

OMAN  DAILY

Observer



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OMAN OBSERVER

www.omanobserver.orn editor@omanobserver.orn

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PETROCI STAKE IN OMAN'S MASIRAH OIL LIMITED CLIMBS TO 12.5%



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JUVE GIVE MOTTA PERFECT START AGAINST COMO

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OMAN'S NEW WELLNESS TREND EMBRACES ANCIENT SOUND THERAPY



MUSCAT

EXPORTS OF VEHICLE SPARE PARTS RISE 27%

The Sultanate of Oman's total import of vehicle spare parts by the end of the first five months of this year fell by 11.8 per cent to stand at RO 44.695 million as against RO 50.683 million during the corresponding period in 2023, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The United Arab Emirates (UAE) topped the list of countries supplying vehicle spare parts to Oman as at the end of May, to the tune of RO 19.480 million. Japan occupied second place (RO 13.728 million), followed by India (RO 2.156 million), Thailand (RO 1.999 million) and China (RO 1.669 million).

Yet, the total value of Oman's exports of vehicle spare parts by the end of May grew by 27.04 per cent to RO 9.868 million, compared to RO 7.767 million in the corresponding period in 2023, according to the NCSI.

DETAILS ON P3

NEW DELHI

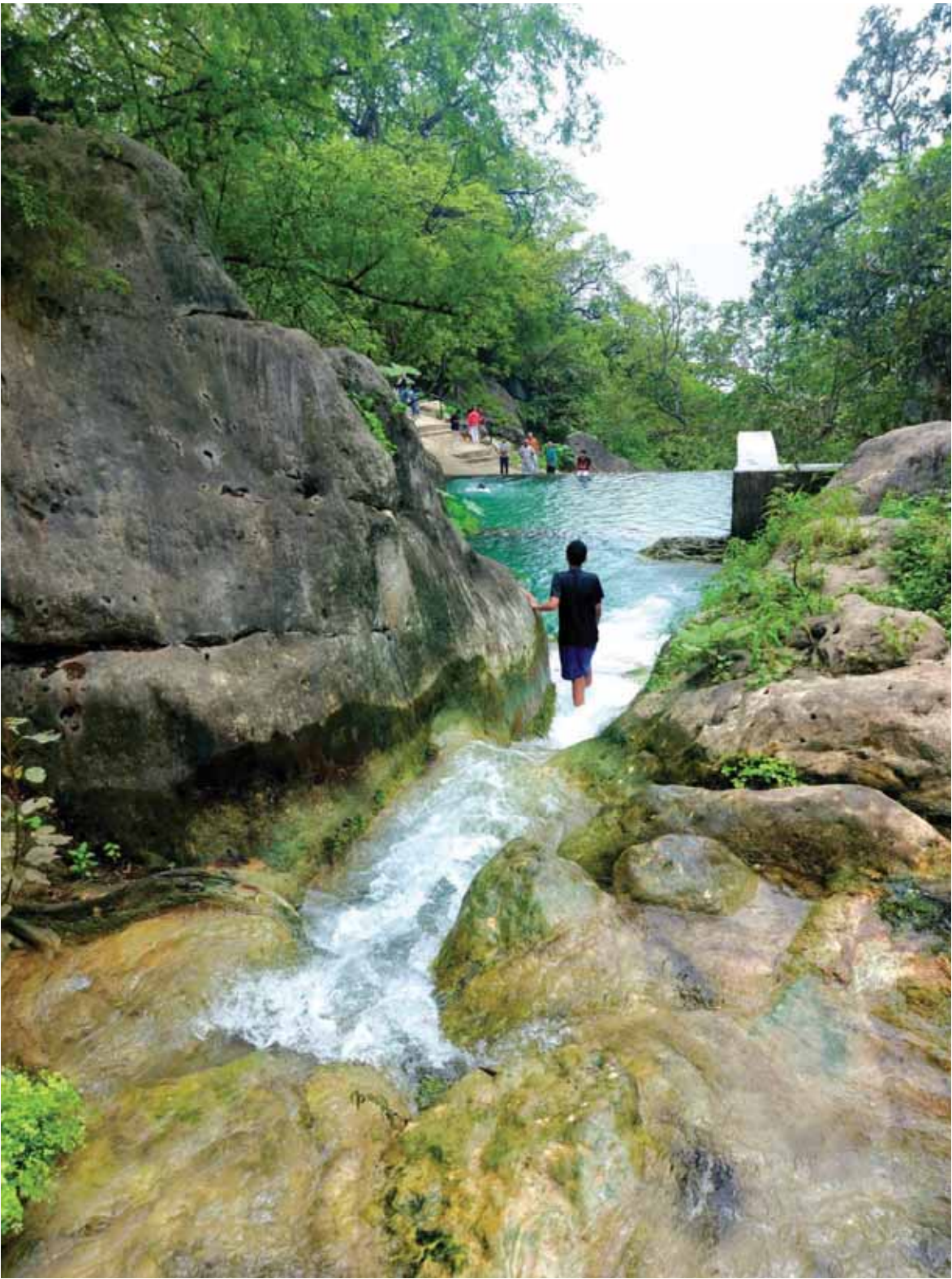
600,000 VISITED OMAN IN 2023

The first mobile promotional workshop organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to introduce and promote the tourism potential of the Sultanate of Oman in the Indian tourism market was launched in the Indian capital, New Delhi, on Tuesday.

The sessions will be held in four major cities that are sources of tourism movement (New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore). Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, said: "The Republic of India is one of the largest sources of tourism to various destinations in the world, as the number of visitors to the Sultanate of Oman during the past year 2023 exceeded 600,000, and this number is expected to increase during the current year 2024."

DETAILS ON P3

A REFRESHING RETREAT!



As the rest of the region grapples with extreme heat, Salalah in Dhofar Governorate offers a refreshing retreat from scorching sun. With just a few weeks left to enjoy the cool climate of Salalah, it's an ideal destination to escape the heat and experience this serene destination. Include in your travel itinerary hiking on lush green mountains, visiting beautiful waterfalls, exploring traditional markets for local crafts and products, enjoying the cool weather and fresh air, trying out delicious local cuisine, while taking scenic drives along the picturesque coastal roads.

PHOTO BY AHMED AL MAASHANI

On-off talks seek ceasefire in Gaza Strip

ALAMEIN, EGYPT: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken pushed for progress towards a Gaza ceasefire and a deal to release captives as he visited Egypt on Tuesday, but major areas of dispute are still to be resolved in talks planned for later this week.

Blinken's visit to the region included meetings in Israel on Monday and he is now travelling to Qatar, one of the mediators in the Gaza talks along with the United States and Egypt.

Blinken said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had accepted a US "bridging proposal" aimed at narrowing the gaps between the two sides after talks last week paused without a breakthrough, and urged Hamas to accept it too.

The Palestinian group has not explicitly rejected the proposal, but said it overturns what was previously agreed, without specifying how, and accused Israel of spinning out negotiations in bad faith.

In Egypt, Blinken met President Abdel Fattah el Sisi, whose country has been helping mediate the on-off Gaza talks for months along with the US and Qatar. Sisi said after the meeting that it was time to put an end to the war and warned of the



Palestinians carry their children as they flee after an Israeli strike on a school, housing displaced Palestinians, in the Rimal neighbourhood of central Gaza City on August 20, 2024, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the militant Hamas group. — AFP

DARK SHAME

The world has not done enough to bring about a ceasefire in Gaza, Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris has said.

Harris called for an urgent review of the EU-Israel Association Agreement as he said human rights clauses in the trade pact were being breached. Harris warned that the world would look back on the conflict as a "time of dark shame." — Agencies

DEALS TO PROVIDE SOLUTIONS TO TARGET ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority on Tuesday signed three contracts with academic institutions that won research projects funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The first contract, signed with Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), covered two projects, the first of which is titled "Multi-criteria decision analysis for sustainable management of the Omani coast: Sohar and Salalah ports as a case study". The project deals with the conservation of ecosystems through the implementation of sustainable management practices in the Omani coastal areas, with emphasis on Sohar and Salalah ports.

The SQU's second project pertains to "mysterious energy sources and natural radiation levels" in Oman. It provides a preliminary breakthrough into the health and social aspects of radiation on the population of Oman. The project seeks to establish a basic database and understand the scope of radiation exposure in Oman, to help develop guidelines to keep radiation levels within safety limits

and protect the environment and human health.

The second contract, signed with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), dealt with a research project titled "Measuring the concentration of radioactive radon gas in Oman, with special emphasis on its impact on public health. The project focuses on measuring the concentration of radon gas and assessing indoor air quality.

The third contract, signed with the National University of Science and Technology (NU), is titled "Revolutionising the sustainability of special economic zones in Oman: Valorisation of pollutant currents' impact on products and developing a bio-electrochemical system-based biorefinery".

The project aims to convert waste materials or pollutants into valuable products through the establishment of a bio-refinery based on bio-electric systems. The facility is envisaged to extract maximum value from waste through the usage of innovative technologies by means of which pollutants are converted into valuable products.

SEE ALSO P2

‘I gave my best’ as Biden passes torch to Harris

CHICAGO: An emotional US President Joe Biden passed the torch to Democratic nominee Kamala Harris with a hug on Monday night, saying he gave everything for his country in a bittersweet farewell speech at the party's convention in Chicago.

"America, America, I gave my best to you," the 81-year-old Biden said, quoting a patriotic hymn during a nearly hour-long address that ran through his achievements while urging voters to back his vice-president against Donald Trump in November.

Harris joined him on stage after the speech and the pair embraced, as the crowd gave Biden a rapturous reception following his stunning decision less than a month ago to drop out of the 2024 White House race.

In a remarkable turnaround, Harris has deenergise the party and wiped out Republican rival Trump's lead in the polls, but Biden insisted that he was not bitter about stepping aside.

Instead, as he contemplates the imminent end of a five-decade political career, he said that he had done what he thought best to ensure that his nemesis Trump does not return to the Oval Office.



US President Joe Biden holds vice-president and 2024 Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris at the United Center in Chicago, Illinois, on Monday night. — AFP

"I love the job, but I love my country more. I love my country more," said Biden. "And all this talk about how I'm angry at all those people who said I should step down — that's not true."

Both Biden and Harris appeared to wipe away a tear as the US leader won a huge four-minute ovation when he first took to the stage, following an introduction by First Lady Jill Biden and his daughter Ashley.

Several members of the audience were also in tears as Biden made his farewell speech,

before leaving the stage to the strains of the song "Higher Love."

And Harris had earlier made a surprise appearance — Democratic nominees don't normally speak until the final day of the convention — to heap lavish tribute on her boss.

"I want to kick us off by celebrating our incredible president Joe Biden," said Harris, who was wearing a tan suit and took to the stage to Beyonce's "Freedom."

"We are forever grateful to you."

It was undoubtedly a difficult swan song for Biden, but he insisted he would be the "best volunteer" for Harris's campaign — knowing perhaps that his legacy depends on her beating Trump. But he couldn't quite let go of the presidency, with his speech focusing more on his own record in office than the future under president Harris.

Biden listed his proudest achievements including on the economy and healthcare, but above all for healing the "soul of America" after Trump's time in office and the pro-Trump January 6, 2021 Capitol riot.

"Donald Trump calls America a failing nation," he said. **SEE ALSO P8**



EA SIGNS THREE CONTRACTS TO PUT RESEARCH INTO ACTION



MUSCAT: The Environment Authority (EA) on Tuesday signed three contracts with academic institutions that won research projects funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. – ONA

Efforts to streamline labour market will continue: Authorities

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The Sultanate of Oman will continue to regulate the foreign workforce and streamline the labour market in an effort to employ more citizens, according to the authorities.

Previously, in an attempt to combat illegal labour, the Security and Safety Institution (SSI) announced that it had apprehended nearly 12,000 illegal workers in the past eight months, with 9,700 of them deported for violating labour laws.

The authority has launched awareness campaigns in various Asian languages, including Urdu, Hindi, and Malayalam, with plans to expand to other languages to educate as many people and organisations as possible.

As part of the ongoing



Directives mandate that the Inspection Unit of the Security and Safety Institution conduct supervisory inspections to ensure compliance with government decisions regarding Omanisation percentages and prohibited professions for non-Omani workers

initiative, the Security and Safety Institution is conducting awareness campaigns for individuals and organisations in multiple languages to minimise violations, said Retired Brigadier

General (Rtd) Said bin Sulaiman al Asmi, CEO of SSI. “The dedicated Inspection Unit, established under the SSI to ensure compliance with labour laws, will continue to conduct

inspections and monitor visits to Omanised professions for all activities to uphold governance in line with Omanisation policy,” Al Asmi stated.

The unit has been granted judicial police powers to enhance enforcement capabilities and is focused on enforcing Omanisation rates and limiting expats in certain professions.

“Granting the institution the trust by Royal Decree No 18/2024 provided the status of judicial police to some employees of the inspection unit. This is a major addition to the institution’s work to activate the labour inspection system to ensure that all parties are committed to implementing government decisions related to Omanised professions and the established Omanisation rates,” he added.

Muscat Airport receives 7.5 million passengers

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Muscat International Airport handled over 7.5 million passengers in the first seven months of this year. The number of international passengers increased by nine per cent to 6,949,193 from 6,374,797 in 2023.

At the same time, the number of domestic passengers increased by 8.3 per cent to 621,955 from 574,405 in 2023.

Overall, the number of number passengers using the Muscat International Airport went up to 7,571,148 in 2024 from 6,949,202 in 2023.

Salalah received 827,486 passengers from 5,975 flights at



Muscat International Airport handled over 7.5 million passengers in the first seven months of this year

the end of July 2024, compared to 750,251 passengers in 2023. Of these 392,098 were

international passengers from 3,088 flights and 435,388 passengers from 2,888 flights. It may be noted that

the Sultanate of Oman received over two million visitors in the first half of this year.

Globally, demand grew across all regions as the peak Northern summer travel season began in June.

“With overall capacity growth lagging demand we saw a powerful average load factor of 85 per cent achieved in both domestic and international operations. Operating with such high load factors is both good and challenging. It makes it even more important for all the stakeholders to operate with equal levels of efficiency to minimise delays and get travellers to their destinations on schedule,” The International Air Transport Association (IATA) stated.

MoSD reviews international indicators on women

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) on Tuesday reviewed international and regional reports and indicators on women as part of a three-day workshop in joint cooperation between the General Directorate of Family Development, represented by the Women’s Affairs

Department, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

Wadha bint Salem al Alawi, Director of the Women’s Affairs Department at the Ministry of Social Development, stated that the Social Work Strategy of the Ministry (2016-2025) serves as the foundation for new social policies aimed at women’s development to increase their contribution to the comprehensive development process and enhance their position within the family.

Nadia Khalifa, Regional Adviser for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment at ESCWA, explained that measuring gender equality development in most countries is achieved through various global indicators such as the Global Gender Gap Index, the Global Index on Women, Peace, and Security, and the World Bank’s Special Index on Women, Business, and the Law.



Wadha al Alawi

She noted that these indicators provide insight into countries’ performance worldwide regarding women’s human rights in education, health, economic work, and political participation.

ESCWA has developed a comprehensive project to assist countries in understanding global and gender-related indicators, offering an interactive tool to enhance their performance on global indicators and learn from successful policies of other countries. The workshop includes 10 working sessions covering topics such as the Indicators Simulation Tool for Policymakers in the Arab World, the United Nations Program’s Human Development Index, and the Global Index for Women, Peace, and Motherhood.

The workshop also addresses various aspects of gender equality and assesses obstacles to closing the gender gap in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA



The Social Work Strategy of the Ministry (2016-2025) serves as the foundation for new social policies aimed at women’s development. – ONA

Bird breeding records highlight Ansab wetland’s importance

MUSCAT: Al Ansab Wetland in Muscat has once again proven its critical role in bird conservation and biodiversity with the recent discovery of new breeding records for two significant bird species: the Black-crowned Night Heron and the Indian Pond Heron. These findings underscore the ecological importance of this unique wetland, which serves as a vital sanctuary for numerous bird species.

The Indian Pond Heron, whose breeding has been recorded for the first time in Oman, marks a significant milestone in the country’s ornithological history. The presence of this species

highlights the diverse habitats within Al Ansab Wetland that are conducive to supporting such uncommon breeding activities. Additionally, the Black-crowned Night Heron, already known to breed in southern Oman, has now been documented breeding in the northern region for the first time, further emphasising the wetland’s expanding ecological significance.

Al Ansab Wetland is a crucial site for bird conservation, providing a safe haven for a wide variety of avian species. The recent breeding records are a testament to the wetland’s thriving ecosystem, which is maintained through dedicated conservation efforts.



The wetland’s thriving ecosystem not only supports a wide array of bird species but also plays a crucial role in maintaining the balance of nature. – ONA

These findings also bring attention to the importance of ongoing preservation initiatives to ensure that Al Ansab Wetland remains a sanctuary for birds and a natural

treasure for Oman. “The discovery of these new breeding records is a reminder of how essential it is to protect and preserve our wetlands,” said

Manal al Kindi, Head of Wetland from Nama Water Services, the company responsible for managing the site. “Al Ansab Wetland is not just a local treasure but a globally significant habitat that supports a wide range of bird species. These records highlight the wetland’s role in maintaining biodiversity and the need for continued conservation efforts.” Al Ansab Wetland has long been recognised as a key site for biodiversity, attracting bird watchers, researchers, and nature enthusiasts from around the world. The recent discoveries reinforce the importance of protecting such habitats to

ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy and learn from these unique ecosystems. Conservationists are calling for sustained efforts to safeguard Al Ansab Wetland, which remains a critical resource for the region’s natural heritage.

With the new breeding records for the Indian Pond Heron and the Black-crowned Night Heron, Al Ansab Wetland continues to stand out as a beacon of biodiversity in the Arabian Peninsula. The wetland’s thriving ecosystem not only supports a wide array of bird species but also plays a crucial role in maintaining the balance of nature in the region. — ONA



Empowering people with disabilities in focus at ‘Azm’ exhibition

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 20

The ‘Azm’ exhibition, which showcases efforts to integrate and empower individuals with disabilities in the Omani society, was launched on Tuesday under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality.

The Directorate-General for Social Development in Dhofar Governorate is hosting the exhibition at the Salalah Grand Mall. This display is not just another event on the Khareef Dhofar Season calendar; it symbolises the Omani government’s commitment to fostering inclusivity and providing equal opportunities for all citizens.

The exhibition features professional rehabilitation products created by individuals with disabilities, highlighting their talents, skills and determination. It provides these individuals with an opportunity to showcase their capabilities and allows the broader community to recognise and appreciate the value they bring to society.

This event is a testament to the



The exhibition features professional rehabilitation products created by individuals with disabilities, highlighting their talents, skills and determination

ongoing efforts of the Ministry of Social Development and other key stakeholders to promote the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities. By offering a platform for these individuals to present their work, the ‘Azm’ exhibition challenges stereotypes and breaks down barriers that often marginalise people with disabilities. It aims to inspire not only the participants but also the audience, encouraging a shift in perspective that acknowledges the abilities and potential of every individual, regardless of physical or mental challenges.

Mohammed al Kalbani, Director-General of Social

Development in the Dhofar Governorate, told the *Observer* that one of the primary objectives of the Ministry of Social Development within the five-year plan is to enhance the empowerment of persons with disabilities in the field of vocational rehabilitation. He explained that the exhibition aims to achieve this goal by showcasing products made by persons with disabilities through vocational rehabilitation programmes.

Furthermore, the timing of the exhibition during the Khareef Dhofar Season, a season that attracts thousands of visitors to the governorate, underscores the

importance of inclusivity in all aspects of society. The Khareef Dhofar Season, known for its lush monsoon rains and vibrant cultural events, serves as an ideal backdrop for this exhibition, blending the celebration of natural beauty with the celebration of human potential.

The ‘Azm’ exhibition also tells stories — stories of perseverance, creativity and the unyielding human spirit.

Each product on display is the result of countless hours of hard work, overcoming obstacles and pushing the boundaries of what is possible. These are stories that deserve to be told, shared and celebrated.

As the exhibition opens its doors, it invites everyone to take part in a journey of discovery and learning. It calls on the community to support and uplift its members, recognising that the strength of a society lies in its ability to embrace diversity and promote equality.

In doing so, the ‘Azm’ exhibition contributes to the larger narrative of building a more inclusive and compassionate Oman.

HR forum discusses psychological safety, mental health



The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. – ONA

SALALAH: A two-day forum on psychological safety and mental health in the work environment kicked off in Salalah.

The forum is organised by the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with the Omani Society for Human Resources Management (OSHRM).

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

The forum aims to raise public awareness about the importance of psychological safety and mental health in the workplace and provide a platform for exchanging knowledge and

expertise on how to apply new techniques to support workers in dealing with psychological challenges.

Through working papers and discussion panels, the forum explores basics of psychological safety in the work environment, related challenges, as well as the process of managing employee performance, online work and its impact on employee well-being.

The forum also discusses the role of leadership in inspiring a healthy work environment for employees and the significance of psychological safety on job satisfaction and institution’s productivity.

— ONA

OMAN'S VEHICLE SPARE PART IMPORTS STAND AT RO 44M

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman’s total imports of vehicle spare parts by the end of the first five months of this year 2024 declined 11.8 per cent to RO 44,695,140 as against RO 50,683,871 during the corresponding period in 2023, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) topped the list of countries supplying vehicle spare parts to Oman as at the end of May 2024, to the tune of RO 19,480,336. Japan occupied second place (RO 13,728,648), followed by India (RO 2,156,903), Thailand (RO 1,999,484) and China (RO 1,669,950).

Yet, the total value of Oman’s exports of vehicle spare parts by the end of May 2024 grew by 27.04 per cent to RO 9,868,483, compared to RO 7,767,713 in the corresponding period in 2023, according to the NCSI.

The total weight of vehicle spare part exports from Oman during the first five months of 2024 stood at 14,327,313 kilogrammes, compared to



10,244,585 kilogrammes during the corresponding by the corresponding period in 2023.

The Czech Republic topped the list of countries importing vehicle spare parts from Oman by the end of May of 2024 (to the tune of RO 4,098,425), followed by the United States of Mexico (RO 2,066,158), the Netherlands (RO 1,193,587), the United States of America (RO 709,888) and the United Arab Emirates (RO 510,330). However, the value of vehicle spare part re-exports from Oman as at the end of May 2024 dropped 65.66 per cent to RO 11,125,786 as against the same re-exports during the corresponding period in 2023 (RO 32,396,522).

The total weights of vehicle spare parts that were re-exported from Oman during the first

five months of 2024 stood at 2,646,405 kilogrammes, compared to 5,286,371 kilogrammes at the end of May 2023.

The UAE topped the list of countries to which vehicle spare parts were re-exported from Oman by the end of May 2024 (Value: RO 7,282,841), followed by Turkiye (RO 2,170,831), the United Kingdom (RO 636,822), the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (RO 132,236), and the United States of America (RO 128,680).

As many as 1,527 establishments operated in the sale of vehicle spare parts in Oman by the end of April of 2024, among them 856 operated in the business of selling new spare parts for vehicles and 671 in the retail sale of used spare parts. — ONA

TRA launches drive to combat fraud

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), in cooperation with the Royal Oman Police (ROP), the Electronic Defence Centre, and licensed telecommunications companies, launched a campaign to reduce electronic fraud and combat the financial and psychological damages caused to the victims.

The campaign focuses through various awareness messages on



The implementation of the campaign is part of TRA’s efforts to protect the rights of beneficiaries

clarifying the methods and means of potential fraud and how to

avoid it. Multiple types of fraud include fake and misleading company advertisements, the risk of sharing the OTPs, and impersonation via social media platforms. The implementation of this campaign is part of TRA’s efforts to protect the rights of beneficiaries by identifying potential fraudulent practices while at the same time supporting safe digital transformation.

Mwasalat to install real-time passenger information screens

MUSCAT: The Public Transport Company, Mwasalat, said it plans to install Real Time Passenger Information Screens (RTPI) at selected bus stations and standalone bus stops.

It has floated a tender for the supply and installation of RTPI, including backend solutions with support and maintenance.

The last date for document distribution is August 28. Tenders

should be submitted online. Currently, passengers can track the estimated arrival time of their buses via mobile applications. The company has been working on improving its infrastructure and expanding its transport network to meet the increasing needs of passengers.

RTPI digital screens are powered by advanced technology and connected to a central system

that receives real time data from the bus, including information about locations, arrival times and service disruptions. The data is then processed and displayed on the digital screens at bus stops. The screens can be designed to show a wide range of information, including bus arrival times, service alerts, weather updates and even advertisements.

MoHT’s promotional campaign in India targets weddings

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) has launched the first mobile promotional workshops in the Indian capital, New Delhi, to introduce and promote the tourism components of the Sultanate of Oman.

The goal is to showcase Oman’s tourist attractions, its picturesque nature, and promote the unique and unforgettable experiences that make Oman a must-visit destination.

Additionally, the campaign aims to highlight various types of tourism such as weddings, events,

conferences and exhibitions, as well as provide information on the latest developments in Oman’s tourism sector and upcoming offers to make exploring the Sultanate of Oman more appealing.

These promotional workshops will take place in four major cities in India (New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore) from August 20 to 28, with the participation of 18 representatives from tourism companies and hotel establishments, along with key partners in the Indian tourism sector including travel agencies and tour operators.

Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry



The promotional workshops will take place in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore from August 20 to 28

of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, stated that the workshops in New Delhi and other Indian cities aim to introduce major Indian tourism companies to

Oman’s tourism capabilities and strengthen relations hips between tourism operators in Oman and India. India is a significant source of tourism to Oman, with over

600,000 visitors in 2023, a number expected to rise in 2024.

The Sultanate of Oman is renowned for its natural beauty and cultural heritage, attracting tourists from all over the world. The focus now is on attracting more travellers to experience the luxurious hospitality in Oman.

The choice of the four Indian cities for the promotional workshops follows the success of previous campaigns in targeted tourism markets worldwide. Efforts will continue to enhance tourism to Oman through intensive promotional programmes.

Discussions during the promotional campaign included

facilities for Indian visitors in Oman, growth in Indian tourists visiting Oman, tourism projects, and opportunities available in the sector. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is working to strengthen Oman’s position in tourism markets through participation in prominent tourism events globally.

Said al Hadhrami, Regional Director of Marketing and Sales at the Atana Hotels Group, emphasised the importance of the ministry’s efforts in enhancing the travel market and tourism sector, particularly focusing on conference and wedding tourism to attract Indian tourists.



GOING BACK TO SCHOOL ... SHOP SMART



RECALL DATE: 21-08-2024

Recall

KIA
Telluride (ON)

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production*	#Number of Affected Commodities
Telluride (ON)	Jan 2019 - Sept 2023	504

*Not all vehicles in this production period, are affected.
#Subject to revision, based on the information received from the manufacturer, from time to time.

Recall consequence

In some of the affected vehicles Telluride (ON) for the years 2019-2023 which were produced within the specified production date range contained in the Technical Services Bulletin. The intermediate shaft and the right front drive shaft may not fully installed due to improper assembly suspected by the supplier. Over time, this partial installation leads to damage and cracks in the intermediate shaft, these cracks leads to unintentional movement of the vehicle while parking if the parking brake is not engaged. The estimated error percentage is 1%, however, Kia conducts this recall as a precautionary measure to avoid risks.

Recall Action

Verify affected vehicles as per the VIN list and Upgrade the electronic parking brake control unit software version as per the TSB. All affected vehicles will be inspected and repaired at no expense to the vehicle owner.

To check the serial Numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>



Contact details: Toll free - 80073222
Working days: Sunday - Thursday
Working Time: 8.30 - 17.30 hrs.



BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

WITH back-to-school season approaching, being prepared and planning ahead by saving and being thrifty are crucial skills

for smart shopping. This helps avoid large and unexpected financial burdens, especially since the back-to-school season follows other events that strain the family budget, such as the holidays and summer vacation.

Financial experts point out that education-related expenses can be divided into two categories: non-recurring expenses like stationery and school bags, and recurring expenses such as school fees.

When preparing for school, it is important to create a summary list of tuition fees, consider the difference between educational vouchers and what the family needs to pay, account for additional fees, and compare different schools based on quality, costs, and benefits.

Parents can make wise purchases by choosing stores that offer school supplies at

lower prices than big retailers, buying basic stationery items like pencils and notebooks in bulk, and sharing items like geometry boxes among their children.

Encouraging children to save and only buy necessary supplies is also important.

Tips for purchasing school supplies include planning ahead of the back-to-school season to

anticipate price increases, taking inventory of existing school supplies, creating a shopping list with the family to ensure all needed items are purchased efficiently, and buying the right quantities of essentials like pencils, erasers, and notebooks to avoid frequent trips to the store.

Buying school uniforms early and choosing bags with comfortable straps are also recommended.

During the back-to-school season, families and students have different preferences. Some prefer shopping in person at

stores and libraries, while others prefer online shopping from home.

Parents can take advantage of online deals. Smart retailers cater to this by offering their products in-store, online, on social media, and through promotional messages and emails.

SHOPPING TIPS

CREATE A BACK-TO-SCHOOL BUDGET

CHECK OUT SCHOOL SUPPLY OFFERS

PRIORITISE FUNCTION OVER FASHION

TEAM UP FOR BULK PURCHASES

DON'T OVERDO IT ON SUPPLIES



‘Summer of Talents’ workshop engages children with writing skills

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

The Ministry of Information (MoI) launched the third workshop of the ‘Summer of Talents’ programme marking the beginning of the activities for this year, with a packed schedule that included presentations by the Editorial Director of *Nizwa Magazine*.

The programme is being

organised by the Cultural Library of the General-Directorate of Publications and Artistic Works of the Ministry of Information, in collaboration with the *Observer* newspaper.

It involves the participation of eight children aged 13 to 16 years old and will run for three days.

The workshop features a variety of activities such as writing short stories, drawing and visits to digital television studios.



The workshop features a variety of activities such as writing short stories, drawing and visits to digital television studios

On the first day, activities were led by *Nizwa Magazine*’s Editorial Director, Huda al Jahwari. The children engaged in activities focused on writing short stories, memory exercises and midbrain activation. They also took a practical test on recognising colours and shapes, as well as learning the basics of story writing.

Iman al Alawi conducted a workshop on pencil drawing, teaching the children about

colour frequencies and drawing techniques. The story-writing activities will continue on the next day, where the children will delve into composing story details and discussing them. They will also learn how to draw cartoon characters.

The third and final day will include a visit to television studios, where the children will have the opportunity to participate in various workshops.



COMOROS DELEGATION VISITS MILITARY TECHNOLOGICAL COLLEGE

MUSCAT: General Youssouf Idjihadi, Chief of Defence Staff of the Union of the Comoros and his accompanying delegation on Tuesday visited the Military Technological College (MTC).

Upon their arrival, members of the Comorian delegation were greeted by Air

Commodore Eng Mohammed bin Aziz al Siyabi, Dean of the college. Members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the college’s educational and technical specialisations.

They also toured the Military Technological College’s departments and service facilities. — **ONA**



The delegation toured the Military Technological College’s departments and service facilities. — **ONA**

Blueprint to develop Muttrah fish market, working conditions on anvil

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Plans to develop the Muttrah fish market and improve working conditions for the fishermen are currently underway, with recent research conducted by the office of the Wali of the Wilayat of Muttrah.

A meeting was recently held under the auspices of Abdulhameed bin Abdulrahman al Kharousi, deputy wali of the wilayat, to discuss the working conditions of the fishermen in Muttrah Fish Market and ways to develop the market.

The meeting was attended by a member of the municipal council representing the wilayat, representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Muscat Municipality officials in Muttrah, and members of the Sea Traditions Committee.

During the meeting, the difficulties facing fishermen and workers in the fish market were discussed, and appropriate solutions were sought to simplify them. Additionally, establishing a control system for fish vendors, arranging and unifying the



The new fish market, which was opened in 2018, has become the centrepiece of the city and a focal point for the community

fishing platforms, and proposing to unify the fish cutting workers’ uniforms were also reviewed.

The members urged the implementation of market working systems and adhering to its working hours.

To enhance community participation, it was suggested that the Sea Traditions Committee members meet with fishermen and cutters’ representatives to discuss proposals that would increase the market’s performance

and effectiveness.

“These steps aim to develop the work environment in the fish market in Muttrah and improve its workers’ conditions. It will also enhance the fisheries sector’s position in the GDP of the Sultanate of Oman,” said Abdulhameed bin Abdulrahman al Kharousi.

The new fish market, which replaced the existing 1960s building with more modern trading spaces, was opened

in 2018 and has become the centrepiece of the city and a focal point for the community.

Designed by Snøhetta, with Buro Happold providing multidisciplinary services for this landmark development, the market’s distinctive architecture features a curved wall on the northern spine and was constructed from rammed earth. The shape of the building mirrors the curve of the corniche and wider bay area.

Conference looks at advances in treatment of breast cancer

MUSCAT: HCG Hospital, Mumbai, India, in association with Muscat Family Physicians Group and Global Treatment Services, conducted an international medical conference on advances in the surgical treatment of breast cancer and the role of medical oncology recently. The conference was attended by approximately 60 distinguished practicing doctors from Oman, including breast cancer specialists, surgeons, gynaecologists, internists, and family physicians from both government and private health establishments.



Skills forum looks at research skills opportunities for graduates

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

The activities of the Third Research Skills Forum, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) in partnership with the Arab Open University, are ongoing and set to conclude on August 22.

The forum, targeting Omani postgraduate students, consists of training sessions and practical workshops covering various topics related to research skills for qualitative research.

The forum provides a valuable opportunity for graduate students to acquire the necessary research skills for success in their scientific careers. It also facilitates the

exchange of experiences and knowledge among graduate students from different universities.

The forum aims to offer researchers and graduate students a comprehensive understanding of the basic concepts of qualitative research, including its philosophy, principles, and techniques.

It helps them develop critical and analytical thinking skills essential for formulating research questions, studying hypotheses, and analysing data. Additionally, it encourages creative thinking in data collection and analysis methods, as well as effective communication of research results for the benefit of human knowledge.

The third edition of the



The forum provides a valuable opportunity for graduate students to acquire the necessary research skills

forum focuses on qualitative research, which offers a profound insight into social and human phenomena. It emphasises understanding the meaning and interpretation of individual and collective experiences. Qualitative researchers are passionate about

utilising various methods to gather data, such as observation, participation, and listening to human stories and experiences.

A participant in the workshops mentioned that they were not just educational sessions but interactive platforms that allowed

participants to ask questions and learn from others’ experiences. This enhances researchers’ ability to apply their newfound knowledge in future research endeavours.

Moreover, it fosters networking and communication among researchers from different educational institutions, paving the way for research collaborations and partnerships that advance scientific research.

The commendable efforts of the Arab Open University, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation, in organising this forum deserve recognition. They have successfully created a platform that brings together researchers and experts in

qualitative research, contributing to the development of a cohesive research community capable of staying abreast of global scientific advancements.

The forum comprises training sessions and practical courses covering various topics related to research skills for qualitative research.

In the first week, the forum addressed issues such as scientific research problems, information collection, literature review in qualitative research, and practical exercises on formulating qualitative research problems, collecting information, reviewing literature, hypotheses, and variables in qualitative research design, population, and sample selection.



Israel strikes Gaza school shelter



Palestinians react after an Israeli strike on a school, housing displaced Palestinians, in the Rimal neighbourhood. – AFP

GAZA: Gaza’s civil defence agency said an Israeli strike on a school-turned-shelter killed at least 12 people on Tuesday, while the Israeli military said it struck a Hamas command centre.

“Our crews retrieved 12 martyrs from the Mustafa Hafiz school, which was bombed by the Israeli occupation west of Gaza City,” agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said.

Thousands of displaced Palestinians had sought refuge in the school, he said, amid the ongoing brutal war in the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military said the school was targeted because it housed a command-and-control centre. “Hamas used the command-and-control centre to plan and execute attacks against IDF (Israeli army) troops and the State of Israel,” the military

Thousands of displaced Palestinians had sought refuge in the school, amid the ongoing brutal war in the Gaza Strip

said in a statement. It said it carried out a “precise strike on gunmen who were operating” inside the school.

Bassal had earlier given a toll of seven dead and 15 wounded in the strike, which he said had hit the second floor of the school building. The latest death toll figure could not be independently verified.

Photos showed the school reduced to rubble, with sores of Palestinian men and women, many holding children, fleeing the site after the strike.

In recent weeks, the Israeli military has struck several schools across Gaza, primarily in Gaza City, accusing them of housing Hamas command centres, which the Palestinian group denies.

Earlier this month, the military had struck Al Tabieen School in Gaza City, which according to the civil defence agency killed 93 Palestinians, while the military said 31 militants died.

Tens of thousands of displaced people have taken refuge in schools since the war broke out on October 7 after Palestinian groups attacked southern Israel.

Israel’s retaliatory military offensive has killed at least 40,173 people in Gaza, according to the territory’s health ministry.

Most of the dead in Gaza are women and children, according to the UN human rights office.

Meanwhile, top US diplomat Antony Blinken was in Egypt on Tuesday for talks on a Gaza ceasefire after saying Israel had accepted a US “bridging proposal” for a deal and urging Hamas to do the same.

Blinken, on his ninth visit to the Middle East, flew to El Alamein, the Mediterranean city famous for a World War II battle, and began talks with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el Sisi at his summer palace.

Afterwards, he will head to a meeting with Qatar’s emir, Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, in Doha.

Both Egypt and Qatar are working alongside the United States to broker a truce in the 10-month Gaza conflict. — AFP

India’s top court orders medical safety task force

NEW DELHI: India’s Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered a national task force to examine how to bolster security for healthcare workers after the “horrific” murder of a doctor sparked medical strikes and furious protests.

The discovery of the 31-year-old doctor’s body at a state-run hospital in the eastern city of Kolkata on August 9 has stoked nationwide anger at the chronic issue of violence.

Doctors’ associations from government-run hospitals in many cities across India have launched strikes that cut non-essential services, with protests in their second week.

Protesters marched through Kolkata on Tuesday, holding up signs demanding “justice”, while the country’s top court issued orders in the capital New Delhi.

“The brutality of the physical assault and the nature of the crime have shocked the conscience of the nation,” the three-judge bench said in its order, calling the details “horrific”.

Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud read out the order, which called for the formation of a “national task force” of top doctors to prepare a plan to prevent violence in healthcare

facilities and draw up an “enforceable national protocol” for safe working conditions. The court said it had been forced to step in as the issue was of national concern. “With the involvement of systemic issues for healthcare across the nation, this court has had to intervene,” it added.

“The lack of institutional safety norms at medical establishments, against both violence and physical violence against medical professionals, is a matter of serious concern,” the court order read.

“With few or no protective systems to ensure their safety, medical professionals have become vulnerable to violence,” it added, highlighting a lack of CCTV cameras and a failure to screen visitors to hospitals for weapons. “Lack of security personnel in medical care units is more of a norm than an exception,” it said.

Many of the protests have been led by doctors and other healthcare workers but have also been joined by tens of thousands of ordinary Indians demanding action. Doctors have demanded the implementation of the Central Protection Act, a bill to protect healthcare workers from violence. — AFP



Doctors shout slogans during a protest at a hospital in Kolkata. – Reuters

China’s Xi promises stronger Fiji ties in world of turmoil

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged to strengthen ties with Fiji in a world beset with “turmoil” as he met the Pacific island’s Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka in Beijing on Tuesday.

China has stepped up its courtship of South Pacific nations in recent years, triggering concern among Western powers — particularly the United States and Australia — that have historically held sway over the region.

Rabuka met Xi in Beijing’s Great Hall of the People after touring the length and breadth of

China for more than a week.

“Our two countries have always supported and helped each other as good friends, good partners, and have become a model of being equals and friendly cooperation between countries large and small,” Xi told Rabuka.

He said Beijing was keen to “promote the building of a China-Fiji community with a shared future in a world of turmoil and chaos, and to bring more benefits to our people”.

Xi also praised Fiji’s recent sporting successes in rugby, for



Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka (2nd L) and Chinese President Xi Jinping (R) attend a meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. – AFP

which it won a silver medal at the Paris Olympics last month.

Rabuka thanked the Chinese leader, telling Xi that “Fiji stands ready to send rugby coaches and players to come to China to play

with Chinese teams”.

He also hailed Xi’s meeting last year with US President Joe Biden in San Francisco, where he said “you might have achieved peace for the world”.

Rabuka praised Fiji’s warming ties with Beijing while saying he preferred to deal with democratic “traditional friends” on security.

Fiji and China signed a series of bilateral deals on trade, military aid, infrastructure and Chinese-language education during Rabuka’s trip, according to statements by both governments.

Premier Li Qiang pledged at a

meeting with Rabuka on Sunday to boost imports from Fiji and encourage Chinese investment there, according to a Chinese government readout.

Rabuka also hailed Beijing’s “tailor-made innovative poverty alleviation strategies” during a trip to Ningde city in eastern China’s Fujian province.

The Fijian premier last met Xi at an Asia-Pacific economic summit in San Francisco last year, when the Chinese leader committed to helping Fiji safeguard its “security and sovereignty”. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

TOKYO

Japan ruling party to choose PM on Sept 27

Japan’s ruling party said it will select a new leader — and by extension the likely next prime minister — on September 27. The announcement follows current Prime Minister Fumio Kishida’s shock decision last week to step down next month after polls showed plummeting approval ratings for his government.

Campaigning to become the next Liberal Democratic Party president will begin on September 12 with a vote two weeks later, an internal committee de-



cided early on Tuesday, a party official said. The 67-year-old Kishida has seen his and his party’s poll ratings slide sharply in response to rising prices and several scandals. — AFP

HANOI

Thousands cut off from school by Vietnam floods

Thousands of children in northern Vietnam will struggle to return to school after flash floods and landslides damaged homes, destroyed crops and cut off several communities in the region, a charity warned on Tuesday. Nearly 29,000 houses have been damaged and 90,000 hectares of crops destroyed.

In Son La province, about 1.3 million people have been affected, according to Save the Children, who said floods had left the countryside strewn with broken



bridges and heavily damaged roads. Eleven people have died in the area, and around 2,670 houses and 29 school buildings were damaged, according to Vietnam’s disaster officials. — AFP

NAIROBI

Kenya serial killer suspect escapes from police

Red-faced Kenyan police on Tuesday arrested eight of their own officers and launched a manhunt after a man accused of murdering and dismembering 42 women escaped from a Nairobi police cell along with a dozen other people.

The escapees include Collins Jumaisi, 33, described by police as a “vampire, a psychopath”, who was arrested last month. “Our preliminary investigations indicate that the escape was aided by insiders,” acting national po-



lice chief Gilbert Masengeli said in a statement. Police said they discovered the breakout when officers made a routine visit to the cells at around 5 am to serve the prisoners breakfast. — AFP



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In brief

WASHINGTON



US SANCTIONS EX-HAITI PRESIDENT FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING

The US Treasury Department unveiled sanctions against former Haitian president Michel Martelly on Tuesday for trafficking drugs destined for the United States.

The actions taken by Washington echo similar moves from the Canadian government, which imposed sanctions in 2022 against Martelly and two ex-prime ministers.

Martelly “abused his influence to facilitate the trafficking of dangerous drugs, including cocaine, destined for the United States,” the US Treasury said in a statement. He was also involved in “laundering of illicit drug proceeds,” the statement continued. — AFP

CARACAS



VENEZUELA OPPN CANDIDATE ASKS MADURO TO ‘STEP ASIDE’

Venezuelan opposition presidential candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, who has claimed he defeated Nicolas Maduro in last month’s election, said he was ready to negotiate a transition — and asked the incumbent to “step aside.”

“Mr. Nicolas Maduro, respect what all Venezuelans have decided... You and your government should step aside... I am ready for dialogue,” Gonzalez Urrutia said. “Every day that you hinder the democratic transition, Venezuelans suffer from a country in crisis, and without freedom. Clinging to power only makes the suffering of our people worse.” — AFP

SYDNEY



WWII MUNITIONS FOUND NEAR SOLOMON ISLANDS SCHOOL

Workers at a school in Solomon Islands discovered a buried stockpile of World War II munitions as they “dug a hole for sewage,” police said. More than 200 rust-caked projectiles — which once belonged to US troops — have been dug up and removed after they were found near a school.

Inspector Clifford Tunuki said the long-hidden weapons cache had been ferried away and was now “waiting for safe destruction”. “The removal came about when the school discovered the stockpile of US projectiles in front of a staff house when they dug a hole for sewage,” police added. — AFP

Russia thwarts Ukrainian attacks in Kursk

MOSCOW: Russia’s military said on Tuesday its forces had thwarted attempted Ukrainian attacks on four settlements in its western Kursk region and taken control of what it described as the strategic logistics hub of Niu-York in eastern Ukraine.

The capture of Niu-York, if confirmed by Ukraine, would mark another advance in Moscow’s grinding drive to capture the entire Donetsk region even as it fights to end the two-week-old Ukrainian incursion in the Kursk region.

Ukraine says it has captured more than 1,250 sq km of Russian territory, including 92 settlements, since bursting across the border on August 6 in one of its most audacious and unexpected counter-attacks of the war.

“Reconnaissance and search operations continue to identify and destroy enemy sabotage groups in clumps of forest that were trying to penetrate deep into Russian territory,” the defence ministry said in a statement.

Russian warplanes had also struck concentrations of Ukrainian manpower and hardware on the Ukrainian side of the border, it said.

It said the attempted Ukrainian assaults inside Kursk were near the settlements of Borki, Korenevo, Kremyanoye and Russkaya Kanapelka.

“In the Kursk region, the tense situation continues along the entire front line. The enemy attacks with columns of armoured vehicles in various areas, coming under fire from armoured vehicles of the Russian Armed Forces and aviation,” wrote Rybar, a popular Russian



A woman walks amid debris from her house hit by shelling, in Makiivka (Makeyevka) in the Donetsk region, Ukraine. — Reuters

Ukraine says it has captured more than 1,250 sq km of Russian territory, including 92 settlements, since bursting across the border

military blogger.

The incursion has boosted Ukrainian morale, and Kyiv

believes the seizure of territory and Russian prisoners has strengthened its hand in any potential negotiation.

But independent military analysts say Kyiv has gambled by pulling some of its most effective combat units away from the defence of front lines in eastern Ukraine, where Russia is continuing to advance.

There was no immediate confirmation by Ukraine

that Niu-York was in Russian hands. Ukraine’s General Staff acknowledged Russian troops were attacking near Niu-York but said Ukrainian forces were giving them “a worthy rebuff”.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said separately that the situation was “difficult” on Ukraine’s eastern front line, near the strategic logistics hub of Pokrovsk and also close to the city of Toretsk.

Ukraine’s General Staff said that 14 combat clashes had been reported in the Toretsk area and 34 in the Pokrovsk sector since the start of the day. Ukrainian officials said Russia had also hit energy infrastructure in northern Ukraine in an overnight missile and drone attack and caused a huge fire in the west of the country, resulting in an increase in chlorine levels in the air.

— Reuters

King Charles III visits UK town where riots sparked

SOUTHPORT: King Charles III on Tuesday visited the town in northwest England where a devastating knife attack that killed three young girls sparked nationwide anti-immigration riots.

The 75-year-old monarch inspected a vast sea of floral tributes to the victims and will also meet children who survived the attack in the seaside town of Southport.

Buckingham Palace said he wanted to thank “frontline emergency staff for their ongoing work serving local people”.

Although the monarch conveyed his condolences to the families of the three girls killed, he did not comment on the unrest until nearly two weeks later.

But in calls with Prime Minister Keir Starmer and police chiefs, the king later said he had been “greatly encouraged” by the reaction “that countered the aggression and criminality from a few with the compassion and resilience of the many”.

Footage showed the king waving to people as he walked through the town centre. He was later set to meet regional leaders, representatives from the emergency services and others.

They will include local groups and faith leaders impacted by the violent disorder which hit Southport the day after the July



Britain’s King Charles gestures, as he makes a community visit, outside the Town Hall in Southport, Britain. — Reuters

29 mass stabbing.

Charles was also due to meet privately with some of those caught up in the knife attack, which claimed the lives of three young girls, aged six, seven and nine, and injured 10 others, eight of them also children.

The meeting was to include some of the surviving children who were present at the community centre, as well as their families.

The children were attending a Taylor Swift-themed dance class when an assailant entered the building and began attacking them. Axel Rudakubana, who was aged 17 at the time, has been charged with murder and

attempted murder over the stabbing spree.

The king eventually praised British police and emergency services “for all they are doing to restore peace in those areas that have been affected by violent disorder”.

He hoped the “shared values of mutual respect and understanding will continue to strengthen and unite the nation”, a Buckingham Palace spokesperson had said.

The riots have led to more than a thousand arrests and hundreds of convictions after Prime Minister Starmer vowed those who participated would be quickly called to account. — AFP

Divers continue search Sicily yacht wreck

PORTICELLO: Divers spent a second day Tuesday searching for six people believed trapped when a luxury yacht sank off the Italian island of Sicily, including a British tech tycoon, colleagues and his teenage daughter.

The 56-metre sailing yacht “Bayesian” was anchored some 700 metres from port with 10 crew and 12 passengers on board when it was struck by a waterspout, a sort of mini tornado, before dawn on Monday.

Fifteen people, including a mother and her one-year-old baby, were rescued but the body of one man — reported to be the yacht’s chef — was found.

Among the six missing were UK tech entrepreneur and investor Mike Lynch and his 18-year-old daughter Hannah, and Jonathan Bloomer, the chair of Morgan Stanley International, and his wife Judy.

The passengers were guests of Lynch — sometimes referred to as the UK’s answer to Bill

Gates — celebrating his recent acquittal in a massive US fraud case.

Experts and Italy’s coastguard described the rapid sinking of the superyacht as an “extraordinary” event.

The search was made difficult by the fact the yacht remains largely intact, emergency services said.

The British-flagged boat is lying 50 metres below the surface, with specialist divers taking one minute to get down to the wreck, and another minute to get back. They are restricted to 12 minutes in total each dive because of the water pressure, according to Luca Cari, spokesman for the fire service.

Lynch’s wife Angela Bacares was among those rescued, according to Salvo Cocina, head of Sicily’s Civil Protection Agency.

Divers trained to work in tight spaces were flown in from Rome and Sardinia to help join the Sicilian search. — AFP



Divers of the Vigili del Fuoco, the Italian Corps. of Firefighters, return to Porticello on a small boat. — AFP

‘Agri-influencers’ to shake up key sector



Alice Chancellor

The writer is West Africa Correspondent in Dakar for AFP

Crouched next to a pile of fresh mangoes, Senegalese farmer Mame Abdou Diop shoots a TikTok clip hoping it will be a hit with his burgeoning social media following.

Diop, 30, is part of a new wave of agricultural entrepreneurs in the West African nation embracing online platforms to boost sales, share knowledge and carve their own path in a key economic sector.

Since 2020, Diop has run a small business managing plots of land and growing a range of crops from watermelon and mangoes to onions and beans.

But since launching on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and LinkedIn two years ago, he has seen profits soar and his client base more than double.

“I used to make videos for fun, I didn’t even know what kind of impact social media would have,” said Diop, who has amassed nearly 14,000 TikTok followers and 2,000 on Instagram.

But he soon realised the videos were “very good marketing,” he said in the village of Gadiaga, east of the capital Dakar. Agriculture represents roughly 16 per cent of Senegal’s GDP, but the industry suffers

from chronic underperformance.

The new government has prioritised attaining food sovereignty, with the aim of creating more jobs in a country plagued by youth unemployment.

Senegal imports almost 70 per cent of its food requirements, despite 60 per cent of the labour force growing food crops, according to the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Low productivity is due to a number of factors including a lack of quality infrastructure and technical support as well as poorly organised value chains and crop processing.

For Senegal’s young and increasingly urban, tech-savvy population, social media offers an opportunity for innovation. Diop films himself in reels and adds his phone number to advertise his mangoes, which are sold directly to local businesses or exporters shipping to Europe or Morocco.

Buyers contact Diop by text or through social platforms, and after a price is agreed, the crops are delivered directly.

He said social media allows him to bypass costly or inefficient middlemen, reduce the price and pick, process and sell his mangoes in a day.

SENEGAL IMPORTS ALMOST 70 PER CENT OF ITS FOOD REQUIREMENTS, DESPITE 60 PER CENT OF THE LABOUR FORCE GROWING FOOD CROPS

N’Diaye Pape, 26, a fruit juice seller in Dakar, found Diop while scrolling on Instagram and appreciates the speed of his service. “I saw the quality. So I contacted them and they delivered on time,” he said.

Social media also allows farmers to share and monetise technical expertise, said Helene Smertnik from research firm Caribou Digital, which studied the use of social media in Senegalese agriculture in partnership with the MasterCard Foundation.

“Quite a number of people become consultants and start making a decent amount of money,” she explained. Using a stick to transplant a row of chillies at a farm, 27-year-old Nogaye Sene explained how Instagram had helped her fledgling consultancy take off.

“I started social networking in September... to get more visibility and to find people,” she said.

“They contact me directly on Instagram. So I give them my number, then I visit their fields and now I help them with production,” she added.

Sene, who describes herself as an agri-influencer, manages plots for around a dozen clients, helping with land development, market garden production and the planting of fruit trees.

Agony mounts for patients in India doctors’ strike

ABHAYA SRIVASTAVA

In a New Delhi pedestrian subway, patients waiting for treatment at nearby hospitals line the ground as queues grow with Indian doctors protesting the abuse and murder of a colleague.

Oresa Khatoon dreads her son might die without treatment, with doctors from government-run hospitals entering a second week of strikes withholding non-essential services — and demanding justice for their comrade and better security for themselves.

Khatoon, 65, has been anxiously waiting for the past ten days for an appointment at a top state-run hospital, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

“His condition is not good at all,” Khatoon said, casting a worried glance at her 30-year-old son, suffering from a brain tumour and bed-ridden for the last four years.

“I don’t know if this strike is for the good or bad. All I fear is that my son will die by the time the (appointment) date will come.”

Patients often queue in the underpass, providing shelter from blazing heat or torrential monsoon rains while braving marathon queues to see a doctor -- but the strike has made the situation worse.

Protests erupted after the 31-year-old doctor’s body was discovered at a state-run hospital in the eastern city of Kolkata on August 9.

One man, who worked at the hospital helping people navigate busy queues, has been detained.

Doctors’ associations from government-run hospitals in many cities across India have launched strikes, cutting non-essential services. Tens of thousands of ordinary Indians have also joined the protests, channelling anger at the chronic issue of violence against women.

But the protests have hit hard patients like Khatoon seeking free treatment in government-run hospitals because they are too poor to pay for private healthcare.

Sarita Devi, from the northern Uttar Pradesh state, is distraught because her husband, a daily wage labourer, has been unable to seek treatment for a cancerous tumour in his leg.

“The doctor is not responding to phone calls,” 35-year-old Devi said, breaking into tears.

“We are running from pillar to post. He cries in pain in the night, but I am helpless.”

Doctors have also been demanding the implementation of the Central Protection Act, a bill to protect healthcare workers from violence.

Rosy Khatoon, whose husband suffers from stomach cancer, feels the current strike is “unfair” for the poor.

— AFP

‘We heart Joe’: Tearful Democrats hail Biden



Frankie Taggart

The writer is US politics correspondent in Washington for AFP

It was the hero’s send-off he had hoped to defer for another four years but when it came, any lingering bitterness seemed forgotten for a cathartic hour as Joe Biden basked in the adulation of his party faithful.

Chicago’s United Center crackled with pride, love and not a few tears as the US president stepped out to deliver his farewell speech on Monday at the Democratic National Convention.

“The ending was like a fairy tale, because it seemed like a changing of the guard,” said Azziem Underwood, 64, from Seattle, Washington.

“He seemed good. I was like, ‘Oh, why did he step down? He was excellent today.”

Flanked by First Lady Jill Biden and heir apparent Kamala Harris, as well as members of both families, the veteran Democrat’s final bow marked at long last the passing of the torch for a politician who has been in the public eye for more than half a century.

Before his grand entrance, the vibe was distinctly Spring Break as speakers on the undercard led chants of “USA! USA!” and the audience in the packed venue waved “We heart Joe” banners.

There was a smattering of celebrity with Tony Goldwyn — who played a Republican president in political drama “Scandal” — taking on hosting duties while Chicago Bulls legend and current Olympic men’s basketball coach Steve Kerr’s speech was a slam dunk.

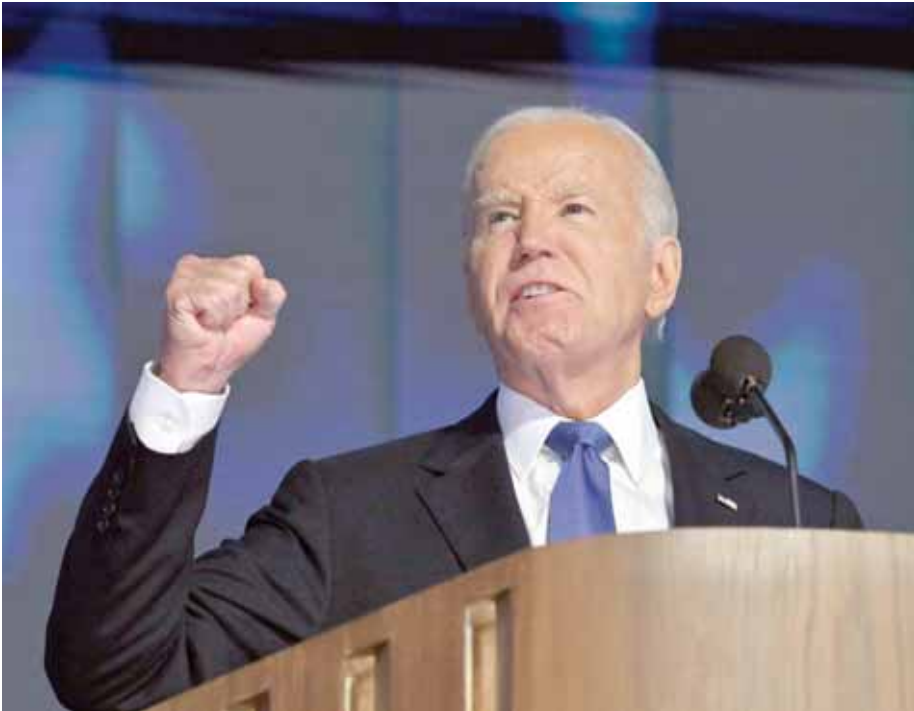
Hillary Clinton and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez — a Democratic grandee and a rising star — electrified the crowd as they thanked Biden for his leadership and exhorted voters to back Harris.

The vice president herself earned her own deafening cheer as she made a surprise appearance, taking the stage to laud Biden for his “lifetime of service.”

Donald Trump was always going to be the villain of the night, and delegates booed dutifully as giant video screens above them beamed out images of the former president’s more notorious interviews.

It was the kind of atmosphere that buttoned-up Democrats once scorned in Trump rallies, but the crowd was all-in, even singing along to the middle-of-the-road country music.

Then came the main event, and the crowd raised the roof.



US President Joe Biden speaks on stage on the first day of the Democratic National Convention at the United Center in Chicago, Illinois, on Monday. — AFP

An emotional Biden took the stage, embracing his daughter Ashley, who had introduced him, and wiping his eyes with a tissue as Democrats broke into raucous chants of “We love Joe” and “Thank you Joe” that continued for around four minutes.

BIDEN EXITED THE WHITE HOUSE RACE LAST MONTH AMID GROWING CONCERN OVER HIS AGE AND FEARS THAT HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO STOP TRUMP FROM REENTERING THE WHITE HOUSE

Members of the Biden entourage — not to mention several delegates on the floor — wept openly.

Biden, 81, had assumed he would be closing out the convention, not kicking things off. But he exited the White House race last month amid growing concern over his age and fears that he would not be able to stop Trump from reentering the White House.

Nevertheless thousands of Democrats clung to every word of an

uncharacteristically vigorous Biden, clapping wildly as he forcefully made the case for Harris to carry on his mission.

“I thought the speech was amazing. I thought Joe did a great job pumping everybody up, running through his accomplishments, Kamala’s accomplishments, just getting everybody energised and out to vote,” said Alexis Rossum, 32, from Louisiana.

“I think it was great. The atmosphere was pretty electric. A few times I even had tears in my eyes.”

The wild applause in the arena was an act of veneration for a much-loved, ever-present figure in Democratic politics.

But it was also a release — a collective exhalation from activists who had spent months fretting over the direction the 2024 election was taking.

For all Biden’s good grace, there was little doubt among delegates who spoke to AFP ahead of the speech that he is still smarting over the manner of his exit, driven from the top of the ticket by allies from whom he had expected loyalty.

The one he reportedly blames the most — former House speaker Nancy Pelosi — apparently hadn’t got the message.

“#ThankYouJoe,” she said on X, along with a picture of her holding up one of the heart banners.

From a start-up to a thriving enterprise

In today’s constantly evolving job market, education needs to shift more towards preparing students with entrepreneurial skills and specific job careers than traditional reliance on formal education.

We know the most common goal of education is to help individuals achieve the basic skills needed to accomplish whatever task or job is assigned in the future. We also know that education fosters critical thinking and creativity.

Unfortunately, educational institutions in many countries are still teaching the same subjects and use the same techniques that were used years ago pointing to the fact that education is still happening specifically in textbooks.

I remember that throughout my student life, the only advice my parents, teachers and other benefactors gave me was to study well so that I could get a ‘good’ job. But I see a change today. The change, of course, is palpable, and is happening at an unprecedented pace!

The change that we’re witnessing is a paradigm shift from conventional education to the exposure of students to entrepreneurship education that encourages innovation and creativity.

In this transformative journey, educational institutions have a critical role to play. What I mean to say is that, both schools to colleges should weave entrepreneurship and industry-ready training into the curriculum.

As experts point out, entrepreneurship education is not just about learning how to start a business. It’s also about understanding what it takes for an idea to become a reality.

When students learn entrepreneurship, it means they learn the skills required to be successful in their careers. In addition, entrepreneurship plays a vital role as students become job creators rather than just job-seekers.

This will help foster a culture of self-reliance and drive economic growth in a country.

Look at the Sultanate of Oman



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

A NUMBER OF START-UPS HAVE ARRIVED AT THE OMANI INDUSTRIAL SCENE IN THE RECENT YEARS. MANY YOUNGSTERS, BOTH CITIZENS AND EXPATRIATES, HAVE STARTED RECOGNISING THE POWER OF START-UP COMPANIES

where entrepreneurship has been adopted as a strategy to promote economic activities among young people. More significantly, supporting youth entrepreneurship is a priority in the Oman Vision 2040.

Represented by the Ministry of Education, Oman has witnessed, over the past years, steady growth through positive transformations that are taking place in line with the rapid global developments in various fields.

The National Innovation Strategy, that is part of Oman Vision 2040, focuses on research that will lead to the development of a knowledge-based society and capable national cadres, which focuses on transferring knowledge into economic revenue.

One of the most significant components of Oman’s national entrepreneurship strategy is the support of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, who believes that research and innovation should be at the top of the national priorities.

Entrepreneurship education in Oman includes a training system for professional development, diversification of its sources and linking it to the labour market, establishment of solid bases for scientific research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in the curricula, and supporting the establishment of innovative start-ups through various programmes.

A number of start-ups have arrived at the Omani industrial scene in recent years. Many youngsters, both citizens and expatriates, have started recognising the power of start-up companies.

In 2021, a survey found that societal attitude towards entrepreneurship is positively higher among the age group between 25 and 34. This group believes “entrepreneurship is a better career choice”.

The survey also found that among those who believe starting a successful business has high status and respect and receives media attention, only just above half of those surveyed said that starting a business is easy.

COCONUT FESTIVAL!



A girl carries a coconut in a vessel during a procession for Narali Purnima, or coconut festival, to pray to the sea God for a prosperous fishing season in Mumbai, India, on Tuesday. — Reuters

How Nato can help end the Ukraine war

Last month, yet another Nato summit concluded with a vague statement that Ukraine will, at some point, be a member of the alliance. But while it is impossible to provide a precise date for Ukraine’s accession while the country is at war, the event that should trigger it should be clear: the United States and its Nato allies should stand ready to provide full protection to Ukraine as soon as a peace deal is reached. This would enable and encourage Ukraine’s government to make the difficult choices that are needed to bring an end to the fighting.

The first step towards charting a path towards durable peace in Ukraine is recognising that Russia did not launch its full-scale war in 2022 merely to take some Ukrainian territories. Nor was the goal to prevent vague promises of future Nato membership for Ukraine from being fulfilled — though the Kremlin did exploit these promises to convince Russians and others that the war was crucial to preempt serious threats to Russia’s security.

After more than two years of war, this illusion has been dispelled. The Ukrainian government’s official position is that its forces will keep fighting until they liberate all territory currently under Russian occupation. This stance should not be viewed as an impediment to peace: if your adversary’s goal is your total destruction, territorial concessions will not buy an end to the war; they



Roger Myerson
The writer is a Nobel laureate in economics, is Professor of Global Conflict Studies at the University of Chicago



Timothy Mylovanov
The writer is a former minister of economy and agriculture of Ukraine, is President of the Kyiv School of Economics



Konstantin Sonin
The writer is a former vice rector of the Higher School of Economics University in Moscow, is a professor at the University of Chicago

will merely weaken your position. The real barrier to any reasonable peace settlement is Russia, which remains committed to ensuring that a free and democratic Ukraine does not survive and has a long track record of renegeing on promises and violating treaties.

A negotiated peace in Ukraine can be credible only if it includes tangible international commitments to ensure the country’s long-term independence. Incorporating Nato protection for Ukraine into any peace deal is the obvious solution. After all, it is the threat of war with Nato that prevents Russia from going to war, say, the Baltic states.

A plausible way forward would start with Ukraine’s military stabilising the frontlines, using Western weapons and aid. Once this condition is met, Ukraine could join Russia at the negotiating table, with the shared understanding that any agreement would be backed by Nato guarantees. For example, Nato membership could include a proviso that the alliance’s protection covers only the parts of Ukraine controlled by the Ukrainian government at the time of admission. This approach would reassure Ukrainians that any territorial concessions would not simply enable Russia to attack more of the country.

This would not be first time

Nato has admitted countries with unresolved territorial disputes. But other approaches could be considered. For example, Ukraine could be offered a kind of de facto Nato membership, or negotiators could agree to limit Nato’s normal military presence in parts of Ukraine, as was done in Norway during the Cold War. A major multilateral commitment to developing Ukraine’s military would enhance the deterrent further.

Of course, Nato can grant Ukraine membership without Russia’s involvement. But including Nato security guarantees in a peace deal, rather than establishing them separately, would make it harder for Putin to convince Russians that they pose a threat to Russia’s national security. To be clear, they do not: Russia’s massive nuclear

arsenal guarantees its security very effectively. When Russians understand that Nato protection of Ukraine does not entail any threat to Russia, they will be less inclined to support preemptive wars of aggression.

Nato security guarantees for Ukraine — whether in the form of membership or some other arrangement — would amount to a major commitment for the US and its allies, with significant costs and risks. But these should be weighed against the prospect of prolonging a European war that has already resulted in vast destruction and cost hundreds of thousands of lives, with regular threats of further escalation.

Ultimately, it will be up to Ukraine to decide how to manage the difficult and costly trade-offs that any peace negotiation will require. Ukrainians are the ones

who have been forced to fend off an unprovoked Russian war, so only they can decide what more they are willing to sacrifice to liberate the occupied territories. But it is up to the international community — especially Nato — to ensure that when Ukraine decides to negotiate, any peace deal is credible, and the country’s long-term independence and security are guaranteed.

Like so many other observers of the Ukraine war, we would like to see Putin tried for launching an unprovoked war, killing civilians. We would also like to see all Russian-occupied territories returned to Ukrainian control. But the most urgent priority must be to end the war and ensure Ukrainians’ future safety. That is what Nato security guarantees can help to achieve.

@Project Syndicate, 2024



The US and its Nato allies should stand ready to provide full protection to Ukraine.

sport

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ATLETICO TWICE FIGHT BACK IN VILLARREAL DRAW

SPANISH LA LIGA RESULTS	
ON MONDAY	Leganes 1 (Cruz 22)
Real Valladolid 1 (Moro 23) Espanyol 0	Valencia 1 (Duro 44) Barcelona 2 (Lewandowski 45+5, 49-pen)
Villarreal 2 (Danjuma 18, Koke 37-og) Atletico Madrid 2 (Llorente 20, Sorloth 45+5)	ON FRIDAY
ON SUNDAY	Celta Vigo 2 (Swedberg 66, Aspas 84) Alaves 1 (Garcia 17)
Real Sociedad 1 (Zubimendi 90+8) Rayo Vallecano 2 (De Frutos 67, Camello 84)	Las Palmas 2 (Nianzou 42-og, Ramirez 71) Sevilla 2 (Alex Suarez 25-og, Juanlu Sanchez 61)
Real Mallorca 1 (Muriqi 53) Real Madrid 1 (Rodrygo 13)	ON THURSDAY
ON SATURDAY	Athletic Bilbao 1 (Sancet 27) Getafe 1 (Uche 64)
Osasuna 1 (Soriano 79-og)	Real Betis 1 (Bartra 6) Girona 1 (Misehouy 72)

VILA-REAL, SPAIN: Diego Simeone's Atletico Madrid shared an entertaining 2-2 draw with Villarreal as they began their La Liga campaign on Monday. The Rojiblancos revamped their squad over the summer after struggling to a fourth-place finish but had to settle for a point at Villarreal's Estadio de la Ceramica,

twice coming from behind. Alvaro Morata, Stefan Savic, Memphis Depay and others have departed while Atletico brought in Julian Alvarez, Alexander Sorloth and Robin Le Normand, who all made their debuts. The latter two started on Spain's east coast and Norwegian striker Sorloth netted what



Villarreal's Ivorian defender Eric Bailly and Atletico Madrid's French forward Antoine Griezmann (R) vie for the ball during the Spanish league match between Villarreal CF and Club Atletico de Madrid. – AFP

proved to be the goal to earn his team a point. "I think we played a good game, we had some individual areas where we have to improve, but as a group, we were committed," said Simeone. Villarreal took the lead through Arnaut Danjuma in the 18th minute with the forward starting his team's La Liga opener after spells on loan at Tottenham and Everton. The Dutch winger beat Axel

Witsel for pace to run on to a pass and then worked some space to squeeze a low shot across goal and into the far corner. Atletico reacted instantly, scoring a little over a minute later when Antoine Griezmann played in Marcos Llorente who rifled into the roof of the net. Samuel Lino hit the post for the visitors before Villarreal moved back ahead when Jan Oblak failed to claim a cross and the ball bounced in off the

unfortunate Koke. Atletico levelled through Sorloth, nodding home against his former side in first half stoppage time, his header squirming under goalkeeper Diego Conde, who should have kept it out. Former Manchester City striker Alvarez, signed for an estimated 85 million euros (\$93 million), came on for his Atletico debut in the final stages with the second half evenly fought.

New Villarreal arrival Nicolas Pepe hit the crossbar with a looping free-kick late on but the teams could not be separated. "We conceded very quickly, too easily, and that gives you an uphill struggle," Atletico midfielder Llorente told Movistar. "We got back level, which is the hard thing, and we went and let in another goal, and in the end when you let in two it's very hard to turn the game around and we didn't do it today." — AFP

Veteran Vardy earns Leicester point against wasteful Spurs

LEICESTER, ENGLAND: Veteran striker Jamie Vardy earned newly-promoted Leicester City a 1-1 draw with a profligate Tottenham Hotspur in their Premier League season opener on Monday. Spurs dominated the first half but Pedro Porro's opener in the 29th minute was the only time they could make one of a host of good chances count. Further, clear-cut opportunities came and went after the break, with the visitors' wastefulness proving costly when Leicester skipper Vardy headed an equaliser into the net with 57 minutes gone. Brazilian Richarlison missed a golden opening to win it at the death and Spurs had to settle for one point in a match they really should have taken all three from. "Disappointing night for us," Spurs boss Ange Postecoglou told Sky Sports. "The first half was excellent and the game was controlled but wasteful in front of the goal. The second half was the same. "We started off well and once Leicester scored, the crowd lifted and we lost our composure. It was an issue we had last year as well, we need to keep working hard and be a bit more ruthless in front of goal. At times we made poor decisions. "It's not our football or effort. To get results you need to be a lot

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS	
ON MONDAY	Wellbeck 56, Adingra 86)
Leicester 1 (Vardy 57) Tottenham 1 (Porro 29)	Ipswich 0 Liverpool 2 (Jota 60, Salah 65)
ON SUNDAY	Newcastle 1 (Joelinton 45) Southampton 0
Brentford 2 (Mbeumo 29, Wissa 76) Crystal Palace 1 (Pinnock 57-og)	Nottingham Forest 1 (Wood 23) Bournemouth 1 (Semenyo 86)
Chelsea 0 Manchester City 2 (Haaland 18, Kovacic 84)	West Ham 1 (Paqueta 37-pen) Aston Villa 2 (Onana 4, Duran 79)
ON SATURDAY	ON FRIDAY
Arsenal 2 (Havertz 25, Saka 74) Wolves 0	Manchester United 1 (Zirkzee 87) Fulham 0
Everton 0 Brighton 3 (Mitoma 25,	

more ruthless in the final third. If we don't we won't get the rewards our football deserves." Spurs' evening went from bad to worse when midfielder Rodrigo Bentancur was carried off on a stretcher after an eight-minute stoppage in the second half, following a nasty collision. The Uruguayan was given oxygen as he was surrounded by medical staff but was later reported to be recovering. A poor end to last season saw Spurs miss out on a top-four finish in Australian Postecoglou's first year in charge. The north London club have invested in several new signings in the close season to challenge for the Champions League qualification places once again,

with striker Dominic Solanke the biggest outlay. The former Bournemouth forward, playing Premier League football again after a year back in the second tier, should have opened his Spurs account in the first half at the King Power Stadium. Some wayward finishing from Solanke ensured Leicester were let off the hook early on before Porro arrived on the end of a James Maddison cross to guide home the opening goal. The second half appeared to be a matter of how many Spurs would score, with Solanke again guilty of wasting gilt-edged opportunities. Vardy, however, made no mistake when presented with his chance to snatch a point for



Leicester City's Jamie Vardy scores their first goal against Tottenham Hotspur during the English Premier League match at King Power Stadium, Leicester, Britain. – Reuters

Leicester and the 37-year-old collected the eighth Premier League opening-day goal of his career, a tally bettered only by Liverpool's Mohamed Salah. "I see age as just a number,"

Vardy said. "As long as I keep looking after myself and my legs keep feeling great, then I will carry on for as long as is physically possible. "I wouldn't say I am doing

anything differently playing-wise. Probably adapted a bit by dropping in but I think the main thing is I am looking after myself recovery-wise to the maximum." — Reuters



Sinner beats Tiafoe to win ATP Cincinnati Open

CINCINNATI: World number one Jannik Sinner on Monday lifted his third ATP Masters trophy as the world number one beat Frances Tiafoe 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 to win the Cincinnati Open.

The Italian top seed warmed up for next week's US Open in style, biding his time in a hard-fought first set before breaking the match open in the second.

Tiafoe, whose game faded after losing the first-set tiebreaker, still made an impression.

The American, who moves into the ranking top-20, saved three match points before Sinner claimed his 15th career title.

Cincinnati is the fifth trophy of 2024 for the 23-year-old Italian, who began the season with an Australian Open crown in Melbourne.

"I'm happy, this was a very difficult week," Sinner said. "It was tough mentally but I tried to do my best."

"Frances and I were both tired from the (Sunday) semi-finals and there was a lot of tension."

"I'm just glad I kept my level in the important moments. I handled the situations on court well. "There were many ups and downs, but that's normal. At the big moments of each match I played well."

Sinner heads to the August 26 start of the US Open as a major favourite, standing more than 2,000 points clear of world number two Novak Djokovic.

"I'm confident, but it's important to be able to recover to be ready for New York," the Italian said afterwards.

"That is the main goal of this US Open swing. "I'm happy to be in the position I'm in. I have the hunger to keep playing. I hope to show good tennis in New York."

Against Tiafoe, Sinner hit 29 winners, including 13 aces and broke the American twice from

eight attempts.

"I'm really tired," Tiafoe told Sinner at the net afterwards.

"I'm not used to playing so many matches like you big guys. Well-played."

The pair duelled for nearly an hour in the opening set, with the Italian making 10 aces on the way into a tiebreaker.

One crack in Tiafoe's defence was enough to hand Sinner two set point chances, with the first converted by the top seed for the early lead.

Tiafoe dropped serve to start the second as his reserves began to run dry, Sinner achieved a double break in a fifth game lasting for more than 10 minutes with seven deuces.

With a 4-1 lead, the Italian still had to fight, with Tiafoe saving three match points to climb to 5-2 before the top seed completed his work a game later.

Sinner is the youngest champion here since Andy Murray in 2008. — AFP



Sinner accepts the Rookwood Cup championship trophy after defeating Tiafoe in the final. — USA Today Sports

SABALENKA DOWNS PEGULA TO WIN WTA CINCINNATI OPEN



Aryna Sabalenka returns a shot during the women's singles final. — USA Today Sports

CINCINNATI: Aryna Sabalenka thrust herself into US Open title contention on Monday with a 6-3, 7-5 defeat of Jessica Pegula to win the ATP/ WTA Cincinnati Open.

The third seed who missed Wimbledon with a shoulder injury won a trophy for the first time since collecting her second Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in January.

Sabalenka had it all her way against the American sixth seed until the closing stages when she lost serve for the first time leading a set and 5-4.

But a quick re-break and another hold of serve solved that problem and produced a first Masters-level trophy on hardcourt since 2021 for the Belarus player.

"I really couldn't have wished for more — it was a really great day at the office," Sabalenka said afterwards.

"Just super happy with the level I played in the final and I was able to get this title. It's really important going into the US Open."

Sabalenka — beaten in last year's US Open final — has now defeated Pegula, champion last week in Toronto, in five of seven matches.

The winner will move to second in the world in the WTA rankings and has emerged as a serious contender when the Open begins in New York next Monday.

"I'm sure Jess and I will have more battles in the future," Sabalenka said. "Let's keep it up."

The win marked Sabalenka's sixth WTA 1000 title and the 15th of her career.

She fired 10 aces and broke three times in the

1 hour 15 minutes success.

Pegula had been hoping for a trophy double after winning Montreal last week.

"The last few weeks have been crazy, I'd put together quite a streak. But hopefully the team and I can keep going forward," the American said.

"Unfortunately, too good from Aryna today. She was playing at a really high level, and it didn't seem to come down."

"I had some chances at the end, but wasn't able to do it. But I'm really proud of myself for the last couple weeks for the level I've been able to display, playing a lot of matches."

"I've proved to myself that I can win a lot of matches in a row and be able to handle a lot of different challenges."

The final was the first at Cincinnati between two top-10 opponents since Garbine Muguruza defeated Simona Halep here in 2017.

Sabalenka wasted no time in establishing superiority with her break of Pegula for 3-1 in the first set, a margin which she kept throughout the 30-minute opener.

The third seed began the second set with an immediate break of Pegula and served up four games to love.

But the seed was undone while serving for victory leading 5-4. Sabalenka was broken for the first time in the match as her sixth-seeded opponent made a late stand.

But Sabalenka broke straight back for a 6-5 lead and polished off the win on her first match point. — AFP



Sabalenka (R) poses with the Rookwood Cup after winning the final against Pegula (L). — USA Today Sports



Juventus' Italian defender #27
Andrea Cambiaso celebrates
scoring his team's third goal during
the Italian Serie A match between
Juventus and Como. – AFP

Juve give Motta perfect start against Como

MILAN: Juventus made light work of Como on Monday with a 3-0 win on Thiago Motta's Serie A debut with the Turin giants, while Atalanta brushed aside transfer upheaval with a 4-0 thumping of Lecce.

Impressive first-half strikes from promising youngster Samuel Mbangula, a surprise starter on the left flank, and Timothy Weah before a thumping Andrea Cambiaso finish in stoppage time gave Juve and Motta a perfect start against promoted Como, who were playing their first top-flight match in over two decades.

"Como are a good team and we had the right attitude tonight, when we had the ball we did really well all throughout the match," said Motta to DAZN.

Juve could have easily won by a larger margin at the Allianz Stadium as the hosts created a series of chances against Como who were outclassed on the night.

Dusan Vlahovic had a particularly unlucky evening up front for Juve as he struck the woodwork in each half and had what looked like a perfectly good headed goal ruled out just after half-time.

The Serbia striker was baffled as to why his strike was chalked off but Cambiaso had strayed offside earlier in the move, denying him a goal.

Motta, who arrived in the close season after guiding Bologna to the Champions League, already has Juve playing a brand of football which is easier on the eye than was played under his predecessor Massimiliano Allegri.

That is despite Juve being a work in progress as a clutch of Allegri's favourites, including Italy forward Federico Chiesa, have been sidelined in order to make space for players deemed more suited to Motta's style of play.

Cesc Fabregas's Como, an ambitious club backed by tobacco giant Djarum active in the summer transfer window, will get a better indication of their chances of staying in the division in their next two fixtures at Cagliari and Udinese.

"Today was a reality check. We need to be better," said Fabregas to DAZN.

"What I sure was a difference in quality... They were devastating when they took the ball off us and

we gave away too many easy balls. That's not tactics, that's down to individual quality."

PERFECT ATALANTA DEBUTS

New boys Marco Brescianini and Mateo Retegui gave Europa League holders Atalanta a hugely impressive start at Lecce after turbulent summer which has featured long-term injuries and star players agitating for transfers.

Brescianini, who only arrived from relegated Frosinone on Friday, opened the scoring on the rebound 10 minutes before half-time and confidently rolled home the fourth in the 66th minute.

The 24-year old's strikes topped and tailed a near-perfect away performance as Italy striker Retegui netted with a bullet header on the stroke of half-time before winning and then scoring a penalty just before the hour mark.

"It's better than even I could have imagined," said Brescianini, who is from just outside Bergamo, where Atalanta are based.

"I'm really happy to be wearing this jersey and I hope to repay the faith the club and fans have shown in me."

Atalanta have since been hit with serious injuries to both Gianluca Scamacca and star defender Giorgio Scalvini, with a clutch of other players also sidelined.

Meanwhile, coach Gian Piero Gasperini was without Teun Koopmeiners and Europa League final hat-trick hero Ademola Lookman, both dropped as they try to leave before the end of the summer transfer window.

"No-one expected to be in this situation," Gasperini told Sky Sport.

"I have to play it by ear right now... I don't know what's going to happen in the coming 10 days but our job is to build as much as we can."

However, before kick-off, Atalanta CEO Luca Percassi left the door open for reconciliation with the want-away pair, with Paris Saint-Germain reportedly interested in signing Nigeria forward Lookman.

"Our idea is that for the first time in our history to not let our big players go," Percassi told Sky Sport. "We can't wait for this transfer window to close." — AFP

Germany captain Gundogan retires from internationals

BERLIN: Germany captain Ilkay Gundogan announced his retirement from international football on Monday after leading his country at Euro 2024, citing "a certain tiredness" both physically and mentally.

"After a few weeks of reflection, I have come to the conclusion that it is time to end my national team career," Gundogan wrote on social media.

"I look back with great pride on 82 international matches for my home country - a number that I could never have dreamed of when I made my debut for the senior national team in 2011."

His retirement follows those of Toni Kroos and Thomas Mueller. Kroos hung up his boots for good after Euro 2024, while

Mueller called time on his Germany career last month.

Gundogan, who turns 34 in October, skippered the Germany team that reached the Euro 2024 quarterfinals before losing to eventual champions Spain after extra-time.

Despite the pain of that defeat Germany demonstrated they are a force to be reckoned with again after the disappointment of successive World Cup group-stage exits either side of a last-16 loss to England at Euro 2020.

"My highlight was clearly the huge honour of being able to lead the team as captain at our home European Championship last summer," said the Barcelona midfielder.

Gundogan, who won five Premier



Germany midfielder #21 Ilkay Gundogan

League titles and the Champions League in seven seasons with Manchester City before moving to Barcelona last year, admitted to feeling the effects of a busy schedule before the start of Euro 2024.

"I felt a certain tiredness in my body and also in my head, which got me thinking. And the games at club and national level are not going to get any less," he said.

"I will definitely continue to be a fan of this national team and very much hope that the upward trend can continue together - and then there is nothing to stop us from being one of the main title contenders at the 2026 World Cup.

"We have a fantastic coach, a really strong team and a great team spirit"

Gundogan made his debut for Germany

against Belgium in October 2011 but missed their 2014 World Cup triumph with a back injury. He was also ruled out of Euro 2016 due to a dislocated kneecap.

He became the first German footballer of Turkish descent to captain the national team and appeared at four major tournaments. He was also an unused squad member at Euro 2012.

"Ilkay was an outstanding captain, with whom I would have liked to continue working," said Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann.

"The door to the national team is never completely closed, but we respect his decision and wish him all the best for his future, both professionally and privately." — AFP



Oman prioritises social welfare through strategic support measures

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

The Omani government has reaffirmed its commitment to the well-being of its citizens and the stability of its economy by allocating significant funds to key social and sectoral support initiatives during the first half of 2024.

A major focus of the government's spending was on Social Protection, with RO 280 million dedicated to welfare programmes. This substantial investment underscores the government's ongoing efforts to support vulnerable populations, ensuring that economic benefits reach all segments of society. The funding aims to enhance the quality of life for citizens by providing essential services and opportunities for a more secure and equitable future.

In parallel, the government allocated RO 259 million in electricity subsidies, aimed at keeping energy costs manageable for both households and



The logo of the Social Protection Fund (SPF).

businesses. By subsidising electricity, the government is not only easing the financial burden on citizens but also supporting the business sector, enabling continued growth and productivity. This move is seen as critical to maintaining economic stability, particularly in a period of global economic uncertainty.

Additionally, the government provided RO 153 million to subsidise oil products, a measure designed to protect the economy from the unpredictable fluctuations in global oil prices. By ensuring that fuel prices

remain stable, the government is helping to shield consumers and industries from external economic shocks, thereby preserving economic resilience.

These targeted support measures highlight the government's strategic approach to managing the nation's economy. By focusing on both social welfare and sectoral stability, the Sultanate of Oman is working to ensure that its citizens are well-supported while fostering a stable and conducive environment for economic growth.

PDO seeks investors for flare gas recovery in southern Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), the country's leading oil and gas producer, has embarked on a significant environmental initiative with the launch of a Request for Information (RFI) aimed at identifying companies interested in developing projects to recover small-scale flare gas at its production stations in southern Oman.

This initiative, known as the 'South AP Flare Recovery Project,' is part of PDO's broader strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance sustainable practices in its operations.

The project targets the reduction of routine flaring from atmospheric dehydration tanks at production stations located in the Bahja, Rima, Amal, Marmul, and Nimr clusters.

Flare gas recovery is a critical component of PDO's efforts to minimise the environmental impact of its oil production activities. By selling the flared gas to vendors who will assume all environmental liabilities, PDO aims to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions effectively. Typically, oil companies



The scope of work under the RFI involves exploring the recovery of small-scale flare gas across five production stations in Oman.

manage this associated gas through flare combustion. However, PDO's initiative seeks to shift this paradigm by eliminating routine flaring within its conventional facilities in southern Oman.

The scope of work under the RFI involves exploring the recovery of small-scale flare gas across five production stations, where gas flow rates vary from 3-kilo standard cubic metres per day (ksm3/d) to 80 ksm3/d.

The gas contains hydrogen sulfide levels ranging from 0 PPM to 14,000 PPM, with a notably low gas-oil ratio (GOR) in most fields. The geographical distribution of these stations poses a challenge, as they are spread at least 50 kilometres apart, complicating the logistics of centralised gas collection.

PDO's approach under the RFI is based on a 'Flare Gas Purchase Agreement' model. This model allows the company to sell the flared gas while transferring all liabilities to the vendor.

The RFI seeks detailed proposals from vendors, including their pricing models, cost breakdowns for setup and maintenance, and the anticipated PDO scope, such as necessary tie-ins and additional facilities.

Technical considerations are central to this project, with a focus on the Nimr and Amal thermal scopes. Gas from these stations, originating from Free Water Knock-Out (FWKO) units and Concentric Wash Tanks, is currently routed to the Atmospheric Pressure (AP) Flare system. Vendors are expected to propose technologies and outline expected products and by-products, which may vary across different sites.

The RFI also requests vendors to specify the minimum contract duration, provide details of their experience with similar projects, and include a percentage share of carbon credits. The deadline for technology providers to respond to the RFI is set for September 19, 2024.

Petroci stake in Oman's Masirah Oil Limited climbs to 12.5%

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Petroci Holding, the state-owned energy company of Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa, has seen its stake in Masirah Oil Limited (MOL), which owns and operates Block 50, offshore the Sultanate of Oman's east coast, rise to 12.5 per cent, up from 8.39 per cent previously.

The uptick, announced by MOL's majority stakeholder Singapore-based Rex International Holding, follows the settlement of a legal claim brought by Petroci Holding against fellow shareholders of Masirah Oil Limited.

Petroci Holding had a minority share in Masirah Oil Limited when the latter successfully achieved first oil from the Yumna Oilfield in Block 50 in February 2020, effectively unlocking the first petroleum system off Oman's east coast.

However, in August 2021, Petroci filed a claim against Rex Holding's local subsidiary, Rex Oman Limited, a subsidiary of Masirah Oil Limited (with 86.37 per cent stake).



The Yumna field in Block 50 is the hydrocarbon discovery off Oman's east coast.

Also included in the legal claim, filed before the Commercial Division of the High Court in British Virgin Islands, were certain past and present directors of Masirah Oil. The claim challenged certain actions that led to a dilution of Petroci's interest in Masirah Oil as a partner and minority shareholder.

Last week, the Board of Directors of Rex International announced that the parties involved in the suit had signed a Global Settlement Agreement with Petroci Holding, effectively providing for a full and final settlement of the claim.

As part of the settlement, a total of 21,558 ordinary shares

in MOL will be transferred by Rex Oman to Petroci. This will increase Petroci's shareholding in MOL to 12.5 per cent and reduce Rex Oman's shareholding in MOL to 81.14 per cent.

"On closing of the Settlement Agreement, MOL and Petroci will enter into a service agreement pursuant to which Petroci will provide technical services to MOL at no cost.

If MOL achieves certain agreed key performance targets during the 18-month term of the service agreement, MOL will issue new shares to Petroci which will result in Petroci's shareholding interest in MOL increasing to 25 per cent," Rex added in a press statement.

SAUD BAHWAN AUTOMOTIVE UNVEILS THE STYLISH AND LUXURIOUS TOYOTA CAMRY

MUSCAT: Recently, at an exclusive event held at the Toyota showroom at Wattayah, Saud Bahwan Automotive unveiled the all-new Toyota Camry.

The event was attended by Jota Yamamoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Sultanate of Oman, Shunsuke Chijiwa, Deputy Chief Representative of Dubai Office at Toyota Motor Corporation and distinguished guests from both the public and private sectors.

Speaking at the occasion Abdullah Mohammed Bahwan, Managing Director – Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group said, “For decades, Toyota has been the brand of choice for families in Oman”.

Each model, renowned for its quality, dependability and reliability, has become a trusted companion on our roads.

The all-new Toyota Camry is poised to carry forward this proud legacy, making lasting impressions on enthusiasts and drivers alike.

At Saud Bahwan Automotive, our commitment goes beyond delivering exceptional vehicles.



Jota Yamamoto, Shunsuke Chijiwa and Abdullah Mohammed Bahwan.

We continually invest in nurturing a talented workforce and establishing world-class

facilities to enhance the joy of ownership for our customers.”

Expressing his gratitude to

customers and to Toyota Motor Corporation he said, “We are deeply grateful to our loyal

customers in Oman, who have supported us through generations.

Your trust and loyalty are the cornerstones of our success. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the team at Toyota Motor Corporation for their unwavering support and guidance.”

Sharing his views on the all-new Toyota Camry he said, “The all-new Toyota Camry is a true masterpiece, designed to capture attention with its stunning profile.

Inside, it offers a meticulously crafted environment that promises some of the finest on-road experiences. With a gasoline & hybrid engine options, customers can choose the level of performance and efficiency that best suits their needs.”

Later in the evening Shunsuke Chijiwa, Deputy Chief Representative of Dubai Office at Toyota Motor Corporation, sharing his thoughts about Toyota Motor Corporation and Saud Bahwan Group’s journey as partners said, “Toyota Motor Corporation has a very long relationship with Saud Bahwan

Automotive, for more than 50 years since 1975.

They are one of the most important partners among the all the distributors in the world. That’s why, the late Honorary Chairman of Toyota Motor Corporation, Dr Shoichiro Toyoda and his son and current Chairman Akio Toyoda have visited Oman and deepened their personal relationship with Bahwan family, which is not always the case with other distributors.”

Expressing his thoughts about the all-new Toyota Camry he said, “As a part of such production strategy, our brand-new product, Camry is going to be launched today in Oman. I’m very honoured to be able to participate in such an exciting event.

I can see so many Camry on the road in Oman and from that, I can feel that our Camry has been cherished in Oman for long time.

With this model change, we have improved the design, driving performance and other aspects, so I believe that all of you will enjoy the new generation Camry.”

Geely Oman announces an exciting 7-Year/250,000 kilometres warranty offer on 2025 models



Geely Oman is setting a new standard in automotive assurance with an industry-leading 7-year/250,000 km warranty offer.

MUSCAT: Towell Auto Centre LLC (TAC), the exclusive distributor of Geely vehicles in

Oman, proudly announces an exclusive and exciting offer on its 2025 line-up, featuring the Tugella, Emgrand, Preface, and Coolray models.

Geely Oman is setting a new standard in automotive assurance with an industry-leading 7-year/250,000 km warranty offer, underscoring its commitment to delivering exceptional value and peace of mind to its customers.

It’s the perfect time for the people of Oman to seize incredible deals on Geely’s renowned vehicles.

In addition to attractive EMI

prices, Geely Oman is offering benefits to enhance the ownership experience.

The four models Coolray, Emgrand, Preface and Tugella come with a ground-breaking 7-year/250,000 km manufacturer warranty offer for the 2025 models.

Customers purchasing any of the 4 models from the 2025 line-up, will receive a manufacturer warranty of 7 years or 250,000 kms, whichever comes earlier, making it an irresistible offer.

This exciting warranty offer makes it easier to become a Geely

owner and experience top-tier performance and innovation.

Geely Oman invites car enthusiasts to take advantage of this unparalleled warranty offer and explore the diverse range of models, each combining performance, luxury, and reliability.

Whether one opts for the sleek Coolray, the versatile Emgrand, the spacious Preface, or the sporty Tugella, each model combines exciting performance with class-leading features, promising an unmatched ownership experience.



A lineup of Jetour cars, positioned one after the other.

MHD Automobile LLC hosts Jetour Tribe event showcasing Jetour T2

MUSCAT: Mohsin Haider Darwish Automobile LLC (MHD), a leading name in the automotive industry in Oman, proudly announces the successful completion of the inaugural Jetour Tribe event, a thrilling experiential drive showcasing the newly launched Jetour T2 vehicle. This event marked the Dhofar Khareef edition, with more editions to follow.

This three-day expedition, attended by over 50 Jetour T2 owners, took place against the breathtaking backdrop of the Khareef season in Dhofar.

It provided Jetour T2 enthusiasts with a unique opportunity to fully experience the capabilities of their vehicles. Organised by MHD Automobile LLC, the event was designed to reconnect with valued customers, inviting participants to embark on an exhilarating journey that combined adventure with the stunning diversity of Oman’s landscapes.

Commenting on the event, Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles LLC, expressed his enthusiasm, stating, “The Jetour Tribe event exemplifies our commitment to delivering exceptional experiences for our customers, creating lasting memories while

showcasing the remarkable performance of the Jetour T2.”

The meticulously organised adventure catered to drivers of all experience levels, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

The journey commenced at the Jetour Showroom in Al Athaiba, leading participants on an engaging 10-hour drive to Dhofar.

Over the following days, the Jetour Tribe explored a variety of terrains, from expansive plains to majestic mountains and sandy beaches, all within the picturesque setting of Dhofar.

Under the hood, the Jetour T2 is powered by a 2.0-litre 4-cylinder petrol engine that generates an impressive 254 horsepower and 390 Nm of torque.

This powerhouse ensured a thrilling and dynamic driving experience, whether Jetour Tribe was navigating city streets or conquering off-road trails.

MHD Automobile LLC extends its deepest gratitude to all participants who contributed to the success of the Jetour Tribe in Oman. This event underscores the company’s dedication to fostering a vibrant community of Jetour T2 enthusiasts and delivering unforgettable experiences.

Al Mouj Muscat champions SME development in marine tourism

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat continues to solidify its reputation as a cornerstone for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) within the marine tourism and water sports industry, playing a pivotal role in fostering sustainability, innovation and competitiveness.

Recognising the critical role and importance of SMEs in driving economic growth, Al Mouj Muscat identified and implemented a series of development opportunities designed to upskill and enhance the capabilities of operator business owners and captains.

Among the initiatives, Al Mouj Marina implemented several management and safety courses to ensure participants are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills in operational management and safety standards.

In addition, Al Mouj Muscat introduced smartboxes (ticketing kiosks) to enhance operator



An image depicting the Marina lifestyle.

visibility and streamline booking processes as well as planned competition for the best-performing SMEs to encourage excellence and innovation.

These forward-thinking initiatives emphasise quality control, sustainable practices, and

standardised minimum pricing to encourage healthy competition among operators. Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said: “Al Mouj Muscat is more than just a business location, it’s a dynamic ecosystem that nurtures growth and a thriving destination

where people live, work and play.

We are dedicated to up-skilling and supporting our tenants and partners in every way possible, recognising that their success is our success and our collective efforts mean bigger economic growth for Oman.

Beyond the business, we also understand our role in environmental preservation and continue to actively promote environmentally conscious operations.”

Over last several years, more than 30 marine tourism companies have operated from Al Mouj Marina, with 80 per cent of them operating exclusively from the marina.

Adopting a hands-on approach to support its SMEs, Al Mouj Marina organises daily meetings with business owners as well as hosts bi-annual gatherings to discuss various operational matters and hear-first from its tenants and partners.



Dignitaries at the Omantel ICT event held in Dhofar Governorate recently.

10 new submarine cable landings to boost Salalah's connectivity

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

Omantel highlighted its technology-driven solutions during an important ICT event with government officials and business leaders from the Governorate of Dhofar at the "Omantel ICT" event during Khareef Dhofar Season, in the presence of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

Omantel showcased the innovative solutions provided by the company that have contributed immensely to supporting the digital transformation process in the country and strengthening the local economy of the Governorate of Dhofar.

Talal bin Said al Mamari, CEO of Omantel, reiterated the company's focus on keeping pace with global technological advancements and highlighted its edge in having a strong ICT infrastructure.

This is reflected in Omantel's business model, marked by an integrated system of a sprawling core network, strategic acquisitions and collaborations, including partnerships and

alliances with major international technology companies to bring the most advanced technologies to foster digital transformation in Oman.

Al Mamari said, "We attach great importance to Dhofar Governorate due to its strategic location for global tech investments.

"Over the past few years, we have worked on a series of strategic projects and initiatives that have attracted around \$150 million in global investments.

"These include the establishment of the SN1 Data Centre in partnership with Equinix which is the world's leading data centre provider, attracting major global content providers and hyperscalers to build their own massive data centres in the city, and the upcoming landings of 10 international submarine cables in Salalah next year, which will make it the second most connected city in the Middle East."

On the sidelines of the event, a panel discussion titled "Challenges and Opportunities Related to the Adoption of Digital Technologies in the Sultanate of Oman" was held.

The panelists included Dr Amer bin Awadh al Rawas, a leading ICT expert who has contributed immensely to the growth of the telecom sector in Oman; Laila bint Abdullah al Hadhramiyah, Executive Director of Oman Information Technology Society; and Lujaina bint Saif al Kharousiyah, Vice-President of Governance, Regulatory Affairs and Compliance at Omantel.

The session provided insights into several models, generating significant interest among participants and reflecting the extent of Oman's interest in future technologies.

The event also shed light on steps taken in digital transformation at the corporate level and reviewed multiple experiences in digitisation and the technology sector.

Omantel, through its subsidiaries such as Oman Data Park and Tadoom, showcased key innovative solutions and digital services, including data centre services, cloud computing, cybersecurity, software as a service, smart buildings, digital twin solutions, remote control, and digital surveillance cameras.

Mamun pioneers circular finance and investments powered by crowdfunding

HIBBA AL KINDI

MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

Omani fintech and crowd financing company Mamun announced that it has raised over RO 1 million in Sharia-compliant financing within a span of a year, this week.

In a press statement, the company shared the following, "This achievement underscores our commitment to providing ethical and inclusive financial solutions, fostering economic growth and supporting the entrepreneurial spirit in Oman.

"Our innovative approach to crowd financing has enabled us to bridge the gap between investors and businesses, ensuring mutual growth and prosperity."

Co-Founder and CEO Saleh al Tamami, highlighted the significance of the achievement, "Crossing RO 1 million in less than a year is a testament to our unwavering commitment to empowering businesses across Oman with ethical, Sharia-compliant financial solutions.

"At Mamun, we are pioneering circular finance and investments powered by crowdfunding, fully aligning with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's Vision 2040 for alternative and sustainable finance.

"We also appreciate the robust efforts by the Financial Services Authority, Ministry of Finance, and the Sustainable Finance Committee, whose support is instrumental in fostering an environment where innovative financial models can thrive. Our proprietary technology and risk models allow us to evolve as a



Ahmed al Issaei, CTO of Mamun, CCO Mohammed al Tamami, and CEO Saleh al Tamami.

tech-driven financial institution, ensuring that we remain competitive and continue to drive positive economic impact for years to come."

Since the launch of its crowdfunding arm in October of 2023, the company has launched 31 campaigns with investments of over RO 1 million, with an average net extended Internal Rate of Return of 20 per cent, with a 0 per cent default rate.

The company shared that it has returned over RO 290,000 in principal to investors, with RO 25,000 in profits already earned, and an additional RO 100,000 yet to be realised from active investments.

The company currently boasts a portfolio of 3,700 investors from seven countries, and has raised funds for companies in various sectors including construction and contracting, trade, manufacturing: Logistics and Transportation, Retail and Wholesale, Food and Beverage,

and the services sector.

Furthermore, the company was the first crowd financing company to launch an equity crowdfunding campaign in the country earlier this year, raising an amount of \$50,000 for local freelancing platform, Zameeli.

In 2021, the CMA, now rebranded as the Financial Services Authority (FSA), had issued Decision No 153/2021 to regulate crowdfunding platforms, which it describes as "method enabling those who seek funding to obtain amounts from donors or investors for the purpose of supporting their projects via the platform for donation or in consideration of reward or equity or investment note."

Last month, FSA Executive Vice-President Ahmed bin Ali al Maamari shared that since its official launch in 2022, crowdfunding has raised over RO 5.8 million into 100 projects by the first quarter of 2024.

OOREDOO OMAN SETS BOLD COURSE WITH 5G INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

JOMAR MENDOZA

MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

"Ooredoo is dedicated to initiatives that benefit the Omani society, such as enhancing connectivity in underserved areas and promoting digital inclusion. These efforts are integral to the business model, not just corporate social responsibility. These need to be values that are at the core of our brand," Quique Vivas, Chief Commercial Officer of Ooredoo Oman, said.

"It is not only the marketers to try and understand what the customer wants when creating a new proposition. Every function needs to understand customers and ensure their feedback cuts across everything we do. We need first to listen to customers and base developments and approaches on what we hear and understand from feedback and insights," he insists. This holistic approach ensures that digital innovations are balanced with the human interaction that Omani customers desire. By deeply understanding how customers use data and services, Ooredoo is poised to tailor its offerings to meet evolving demands.

Alongside customer experience is the technology to provide these services. Indeed, the rollout of 5G technology is a cornerstone of Ooredoo's strategy.

But rather than adopting 5G as a mere marketing tool, Vivas emphasises its practical applications. "5G for a reason, not 5G for the sake of 5G," he states, highlighting the company's focus on deploying 5G where it can make a tangible difference. This includes providing Internet via 5G in areas lacking fibre connectivity and supporting B2B applications requiring low latency. Such targeted use ensures that investments in 5G deliver real value, aligning with Ooredoo's mission to positively impact customers.

Driving sustainable growth and corporate responsibility sustainability is at the heart of Ooredoo's operations. The company is dedicated to initiatives that benefit Omani society, such as enhancing connectivity in underserved areas and promoting digital inclusion.

Vivas emphasises that these efforts are integral to the business model, not just corporate social responsibility. "These need to be values that are at the core of our brand," he asserts, reflecting a broader industry trend towards embedding sustainability in core operations.

Ooredoo's commitment to sustainability is evident in its efforts to ensure that technological advancements contribute to societal well-being. From providing connectivity in less profitable



Ooredoo is dedicated to initiatives that benefit the Omani society, such as enhancing connectivity in underserved areas and promoting digital inclusion. These efforts are integral to the business model, not just corporate social responsibility. These need to be values that are at the core of our brand

QUIQUE VIVAS

Chief Commercial Officer of
Ooredoo Oman

regions to ensuring digital inclusion, Ooredoo is actively working to bridge the digital divide. This approach not only supports the company's growth objectives, but also reinforces its role as a responsible corporate citizen in Oman.

Strategic objectives and a long-term vision for growth, Vivas outlines a clear roadmap for Ooredoo's future, aimed at long-term market leadership. "We have a very clear, achievable and committed ambition," he declares, acknowledging that the transformation requires a strategic, phased approach. The company is implementing a two-to-three-year plan to restructure and build the foundations for sustainable growth. This involves making strategic decisions that may not yield immediate growth but are designed to provide robust returns to shareholders in the medium term.

The focus on long-term growth is underpinned by a commitment to strategic investments and restructuring. Vivas highlights that the company is setting the stage for future success by laying solid foundations now.

"The most immediate thing we need to do is set the foundations on which we will build this growth," he explains, ensuring that Ooredoo is well-positioned to lead the market in the coming years.

Though Vivas mainly focuses on the B2C segment, he recognises the immense potential in the corporate sector driven by advanced technologies.

The integration of Internet of Things (IoT), Information, Communications and Technology (ICT), and Software-Defined Wide Area Networks (SD-WAN) is expected to revolutionise how businesses operate.

"These are the growth engines not only for telcos to create more value, but also to ensure that Industry 4.0 will actually be implemented," he explains.

By leveraging these technologies, Ooredoo aims to empower businesses to innovate and enhance their service delivery. This strategic focus not only supports Ooredoo's growth, but also contributes to the broader economic development of Oman, positioning the company as a key enabler of digital transformation in the region.

Through a combination of strategic 5G implementation, a strong emphasis on sustainability and a customer-centric approach, Ooredoo Oman is setting the stage for a new era of growth and innovation. Under the strategic commercial management of Quique Vivas, the company is poised to lead the telecommunications sector in Oman, driving both technological advancement and societal impact.

Wage rise slows raising hopes of further rate cuts

Wage growth has fallen to a two-year low of 5.4 per cent in the UK raising hopes of a further interest rate cut in the autumn, latest figures revealed. Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that average regular pay, not including bonuses, fell from 5.7 per cent to 5.4 per cent in the three months to June.

It was the smallest nominal increase since July 2022 but still represented a 2.4 per cent rise in real terms after inflation is taken into account. Wage growth is closely watched by rate setters on the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee as an indicator of the underlying level of inflation in the economy.

Average wages have been



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The author is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

buoyed by a 9.8 per cent rise in the minimum wage in the spring and will be given a further boost by public sector pay awards agreed by the Labour government including 22 per cent over two years for junior doctors.

Senior economist at the Resolution Foundation think tank, Hannah Slaughter said: "Workers' pay packet continue to grow coming out of the cost-of-living crisis, but the recent strong real wage growth is running out of steam as productivity stagnates and the jobs market cools.

"While monetary policy makers may be less worried now about pay rises fuelling inflation, they should be concerned about the lack of reliable data on the wider state of the labour market."

Head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown, Susannah

Streeter, said: "Red hot wage growth has been doused with another bucket of cold water, but there are still lingering concerns it could ignite again, due to a small dip in unemployment.

It still seems highly likely there won't be another rate cut in September.

The data also revealed a surprise fall in the rate of unemployment, down to 4.2 per cent over the three months to June, from 4.4 per cent over the previous three months. A consensus of economists had predicted a rise to 4.5 per cent for the quarter.

The statistics body said it reported a broad decrease in unemployment among surveyed Britons over 25.

The data also highlighted a "modest increase" in employment for the quarter, in another positive

sign for the UK labour market. Estimates for the number of payrolled employees in the UK increased by 14,000 between May and June 2024, the ONS said. Another decline in vacancy rates also showed continued pressure in the UK job market. The number of vacancies in the UK decreased by 26,000 to 884,000 for the three months to June.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves said: "Today's figures show there is more to do in supporting people into employment because if you can work, you should work." Economists indicated the Bank of England could seek to hold interest rates at 5 per cent – after a reduction in August – on the back of continued wage growth, before resuming cuts later in the year.

Banks and Retailers boosted by UK outlook: Retailers, banks

and housebuilders stood out on a steady London stock market last week, as brightening hopes for the UK economy lent some support. It came from jobs and wages data that was well-received in the financial district, and played into expectations that the Bank of England's second rate cut of the year would come in November.

The FTSE 100 inched seven points lower to 8,203.04, with heavily weighed mining stocks holding it back in line with lacklustre commodity markets. Chilean copper giant, Antofagasta led them lower, down 33p to 1847.

There was a more domestic feel to the top of the market, where some of the best gains came for retailers, mortgage banks and housebuilders, likely to be among the main beneficiaries from a stronger UK economy.

AI is helping to launch new businesses (and not just AI businesses)



SYDNEY EMBER

The author is a business reporter for The New York Times, covering the US economy and the labour market.

and recruitment of early customers.

By the end of the class in May, venture capitalists were descending on Carnegie Mellon's campus in Pittsburgh.

"It felt to me like what I felt like in the mid-2000s, when cloud and mobile happened at the same time," said Ammirati, who is himself an entrepreneur. Generative AI, he believed, could similarly change innovation "by an order of magnitude." For all the excitement over the potential impact of generative AI tools like ChatGPT, it is not yet obvious how or when this technology will begin to measurably affect economic activity. Many businesses, especially smaller businesses, are still trying to figure out how to use it effectively.

Yet for some entrepreneurs, generative AI is already a game changer. It is helping them write intricate code, understand complex legal documents, create posts on social media, edit copy and even answer payroll questions. The result, they say, is that AI allowed them to get their companies off the ground more quickly, and more efficiently, than they would have without it.

The implications could be profound. Startups are a crucial well of job growth and economic resilience. By helping to drive innovation, they also contribute to higher productivity — one of the key promises of generative AI.

Sean Ammirati has been teaching a class on entrepreneurship for more than a decade. A professor at Carnegie Mellon University, Ammirati has groups of mostly graduate students start businesses from scratch over the course of the spring semester. Some of the startups that his 49 students created this year were classic examples of the form: a dating app for couples in long-distance relationships, a personalised fitness app.

But Ammirati also noticed something unusual.

"I have a pretty good sense how fast the progress that students should make in a semester should be," he said. "In 14 years, I've never seen students make the kind of progress that they made this year." And he knew exactly why that was the case. For the first time, Ammirati had encouraged his students to use generative artificial intelligence as part of their process — "think of generative AI as your co-founder," he recalled telling them.

The students began sharing their ideas for use cases on a dedicated Slack channel. They used generative AI tools such ChatGPT, GitHub Copilot and FlowiseAI to help them with tasks including marketing, coding, product development



Sean Ammirati, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University, in Sarasota, USA.

the medical field," he said. "I didn't even know where to start with regards to getting help." So instead, he turned to ChatGPT, which was gaining widespread attention. He initially used the technology to answer basic questions such as how to use a particular kind of dye for the glove skins, eventually asking the tool to handle more complicated tasks including coming up with a survey for customer feedback, translating patent documents into understandable terms and deciphering legal agreements for trade shows.

While the company is not yet profitable, Bright said using ChatGPT gave him the confidence he needed to start Skittenz without having to pay lawyers or other experts. "It's scary when you're taking your

savings and putting it into a new idea when you have no footing," he said. "But to be able to harness the whole power of the Internet into a bit of a conversation gives you some reassurance." Little data exists at this point on how many startups are using AI and whether the technology is helping them to get more quickly on the path to hiring and, ideally, profitability. That is partly because the intersection of entrepreneurial activity and generative AI has only recently emerged as an area of study for economists. But research suggests that newer businesses are, at a minimum, more inclined to experiment with the technology.

According to a working paper published in April by the National Bureau of Economic

Research, AI use was higher among young firms. Applications like generative AI may be attractive to young and small firms, the paper's authors wrote, because they are "general-purpose technologies" that are not expensive to use.

And Gusto, a small-business payroll and benefits platform, found that roughly one-fifth of businesses created last year said they were using generative AI to more efficiently carry out tasks including market research, contract reviews, bookkeeping and job postings. Liz Wilke, principal economist at Gusto, thinks use could transform the startup landscape.

"There is every reason to believe that is the likely path — that businesses are going to get to profitability faster and they will get to scale faster and that they will actually be a little more stable in the end," she said.

Jamie Steven, an entrepreneur in Greenwater, Washington, seems to be on this track.

Steven used generative AI to learn about some of the basics of running a business when he was trying to start an application last summer that would show users the quality and conditions of their Internet connection in an easy-to-interpret interface. He asked ChatGPT questions on topics including equity in startups and payroll. Although the technology would sometimes produce suspect or non-sensical answers to the point at which he adopted a mantra, "Don't trust and verify," its ability to provide succinct summaries helped him feel more informed before he spoke to experts.

"I feel like I can ask the stupid questions of the chat tool without being embarrassed," said Steven, who previously held senior positions at Ookla, which runs popular sites Speedtest and Downdetector.

He and his engineers have also used GitHub's Copilot to help them more quickly write code for the app, called Orb.net, a move that he said was instrumental in building the business faster. He has recently hired several people, raised \$700,000 from angel investors and aims to introduce the app publicly in the next several months.

"Would I have been able to have done that had I not had access to those tools?" Steven said. "Probably not." One piece of the startup landscape that is showing signs of more measurable change because of artificial intelligence is a boom in AI-related new business. Investors are pouring billions of dollars into AI startups, and some research has shown that businesses originating from AI-related new-business applications over the years had greater potential than others for job creation, payroll and revenue.

But many entrepreneurs are also using artificial intelligence to help turn their ideas into viable business concepts. Erik Noyes, an entrepreneurship professor at Babson College in Massachusetts, said the technology, in effect, gives startup founders the opportunity to multiply their intelligence cheaply.

"Entrepreneurs never have enough resources," he said. "You could look at this as a bootstrapping technology — do more with less." E. Darren Liddell spent years working in non-profit financial coaching, helping lower-income people make good financial decisions. He had always wanted to start a business and finally did last summer, creating My Money Story, a financial coaching company for people of colour with lower incomes. One of the company's programmes pairs up users to help each other meet financial goals. In the beginning, users were matched manually. But about six months ago, Liddell, who lives in New York City, became curious about using artificial intelligence to make the pairings, which he and his small team would then review before making them final.

Though there were some privacy issues to iron out involving how the AI technology would incorporate user information, the idea was a success, Liddell said. Above all, the tool saved the company time, and meant it did not have to hire an intern or entry-level employee to do the matching.

"We're a startup, so our money is quite lean," he said, "and every dollar really counts."

— The New York Times

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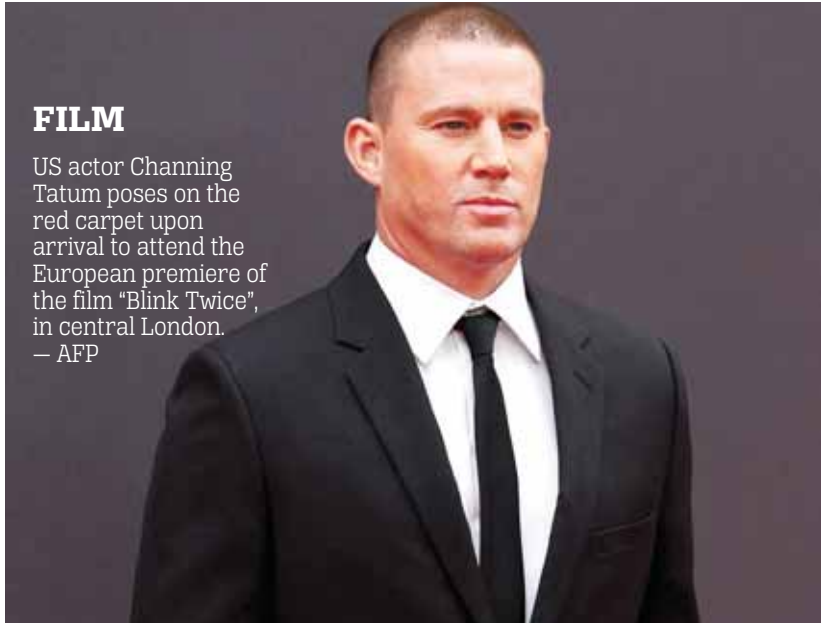
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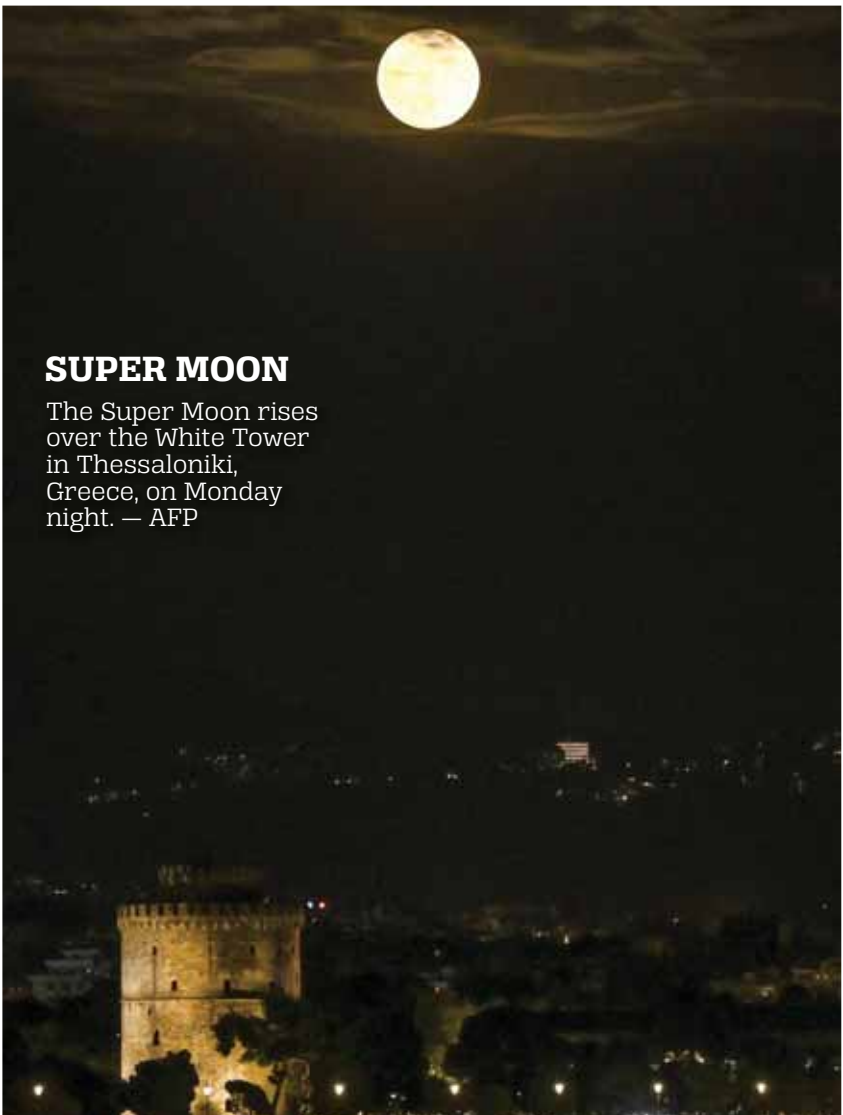
FESTIVAL

A dancer performs during the parade of the 26th African Diaspora Flowers Festival in San Jose. The Costa Rican population has about 30 per cent of Afro-descendant genetic heritage, mainly in the Costa Rican Caribbean. — AFP



FILM

US actor Channing Tatum poses on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the European premiere of the film "Blink Twice", in central London. — AFP



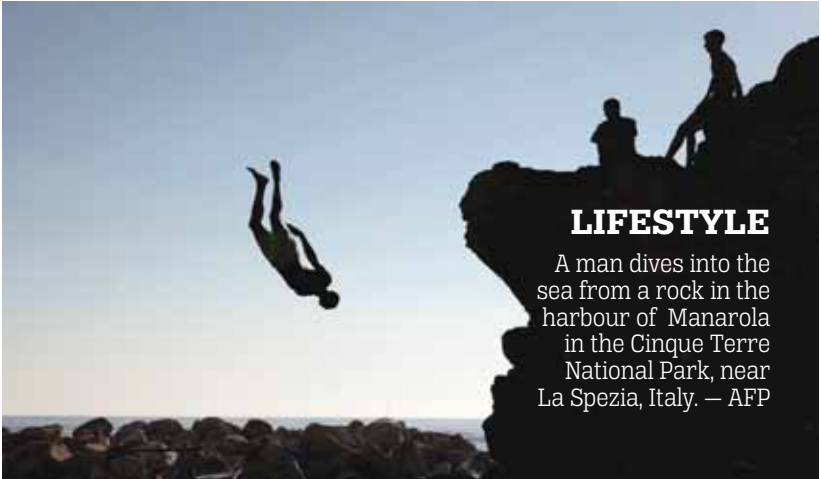
SUPER MOON

The Super Moon rises over the White Tower in Thessaloniki, Greece, on Monday night. — AFP



CULTURE

Traditional musicians perform in front of the historic Buddhist Temple of the Tooth, as part of celebrations to mark the Buddhist festival of Esala Perahera, in the ancient hill capital of Kandy. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

A man dives into the sea from a rock in the harbour of Manarola in the Cinque Terre National Park, near La Spezia, Italy. — AFP

art & life

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OMAN’S NEW WELLNESS TREND EMBRACES ANCIENT SOUND THERAPY

Sound healing therapy, with its ancient roots, has been growing in popularity in Oman. In this feature, a local specialist and coach, Mazoon al Zadjali, shares how she came to embrace the trend and how individuals have experienced its physical, emotional and spiritual benefits... **P20**



Rare Viking treasures discovered in Denmark

SEVEN ANCIENT SILVER bracelets which show the staggering breadth of the Vikings' reach have been found in Denmark, a museum said on Monday.

One of the bracelets — which date from the ninth century — was inspired by Russian or Ukrainian models while others were of a Scandinavian type that later influenced bangles in Ireland.

The hoard was found close to Aarhus, and showed how Denmark's second city was connected "to the East and the West", historian Kasper Andersen, of the city's Moesgaard Museum, said.

"These are early specimens, and it helps us understand better how the Vikings in this part of Scandinavia operated in a global world, from western Asia to the North Atlantic," he added.

At their height, Viking trading networks stretched from Greenland and the fringes of North America to Turkiye and Central Asia.

"It's the first time we have found a hoard of this kind so close to Aarhus so it's both uncommon and very interesting," Andersen said.

The pieces were both used as jewellery and as a form of currency with each adhering to a weight standard.

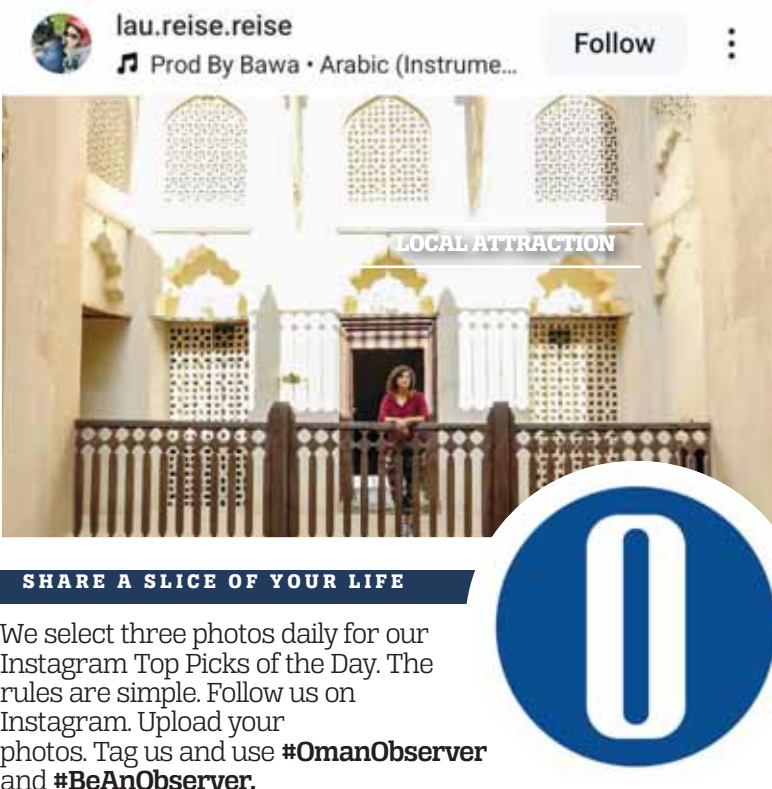
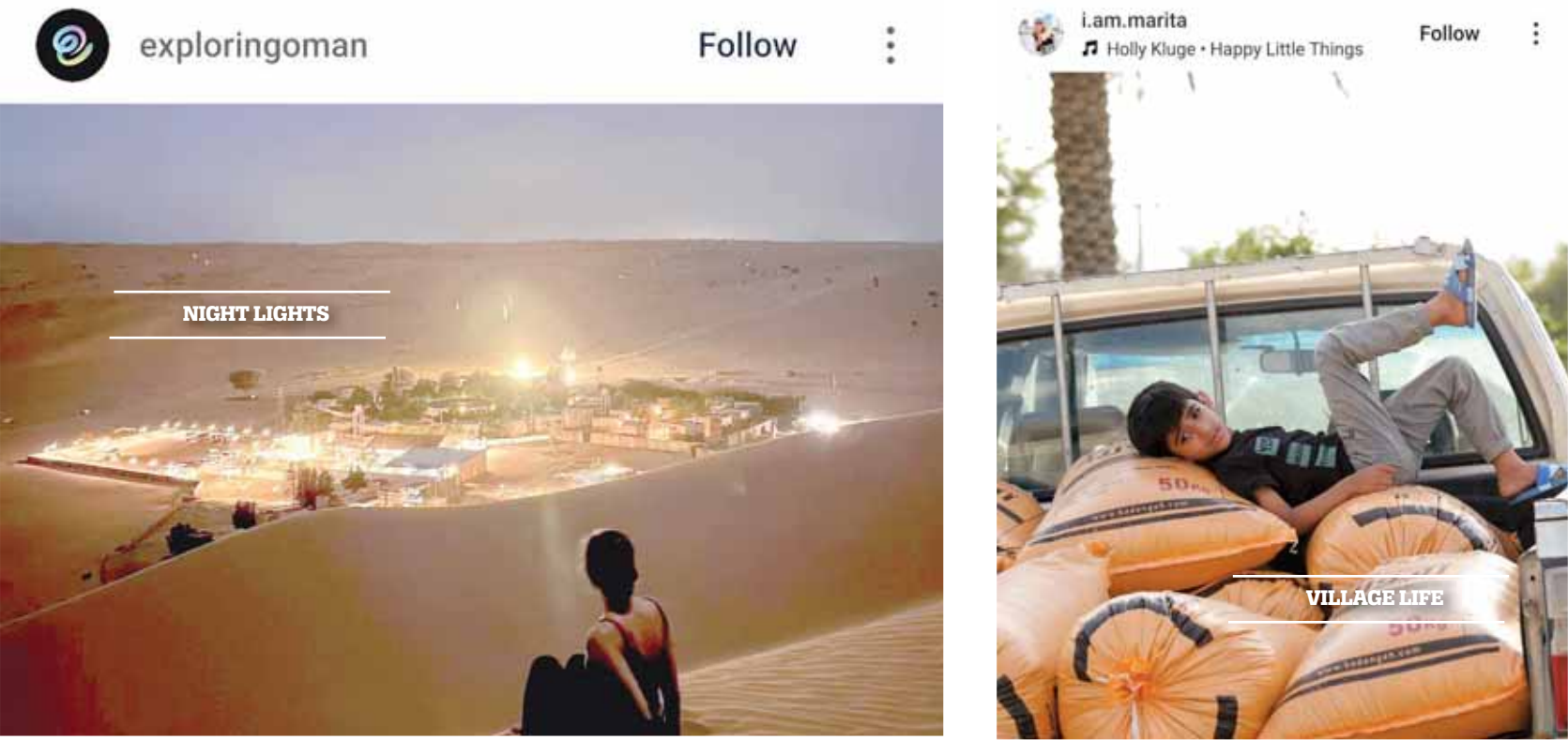
The discovery was made earlier this year by a 22-year-old archaeology student armed with a metal detector.

Gustav Bruunsgaard found a single bracelet on a site north of Aarhus before returning a few days later and discovering six more.

"We did an excavation on the site but didn't discover any other artefacts," Andersen said.

"The guess is that someone buried them to hide them and never picked them up," the historian added. — **AFP**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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THE BRITISH MUSEUM IS TRYING TO RECOVER GEMS, AND ITS REPUTATION

A YEAR HAS PASSED since the British Museum said it had fired a curator for stealing from its supposedly lock-tight store-rooms and selling the artefacts online. Ever since, the museum has struggled to deal with the fallout from the scandal, which has battered its reputation as a protector of world treasures.

Hartwig Fischer, the museum's director, resigned. Foreign governments used the uproar to renew claims for the return of artefacts from the collection. And the museum sued a former curator to try to get back the items, which include gems and carved glass.

Nobody has been criminally charged, but while a police investigation continues, the museum has asked an eight-person team based in its Greek and Roman department to secure the return of about 1,500 missing artefacts.

The team is searching for the items online, in public auctions and in other museums' collections, and contacting antiquities dealers who may have bought the artefacts and then sold them to collectors.

In recent interviews, team members said they were making progress but might never recover every lost item.

"I don't think we've ever said that we won't get everything back, but I suspect we won't," said Thomas Harrison, who leads the Greek and Roman department.

So far, Harrison said, his



team had secured the return of 634 items, leaving more than 850 missing. Harrison said he was "fairly confident" that another 100 gems would rejoin the museum "in the next year or so."

The poor quality of the museum's records was a major obstacle for his team, Harrison said. Because many of the missing items were not especially valuable, officials had never fully catalogued them. Dick Ellis, a former head of Scotland Yard's art and antiquities squad, who is not involved with the inquiry, said the lack of photographs and incomplete paper or digital records would also slow down

the police investigation. If you can't prove ownership, he said, "you don't have a victim."

"To be honest," Ellis added, "the case is a bit of a nightmare. I'm not surprised no one's been charged."

The British Museum says the curator at the heart of the incident is Peter Higgs, who briefly ran the Greek and Roman department. In March, the museum won a civil case against Higgs, compelling him to return any stolen items and explain the whereabouts of other artefacts that the museum says he sold online.

Higgs did not attend the hearing in London and has never spoken publicly about the



thefts, but court documents say that he disputes the accusations. The British Museum declined to comment on whether Higgs complied with the court's order, and Higgs did not respond to interview requests.

Each member of the recovery team has a different area of focus.

Some search the museum's archives to work out what is actually missing. Ollie Croker, a project curator, said that many of the items had once belonged to Charles Townley, an aristocrat whose well-catalogued antiquities collection was acquired by the museum in the

early 19th century. Croker said that one of his main tasks was comparing items in the store-rooms with Townley's records and looking for discrepancies.

Other members focus on tracking down the missing items. Sara Aly, the recovery team's art market expert, said she has scoured auction records and spoken with dealers who might have traded them. Those investigations could be twisty, Aly said. One recently returned gem had passed through "seven hands," including dealers in Britain, Switzerland and the Middle East, she added.

The museum is paying collectors the same amount that they spent on the missing items, Harrison said; everybody the museum has approached so far accepted that offer.

The team is in regular contact with police, Harrison added, but is not trying to gather evidence. "There's very clear lines between what we're doing and what they're doing," Harrison said. (Police declined to comment.)

Morale seemed high in the team's offices, and Harrison said he worked hard to keep it up. Paloma Ley, the team's administrator, recently obtained a metal handbell for staff members to ring whenever they made a breakthrough.

"There's a need to express joy," Harrison said.

At a staff meeting, Harrison gathered with his team in a book-lined room in the Greek and Roman department, where they updated one another on their efforts to secure items from Denmark, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

Harrison was about to end the meeting after 30 minutes when he remembered two things to celebrate: Aly had just located a missing purple gem engraved with a likeness of the goddess Venus, and Ley had found another gem of interest on an auction house website.

Harrison asked Ley to get the bell, and the two team members took turns lifting it above their shoulders and ringing it. They looked a little embarrassed but swung the bell heartily. — NYT

LIFESTYLE



Not even the inside of your fridge is safe from decorating

THERE'S ORGANISING a fridge, and then there's fridgescaping: the art of decorating a fridge's interior.

When Lynzi Judish restocks her refrigerator, for example, she doesn't just fill it with colour-coded glass containers. Instead, Judish, a 37-year-old lifestyle blogger in Hopewell Junction, New York, creates a little world within the 37-degree space. Milk is poured into a pink paisley-printed acrylic pitcher; butter is placed in a quaint hedgehog dish; zucchini and carrots are neatly arranged in a rattan basket; and red cherries overflow in a white ceramic pedestal bowl.

Throughout, herbs and flowers like echinacea sprout up in vases alongside fairy figurines lit up by floral twinkle lights. It's Judish's enchanted forest-themed fridge, and it took her about three hours to assemble it. "There's just a lot of little details in that one," she said.

Judish first gave fridgescaping a try about three months ago after long admiring other fridges she'd seen on TikTok. Now it's a hobby that she takes pleasure in. "I love looking at the work that I've done," she said. "I feel a lot of pride in it."

Fridgescaping sits at the intersection of home organisation and interior design. Fruit and vegetables are displayed prominently in decorative bowls, rather than in Tupperware; drinks become part of the décor; and leftovers and practical items like condiments are tucked in the back. Videos of these curated interiors have a niche audience on TikTok where they garner thousands, if not millions, of views.

Fridgescaping may seem novel, but the word first appeared in a 2011 blog post — though the original blogger's fridge was more subdued than the ones on TikTok today. People have long aestheticised their kitchens, whether through a stylish pantry or a freezer filled with custom ice cubes.

Even before social media romanticised every inch of the home, the contents of people's fridges have captured people's curiosities — a 1950s Frigidaire ad displaying cakes and poultry on the shelves, for example, or a celebrity's beverage-packed fridge on the show "MTV Cribs."

"Aesthetics play this huge role in our everyday life, and I think fridgescaping is that extension of the visual culture where we want everything, even the insides of our fridges, to be a little Instagram-worthy," said Heather Goerzen, the director for content and design at Havenly, an online design service in Denver.

An over-the-top fridge may not be for everyone — just read some of the comments on social media — but organising a fridge in an aesthetically pleasing way is one of those "small, easy wins," Goerzen said. "And visual satisfaction can produce within us that little dopamine hit."

Sometimes people add framed photos of loved ones or pets. While this may be unconventional, Nonnahs Driskill — the founder of Get Organized Already, a professional organising service in Pasadena, California — understands why people do it. "If something really makes you happy, it doesn't need to be on public display," said Driskill, who puts pictures for her clients in surprising places like closets or medicine cabinets.

Another benefit of fridgescaping, Judish said, is the reduction of food waste. She said she was "more excited" to eat her produce, because her food is on display when she opens the fridge door and is easy to find, rather than wilting in a drawer.

"Because I love how the refrigerator looks so much, it makes me want to make sure I use everything in it," Judish said.

While Judish doesn't have children, she does receive comments from sceptical parents. "So many parents comment that they could never do it in their home, which I understand," she said. "Kids complicate things."

In West Palm Beach, Florida, Julianne Brown, an artist, said her fridgescaping had made the fridge — and especially the produce within it — more accessible to her three young children. "We eat first with our eyes," Brown, 31, said, "so when you can see it and it's pretty, I think that makes it easier for them and easier for me."

For some people, fridgescaping is a creative outlet. Tiffany Bishop, a 31-year-old event decorator, has a minimalist home in Naperville, Illinois, but takes a maximalist approach to her refrigerator. "Since the fridge is enclosed, I can let out that Lisa Frank inner child," Bishop said, referring to the brand known for its cheerily decorated school supplies (and that has now expanded to offer cookie dough, which Bishop keeps in her fridge).

She started decorating her fridge five years ago and incorporates seasonal elements, like porcelain eggs and decorative mushrooms for Easter and rhinestones for her birthday, in July.

"If an artist's medium is painting, they'd go to a canvas," Bishop said. "For me, mine is my refrigerator." — NYT

SOUND HEALING THERAPY IS NOT JUST A TREND BUT A MEANINGFUL PRACTICE THAT RESONATES WITH MANY IN OMAN. ITS ABILITY TO ADDRESS PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING MAKES IT A VALUABLE ADDITION TO THE COUNTRY'S WELLNESS LANDSCAPE.

OMAN'S NEW WELLNESS TREND EMBRACES ANCIENT SOUND THERAPY

BY SIHAM AL SAIDI

In the serene corners of Oman, where the echoes of ancient civilisations in Africa and Asia resonate, a new wellness trend is quietly emerging, particularly in Muscat. The soothing sounds of singing bowls, gongs and chimes are becoming an integral part of Omani wellness culture.

Sound healing therapy, an ancient practice now gaining renewed popularity, is being embraced in a country that deeply values its rich cultural heritage and is open to both traditional and alternative healing methods.

Increasingly, wellness centres across Oman are offering sound healing sessions, both private and group, attracting individuals seeking holistic approaches to health and well-being.

Sound healing therapy, which uses sound frequencies to harmonise the mind, body and spirit, is gaining global recognition, and Oman is no exception. This holistic practice involves using various instruments – such as singing bowls, gongs and tuning forks – to produce vibrations that promote healing. These vibrations help reduce stress, enhance mental clarity and foster emotional and physical well-being. Rooted in the belief that sound influences our energetic fields, sound healing seeks to bring balance and harmony to the individual.

Mazoon al Zadjali, a specialist and coach who trained in sound healing in Nepal and offers practical and consultation sessions in Muscat, explains: "Sound healing is a powerful therapy that combines healing sounds, music and instruments to enhance our multidimensional well-being. It creates a beautiful experience where all layers of our energy field – body, mind and soul – are awakened gently and lovingly."

When asked about the instruments she uses and her approach to conducting sessions, Mazoon shares, "Each session is unique and tailored to the client's needs. My primary instrument is the handpan, a handmade instrument, along with Tibetan singing bowls. I also use a variety of handmade instruments such as the rain stick, wave sound, drum and tree sound, all of which produce natural sounds. The session begins with a brief consultation to understand the client's needs, followed by breathing tech-



niques and meditation to induce relaxation before the therapy session, which includes the use of Tibetan singing bowls. We conclude with a meditation to close the session."

To gain deeper insights into the impact of sound healing therapy, we spoke with three individuals in Oman who have experienced its benefits firsthand.

Fatma al Harthi, a 35-year-old teacher, turned to sound healing during a period of intense stress. "I was overwhelmed with work and personal responsibilities. A friend recommended sound healing, and though I was sceptical at first, my first session was transformative. The soothing sounds of the singing bowls enveloped me, and I felt a profound sense of calm. Over time, I noticed improved sleep and a more positive outlook on life."

Ahmed al Busaidi, a 40-year-old engineer, sought sound healing for chronic back pain. "I had tried various treatments, but nothing provided lasting relief. During the sessions, the vibrations of the tuning forks resonated deeply with my body. The pain started to diminish, and I felt more relaxed. It was a holistic healing experience that addressed not just the physical pain but also emotional stress."

Layla al Saidi, a 28-year-old artist, embraced sound healing as a means of self-exploration. "I wanted to connect more deeply with myself and my creative energies. The gong baths I attended allowed me to enter a meditative state, where I experienced vivid visions and heightened creativity. It was a journey within, revealing aspects of myself I hadn't recognised. Sound healing opened new pathways for my art and personal growth."

Mazoon adds, "Sound healing triggers a relaxation response that counters many symptoms caused by chronic stress, helping to balance our entire being."

Sound healing therapy is not just a trend but a meaningful practice that resonates with many in Oman. Its ability to address physical, emotional and spiritual well-being makes it a valuable addition to the country's wellness landscape. As more individuals like Fatma, Ahmed and Layla discover the transformative power of sound, the future of sound healing therapy in Oman looks promising. Through their stories, we witness the profound impact this ancient practice can have, inviting us all to listen to the healing sounds within and around us.

Mazoon shares this message with readers: "Your well-being is of utmost importance. There are people around you who can help you heal and overcome your challenges. Remember to dedicate time to yourself, even if it's just one hour a day. That hour can relax your mind and help you grow stronger. Life presents us with many challenges, but never underestimate the power of healing."

For those interested in learning more or scheduling a session, Mazoon can be contacted through her Instagram page @theinnerharmony for group or private sessions.