For example, anyone speaking to a broadcaster declared 'undesirable' would be liable to prosecution. The law could also be applied to DW, which was forced to close its

Moscow bureau in 2022.

Russian human rights lawyer Anastasia Burakova said she is convinced the law was deliberately made vague so authorities could ban any organisations they deem 'not in line with Kremlin policy'. Speaking with DW, she described it as a 'rubber law', be-

cause it can be stretched and interpreted to fit any circumstance - it could even be applied to NATO, the Council of Europe, or the International Criminal Court.

"Anyone who files a complaint against the Russian state in the court could face a prison sentence of up to four years," said Burakova, explaining that they

state structures in the United States, the United Kingdom and other European countries that 'conduct activities directed against Russia'.

One of the authors of the amended law, Duma member Vasily Piskarev, added that every possibility for foreign organisations to interfere in Russia's in-

The law states that organisations would be considered undesirable in Russia if their activities 'pose a threat to the foundations of the constitutional order, defence, or security of the state'

could be deemed to have participated in the activities of an 'undesirable organisation.'

When the State Duma voted on the bill at its first reading on June 11, the chairman, Vyacheslav Volodin, indicated the target of the expanded law: organisations founded within

ternal affairs should be eliminated. "There are enough examples of organisations connected to government agencies of the United States or European countries directly harming Russia and carrying out subversive activities," he said.

DW

Will EU's normalisation push with Syria help Bashar Assad?

The FM's of 8 European countries said they are willing to thaw ties with President Bashar Assad

Brussels, Belgium - For eight European countries, the time seems ripe to change their strategy toward Syria.

Earlier this week, the foreign ministers of Italy and Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Greece, Slovenia and Slovakia said they are willing to thaw ties with Syrian President Bashar Assad.

In a joint letter, they suggested creating the position of an EU-Syria envoy who would be tasked with reinstalling a Syrian ambassador to Brussels and designating 10 so-called 'safe zones' within Syria's government-held regions to which Syrian migrants in Europe could be returned.

Although Germany was not among the signatories, one of the country's top administrative courts ruled this week that there 'is no longer a general danger to all civilians from the long-running conflict in Syria'.

Yet human rights observers, analysts and the UN top envoy for Syria have all pointed out that Syria is neither safe for the population, nor for returning refugees.

"Syria remains in a state of profound conflict, complexity and division," UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen told the UN Security Council this week. "It is riddled with armed actors, listed terrorist groups, foreign armies and front lines... and civilians are still victims of violence and sub-



A Syrian fighter carries his son while holding a rifle (DW)

ject to extensive human rights abuses, a protracted state of displacement and dire humanitarian conditions."

'Boosting Assad's legitimacy'

And yet, the European willingness to reengage with Syria - after severing official relations with Damascus as a consequence of Syria's government's brutal crackdown on protesters in 2011 which led to an ongoing civil war - is just the latest in a series of rapprochements.

In 2023, Syria was readmitted to the Arab League, a group of 22 countries that had also shunned Syria for some 12 years.

And earlier this month, Assad met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan who has for years been backing the opposition, which continues to fight Syrian government forces in the country's northwest.

"Renewing ties with Europe would boost Assad's legitimacy as ruler and his claim that Syria is a safe country," Kelly Petillo, Middle East researcher at the European Council on Foreign Relations, told DW. "Only, Assad is far from being the winner (of the war) as Syria remains territorially and politically fragmented and it is absolutely not a given that the Assad regime will return to power all over the Syrian territory," Petillo added.

While Assad's forces have recaptured some 60 per cent of the country with the help of Russia and Iran, the country's north-east remains under Kurdish rule, and the northwest is the last bastion of the Syrian opposition. In the first half of 2024, attacks by the terrorist group 'Islamic State' in Syria have doubled.

As experts point out, normalising ties does not only mean a political shift by other countries.

"It also requires diplomatic commitment by Assad as he is fearful of having millions of refugees returned who are opposing him," said Petillo, adding that due to the country's dire economic situation, it would also be also very hard to cater for these many people as a state.

According to recent numbers by the UN Refugee Agency, an estimated 16.7mn Syrians need humanitarian assistance. More than half of the population remains displaced from their homes, including some five million refugees living in neighbouring countries and 7.2mn internally displaced inside Syria.

Economic benefits

And yet, normalising ties with Europe and designating safe zones for returnees would most likely also mean an end to Europe's far-reaching sanctions on Syria, which have been exacer-

bating the economic situation for years. According to the latest Syria Economic Monitor by the World Bank, continued funding shortfalls and limited access to humanitarian assistance have further drained the ability of households to meet basic needs amid inflation.

In turn, 'any initiative to improve the economic situation for the Syrian population is a step away from the ongoing economic and social collapse', said Nanar Hawach, a senior analyst for Syria at the International Crisis Group, an independent organisation working to prevent wars.

Hawach is confident that a stronger economy would reduce the population's dependence on political entities or joining armed groups to make a livelihood.

However, the benefits of eased or ended sanctions would not be felt in the whole country. "If ties with the Assad regime are normalised, aid will go through regime channels only," said Petillo. This would continue to exacerbate the situation in areas that are not under the control of the regime.

"We are already massively underfunded," Ian Ridley, head of office at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Turkey, told DW. "I saw the consequences of this a couple of days ago when I visited northern Aleppo (which is under the control of the opposition) and spoke to displaced people who are struggling with the withdrawal of services."

Julien Barnes-Dacey, director of the Middle East & North Africa programme at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said 'the idea of safe zones without meaningful security guarantees shouldn't be acceptable'.

"The regime has been unwilling to provide this," he said, adding that 'we see Syrians going back and being disappeared and even killed'.

DW



Soldiers arrive in Ciudad Juarez to reinforce security in Mexico

Mexican army reinforces security in state of Sinaloa

Mexico City, Mexico - The Mexican National Defence Ministry deployed 200 elite soldiers on Friday to the north-western state of Sinaloa to strengthen security following the arrest of the notorious leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, Ismael Zambada, in the US.

Media reports said the troops were deployed from Mexico's Special Forces Corps that are designed to deal with national security threats, anti-terrorism and hostage rescue tasks.

The deployment follows the capture of Zambada and the son of his former colleague, Joaquin 'Chapo' Guzman, in the US state of Texas.

Criminal groups, especially the Sinaloa Cartel, have responded in the past with violence after the arrest of their prominent leaders, unleashing attacks against the population.

The Sinaloa Cartel launched attacks following the arrest of Ovidio Guzman, another one of Chapo's sons and a cartel leader, that led to 15 deaths and the release of Ovidio, which was ordered by Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to prevent further violence.

In January 2023, Ovidio was again arrested and the cartel responded with shootings, car

The Sinaloa Cartel launched attacks following the arrest of Ovidio Guzman, another one of Chapo's sons and a cartel leader, that led to 15 deaths and the release of Ovidio, which was ordered by Mexican President Andres Lopez Obrador

burnings and roadblocks, as well as fighting the military and police, resulting in 35 fatalities.

This time, however, Ovidio was extradited to the US where he remains imprisoned.

Zambada faces multiple criminal charges involving organised crime, money laundering and drug trafficking.

The Sinaloa Cartel is accused by the US of being the leading supplier of fentanyl, which kills 100,000 Americans annually.

Zambada reportedly pleaded non-guilty to the charges in a US federal court and will have his second hearing July 31.

Anadolu Agency

China warns Philippines over the US intermediate missile system deployment

Vientiane, Laos - Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo here on Friday, warning the Philippine side over the US intermediate missile system deployment.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said that China and the Philippines are close neighbours across the sea, and good neighbourliness, mutually beneficial cooperation and common development are in the fundamental interests of the two countries.

He noted that the positive and negative lessons of China-Philippines relations in recent years have proved time and again that it is not easy to build good relations, but it is easy to destroy them.

At present, Wang said, China-Philippines relations are facing serious difficulties and challenges, which are rooted in the fact that the Philippine side has repeatedly violated the consensus of the two sides and its own commitments, continuously pushed the infringement of rights at sea and magnified the speculation of public opinion.

China is gravely concerned about and firmly opposes it,



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets with Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo in Vientiane, Laos on Friday (Xinhua)

Wang said.

He added that if the Philippines introduces the US intermediate missile system, it will create regional tension and confrontation, triggering an arms race, which is totally not in line with the interests and aspirations of the Filipino people.

Wang said that China has recently reached a temporary arrangement with the Philippines on the transportation and replenishment of humanitarian supplies to Ren'ai Jiao in order to maintain the stability of the maritime situation. The key is for the Philippine side to fulfil its com-

mitments and refrain from changing its position, said the Chinese foreign minister. Otherwise, he noted, China will definitely respond resolutely.

Wang pointed out that China-Philippines relations are now at a crossroads and there is no way out of conflict and confrontation, except for dialogue and consultation. He expressed the hope that the Philippine side will seriously think about the future of China-Philippines relations and work with China to push bilateral relations back on the right track at an early date.

Xinhua

31 killed in Israeli attack on Gaza school housing displaced

Gaza City, Palestine - At least 31 Palestinians, including children, were killed and many others injured on Saturday in an Israeli attack targeting a field hospital in a school housing displaced people in the central Gaza Strip, Palestinian sources said.

"The death toll from Israel's attack on a field hospital inside a school housing displaced people in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza has risen to 31," the Gaza government media office spokesman, Ismail Al-Thawabta, told Anadolu.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army stated that its fighter jets attacked the Khadija school in the central Gaza Strip, claiming to target Hamas members.

There was no immediate comment from the Palestinian group Hamas on the Israeli claims.

Earlier, the Gaza government media office said that 'the Israeli occupation army committed a new massacre a short while ago by bombing a field hospital set up inside Khadija School in Deir al-Balah in the Central Governorate'.

"The occupation bombed the hospital with three missiles from fighter jets, which led to the killing of 18 people and dozens of injuries," it added.

Medical sources told Anadolu that the Israeli army bombed the



The Israeli army on Saturday also ordered Khan Younis residents to evacuate and head towards Al-Mawasi in the southern Gaza Strip, an area designated as a safe zone but frequently attacked

school in an area that was classified as a 'humanitarian safe zone' in Deir al-Balah.

The Israeli army on Saturday also ordered Khan Younis residents to evacuate and head towards Al-Mawasi in the southern Gaza Strip, an area

designated as a safe zone but frequently attacked.

In a statement, the army said, 'remaining in this area has become dangerous' due to 'rocket fire' from the southern area of Khan Younis.

"The early warning to civilians

is being made in order to mitigate harm to the civilian population and keep civilians away from areas of combat," it added.

On July 13, the Israeli army targeted camps of the displaced in Al Mawasi, killing more than 90 Palestinians and injuring nearly 300 others, according to official Palestinian sources.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed at the time that the airstrike targeted Mohammed Deif, the commander-in-chief of Hamas's Al-Qasam Brigades, and his deputy.

Anadolu Agency

INDIA



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

PM emphasises on transformative opportunities

New Delhi - Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised the pivotal role of technological advancements and geopolitical changes at the 9th Governing Council meeting of NITI Aayog held on Saturday.

In his address, the Prime Minister articulated a vision for India's development, emphasising the need to leverage current opportunities to achieve the goal of a 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India) by 2047.

According to a post by NITI Aayog on X, PM Modi said: "This decade is one of changes, technological and geopolitical, and also of opportunities. India should seize these opportunities and make our policies conducive to international investments. This is the stepping stone for progress to make India a developed nation."

Reflecting on the progress made, Modi noted that India has navigated the challenges posed by a once-in-a-century pandemic and is now on a path of recovery and optimism.

PM Modi said: "We are moving in the right direction.

We have defeated a once-in-a-century pandemic. Our people are full of enthusiasm and confidence. We can fulfil our dreams of Viksit Bharat @ 2047 with the combined effort of all states. Developed states will make a developed India."

Modi emphasised that the collective effort of all states is essential to realising the vision of a developed India.

Addressing India's demographic advantage, Modi pointed out the country's youthful population as a significant asset. PM Modi said: "India is a youthful country. It is a huge attraction for the entire world because of its workforce. We should aim to make our youth a skilled and employable workforce. Emphasis on skill, research, innovation, and job-based knowledge is necessary for making Viksit Bharat @ 2047."

He stressed the importance of equipping the youth with the skills needed to meet future demands and drive economic growth.

ANI

Mamata Banerjee walks out from NITI Aayog meeting

New Delhi - West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged 'political discrimination' at the NITI Aayog meeting held in the national capital in Delhi stating that her microphone was muted and she was not allowed to speak for more than five minutes while other chief ministers were given more time.

"...I said you (central government) should not discriminate against state governments. I wanted to speak but my mic was muted. I was allowed to speak only for five minutes. People before me spoke for 10-20 minutes," Banerjee told reporters after she stormed out of the NITI Aayog meeting today.

"I was the only one from the opposition who was participating but still, I was not allowed to speak. This is insulting..." Banerjee said as she walked out midway from the meeting.

Before leaving for Delhi today, the All India Trinamool Congress Chairman said: "I will protest against the political discrimination being done with Bengal in the Niti Aayog meeting. In the budget, the way they have discriminated against Bengal and the other opposition states, we can't agree to that."

The Trinamool supremo further stated that the BJP ministers and leaders' attitude is such that they want to divide Bengal while also imposing economic and geographical blockades on the state.

"The attitude of their ministers and BJP leaders is such that they want to divide Bengal. Along with the economic blockade, they also want to impose a



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee speaks to the media after NITI Aayog meeting, in New Delhi on Saturday (ANI)

I wanted to speak but my mic was muted. I was allowed to speak only for five minutes. People before me spoke for 10-20 minutes

MAMATA BANERJEE

geographical blockade. The Minister said this while Parliament was in process. Different leaders are giving different statements to divide Jharkhand, Bihar, Assam, and Bengal. We strongly condemn this attitude,"

she said.

She further said that dividing Bengal means dividing the nation and further mentioned that she will record her voice at the meeting and if they won't let her, she will protest and leave the meeting.

"Divide Bengal means to divide our country, India. We want to record our voice in this situation, and I will be present there to do so. I will try to record my voice if they let me or else I will protest and come out," she said.

'Given their due time to speak'

Meanwhile, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday rejected Banerjee's

claim and said that every chief minister was 'allotted due time to speak'.

"CM Mamata Banerjee attended the Niti Aayog meeting. We all heard her. Every CM was given the allotted time, and that was displayed on the screen, which was present before every table. We could see that two tables have a screen before us. She said in the media that her mic was turned off. That is completely false. Every CM was given their due time to speak," the Finance Minister told ANI.

Sitharaman said that it is 'unfortunate' that the West Bengal CM is making such claims, adding that the government is happy that West Bengal Chief

Minister attended the meeting.

Sitharaman further said that the Bengal CM should have requested for more than the allotted time but she chose to use it an excuse to walk out of the meeting.

"If she's reminded that her time is over, even with the mic on, she could have requested that she will continue speaking like some other Chief Ministers did. But she chose to use it as an excuse so that she can get out of the meeting," Sitharaman said.

"She should speak the truth behind this rather than again build a narrative based on falsehood," the Finance Minister added.

ANI

'Southern states constantly neglected by central government'

Chennai, Tamil Nadu - Following a state-wide protest in Tamil Nadu against the Union Budget, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MP Dayanidhi Maran on Saturday said that southern states are constantly being 'neglected' by the central government.

DMK staged a protest in all the district headquarters in Tamil Nadu today against the Union Budget presented on July 23, alleging that the state has been 'neglected' in the budget.

"Southern states, especially Tamil Nadu, are constantly being neglected by the Modi government. We have been asking for funds for the second

phase of the metro for the last three years, but not a single rupee has been given yet," the DMK MP told reporters.

He further asserted that Andhra Pradesh is receiving Rs 16,000 crore for the new capital, while technically, Rs 35,000 crore is being gifted to Bihar in the name of flood relief.

"The amount given to Andhra Pradesh is a loan guarantee, which means CM Chandrababu Naidu can take loans from other banks, but he has to pay interest and principal, so I am sure CM Naidu is aware of this. The implications will come out very soon. It is a minority government, so anything can



DMK leaders stage a protest in Chennai on Saturday (ANI)

happen," he added. Earlier today, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin boycotted the 9th NITI Aayog's Governing Council meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre in the national capital.

Stalin attacked the BJP government over the Union Budget and said that the budget seems like a 'vengeful act' against the States and people who boycotted the BJP.

"You are all well aware of the progressive and visionary schemes of your Dravidian Model Government in Tamil Nadu, which have been implemented over the past three

years. The benefits of our government schemes directly reach every family - every citizen. This is why the DMK is achieving continuous success. 'New schemes everyday, people's heart filled with joy' is the motto of our government. Yet, the Union Government continues to engage in actions that are contrary to our progressive thoughts," Stalin said.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, while presenting a Union Budget 2024-25, made major announcements for Bihar and Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday, including a boost in infrastructure.

ANI

Landslides, floods in Philippines claim 34

Manila, The Philippines - The death toll from landslides and floods triggered from Typhoon Gaemi in the Philippines has risen to 34 while several people are still missing in different regions, police said.

Twelve victims died in the region of Calabarzon, 11 in Metro Manila, nine Central Luzon and two in Bicol area.

Twenty-two people passed away from drowning, five got electrocuted, six were buried by landslide and one was hit by a fallen tree.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr had earlier ordered authorities to speed up efforts in delivering food and other aid

to isolated rural villages.

In Taiwan, at least eight people were killed, more than 800 injured and one person was missing, the Central Emergency Operations Centre said. Many more got displaced.

The highest number of injuries - 259 - were reported in the port city of Kaohsiung, followed by 125 in Tainan and 120 in Taichung.

An earlier Defence Ministry statement said Typhoon Gaemi moved out to the Taiwan Strait, but residents should remain cautious of wind and rain.

Anadolu Agency

Wildfire races across California, thousands evacuated

California, US - An out-of-control wildfire prompted over 4,000 residents to evacuate after spreading across northern California.

The Park Fire in Butte County was still growing quickly on Saturday morning, affecting some 307,369 acres (1,244 sqkm) according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire).

Officials said it was still at 'zero per cent' containment.

The fire started on Wednesday near Chico, in Butte County, where some 400 residents have since been evacuated. It reached the neighbouring Tehama County within hours, devastating a wide area of it.

It is believed to have been started by an arsonist, who pushed a burning car into a



ravine. A 42-year-old suspect was arrested on Thursday. He will be held without bail until a court appearance next week.

Over 1,600 fire fighters have been dispatched to battle the Park Fire. The blaze has so far destroyed some 134 structures.

"The biggest challenge with this fire is getting to it," said Fire Captain Dan Collins. "It's steep land with almost no roads. It's hard to get our people and equipment to the fire lines."

The National Weather Service has issued a Red Flag Warning for the region through Friday night. It predicted 'critical' fire weather conditions.

'Be prepared to go'

Authorities have continued to call on people in affected areas to evacuate immediately.

"You have to be prepared to go," Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea warned area residents. "This county has seen time and time again where people have waited too long and they have lost their lives."

Chico resident Carli Parker

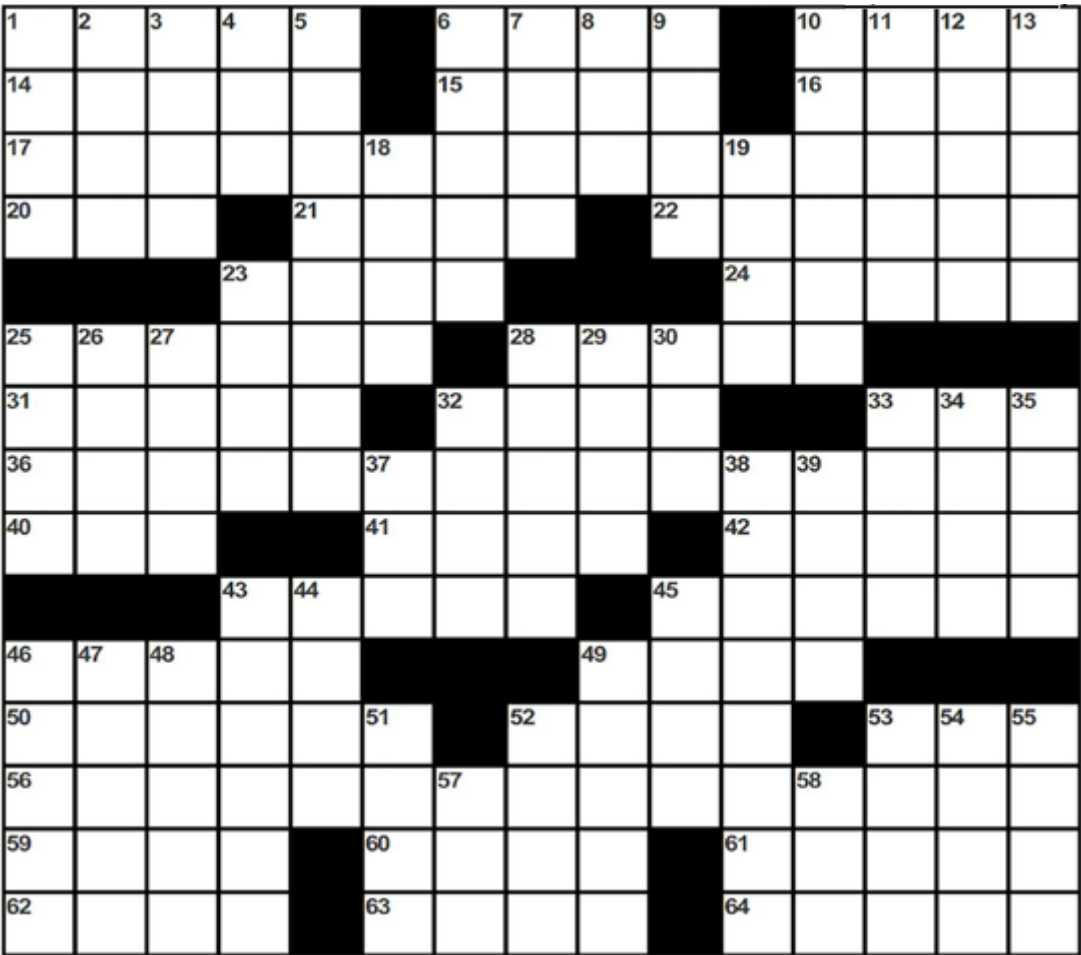
told the AP news agency she and her family had decided to flee when the fire began burning across the street.

"I think I felt like I was in danger because the police had come to our house because we had signed up for early evacuation warnings, and they were running to their vehicle after telling us that we need to self-evacuate and they wouldn't come back," the mother of five said.

The fire is burning merely 25 miles (roughly 40km) away from Paradise, where a 2018 fire devastated the city and killed 85 people. California is experiencing some 20 active wildfires, in a seemingly early start to a wildfire season that could prove intense.

dw

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - 1) Theater curtain fabric
 - 6) VIP's ride
 - 10) Speed-of-sound word
 - 14) First lady after Hillary
 - 15) Evidence of decay
 - 16) Big Apple tennis stadium
 - 17) Dairy item threatened with violence?
 - 20) Like fresh paint
 - 21) Off one's rocker
 - 22) Jam or jelly
 - 23) Use a kiln
 - 24) Bases of civil lawsuits
 - 25) What you eat
 - 28) Lawgiver of Athens
 - 31) Waftler's word
 - 32) Seemingly hopeless
 - 33) _ tai cocktail
 - 36) Vegetables challenged in court?
 - 40) Long March leader
 - 41) Self-assembly retail chain
 - 42) Like Stephen King novels
 - 43) Made a pick
 - 45) Missouri River tributary
 - 46) In la-la land
 - 49) React to a haymaker
- 50) Be a snitch
 - 52) Pervasive glow
 - 53) Air pump letters
 - 56) Seafood on a pedestal?
 - 59) Tiny bit
 - 60) "Just the facts, I"
 - 61) Atelier stand
 - 62) Some bunts, for short
 - 63) Team with a mule mascot
 - 64) Big name in fine china

DOWN

 - 1) Side with a burger
 - 2) Item on a docket
 - 3) Tin Woodman's woe
 - 4) Tax-deferred plan, briefly
 - 5) Donnant volcano of Hawaii
 - 6) Lenya of "Cabaret"
 - 7) Bad day for Caesar
 - 8) Chic, in the '60s
 - 9) Planets, to poets
 - 10) Women's prison head
 - 11) Daisy look-alike
 - 12) Palm an ace, say
 - 13) Does a cowboy's job
 - 18) Skywalker of sci-fi
 - 19) Not exceeding
 - 23) Blue ox of folklore
 - 25) Mosque leader
 - 26) California wine valley
 - 27) Errata item
 - 28) Sympathized (with)
 - 29) Black and white predator
 - 30) Place to graze
 - 32) Fake out on the ice
 - 33) Sahl of satire
 - 34) Working away
 - 35) Analyst's comment
 - 37) Reading course, for short
 - 38) Lets loose
 - 39) Honest-to-goodness
 - 43) Largish combos
 - 44) Mayberry's Gomer
 - 45) Home to Machu Picchu
 - 46) Crockpot creations
 - 47) Turkish bigwig of old
 - 48) Often-cobwebbed room
 - 49) Melding game
 - 51) Jane Austen classic
 - 52) Singer Levine of Maroon 5
 - 53) South-of-the-border coin
 - 54) Ilditarod vehicle
 - 55) Archipelago unit
 - 57) Place for a piercing
 - 58) Maple exudation

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You've been making some great changes in your life, and others are starting to notice. In fact, you've been the topic of some speculation for several days now, and a few people are turning green with envy over your accomplishments. A strong support network surrounds you, and it's time you realized it. The warmth will give you a nice sense of momentum that will drive you into one heck of a great mood all day.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Try to get into a conversation with the smartest person you know today, even if it's virtual. They have a plan you need to hear, and it involves an unusual cultural experience. Find out what they have cooking and if you can get involved. Even if you're not too into the idea, try to muster up some enthusiasm just the same. It's important to be more open right now. This person holds the ticket to your next big spiritual growth spurt, so take this opportunity.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

It's usually a great idea to have a direct manner with people, but sometimes it's much smarter to be subtle in your communication. Drop a hint and see if anyone picks up on it. Even if all you want to do is start a conversation, let someone else be the one to start it. Plant the seed with a brief mention of a tempting topic, and the curiosity of the people you're with will take it from there. You are capable of being provocative without being pushy right now.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Alidade, for example, a rotary dial for angular positioning on an astrolabe, is a term borrowed from which language?

A. Italian
B. Greek
C. Arabic
D. Chinese



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You are feeling curious right now, especially about people and customs of other countries. This could be one of the most enlightening periods of your life if you let yourself follow your desire to ask more questions and take more social risks. Keep probing into areas that confuse, beguile, or even frustrate you. If you don't understand something, then you need to figure it out. Don't stop until you feel educated and rewarded. It shouldn't take too long.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Today, someone's brilliant one-liner will do more than tickle your funny bone. It will ignite a tiny spark in your heart. Few people realize how having fun can lead to romance, though you have always understood the connection. Your ideal mate is more likely to be someone who makes you smile than someone who makes you swoon. Remember this when you are considering which crushes to pursue. Hold off on accepting an invitation from anyone who's coming on too strong.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You just accomplished a big victory, but you'd be wise to stop reminding others about it. You've definitely earned the position you're in, but people are very sensitive about things right now. Their egos are delicate and it's vital to maintain your good relationships with them. You don't need to minimize your accomplishments. You just have to avoid being pompous. Think about the future and cultivate goodwill today. People are impressed by good winners.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You have many layers to your personality, which is good because it makes you an interesting person. But it can also be bad, because each one of those layers is something you have to nurture consciously. And right now, you aren't spreading your energy around equally. Today, spend time doing something you've been neglecting for a while. Maybe it's a hobby, maybe it's a health regimen, maybe it's a favorite sport. But get yourself back in balance.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

When the going gets rough today, just reach out to your friends. That's what they are there for! While they might not be able to fix your problems, they can at least figure out a way to put a smile on your face. You've been in a bit of a depressed phase, but that isn't necessarily anything to worry about. Everyone goes through blue periods, and it's part of life. You need to feel whatever you're feeling and work your way through emotions even if they are negative.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

All of the inspiration and energy you've been waiting for will finally roar into your life first thing this morning. You'll want to jump right on this wave of productivity as soon as possible, because it probably won't last all day long. Others will love your new and improved attitude, so much so that you could gain some support from former foes. Today, it's all about having fun and getting stuff done while you can and then relaxing when you can't.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Relationships are about creating a healthy balance of power, and you've been the one giving it up for too long. It's time to get things back to an equitable state and for you to get more of what you want. So today, it's not only okay for you to push the scales so they tip in your favor, it's healthy for the relationship. The other person won't put up nearly the fight you fear they will. They've grown a bit tired of being the leader for so long. They're ready to hand over the reins.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You're famous for thinking things over (and over and over and over again). Truth be told, you've been known to obsess just a little every now and then. So now, with a rather serious issue on the table, your loved ones will be more than surprised to see you reacting in what can only be called a spontaneous manner. It's okay. Once they're over the shock, they'll love it. They may even encourage you to keep up the good work.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Why are you trying so hard to be modest about all of your accomplishments? It makes no sense to be humble now. Let everyone know how proud you are of yourself. You'll get no denial from anyone! You will join the ranks of friends in high places, because your credibility and influence are about to increase dramatically. Start acting and looking the part. It's a great time to invest in building your wardrobe into something more impressive.

3. Who discovered and named the element francium in 1939?

A. Emmeline Pankhurst
B. Benjamin Franklin
C. William Pitt the Younger
D. Marguerite Perrey

Answers: 1. C 2. C 3. D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

T	S	P	C
L	E	E	E
A	I	E	R
G	U	A	S

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

SOLUTION

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

MADRID MOVE A DREAM COME TRUE FOR ENDRICK

Spanish giants unveil Brazilian prodigy at Bernabeu

Madrid, Spain - Brazil teenager Endrick was unveiled as Real Madrid's latest transfer at the Bernabéu, days after he signed his contract with the Champions League holders.

Madrid agreed a deal to sign forward Endrick from Palmeiras in December 2022, but the prospect could not formally join the club until his 18th birthday on July 21, 2024.

The 18-year-old was visibly emotional at the public presentation at the stadium, telling fans he has long dreamed of playing for the reigning LaLiga champions as his parents were also in tears in attendance.

"This is crazy," Endrick said. "I am so happy, since I was a kid I have always been a Madrid fan and now I am going to play for Madrid.

"I am here, I am going to play, I am so happy, my family are as well. I don't have words to describe what I am feeling. I always wanted to be here. I wanted to play for Madrid. It was a dream. Today it is a reality.

"I am grateful to everyone. Now we are going to sing a chant together, I am sure you will all sing with me: Three, two, one...



Endrick greets the fans after his unveiling

"Hala Madrid."

"I won't lie, I did not expect all this, so many people."

More than 40,000 fans were at the event. Madrid president Florentino Perez welcomed his team's latest young talent.

"This moment was what you dreamed of as a child," he said. "That conviction has led you to fulfil a lifetime dream. That dream you had when you were only nine years old with the Real Madrid Foundation.

"Your play and goals already bring fans to their feet and Madrid are delighted to have you

about the club and started looking back at all the stars that have been here.

"I have been enamoured by Madrid since then... I didn't want to cry, but it came from the soul. I hope we can now create history together."

He added that his parents tears during the event "touched his heart," saying he "would not be here without them."

Endrick featured for Brazil at this summer's Copa América, starting and playing 90 minutes in their penalty shootout defeat to Uruguay in the competition's

It [the tears] wasn't planned, but since I was young, I have loved Real. Firstly because I saw Cristiano Ronaldo and that's why I wanted to know more about the club

ENDRICK



as part of the family."

Endrick held a news conference at the Bernabéu immediately after the unveiling, where he revealed that Los Blancos all-time record goal scorer Cristiano Ronaldo drove his fandom of the storied club, and that the emotion overwhelmed him on the pitch at the unveiling.

"It [the tears] wasn't planned, but as I said, since I was young, I have loved Real Madrid," Endrick said.

"Firstly because I saw Cristiano Ronaldo and that's initially why I wanted to know more

quarterfinals.

He told the news conference that he has spoken a lot to new teammates Vinicius Júnior, Rodrygo and Éder Militão about his move.

"[They] have helped me a lot," Endrick said. "They have spoken about the club as the moment arrived to come here, about training and games.

I was focused on the Copa América so now I hope we can speak more and build a strong friendship for the benefit of Real Madrid, which is what is important."

Six-time French champions Bordeaux file for bankruptcy

Bordeaux, France - Bordeaux have filed for bankruptcy just days after they were relegated to the third tier of French football after Liverpool football club's owner withdrew from takeover talks, the former Ligue 1 club said on Thursday.

Earlier this month the six-times French champions were demoted from Ligue 2 by the National Directorate of Management Control due to financial concerns.

Once Liverpool's owner, Fenway Sports Group, pulled out from takeover talks, it effectively ended the club's survival hopes.

In their latest statement, Bordeaux announced that the club had filed for bankruptcy due to financial shortcomings. "Following the confirmation of the DNCG's decision to relegate FC Girondins de Bordeaux to National 1, the Club filed for bankruptcy on Tuesday with the Bordeaux Commercial Court in order to begin the necessary restructuring," they wrote.

Speaking further in their official statement, Bordeaux talked about how this was a difficult decision for the club. "This is a difficult decision that anticipates an inevitable consequence of the restructuring process underway."

Leclerc on Belgian pole as Verstappen gets penalised

Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium - Ferrari's Charles Leclerc took pole position at the Belgian Grand Prix on Saturday, where Red Bull's Formula One champion Max Verstappen posted the fastest time in wet conditions but is on a 10-place grid penalty for taking on a fifth engine.

Drivers' championship leader and three-times world champion Verstappen will start 11th on the grid on Sunday, after Red Bull decided to take the penalty at Spa which can be an easier track for overtaking, as he goes for a fourth straight win in Belgium.

Red Bull's Sergio Perez, under

pressure of late after a run of poor performances, will be alongside Leclerc on the front row, with Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes third on the grid and McLaren's Lando Norris making up the second row.

"I definitely did not expect that this weekend, with the tricky conditions, to do something above our expectations," Leclerc said.

"We need to focus on tomorrow and what will happen when the rain is gone. Without the rain, P5 was the position we were fighting for with the Mercedes. The rain helped us, but I'm not going to complain."

Norris is second in the cham-

pionship, 76 points behind Verstappen, and will see this as another great chance to close the gap, especially in the expected drier conditions.

It turned out to be a repeat of last year's qualifying at Spa, where Verstappen was also fastest but dropped to sixth on the grid with another penalty.,



Charles Leclerc

Atletico agree to sign Le Normand

Madrid, Spain - Atletico Madrid have reached an agreement with Real Sociedad for the transfer of Spain centre back Robin Le Normand, both LaLiga clubs said on Saturday.

Neither Atletico nor Sociedad disclosed the financial details, but Spanish media reported that the deal will be worth around 30 million euros (\$32.57 million) plus add-ons. The length of the 27-year-old's contract was not revealed. "Atletico and Sociedad have reached an agreement for the transfer of Le Normand. The deal will be finalised in the coming days when the player returns from his holiday," Atletico said in a statement.

Having started his career with Ligue 1 side Brest, the France-born player joined Sociedad in 2016. He has since made 221 appearances for Sociedad's first team and won the Copa del Rey in the 2019-20 season.

"We'll always remember his dedication and gratitude to the colours that have shaped him into the player he is today. Good luck," Sociedad said on social media platform X. Capped 17 times, Le Normand was part of Spain's victorious 2024 European Championship team.

Everton sign Lindstrom

Premier League side Everton



Robin Le Normand

We'll always remember his dedication and gratitude to the colours that have shaped him into the player he is today. Good luck

REAL SOCIEDAD

have signed Napoli midfielder Jesper Lindstrom on loan with an option to make the move perma-

nent in 2025, both clubs said on Friday.

While the financial details of the deal were not disclosed by either club, Italian media reported that Everton would pay Napoli around 3 million euros (\$3.26 million) in a loan fee and have agreed to a 22.5 million euros buy option for the 24-year-old.

The Denmark international joined Napoli from Bundesliga side Eintracht Frankfurt in 2023 and has made 29 appearances for the Italian club.

"Last year was a tough year for me but I'm so happy to be here now and I can't wait to get started," Lindstrom told the club website. "This is a season for me to come back on track. I think Everton is a very good fit for me and I'm ready to show why I should stay here."

Everton have also signed forward Iliman Ndiaye from Ligue 1 side Olympique de Marseille on a five-year contract. They kick-off their league campaign at home against Brighton on August 17.

Argentina beat Iraq, Spain win

Paris, France - Argentina earned a 3-1 win over Iraq in Lyon and Spain outclassed the Dominican Republic 3-1 in Bordeaux in the second matchday of the men's Olympic soccer tournament on Saturday.

Argentina recovered from their chaotic opening loss to Morocco and boosted their chances of reaching the next round as they went top of Group B on goal difference. Debutants Dominican Republic's first Olympic goal was not enough to stop the Spaniards who scored twice in the second half to clinch a quarter-final spot.

Argentina opened the scoring after 14 minutes thanks to a Thiago Almada's volley after Julian Alvarez set him up but Iraq captain Ayman Hussein equalised seconds before halftime with a brilliant header. Substitute Luciano Gondou restored Argentina's lead with a close-range finish before a superb strike by Ezequiel Fernandez six minutes from time secured all three points.



Joe Root and Ben Stokes

Root, Stokes help England fight back against Windies

Birmingham, England - Joe Root led an England fightback as they moved to within eight runs of the West Indies' first-innings score, reaching 274-7 at tea on the second day of the third test on Saturday.

Root scored 87, before being trapped lbw as the hosts fought back from 54-5 to close on the Windies' 282 as they look for a clean sweep of the series.

Jamie Smith, playing his third test, was unbeaten on 56 at tea with Chris Woakes on 21 not out.

Root featured in a 115-run sixth wicket partnership with captain Ben Stokes that hauled England back from a precarious

position after they lost two early wickets. They resumed on 38-3 and were quickly in further trouble with Ollie Pope bowled and Harry Brook caught behind in the first four overs.

Root and Stokes steadied the innings, however, taking England to 157-5 at lunch, with Root bringing up his 63rd test half century after surviving an lbw appeal on 10.

Stokes was dismissed in the third over after lunch, caught by Kraigg Brathwaite off Alzarri Joseph, his 100th test wicket.

It was a miscued pull from the skipper, offering an easy catch to square leg, after making 54.



Chen Yiwen and Chang Yani

Chinese start gold hunt in diving

Paris, France - Chen Yiwen and Chang Yani began China's bid to capture all eight women's Olympic diving golds by winning the synchronised 3-metre springboard event on Saturday.

First-time Olympians Chen and Chang, who arrived in Paris having won three consecutive world titles, finished on 337.68 points.

Chen, 25, and Chang, more than two years her junior, kicked off the competition with a back dive in the pike position to loud cheers from the fans, many of whom were dressed in China's team jacket and waving national flags.

"Today we performed normally but we have higher standards for ourselves when it comes to the scores. We need to keep working at it," Chang, who looked emotional after winning her first Olympic gold medal, told reporters.

Americans Sarah Bacon and Kassidy Cook, who performed the same routines as Chen and

Chang, gave the Chinese duo a scare after scoring equal points in the second round.

The Americans fell short in following dives, however, and took silver with 314.64 points.

"I don't think we had our all time best performance out there today, but we had a really solid performance and it's something that I'm very proud of," a grinning Kassidy said. "I'm very pleased with the silver medal."

"I think following the Chinese is a big responsibility almost," she said. "The Chinese hardly ever mess up but they kind of set the tone for the competition and pushed me and Sarah to put together five solid dives."

China have now won six Olympic titles in a row in the event, which was introduced into the Games programme in 2000.

China's Guo Jingjing, a four-times Olympic gold medallist in the 3m springboard event, refereed Saturday's competition and was given a loud cheer when she was introduced on the screen.

India's Manu Bhaker enters pistol final

Chateauroux, France - Indian shooter Manu Bhaker stormed into the final of the women's 10m air pistol event at the Paris 2024 Olympics after finishing third in the qualifying round on Saturday.

The top eight shooters from the men's and the women's 10m air pistol qualifying events made it to the final scheduled for Sunday at the National Shooting Center in Châteauroux.

Manu Bhaker became the first Indian woman to reach an Olympic shooting final in an individual event in 20 years, since Suma Shirur's entry in the 10m air rifle final at Athens 2004.

Manu also became the first Indian woman to qualify for the 10m air pistol women's final at the Olympics.

Hungary's Veronika Major (582-22X) topped the qualifying round, followed by Republic of Korea's Oh Ye Jin (582-20X) and Manu Bhaker (580-27X). Rhythm Sangwan finished 15th (573-14x).

Earlier both of India's 10m air rifle mixed teams - Sandeep Singh/Elavenil Valarivan and Arjun Babuta/Ramita Jindal - failed to make the cut for the medal matches in the shooting event.

China take first gold

Huang and Lihao hold off Koreans in 10m air rifle mixed team event

Chateauroux, France - Social media-savvy teenaged duo Huang Yuting and Sheng Lihao upheld a Chinese shooting tradition as they won the first gold of the Paris Olympics in the 10 metres air rifle mixed team event on Saturday.

Chinese shooters have claimed their country's first gold of the Games more times than athletes in any other sport and that trend continued with Huang and Sheng triumphing at the Chateauroux Shooting Centre.

Their 16-12 win, quelling a late challenge from the South Korean pair of Keum Ji-hyeon and Park Ha-jun, ensured China remain the only country to win the gold in the mixed team event introduced in Tokyo three years ago.

"When the Koreans were catching up, I was not paying too much attention to it because I was first trying to stabilise myself," Sheng, 19, told reporters.

"I told myself I need to do what I must do."

Alexandra Le and Islam Satpayev gave Kazakhstan the bronze with a 17-5 romp against the German pair of Anna Janssen and Maximilian Ulbrich.

Three years after China's Yang Qian and Yang Haoran won the gold in Tokyo, reigning world champions Huang and Sheng topped the qualifying round ahead of their Korean rivals to signal their intent.



China's Huang Yuting and Sheng Lihao

I was quite tense to be honest. Deep inside, I was telling myself to focus on my movement and the competition, and get some positive energy.

HUANG YUTING

The gold medal contest was not really a cakewalk though despite them racing to a 14-8 lead after the 11th round.

Keum and Park staged a late comeback to reduce the gap at 14-12 but the Chinese pair prevailed in the end.

Huang said she was jittery

when the Koreans started breathing down their neck.

"I was quite tense to be honest," said the 17-year-old, whose puppy hair-clips are quite popular among her social media fans back home.

"Deep inside, I was telling myself to focus on my movement

and the competition, and get some positive energy."

Huang and Sheng will be gunning for a second gold in Paris but said the team event result would have no bearing on their individual rifle competitions.

Korea's Park was not too unhappy with the silver.

"We could not overcome the Chinese shooters, but we are

very satisfied with our medals," said the bespectacled 24-year-old.

Teammate Keum also had no issues finishing behind their Chinese opponents.

"I respect the Chinese athletes and I think they did a great job of winning the gold.

"I personally think we also did great to get this silver."

Former Chinese teammates reunite on Olympic stage after four decades

Paris, France - Ni Xialian and Zeng Zhiying were once Chinese table tennis teammates but never made it to the Olympics for the land of their birth. Four decades on, they are both at the Paris Games representing other countries.

At 61, Ni is one of the oldest athletes competing in what is her sixth Olympics, representing Luxembourg where she moved in the late 1980s after winning two world championship gold medals for China.

"Three years ago, after Tokyo I thought I can retire. But our federation of the country, they love to have me. So I tried to be here, and I made it," said Ni.

"The next goal is winning one more game."

Zeng, 58, retired from professional table tennis nearly three decades ago before moving to Chile, where she took up the sport again during the COVID lockdown.

"In 2022 when I played, I didn't have any other dreams or



Zeng Zhiying

ambitions," said Zeng. "I just wanted to pick up a bat, exercise, and play at our club, getting to know more people."

Within a few months, Zeng found her muscle memory returning, but she thought Olympics would be "a distant dream" because of her age.

During Zeng's online research to study rivals, however,

a familiar face jumped out among players who are mostly half her age.

While Zeng was living in northern Chile running a furniture trading business, her former teammate had remained active in international competition.

"When I started playing last year, Ni Xialian was already 60

years old," said Zeng.

"If she can play, then I can also improve my physical fitness and play. She's a role model for me to follow."

Both attribute their extended careers to the fundamental skills they gained from training at a young age in China, getting their form right under strict guidance during hundreds of hours of te-

dious repetition.

Rarely has a country dominated a sport the way China dominates table tennis. China have won 32 of the 37 golds and 60 of the 115 total medals since table tennis was introduced to the Summer Olympics in 1988.

Zeng, who goes by the name Tania in Chile, faces 46-year-old Mariana Sahakian of Lebanon in the first round. She is excited to have her husband and two adult sons cheering for her in Paris and is grateful to her adopted country for the opportunity to compete on the biggest stage.

"In China, even if you had the chance to play, you wouldn't necessarily make it due to the high overall level of play there," she said.

For Ni, representing a different country took some getting used to and she turned down the opportunity to compete at the 1996 Games. "(In the) beginning, I don't think I wanted to play for another country, it's not my goal and that's why I gave up

Australia's Rahimi expresses solidarity with French athletes over hijab

Paris, France - Australian boxer Tina Rahimi weighed into France's rules on secularism and athletes wearing the hijab on Saturday, saying she was saddened by the fact she could freely represent her faith while French athletes were not given the same opportunity.

Muslim French sprinter Soukamba Sylla, part of France's 400 metres relay team, wrote on her Instagram account on Monday that her hijab - a head covering worn by many Muslim women - would prevent her from

appearing in Friday's Opening Ceremony. The French Olympic Committee said Sylla had accepted the option of wearing a cap instead of a hijab at the ceremony.

France, home to Europe's largest Muslim minority, enforces laws to protect the principle of secularism under which state employees and school pupils are banned from wearing religious symbols and clothing in public institutions. This also applies to athletes competing for France in the Games, Sports Minister



Tina Rahimi

I still feel for the French athletes and I just hope that it can be overturned for them and they can participate

TINA RAHIMI

Amelie Oudea-Castera has said. Rights groups say these rules effectively discriminate against Muslims. Foreign athletes are not

affected by the secularism rules.

"It's sad, with the French rules and that whole situation," Rahimi said. "I mean, as proud as I am to be here, I think in my heart I feel sad that I'm able to be here with my hijab and the other French athletes and people aren't."

"I still feel for the French athletes and I just hope that it can be overturned for them and they can participate and every woman can feel free in how they want to dress."

Featherweight Rahimi, who was handed a first-round bye and

is due to fight on Aug. 2, is the first Muslim woman to box for Australia at the Olympics.

"It means a lot to me to be here as a representation of my faith, and to display to other women out there, in particular hijabi women, that they can participate in sport and feel welcome," the 28-year-old Rahimi added.

"I think that's really, really important. That's what everyone wants to feel, they want to go somewhere and feel like they're included and they're not being discriminated against."

OMANI DELEGATION SHINES AT SPECTACULAR OPENING

Adil Al Balushi

Paris, France - The Omani delegation took part in the historic opening ceremony of the 33rd Summer Olympic Games, Paris 2024, on Friday at the Seine River in the heart of the French capital city Paris.

The four-hour spectacular event was attended by top dignitaries including French President Emmanuel Macron, numerous heads and representatives of countries besides Thomas Bach, President of the International Olympic Committee and a huge number of spectators.

Oman's Sheikh Khalid Mohammed al Zubair, Chairman of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) and head of Oman's delegation to Paris 2024 Olympics participated in the official opening ceremony. HE Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth for Sports and Youth Affairs was among the invitees beside HE Ambassador Ahmed bin Mohammed al Orami, Oman's Ambassador to France, along with several members of the Oman Olympic Committee's Board of Directors.



Omani delegation at the opening ceremony

Oman made a notable appearance at the official opening ceremony through the participation of its sports delegation members who proudly wore traditional Omani dress and carried the Omani flags. The Omani delegation shared the same boat with delegations from New Zealand, Uganda, and Pakistan. The flag bearers were athlete

Ali Anwar al Balushi, who is making his Olympics debut and female sprinter Mazoon al Alawi, who is participating in the Olympics for her third consecutive time.

"This is a historic moment for me to be chosen as the national delegation flag bearer. I enjoyed historic and pivotal moments in my sports career and my joy was

great after qualifying directly for the Olympics but it became even more interesting when I was chosen to carry the flag of my beloved country in this high profile sporting and global event. I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the officials of Oman Olympic Committee for selecting me and my fellow runner Mazoon al Alawi,"

said Ali.

Mazoon al Alawi also expressed her pride for raising the Omani flag during the official ceremony.

"I had participated in the Olympics twice before but this participation was different from the others as I had the honour of being one of the flag bearers for Oman."



Omani athletes in Paris

Omani shooter Al Khatri to start official training on Sunday

Shooter Said al Khatri from the national shooting team will begin his official training on Sunday at the Châteauroux Shooting Center. The organising technical committee has allocated the morning period for all competitors in the Men's Trap Shooting event to practice on the main range providing a valuable opportunity for shooters to train and acclimatise to the range before the official competitions start on Monday and Tuesday.

The domestic shooter will begin his action at the qualifying rounds of the Men's Trap event on Monday and Tuesday.

"I had excellent training

sessions over the past few days through my early arrival to France. It was a remarkable training experience alongside other shooters from various countries. This is my debut Olympics experience and it is a significant motivation to deliver my best technical to honour my beloved country in this historic event.

The presence at the shooting ranges in advance helped him greatly to the competition atmosphere and get used to the weapons.

Also, I am more adaptable with the weather conditions and other natural factors. I am looking forward to registering top records," he said.



I had excellent training sessions over the past few days through my early arrival to France

HAMED AL HARTHY

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

A senior printing press/advertising management executive, with extensive experience and clear plan to train Omanis in printing press management, is looking for a suitable job.
Contact: +968-92102442

Indian,Male(25),CA Inter, 4 years of experience in the field of auditing and accounts . looking for a job in the field of auditing or accounts.
Email : nnijas98@gmail.com
Phone: +968-79719058

SEND YOUR REQUEST FOR

Birthday/Anniversary wishes to wish@apexmedia.co.om with your resident card copy (It's free of cost)

MARRIAGE NOTICE

I BALAJI GOTHANDAPANI holder of Indian Passport No U7041680) S/o GOTHANDAPANI VENKATASAMY having permanent residence in 3/11, EAST STREET THIRUVALANDURAI,(po),PERAMBALUR , PERAMBALUR (DT), TAMILNADU,INDIA (complete postal address in India) and presently residing at AL KHOULD MUSCAT Post BOX. No. , Postal Code 132, Sultanate Of Oman , intend to marry Ms DHIVYALAKSHMI BALAKRISHNAN SENTIL (holder of Indian Y7513583 /D/O BALAKRISHNAN SENTIL having permanent residence in 1B, SELLANDIAMMAN KOIL ST,SUBLANE, NAMAKKAL,TAMILNADU (complete permanent address) at embassy of India, Muscat. I swear that I am marrying her at my own free will and not under any duress and intimidation. Any objection towards this marriage may please be communicated to Embassy Of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, PO Box No : 1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman within 30 days of publication of this news paper advertisement

FOR RENT/SALE

Available 2100 sq meter best in class Warehouse cum office Space, fully furnished ready to use, Located at Prime area of Ghala in the heart of the city having easy access to airport & express Way.

Contact: Mr.Sumit Mudgil - 95616835
Girish Sewani - 93893596

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

Car Rental & Lease

BIRTHDAY WISHES

AIZA NOOR

Wishing our sweetie girl a Happy Birthday! May all your wishes come true today and every day.

RIZWAN

Happy Birthday, my dear Rizwan! May your day be filled with joy, laughter, and all the things you love. Here's to another fantastic year ahead! Cheers!

FOR SALE				
S.No	Category	Make	Capacity	Year Of Manufacture
1	Batching Plant	Elba	130cum	2007
2	Ice Plant	Kti	44 Ton	2007
3	Wet Mix Plant	Appollo	200 Tph	2006
4	Wet Mix Plant	Maxmech	250tph	2015

FOR SALE: Used Scaffolding Materials, The list is given below

S. No	Description	No's
1	40mm Dia Pipe - 3m Length	560
2	40mm Dia Pipe - 6m Length	2100
3	Base Plates	2700
4	Cuplock Vertical 1 Mtr	1700
5	Cuplock Vertical 2 Mtr	2300
6	Telescopic Leg -2mtr	300
7	Cup Lock Ledger 1.3 Mtr	20
8	Cup Lock Ledger 1.8 Mtr	1800
9	Cup Lock Ledger 1.6 Mtr	1500
10	Cup Lock Ledger 1.2 Mtr	7500
11	Cup Lock Standard 1.8 Mtr	130
12	Adjustable Props 2.4 -3.9 Mtr	2200
13	Universal Jack 75 Cm	3500
14	Cup Lock Standard 0.80 Mtr	750
15	Adjustable U Head 760 Nm	3500
16	Cup Lock Ledger 1 Mtr	6200
17	Cup Lock Ledger 1.5 Mtr	1200
18	Cup Lock Standard 2.5 Mtr	1600
19	Cup Lock Standard 1.3 Mtr	3000
20	Stirrup Heads	8300
21	Ms Channel 100 X50 X6 Mtr	1800

Only Interested Parties In Buying As The Full Lot May Contact 94125750

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Yoga, Kalari, Panchakarma, Massage, Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Beauty therpay & post Delivery Care

Zaher Building ,1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road ,near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-king Tel:24475280, GSM: 95371664 , 92504980 , Website:www.siddhayur.com

mai alkaline

pH 9.1 to 9.5

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

OmanOasis OmanOasisOfficial OmanOasisWater

HYDRATE SMARTLY

- Ultra-hydrating
- Revitalizing
- Energizing
- Electrolytes

800 71 222
9275 5522

Call No: 7899452



It was a strong preview of what the rest of the Games will look like with some of the city's most iconic landmarks serving as backgrounds for competition.

Rain plays spoilsport

The rain had sent a warning Friday morning and threatened through much of Friday afternoon. But Paris' grey skies finally opened up about 30 minutes into a three-and-a-half-hour show, leading to perhaps the most drenched opening ceremony in the history of the modern Olympics.

Hundreds of thousands of spectators lined the banks of the River Seine, clad in ponchos and rain jackets, and a canopy of umbrellas sprouted up at the first hint of raindrops. The rain was evident in the performances, too, as dancers were seen having slight slips as they performed. The water also sprung off musicians' instruments as they played and some of the boats carrying the smaller athletic delegations appeared tossed in the Seine's waves.

But the Olympic spirit did not wilt in the rain. The athletes – standing in pouring rain days before they are about to compete in the most important competitions of their lives – looked beyond excited to wave to the crowds.

Icons perform

After a stunning light show on the Eiffel Tower, one of the most iconic singers of the last several decades finally made her return to performing after four years.

Canadian singer Celine Dion performed Edith Piaf's "Hymne À L'Amour," one of the French singer's most well-known songs, on the Eiffel Tower at the end of the ceremony. It was her first performance since her diagnosis with stiff person syndrome.

A massive roar greeted the end of her performance from the spectators who braved the rain throughout the night as the Eiffel Tower sparkled around her – truly a moment worthy of a singing icon.

A long dance break in the middle of the show encapsulated the vibe that much of the show took on: It was party time in the French capital as techno and Europop music accompanied by colourful dancers turned heads around the world.

Earlier in the ceremony, the first moment that made people stop and stare was a performance by heavy metal band Gojira. In an opening ceremony full of classic rock anthems and dance tracks, the slamming drums and driving guitar was a surprising change of pace - indeed, it was the first time a metal band had played at the Opening Ceremony - but one that left a mark.

(Courtesy: cnn.com)

Olympics opening

The Eiffel Tower and the Olympics rings light up to herald the colourful, grand opening ceremony of the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris on Friday

It was wet, parts of it were weird, much of it was beautiful and all of it was very, very memorable...

An opening ceremony unlike any other got the 2024 edition of the Olympic Games officially underway in Paris Friday night and truly it was one that will live on in Olympic legend – though maybe not in the way the Paris 2024 organisers would have hoped.

Paris shows off

It wasn't exactly the night that Paris 2024 organisers would have hoped for (more on that in a moment). But the opportunity to put the City of Light and its culture and people on full display was well-taken on Friday.

The boats floating on the River Seine allowed for incredible Parisian scenes as they passed storied landmarks on their journey to the end of the Parade of Nations at the Trocadero, with an Olympic-rings-adorned Eiffel Tower serving as the backdrop. The fa-

mous landmark was lit up in all its glory, a veritable beacon on what could have been a dreary night.

Parts of the city's history and culture were acknowledged throughout the ceremony, including a heavy metal performance in the Conciergerie with the windows full of headless Marie Antoinettes backlit in red, and a fashion show catwalk that went over the river it-

self. Oh, and not to mention Lady Gaga performing a salute to the city's cabaret's culture on the banks river.

Tennis star Rafael Nadal carried the Olympic flame aboard a boat with a few famous former Olympians - Carl Lewis, Nadia Comăneci and Serena Williams while the ceremony speeches were held in front of the Eiffel Tower following the Parade of Nations.

The ceremony depicted scenes from the French Revolution. Here, smoke billows near windows at the Conciergerie, the site where Marie Antoinette, the last French queen prior to the revolution, was imprisoned.

As the sun went down, the City of Light shone through the raindrops. The running of the Olympic Torch passed down the lit-up Seine and around the magnificent scenery outside of the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower's light show looked incredible as it illuminated the clouds and rain with lasers and dancing beams.

**Free home delivery
& timely service**



oman
OASIS
BALANCED ENRICHING WATER

Oasis Water Co. SAOC,
PO Box 87, Rusayl 124,
Sultanate of Oman.
www.omanoasis.com

CALL TOLL-FREE
800 71 222
or GSM: **9275 5522**

 Winner of
His Majesty's Cup Award
in 2012 & 2013
for Best Five Factories

C.A. No.: 128452

**WORLD WIDE
REMITTANCE**

**WE BUY & SELL
GOLD & SILVER**
1 gm to 1kg 24ct gold bars available
at best international rate.

1 gm to 1kg 24ct gold bars available
at best international rate.

INTERVIEW: H E VERONIQUE AULAGNON

FRENCH TOAST



WITH GREAT HONOUR, JOY, AND LASTING MEMORIES, FRENCH AMBASSADOR BIDS ADIEU TO OMAN

As H E Veronique Aulagnon, the Ambassador of France to Oman, prepares to bid farewell to the sultanate, she shares her reflections and experiences in an exclusive interview with Muscat Daily. Here are her final thoughts on her remarkable journey in Oman:

How fruitful has your deputation been in the sultanate? Will you miss Oman?
Representing France in Oman was an honour and a joy. It was an honour to have contributed to the renewal of the centuries-old friendship between our two countries, by projecting it resolutely towards the future. It was also a joy to have been able to travel and introduce more and more French visitors to this immense and magnificent country, from Muscat to Nizwa, from Salalah to Khasab, via Sohar, Sur, the Wahiba Sands, Jabal Akhdar, Jabal Shams, Al Hamra, Misfat Al Abreyeen, Masirah, Bar Al Hikman, Ibra, Al Ayn, and so many other places, which dazzled me. Above all, it was a joy to have contributed to cultivating and expanding human ties with Omanis - representatives of the authorities and established bodies, as well as entrepreneurs, researchers, teachers, artists, students, and pupils. I will miss Oman, but Oman is now part of me - through memories and lasting friendships. Of course, I will be back with my family.

Could you share some pleasant and some not-so-pleasant moments during your stay in Oman?
There are so many memorable moments from my stay in Oman that it is hard to select only a few. But let me share three of them, related to nature, heritage, and women leadership.
Nature: I have travelled extensively throughout the country with my family and visitors, from dune bashing to hiking, diving, and even kite

surfing. I have a soft spot for Misfat al Abreyeen and Bar al Hikman, where I spent hours watching the changing landscapes and listening to the stories of ancient times and the spirited jokes of my Omani hosts.
Heritage: I visited most of Oman's historical places, but two moments come specifically to mind. Firstly, the visit to the hardly reachable painted caves in the Dhofar mountains where French archaeologists have been researching for years, which I was privileged to reach with outstanding colleagues from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. Secondly, my visit to the UNESCO-enlisted necropolises of Al-Ayn and Bat with French archaeological teams, and the memorable hospitality offered on this occasion by the sheikh of Al Dreez, who even organised a special horse race for us.
Women Leadership: As a woman Ambassador and as part of France's strong feminist diplomacy, I engaged in activities to promote women, through our annual flagship 'Empower Women' event within the Oman-France Friendship Association, many informal gatherings that I hosted, and events such as the latest on women and sport, as a contribution to the spirit of the Olympic Games now taking place in Paris. I was privileged to meet incredibly inspiring women, Omanis and foreigners, who have become friends for life.
I do not have unpleasant memories of my stay in Oman, but like many people in Oman, as well as in France and around the world, I feel deeply saddened about the ongoing horrific human suffering in Gaza. This is a test of our collective willingness and capacity to defend peace, human rights, and international justice. France has been very clear about where it stands on this issue.

What do you consider your most significant achievements or milestones during your

I will miss Oman, but Oman is now part of me - through memories and lasting friendships. Of course, I will be back with my family

H E Veronique Aulagnon



tenure in Oman?
While we celebrated, in 2022, the 50th anniversary of our diplomatic relations, our bilateral relationship goes back 400 years. Together with the Omani authorities, we took several initiatives over the last three years to build on this strong legacy, around three pillars - diplomacy and security, business, and education and culture.
Diplomacy and Security: We intensified our political dialogue and security cooperation, which was much needed in a particularly challenging international environment, marked by at least two major crises - the invasion of Ukraine and the war in Gaza. France values the positive role played by Oman in diffusing tensions in the region, as our president expressed to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik during a phone call on June 15. He also thanked HM for the instrumental support provided by the sultanate to help secure the release of one of the French nationals detained in Iran. We recently decided to enhance our bilateral dialogue in the format of a high-level annual strategic dialogue, with the first round scheduled later in 2024, in Muscat. This will help provide stronger impetus to our bilateral cooperation, in view of upcoming high-level visits.
Business: We worked to support more business-to-business connections and mutual investments. Over 40 French companies are operating in Oman, some of them for many decades, particularly in the sectors of energy, security, water, and waste management. Over the last three years, as a result of our joint efforts, the French footprint increased and expanded to new sectors identified as priorities within Oman Vision 2040, namely renewables and green hydrogen, fisheries, tourism, and hopefully soon, transport. Their contribution to the transfer of technologies and training is

highly recognised. We are also working on an initiative to promote joint investments.
Education and Culture: I am proud of the new initiatives we have taken to foster more people-to-people relationships. We just launched a joint scholarship programme for Masters, whereby more Omani students will be able to study in France, which is one of the top world destinations for foreign students and has among the best universities, research centres, and incubators. We expanded the French international school of Muscat, which is now fully accredited and offers a bilingual French curriculum, as well as the French-Omani Cultural Centre of Muscat. We took many initiatives to showcase French culture, notably through our annual flagship festival, the 'French Weeks'. We are supporting the development of cultural and creative industries in Oman, notably in the movie industry and fashion. A final word on the French-Omani Museum, 'Bait Faransa', a symbol of our joint history, whose renovation started in 2023. France will contribute with the best of its expertise with the aim of transforming it into a vibrant space open to young people and artists.
As you prepare to depart, what advice or insights would you offer to your successor?
My successor is a top career diplomat with strong expertise in the Arab world. Oman is indeed a very attractive posting for French diplomats, and not just because of the beauty of the country and the hospitality of its people. To him, as to all arriving fellow ambassadors from other countries, I offer the same advice, one that was given to me by wise peers - explore the country and mingle with people from all backgrounds, as Oman is a place where you will be welcomed in private houses probably like nowhere else in the GCC.



ابدأ يومك بلذة!

f Poppins Arabia @poppins_arabia poppins.com



Distributed by



CATERING SOLUTIONS TRADING LLC

Please contact +968 22060236/237

Dream Hyundai Offer.

Tucson
RO 10950
Onwards



Creta
RO 7000
Onwards



Elantra
RO 6850
Onwards

Limited Stocks! Limited Time!
Visit your nearest Hyundai showroom today.



 **9729 4445**

Terms and conditions apply. Price valid for 3 days only from 28th – 30th July 2024 on 2023 Manufacturing cars only. Price covers only manufacturer warranty.