



DRIVING ALONG WADI AGHEER ROAD IN SALALAH IS A VISUAL TREAT FOR TOURISTS

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology is making all efforts to plan, design and construct roads in Dhofar to keep abreast with the economic development in the Sultanate. Wadi Agheer Road in the Wilayat of Salalah is one of the amazing roads through which tourists cross the green forests towards the peak of mountains. **>A4**



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Omanis advised not to visit Bangladesh

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Given the tense situation in the Republic of Bangladesh due to the protests by students, the foreign ministry has advised Omanis not to visit the country.

"In view of the current security situation in the Republic of Bangladesh, the foreign ministry would like to draw the attention of the citizens that it is not appropriate for them to visit during this period," the Ministry added.

The government of Bangladesh is expected to officially accept a court ruling on Tuesday that would see its quota system for government jobs drastically scaled back.

Clashes between armed police and student-led protests over the



quotas in recent weeks resulted in the deaths of almost 150 people and some 2,500 arrests.

The quota system stipulated that 30% of government positions must be held by the descendants of those who fought in Bangladesh's war of independence from India in 1971. Smaller quotas were in place for women and other disadvantaged groups.

OVER 32,000 SEATS ON OFFER FOR NEW ACADEMIC SESSION

The number includes scholarships offered by the government for study in local institutions and institutions abroad



MUSCAT: As many as 32,625 seats have been offered during academic year 2024-2025 to eligible students in government and private higher education institutions.

The number includes scholarships offered by the government for study in local institutions and institutions abroad, in addition to grants provided by private sector establishments and friendly countries.

Ahmed Mohammed Al Azri, Director General of the Higher Education Admission Centre at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, said that the number of academic seats in government higher education institutions stood at 20,449.

Meanwhile, 11,573 seats were offered through local scholarships and grants in private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, while the total number



Ahmed Mohammed Al Azri, Director General of the Higher Education Admission Centre

of external scholarships (for study abroad) stood at 603.

Al Azri pointed out that new study programmes have been initiated in the context of scholarships abroad and internal scholarships in private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman in various specialisations, including artificial intelligence (AI), sustainable systems engineering, cybersecurity, emergency medical services, visual communication design, port management and sustainable shipping, and business administration in the sub-specialisations of International Business and e-business.

Al Azri added that the period set for amending specialisations will begin on 24 July 2024 and end at 2:30 pm on Sunday 4 August 2024. **-ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Over 23,000 visit Musandam sites

1 The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism stated that the number of visitors to castles, forts and historic monuments in the Musandam Governorate in 2023 reached 25,009 while the number of visitors to various sites until the end of June of the current year reached 23,535. **>A2**

OMAN Mixed reactions to Indian budget

2 The Indian expatriates in Oman had mixed reactions to the budget presented by the Narendra Modi-led government on Tuesday. While many believed that the budget failed to address the long-standing demands of NRIs, others welcomed the cut in duties for gold and silver. **>A3**

WORLD Kamala Harris gets nomination

3 Vice President Kamala Harris has secured enough Democratic delegates to clinch the party's nomination for president, as per the CNN. Her momentum towards the nomination has been bolstered by widespread support from key factions within the Democratic Party. **>A7**

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NIZWA

Entrance project nearly complete



Times News Service

NIZWA: Al Dakhiliyah Governorate is in the process of completing the final phase of Nizwa entrance project at a cost of over OMR 1.680 million and for a length of 3,500 metres for both the courses.

The project's entry road extends from Firq Bridge to the traffic signals at Firq exchange.

The project of development of the entry road to the Wilayat of Nizwa falls within the plan for development of the governorates and aimed to increase the landscaping works in the wilayat of Nizwa.

The project includes walkways, shades, sports area and green areas. Sheikh Hilal bin Said Al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, said that the project has been awarded to one of the local companies, which commenced works in July, last year. The project would contribute to the economic and tourism activity in the governorate and create a new space for entertainment, he added.

He said that the project includes landscaping works over an area of 23,000 sq. metres, 240 shade trees and 1,930 plants, walkways, cycling and sports area, parking lots, a modern irrigation system and a fountain among other services.

Over 23,000 visit historic Musandam monuments

Specialists periodically visit private museums and archaeological sites to evaluate these museums, provide them with the necessary support, and ensure the quality of services are given to visitors

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism stated that the number of visitors to castles, forts and historic monuments in Musandam Governorate during the past year 2023 reached 25,009. The number of visitors until the end of June of the current year 2024 reached 23,535.

Maryam bint Ahmed Al Shehhi, head of the Craft Heritage Section of the Heritage and Tourism Department in Musandam Governorate, said that the historic monuments in the governorate receive great interest among visitors coming from across the globe.

It differs from one landmark to another through its historical vocabulary, which is the "Khasab" and "Al-Kamazra" forts in the Wilayat of Khasab, the fort of Bukha in the Wilayat of Bukha, and the fort of Dibba in the Wilayat of Dibba.

Al Shehhi added that offering Khasab Fort, Al Kamazara Fort, Bukha Fort and Dibba Fort in Musandam Governorate for investment by individuals and the private sector contributes to providing the opportunity for institutions and individuals to operate castles and forts in optimal and innovative ways while providing job opportunities.

Al Shehhi stressed that this trend comes within the tenth five-year plan of the Sultanate of Oman, which made it a priority to develop tourist heritage sites and cultural components to create a sustainable investment in heritage, culture and arts and contribute to the growth of the national economy by offering a group of heritage and tourist sites such as castles, forts, museums and ancient neighbourhoods for sustainable tourism investment from by the private sector or through partnership between the two sectors to provide diverse and different tourism experiences.

She explained that the administration works, through coordi-



men, and enhancing the talent spread there by introducing the identity and originality of Omani crafts.

Bassam bin Mohammed Al Kamzari, head of the Antiquities and Museums Department of the Heritage and Tourism Department in Musandam Governorate, said that work is underway to develop archaeological sites of exceptional value and make them tourist destinations. Construction of the Dibba Archaeological Visitor Center began at the beginning of this year, with funding from OQ and the Musandam Governor's Office.

This site was discovered in 2012 and is one of the most important archaeological sites in the Sultanate of Oman dating back to the first millennium BC.

Early Iron Age

Bassam Al Kamzari explained that the site contains many archaeological tombs dating back to the early Iron Age, more than 190 skeletons, archaeological finds, pottery, stone and bronze vessels, and gold and bronze jewelry.

Al Kamzari stressed that specialists from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in cooperation with archaeological missions, are making great efforts through construction and excavation work at the site.

He pointed out that there are ongoing efforts to support and develop private museums by supporting their owners and constructing modern buildings for them or restore archaeological sites.

These buildings and sites contain rare artifacts to be displayed prominently and preserved from any external factors that may cause damage to the pieces and to be new additions to the public museum system in the Sultanate of Oman.

Specialists periodically visit private museums and archaeological sites to evaluate these museums, provide them with the necessary support, and ensure the quality of services provided to visitors.

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Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Labour

TENDER
ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Labour announces the following tenders:

Tender No.	Tender title	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date
30/2024	Supply and installation of an elevator in the Directorate General of Labour in Dhofar Governorate	Sunday 11/08/2024 2:00 p.m.	Sunday 01/09/2024 10 a.m.
31/2024	Providing a system for monitoring the performance of electronic systems and central devices	Sunday 11/08/2024 2:00 p.m.	Sunday 01/09/2024 10 a.m.

- Specialized establishments may obtain the tenders' documents online through the following link, starting from Wednesday 24/07/2024 at 08:00 a.m.: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Bids shall be submitted online.
- Bids shall be opened at 11:00 am on Sunday 01/09/2024.

(The Ministry shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid)

labour_OMAN

SUMMER SPORTS

Muscat gears up for 'Sports Spark'

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Muscat Governorate, in cooperation with the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center, will organise a media day on Wednesday, July 24, 2024, about the 'Sports Spark' sporting event during the summer period.

The event will include a group of activities, surprises and exciting competitions which will begin on Thursday, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center, and will continue for a month until August 24, 2024.

The Media Day includes the participation of an elite group of media professionals from various local media bodies, radio and television.

In the presence of several representatives from Muscat Governorate as the event's organiser with the event's strategic partners. It that aims primarily to present an innovative concept for the best utilisation of summer sports that focuses on children, youth and families.

The media day will include an introduction to the event and its

purposes for Muscat Governorate. As well as, visiting particular sites for activities.

Media professionals will also be involved in the event by holding the event's specialised version and enjoyable competitions. In addition, to involve them in the mini media tournament that will include various sports activities.

The "Sports Spark" event will give participants the opportunity to meet famous players and coaches.

This contributes to open the way for ambitious competitors to exchange sports experiences and knowledge. This event is appropriate for all family members. It also is an ideal opportunity to interact and enjoy summer activities in an atmosphere of enjoyable fun and entertainment.

The event will include a summer camp for children from 6 to 14 years old. It combines fun and educational experiences from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. All facilities are available to the public from 2:00 pm to 12:00 am. Additionally, there will be two special days for women on August 3 and 17 during

the event month.

The Muscat Governorate pursues, through "Sports Spark" event to stabilise effective partnership in the entertainment sector with concerned authorities, in addition to encourage local sporting tourism as an organised family destination under one roof that meets aspirations.

The "Sport Spark" event is an implementation of the concept of health and physical fitness's promotion, and encourage the sports' practice between community members.

Additionally, it offers an opportunity for the public to practice their favourite sports. The event includes various sporting activities and initiatives. These activities include football, badminton, basketball, table tennis, volleyball, ninja training, and other popular sports.

Muscat Governorate invites community members and those interested in visiting the event and participation to book through the official website "www.sport-sparkoman.com", or through WhatsApp number 79006052.

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Mixed reactions among NRIs to Modi government’s budget

The budget, presented by Nirmala Sitharaman, has sparked varied opinions among NRIs

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Indian expatriate community had mixed reactions to the first budget presented by the Narendra Modi-led government on Tuesday.

While many believed that the budget failed to address long-standing demands of NRIs, there were provisions related to employment, consumption boosts, and support for rural and MSME sectors that could invigorate NRI businessmen. The budget, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, has sparked varied opinions among NRIs.

R. Madhusoodanan, a financial



R Madhusoodanan



Piyush Jain

expert based in Muscat, expressed disappointment in his remarks to the *Times of Oman*.

“The Indian expat community had high hopes from the new government, expecting substantial reforms and measures addressing their unique concerns. With Indian diaspora remittances reaching over INR one lakh crores (US\$1.25 billion) last year—the highest in the world—expectations were justifiably high. Among the key demands were comprehensive social security measures and rationalisation of exorbitant airfares. However, the Union Budget left many NRIs somewhat disappointed.”

Madhusoodanan, a former State Bank of India official, acknowledged the budget’s pro-development agenda within India, focusing on crucial areas such as agriculture, employment generation, youth development, and both urban and rural development.

“The agricultural sector, considered the backbone of India’s economy, stands to benefit from several new measures aimed at boosting productivity and sustainability,” he said.

He welcomed the reduction in customs duties on gold, silver, platinum, and mobile phones.

“The reduction in customs du-

ties is a welcome step and has been warmly received by both industry leaders and the general public, in particular, NRIs. Given that a significant portion of India’s forex is used for importing oil, gold, and electronic items, this move could lead to increased imports, potentially impacting the balance of trade,” Madhusoodanan explained.

He also noted that the “abolition of the Angel Tax” as a significant win for startups and entrepreneurs and mentioned that a 5% reduction in corporate tax for foreign companies is expected to attract higher investments into the country.

He said: “The budget did offer some respite for the salaried class and pensioners with enhanced exemptions on personal income tax. However, others will have to contend with rate adjustments in the tax slabs, with no relief for those sticking to the old tax regime. The basic exemption limits for both old and new regimes remain unchanged. “The stock market reacted negatively to the budget, primarily due to the upward revision in the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) and changes in short-term and long-term capital gains taxes. The Indian rupee has also depreciated

against the dollar, indicating that the markets may take some time to stabilize as they absorb these new developments,” he added.

Piyush Jain, Group CFO of Al Tasnim Enterprises LLC, also shared his thoughts with the Times of Oman. “The first budget of the Modi 3.0 government sent a strong message on employment and skilling, consumption boost, and support for rural and MSME sectors. Digitalisation and fiscal controls remain the focus as well.”

He highlighted two perspectives for the NRI community regarding the budget.

“For NRI businessmen and large NRI-owned companies, the budget is likely to boost overall investment in India and open up more opportunities in MSME, agriculture, and skills development sectors. NRI businessmen should explore synergies in these focused sectors to fuel growth by investing in these specific areas apart from manufacturing, automobile, semi-conductors, EV, and defence sectors,” Jain said.

However, for the workforce and salaried-class NRIs, the budget has “not brought any major good news as it proposes higher taxes

on certain capital gains for non-residents, such as listed equities. Long-term capital gains (LTCG) have increased to 12.5% from 10%, and short-term capital gains (STCG) to 20% from 15%,” he noted. “Additionally, the withdrawal of indexation benefits for properties may have huge tax implications upon selling them, although the overall tax rate has been reduced from 20% to 12.5%. The INR 1.25 lakh LTCG non-taxable ceiling has been raised from INR 1 lakh, giving some breather to taxpayers,” he said.

P. Samir, another NRI based in Sohar, welcomed the budget’s focus on job creation and skill development programmes for millions of youth. “These measures are designed to maintain fiscal discipline while encouraging digital and infrastructural growth. We welcome the new budget’s focus on manufacturing capacity,” Samir said.

He welcomed the reduction in gold duty from 15 percent to 6 percent, calling it positive news for NRIs. “Cut in duties on mobile phones, chargers, and silver will stimulate consumer demand and benefit domestic manufacturers by reducing input costs,” he added.

SCOTLAND

RAO band conducts music training programme

EDINBURGH: The Royal Army of Oman (RAO)’s Music Band conducted a training programme as part of its participation in an international music competition, being held in Scotland, the United Kingdom, and will continue until 19 August 2024.

Knockouts at the international contest will be held in five Scottish cities where music bands from different countries of the world will compete.

The training programme includes showcasing skills at playing musical instruments and presenting different melodies, in addition to military discipline and infantry shows to be held in preparation for the competitions in which the RAO band will participate.

Col. Ahmed Salim Al Shukairi, Director of RAO Band, said that the event was an opportunity to demonstrate the high standards of Omani military music, military discipline and the professionalism of the musicians.

He added that the gathering allowed members of the RAO band to meet international teams, exchange experiences and gain more skills. “We look forward to the RAO band winning advanced places in different competitions in accordance with the new classification set by the organizing body,” said Col. Al Shukairi.



MUSIC COMPETITION: The training programme includes showcasing skills at playing musical instruments and presenting different melodies. -ONA

He pointed out that the organizing body upgraded the RAO Band’s classification due to its excellent performance at the same international competition in 2023. -ONA



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Driving along Wadi Agheer road in Salalah is a visual treat for tourists



SALALAH: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology in Dhofar Governorate is building a number of roads as per the state-of-the-art technical specifications.

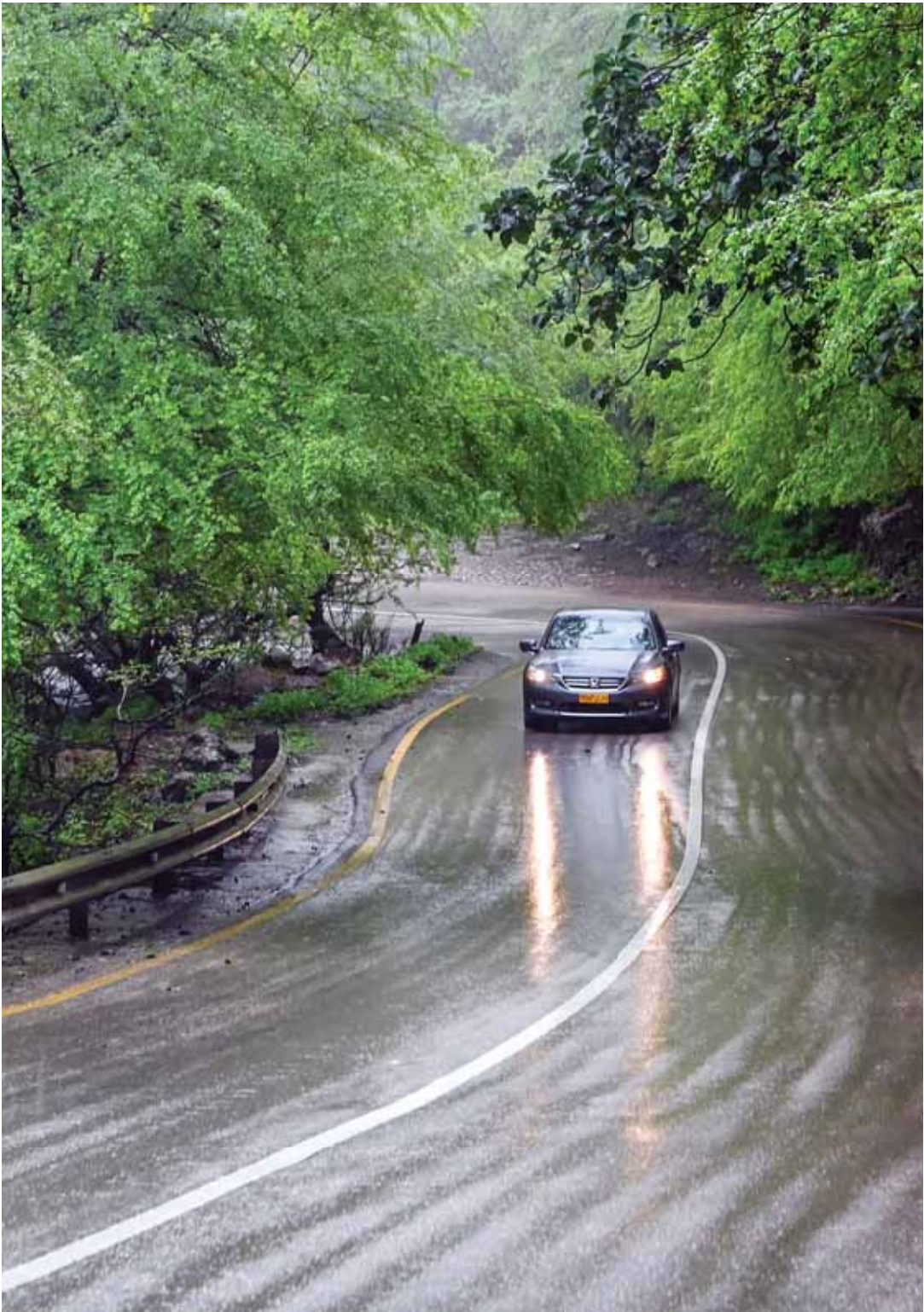
The ministry is making all efforts to plan, design and construct roads in Dhofar to keep abreast with the economic development in the Sultanate.

Wadi Agheer Road in the Wilayat of Salalah is one of the amazing roads and tourism sites through which tourists cross green forests to the green plain areas on the peak of mountains.

Citizens in Dhofar Governorates and tourists visit Wadi Agheer to enjoy the beautiful natural scenes at the roadside between Salalah and the mountain areas, for relaxation.

The road and the high mountains at the roadside attract hikers and adventurers.

Wadi Agheer Road is close to Ain Sahalnoot tourism site, a natural spring with eye-catching views at the spring at the foot of the wadi. -ONA



New boarding cut-off time at Muscat airport

Starting August 4, 2024, the cut-off time for passenger processing will be extended from 20 minutes to 40 minutes before the scheduled departure

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Travellers using Muscat International Airport are advised to arrive earlier than usual due to a significant change in the Passenger Boarding System (PBS) processing times. Starting Sunday, August 4, 2024, the cut-off time for passenger pro-



cessing will be extended from 20 minutes to 40 minutes before the scheduled departure time. In a circular dated 23 July, 2024, addressed to all stakeholders, Oman Airport announced the implementation of this new PBS processing cut-off time. The airport authorities emphasised that this change is part of ongoing efforts to enhance passenger experience and improve operational efficiency. "As part of our ongoing efforts to enhance passenger experience and operational efficiency at our airport, we have conducted a detailed

review of the passenger journey from completing check-in procedures to reaching the departure gates. This review aimed to identify optimal timelines for completing check-in processes and ensure the progression of the boarding process according to the schedule set for all flights, thereby avoiding delays in operational activities. Therefore, starting from Sunday, August 4, 2024, the timing for processing passengers in the PBS (Passenger Boarding System) will be changed from 20 minutes to 40 minutes before the scheduled time of departure," the circular stated.

500 TRIATHLETES TO TAKE PART

Dhofar Municipality Ironman 70.3 Triathlon to be held in October 2024

SALALAH: Dhofar Municipality on Tuesday held a press conference during which it announced its upcoming sporting events, including the "Ironman 70.3 Triathlon", renamed as "Dhofar Municipality Ironman 70.3". Dr. Ahmed Mohsin Al Ghasani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, said that Ironman 70.3 triathlon (swim, bike and run) is anticipated by many athletes from around the world who would also get an opportunity to take part in other sports events, including Dhofar Municipality Race, Salalah Half Marathon, "She Runs" and the "Iron Child Race". For his part, Mohammed Khalafan Al Obaidani, CEO of Middle East Triathlon Company, told reporters that this year's edition of Dhofar Municipality Ironman



70.3 Triathlon would be held during October 2024, notably in line with a plan aimed to highlight the governorate beyond the Khareef (monsoon) season. Al Obaidani pointed out that the opening of the Ironman 70.3 racing season in the Middle East will coincide with the conclusion of the season of similar events in

the European continent. As many as 500 players from 56 countries will opt for 40 places set for qualifiers to the "Fun Fast" Ironman 70.3 World Championship scheduled to be held in Spain in 2025, said Ammar Obed Al Katheri, Director of the Department of Events Management, Municipality of Dhofar. -ONA

EMPOWERING FUTURE LEADERS

Omran Group honours first Eidaad programme graduates



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) proudly celebrated the successful graduation of the first cohort of trainees from the Eidaad Programme. This milestone exemplifies the commitment to empowering future leaders with essential skills and knowledge. The graduation ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Hashil Obaid Al Mahrouqi, Chief Executive Officer of Omran Group. The Eidaad Programme is a collaborative initiative with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation (MoHERI), and Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). This intensive on-the-job training programme aims to equip participants with the skills, knowledge, and experience required to excel in their respective fields. The national programme, lasting a full academic year, targets students in their penulti-

mate year of study at both public and private higher education institutions. Hilal Al Jadidi, Chief People and Change Officer, commented on the occasion: "We congratulate the trainees on their hard work and dedication. We are confident that their efforts will pay off in the future." **Comprehensive roadmap** He added, "This programme aligns closely with the #IAM-Tourism strategy, which serves as a comprehensive roadmap for all training and development programs by incorporating fresh perspectives, supporting sustainable growth and high standards of professionalism, as well as raising awareness about the opportunities and offerings of the promising tourism sector as a key economic driver." Roaa Al Kathiri, Eidaad trainee at Finance Department said: "I could not be more grateful for this opportunity. The programme has shaped my soft skills in com-

munication, leadership, decision-making, and problem-solving. It has prepared me professionally for my future career, and now I feel more confident that I will be able to apply what I learned in the program to my university studies." According to Rashid Al Lamki, Eidaad trainee at Financial Planning and Reporting Department: "My experience with the Eidaad program was incredibly special. I deeply appreciated the relationships I built, and the time I spent at Omran Group, and the valuable lessons I received. The programme gave me the opportunity to apply the theoretical aspects of my studies, which gave me deeper insight and effective skills in preparing report." This initiative highlights Omran Group's commitment to building national capacity and aligns with its strategies to focus on human resource development and fulfil the demand for qualified professional to support the development of the tourism sector.

EASING TRAFFIC MOVEMENT

Al Sharqiyah Expressway to cost OMR68mn

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology began implementing the second part of the 2nd phase of Al Sharqiyah Expressway project. Al Sharqiyah Expressway connects the governorates of North Al Sharqiyah and South Al Sharqiyah. The total cost of the project stands at OMR68 million. Moreover, the project will contribute to easing the movement of traffic and will enhance the

road network between different areas of the two governorates. Implementation of the project is expected to take approximately 22 months. The project also includes the construction of an overpass, the construction of a number of valley crossing bridges and arched overpasses, in addition to the construction of vehicle tunnels and pedestrian crossing tunnels. Lighting works and the installation of traffic lights in the Wilayat of Sur will also be completed. -ONA



GCC COUNTRIES

Oman hosts meeting on SDG implementation



MEETING: The team is tasked with following up the implementation of the fourth Sustainable Development Goal. -ONA

SALALAH: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Education, is currently hosting the tenth meeting of the team tasked with following up the

implementation of the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) in the GCC countries. The two-day meeting is being held in the Wilayat of Salalah,

Dhofar Governorate. It aims to follow up the progress made in achieving the fourth SDG by reviewing indicators and highlighting best practices. -ONA

Ministry of Defence
TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Defence invites MOD registered suppliers to participate in The following tender:

Subject	Tender Number	Last Date for Inquiries	Last date to submit the tender	Tender Documnet Price
SUPPLY OF KITCHEN UTENSILS, ELECTRICAL AND HOUSEHOLD APPLANCES FOR THREE YEARS	23 /2024	19/08/2024	26/08/2024	1002 OMR

1. Tenders documents and terms may be obtained on payment from the office of the Secretary of the Tender Committee, gate No. 14 of MAM Camp between 0900 to 1300 hrs on the working days.

2. Payment of Tender documents to be made by using of any Visa Electron Cards or "Visa credit" Cards or through Smart Card issued from all the banks are operated in oman.

Royal Oman Police
ANNOUNCEMENT

Royal Oman Police - Directorate of Public Relations and Security Information – announces a public auction to sell used ROP vehicles at the Directorate General of Transport at the Airport Heights, at 4:30 pm on Monday 05 August 2024.

Vehicles can be inspected during official working hours during the period from 28 July to 01 August 2024. The successful bidder must abide by the following terms and conditions:

- The buyer must pay the vehicle's value immediately along with the auctioneer fees at 3% by e-payment.
- The buyer must move the vehicle within a period of 3 days from the selling date; otherwise, they shall pay a fine of RO 5/- per each day of delay.
- The buyer must pay the fees of vehicle registration in their name in the traffic system before receiving the vehicle.

Bangladesh student group halts protests

The group also demanded an end to the curfew and for the government to restore the internet

DHAKA: A student group that has led protests in Bangladesh against a quota on government jobs said on Monday it has withdrawn its calls for a complete shutdown.

Dozens of people have been killed in the unrest last week, while authorities imposed an internet shutdown and a curfew.

Hasnat Abdullah, a coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, told the Associated Press (AP) news agency that they were withdrawing their calls for a complete shutdown.

“But we are issuing an ultimatum for 48 hours to stop the digital crackdown and restore internet connectivity.”

Abdullah called for the withdrawal of security officials deployed at universities should the reopening of student dormitories.

The group also demanded an end to the curfew and for the gov-



ernment to restore the internet.

Nahid Islam, the leader of the group, told the French AFP news agency that the reversal of their protest calls was due to the high death toll in the unrest.

“We started this movement for reforming the quota,” Islam said. “But we did not want quota reform at the expense of so much blood, so much killing, so much damage to life and property.”

According to information from hospitals, nearly 150 people died

in the protests.

Police said on Monday that more than 500 people, including opposition politicians, have been arrested in the unrest in the capital, Dhaka.

What is the Bangladesh job quota?

The quotas originally reserved 30% of positions in the civil service for the families of people who fought for independence from Pakistan in the so-called Bangladesh

Liberation War in 1971.

The quota rules were scrapped by the government in 2018, but a court reintroduced the system last month. The move caused widespread anger, particularly among the country’s young people, who make up around a fifth of the population.

The Supreme Court ruled that just 5% of civil service jobs would remain reserved for children of independence war veterans and 2% for other categories. -**ow**

SHOOTING INCIDENT

Six people killed after gunman opens fire at care home in Croatia



ZAGREB : At least six people were killed after a gunman entered a home for the elderly in Croatia on Monday and began shooting, CNN reported, citing the country’s public broadcaster.

A man with a firearm entered a private home for the elderly in Daruvar and opened fire at those who were present, CNN reported, citing Croatian Radiotelevision (HRT). According to police, six people were also injured during the shooting incident.

Speaking to reporters in Daruvar, the Croatian police chief, Nikola Milina, said that five of the deceased were residents of the home and one person was an employee.

Milina said that the gunman, who had previous encounters with authorities, was a member of a military police unit, and had a short firearm that hadn’t been registered, adding that it is too early to talk about the reason behind the shooting.

Some of those injured were re-

ceiving medical assistance in the hours after the shooting, CNN reported, citing State news agency HINA. The gunman had escaped from the spot. However, he was later arrested near a cafe, according to the report.

Five of the victims died immediately, according to HRT. State news agency HINA has reported that some of those injured were receiving medical assistance in the hours after the shooting.

The police have not provided further details and the investigation is being conducted, CNN cited the HRT report.

Before the death of the sixth victim, Croatia’s Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic in a post on X stated, “We are appalled by the murder of five people” in the home for the elderly.”

He said, “We express our condolences to the families of the victims and hope for the recovery of the wounded. I expect the competent authorities to determine all the circumstances of the terrible crime.” -**ow**

OVER 150 KILLED

Bangladesh protests: What’s next after the top court cuts quotas?

DHAKA: Bangladesh’s top court on Sunday largely scaled back a decision to reintroduce a quota system for government jobs following a week of deadly clashes between student demonstrators, police and pro-government groups.

Over 150 people have been reported killed and thousands injured in the worst unrest the country has seen in decades.

Demonstrations started after the government said it would reinstate a quota system for well-paid and secure government jobs, reserving more than half for specific groups.

This included 30% for descendants of “freedom fighters” who fought for Bangladesh’s independence from Pakistan in 1971. It was seen as favoring supporters of long-serving Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her ruling Awami League, a claim the party has denied.

In its recommendation, the Supreme Court advised 93% of all appointments are to be based on merit with immediate effect, with 5% going to descendants of freedom fighters, and 2% to people from ethnic minorities or with disabilities.

However, the court also said the government is still permitted to change the recommended quota ratio.

Protesters say demands not fully met

Internet connectivity and text messaging have been largely cut off in Bangladesh since Thursday after protests intensified. This was followed by a curfew and military



deployment to help the civilian administration keep order.

Despite the crackdown and the Supreme Court ruling, some student protesters have vowed to continue.

Sarjis Alam, one of the quota reform protest coordinators, told DW that the court decision doesn’t fully address their demands, as it essentially leaves it up to the government to decide on how to implement to quota system.

“The court said the quota issue is a policy decision of the government and the authorities can change the ratio of the quotas if they want,” said Alam.

He added that the court has asked the government to quickly issue information on how it intends to reform the quota system.

“We want to see how fast the government is, and whether it reforms quotas for all government jobs or not. We will react based on the percentage of quotas the government announces,” he added.

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SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

NATO appoints envoy for Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel

BRUSSELS: NATO on Tuesday appointed a special representative for the defence alliance’s “southern neighbourhood,” meaning the Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel.

Special representative

The new envoy is Javier Colomina, who previously served as NATO’s special representative in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Instability in the southern and eastern Mediterranean poses a security challenge for NATO members in Europe in part by fuelling irregular migration to the bloc.

NATO member Spain also has some territory in North Africa,

particularly the cities of Melilla and Ceuta.

Extensive experience

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said in a statement: “The Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel regions are important to our Alliance. Javier Colomina has extensive experience in dealing with NATO partners. His appointment will further strengthen NATO’s important work in the South.”

At a summit in Washington earlier this month (July 2024), NATO leaders agreed on a plan for the region that included the appointment of a special representative. -**ona**

ISRAELI AGGRESSION

Palestinian factions sign unity declaration in Beijing

BEIJING: At the conclusion of the round of dialogues held in the Chinese capital, Beijing, representatives of the Palestinian factions agreed to unify the Palestinian position within the framework of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to confront the genocidal war and Israeli aggression and to end the division in a way that achieves the aspirations of Palestinian people for unity, freedom and national independence.

The representatives of the factions welcomed the opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which confirmed the illegality of the Israeli occupation and settlement on the land of the State of Palestine and the necessity of removing them as soon as possible.

They affirmed their commit-



ment to the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem (Al-Quds) as its capital in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, rejected attempts to displace Palestinian people from their land, and emphasised the il-

legality of settlement and settlement expansion, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the opinion of the ICJ.

They called for work to lift the siege imposed on Palestinian peo-

ple in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and to deliver medical and humanitarian aid without any conditions and restrictions.

The Palestinian factions also saluted all the forces, countries, and student, popular, and trade union

solidarity movements that support the struggle of the Palestinian people on the ground, politically, legally, and diplomatically.

The attendees expressed their great appreciation for the efforts made by the People’s Republic of

China based on its support for the rights of the Palestinian people and its keenness to end the division and unify the Palestinian position.

They also stressed the empowerment of the Arabs and friends in the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation to continue international efforts to convene an international conference with full powers to end the Israeli occupation and implement relevant international resolutions that are fair to the rights of the Palestinian people under the umbrella and aegis of the United Nations, and with broad regional and international participation.

At the invitation of the Chinese side, representatives from 14 Palestinian factions held a reconciliation dialogue in Beijing during the period of 21 to 23 July 2024. -**ona**

Harris clinches enough delegates to win Democratic nomination

While endorsements from delegates continue to come in, the vice president has now been backed by well more than the 1,976 pledged delegates she'll need to win the nomination on the first ballot, CNN reported

WASHINGTON, DC: Vice President Kamala Harris has secured enough Democratic delegates to clinch the party's nomination for president, as per CNN's latest delegate estimate.

Her momentum towards the nomination has been bolstered by widespread support from key factions within the Democratic Party, eager to see her challenge former President Donald Trump.

While endorsements from delegates continue to come in, the vice president has now been backed by well more than the 1,976 pledged delegates she'll need to win the nomination on the first ballot, CNN reported.

Harris achieved this milestone amidst a surge of endorsements from state delegations on Monday

evening. These endorsements, though not binding, signal significant unity behind Harris now that President Joe Biden is no longer in the race.

CNN's count relies on public statements of support from delegates, state delegations, and conversations with key figures. Endorsements from state delegations are considered unanimous for Harris unless specified otherwise.

According to a plan outlined by Democratic officials, delegates are set to confirm Harris as the nominee by August 7.

Adding to Harris's momentum, over 300 former staffers penned a letter endorsing her for president. Rachel Palermo, who served as associate counsel and deputy communications director for Harris,



initiated the endorsement effort among former staffers following Biden's endorsement, as reported by CNN.

As of Monday evening, more than 300 former Harris staffers from various roles including the White House, her campaign, California Attorney General's office, and San Francisco District Attorney's office have signed on, Palermo informed CNN. She noted a high level of enthusiasm among signatories, many eager to contribute to the campaign.

State delegations have also rallied behind Harris across the country, providing crucial support ahead of the Democratic National Convention scheduled from August 19 to August 22 in Chicago, Illinois.

Here's a roundup of some notable endorsements Harris has received:

California's Democratic delegation unanimously endorsed Harris, underscoring her deep ties to the state as a native Californian.

New York's delegates also unanimously backed Harris, with State Democratic Party Chairman Jay Jacobs praising her leadership and alignment with Democratic values.

In Louisiana, Harris received

a strong majority endorsement, with Party Chair Randal Gaines emphasising the need to defeat Donald Trump and uphold Joe Biden's legacy.

Maryland's delegation joined in unanimously endorsing Harris, citing her unique qualifications and experience.

Kentucky's delegation overwhelmingly supported Harris, highlighting her readiness to assume the presidency from day one.

Tennessee and North Carolina similarly expressed unanimous support for Harris, with their state parties affirming her candidacy.

South Carolina, Wisconsin, Maine, Massachusetts, Utah, Iowa, and South Dakota delegates all endorsed Harris, each highlighting her preparedness and capabilities for the presidency.

Nevada's entire Democratic delegation of 49 delegates backed Harris, reinforcing her broad support within the party.

New Jersey and Texas also threw their support behind Harris, with Texas Democratic Rep. Lloyd Doggett indicating his support despite procedural objections.

The endorsements underscore Harris's growing momentum within the Democratic Party as she moves closer to securing the nomination. **-DW**

PHONE CALL



Embrace her, she's the best, says US president

WASHINGTON, DC: US President Joe Biden called on his supporters to back Vice President Kamala Harris in his first remarks after announcing his decision to not seek re-election. He called his decision to drop out of the presidential race "the 'right thing to do,'" CNN reported.

Biden made the remarks during a phone call he made into his former campaign's headquarters to thank the staff and praise Kamala Harris, who visited the Wilmington office on Monday (local time) to visit with staff.

During the phone call, Biden directly addressed Harris and the team, saying, "embrace her, she's the best."

On his announcement to drop out of the presidential race, he called it "surprising news" and emphasised that it's his belief it was the "right thing to do," CNN reported.

"I know it's hard because you poured your heart and soul into me," Biden told the campaign staffers and added, "You're an amazing team."

The US President expressed gratitude to the staffers for uprooting their lives for him and his now ended campaign. He said that they have built the "best" campaign organisation in history. He said, "I've been honoured and humbled."

Biden said, "I'm going to be on the road and I'm not going anywhere." He stated, "I won't be on the ticket but I am still going to be fully, fully engaged. I've got six months left in my presidency. I'm determined to get as much done as I possibly can both foreign policy and domestic policy," according to CNN report.

Earlier on Sunday, Biden announced his decision to not seek re-election in the "best interest" of the Democratic Party and the country. He has endorsed US Vice President Kamala Harris as the presidential nominee for the Democratic Party and called on Democrats to "come together and beat" Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump.

In a letter posted on X, Biden stated, "And while it has been my intention to seek reelection, I believe it is in the best interest of my

party and the country for me to stand down and to focus solely on fulfilling my duties as President for the remainder of my term. I will speak to the nation later this week in more detail about my decision."

He also expressed gratitude to US Vice President Kamala Harris for being an "extraordinary partner" for him. He even thanked people who worked for his re-election.

He said, "For now, let me express my deepest gratitude to all those who have worked so hard to see me reelected. I want to thank Vice President Kamala Harris for being an extraordinary partner in all this work. And let me express my heartfelt appreciation to the American people for the faith and trust you have placed in me. I believe today what I always have: that there is nothing America can't do - when we do it together. We just have to remember we are the United States of America."

He said that the US has been a strong economy in the world and they have made historic investments in rebuilding the nation, lowering prescription drug costs for seniors and expanding affordable healthcare to a record number of Americans.

Great progress

Highlighting the achievements of his government in the past, Biden said, "Over the past three and a half years, we have made great progress as a nation. Today, America has the strongest economy in the world. We've made historic investments in rebuilding our nation, in lowering prescription drug costs for seniors, and in expanding affordable health care to a record number of Americans."

"We've provided critically needed care to a million veterans exposed to toxic substances. Passed the first gun safety law in 30 years. Appointed the first African American woman to the Supreme Court. And passed the most significant climate legislation in the history of the world. America has never been better positioned to lead than we are today," he added.

In a letter, Biden said it had been the greatest honour of his life to serve as US President. **-DW**

HOUSE COMMITTEE

Trump shooting was significant 'failure' of the US Secret Service

NEW YORK: US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle admitted to lawmakers the attempted assassination of Donald Trump was "the most significant operational failure at the Secret Service in decades." She was testifying at a US House of Representatives hearing into her agency's failure to prevent a would-be assassin from wounding a Republican presidential candidate.

"We failed," Cheatle, facing calls to resign, said during testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

"As the director of the United States Secret Service, I take full responsibility for any security lapse," Cheatle said.

The Secret Service director also said she apologized to Trump in a phone call after the assassination attempt.

Trump's security was beefed up

Republican claims that the Secret Service was denied resources to protect Trump were dismissed by Cheatle, who said the former president's security had been increased before the shooting.

"The level of security provided for the former president increased well before the campaign and has been steadily increasing as threats evolve," Cheatle said.

She also added that the Secret Service provided the security the



Trump campaign requested for the rally.

"What I can tell you is that for the event on July 13, the details that were requested, the assets that were requested for that day, were given," Cheatle said.

Cheatle faces storm of bipartisan criticism

Lawmakers repeatedly asked Cheatle why she had not yet resigned from her job yet.

"The Secret Service has thousands of employees and a significant budget. But it has now become the face of incompetence," the Republican chairman of the House Oversight Committee, Representative James Comer of Kentucky said.

"If you have an assassination attempt on a president, former president or a candidate, you need to resign," Democratic Representative Ro Khanna said. "You cannot go leading the Secret Service agency, when there is an assassination attempt on a presidential candidate."

Cheatle however insisted she was the "right person" to lead the agency.

Monday's hearing was the first round of congressional oversight regarding the assassination attempt. FBI Director Christopher Wray is scheduled to appear before the House Judiciary Com-

mittee on Wednesday. Trump was wounded in the ear in the July 13 Pennsylvania rally shooting that left one spectator dead and two attendees seriously injured.

The 20-year-old gunman, Thomas Matthew Crooks, opened fire with an AR-style rifle just minutes into Trump's speech. Twenty-six seconds after firing the first of eight shots, Crooks was shot and killed by a Secret Service sniper.

Investigators have determined that Crooks, who lived in a town about 80 kilometers (50 miles) from Butler, was a lone gunman and had no strong ideological or political leanings. **-DW**

SHARP INCREASE

250% rise in children's death in West Bank: UNICEF

NEW YORK: The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has monitored a 250 percent increase in the number of children killed in the occupied West Bank, since the start of the aggression on the Gaza Strip on 7 October 2023.

UNICEF explained in a statement that 143 children have been killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since October 2023, which represents an increase of about 250 percent compared to the previous nine months.

UNICEF reported that the first nine months of 2023 witnessed the death of 41 Palestinian children.

In the same context, it indicated that more than 440 Palestinian children were injured by live ammunition during the period that followed October 2023, as Israeli attacks escalated in the West Bank and East Jerusalem coinciding with the outbreak of the aggression against



Gaza.

Since 7 October 2023, the number of martyrs in the occupied West Bank has risen to

578 martyrs, in addition to about 5,350 wounded, and the number of arrests in the West Bank has risen to about 9,600 cases. **-DNA**

ART CENTRES

Colombia to ban bullfighting

BOGOTA: President Gustavo Petro of Colombia has signed a law banning bullfighting in the country.

"We cannot tell the world that killing living and sentient beings for entertainment is culture," Petro said yesterday at a ceremony attended by hundreds of animal rights activists in a Bogotá bullfighting arena.

The bullfighting arena will become a stage for "culture, sport, life and not death," the president said. The country now has three years to convert bullfighting arenas into culture and art centres.

The workers who earned their livelihood from bullfighting would need to be retrained, Petro said, noting that as many of them as possible should be kept on board.

The law dubbed "No más olé," meaning no more olé - the cheer used during bullfights, was passed by Congress in a historic decision at the end of May. **-DNA**

SPORTS

AMONG FINAL TORCHBEARERS



American rapper Snoop Dogg to carry Olympic torch

PARIS: American rapper Snoop Dogg has been named as one of the final torchbearers of the Olympic flame before Friday's opening ceremony in Paris. The 52-year-old will carry the torch through the streets of Saint-Denis in the north of Paris, which is home to the Stade de France Olympic Stadium, on Friday.

The Saint-Denis stretch is the penultimate leg of the flame's journey before the relay ends at the Eiffel Tower. The Olympic torch has crossed France since starting its journey in May and has been carried by a host of different personalities, including former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, For-



mula One driver Charles Leclerc and actress Halle Berry. Snoop Dogg, whose full name is Calvin Cordozar Broadus Jr, was born in Los Angeles. The US artist will be joined by fellow torchbearers in Saint-Denis, including French actress Laetitia Casta and French rapper MC Solaar. - Agencies

Murray to retire after Olympics

The three-time Grand Slam champion confirmed on Tuesday that he will call it a day after the 2024 Games

LONDON: Two-time Olympic men's singles tennis champion Andy Murray on Tuesday confirmed he will retire from tennis after the 2024 Paris Olympics. The 37-year-old British star is planning to play in the singles and doubles at what will be his fifth Games. "Arrived in Paris for my last ever tennis tournament," Murray wrote on X. "Competing for Team GB has been by far the most memorable weeks of my career and I'm extremely proud to get to do it one final time!" The Scot's first Games appearance was in Beijing in 2008, when he lost in straight sets to Lu Yen-hsun in the first round. Four years later, Murray swiftly put the disappointment of a Wimbledon final defeat by Roger Federer behind him, defeating the Swiss in straight sets at London 2012 to win gold. The Briton became the first male tennis player to win two Olympic singles titles when he beat Argentina's Juan Martin del Potro at Rio 2016. The three-time Grand Slam winner had career-saving hip surgery in January 2019. Murray, a two-time Wimbledon champion, played competitively at SW19 for one last time earlier



this month when he was knocked out of the doubles in the first round alongside his brother Jamie. A back injury had threatened Murray's participation at Wimbledon and he left it until the final moment before pulling out of the singles. He had hoped to play mixed doubles with Emma Raducanu, but she pulled out of that planned

pairing because of a wrist injury concern. Speaking after his defeat at Wimbledon, Murray said: "It is hard because I want to keep playing, but I can't. "Physically it's too tough now. I want to play forever. I love the sport." The Scot said earlier this year

that he was "not planning to play much beyond the summer" but hoped to compete in Paris. Dan Evans, the British No.3, will partner Murray in the doubles. The opening rounds of the tennis in Paris begin at Roland Garros on 27 July and the event concludes on 4 August, with medal rounds being played from 2 August. - Agencies

Injured Vondrousova pulls out from Paris Games 2024



PARIS: Olympic silver medalist Marketa Vondrousova has withdrawn from the Paris 2024 Games due to a hand injury on Tuesday. The Czech, 25, made the decision following her first-round exit during the defence of her Wimbledon title earlier this month. She became the first Wimbledon ladies singles champion since Steffi Graf lost to Lori McNeil in 1994 to go out in the first round, after defeat by Spain's Jessica Bouzas Maneiro. Vondrousova won silver at Tokyo 2020 but posting on her Instagram, external, she said she would not play at this summer's Games and would focus on preparing for the US Open, which begins on 26 August. "I am very sorry, but due to health reasons I will not be participating in this year's Olympic Games in Paris," Vondrousova said. "I hoped until the last moment that I could go at least

in doubles, but problems with my hand won't allow me on the court." She would have been the 12th seed in Paris but she will be replaced on the Czech team by Katerina Siniakova in the singles and Linda Noskova in the doubles. Vondrousova joins world No.3 Aryna Sabalenka, Ons Jabeur and Emma Raducanu as notable absentees from the women's event. Meanwhile, Poland's Hubert Hurkacz, ranked seventh in the world, has also withdrawn from the men's competition. The 27-year-old has not recovered from a knee injury which forced him to retire from his second-round match at Wimbledon. "My rehabilitation is going very well, and I am making continuous progress. However, my team and I have decided that I am unable to compete in the Olympic Games in Paris," Hurkacz said. - Agencies

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by September 2024 reaching \$81.95, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by 38 cents from the price of Monday, which was \$82.33. - **OWA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) general index (30) gained 17.1 points, comprising a rise by 0.37% to close at 4648.53 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 4631.43 points.

Opaz electronic survey reveals high satisfaction levels among beneficiaries

To fulfil the expectations of its clients and investors and to improve its electronic interactions, Opaz places a high priority on raising the quality of services offered to beneficiaries

Times News Service

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

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

Several indicators were evalu-



ated, such as the length of time it took to obtain the service, the degree of satisfaction with the documentation and requirements needed to provide the service, the efficiency and manner in which Opaz staff dealt with the client while delivering the service, and the possibility of praising friends or family for the services rendered by the authority.

The report Opaz Call Center (toll-free 1919) indicated that it

handled more than 1,565 incoming local and international calls, including calls related to investment and inquiries about services and permits, from the beginning of January 2024 to the end of June 2024. The Call Center regularly publishes reports and communications proposals and the satisfaction levels of beneficiaries with the services provided.

Notably, the Call Center is equipped with modern technical

systems and operates interactively to record transaction requests and transfer them to the competitive authorities in the zones supervised by Opaz.

The Call Center has protocols that show how to receive and manage reports and proposals, as well as improve the quality of services provided based on the evaluation of investors and recipients. Communication with callers is conducted at a record-breaking pace.



To fulfil the expectations of its clients and investors and to improve its electronic interactions, Opaz places a high priority on raising the quality of services offered to beneficiaries. Planning, development, organisation, super-

vision, facilitation, after-service care provision, operation, business acceleration, marketing, and investment attraction are among the skills of the authority that encompass this. Institutional excellence is also one of its highlights.

G20 CAPITAL



Rio de Janeiro hosts week of important economic and social meetings

RIO DE JANEIRO: Until Friday (26th), Rio de Janeiro will host a series of high-level meetings between economic authorities from the G20 (Group of 20) countries. The week will also feature events bringing together ministers from social sectors, according to information from Agência Brasil, a partner of WAM.

As a practical result of the first meeting, the G20 Ministers of Development recognised technology as an important tool for reducing inequalities worldwide. In a document released this Monday (22nd), the group highlighted the importance of technology transfer between countries, access to digital technologies, and the benefits of artificial intelligence to reduce social and economic disparities between nations.

"This can enable rapid transformation, combat inequalities within and between countries, and accelerate the achievement of sustainable development in its three dimensions - economic, social, and environmental - as well as the delivery of public services," states the document called the G20 Development Ministerial Declaration to Reduce Inequalities.

Among the agreed points, the ministers reaffirm their commitment to "reduce digital disparities and promote the inclusive use of data for development, leverage the benefits of safe, secure, and reliable artificial intelligence (AI) for good and for all in a responsible, inclusive, and human-centred manner, improve access to digital services and public digital infrastructure, and leverage digital transformation opportunities to drive sustainable and inclusive growth."

High-level meetings

Also in Rio de Janeiro, there will be a meeting of representatives of finance ministers and

central bank governors from G20 member countries. The meetings are part of the Finance Track, a branch of the group that deals with economic issues.

Delegations from the countries will participate in discussions to draft a joint document to be delivered to finance ministers and central bank governors, who will hold meetings on Thursday (25th) and Friday (26th). The content of the Finance Track will be one of the key topics of the G20 summit on 18th and 19th November, also in Rio de Janeiro, bringing together heads of state and government from G20 countries.

One of the highlights of this week will be the pre-launch of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, one of the priorities of Brazil's G20 presidency. The event, taking place this Wednesday (24th), will be attended by Brazil's president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

As reported by WAM last week, the Brazilian government aims to develop a set of actions to eradicate global poverty, involving methods of raising and distributing resources, as well as sharing successful experiences.

Group 20

The G20 is the group formed by South Africa, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, South Korea, the United States, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Russia, Turkey, the European Union, and the African Union, which received member status at the New Delhi Summit last year. The G20 accounts for about 85% of the world's GDP, 75% of international trade, and two-thirds of the world's population. The next presidency of the group will be held by South Africa. - **WAM**

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Workshop held on boosting exports, imports via Omani ports



MUSCAT: A workshop on attracting investments began under the theme "Boosting Exports and Imports Through Omani Ports".

The workshop is the first one in the third phase of workshops and clinics organized by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information technology that aim at attracting investments.

Further, the workshop focuses on devising a joint vision that targets new international markets. It also highlights opportunities and challenges that face exports and imports. The workshop underscores the importance of simplifying procedures and boosting governance. - **OWA**



WORLD MARKETS

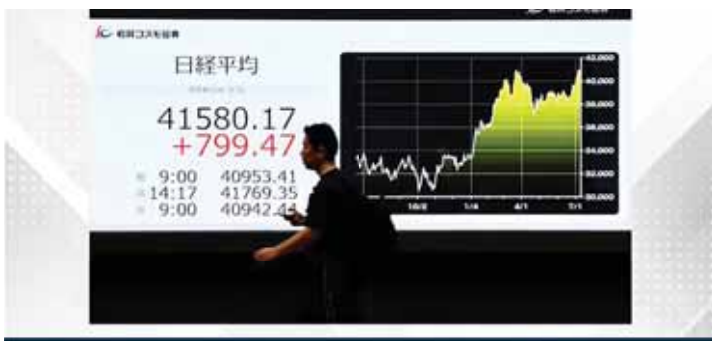
Digesting Biden exit, markets focus on earnings, data

WASHINGTON: World markets steadied on Tuesday as investors looked beyond Joe Biden's exit from the US presidential race, turning their focus to corporate earnings and economic data.

Biden's exit from the race has cast some doubt on a Republican victory under Donald Trump and could see investors unwind trades betting that such a win would add to US fiscal and inflationary pressures. Vice President Kamala Harris will campaign in the battleground state of Wisconsin on Tuesday as the Democrats's presumed nominee.

The pan-European STOXX index was up 0.1% while U.S. futures were down 0.2% following a 1.1% rise in the S&P 500 on Monday.

The US dollar, which had edged higher on Monday, was unchanged against a basket of currencies on Tuesday.



whether the polls show a closer race against Trump than when Biden was the Democratic candidate, Brown said.

"You'd expect that, were polls to narrow, and the race be seen as a closer contest, volatility to tick higher, and perhaps some downside creep into the equity space

Investors will now focus on whether the polls show a closer race against Trump than when Biden was the Democratic candidate, Brown said.

too," he added.

Still, Asian markets remained supported on Tuesday, with Taiwan's benchmark snapping five sessions of losses, rising over 2%.

That tracked a broader rebound in chipmaking shares recovering some of the \$100 billion in market value that was wiped off Taiwan's TSMC the world's largest contract chipmaker, over the previous few sessions.

The stock had come under pressure following Trump's comments that Taiwan should pay to be defended and accusing the island of stealing American chip business.

Focus was firmly on earnings on Tuesday, with Tesla and Alphabet due to report after the session close in New York, beginning the season for the "Magnificent Seven" megacap group of stocks. - **BNA**

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

The trading value stood at OMR4,591,837, comprising a surge by 262.2%, compared to the last session, which stood at OMR1,267,650



MUSCAT: Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) general index (30) dropped (51.4) points, comprising a decline by (1.10%) to close at (4631.43) points, compared to the last session, which stood at (4682.80) points.

The trading value stood at (RO 4,591,837), comprising a surge by (262.2%), compared to the last session, which stood at (RO 1,267,650).

The report released by MSX

pointed out that the market value went down by (0.307%) to reach about (RO 24.39) billion.

The report added that the value of shares bought by non-Omani investors reached (RO 623,000), comprising (13.58%). The value of shares sold by non-Omani investors reached (RO 1,799,000), comprising (39.17%). The net non-Omani investment decreased by (25.59%) to (RO 1,175,000).— **ONA**

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

OMAN STOCKS

INDICES						
Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,648.82	4,622.80	4,648.53	4,631.43	17.10	0.37
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,535.60	7,497.87	7,535.60	7,518.23	17.38	0.23
Industry Index	5,958.09	5,893.90	5,954.35	5,934.40	19.95	0.34
Services Index	1,820.60	1,811.94	1,816.90	1,819.20	-2.30	-0.13
MSX Shariah Index	446.43	439.33	440.86	446.43	-5.58	-1.25
MSX TR INDEX	6,457.67	6,421.53	6,457.27	6,433.52	23.75	0.37
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,561.22	8,518.35	8,561.22	8,541.48	19.74	0.23
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,874.22	6,800.15	6,869.91	6,846.89	23.02	0.34
SERVICES TR IDX	2,111.35	2,101.30	2,107.05	2,109.73	-2.67	-0.13
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary							
Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
11,374,158	1,868,439	560	24,415,223,665	14	14	18	46

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, JULY 23

	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (BD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM00000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO	15,000	1,090	3	0.072	0.073	0.072	0.073	0.071	0.002	2.817	0.073	0.069	0.078	0.100	6,570,000
OM00000002374	UNITED FINANCE	2,500	148	1	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.058	0.001	1.724	0.059	0.057	0.059	0.100	21,011,511
OM00000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	922,897	125,074	19	0.135	0.137	0.135	0.137	0.135	0.002	1.481	0.137	0.137	0.100	764,082,739	
OM00000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	16,968	1,961	5	0.074	0.075	0.074	0.075	0.074	0.001	1.351	0.074	0.074	0.076	0.100	53,580,476
OM00000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	345,612	89,989	10	0.260	0.262	0.260	0.262	0.260	0.002	0.769	0.262	0.260	0.262	0.100	425,997,945
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	2,556,338	357,052	124	0.139	0.140	0.139	0.140	0.139	0.001	0.719	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.100	606,287,349
OM00000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	809,935	235,993	63	0.283	0.285	0.280	0.285	0.283	0.002	0.683	0.285	0.285	0.306	0.100	227,209,000
OM0000003036	OMAN TELECOM	204,886	205,272	35	1.000	1.003	0.999	1.002	1.000	0.002	0.200	1.002	1.002	1.000	0.100	751,500,000
OM00000001533	OMINVEST	300	96	1	0.330	0.330	0.330	0.330	0.330	0.000	0.000	0.330	0.321	0.360	0.100	220,560,591
OM00000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO	144,658	11,139	18	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.100	9,384,375
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	21,800	6,039	4	0.277	0.277	0.277	0.277	0.277	0.000	0.000	0.277	0.277	0.295	0.100	34,596,735
OM00000002796	BANK MUSCAT	904,461	253,392	34	0.250	0.250	0.248	0.250	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.100	1878,599,296
OM00000003968	OORODOO	294,650	83,707	19	0.284	0.286	0.284	0.285	0.285	0.000	0.000	0.286	0.285	0.286	0.100	185,519,106
OM00000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	171,830	13,231	17	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.100	13,475,000
OM00000004925	ALBATTINAH POWER	284,723	19,326	19	0.074	0.074	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.000	0.000	0.073	0.073	0.072	0.100	49,268,782
OM00000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INV.	80,000	9,060	9	0.114	0.114	0.113	0.113	0.114	-0.001	-0.877	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.100	16,950,000
OM00000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	40,975	6,936	9	0.160	0.170	0.160	0.169	0.171	-0.002	-1.170	0.169	0.170	0.169	0.100	37,180,000
OM00000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	140,000	10,500	8	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.076	-0.001	-1.316	0.075	0.074	0.081	0.100	15,000,000
OM00000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	17,375	1,774	5	0.102	0.103	0.102	0.102	0.105	-0.003	-2.857	0.102	0.102	0.103	0.100	97,366,339
Total	19	6,955,308	1,403,080	403												

Parallel Market																
OM0000009569	JABAL REIF	11,673	1,196	2	0.100	0.103	0.100	0.103	0.099	0.004	4.040	0.103	0.100	0.103	0.100	17,922,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	1,861	636	3	0.340	0.345	0.340	0.345	0.335	0.010	2.985	0.345	0.335	0.345	0.100	28,083,949
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	191	567	1	2.969	2.969	2.969	2.969	2.900	0.069	2.379	2.969	2.901	2.900	0.100	266,319,300
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	3,049,344	190,502	62	0.062	0.063	0.062	0.063	0.062	0.001	1.613	0.063	0.061	0.065	0.100	92,143,892
OM0000009447	OMAN REIT FUND	125,000	9,000	6	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.093	0.001	1.587	0.094	0.093	0.095	0.100	31,413,539
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	268,800	141,657	7	0.534	0.539	0.534	0.537	0.535	0.002	0.381	0.537	0.527	0.527	0.100	83,002,500
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	98,000	14,700	3	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.150	0.154	0.100	352,448,620
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	13,240	2,928	4	0.221	0.222	0.221	0.221	0.221	0.000	0.000	0.221	0.221	0.223	0.100	10,114,241
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	358,594	53,259	16	0.150	0.150	0.148	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.148	0.156	0.100	30,447,967
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	181,994	18,837	14	0.103	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.100	232,643,115
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	15,000	2,130	3	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.000	0.000	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.100	237,056,220
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	1,000	90	1	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.090	0.094	0.100	18,000,000
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	1,000	116	1	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.000	0.000	0.116	0.116	0.000	0.100	58,940,011
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	25,000	8,050	2	0.322	0.322	0.322	0.323	0.323	-0.001	-0.310	0.322	0.310	0.322	0.100	64,282,663
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	42,400	3,095	6	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.074	-0.001	-1.351	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.100	15,489,140
OM0000007407	DHOOFAR GENERATING	30,000	2,040	2	0.068	0.068	0.068	0.068	0.070	-0.002	-2.857	0.068	0.066	0.070	0.100	15,112,320
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	3,000	150	1	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.052	-0.002	-3.846	0.050	0.050	0.052	0.100	4,250,000
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	10,000	1,023	3	0.105	0.105	0.102	0.102	0.107	-0.005	-4.673	0.102	0.102	0.107	0.100	1,672,199
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	10,000	1,020	1	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.109	-0.007	-6.422	0.102	0.102	0.103	0.100	8,670,000
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	10,000	800	6	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.086	-0.006	-6.977	0.080	0.078	0.090	0.100	1,680,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	400	84	1	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.228	-0.018	-7.895	0.210	0.210	0.000	0.100	12,852,897
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	2,000	86	1	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.047	-0.004	-8.511	0.043	0.043	0.046	0.100	10,750,000
Total	22	4,258,497	450,967	146												

MARKET

Natural gas futures prices close lower in European trading



AMSTERDAM: Natural gas futures prices closed slightly lower at the end of European trading session after recovering most of their early losses. Dutch natural gas futures, the benchmark for the European market, fell by 1 percent to 31.84 per megawatt-hour.

According to Bloomberg, European benchmark futures prices

dropped by up to 3.3 percent at the start of today's session before regaining most of their losses.

While the US Freeport LNG terminal resumed some of its activities, which had been halted for weeks due to Hurricane Barry and natural gas supplies from Norway to other European countries were affected by the extension of main-

tenance work at Norwegian gas facilities, which are a major source of gas for Europe.

Gas quantities in Europe are currently above the usual levels for this time of year. However, market volatility in the event of supply disruptions highlights the continent's increasing dependence on global markets to meet its fuel needs. — **ONA**

NEW MOMENTUM

What Kamala Harris would mean for the US economy

WASHINGTON: Just last week, it looked like a near foregone conclusion that Donald Trump would return to the White House after the November election.

But on Sunday, Joe Biden blew open the US presidential election by stepping out of the race and endorsing 59-year-old Vice President Kamala Harris.

She is expected to bring new momentum into the race and become the official Democratic nominee in August in Chicago. Harris has already seen a huge increase in fundraising, bringing in more than \$81 million (£74.4 million) in the first 24 hours after Biden's announcement.

It's not just voters, donors or politicians who have taken notice. Businesses in the US and around the world are also taking stock of what this upheaval could mean. One thing companies don't like is uncertainty. Biden's decision to move aside as a candidate removes some of that uncertainty, but not all of it.

'America First' and the Democrats

For the country — and the economy — Biden's decision guarantees a different president in 2025. The difference between Biden and Harris though is harder to decipher.

"Harris tends to be more progressive than Biden, though I'm not convinced there'd be a huge departure on the economy," said Dan Mallinson, an associate professor of public policy and administration at Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg. "They're both pro-labor. Both supportive of expanding parental leave. Both supportive of social safety net policies like Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security."

For many business leaders right now, it is less about what Kamala Harris and the Democrats stand for — as it is unlikely to differ much from what we have seen over the past few years. For them, it is more about which Trump policies Harris would stop in their tracks should she win.

One of Trump's biggest



goals is renewing his "America First" agenda. In addition to his harsh rhetoric on borders and immigration, Trump has proposed a 10% tariff increase on all US imports and even said he could impose a 60% tariff on all imports from China.

While Biden has left many of Trump's previous tariffs in place and even added more restrictions, they are targeted and aimed at specific industries. A blanket tariff on all imports would drive down competition and drive up prices for hard-hit Americans. Higher prices would lead to more inflation, which would keep interest rates high.

This prospect, and the fear of a global trade war, has upended business models and caused many companies to rethink how they will do business if Trump wins and imposes his will. These companies, especially those in China, are likely to breathe easy, for now, with Harris' expected nomination likely to reenergize the Democrats.

Stocks, the dollar and crypto

A few US industries like traditional vehicle manufacturing, energy and cryptocurrencies may be feeling less enthusiastic about the increased possibility of a Democratic win. They had a place of pride in the Republican's official election platform and were expecting a Trump boost.

The document promised deregulation for the fossil fuel industry and declared that "Republicans will end Democrats' unlawful and un-American crypto crackdown

and oppose the creation of a central bank digital currency."

Now, investors may be recalibrating their political calculations and hopes for higher returns. While renewable energy producers and electric vehicle manufacturers are likely hoping for the status quo of a Harris win.

Yet, any major policy changes are months away and currently just theory. On Monday, European stock markets closed the day higher as did stocks on the Wall Street backed by gains in Big Tech shares.

What would a Harris economy look like?

Kamala Harris has said little so far about the economy and how she would run it. Looking back at her time as a Californian prosecutor, attorney general, senator and US vice president gives a little insight though.

As attorney general she was tough on oil companies and banks. As vice president she supported Biden's big economic plans including building up green energy, the American Rescue Plan and the Inflation Reduction Act. She also backed the CHIPS and Science Act, which is investing billions to encourage chip manufacturing at home.

Harris has argued against blanket tariffs but would keep an eye on China, which is in line with current government policies.

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LIFESTYLE

OXYGEN
DISCOVERY
DEFIES
KNOWLEDGE
OF THE

SCIENTISTS HAVE DISCOVERED "DARK OXYGEN" BEING PRODUCED IN THE DEEP OCEAN, APPARENTLY BY LUMPS OF METAL ON THE SEAFLOOR.

About half the oxygen we breathe comes from the ocean. But, before this discovery, it was understood that it was made by marine plants photosynthesising - something that requires sunlight.

Here, at depths of 5km, where no sunlight can penetrate, the oxygen appears to be produced by naturally occurring metallic "nodules" which split seawater - H2O - into hydrogen and oxygen.

Several mining companies have plans to collect these nodules, which marine scientists fear could disrupt the newly discovered process - and damage any marine life that depends on the oxygen they make, BBC news reported.

"I first saw this in 2013 - an enormous amount of oxygen being produced at the seafloor in complete darkness," explained lead researcher Prof Andrew Sweetman from the Scottish Association for Marine Science. "I just ignored it, because I'd been taught - you only get oxygen through photosynthesis.

"Eventually, I realised that for

years I'd been ignoring this potentially huge discovery," he added.

He and his colleagues carried out their research in an area of the deep sea between Hawaii and Mexico - part of a vast swathe of seafloor that is covered with these metal nodules. The nodules form when dissolved metals in seawater collect on fragments of shell - or other debris. It's a process that takes millions of years.

And because these nodules contain metals like lithium, cobalt and copper - all of which are needed to make batteries - many mining companies are developing technology to collect them and bring them to the surface.

But, Prof Sweetman said the dark oxygen they make could also support life on the seafloor. And his discovery, published in the journal Nature Geoscience, raises new concerns about the risks of proposed deep-sea mining ventures.

The scientists worked out that the metal nodules are able to make oxygen precisely because they act like batteries.

"If you put a battery into sea-

water, it starts fizzing," explained Prof Sweetman. "That's because the electric current is actually splitting seawater into oxygen and hydrogen [which are the bubbles]. We think that's happening with these nodules in their natural state."

"It's like a battery in a torch," he added. "You put one battery in, it doesn't light up. You put two in and you've got enough voltage to light up the torch. So, when the nodules are sitting at the seafloor in contact with one another, they're working in unison - like multiple batteries."

The researchers put this theory to the test in the lab, collecting and studying the potato-sized metal nodules. Their experiments measured the voltages on the surface of each metallic lump - essentially the strength of the electric current. They found it to be almost equal to the voltage in a typical AA-sized battery.

This means, they said, that the nodules sitting on the seabed could generate electric currents large enough to split, or electro-

lyse, molecules of seawater.

The researchers think the same process - battery-powered oxygen production that requires no light and no biological process - could be happening on other moons and planets, creating oxygen-rich environments where life could thrive.

The Clarion-Clipperton Zone, where the discovery was made, is a site already being explored by a number of seabed mining companies, which are developing technology to collect the nodules and bring them to a ship at the surface.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has warned that this seabed mining could "result in the destruction of life and the seabed habitat in the mined areas".

More than 800 marine scientists from 44 countries have signed a petition highlighting the environmental risks and calling for a pause on mining activity.

New species are being discovered in the deep ocean all the time - it is often said that we know more about the surface of the Moon

than we do about the deep sea. And this discovery suggests that the nodules themselves could be providing the oxygen to support life there.

Prof Murray Roberts, a marine biologist from the University of Edinburgh is one of the scientists who signed the seabed mining petition. "There's already overwhelming evidence that strip mining deep-sea nodule fields will destroy ecosystems we barely understand," he said.

"Because these fields cover such huge areas of our planet it would be crazy to press ahead with deep-sea mining knowing they may be a significant source of oxygen production."

Prof Sweetman added: "I don't see this study as something that will put an end to mining.

"[But] we need to explore it in greater detail and we need to use this information and the data we gather in future if we are going to go into the deep ocean and mine it in the most environmentally friendly way possible," he concluded. -ONA

DEEP
OCEAN

SPORTS

Asalanka to lead Sri Lanka in T20I series against India

The hosts have also picked uncapped all-rounder Chamindu Wickramasinghe for the series

COLOMBO: Charith Asalanka is the new captain of the Sri Lanka men's T20I team, according to a press release from the Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) on Tuesday. A 16-man squad was named to face India in a three-match series starting July 27. Asalanka, who takes over from Wanindu Hasaranga after the latter had stepped down from the role earlier this month following a six-month stint, is no stranger to captaincy, though. He had led Sri Lanka in two T20Is on the tour of Bangladesh earlier this year when Hasaranga, the captain at the time, was serving a suspension. He has also captained the Sri Lanka Under-19s and, most recently, led Jaffna Kings to the LPL title, after having taken over the reins from Thisara Perera at the start of the season. The other big news is the return of the 34-year-old Dinesh Chan-



Charith Asalanka, Sri Lanka captain

dimal to Sri Lanka's T20I fold. He last played a T20I back in early 2022, but his form in the LPL this year, where he struck 287 runs across eight matches at a strike rate of 168.82 - far above his career strike rate of 123.03 - opening the innings, made a strong case for his inclusion. But with one stalwart entering another made way, with Angelo Mathews, now 37, left out of the squad despite also having had a good time in the LPL. Included is another surprise inclusion, the uncapped Chamindu Wickramasinghe. The 21-year-old all-rounder from Kandy, who has

been putting in time at the MRF Pace Academy in India, caught the eye of selectors following a breakout LPL campaign this past month. A right-arm seamer who can also bat, he showed great maturity for his Dambulla Sixers franchise lower down the order, picking up seven wickets across eight games while also scoring 186 runs at a strike rate 131.91 - including two clutch fifties. There are also returns for Kusal Perera, Avishka Fernando and Binura Fernando, but this means there's no room for Sadeera Samarawickrama, Dhananjaya de

Silva and Dilshan Madushanka. Replacing Madushanka in the squad is Binura Fernando, largely on the back of an excellent LPL outing. The 29-year-old left-arm quick has been in the Sri Lankan system for quite some time now - he made his debut back in 2015 - but consistency eluded him, primarily down to a poor injury record. This year, though, has been a watershed moment, as an unencumbered Binura took the LPL by storm, his clever variations helping him pick up 13 wickets across eight games at a miserly economic rate of 6.81. Equally, he put his



Chamindu Wickramasinghe, uncapped all-rounder

body to the test, ending the season having played four games across five days. The rest of the side comes through as expected, with Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Mendis, Kamindu Mendis, Dasun Shanaka, Dunith Wellalage and Wanindu Hasaranga completing a strong batting line-up. Hasaranga, Maheesh Theekshana and Wellalage will be the primary spin-bowling options with support from the ambidextrous Kamindu if needed. The seam-bowling contingent shows good variety with two slingers in Nuwan Thushara and Mathee-

sha Pathirana, Binura's left-arm seam and Dushmantha Chameera right-arm pace, while Shanaka and Wickramasinghe can also roll their arm over when called upon. **Sri Lanka squad:** Charith Asalanka (capt), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Janith Perera (wk), Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis (wk), Dinesh Chandimal, Kamindu Mendis, Dasun Shanaka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Dunith Wellalage, Maheesh Theekshana, Chamindu Wickramasinghe, Matheesha Pathirana, Nuwan Thushara, Dushmantha Chameera, Binura Fernando. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

De Bruyne 'isn't leaving' Man City, says Guardiola



LONDON: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said on Monday that influential midfielder Kevin de Bruyne will stay at the club. De Bruyne has been heavily linked with a summer move to Saudi Arabia. He has one-year left on his Blues contract and said last month he would have to consider an offer from the Saudi Pro-League because of the "incredible money" available. However, Guardiola is unconcerned. "Kevin isn't leaving," he told reporters before his side's opening pre-season game against Celtic in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, on Wednesday. De Bruyne helped inspire City to the Premier League title last

season, the club's fourth in a row and his sixth in total at the club. Crystal Palace's England Euro 2024 squad member Ebereche Eze has been linked with a move to City, while Brazil goalkeeper Ederson has also been the subject of interest from Saudi Arabia. But Guardiola feels it is more likely he will have the same squad as last season. "If someone leaves, we are going to talk about that and, of course, until the last day [of the transfer window] we have chances," he said. "I don't rule out new players as an option, but I think there is an 85, 90, 95% chance we will have the same squad." City begin their Premier League title defence at Chelsea on 18 August. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Aston Villa sign Everton's Onana

LONDON: Aston Villa have signed midfielder Amadou Onana from Everton in a £50m deal on Monday. The 22-year-old played every minute of Belgium's Euro 2024 campaign and now has the opportunity to represent Villa in the new season's Champions League. Onana joined Everton from Lille for £33m in 2022 and made 72 appearances for the Toffees, scoring four goals. He was linked with a move to Arsenal in 2023, and a host of top clubs were reportedly keen this summer. Villa boss Unai Emery had been in the market for a new defensive midfielder after the club sold Douglas Luiz to Juventus for £42.35m in June. "I'll be playing in the Champions



League again and that's very exciting," said Onana. "We also have a manager that's one of the best in the business and I think he can take my game to the next level." Onana added that Villa midfielder and Belgium team-mate

Youri Tielemans helped convince him to join the Midlands club. "Youri played a big part in me being here because he told me lots of good stuff about the club," said Onana. Villa, who finished fourth in the Premier League last term, are

strengthening for the challenge of Champions League competition in the coming campaign. They have not featured at that elite level since the 1982-83 season, the campaign after they won the European Cup. The arrival of Onana has taken Villa's summer spending to about £140m. Villa have also spent £35m on signing Ian Maatsen from Chelsea, £18.6m on the double signing of Samuel Iling-Junior and Enzo Barrenechea from Juventus, £18m on Jaden Philogene's return from Hull, £5m on Ross Barkley's move from Luton and £9m on Lewis Dobbin's transfer from Everton. They will begin their Premier League campaign at West Ham on Saturday, 17 August. - Agencies

39 LEAGUES IN 33 COUNTRIES JOIN HANDS TOGETHER

Top European leagues to sue FIFA over 'abuse of dominance'

LONDON: The top European leagues, including the Premier League, and global players' union Fifpro will launch legal action against world governing body FIFA over its "abuse of dominance" in the game. The European Leagues, which represents 39 leagues and 1,130 clubs in 33 countries, says it is filing a complaint to the European Commission to protect the welfare of players, *BBC Sport* reported on Tuesday. It comes following growing pressure from leagues and player unions, including the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), over the number of games added to the calendar and the impact on players. A Fifpro statement said the international calendar is "now beyond saturation", "unsustainable for national leagues" and a "risk for the health of players". It added: "FIFA's decisions over

the last years have repeatedly favoured its own competitions and commercial interests, neglected its responsibilities as a governing body, and harmed the economic interests of national leagues and the welfare of players. "Legal action is now the only responsible step for European leagues and player unions to protect football, its ecosystem and its workforce." The statement said FIFA has "consistently refused to include national leagues and player unions in its decision-making process", having been urged to develop a clear and transparent process regarding the international match calendar. The European Leagues includes the English Football League, Scottish Professional Football League, Serie A and the Bundesliga. La Liga is not a member but is joining the action. In May FIFA rejected a claim



that Fifpro and the World Leagues Association were not consulted over plans to host a 32-team Club World Cup. Manchester City and Chelsea are among the 12 European representatives at the expanded Club World Cup, to be held in the USA between 15 June and 13 July 2025.

'Leagues are acting with hypocrisy' FIFA has responded strongly to the action, accusing some leagues of "hypocrisy" by sending their players on global pre-season tours. A FIFA spokesperson said: "The current calendar was unanimously approved by the FIFA Council, which is composed of representa-

tives from all continents, including Europe, following a comprehensive and inclusive consultation, which included Fifpro and league bodies. FIFA's calendar is the only instrument ensuring that international football can continue to survive, co-exist, and prosper alongside domestic and continental club football. "Some leagues in Europe - themselves competition organisers and regulators - are acting with commercial self-interest, hypocrisy, and without consideration to everyone else in the world. "Those leagues apparently prefer a calendar filled with friendlies and summer tours, often involving extensive global travel. "By contrast, FIFA must protect the overall interests of world football, including the protection of players, everywhere and at all levels of the game." The PFA is a co-claimant with the French and Italian players' union in a claim filed at the Brus-

sels court of commerce, with the support of the European office of Fifpro. Maheta Molango, chief executive of the PFA and FifPro board member, said in May that players were at breaking point and could strike if they continue to be overworked. Because of the expanded Club World Cup, next year's African Cup of Nations has been moved from the summer to December 2025 and January 2026, which is also likely to impact that season's Champions League knockout stages. "Legal action is the unfortunate but inevitable consequence of major stakeholders within the game - the leagues and the players - being ignored," said Molango. "It's just not tenable to continue to argue that this approach to the fixture calendar is working. "As always, it's the players who are expected to bend. As we have seen, eventually they will break. It has to stop."

IN PICTURES



Sunset view in Sydney, Australia
This photo taken on July 23, 2024 shows a sunset view of the Opera House and the Harbor Bridge in Sydney, Australia. (Xinhua)



Tibetan macaques forage near national highway in Sertar County, SW China
Tibetan macaques are seen near a national highway in Sertar County, the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Garze, southwest China's Sichuan Province. Xinhua



North Curl Rockpool
An aerial drone photo taken on July 23, 2024 shows a view of the North Curl Rockpool in Sydney, Australia. (Photo by Liang Yu/Xinhua)



Indian Navy MARCOs and US Navy SEALs in the US' RIMPAC exercise
Indian Navy MARCOs and US Navy SEALs and Special Forces of other partner nations take part in the US' RIMPAC exercise, at Joint Base Pearl Harbour, on July 21, 2024 (ANI)



Kataragama Perahera celebrated in Sri Lanka
People perform traditional dances during the final day of Kataragama Perahera in Katharagama, Sri Lanka, July 21, 2024. Kataragama Perahera is an important festival in Sri Lanka. (Photo by Gayan Sameera/Xinhua)



20th Taebaek Sunflower festival held in South Korea
A woman visits the 20th Taebaek Sunflower festival in Taebaek-city, Gangwon-do province, South Korea, July 23, 2024. The festival runs from July 19 to August 15. (Photo by Jun Hyosang/Xinhua)

ROUND-UP

Own Kia Seltos SUV with exciting ‘Summer Sensations’ benefits

Kia’s hottest-selling power-packed sub-compact SUV, the Seltos, complements family and a busy corporate lifestyle

MUSCAT: This summer, upgrade to a bold Kia Seltos SUV featuring modern aesthetics, exceptional safety, and a spacious cabin to groove into your everyday lifestyle. Kia’s hottest-selling power-packed sub-compact SUV, the Seltos, complements family and a busy corporate lifestyle. Making its way up the SUV lineup, it exudes confidence on the roads with its eye-catching exterior, exhilarating performance, and high-tech features catering to all segments, whether young or old. Kia Oman is thrilled to present SUV enthusiasts with an exclusive, limited-time ‘Summer Sensations’ offer to purchase a Seltos. Get 1st-year free insurance and registration and an assured



scratch-and-win coupons for an opportunity to win gold coins, iPhone 15s, or service upgrades up to 200,000 km/20 years. Moreover, participate in the raffle draw to bag the opportunity to win a dream holiday in Singapore. “It’s the holiday season so relish the summer fun with Kia. The Seltos is a powerhouse of innovations and technology, coupled with Kia’s promise to deliver the

best-in-class SUV.” A representative from KIA Oman commented. “It’s a win-win season; walk into your nearest Kia showroom with a valid driving license to participate in the raffle draw and win an all-inclusive Singapore holiday for a family of four.” He further shared. “Double up on savings with first-year free insurance coverage, a registration fee waiver, and 30,000 km/3 years of service benefits of-

fered on purchase. All customers are eligible for an assured scratch-and-win coupon to win the latest iPhone 15 256 GB or hit a jackpot with 24k 10 grams of gold coins or upgraded service benefit up to 200,00 km/20 years.” The team at Kia Oman highlighted. Exploring the Seltos, it features a robust 1.5L engine producing 113 hp at 6,300 rpm paired to a VVT transmission. Conclusively, the

SUV delivers exceptional performance and an impressive fuel efficiency of 17 KMC/liter, increasing your savings and contributing towards a greener future. The 18,000mm x 4385mm wheelbase and 17-inch alloy wheels create a firm grip, making it ideal for longer drives. Delve into the luxurious comfort of roomy legroom, wider headspace, and ventilated front-row seats. En-

joy seamless connectivity with the wireless charging tray and an 8-inch audio display with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto integration. Lighten the inside mood with custom ambient lighting and power up your devices with USB ports spread across. Enjoy the spacious comfort and increased luggage capacity in the boot as you set off for your next adventure. Cruise the narrow city landscape or navigate wider terrains with its advanced safety and tech features made considering today’s passenger needs. The five-seater is augmented with Auto AC & ventilated Seats, cruise control, manual speed limit assist (MSLA), electronic parking brake, Parking Distance Warning (PDW), rear-view monitor, and front and back sensors. Kia’s attentiveness towards life-saving driver-assist technologies for enhancing the driving experience helps achieve peace of mind. Visit your nearest Kia showroom to get a first-hand experience with the Seltos and join the Kia family. Grab the coolest gadgets, hassle-free car service packages and incredible prizes before the Summer Sensations campaign ends on July 25. The Kia team eagerly anticipates your arrival to support and enhance your Kia ownership experience.

DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

ahlibank’s revamped mobile banking app set to enhance customers’ banking experiences

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing efforts to lead digital transformation in the Sultanate of Oman, ahlibank aims to improve operations and drive innovation with advanced technologies that enhance customer experiences. By using unique digital solutions, ahlibank has revamped its mobile banking application with added new features, exceeding traditional banking standards and offering an impressive range of products and services. Whether at home, at work, or on the go, ahlibank’s user-friendly mobile banking app makes it easy and hassle-free to manage finances efficiently and effectively. Through the new and enhanced app, customers can now schedule branch appointments, keep track of their finances with the Personal Finance Manager, and make quick transfers using the ‘send again’ feature to make repeat transfers quickly and easily. Moreover, customers can make utility payments using the app, all in one go. Further, they can manage their cards, open additional savings accounts instantly, view balance, and perform transactions on Pearl Points from ahlibank’s Loyalty Program. ahlibank’s mobile banking app is the most inclusive solution to meet customers’ banking needs, and is a smarter avenue to bank in tune with their evolving lifestyles. ahlibank seeks to provide its customers an exceptional banking experience. The new and revamped mobile banking app has a distinct look and feel, bringing the latest and most innovative financial tools to the Bank’s clientele in order to assist them in carrying out their transactions with ease and efficiency. The



redesigned mobile banking app gives customers what they need in accordance to their preferences, as they embark on a seamless and highly rewarding journey. It will elevate users’ experiences with guaranteed satisfaction, signaling the next intuitive step towards redefining digital banking in the Sultanate. ahlibank is among the pioneers in the highly competitive market, fostering a culture of perseverance and continuous improvement. By revamping the app, ahlibank envisions a future where digital solutions empower customers to achieve greater goals with definitive success, reaffirming its position as a partner in excellence.

ISLAMIC WINDOW OF BANK DHOFAR

Explore world with Dhofar Islamic’s Sharia-compliant travel finance product

MUSCAT: Dhofar Islamic, the Islamic window of Bank Dhofar, has highlighted the increasing popularity of its travel finance product. The Travel Financing products tailored to fulfil the needs of customers who wish to avail Sharia-compliant travel solutions. Elaborating on the product, Amor Said Al Amri – DGM & Head of Retail Banking - Dhofar Islamic said: “Under this product, Dhofar Islamic finances all costs of traveling, including transportation and accommodation. The facility also covers tourism packages in addition to Haj and Umrah packages with all the services offered by travel agents. Similarly, those who are travelling for health tourism, which are packaged through travel agencies, can also avail this facility.” Dhofar Islamic’s Travel Finance



product gives customers the flexibility to avail better packages and destinations as well as the capability to take extended family members for the trip. It also provides a boost to the tourism sector as it opens the doors for avid travellers to explore exciting domestic and international destinations.

As the leading Islamic banking services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, Dhofar Islamic is committed to cater to the evolving needs and requirements of its retail and corporate customers by expanding its diverse array of customised Sharia-compliant products and services. “This product has been developed to add more convenience to our customers and help them finance their travel costs in a Sharia compliant manner. It is based on the Islamic financial contract of Service Ijarah where Dhofar Islamic purchases the services and leases them to customers. The product is available for Omani nationals and expatriates with a valid residence visa. It is a very easy and convenient facility which comes with fast approval, simple process

and flexible financing period of up to three years,” he said. The Travel Finance facility adds to the wide range of Islamic financial solutions, innovative products and best-in-class services that Dhofar Islamic offer to cater to the needs of its retail and corporate customers. These solutions include: credit card, home finance, auto finance, goods finance, education finance, savings account, current account, Savings Plan, Ameen term deposit, etc. As part of its strategic plan, Dhofar Islamic continues to distinguish itself by focusing on providing prominent customer service, developing and launching new products, as well as investing in technology to provide the best customer experience in a timely and convenient manner.

SPECIAL OFFER

Kalyan Jewellers launches its ‘25 Gold Bars’ giveaway campaign

MUSCAT: Kalyan Jewellers, one of the most trusted and leading jewellery brands has recently announced the launch of its ‘25 Gold Bars’ Giveaway offer, wherein 25 patrons stand a chance to take home a 10g gold bar, on their jewellery purchases from Kalyan Jewellers. With this unique offer, Kalyan Jewellers aims to celebrate the season in a distinctive manner. The offer can be availed till 30 August across all its showrooms in Oman. As part of this campaign, customers are entitled to receive 1 raffle coupon on purchase of gold jewellery worth OMR 50 and above, whereas patrons will receive 2 raffle coupons on purchase of diamond jewellery worth OMR 50 and above.



Speaking on the campaign, Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director – Kalyan Jewellers said, “At Kalyan Jewellers, we have been taking consistent steps towards creating a holistic ecosystem while catering to the distinct needs of our

customers, enhancing their shopping experience. Through this special offer, we aim to provide our patrons with exceptional benefits on their jewellery purchases. We are confident that our customers in the region will continue to show their

love and support for the Kalyan Jewellers brand.” All their showrooms stock Kalyan’s popular house brands, including Muhurat (Wedding Jewellery Line), Mudhra (Handcrafted Antique Jewellery), Nimah (Temple Jewellery), Glo (Dancing Diamonds), Ziah (Solitaire-like Diamond Jewellery), Anokhi (Uncut Diamonds), Hera (Daily Wear Diamonds), Rang (Precious Stones Jewellery), and the recently launched Lila (Coloured Stones and Diamond Jewellery).



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