

H M receives thanks cable from Emir of Kuwait

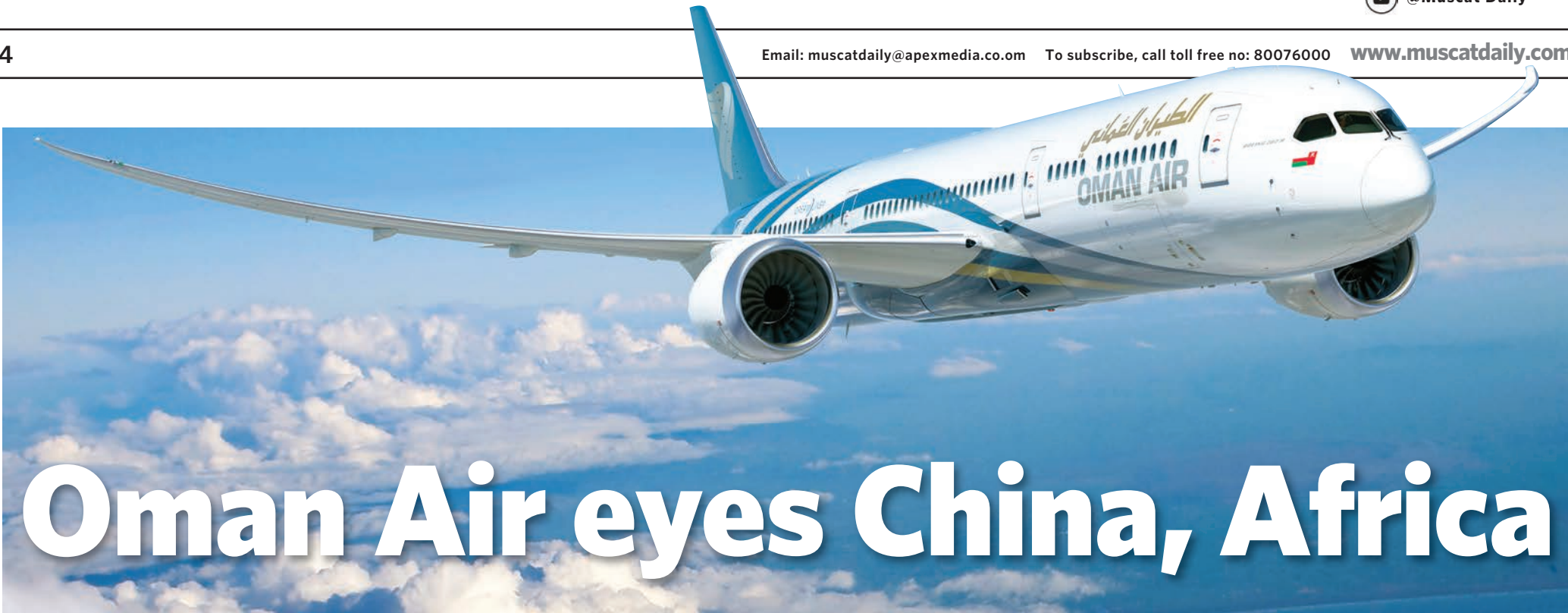
Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from Sheikh Mishal al Ahmad al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, in reply to His Majesty's condolences cable on the death of Sheikhha Suhaira al Ahmad al Jaber al Sabah.

In the cable, Sheikh Mishal expressed his utmost thanks for His Majesty's sincere condolences and sympathies, praying to Allah the Almighty to protect His Majesty against all harms.

His Majesty congratulates President of European Commission

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Ursula von der Leyen on the occasion of her re-election as President of the European Commission.

In the cable, His Majesty expressed his best wishes of success to the President of the European Commission. He also wished the peoples of the European Union further progress.



Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman Air's new CEO Con Korfiatis wants to target China as a strategic market once the airline stabilises; the two major markets currently not on his plans are the US and Australia.

"China is a huge tourist market with completely unexploited potential," he said in an interview with AeroTime, a global aviation digital hub. Korfiatis also sees opportunities in Africa, South Asia and Europe, where the airline currently serves a limited number of destinations.

"We have a fantastic location geographically for access to Africa. So, I see opportunities in Africa going forward. South Asia also has lots of opportunities and, of course, Europe. We're only touching a handful of places in Europe, and we believe we can bring in people from many other places into Oman,"



Don't expect any new aircraft orders, not in the next six months or 12 months at least

CON KORFIATIS

he told the digital magazine.

Korfiatis emphasised a "measured" approach to Oman Air's future milestones, focusing on consolidating the airline's market position before launching any new major projects. "Don't expect

National carrier lost RO2bn since 2011

Muscat - Oman Air has lost RO2bn in operations since 2011 and RO185.6mn in 2023, the national carrier's 2023 Annual Report revealed.

In 2023, the airline made significant strides in its recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, with load factors improving to almost pre-pandemic levels, stated H E Said bin Hamood al Mawali, Chairman of Board of Directors, Oman Air, in the report.

"However, despite these commendable achievements,

the stark reality is that the business in its current state remains unprofitable," he added.

The long-standing mismatch between unit revenues (RASK) and unit costs (CASK) has resulted in the cumulative loss of RO2bn at the operating level since 2011. "This mismatch stands in glaring contrast to most regional peers, impacting the majority of routes, and demanding radical improvement," H E Mawali stated.

The airline continued to burn cash in 2023, requiring an

RO60mn injection from the government.

Following RO392mn in loans taken on by the company in the last five years, the airline's debt position as of December 2023 remained unsustainable.

"Long term liabilities (debt and leases) reached RO1.6bn in 2023 versus RO800mn-RO900mn in 2018-2019, and future cash flow projections are insufficient to fund operations and investment requirements without further state cash injections," the chairman rued.

strong two-class product offering, with high-quality business and economy class services. While Premium Economy is being considered, there are no immediate plans to introduce it, he informed.

The airline's current first-class service, available on only two aircraft, is under review for long-term viability.

Oman Air's entry into the oneworld Alliance, expected to be formalised in the second half of 2024, will enhance its global reach and offer customers recognition and benefits across partner airlines. The alliance will help Oman Air connect to destinations it cannot serve directly, Korfiatis informed.

Looking ahead, Oman Air will incrementally increase frequency on some routes and introduce seasonal services, maintaining a steady but modest growth trajectory. "It's a measured approach," Korfiatis said. "I think it is wise."

ASMED launches SME emergency funding to help tide over crises

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) has launched an emergency financing programme aimed at supporting SMEs during crises.

The initiative aims to ensure continuity of SME activities and enhance their capacity to respond to emergencies.

The financing programme targets existing SMEs within the geographical areas affected by emergencies, as identified by relevant authorities. It provides swift and effective financial support to mitigate the economic impacts of such situations.

Outlining the conditions for applying for this financing, ASMED stated that business



To be eligible, business owners must possess an entrepreneurship card, and their financial and credit status must qualify them for funding

owners must possess an entrepreneurship card, and their financial and credit status must qualify them for funding.

Beneficiaries will have a grace period of up to two years from the date of the last disbursement, with a repayment period not exceeding five years, as determined by the nature of each

project.

Launch of this programme follows the impact of the tropical depression 'Al Matir' on SMEs, highlighting the need for a structured financing framework to ensure the sustainability of economic activities during various types of emergencies.

The tropical depression,

which struck Oman in April, resulted in 21 deaths, including 12 children.

ASMED aims to maintain the economic and social contributions of SMEs through this new financing initiative, ensuring their resilience and ongoing viability in the face of unforeseen challenges.



Airfares a deterrent to visit Dhofar for khareef



Bangladesh top court cuts back job quotas

Biden drops out of US presidential race

Washington, DC - US President Joe Biden announced on Sunday he was stepping down from the 2024 US presidential race.

"It has been the greatest honour of my life to serve as your president," he said in an online post.

"And while it has been my intention to seek reelection, I believe it is in the best interest of my party and my country for me to stand down."

The 81-year-old president has been facing calls to resign since his debate against Donald Trump three weeks ago, where he seemed frail, was struggling to focus, and slurring his words. Before the latest statement on



Joe Biden

Sunday, however, Biden tried to project defiance and repeatedly dismissed those calls.

While confirming he would not be running against Trump at the November election, Biden indicated he would be staying on

as president until the end of his term.

Biden endorsed his vice president, Kamala Harris, as the next Democratic nominee in a later statement.

Biden is the oldest man to ever be elected as the US president, with his rival Trump, 78, being the second oldest president in history.

In his message, Biden drew attention to his achievements in office, praising "historic investments" in rebuilding the US and unprecedented climate legislation.

"America has never been in a better position to lead than we are today," he said. DW

# 15

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# AIRFARES A DETERRENT TO VISIT DHOFAR FOR KHAREEF

The most awaited time of the year has arrived in Salalah. A popular getaway from the heat, last year over 1mn visitors visited Salalah during khareef and spent over RO100mn. But ticket prices are a deterrent for many. Should airfares to Dhofar during khareef be reduced? What other measures should be taken to attract visitors to Salalah? Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers said -

**Jacob John**  
IT professional

Reducing airfares, especially during khareef, is essential, but that is only half the picture. The remaining lies in developing Dhofar itself. There can be investments in transportation infrastructure, hotel options, local markets and tour services. These, alongside an advertising campaign, will help boost tourism in the region.

**Ahmed Mahmood al Jawhari**  
Teacher

Yes, I believe they should. A lot of people wish to visit with families during this season, but the high airfares are a deterrent. To attract visitors, I think we should invest in our traditional crafts. We cannot throw this away for imported goods and nobody comes to Dhofar to enjoy what they can already get in their countries. It's important to

balance tourism with preserving our local culture.

**Sanju Mohan**  
SME owner

Lower fares help, but we need more. Something in the vein of adventure tourism perhaps? Hiking trails, camel safaris, archaeological digs and so on. We should also definitely improve information services for tourists and hire more local guides who know multiple languages.

**Ali Khan**  
Private sector employee

Airfares must be reduced and infrastructure of the city upgraded. Salalah deserves much more attention and the tourist sites need to be improved and developed. The standard of shops and eateries at tourist spots are not up to the mark. There is nothing like Salalah



in the entire Middle East and so it deserves to be more developed.

**Reni Abraham**  
Marketing professional

Reduced airfares are definitely a start. From a marketing angle, I would sug-

gest a digital campaign targeted around Dhofar's monsoon season. Misty mountains and lush wadis make great photography material and would generate lots of tourism. We should also try to tell a story, like a documentary, on Dhofar's history, its culture and natural wonders. This will further

boost engagement and make it an appealing holiday destination.

**Mohammad Iqbal**  
Businessman

Two weeks ago, I wanted to go to Salalah with my family. But I couldn't

due to high flight tickets, despite a government announcement capping prices. People are being deprived of the opportunity to explore the beauty of Oman because of ticket prices. Airfares must be controlled. Additionally, some measures must be put in place to cap hotel room tariffs, too.

NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Should Oman shift to a Saturday-Sunday weekend, like the UAE has done and in alignment with the business schedule of most other countries?

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

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

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

| Tender Number        | Description of Tender                                                                                | Last date to collect the tender | Tender return date |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| PRE-23-215 Re-Call 2 | Replacement of existing Lighting at Al Seeb (RE-Call 2)                                              | 30/07/2024                      | 05/08/2024         |
| PRE/24/037 Re-Call 1 | Removal, Supply & laying of Road Marking at Muscat Governorate(RE-Call)                              | 30/07/2024                      | 05/08/2024         |
| PRE-23-201 Re-Call 1 | Maintenance of Boshier Sign Boards (Re-Tender)                                                       | 11/08/2024                      | 01/09/2024         |
| PRE-24-075 Re-Call 1 | Upgrade and centralize Avaya call manager for DGs at MM (RE-Call)                                    | 11/08/2024                      | 01/09/2024         |
| PRE-24-186           | Supply of Safety Barriers                                                                            | 11/08/2024                      | 01/09/2024         |
| PRE-24-185           | Beatification Of The Dagal Area Phase 2                                                              | 11/08/2024                      | 01/09/2024         |
| PRE-24-129           | Design And Build Of Al-Mabelah Bazar                                                                 | 11/08/2024                      | 01/09/2024         |
| PRE-24-190           | Hire of Automatic Truck Mounted High Capacity Thermoplastic Road Marking Machine with operating crew | 30/07/2024                      | 05/08/2024         |
| PRE-24-041           | Consultancy Services for Development at Hail Al Ghaf                                                 | 11/08/2024                      | 01/09/2024         |
| PRE-24-192           | Redressing Data Center                                                                               | 11/08/2024                      | 01/09/2024         |
| PRE-24-193           | Design and Construction of road in Halban at AlSeeb                                                  | 11/08/2024                      | 01/09/2024         |
| PRE-24-177           | Design and Construction of Parking at Muscat Hills                                                   | 11/08/2024                      | 01/09/2024         |
| PRE-24-195           | Supply of Evaporative Cooler                                                                         | 11/08/2024                      | 01/09/2024         |

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.

2. Clarification and Support:

- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to ([etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om)) or call (+96824402200).

BIDS INVITES

Oman Sales & Services invites bids for the procurement of IT infrastructure for a Disaster Recovery solution (cold site). Interested and qualified companies are requested to submit their proposals in response to the Request for Quotation (RFQ).

Instructions to Bidders:  
RFQ Collection Deadline: 22nd July 2024, 5:00 PM  
Proposal Submission Deadline: 29th July 2024, 5:00 PM

Requests for RFQ documents and clarifications must be sent via email to: [drsolution@muscatdutyfree.com](mailto:drsolution@muscatdutyfree.com)

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North Sharqiyah sees surge in SMEs

**ibra** - The number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in North Sharqiyah has grown to 9,912, with 1,783 of these obtaining the Riyada card. These businesses are primarily engaged in tourism, agriculture, mining and technology.

Salem bin Ali al Hajri, Director of Small and Medium Enterprises Development Department in North Sharqiyah, confirmed this increase over the past three years. Support was provided to 995 beneficiaries in 2023-2024, which included supplying machinery, equipment and raw materials, and refurbishing operations sites.

According to Hajri, tourism, agriculture, technology and mining are the key investment areas for entrepreneurs in the governorate, giving it a distinctive advantage. "Young entrepreneurs here are passionate about showcasing the promising aspects of North Sharqiyah."

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) has organised various programmes and initiatives this year, focusing on consulting, financing and training. Hajri informed that individual specialised consulting services

have been provided in finance, feasibility studies, marketing and business development.

"Five projects were funded this year from the authority's portfolio for those that completed the Entrepreneur Readiness Programme," Hajri added. The programme was organised in three batches, covering establishment and project expansion, with 83 beneficiaries participating.

In 2023, three marketing exhibitions were held for SMEs, craftsmen and productive families to empower these enterprises. Additionally, six workshops were conducted to enhance entrepreneurship culture, benefiting 247 participants.

In cooperation with the Governor's Office and several government institutions, ASMED has created 12 investment opportunities for Riyada card holders in North Sharqiyah, including the allocation of usufruct land for grape cultivation.

Hajri noted that ASMED is working on a supplier development programme for this year, aiming to enhance SMEs' capabilities to secure tenders, contracts, and purchases from government and private entities.



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# Duqm's new hotel facilities boost summer tourism

Our Correspondent  
Duqm

Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) has enhanced its status on Oman's summer tourism map by inaugurating new hotel facilities and increasing investments through Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

This year, three new hotels have opened in Duqm, taking the total number to 15 and available rooms exceeding 2,460.

Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, Acting CEO of SEZAD, noted that Duqm's location, midway between Muscat and Salalah, makes it a vital stop for travellers. "Visitors can take a break at one of the hotels, resorts or serviced apartments available in Duqm, which cater to the needs of tourists and families," Akaak stated.

The new hotels include Duqm Express Hotel, Al Madina Express Hotel Duqm and Royal Plaza



Hotel Duqm. Last year saw the opening of Grand Orchid Hotel Apartments and Duqm Plaza Hotel. "These hotels represent a significant addition to the hospitality sector in Duqm," Akaak added.

Duqm offers a variety of accommodation options, including 4-star hotels like the Crowne Plaza Duqm and Park Inn Resort Duqm, both located on Duqm Beach.

There are also 3-star hotels - Al Madina Hotel and Asian Hotel

- as well as serviced apartments like the Ocean Hotel Apartments, Royal Land Suites, Discovery Hotel Apartments, Dar al Jawhara, Dar al Dhiyafa and Duqm Suites. Youth hostels and heritage camps, such as Azbat al Maha and Duqm Camp, provide additional choices.

With mild weather year-round, including summer temperatures ranging from 25 to 32°C, Duqm is an appealing destination. Its location on the Arabian Sea, with access to the

Indian Ocean and sandy beaches, attracts tourists for beach sports.

Duqm's tourist attractions include the Rock Garden in the heart of the wilayat and the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary, less than a two-hour drive away. Travel agencies organise trips to these sites, offering various activities tailored to tourists' preferences.

Akaak highlighted the fact that the rise in tourism investments and infrastructure improvements within SEZAD have significantly increased tourist arrivals. This growth is further supported by daily direct flights from Muscat. SEZAD is implementing projects to enhance tourism services, including main and secondary roads, electricity and water services, and drainage systems.

Additionally, OPAZ plans to construct a coastal road serving the tourist area up to the multi-purpose fishing port and redevelop the zone according to modern urban planning standards.

# New tourism hotspot in Dhofar: Al Baleed Beach

Salalah - As part of ongoing efforts to boost tourism and create sustainable attractions, Dhofar has introduced several initiatives aimed at enhancing the visitor experience and promoting cultural heritage.

One such initiative is the Al Baleed Beach project in the wilayat of Salalah.

Situated in Al Baleed Archaeological Park, the project serves as a recreational outlet for families of citizens, residents and visitors to Dhofar, particularly during khareef, which attracts a large number of tourists from within and outside Oman.

The beach project implemented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, features a 1,200m walkway on a suspension bridge and includes eight cafes and restaurants overlooking the sea.

Ali bin Salem al Kathiri, Director of Frankincense Land Sites at Directorate General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar, stated,



"Based on the ministry's commitment to leveraging heritage assets and empowering the local community, an investment agreement was signed with Royal International Company to activate this cultural heritage site, aiming to create a sustainable tourism project."

Kathiri added that the project is expected to attract more visitors to the World Heritage Site, highlighting Omani heritage and culture. "This project is one of

the strategic initiatives to promote tourism in the governorate and the site in particular."

Speaking of the project's importance for regional development, Haitham bin Salem al Hadri, owner of Royal International Company, said, "Al Baleed Beach will enhance economic and social life, providing an attractive environment for citizens, residents and visitors to enjoy shopping, dining and the overall project experience," he said.

Hadri described the project as a unique architectural masterpiece, featuring shops and restaurants overlooking the sea, offering an exceptional experience for visitors.

"Initial visitor numbers indicate that Al Baleed Beach will significantly attract tourists, benefiting the community and enhancing the region's position as a distinctive tourist destination. Future developments will include additions to attract visitors of all ages," he added.

# Rummana agritourism event in Jabal Akhdar draws 15,000 visitors

Jabal Akhdar - The second edition of 'Rummana', an innovative agritourism event in Jabal Akhdar, Dakhliyah has attracted over 15,000 visitors since its opening on July 4. Sales during this period exceeded 500kg of fruits and other products, supported by ten small and medium enterprises.

The event is a collaboration between Teepee Oman and Agritourism Development Company (Janaen), which is a joint venture between Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) and Oman Food Investment Holding Company (Nitaj).

Khalid bin Hamad al Aghbari, Head of Field Work Team at Janaen, stated, "Rummana is part of the agricultural tourism initiatives in Jabal Akhdar. It aims to promote environmentally friendly agricultural tourism and



provide unique experiences to attract tourists, enhancing local value."

He added, "Rummana is the first of its kind to offer an exceptional experience among pomegranate trees, a fruit for which Jabal Akhdar is renowned."

According to Aghbari, the event helps position Jabal Akhdar as a leading tourist, cul-

tural and agricultural destination in Dakhliyah. "The wilayat has unique natural resources that enhance the competitiveness of Oman's agricultural and tourism sectors. This edition of Rummana will enrich the agritourism experience for visitors and support farmers in marketing their products," he said.

Rummana features various events and activities, including restaurants, cafes, workshops and cultural programmes aimed at children and families to promote agritourism. The event also includes children's games and specialised corners for selling products of local families, including food and fresh farm produce.

Visitors seeking a unique tourism experience can visit Rummana until September 28 at the Janaen farm in the village of Sih Qitna in Jabal Akhdar.

# Royal Cavalry 2nd in British Open Polo Championship

London - Oman's Royal Cavalry team won second place in the British Open Polo Championship held at Aspect Knepp Castle Polo Club. The final match between Royal Cavalry and Irish Polo Club saw five goals scored by the latter and three by the Omani team. Royal Cavalry's Mazin Mohammed al Zadjali won the Best Player's Award in the championship. ONA

**BIDS INVITES**

Oman Sales & Services invites bids for the provision of Third Party Logistics (3PL) warehousing services. Interested vendors are requested to submit their proposals in response to the Request for Quotation (RFQ).

Instructions to Bidders:  
Please pay RO 100 and collect RFQ document by 25th July 2024, 5:00 PM  
Proposal Submission Deadline: 8th August 2024, 5:00 PM

Requests for RFQ documents and clarifications must be sent via email to: [warehousetender@muscatdutyfree.com](mailto:warehousetender@muscatdutyfree.com)



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WORLD GREEN ECONOMY SUMMIT

Global platform supports transition to green and sustainable economy

Dubai, UAE - Held under the patronage of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, the World Green Economy Summit (WGES) has consolidated its position as a cornerstone for achieving the sustainable development goals and the transition to a green economy.

The summit - in its tenth year - has successfully kept pace with the UAE's leading and relentless efforts in supporting global climate action.

WGES is organised by the Dubai Supreme Council of Energy, Dubai Electricity & Water Authority (DEWA), and the World Green Economy Organisation (WGEO). It provides a pioneering platform that brings together prominent experts and specialists in various key sectors from around the world.

The summit fosters the exchange of ideas and experiences and coordinating the efforts of decision-makers and stakeholders in the energy, economy, and climate sectors. It provides innovative solutions and pioneering practices that drive positive



change and turn challenges into opportunities, supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

The 10th WGES will be held on October 2 and 3 this year at the Dubai World Trade Centre under the theme 'Empowering

Global Action: Unlocking Opportunities and Advancing Progress'.

It will highlight key thematic pillars, including Decarbonisation; Clean Energy Advancements (including Green Hydrogen & Energy Storage);

Climate Finance; Circular Economy; Using Technology to Tackle Climate Change; Youth in Climate Change, and Food and Water.

Saeed Mohammed al Tayer, vice chairman of the Dubai Supreme Council of Energy,

MD&CEO of DEWA, and Chairman of WGEO, emphasised that WGES 2024 will build on the themes and goals of the past nine editions to provide sustainable global solutions that contribute to achieving a balance between economic development

and environmental protection. The summit supports the transition to a green economy, achieving net zero, and enhancing international cooperation in various relevant sectors.

Tayer stated that the 10th WGES will host ministers, decision-makers, CEOs, and senior officials from the government and private sectors, and representatives of non-governmental organisations from around the world. They will discuss ways to advance the green economy, enhance effective cooperation in innovation, technology, and green finance, and utilise fruitful partnerships between the government and private sectors to support sustainable development efforts.

The 9th WGES 2023 hosted a diverse cohort of stakeholders, empowering developing regions and encouraging global cooperation and public-private partnerships.

WGES 2023 focused on the UAE's priority areas for COP28, which the UAE hosted last year, including mitigation, adaptation, finance, and loss and damage across key pillars.

These included the green policy pillar, which focused on the global stocktake, global carbon market, national and corporate approaches, sustainable development goals, and policies for a just green transition; and the green finance pillar, which focused on securing access to financing in low- and middle-income countries, de-risking investments, financing technology, the global economic landscape, and private sector solutions.

WGES 2023 also witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the World Green Economy Organisation (WGEO) and the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa), to foster sustainable development and green initiatives across the African continent. Additionally, WGEO announced during this edition that 86 countries have joined the Global Alliance on Green Economy (GAGE), and the Dubai Supreme Council of Energy launched the 5th Emirates Energy Award (EEA) 2023-2025.

WAM

Saudi invites global investors for record-sized mineral belts

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia has opened its most extensive mineral belt to date, covering an area of 4,788sqkm for global investors, involving five exploration licences.

This was revealed in a press release issued by the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources.

Through the release, the ministry has invited major mining and exploration companies to participate in the ongoing 'exploration licensing rounds' aimed at unlocking the belts' vast mineral wealth.

According to the ministry's official spokesperson Jarrah bin Mohammed al Jarrah, the initiative highlights Saudi Arabia's commitment to fostering a robust mining and minerals sector and creating opportunities for investors to explore the kingdom's wealth. He noted that five exploration licences are available to local and international mining companies.

These licences are integral to the ministry's strategy of promoting increased exploration investment and aligning with Vision 2030 objectives - aimed at positioning mining as the third pillar of its national industry.

The ministry is calling on major local and international mining and exploration companies to participate in the exploration licensing of the following mineral belts, which include three exploration licences for the Jabal Sayad belt, covering 2,892sqkm.

This mineral belt has big deposits of copper, zinc, lead, gold, and silver.

Two exploration licences for Al-Hajjar site in the Wadi Shwas VMS Belt covers 1,896sqkm of land containing deposits of gold, silver, copper, and zinc.

According to Jarrah, the Jabal Sayad and Al-Hajjar are the largest mineral belt sites the kingdom has ever launched.

The Jabal Sayid belt, located northeast of Jeddah and east of Madinah, contains the Jabal Sayid and Mahd AlThahab Mines.

Al-Hajjar site, situated within the Wadi Shwas VMS Belt in Saudi Arabia's Asir Terrane, has been opened for two exploration licences. This region, known for its rich gold, copper and zinc deposits, previously hosted a developed mine (Alhajjar mine), which produced approximately 40,000 ounces of gold annually before becoming inactive.

The spokesperson stated that the bidding process for the exploration licenses would be conducted with utmost transparency and through several stages, starting with the pre-qualification stage from July to October 2024. This stage will be followed by the invitation for qualified bidders to submit technical expertise proposals and social and environmental impact management plans in December 2024. This will culminate in the announcement of the winner and the grant of the exploration licence in January 2025. This comprehensive approach is necessary due to the massive size of the exploration sites that are up for bidding.

SPA

Japan's Mos Burger chain to start recruiting skilled foreign workers

Tokyo, Japan - The operator of the Mos Burger chain will start recruiting skilled foreign workers to help restaurants cope with Japan's labor shortage, officials of the fast food company have said, in a rare move for the sector.

Mos Food Services Inc will first introduce workers with skilled worker visas to its franchisees nationwide, with an eye to expanding the business to restaurants outside the group in the future, the officials said.

Potential new hires will receive training required to work in the Mos Burger chain, such as how to speak to customers and handle ingredients, at an educational institution it has tied up with in Vietnam.

The company expects to begin recruiting workers next spring in accordance with the needs of franchisees, with the chain already having applied for approval with related agencies.

Mos Food Services has been offering training and jobs to people



This file photo shows Vietnamese workers receiving cooking training at a Mos Food Services Inc facility in Tokyo in April this year (Kyodo)

Efforts to tap more foreign workers accelerated in the restaurant sector, which has been hit hard by the recent labour crunch due to long working hours and relatively low wages

ple in Vietnam since 2019, when Japan launched the specified skilled worker program, leading to the employment of 37 workers currently at its headquarters and restaurants directly run by the company.

But its franchisees face challenges in hiring skilled foreign workers as they have to recruit workers on their own, while they also lack know-how in assisting them after they come to Japan, the company said.

The new staffing programme

will also introduce support measures to help foreign workers adjust to life in Japan smoothly by assisting them with securing housing and offering consultation services, it said.

"Stores cannot operate without workers," Tsutomu Kawakoshi, executive officer at Mos Food Services, told Kyodo News. "It makes sense for the headquarters to step up efforts to secure more talent."

Efforts to tap more foreign workers have been accelerating in recent years in the restaurant sector, which has been hit hard by the recent labour crunch due to long working hours and relatively low wages.

Watami Co, the operator of an izakaya Japanese-style pub chain, has set up a subsidiary focusing chiefly on recruiting foreign workers, while Chinese restaurant chain operator Hiday Hidaka Corp. has been ramping up hiring of specified skilled workers.

Kyodo News

TRENDS highlights trade, investment prospects in Africa

Cape Town, South Africa - TRENDS Research and Advisory organised a panel discussion with the Bureau for Economic Research (BER) at Stellenbosch University, focusing on the prospects of economic relations between the Middle East and Africa, as well as the significant economic developments in the African continent and its promising commercial and investment opportunities.

The discussion was attended by several researchers and officials from TRENDS, led by Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Al-Ali, CEO of TRENDS, along with Dr. Johann Kirsten, Director of BER, and a number of researchers and experts. It

In addition to discussing economic cooperation prospects,



the discussion explored research and scientific collaboration opportunities between TRENDS and BER in vital areas, such as economics and technology, aiming to maximise mutual opportunities and propose innovative

solutions to the economic and developmental policy challenges facing countries.

Dr Mohammed al Ali, CEO of TRENDS, emphasised the importance of this panel discussion in enhancing research cooperation

with leading African think tanks.

"The TRENDS office in Cape Town serves as a focal point for the centre's efforts in Africa, aiming to expand the scope of joint research with prestigious African research institutions,"

the CEO noted.

He explained that the strategic objectives of the TRENDS office in Cape Town in the coming phase focus on identifying priority research areas that can enhance cooperation with African research institutions, establishing effective partnerships with think tanks in various African countries, and promoting the exchange of expertise and knowledge between African researchers and their counterparts at TRENDS.

Dr Johann Kirsten, Director of BER, stated that the "panel discussion represents an important step towards enhancing cooperation between the two sides in areas of mutual research interest".

WAM

# Saudi produces 89,500 tonnes mangoes in attempt to become food sufficient

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia has achieved a self-sufficiency rate of 68% in mango production, exceeding 89,500 tonnes annually, the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture stated.

As part of the 'Harvest Season' campaign, the Saudi ministry highlighted the kingdom's efforts in enhancing the agricultural yields - part of which got reflected in the country's focus on increasing the mango cultivation in several regions covering approximately 6,966 hectares.

Aimed at spreading awareness about agricultural products and diverse seasonal fruit options, and enhancing the local fruit marketing system to support local farmers, the ministry informed that the Jazan Region leads in annual production with 60,026 tonnes, followed by the Makkah Region with 17,915 tonnes, the Madinah Region with 4,505 tonnes, the Asir Region with 2,845 tonnes, the Tabuk Region with 2,575 tonnes, the Al-Baha Region with 912 tonnes, the Najran Region with 347 tonnes, the Eastern Region with 198



This file photo shows Jazan Region Governor Prince Mohammed bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz at the 20th edition of the Mango and Tropical Fruits Festival 2024, in Sabya on April 26

tonnes, Riyadh with 117 tonnes, and the Qassim Region with 60 tonnes.

The ministry highlighted that mango is one of the economically viable tropical crops in the kingdom, with a production period extending from April to August.

The kingdom cultivates over 20 different varieties of mango, including Tommy Atkins, Keitt, Kent, Fons, Sukkary, Badaami, Indian, Glenn, Langra, Julie, Sensation, Kland, Samak, Awais, Timor, Naomi, Valencia, Omani, Balmar, Thai and Preibo.

Mangoes are known for their numerous health benefits, being rich in vitamins, minerals, and fibre. They promote digestive and heart health, boost immunity, reduce the risk of certain cancers, and alleviate anaemia, in addition to benefiting skin and eye health.

The 'Harvest Season' campaign aims to educate people about various types of local fruits and their availability in different seasons throughout the year. This initiative aligns with the ministry's policy to enhance local production and consumption.

SPA

# China, Europe grow stronger auto industry ties amid closer cooperation



Shenyang, China - At the Tiexi plant of BMW Brilliance Automotive Ltd. in northeastern China, rows of sleek electric vehicles await global delivery. Just a street away, an auto parts factory buzzes with production activities, crafting components for car assembly.

The auto parts factory, which belongs to Gestamp, a Spanish multinational specialising in the design, development and manufacturing of highly engineered metal components, is one among many auto parts suppliers surrounding the plant, situated in Shenyang, the capital of northeast China's Liaoning Province.

With European automotive

giants like BMW entrenching themselves in the Chinese market, a large number of supporting suppliers have been prompted to set up facilities nearby, which fosters closer integration between the Chinese and European automotive sectors.

According to Ren Tingfu, general manager of Gestamp's Shenyang factory, the factory has steadily expanded its production capacity with substantial cumulative investments since its establishment in 2012.

"To meet the growing demand from our clients, we invested in expanding the automotive component project in 2023, which will soon be op-

erational," Ren added.

Gestamp, which began operations in China in 2007, now operates 14 factories and two research and development (R&D) centres and employs over 5,000 people in China.

"China boasts a vast, innovative and dynamic auto market," said Antonio Lopez Arce, CEO of Gestamp's Asia division, emphasising the strategic importance of the company's strong investment and considerable cooperation in China. "We continue to introduce our cutting-edge body in white, chassis and battery box technologies and products to China."

In recent years, China's auto market has accelerated its shift

towards new energy vehicles (NEVs), prompting significant investment and expanded production from European automakers.

In April 2024, BMW announced an additional investment of 20bn yuan (US\$2.8bn approx) in its production base in Shenyang to localise the production of a new generation of BMW models by 2026. Volkswagen AG established its largest R&D centre outside of Germany in China, focusing on R&D of intelligent networked vehicles.

Furthermore, German auto supplier ZF Group launched an NEV auto parts industrial park in Shenyang in 2023.

Xinhua

# Arab Parliament Speaker stresses on development

Cairo, Egypt - Speaker of the Arab Parliament Adel bin Abdulrahman al Asoumi stressed that the challenges facing Arab countries, including conflicts, internal crises, and economic problems.

Asoumi highlighted the importance of development projects undertaken by major international institutions, including the World Bank and its five main affiliates, to help these countries address these challenges.

He made his remarks during a meeting in Washington with Abdulaziz al Mulla, Executive Direc-



tor of the World Bank.

The meeting discussed the mechanism of the World Bank's operations, the representation of

Arab countries at the bank, and how the bank engages in development projects being implemented in Arab countries.

According to a statement issued on Sunday, Asoumi referred to the Arab Parliament's keenness to launch a joint development action program with the World Bank and explore potential areas and fields of cooperation through which the bank can provide technical assistance to enhance the parliament's legislative role in parliamentary diplomacy.

SPA

# flydubai celebrates its third anniversary of operations to Salzburg in Austria

Dubai, UAE - flydubai, the Dubai-based carrier, celebrated its third anniversary of operations to Salzburg, Austria.

flydubai was the first national carrier in the UAE to operate direct flights between Dubai and Salzburg with its inaugural flight landing at Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Airport (SZG) on July 15, 2021.

The carrier currently operates a four-times weekly service to Salzburg. Located near the German-Austrian borders, Salzburg Airport is also the second-largest airport in Austria which serves as a gateway to the famous Ski Amadé region.

Over the past few years, fly-



dubai has carried more than 100,000 passengers between Dubai and Salzburg, showcasing strong demand for travel.

Hamad Obaidalla, Chief Commercial Officer at flydubai, said, "At flydubai we are committed to exploring opportunities for growth, removing barriers to

travel and creating free flows in trade and tourism and enhancing connectivity between different cultures; all while providing convenient travel options to passengers across our ever-expanding network."

"We continue to grow our network in Europe," he added.

# Japan expands continental shelf eastward for metal research; China flays

Tokyo, Japan - Japan has extended its designation of its continental shelf to the eastern part of islands some 1,000km south of Tokyo, enabling the resource-poor country to start research on extracting maritime natural resources such as rare metals from the region.

A revised Cabinet order took effect designating a significant portion of the Ogasawara Plateau sea area as part of its continental shelf, an area of around 120,000sqkm. Its move to enlarge the shelf has triggered

opposition from China.

"The expanded continental shelf represents around half of the area of Japan's Honshu main island," said Yoshifumi Matsuura, minister for ocean policy, on June 25 when the Cabinet approved the expansion.

"We will be able to exercise our sovereign rights to explore the continental shelf and develop natural resources," he said.

The government said it has confirmed the existence of a cobalt-rich crust, including rare metals, in the region. Cobalt is a



This aerial photo taken in June 2018 shows Minamijima Island (bottom) and Chichijima Island in the Pacific (Kyodo)

metal that is used for electric vehicle batteries.

The enlargement of the continental shelf, a part of a continent submerged in a relatively shallow part of the sea, was first proposed in an ocean policy the Japanese government adopted in 2014.

To have its continental shelf recognized beyond its exclusive economic zone, Japan needed the approval of an institution established under the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea on the continuity of the seabed topography and agreement from relevant

countries, which in this case was solely the United States.

Following consultations with Washington, Japan set the area for expansion in December 2023.

China has criticised Japan's move. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on June 27 that the expansion "contravenes the stipulations of UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and universal practice".

Rare earth minerals are crucial for high-tech products such as batteries and semiconductors. China, a major producer of them,

has apparently been seeking to dominate industries where it already holds a large market share and to boost its economic clout in growing sectors that rely on such materials, experts said.

Japan has been strengthening efforts to secure supplies of the resources. Under the UN law, a coastal state can claim control of the seabed beyond the traditional 200-nautical-mile limit for its exclusive economic use if it can prove the ocean floor is connected to its continental shelf.

Kyodo News

# Changan UNI-K 4WD sports AI features

The Changan UNI-K 4WD is a luxurious vehicle that offers a combination of comfort, style, and advanced features such as artificial intelligence.

Its AI-Level 2 capabilities can enhance your driving experience through features like intelligent voice control, adaptive cruise control, and automated parking assistance. If you're looking for a premium driving experience with cutting-edge technology, the Changan UNI-K 4WD might be the perfect choice for you, a press release said.

Changan UNI-K boasts a sleek and streamlined exterior design, combining modern aesthetics with dynamic elements. Its unique exterior styling and attention to detail showcase a blend of fashion and technological sophistication. In terms of performance, the UNI-K is equipped with an efficient powertrain, featuring a robust engine and advanced suspension system, delivering an outstanding driving experience.

From the moment you lay eyes on the UNI-K, its striking el-



gance and futuristic design capture your attention. Sleek lines and aerodynamic contours seamlessly combine with features like electrically folding ORVMs, enhancing both aes-

thetics and functionality. Beneath this stunning exterior lies a powerful 2ltr turbocharged engine, delivering an impressive 233hp. Paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission, the

UNI-K offers a driving experience that is both thrilling and effortlessly smooth.

Step inside the UNI-K, and you are greeted by a sanctuary of opulence and comfort. The inter-

rior is a masterpiece of premium materials and meticulous craftsmanship. The eight-way Electrically Adjustable Driver Seat with Electric Lumbar Support and the four-way Electrically Adjustable

Co-driver Seat ensure unparalleled comfort on every journey, regardless of distance.

Technological innovation is at the heart of the UNI-K. A triple HD screen setup, featuring a

*Changan UNI-K boasts a sleek and streamlined exterior design, combining modern aesthetics with dynamic elements*

12.3" Infotainment system, keeps you seamlessly connected and entertained. The premium audio system, boasting 12 speakers, offers an immersive listening experience. Convenience is elevated with features like the streaming inside rearview mirror and remote engine start/stop functionality, making every drive a pleasure.

Versatility is another hallmark of the UNI-K. The rear seats can be almost fully flattened, transforming the trunk space from an impressive 518 litres to a cavernous 1,412 litres. This adaptability makes the UNI-K the perfect companion.



## SEF Legacy Museum opens

The Saudi Esports Federation (SEF) today opened a Legacy Museum in Riyadh, documenting the work of the federation since its inception and celebrating Saudi Arabia's impact on the global gaming and esports industry.

The museum, located at the SEF Arena at Boulevard Riyadh City, features sections such as 'Moments in Saudi Arabian Esports', with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pictured announcing the Esports World Cup at The New Global Sport Conference in October 2023. The Crown Prince is also showcased emphasising the significance of the gaming and esports industry and Saudi Arabia's prominent role within it, a press release said.

SEF's journey since it was formed in October 2017 is also chronicled, while a 'Kingdom Champions' area is dedicated to elite stars who have made global headlines through their esports exploits. Mosaad al Dossary is shown lifting the FIFAE World

Cup 2018 trophy, the Saudi national team celebrating their Overwatch World Cup crown in 2023, and the women's Saudi team cheering Valorant glory at the Afro-Arab Esports League last year.

Entry to the museum, which is open seven days per week from 6pm until Boulevard Riyadh City's closing time that night, is free of charge.

Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Sultan, chairman of the Saudi Esports Federation, said, "The unveiling of the Saudi Esports Federation Legacy Museum is a milestone moment in the history of our federation and Saudi Arabia's gaming and esports journey. It celebrates and showcases the passion for gaming in our country and the phenomenal impact and success that Saudi Arabia has had on the global stage in a relatively short space of time. In a country that deeply cherishes history and tradition, it is an honour for us to lay a permanent marker on Kingdom soil epitomizing the

modern Saudi Arabia."

Turki Alfawzan, CEO of the Saudi Esports Federation, said, "Recognising the achievements of the past is a vital part of ensuring progression in the future. The Saudi Esports Federation Legacy Museum provides inspiration for all who visit, especially those who play a role - or want to play a role - in capturing the full potential of gaming and esports in Saudi Arabia. Looking around the museum and seeing special moments dedicated to world-class, game-changing tournaments such as Gamers Without Borders, Gamers8 and the Esports World Cup is a thoroughly enjoyable and moving experience. We encourage all members of the public to visit the museum and relish the documentation of modern Saudi Arabian success."

Other sections at the Saudi Esports Federation Legacy Museum include a 'Heroes' zone, a 'Center of the Game' video display, and an interactive area called 'Experience the Moment'.

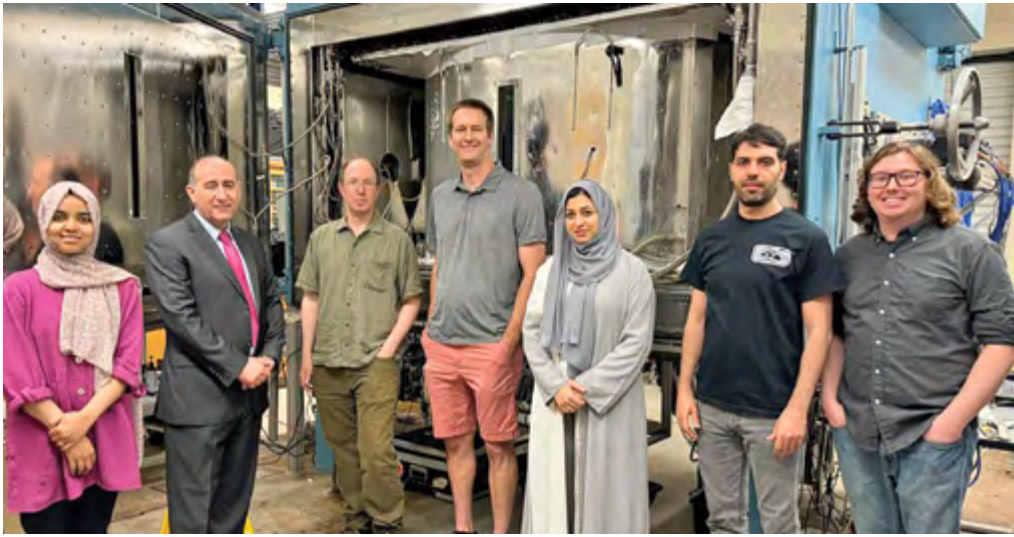
## UAEREP explores new research collaboration in United States

The UAE Research Programme for Rain Enhancement Science (UAEREP) has concluded its roadshow in the United States.

With an agenda focused on exploring new opportunities for innovative research collaboration in the fields of weather enhancement technologies, the roadshow also officially launched the research project awarded recipient of the 5th UAEREP grant cycle, led by Professor Will Cantrell from Michigan Technological University (MTU), USA, a press release said.

The roadshow included visits to key research centers specializing in advanced technology and water sustainability in the states of Michigan and New York. These centres included Michigan Technological University (MTU) and its Great Lakes Research Center, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Thomas J. Watson Research Center at IBM, Columbia University, Brookhaven National Laboratory, and The City College of New York.

The tour took place as the programme began preparations to announce the start of its new grants cycle due to start in January 2025. The new cycle will focus on five principal areas - enhanced seeding materials, rain enhancement systems, autonomous aerial systems, localised climate intervention, and advanced models, software, and data. Additionally, it will also explore opportunities to build on



the outputs of the 14 research projects that received programme grants in previous years.

The roadshow also included the participation of the programme's delegation in the United Nations High-Level Pol-

tainability goals through innovative new rain enhancement technologies as a sustainable water source.

The roadshow strengthened cooperation with key stakeholders, leading scientists, and ex-

tre of Meteorology (NCM) and President of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), said, "In line with the UAE's commitment to supporting groundbreaking research initiatives and building international partnerships to seek effective solutions to address water scarcity challenges and improve weather worldwide, we commit to explore new collaboration opportunities with some of the world's leading environmental and water sustainability research institutions, stakeholders, researchers, scientists, and policymakers."

Alya al Mazroui, director of UAEREP, said, "Our first stop on this tour focused on launching the innovative research project by Professor Will Cantrell and his team at MTU, award recipients of the 5th UAEREP grant cycle. Their project utilises laboratory studies and modelling to determine the suitability of clouds."

*We commit to explore new collaboration opportunities with some of the world's leading environmental and water sustainability research institutions*

DR ABDULLA AL MANDOUS

## UAE launches global initiative to build 10 new hospitals in next decade

The United Arab Emirates has unveiled an ambitious programme aimed at bridging critical healthcare gaps worldwide as part of the Zayed Humanitarian Legacy Initiative, announced in March of this year by President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan.

With a substantial financial investment of approximately US\$150mn (AED550mn) over the next decade, the UAE Global Hospitals Programme will oversee the construction of up to 10 hospitals, each tailored to meet the specific healthcare needs of underserved communities, en-

hancing the health of those least likely to access medical care.

The UAE-Indonesia Hospital for Cardiac Diseases, currently under construction in Surakarta, Central Java, will be the first facility to be inaugurated. Expected to be completed in the last quarter of 2024, the launch of this hospital will mark a significant milestone in the UAE Global Hospitals Programme overseen by the International Humanitarian and Philanthropic Council, providing vital services to thousands of heart disease patients.

The programme reflects the



UAE's long-standing commitment to global health equity and international cooperation. It represents a significant investment in supporting global health

under the Zayed Humanitarian Legacy Initiative, which will support institutions and projects working to deliver aid, address inequality, and advance sustain-

able development solutions.

Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, chair of the International Humanitarian and Philanthropic Council, said, "Under the guidance of Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, president of the UAE, we are honoured to reinforce our dedication to the UAE's enduring mission of improving global health. Over the coming decade, this initiative will drive meaningful change, embodying our commitment to assisting the underserved and enhancing the wellbeing and dignity of communities world-

wide."

Sheikh Shakhboot bin Nahyan al Nahyan, Minister of State and chair of the International Health Advisory Committee at the International Humanitarian and Philanthropic Council, said, "The hospitals established through this initiative will bolster healthcare systems, equipping them to bridge crucial health access gaps effectively. The UAE-Indonesia Hospital for Cardiac Diseases will not only deliver specialized medical services but also stand as a model for future projects within this programme."

Heart diseases are a leading cause of death and disability in Indonesia, with ischemic heart disease and stroke particularly prevalent. The burden of these diseases has risen significantly due to lifestyle changes, urbanisation, and an aging population.

Despite the expansion of healthcare coverage through national insurance programmes, the healthcare system struggles to effectively manage the rising incidence of heart diseases. Furthermore, access to healthcare facilities remains uneven, particularly in rural and remote areas in Indonesia.

# INJAZ Al-Arab, Boeing launch sustainable aviation course in ME

INJAZ Al-Arab, a member of Junior Achievement (JA) Worldwide, has joined forces with Boeing to launch a course on aviation sustainability.

The course is available on the INJAZ Campus digital education platform and aims to equip 4,000 high school and university students in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco, and Oman with the relevant knowledge and skills to drive sustainability in the aviation industry.

Kuljit Ghata-Aura, president of Boeing Middle East, Türkiye, Africa, and Central Asia, said, "Achieving commercial aviation's net zero target by 2050 requires involving the next generation. Boeing is partnering with non-profits and academia to educate and inspire young talent who will eventually design, build, and operate zero-emissions aircraft or develop new pathways for sustainable aviation fuels (SAF)."

By fostering a better understanding of corporate social responsibility, sustainable operations, renewable energy transition including SAF, and more, the course will inspire students to pursue rewarding careers in aviation and sustainability.

"We are thrilled to introduce our first-ever sustainable aviation course, marking a significant milestone in our longstanding partnership with Boeing," said Akaf Aqrabawi, president and CEO of INJAZ Al-Arab.



"INJAZ has always been dedicated to empowering young people to make positive changes in their lives and communities. With environmental concerns ranking among the world's top priorities today, we believe this course will serve as a gateway to building a professional sustainability-driven community."

The course is available both offline and online, offering flexibility to meet the specific needs of each participating country. It welcomes students registered within academic institutions in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco, and Oman.

The curriculum comprises six

comprehensive one-hour modules, covering various topics related to sustainability in aviation. Participants will engage in real-world case studies, gaining practical insights into the delicate balance between decarbonizing aviation and preserving and growing the societal and economic benefits of it.

For over 15 years, INJAZ Al-Arab and Boeing have been working closely to upskill and empower the youth in the Middle East and North Africa.

Operating in 13 countries across the Middle East and North Africa, INJAZ Al-Arab is the only non-profit organization

in the region that harnesses the mentorship of business leaders to help inspire a culture of entrepreneurship and business innovation among Arab youth.

Partnering with leading companies in the private sector, INJAZ Al-Arab equips the youth to drive the economies of the Arab world forward through training designed to inspire them to develop ambition, entrepreneurship, and professional skills. Named one of the top 100 NGOs in the world by NGO Advisor for six consecutive years, INJAZ Al-Arab has influenced the lives of over 7mn students since its inception in 2004.

INJAZ Al-Arab is a member of Junior Achievement, the world's largest and fastest-growing youth organization dedicated to educating students about workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy through experiential, hands-on programs.

As a leading global aerospace company, Boeing develops, manufactures, and services commercial airplanes, defence products, and space systems for customers in more than 150 countries. The company leverages the talents of a global supplier base to advance economic opportunity, sustainability, and community impact.

Boeing's diverse team is committed to innovating for the future, leading with sustainability, and cultivating a culture based on the company's core values of safety, quality, and integrity.

Boeing has been present in the Middle East for almost eight decades, supporting the region with the most advanced commercial airplanes, defence platforms, space and security systems.

The main aim of Boeing's community work is to develop local human resources capabilities in line with ambitious national visions.

Since 2013, Boeing invested more than US\$12mn in community outreach programmes across the Middle East, reaching more than 16,000 students.



## Lamborghini Urus SE on Gulf tour enters Muscat

Automobili Lamborghini has unveiled the Urus SE, marking a new era with the introduction of its first hybrid plug-in Super SUV. This groundbreaking model was presented at Lamborghini Muscat as part of its tour across major Gulf cities.

Featuring a new design, optimised aerodynamics, unprecedented on-board technology and an 800CV hybrid powertrain, the PHEV (Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle) version ranks at the top of the Urus range in terms of comfort, performance, efficiency, emissions and driving pleasure.

Thanks to its 'two hearts', thermal and electric, the torque and power values are the highest ever, giving the SE a unique place in its category and boasting an 80% reduction in emissions.

The Urus SE offers an unparalleled driving experience also thanks to the plug-in hybrid system, which helps to improve the

vehicle's performance and dynamics on any surface and in any condition: More torque and power at any rpm is provided by way of innovative technical solutions such as the introduction of the electric torque vectoring system between the two axles, and the electronic rear differential.

The twin-turbo 4.0 V8 engine has been re-engineered to work in optimal synergy with the electric powertrain. It develops 620CV of power (456kW) and 800Nm of driving torque; the combustion unit is combined with an electric powertrain delivering 192CV (141kW) and 483Nm of torque.

In delivering maximum output, the main focus has been on the calibration strategy between ICE and e-motor, reaching a total output of 800 CV to ensure an optimal power curve in every driving mode and on every surface, the company stated.

## PUBG Mobile debuts in highly anticipated Esports World Cup

After days of increasing excitement among Esports World Cup audiences, the wait for the highly anticipated PUBG Mobile World Cup 2024 is finally over.

The US\$3mn tournament got underway on Friday - welcoming 24 of the world's best teams in an epic battle for survival and global supremacy.

Running till July 28 live from Boulevard Riyadh City, the objective for those competing is simple: Parachute onto the remote island below and remain as the last player or team standing in epic battle royale format.

"We're absolutely thrilled that the time has come for PUBG Mobile to headline here at the Esports World Cup - the PUBG Mobile World Cup is going to be incredible," said Faisal bin Homran, Chief Product Officer at the Esports World Cup Foundation. "It's a competition that promises nothing but non-stop action, drama, and excitement - and



we're sure this will go down as one of the very best we see this summer."

Given PUBG Mobile's global following and popularity, anticipation at home and abroad has been growing ever since the official Esports World Cup schedule was announced. Now, the PUBG Mobile World Cup 2024 co-headlines at the Esports World Cup. Throughout its duration, the PUBG Mobile World Cup will see

clubs engage in fierce combat on the road to victory. The group stage, which ended on Sunday had 18 matches with 12 teams assured of qualification to the main tournament (July 26-28). The 12 that failed to qualify entered the survival stage (July 23-24), where they will have another opportunity to progress with four teams assured of advancement to the main tournament.

## Ooredoo, Oman Academy for SMEs launch content creator programme

In collaboration with the Oman Academy for SMEs, Ooredoo has announced a ground-breaking programme aimed at training, supporting, and guiding aspiring content creators.

This initiative is designed to empower job seekers, university and college students, and beginner content creators by helping them reach a wider audience and enrich Omani content on social media platforms, a press release said. The programme is structured to make a significant impact by offering participants the opportunity to earn a sustainable income, receive ongoing support and guidance, and market Omani brands, particularly during the Khareef season.

Feras al Shaikh, director of Branding and Communications at Ooredoo, said, "Our goal is to discover and nurture local talent in the field of content creation, helping them become prominent



names in their respective areas.

"This partnership will not only benefit Ooredoo and the Oman Academy for SMEs but also support the promotion of Omani brands and the establishment of emerging companies in the field of social media marketing. Together, we are committed to up-

grading the world of our participants, fostering innovation, and contributing to the growth of Oman's digital economy."

The programme received significant attention from individuals and major brands, and the competition to participate in the programme was high. The

academy has already started the programme workshops, following the announcement of chosen participants and brands.

Fair and transparent voting methods will be employed to select the top ten brands, and the public and participants will then vote to choose the top three.

## Skyscanner reveals best family travel destinations for this summer

Global travel marketplace, Skyscanner has unveiled its latest report on the top family travel destinations to visit this summer, complete with recommendations for the most affordable car rentals with savings of up to 14%.

With the travel season in full swing, families can now plan their perfect vacation without breaking the bank, Skyscanner stated in a release.

Skyscanner's latest research, in association with OnePoll, reveals that out of the 48% of the UAE residents who have already booked their summer holidays this year, only 53% have hit the book button on their car hire, in contrast to the 97% who have already booked their flights.

The UAE travellers' advanced planning approach to car rentals

are reflected in Skyscanner booking behaviours with 84% of residents booking their car rentals less than 4 weeks before departure and 31% booking on the day before or day of travel.

Skyscanner has rounded up five of the cheapest destinations for families seeking adventure.

### 1. Jordan

For families seeking a mix of adventure, culture and history, Jordan offers an array of attractions such as the ancient city of Petra, the desert landscapes of Wadi Rum, and the buoyant waters of the Dead Sea. Affordable car hires starting from an average daily rental price of AED101 for a hassle-free exploration of this Middle Eastern gem. Return flights to Jordan from AED850.



### 2. Cyprus

Rich in history, culture and it's alluring crystal clear waters, Cyprus offers a perfect blend of ancient ruins, beautiful beaches,

and charming villages. Families can enjoy the freedom of exploring this Mediterranean gem with cost-effective car rentals with an average daily rental rate of

AED117, making it easy to visit iconic sites such as the Tombs of the Kings and Troodos Mountains. Return flights to Cyprus starts from AED865.

### 3. Mauritius

A tropical paradise known for its stunning sparkling beaches, lush rainforests, and vibrant coral reefs, Mauritius is a dream destination for families. Discover the island's natural beauty with affordable car hires starting at an average daily cost of AED121. This allows you the freedom to explore attractions like Black River Gorges National Park and Chamarel Waterfall at your own pace. Return flights to Mauritius from AED3,537.

### 4. Portugal

From the golden beaches of the Algarve to the historic streets of Lisbon and Porto, Portugal offers a diverse and family-friendly experience. With budget-friendly daily car rental options starting

from AED124, exploring the country's breathtaking landscapes and rich cultural heritage has never been easier. Discover Unesco-listed sites such as Sintra and the Douro Valley region, all at your own convenience. Return ticket from AED3,217.

### 5. Spain

Spain's rich cultural heritage, delicious cuisine, and vibrant festivals make it an ideal family vacation spot. With best-value car hire options starting from an average daily rate of AED141, families can easily travel between bustling cities like Barcelona and Madrid, attractions like the Alhambra in Granada and the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. Return flights to Spain starts from AED3,480.

North Korea flies more balloons across border with South

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea has resumed sending balloons carrying trash toward South Korea, Seoul's military said on Sunday.

The military added that South Korea was stepping up its anti-Pyongyang propaganda broadcasts across the heavily guarded border between the two Koreas.

"The North is launching another batch of rubbish-carrying balloons," the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said in a statement, advising people not to touch the objects and report them to nearby military or police authorities.

**S Korea responds with loud speakers**

The latest balloons from North Korea come after South Korea announced on Thursday that it had resumed loudspeaker propaganda broadcasts directed at the North. The broadcasts were restarted for the first time in nearly 40 days as a response to Pyongyang's previous balloon



*The latest balloons from North Korea come after South Korea announced on Thursday that it had resumed loudspeaker propaganda broadcasts directed at the North*

activities.

The Cold War-style psychological battle between the North and South has seen a tit-for-tit balloon campaign, with the North sending nearly 2,000 rubbish-carrying balloons toward the South since the end of May, saying it is retaliation for propaganda balloons launched by South Korean activists.

Seoul had earlier cautioned that it would broaden the scope of its broadcasts if the North continued floating the trash-car-

rying balloons.

"As we warned several times, the military will carry out loud-speaker broadcasts in full scale and on all fronts starting 1pm today," the JCS said on Sunday, deeming the North's launch of balloons vulgar and shameful.

South Korea's broadcasts - which contain propaganda, world news and K-pop music - irk the isolated North Korea, which tries to limit access to outside news for its 26mn people.

DW



Former US President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

Clintons privately encouraging donors to continue support Biden's campaign

New York, US - Former US President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have been privately urging donors to maintain their financial support for President Joe Biden's campaign, CNN reported on Sunday. This comes after Biden's debate performance, which has caused significant turmoil within the Democratic Party.

One of the sources stated that the Clintons are choosing to be 'deferential to Biden's decision'.

The second source, who is knowledgeable about the Clintons' perspective and has spoken with them recently, underlined that a more accurate portrayal of their position would be that they are 'deferential to the process'.

According to this source, in recent private conversations, the Clintons have explicitly stated that regardless of others' opinions or statements, President Biden remains the party's presumptive nominee unless he chooses to

withdraw from the 2024 race or delegates vote for another candidate.

This source did not provide any comment on whether the Clintons have expressed a personal opinion regarding whether they believe Biden should continue seeking a second term.

Since the CNN debate on June 27, major donors have refrained from contributing financially amid increasing apprehensions about Biden's candidacy. This situation raises significant concerns about the campaign's ability to sustain its operations at full capacity if conditions remain unchanged.

"I don't know how you campaign with a broadening electoral map without money. I don't know what they're doing. I don't know," one major Democratic donor told CNN on Friday. "I've never seen this strategy where you think you can win without money," the source added.

Anadolu Agency

'I took a bullet for democracy': Trump after attempt on life

Michigan, US - "I took a bullet for democracy," former US President Donald Trump said on Saturday, addressing a first rally after he was shot in the ear during an assassination attempt on his life last week, *The Hill* reported.

Trump returned to the campaign trail in Michigan's Grand Rapids, days after accepting the Republican nomination for president at the Republican National Convention.

"I don't want to know anything about it. But what they do is misinformation and disinformation, and they keep saying he's a threat to democracy," Trump continued, referring to Democrats. "I'm saying, 'What the hell did I do for democracy? Last week, I took a bullet for democracy,'" Trump said.

Speaking about Project 2025, Trump said: "They're seriously extreme, but I don't know anything about it."

Democrats have tried to tie Trump to Project 2025, a conservative policy platform organised by the Heritage Platform, whose contributors include former Trump administration officials, according to *The Hill* report. Former US President and his campaign have denied any support for Project 2025.

During the rally, he said: "I stand before you only by the grace of Almighty God." Trump was wearing a smaller beige coloured bandage on his right ear at his rally, different from the larger white one he wore at the Republican National Convention earlier this week, according to



Donald Trump returned to the campaign trail in Michigan's Grand Rapids, days after accepting the Republican nomination for president

*What did I do for democracy? Last week, I took a bullet for democracy... I stand before you only by the grace of Almighty God*

DONALD TRUMP

*The Hill* report.

It was Trump's first rally after surviving an assassination attempt at a rally in Pennsylvania last Saturday.

He was shot in the ear and was escorted off the stage by US Service agents. One attendee and the shooter died during the attack, while two others were injured in the shooting incident in

Pennsylvania.

Many Trump supporters who came to attend the rally were wearing shirts featuring the image of Trump holding his fist in the air and telling his voters to 'fight' as Secret Service agents were escorting him off the stage after the shooting incident in Pennsylvania, CNN reported.

Many of the merchandise ta-

bles outside the venue in Michigan's Grand Rapids were selling shirts to attendees as they waited in queues to enter the indoor arena.

At the same rally in Michigan, Republican Vice presidential nominee JD Vance slammed US Vice President Kamala Harris, questioning her achievements and defending his own loyalty to the country, CNN reported.

Vance said: "There's some bad news actually, Vice President Kamala Harris, she doesn't like me."

"Kamala Harris said something to the effect that ... I have no loyalty to this country. Well, I

don't know, Kamala, I did serve in the United States Marine Corps and build a business. What the hell have you done other than collect a check?," Vance said.

It was Vance's first rally with former US President Donald Trump after being selected as his running mate. Vance's remarks came after Kamala Harris earlier this week criticised him for saying he would not have certified the election results of 2020.

Harris even compared Vance to former US Vice President Mike Pence, saying that Vance 'would have carried out Trump's plan to overturn the 2020 election'.

ANI

INDONESIA ALL SET TO CELEBRATE CHILDREN'S DAY



Children participate in a drawing activity to welcome National Children's Day at Kandank Jurank playground in South Tangerang, Banten Province, Indonesia on Sunday. Indonesia commemorates its National Children's Day on July 23 every year (Xinhua)

ZHO launches operations across speech therapy centres in Egypt

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The Zayed Higher Organisation for People of Determination (ZHO) has announced the launch of operations across 10 new speech therapy centres in 6 governorates of the Arab Republic of Egypt, benefiting 643 young men and women with disabilities.

The step comes within the framework of the joint cooperation protocol signed last November between the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the ZHO, under the 'Bridges of HopeHolding' programme, sponsored and supported by ADQ, to rehabilitate and develop 60 of the Ministry's speech therapy centres and provide internet services to these centres, as well as establishing and funding a medical convoy touring several governorates to provide urgent medical care for people of determination and their families.

Dr. Ashraf Sobhy, Egyptian Minister of Youth and Sports, highlighted the efforts of ZHO and ADQ to support people of



determination in Egypt, offering a free service for Egyptian families with children with disabilities, to integrate them into society and provide a decent life for them.

He also underscored the role of Zayed Higher Organisation in enhancing efforts aimed at empowering people of determination and their families, reinforcing their role in community development, and providing all means to facilitate their activities to ensure their rights are protected.

For his part, Abdullah Al Humaidan, Secretary-General of

Zayed Higher Organisation for People of Determination, affirmed that the launch of speech therapy centres in six Egyptian governorates, both in upper and lower Egypt, represents a positive step towards completing the system of providing care and therapeutic sessions for beneficiaries in these areas. This is part of the cooperation protocol, transferring expertise, and supporting families of people of determination through counselling programmes and developing speech therapy centres.

WAM

# Saudi calls for peace efforts in Yemen

Saudi voiced ‘great concern’ over the military escalation following Israeli airstrikes on Al Hudaydah Port

Riyadh, KSA - Saudi Arabia said on Sunday it is following with ‘great concern’ the military escalation in Yemen following Israeli airstrikes on Al Hudaydah Port.

At least six people were killed and 83 others injured in Israeli airstrikes on the port in western Yemen on Saturday, according to the Houthi-run Health Ministry.

The Israeli army claimed responsibility for the raids, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described them as a ‘direct response’ to a drone attack launched by the Houthi group on Tel Aviv on Friday, which killed an Israeli and injured 10 others.

In a statement, the Saudi Foreign Ministry called on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and ‘to distance the region and its people from the dangers of war’.

It called on the international community and active influential parties ‘to fulfil their responsibilities to end conflicts in the region’.

The ministry reiterated the kingdom’s continued efforts to end the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip and ‘its continuous support for peace efforts in Yemen to spare its people more suffering and achieve security and peace in the region’.

American officials told private Israeli Channel 12 that Tel Aviv conducted the attack on Al Hudaydah independently, without any military involvement from Washington.

The airstrikes marked the first



At least six people were killed and 83 others injured in Israeli airstrikes on the port in western Yemen on Saturday, according to Houthi-run Health Ministry

direct Israeli response to recent Houthi attacks.

The Houthis have been targeting ships that are Israeli-owned, flagged, operated or headed to Israeli ports in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden with missiles and drones in solidarity with the Gaza Strip, where nearly 39,000 people have been killed in a devastating military offensive since October 7, 2023.

**Call for ‘complete destruction’**

Meanwhile, former Israeli Foreign

Minister Avigdor Lieberman called on Sunday for the ‘complete destruction’ of the port of Al Hudaydah in western Yemen.

“We must completely destroy the port of Al Hudaydah,” Lieberman, the head of the Yisrael Beit-einu Party, told Army Radio.

He claimed that the port is ‘the main gateway for the supply of Iranian weapons to the Houthis’.

Hezbollah, meanwhile, said on Saturday that it considered a ‘reckless’ Israeli attack on the Al Hudaydah governorate in Yemen ‘a signal for the beginning of a

Lebanese group.

It affirmed its ‘strong support for the Yemeni people in defending itself, its sovereignty, and its heroic and historic stance alongside Palestine, its people, and its resistance’.

**Lay off at Port of Eilat**

The Port of Eilat in southern Israel plans to lay off half of its workforce this week due to Houthi attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea, its chief executive officer said on Sunday.

“Eilat Port is Israel’s southern

gateway to the Far East, Australia, and Africa,” Gideon Golber told Israeli daily Maariv.

“All activity stopped because ships could no longer pass in any direction to reach Eilat Port or travel towards Europe through the Suez Canal. Therefore, the port halted its operations and income stopped,” he added.

Golber said the port will lay off 50 per cent of its workers this week due to its economic losses.

According to Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth, the port has incurred losses of 50mn shekels (US\$13.61mn).

Currently, approximately 120 people are employed at the port.

Anadolu Agency

# Israel must face consequences, says Turkish President Erdogan

Istanbul, Turkey - Israel must face punishment for its actions severe enough to deter anyone ‘from considering such cruelty again’, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Sunday.

“Israel must face the consequences of its actions, ensuring that the punishment serves as a stark deterrent against anyone considering such cruelty again,” Erdogan told reporters on the plane returning from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Erdogan also commented on an advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that affirmed Palestinians’ right to self-determination and ruled that Israeli settlements in occupied territories must be evacuated.

“I hope this decision and previous ones not implemented by Israel will bring an awakening in the international community,” he said.

The Turkish president urged the US to exert pressure on Israel, withdrawing its support for ‘murderer’ Prime Minister Ben-



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Israel must face the consequences of its actions, ensuring that the punishment serves as a stark deterrent against anyone considering such cruelty again

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

jamin Netanyahu and his associates to end the ‘oppression’ in Gaza.

“The whole issue is for those who stand for justice against Israel’s actions to unite, ensuring everyone stands alongside the decision of the ICJ. We can only disrupt this game with such a stance,” he said.

“To end this oppression, it is necessary for the US administration to pressure Israel and withdraw its support from murderer

Netanyahu and his associates,” he added.

The top UN court ruled on Friday that Israel should end its occupation of the Palestinian territories ‘as rapidly as possible’ while also calling on Tel Aviv to make full reparations for its ‘internationally wrongful acts’.

The court found multiple breaches of international law by Israel including activities that amounted to apartheid.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army

killed 64 more Palestinians in attacks in the Gaza Strip, taking the overall death toll to 38,983 since October 7, the Health Ministry in the enclave said on Sunday.

A ministry statement added that some 89,727 others have been injured in the assault.

“Israeli forces killed 64 people and injured 105 others in four ‘massacres’ against families in the last 24 hours,” the ministry said.

Anadolu Agency

# Israeli finance minister slams US sanctions as ‘fatal blow’

Jerusalem - Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich on Sunday called potential US sanctions against him over illegal settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank a ‘fatal blow to Israeli sovereignty’.

“This is an unfortunate decision stemming from internal political needs of those who claim to lead the world’s largest democracy,” said Smotrich, who leads the far-right Religious Zionism Party.

Reports emerged that the White House was considering sanctions against Smotrich due to his efforts to promote illegal settlement activities in the occupied West Bank, according to Israeli Channel 7.

“Imposing sanctions on an elected official and senior government minister for his governmental and democratic activities on behalf of his voters constitutes a fatal blow to Israeli sovereignty and bilateral relations, with severe consequences in many areas,” he



said. Smotrich insisted that his duty is to ‘strengthen Israel’s grip on parts of the homeland in Judea and Samaria (West Bank) and prevent the establishment of a state that would endanger Israel’s existence’.

The far-right minister downplayed the importance of Western sanctions, calling American and European penalties ‘a passing shadow and dust’.

Smotrich said he discussed the issue of US sanctions with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, adding that ‘matters will be clarified (to the American side) unequivocally’.

Netanyahu is scheduled to

travel to Washington on Monday morning, where he will meet with US President Joe Biden on Tuesday and address the US Congress on Wednesday, according to a statement from his office.

Tensions have been running high across the occupied West Bank amid a deadly Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023.

At least 578 Palestinians have since been killed and nearly 5,400 others injured by Israeli army fire in the occupied West Bank, according to the Health Ministry.

Anadolu Agency

# Philippines and China reach South China Sea ‘arrangement’

Manila, The Philippines - China and the Philippines have reached a deal they hope will end confrontations at a fiercely contested atoll in the South China Sea.

“The Philippines and the People’s Republic of China have reached an understanding on the provisional arrangement for the resupply of daily necessities and rotation missions to the BRP Sierra Madre in Ayungin Shoal,” the Philippine Foreign Ministry said on Sunday, using the Filipino name for Second Thomas Shoal.

The Philippines occupies the Second Thomas Shoal, but China also claims it.

Increasingly tense maritime confrontations over the shoal

have raised concerns about a potential broader conflict that may involve the United States due to as mutual defence pact with the Philippines.

A small number of Filipino soldiers are stationed on a deliberately beached old warship on the shoal.

Chinese Coast Guard and other forces have used powerful water cannons and dangerous blocking manoeuvres to prevent food and other supplies from reaching the military personnel at Manila’s outpost at the shoal.

“Both sides continue to recognise the need to deescalate the situation in the South China Sea and manage differences through



dialogue and consultation and agree that the agreement will not prejudice each other’s positions in the South China Sea,” the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said.

China has not yet publicly said anything about the deal.

The Second Thomas Shoal lies about 200km (120 miles) from the western Philippine island of Palawan and more than 1,000km from China’s nearest major landmass, Hainan Island.

The United States and its key Asian and Western allies, including Japan and Australia, condemned the Chinese acts at the shoal and called for the rule of law and freedom of navigation to

be upheld in the South China Sea.

Beijing claims almost the entire waterway with its so-called nine-dash line, which overlaps the exclusive economic zones of rival claimants Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

In 2016, an international tribunal in The Hague ruled in favour of the Philippines and invalidated China’s claim in the strategic waters. But Beijing refused to accept the ruling.

The deal with the Philippines could spark hope that Beijing could forge similar arrangements with other rival countries to avoid clashes while thorny territorial issues remain unresolved.

dw

# India: FM set to present Union Budget

Nirmala Sitharaman, is set to present her seventh consecutive Union Budget on Tuesday

New Delhi, India - As the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, is set to present her seventh Union Budget, the Monsoon Session of Parliament will commence on Monday.

With the presentation of this year's budget, Sitharaman will establish herself as the first finance minister to present seven consecutive budgets, breaking the record of Morarji Desai's six budget presentations.

Desai, who was the country's finance minister from 1959 to 1964, presented a record six budgets for the country, of which five were full budgets and one was an interim budget.

Like the previous few full Union Budgets, Budget 2024 will also be delivered in paperless form. An Interim Union Budget 2024 was presented on February 1, as the country was due for general elections.

As part of the budget preparation, the finance ministry has completed several rounds of de-



This file photo shows Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at a meeting with economists ahead of the Union Budget, in New Delhi on July 11 (ANI)

liberations with different stakeholders of the economy.

These meetings started on June 20, during which Sitharaman met representatives from trade unions, the education and health sectors, employment and skilling, MSMEs, trade and services, industry, economists, the financial sector and capital markets, as well as representatives

from the infrastructure, energy, and urban sectors.

During the meetings, economists discussed several critical issues, such as boosting capital expenditure and reducing the fiscal deficit.

The group of economists suggested to the ministry that the focus should be on reducing the fiscal deficit in the upcoming

budget, along with the need to generate employment growth.

The industry body, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), suggested that the government increase capital expenditure in the upcoming budget. The economists also emphasised the need to enhance capital expenditure. Farmer associations urged the finance minister to enhance

the budgetary allocation for the agriculture sector. Representatives from the skilling and employment sectors suggested ways to skill the youth for better utilisation of the workforce.

This year's Monsoon Session will have 19 sittings until August 12. The Modi government is expected to present six bills, among which the Aircraft Act and Parlia-

ment's nod for the budget of Jammu and Kashmir are prominent. The government will also present the Finance Bill after the announcement of the budget on July 23. Among the other bills, the disaster management law, the Bhartiya Vayuyan Vidheyak 2024, the Boilers Bill, the Coffee (Promotion and Development) Bill, and the Rubber (Promotion

*Like the previous few full Union Budgets, Budget 2024 will also be delivered in paperless form. An Interim Union Budget 2024 was presented on February 1*

and Development) Bill will be tabled in this year's Monsoon Session.

The Bhartiya Vayuyan Vidheyak 2024 will replace the Aircraft Act of 1934 and streamline regulations in the civil aviation sector, aiding industry players in the sector.

The interim budget, tabled on February 1, addressed the financial needs of the intervening period until a government was formed after the Lok Sabha polls, after which a full budget was supposed to be presented by the new government in July.

The Union Budget documents will be available on the 'Union Budget Mobile App' for hassle-free access to budget documents by Members of Parliament (MPs) and the public.

The app is bilingual (English and Hindi) and is available on both Android and iOS platforms. ANI

## Indian Muslim group voices concerns about 'discriminatory' govt order against eateries

New Delhi, India - An Indian Muslim group raised concern on Saturday about the Uttar Pradesh state's government 'discriminatory' order for eateries to identify their owners.

Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, India's largest socioreligious Muslim organisation, expressed concern about the order by the state's government that asked eateries - including roadside carts - to display the names of their owners to 'avoid confusion' during a Hindu holy pilgrimage when thousands of worshippers will make the journey on foot.

"This is a completely discriminatory and communal decision, anti-national elements will get an opportunity to benefit from this decision and there is fear of serious damage to communal harmony due to this new decree which violates the fundamental rights of citizens as enshrined in the Constitution," Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind President Maulana Arshad Madani said in a statement. "All the citizens of the country have been given complete freedom in the constitution to wear what



*Uttar Pradesh state government had asked eateries - including roadside carts - to display the names of their owners to 'avoid confusion' during a Hindu holy pilgrimage*

they want, eat what they want. There will be no hindrance in their personal choice because this is a matter of the basic rights of the citizens."

Earlier this week, police in the state's Muzaffarnagar district initially ordered all eateries along the

pilgrimage route to display the names of their owners.

Days later, the state government extended the controversial order across the state, local daily Indian Express reported on Friday.

Police in Haridwar in neighbouring Uttarakhand's Haridwar issued similar directions on Friday. Opposition leaders have criticised the government for the order.

"The divisive order to put up name boards of the owners of carts, kiosks and shops in Uttar Pradesh is an attack on our Constitution, our democracy and our shared heritage," said Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, a senior leader of the opposition Indian National Congress party, while demanding that the order be withdrawn immediately.

Anadolu Agency



## Congo summons Uganda envoy on alleged rebel support

Yaounde, Cameroon - The Congo's Foreign Ministry summoned Uganda's charge d'affaires, Matata Twaha, following a UN report that alleged Ugandan support for the March 23 Movement (M23) rebel group.

The report, released earlier this month, alleges that the Ugandan military is supporting the M23 - a group active in eastern Congo that is linked to Rwanda. It said Rwandan forces have been operating alongside M23 rebels, complicating security in the region. Deputy Foreign Minister Gracia Yamba Kazadi

summoned Twaha on Friday to discuss the allegations.

Twaha denied the allegations and reiterated Uganda's commitment to regional stability and co-operation with the Congo government.

Earlier in March, the Congo recalled Rwanda's ambassador for attacks on its troops, accusing Rwanda of supporting the M23 rebels in the eastern regions of Tchanzu and Runyonyi.

Renewed M23 attacks since November 2021 have displaced thousands.

Anadolu Agency

### A MAJESTIC YAWNING



A tiger is seen yawning in a pond amid monsoon season, at Assam state Zoo, in Guwahati, India on Sunday (ANI)

## Bangladesh top court cuts back job quotas

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Bangladeshi authorities extended a curfew on Sunday before the country's Supreme Court ruled to reduce government job quotas that this week sparked nationwide student-led protests.

The quotas originally reserved 30 per cent 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. Local media reported that a curfew imposed late on Friday was to run until 3pm local time (0900 GMT/UTC), after the hearing, then continue until further notice after a two-hour break for people to take in supplies.

Internet and text message services in Bangladesh have been



suspended since Thursday amid the protests, and universities and colleges have been closed since Wednesday.

"The Supreme Court has said the High Court verdict was illegal," Attorney-general AM Amin

Uddin told AFP news agency, referring to a ruling last month that reintroduced the quotas.

He said that just five per cent of civil service jobs would remain reserved for children of independence war veterans and two per

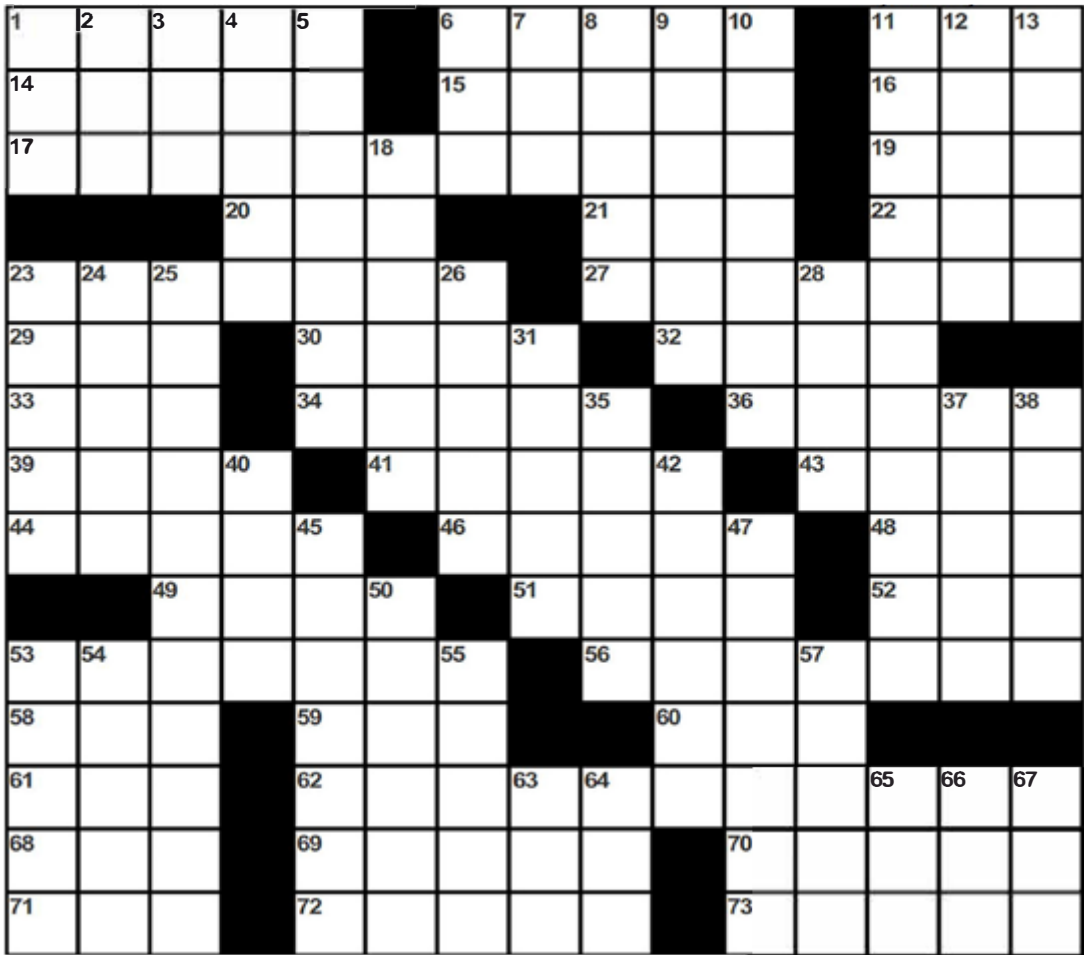
cent for other categories.

The quota rules were scrapped by government in 2018 and their reintroduction caused widespread anger, particularly among the country's young people, who make up around a fifth of the population. The Supreme Court brought forward the hearing, which was originally scheduled for August 7, to Sunday.

Some observers say that public anger will continue at the government even though the top court has decided to reduce the quotas. The demonstrations in the past week, led largely by university students, were the largest since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was reelected for a fourth successive term this year.

DW

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Hairdos
  - 6) Led off
  - 11) Gridlock component
  - 14) Alternative to bottled
  - 15) Arctic dwelling
  - 16) Feel regret over
  - 17) Sellers of illegal alcohol
  - 19) Hard to explain
  - 20) Emulate a bunny
  - 21) Snacked
  - 22) "Dear" mister
  - 23) Living in water
  - 27) Grandeur
  - 29) It's certainly not a show dog
  - 30) "Happy" mollusk
  - 32) Kind of food or mate
  - 33) Vicksburg combatant, briefly
  - 34) Old rail riders, stereo-typically
  - 36) Animal variety
  - 39) It was Persia
  - 41) Black-clad teens, often
  - 43) Folklore monstrosity
  - 44) 100,000 make a new-ton
  - 46) Back-up sounds
  - 48) Shoot the breeze
  - 49) "Able to \_ tall buildings ..."
  - 51) Edible tuber of Polynesia

- 52) Superlative suffix
  - 53) Christmas tree shed-dings
  - 56) False fronts
  - 58) Special-interest grp.
  - 59) Crater creator, perhaps
  - 60) Barely defeat
  - 61) Compass reading, sometimes
  - 62) In a disgraceful way?
  - 68) A, in Berlin
  - 69) Not just "not"
  - 70) Auto contract, sometimes
  - 71) Knight or Nugent
  - 72) Garbo of "Ninotchka"
  - 73) "\_ oflwo Jima"
- DOWN**
- 1) Picnic discard, sometimes
  - 2) Lady associated with the Beatles
  - 3) "Am\_ believe ... ?"
  - 4) Jazzy Earl Hines' nickname
  - 5) Large irregular spot
  - 6) Above average in size
  - 7) Coop ovoid
  - 8) Faint flicker
  - 9) Main arteries
  - 10) Rhinoplasty
  - 11) How Buddha sits
  - 12) Attend a class for no credits

- 13) Remove more moisture from
- 18) Concluding speech (var.)
- 23) Bitter-tasting
- 24) Ask
- 25) Bit of modern folklore
- 26) One spelling for a meal on a skewer
- 28) 100 cents, somewhere
- 31) Short choral composition
- 35) Bundle of grain
- 37) Delete, as messages
- 38) Mortgages, e.g.
- 40) "No \_ to apologize"
- 42) Pounced
- 45) Preserving, as pork
- 47) Tea parties, e.g.
- 50) Author
- 53) Group of nine
- 54) A Muppet
- 55) Martin of comedies
- 57) Breathing problem for heavy sleepers
- 63) Allow
- 64) The-lower-the-better pitching stat
- 65) Thing acquired on a beach
- 66) "Acid" drug
- 67) "All right!"

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your focus for the next few days will be on one thing, and one thing only: making sure your dear ones feel warm, wonderful and, above all else, well-loved. And you'll be extremely well equipped for the job. The universe has sent several planetary envoys to help you -- but then, as fiery and determined as you are by nature, you may not need them. Defense is second only to offense on your list of specialties.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Be careful who you flirt with today, because it will be all too easy to capture someone's heart without even trying. Does that mean you can't talk to anyone at all? Well of course not -- but confine yourself to your very own sweetie as much as you possibly can. It would probably be best for all parties concerned. Especially since getting rid of any new admirers won't be easy.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Who's jealous? You? Believe it or not, you just might be. And if you feel guilty about working so much and taking time away from your loved ones, the attention that someone else shows them could be enough to stretch even the most open-minded, freedom-loving person past the breaking point. That's if you're not careful. But you'll be careful. And more attentive?



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

With any luck, you haven't committed all your free time to one particular person -- because more interesting, exciting and exotic admirers are en route, one of whom might disrupt the routine of your day in a wonderful way. Of course, if you're attached, your best bet will be to smile, say thank you to the fans and move along. Stay focused on that one quality person you so wisely chose -- who'll be delighted to let you know just how much you're adored.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 23

Thinking of doing something different with your hair, your body or your wardrobe? Good for you. Change is good for the soul and refreshing to the spirit. Just don't get too carried away. You wouldn't want a dear one to walk by you without recognizing you, right? Besides, you're pretty darned close to perfect in the eyes of your sweetie. Better have a powwow before you do anything too drastic.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Someone is working hard from behind the scenes to cause a problem between you and a person you love. So if you've had that feeling lately and you thought you were losing your mind, you can rest assured that you're not. But what are you going to do about it? Well, there's only one thing to do: March right up to them, tell them you know what they're doing and demand that they stop. You can bet they will.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

For better or worse, someone has captured your attention, totally and completely. You can't remember the last time you felt this way. And there's a good reason for that: You probably haven't ever felt this way. At least, not since becoming an adult. It's called passion, and this wave of it is here for at least the day. What you do with it is up to you, of course, but you can cross arguing off the list right away.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Finally, at long last, you're ready to come out of your cocoon. And not a moment too soon, in the opinion of your sweetheart and your friends, all of whom have probably been pouting since you decided to hide out a few days ago. Well go ahead and call them now, or see them tonight if you feel like it. And before they have a chance to give you a hard time, explain that absence really does make the heart grow fonder.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You've been thinking about this for days -- weeks, even. Are you going to stay and try to work this out, or let go of the whole thing and start over? You've laid out all the pros and cons in your mind and you're still just not sure. Well, talking to a friend about it will help. But in the end, you'll have to make up your mind all by yourself. How about taking some time alone?



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Who loves entertaining more than you do? Right, no one. And who loves coming to your place? Right, everyone. So don't be surprised if the urge to open up your home for dinner, drinks and some light-hearted socializing comes along -- or if you answer that urge by doing some serious shopping for provisions. Remember, though, that it wouldn't hurt to let the guests bring dessert.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

It's easy for you to become rather focused on -- okay, even obsessed with -- a tiny thing. So if you're worried about something and you don't see any end in sight, talk to someone about it. Why live with the worry when you don't have to? Wouldn't it be better to set your mind at ease, once and for all? At the very least, spend some time relaxing with a friend you've known forever.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Intimacy isn't something that comes easily to you. At least not now that you've had time to tuck a couple of years under your belt and learn how fickle some people can be. There's someone in your life at the moment, however, who seems not just sincere, but also legitimately interested in you. At this point, you can trust your own judgment and you know it.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What field of work is Alessandro Volta (1745-1827) best known for?

- A. Study of rivers
- B. Electricity
- C. Sports science
- D. Theory of evolution

2. Where are the Balearic Islands?

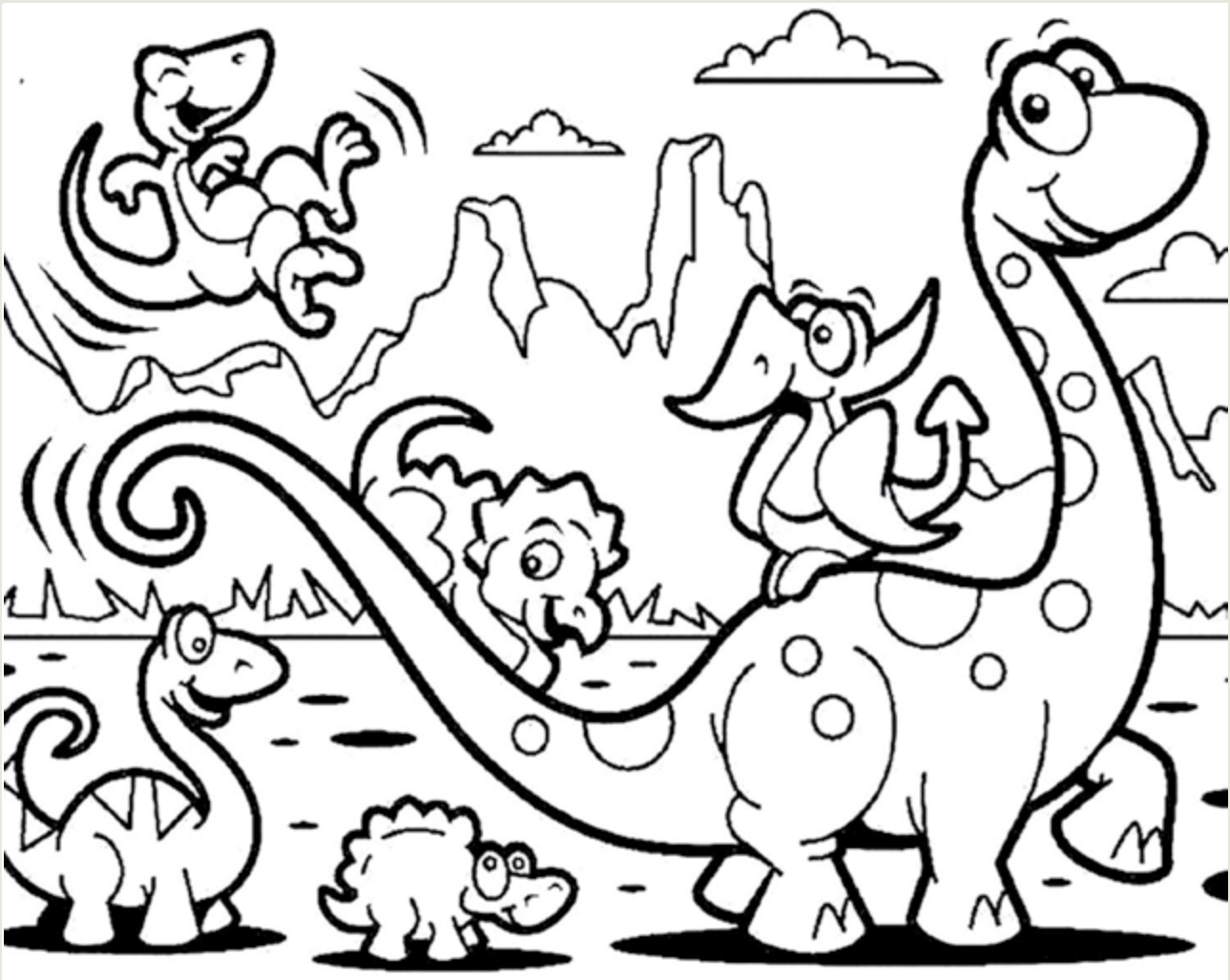
- A. Caspian Sea
  - B. Caribbean Sea
  - C. Tasman Sea
  - D. Mediterranean Sea
- Correct Answer: Mediterranean Sea

3. Who would use an inkblot or Rorschach Test?

- A. Chemist
- B. Butcher
- C. Psychologist
- D. Astronomer

Answers: 1. B 2. D 3. C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | E | S | E |
| R | D | A | D |
| M | R | R | I |
| A | D | M | E |

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

SOLUTION

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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# ON FOOD, FRIENDSHIP AND OLYMPIC DREAMS

India's badminton duo Crasto and Ponnappa ready for Paris challenge

New Delhi, India - India's women's badminton doubles pair Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa plan to treat triumph and disaster the same way at the Paris Olympics - albeit over a good meal.

The two players were looking for a doubles partner, and some Asian food, in the southern city of Hyderabad in late 2022 when they decided to compete together.

Just over a year later, 21-year-old Crasto is set to make her Olympic debut, while it will be 34-year-old Ponnappa's third Games appearance having also competed in London and Beijing.

They are currently ranked 19th in the world

"We ordered lunch and we finalised this over food," a smiling Crasto said on Sunday.

"We thought it would be great to try out this partnership because our game styles really complement each other.

"I really needed someone who could take care of the back court and she needed someone who could really capitalise on the net. We just wanted to give it a shot."

A common love for food



Tanisha Crasto (R) and Ashwini Ponnappa

deepened the bond between Dubai-born Crasto and former world championship bronze medallist Ponnappa.

"We both are big foodies. We make it a point to go out and try different food after our matches," Crasto said.

"We sit and talk about our match - areas we need to work on and what training programme we need for that, the good things that happened ...

"The best part is we always come up with a solution. It really

puts us in a good mood."

While a good meal is an obvious way to celebrate success, it is even more helpful to digest defeat, said Crasto.

"She (Ponnappa) is the one, who takes charge and says, 'It's ok, leave your bag and let's go out for a good meal'," noted Crasto.

"That just pulls me out of the sadness that I would have been feeling after the match.

"It's not like she's leaving me to deal with it alone."

*I really needed someone who could take care of the back court and she needed someone who could really capitalise on the net. We just wanted to give it a shot.*

TANISHA CRASTO

Crasto acknowledged she was always the first to lose her cool on court, while Ponnappa played the role of pacifier.

"She knows how to keep calm during crucial situations and she's very fast to strategise or adapt to a new plan," said Crasto.

"These things really helped us pull off (wins in) crucial matches as it's all about (your) mind to-

wards the end of a game.

"It's about who's sane enough to keep the shuttle in one more time." Crasto said she was too excited to be nervous ahead of her first Olympics.

"I know there are a lot of expectations, but I just want to go out there and be the best version of myself and put up a good show and the results will follow."



Massimo Costantini

## India's table tennis coach Costantini has high hopes

New Delhi, India - India will compete in the men's and women's table tennis team event at the Olympics for the first time at the Paris Games after climbing into the top 16 in the rankings, but coach Massimo Costantini is still not satisfied.

India's table tennis team have had some success at the Commonwealth Games but have failed to match that at the Olympics and Asian Games.

However, their qualification for the team events, introduced in 2008, has renewed hopes of a first-ever Olympic medal in the sport, with the Indian men's team ranked 14th in the world as of July, while the women's team was 11th.

"I think making the team event is already a big achievement, because being in the top 16 in the world is not easy," Costantini said.

"But for me it's (the rankings) too close, like wearing clothes that are too tight. You're not comfortable, you need to be

comfortable to perform as required.

"My goal is to not to fight at the last minute to make the top 16, but to be in the top 10, top eight, or even top four. To not even have the doubt whether India will play in the team events at the Olympics or not."

One of India's leading prospects at the Olympics will be 2018 Commonwealth Games champion Manika Batra, who broke into the top 25 this year and achieved a career-high ranking of 24 after her victory at the Saudi Smash in May.

Batra (ranked 28) and Sreeja Akula (ranked 25), are among the women leading India's charge up the rankings.

"We have to be consistent in taking opportunities. We don't want just sporadic occasional results that make us climb the world ranking. We need more stability," Costantini said.

"Manika was up there for almost one year, hovering between 35 and 38."



Annu Rani

## Annu Rani, Ramesh warm up for Paris with wins in Warsaw

New Delhi, India - Reigning Asian Games champion Annu Rani (women's javelin throw) and Rajesh Ramesh (men's 400m) won their respective events while Jyothi Yarraji topped the qualifiers at the Warszawskie Zawody Lekkoatletyczne 2024 athletics meet in Poland on Saturday.

Only two participants featured in the women's javelin throw competition in Warsaw. The 31-year-old Annu threw 58.70m in her fifth attempt, comfortably surpassing Poland's Amelia Bielak's best attempt of 35.35m to emerge victorious.

An eight-time national champion, Annu also holds the

women's javelin national record with a 63.82m attempt at the Indian Open Javelin Throw Competition 2022. Her best throw this year was 60.68m in Germany two months ago, six meters short of Colombian athlete Flor Ruiz's world leading mark of 66.70m.

Yarraji, meanwhile, clocked

13.29s to top the women's 100m hurdles qualifiers in Warsaw but did not run in the final.

In May this year, Yarraji, the reigning Asian champion, matched her 100m hurdles national record of 12.78s. Yarraji also competed in the women's 200m event in Warsaw and clocked 23.53 to finish second

behind compatriot Kiran Pahal.

Indian runner Rajesh Ramesh, 25, led the field in the men's 400m race, clocking a season's best time of 45.54. Compatriot Muhammed Ajmal, with 45.69, came third while 400m national record holder Muhammed Anas Yahiya (45.93) finished fourth.

## Britain's Peaty wants 'a fair fight' after Chinese doping cases

Paris, France - Adam Peaty and other British swimmers said there needs to be a level playing field after 23 Chinese swimmers escaped punishment after testing positive for a banned drug.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) confirmed reports in April that 23 Chinese swimmers tested positive for TMZ (trimetazidine) - a medication that increases blood flow to the heart - before the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

WADA accepted the Chinese anti-doping agency's (CHNADA) findings that the positive test was due to substance contamination.

An independent investigation found no favouritism or mishandling by WADA in the case, and a World Aquatics audit concluded there was no mismanagement or cover-up by the governing body.

Ahead of the Paris 2024 Games, two-time Olympic 100 metres breaststroke gold medal winner Peaty said he wants "a fair fight".

"If it's not fair then it takes the enjoyment out for me," he said on Saturday.

Tom Dean, who won gold in the 200 metres freestyle at the Tokyo Olympics, said Britain's



*All I've got to focus on is swimming the best I can, performing the best I can. And then those people in charge of what they need to be in charge of, I put full faith in them*

ADAM PEATY

swimmers were held to the highest standards when it came to doping.

"I think if other countries aren't living up to that standard, then it's a real shame that brings a real dark cloud over what the Olympics is meant to stand for," he said.

Freya Colbert, the 400 metres medley world champion, said it was upsetting to see reports of other competitors not being tested rigorously.

"I think it ruins the reliability of the results," she said.

Security concerns are also an issue in the lead-up to the Paris Games. With wars in Gaza and Ukraine, and security concerns at home, Paris is on high alert, particularly for the opening ceremony which will take place on the River Seine.

Peaty, however, dismissed concerns when asked about the safety of British athletes in the city. "It's like, it's a fairground because Rio we had Zika, Tokyo, we had COVID. There's always got to be something," he said.

"All I've got to focus on is swimming the best I can, performing the best I can. And then those people in charge of what they need to be in charge of, I put full faith in them."



Mark Adams

## Tech outage good test for Paris Olympics systems, says IOC

Paris, France - A global tech outage that affected operations in many sectors and also hit parts of the Paris Olympics operations proved to be a good test ahead of the Games, the International Olympic Committee said on Saturday.

A software update by global cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike, one of the largest operators in the industry, triggered systems problems that grounded flights, forced broadcasters off air and left customers without access to services such as healthcare or banking. It also affected some operations of the organisers of the Paris Games.

"Yes there were some significant problems on the morning but it was pretty well dealt with,"

said IOC spokesperson Mark Adams. "It was quite a good rehearsal."

The Paris Games open on July 26. This was not the first time the Olympics were affected by tech failure or attack, with the Pyeongchang 2018 winter Olympics having been a target of cyberattacks.

"Cyberattacks are part of everyone's daily lives. The Olympic Games are a huge target obviously," Adams said.

"We have a huge amount of safeguards in place. I would not go into detail even if I could explain it. We have been assured by our people and partners that we are very, very prepared. You can never be too prepared. We had a close call in Pyeonghchang. We

have every confidence we know how to deal with it."

While praising preparation for the Games, Adams said France's bid for the 2030 winter Games to be voted on in the IOC session next week had been discussed at the IOC executive board on Saturday.

The bid which was picked in June by the IOC executive board as its recommendation to the session next week, has still not provided two key guarantees that are needed for its approval.

One of the guarantees still to be delivered is the public partnership contribution from the two regions. The French bid involves the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes and Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur regions.

# Drama at Hungaroring



Domagoj Vida

## Croatia's Vida retires from international football

Zagreb, Croatia - Croatia defender Domagoj Vida has retired from international soccer after 14 years in the national team, the Croatian Football Federation said on Sunday.

Vida, 35, made his international debut in May 2010 and has played 105 matches for Croatia. He was part of the Croatia side that reached the final of World Cup 2018 and finished third in World Cup 2022.

"It is an honour to wear the most beautiful jersey in the world once in your career," Vida said in a statement. "And when you do it 105 times, you play in seven major competitions ... then you can just be infinitely grateful for such a privilege."

Vida, who has played for Bayer Leverkusen in Germany and Besiktas in Turkey, currently plays for Greek top-flight club AEK Athens.

## Piastrì wins in McLaren one-two but Norris fumes over team orders

Budapest, Hungary - Australian Oscar Piastrì took his first Formula One win in a McLaren one-two at the Hungarian Grand Prix at Hungaroring on Sunday after Lando Norris reluctantly handed back the lead on team orders three laps from the end on an afternoon of high drama.

Lewis Hamilton took third for Mercedes, his 200th Formula One podium coming despite a late collision with Red Bull's championship leader Max Verstappen, who came off worse and finished fifth.

"Very, very special. This is really the day I dreamed of as a kid, standing on the top step of an F1 podium," Piastrì said before the ceremonies. "Obviously, a bit complicated at the end, but I put myself in the right position at the start, and thank you to the team for an amazing effort and an amazing car."

He apologised over the radio at the chequered flag for it being more "painful" than necessary.

The fifth Australian to win a grand prix seized the lead from pole-sitter Norris at the start as Verstappen took second with a short-cut after being forced wide.

Verstappen had to give the place back as stewards' investigated and Piastrì was ahead until



Oscar Piastrì celebrates winning the Hungarian Grand Prix

Norris came in for his second stop to cover against Hamilton, with Piastrì staying out and losing out.

McLaren told Norris to re-establish the order "at his convenience" with more than 20 laps remaining but the gap between only grew larger and the Briton

showed no sign of complying.

"I know you'll do the right thing," Norris was told with 14 laps to go after the team repeated that they wanted Piastrì to win. "Well you should have pitted him first," he replied.

"Lando, he can't catch you up. You've proved your point," the

Obviously, a bit complicated at the end, but I put myself in the right position at the start, and thank you to the team for an amazing effort and an amazing car

OSCAR PIASTRÌ

Briton was told when he moved six seconds clear with six laps remaining.

"The way to win a championship is not by yourself. You're

going to need Oscar, and you're going to need the team," Norris was told, before eventually complying.

"The team asked me to do it,

so that's it," he said in his pre-podium interview, making no attempt to hide his unhappiness.

Behind them, Verstappen was also turning the air blue on the radio to the Red Bull pit wall as he struggled with his car's brake balance and questioned the strategy.

# United leadership doing a great job with transfers, says Ten Hag

Manchester, England - Manchester United are on the front foot in the transfer market thanks to the club's leadership making quick and decisive moves to secure new players early, manager Erik ten Hag said after the signing of Leny Yoro and Joshua Zirkzee.

Since British billionaire and INEOS chairman Jim Ratcliffe took control of football operations at Old Trafford, acquiring a 25% stake in February, United has not only witnessed a new hierarchy but also benefited from new ideas. United signed French defender Yoro on a five-year contract for a fee of 62 million euros (\$67 million) on Thursday, the 18-year-old had been pursued by several top European clubs prior to his move to Manchester, including Real Madrid.

Another crucial signing was striker Zirkzee, who had an excellent season with the Serie A club Bologna last season and played for Netherlands in the European Championship. United paid 42.5



Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag with new signing Leny Yoro

million euros for the 23-year-old for a five-year deal.

"It is very good that we are also there on the front foot, we are very proactive," Ten Hag said on Saturday. "So, (the) leadership is doing a great job in this moment and that's how we want to

act as United."

"We are highly ambitious and you have to be on the front foot and be ready for the season. The earlier you get your players in then (the faster) you can work on your team."

Yoro made a strong impres-

sion in his United debut during their 2-0 pre-season friendly win over Scottish side Rangers on Saturday, while Zirkzee, who has been given time off after the European Championship, is expected to join the squad in August.



Alexandre Lacazette (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Dominican Republic in a warm up game

## France captain Lacazette inspired by coach Henry's attacking football

Paris, France - Alexandre Lacazette said he was proud that head coach Thierry Henry, his idol growing up, had given him the responsibility of leading the France Olympic team, and hoped the home support would fuel the team's medal ambitions.

Lacazette, who last played for France in 2017, told FIFA in an interview published on Saturday that the Olympic team - an U-23

side with three over-aged players - had become a close-knit group ahead of the campaign to win France their second gold medal in soccer. "We all have the same ambition, to go all the way and win a medal," the 33-year-old said. "The fact that it's a home Games is really going to motivate us."

Former Arsenal forward Lacazette said Henry wanted the

team to play an attacking, possession-based style of soccer.

"Tactically, he is decidedly forward-thinking... he especially wants us to enjoy ourselves and put on a show for the spectators."

France, placed in Group A, begin their campaign against the United States in Marseille on Wednesday, two days before the formal opening ceremony in Paris.

## Brook hits century as England extend lead against West Indies

Nottingham, England - Harry Brook made his first test century on home soil to lift England to 348-6 and a lead of 307 runs over West Indies at lunch on the fourth day of the second Test at Trent Bridge on Sunday.

Brook scored a fluent 109, including 13 fours, off 132 balls and shared a fourth-wicket partnership of 189 with Joe Root which put England in control of the match.

Root was 81 not out at the interval after captain Ben Stokes fell for eight, caught at deep square leg by Alzarri Joseph off Jayden Seales and Jamie Smith edged the last ball of the session



Harry Brook

to wicketkeeper Joshua Da Silva off spinner Kevin Sinclair.

Brook reached his fifth Test hundred with a quick single to mid-on before removing his helmet and raising his bat to the crowd, but he soon edged a wishy delivery from Seales to Da Silva. Root passed West Indian Shivnarine Chanderpaul to move up to eighth on the all-time list of leading Test run scorers, and he will need to shepherd the tailenders for England to set West Indies a tough victory target with five sessions of the match remaining.

England won the first Test at Lord's by an innings and 114 runs.

## Newcastle sign Pivas

Newcastle, England - Newcastle United have signed 19-year-old defender Miodrag Pivas from Serbian side Jedinstvo Ub, the Premier League club said on Saturday.

The Serbia youth international, spent most of his youth career in Austria, playing for Siezenheim and Grodig, before joining Jedinstvo last year.

"Miodrag is a promising talent with high potential," Newcastle's CEO Darren Eales said in a statement.

"I see the project of the club and it looks great which helped convince me to sign for Newcastle," Pivas said.



Miodrag Pivas

**Meunier joins Lille**  
Belgium defender Thomas Meunier has joined Lille on a two-year contract, the Ligue 1 club said on Friday.  
Meunier, 32, had joined Turkish side Trabzonspor in February from Borussia Dortmund.



Matteo Berrettini

# I found the right energy, says Gstaad winner Berrettini

Gstaad, Switzerland - Matteo Berrettini wasted little time charging to his ninth ATP Tour title on Sunday at the EFG Swiss Open Gstaad.

The sixth seed dispatched Quentin Halys 6-3, 6-1 in just 59 minutes in the championship match at the clay-court tournament. Berrettini clinched the opening break of the match shortly before the match was suspended for 30 minutes due to rain. When the players returned to court with the Italian leading 5-3, he promptly won seven of the next eight games to claim the trophy in the Swiss Alps for the second time.

"It feels unbelievable. It feels like it was yesterday that I won my first title here six years ago, but a lot of matches and a lot of things happened," said Berrettini in his post-match interview. "I'm

just so glad that I can keep playing and enjoying, and I think I found the energy of six years ago during this week. This place is special for me. I'm just so happy."

It was Berrettini's second clay ATP 250 title of the season — he also won in April in Marrakech. The former World No. 6 was outside the Top 150 in the ATP Rankings as recently as March after a difficult 12 months with injuries. Now 16-6 for the 2024 season, he will return to the Top 50 for the first time since August 2023.

The only moment of peril for Berrettini in his third Gstaad championship-match appearance came when he faced three break points at 2-3, 0/40 in the opening set. As he did so often during his run this week, the Italian found some big first serves when he needed them to escape the danger.

# Nadal bested in Bastad

## Portugal's Borges wins maiden ATP Tour title

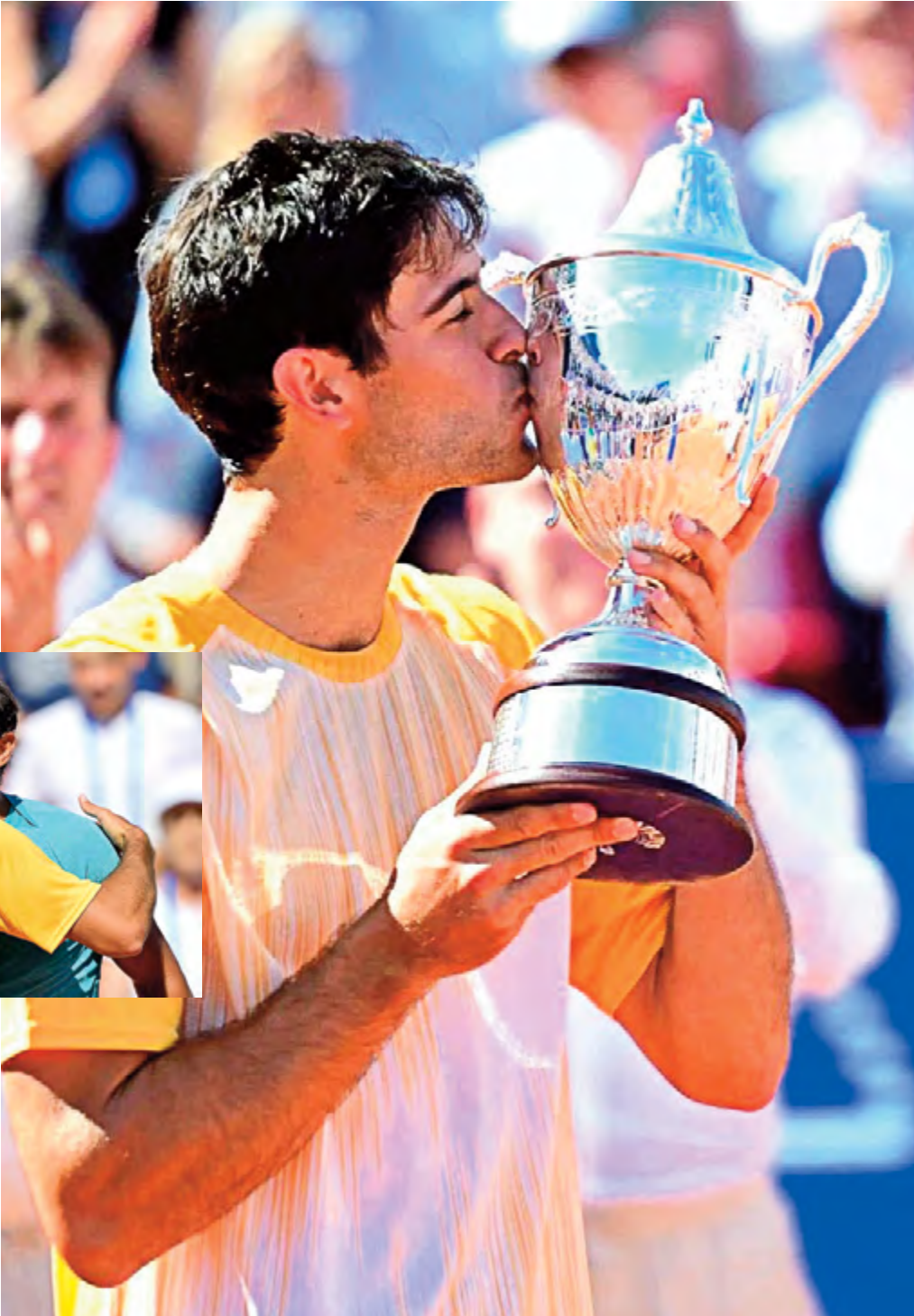
Bastad, Sweden - Nuno Borges overcame tennis royalty to notch his maiden ATP Tour title on Sunday at the Nordea Open.

The seventh-seeded Portuguese eased past Rafael Nadal 6-3, 6-2 to clinch the trophy at the clay-court ATP 250. Borges delivered a rock-solid performance against the 22-time Grand Slam winner Nadal, and he broke the Spaniard's serve five times en route to victory in his maiden tour-level final.



Rafael Nadal and Nuno Borges greet each other after the match

"I don't know what to say. I think I was wishing for this moment for a while already," said Borges in his post-match interview. "It's crazy, in tennis it doesn't happen when you expect it sometimes. I know we all wanted Rafa to win, a part of me wished that too, but something even big-



Nuno Borges celebrates with the trophy

ger inside of me really pushed through today. Through all the emotions, through all the ups and downs.

"It wasn't about playing my best tennis, it was just coming up in the big moments where I wanted, and I couldn't have played better. I'm just really happy overall. I really don't know what to say, I'm very emotional."

Borges was the more consistent player throughout his maiden clash with Nadal, who could not raise his level like he did in battling three-set wins against Mariano Navone and Duje Ajdukovic earlier this week. The 27-year-old Borges showed no sign of nerves as he served out victory against the former world No. 1.

As he did throughout his run in Bastad, Nadal struggled to regularly hold onto his serve. Borges was particularly clinical against his opponent's second delivery and finished the match having won 72 per cent (13/18) of second-serve return points.

With his 88-minute triumph, Borges ensured he will on Monday rise nine spots to a career-high No. 42 in the rankings. He is the ninth first-time title winner on the ATP Tour in the 2024 season so far.

Despite his championship-match defeat, Nadal can reflect on a positive week in Bastad, where he reached his first tour-level title match since 2022 Roland Garros. The 38-year-old Spaniard, who is now 11-6 for the year, will now turn his attention to preparing for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

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## China Plans to open the Ming Dynasty tombs to the public by 2030

Sixteen emperors ruled China during the Ming dynasty, which lasted from 1368 to 1644. Of those, 13 are interred in an extensive burial complex near the base of a mountain range on the outskirts of Beijing.

The location was selected by the emperor Yongle according to *feng shui* principles.

For many years, the site was closed off. “No one, not even the emperor, could ride a horse on these grounds,” according to the Beijing municipal government. However, starting in the mid-20th century, researchers began excavating and restoring some tombs.

Today, three of the mausoleums are accessible to visitors for a small admission fee - the Changling, Zhaoling and Dingling tombs. The grounds, which include a ‘spirit way’ lined with statues, are open to the public for free.

Now, the Beijing municipal government has unveiled plans to restore the rest of the Ming tombs and open them to the public by 2030.

The news was announced recently at the Ming Culture Forum, held in Beijing’s Changping district, an area that also encompasses the tombs. More than 600 scholars from China and beyond convened to discuss and celebrate Ming culture, gathering for dialogue sessions, seminars, exhibitions and cultural activities.

The tombs are ‘masterpieces of human creative genius’, writes UNESCO, which has listed them as a World Heritage site since the early 2000s. The sprawling complex illustrates the importance that Ming rulers placed on building imposing mausolea, reflecting not only the general belief in an afterlife

The Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644) tombs are ‘masterpieces of human creative genius’ UNESCO

but also an affirmation of authority.

According to the announcement, the tombs will be opened in phases. During the first phase, scheduled to take place in 2024 and 2025, officials will open the Siling and Yongling tombs, which belonged to Emperor Sizong and Emperor Shizong, respectively. Then, between 2026 and 2028, they plan to open the Maoling (Emperor Xianzong), Tailing (Emperor Xiaozong) and Deling (Emperor Xizong) tombs.

The third and final phase will take place in 2029 and 2030. During this stage, officials will open the Xi-anling (Emperor Renzong), Yuling (Emperor Yinzong) and Qingling (Emperor Guangzong) tombs.

Once all of the burial sites are open, authorities plan to add new educational elements to help tell their story. Visitors will learn about the tombs’ design and construction through artefacts and interpretive signs.

Nearby, a new ‘culture-museum-tourism complex’ is also in the works, according to Priyaja Bakshi of Travel + Leisure Asia.

Officials say it will become ‘a world-renowned international exchange base dedicated to Ming culture’, as per the announcement.

Officials also announced the launch of two new educational tour routes that highlight Ming ruins and artefacts. The routes will take travellers to destinations like the Juyongguan Great Wall and several of the soon-to-be-opened Ming tombs. Completing both routes will take two days, and travellers can either camp nearby or spend the night in nearby hotels.

(Courtesy: smithsonianmag.com)



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GALLE FORT



A vibrant mix of colonial history, stunning architecture, and local culture makes Galle a must-visit destination in Sri Lanka. From savouring artisanal gelato to exploring historic landmarks, the Galle Fort promises a rich and diverse adventure.

Situated about 120 km from Colombo, Galle is a historic city in Sri Lanka with deep colonial roots. The city attracts visitors year-round, but the ideal time to visit is from December to March when the weather is relatively cool and dry. Galle is renowned for its beautifully preserved Dutch Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

ECONOMIC STRONGHOLD

Galle's earliest historical record can be traced as far back as Ptolemy's world map of 125-150 AD. Due to its strategic location, it facilitated trade for the Greeks, Arabs and the Chinese. Sri Lanka's natural resources, including spices, gems, and exotic wildlife, made it a desirable trading partner.

The fort was initially built by the Portuguese. However, when the Dutch seized it in 1640, they expanded it and proceeded to build a well-planned city. It served as a strategic and economic stronghold until the British took control in 1796.

The British made minimal changes, preserving the fort's original Dutch architecture and making it a notable example of European fortifications in South Asia. The influence of the Dutch can still be largely seen in the fort to this day.

Galle is Sri Lanka's southern transportation hub, providing excellent public transportation options. From Colombo, you can take the train or bus to Galle, a journey that

takes about 3-4 hours. For a quicker trip, luxury highway buses can get you there in less than two hours.

EXPLORING GALLE FORT

The Galle Fort is the city's most iconic location. Built by the Dutch and Portuguese as a bastion of defence, it has transformed into a vibrant area filled with souvenir shops, boutique hotels, and charming cafes.

One of the must-visit spots on Church Street is 'Isle of Gelato,' known for its artisanal gelato made from local ingredients. The Puttalam salt and caramel gelato is a popular choice year-round, while flavours like mangosteen gelato and rambutan sorbet are available seasonally.

As you stroll through the narrow streets

of treats, from slices of pineapple and mango to cotton candy. As you make your way along the wall, you will come across one of the main photo stops - the lighthouse. Constructed by the British, it is now operated and maintained by the Sri Lankan Port Authority. It is also Sri Lanka's oldest light station.

You will find plenty of spots to take that Instagram-worthy photo. One of the main things about the Galle Fort is how well-preserved it is. You can find modern boutique hotels carved into these ancient buildings built by the Dutch and the Portuguese.

Apart from the boutique hotels in the Fort, you can find a number of well-known hotel chains in the city and on the outskirts of Galle.

Another notable site within the Fort is



isfy your taste-buds. From cozy cafes to gourmet restaurants, my personal favourites include Peddler's Café, Isso and Simply strawberries by Jagro.

For those craving Italian cuisine, Aqua Forte is the place to be. This elegant restaurant offers a fine dining experience with a selection of Italian wines and dishes, all served in a cozy, intimate setting.

Located in a beautifully restored colonial building, Church Street Social is a must-visit. Known for its eclectic menu, this restaurant offers a mix of Sri Lankan and international cuisine, perfect for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

Dutch Hospital Shopping Precinct houses The Tuna and The Crab, a haven for seafood lovers. The restaurant offers a fusion of Japanese and Sri Lankan flavours, with a focus on fresh tuna and crab dishes.

Another gem in the Dutch Hospital Shopping Precinct, Sugar Bistro, is known for its vibrant atmosphere and diverse

menu. From hearty breakfasts to delicious cocktails, it's an excellent spot for any time of day.

You can also grab a traditional feast of rice and curry for lunch from local homestays in Fort.

SHOPPING

From incense sticks to jewellery, the Orchid Shop is a one-stop shop for all your souvenir needs on Hospital Street. For a unique shopping experience, don't miss 'Stick No Bills,' a shop specialising in vintage-style posters and prints.

A few metres away from Stick No Bills, you will find Barefoot, a sister store to the one in Colombo, renowned for its handwoven clothing and products. The product range encapsulates the country's rich history and culture, it is vibrant, colourful and creative and is made with passion by local hands.

(Courtesy: goworldtravel.com)

GALLE FORT - A VIBRANT UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE IN SRI LANKA, ATTRACTS TOURISTS ALL YEAR ROUND

of the Fort, you will encounter stunning architectural landmarks. The Dutch Reformed Church and Portuguese Church are notable for their beautiful glass paintings, reflecting the city's rich colonial history.

Walking along the fort wall, you can enjoy panoramic views of the Indian Ocean, with crystal-clear waters and picturesque sunsets. If you plan to stay until the evening, the Flag Rock Bastion is an excellent spot to catch the sunset.

As you walk along the Fort walls, you can't miss the local vendors selling all kinds

the Dutch Hospital, one of the oldest buildings on the Fort. This historic building once served as a facility to treat Dutch East India Company officers. It now houses boutique shops, restaurants, and cafes, uniquely blending history and modern amenities.

LOCAL CUISINE

If you're looking to grab lunch while exploring the Fort, there's a variety of dining options to choose from. Whether you prefer local Sri Lankan cuisine, pizza, or Mediterranean dishes, you'll find something to sat-



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