

Bids for office complex

Asyad Group has announced the launch of a tender to design, build, finance, operate and transfer an office complex covering an area of 4,925 square metres in the Muscat Airport Free Zone (MAFZ). This call for partnership aligns with Asyad Group's commitment to enable and partner with the private sector on vital logistics projects in line with Oman Vision 2040. This tender is the second call for partnership. **DETAILS ON P15**

SUNRISE - 05:42 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR - 04:21 AM
DHUHR - 12:17 PM
ASR - 03:43 PM
MAGHRIB - 06:47 PM
ISHA - 08:03 PM



P11

LEBRON'S USA CLINCH OLYMPIC BASKETBALL GLORY AS INGEBRIGTSEN STRIKES GOLD



P15

PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION POLICY UNVEILED FOR OMAN STATE UNITS



P20

DESCENDING AL SAYR WITH NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



MUSCAT

RAO LAUNCHES WOMEN MUSIC BAND

The Royal Army of Oman (RAO), on Sunday, celebrated the launch of its women military music band. The move aims to highlight the role of the Omani women and their remarkable presence at local and international events. Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), launched the women military music band during a ceremony. The event was attended by some SAF Forces commanders, SAF senior officers and personnel.

KHAREEF VISITORS RISE 4.3 PER CENT

The number of visitors to khareef season from the beginning of the season until July 31 stood at 413,122, an increase of 4.3 per cent compared to the same period in 2023, when the number stood at 396,108 visitors, according to initial estimates of Khareef season 2024 released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Estimated statistics showed that the number of Omani visitors increased by 3 per cent, recording 305,070, while the number of visitors from the GCC states reached 66,998, up from 59,555 during the same period in 2023. The number of visitors from other nationalities reached 41,054 visitors, up from 40,418. **DETAILS ON P2**

TESTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION SEATS

The Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, on Sunday, began conducting admission tests, personal interviews and medical examinations for the 2024/2025 academic year and will conclude on August 15. The HEAC said that 4,046 candidates are vying for 2,297 seats in several disciplines including education and health specialisations, military technical college specialisations and many more. The HEAC said that the admission depends on the result of the interview, test or medical examination required by each educational institution as well as the number of seats available and the student's competitive rate compared to other successful candidates.

New milestone in treating median arcuate ligament syndrome

MUSCAT: A medical team at the Royal Hospital conducted a complex surgical operation to treat “median arcuate ligament syndrome (MALS)” using a surgical endoscope. The team met with success in addressing such a rare condition that often poses major challenges, both in diagnosis and treatment.

Dr Mohammed bin Said al Abri, Consultant of Obesity and Upper Gastrointestinal Surgery at the Royal

Hospital, told Oman News Agency (ONA), that the patient was suffering from severe, recurring abdominal pain that seriously affected the quality of his daily life. He said that the medical team carried out a number of examinations using advanced diagnostic tools and CT scans, based on the medical history of the patient, and eventually managed to accurately diagnosing the case as MALS.

Dr Al Abri pointed out that the

operation was performed using a surgical endoscope that helped keep the abdominal artery free from the usual pressure and risks involved in conventional open surgery operations.

“After the operation, the medical team noticed immediate improvement in the patient’s condition: The abdominal pain disappeared and the patient was able to eat normally without feeling nausea or pain,” Dr Al Abri observed. — **ONA**



A medical team performing the surgical operation.



SUR MARINE SPORTS FESTIVAL FROM AUGUST 18

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in collaboration with the Office of Governor of Al Sharqiyah South and a number of public and private establishments, is organising the Sur Marine Sports Festival as part of the activities of Sur, the Arab Tourism Capital 2024, from August 18 to 28, at the 'Mokha' beach in the Wilayat of Sur. **DETAILS ON P5**

New promising companies market

MUSCAT: In a significant move to boost the growth of private companies, family businesses and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the Financial Services Authority (FSA) has announced the establishment of the ‘Promising Companies Market’ as a sub-market within the

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX). This initiative aims to create a conducive environment for these companies to gain experience in financial markets, explore financing alternatives, and prepare for conversion into public joint stock companies. Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim

al Salmi, Executive President of the FSA, said that the Promising Companies Market will operate under flexible listing requirements, supervised by the FSA. Currently, the FSA is collaborating with the MSX to finalise regulations and listing procedures. **SEE P13**

UN SAYS 75,000 ALREADY DISPLACED IN GAZA

Gazans flee as Israel pushes into Khan Yunis

KHAN YUNIS: Hundreds of Gazans fled the northern neighbourhoods of Khan Yunis on Sunday after Israel issued fresh evacuation orders ahead of a new operation.

Early in the morning the army dropped leaflets and sent mobile phone messages telling residents to leave the Al Jalaa area of Khan Yunis, which was already considered a humanitarian safe zone.

The military warned Al Jalaa will become a “dangerous combat zone”, forcing Palestinians, who have already been displaced numerous times by the Gaza war, to pack up and leave looking for a new shelter.

Families gathered their meagre belongings and left the area, fearing fresh missile strikes and fighting, journalists reported. Crowds of people, mainly from the Hamad neighbourhood in Al Jalaa, left with whatever they could lay their hands on, some loading mattresses, clothing and cooking utensils into pick-up trucks, while others simply

walked with their bags. Young men and women escorted elderly family members, while others tried to catch a ride to safer zones.

Khan Yunis, Gaza's main southern governorate, had already been hit with several evacuation orders in the past weeks and devastated by months of bombardment that have reduced residential blocks to piles of rubble.

“Just in the past few days, more than 75,000 people have been displaced in southwest Gaza,” said X Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN refugee agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA.

Lazzarini said the new evacuation orders sent many people fleeing from the early hours of Sunday.

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Sunday expressed concern about the danger of a regional war during a telephone call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a government spokesman said. **SEE ALSO P6**



Palestinian children sit atop a truck loaded with household belongings as they prepare to flee with their families the Hamad residential district and its surroundings in Khan Yunis on Sunday. – **AFP**

Perseid meteor shower to peak on Monday

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

The Oman Astronomical Society (OAS) has said that the skies of the Sultanate of Oman are currently witnessing the Perseid meteor shower, which will continue until August 24.

The shower will be at its peak between Monday evening and the early hours of Tuesday.

Ashwaq bint Nasser al Siyabiyah, member of the executive committee of the Omani Astronomical Society, said meteor showers occur when the Earth passes near the orbit of a comet

in its orbit around the sun and penetrates a crowd of meteors left behind by that comet.

As for the Perseid meteor shower, the Earth passes near meteors left behind by the Swift-Tuttle comet, which results in dust particles entering the Earth's atmosphere and burning up during their entry, resulting in a bright light strip at a speed of about 72 km per second at an altitude of about 70 to 100 km.

During its peak, around 60 to 100 meteors can be seen per hour from a dark place away from light pollution.

These showers usually last



The shower will be at its peak between Monday evening and the early hours of Tuesday.

for hours and may last for days or weeks, as is the case with the Perseid meteor shower, which began in mid-July and continues

until the end of August.

The Perseids are famous for producing extremely bright meteors (fireballs).

No meteor shower produces anything like the comet Swift-Tuttle, which is responsible for this meteor shower.

She said that observing the phenomenon requires being in a dark location away from sources of light pollution or any obstacles such as tall trees and looking northeast near the Perseus constellation, which is the apparent source of these meteors from after midnight on Monday until before dawn on Tuesday.



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Cases of labour violations can be settled without lawsuit

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@vinot_nair

Based on the Labour Law issued by Royal Decree 53/2023, the Ministry of Labour has issued a decision that will allow cases related to labour violations to be settled without going to court. The decision allows the violator of the Labour Law to request to settle the matter by avoiding the lawsuit procedures by paying a fine amounting to a quarter of the maximum fine prescribed for the crime. After approval of the reconciliation request, the violator shall be obligated to pay the financial fine stipulated for reconciliation within a period not exceeding 15 days from the date of approval of the reconciliation. Otherwise, the reconciliation shall be deemed void. The decision stipulates that



The decision allows the violator of the Labour Law to request to settle the matter by avoiding the lawsuit procedures by paying a fine

the reconciliation request has to be submitted by the violator on a specific form and the request must be decided upon within a period not exceeding 15 days from the date of its submission. The expiry of the aforementioned period without a response shall be considered a rejection of the request. An exception to the provisions of Article 1 of these rules to

approve the settlement and not to proceed with the lawsuit procedures in crimes punishable by a double fine stipulated in Clause (1) of Article (143) of the Labour Law, the violator must pay a fine of RO 1,000. Other conditions include that the non-Omani violating worker who has been reconciled must be deported and banned from entering the Sultanate of Oman

if he works in a profession that has been reserved for Omanis unless the establishment appoints an Omani to replace him if he has left his job or is one of those who entered the Sultanate of Oman illegally. In all cases, the employer or the company will bear the costs of deporting the offending worker. Reconciliation in crimes committed by detainees should take place within seven working days from the date of recording the violation, and the Ministry of Labour may extend the aforementioned period for a similar period and only once. Reconciliation does not result in the violator being released from his liability and the violator is obligated to correct the violation and fulfil his legal obligations within a period not exceeding 30 days from the date of reconciliation.

NU TO SET UP SMART CAMPUS IN SULTAN HAITHAM CITY

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The National University of Science and Technology is gearing up for a significant milestone with a master plan for its new campus in Sultan Haitham City. According to the university sources, the model of the master plan is set to release in October 2024. The university has secured a plot in the city, allocated by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, to establish a cutting-edge smart campus dedicated to Advanced Technology and Engineering programmes. The master plan outlines a visionary approach to academic instruction, administration, and campus life, aligning with top-tier models of higher education that integrate advanced technology. Recently, top officials of the university leaders, including Vice-Chancellor Dr Ali bin Saud al Bimani, met with Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, to discuss the project's progress. The meeting highlighted the university's dedication to deliver a high-quality educational experience through

its newly developed Strategic Plan for 2024-30, which emphasises expansion, quality enhancement, and engagement with national and global priorities. "The campus, expected to be operational by 2027, will accommodate 3,000 students and 150 staff members. Huawei, a leading global technology company, has been selected as the university's technology partner for this ambitious project," Dr Ali al Bimani said. "In line with Oman Vision 2040 and the university's commitment to sustainable growth, the new campus is being designed to meet Net-Zero targets. This will be the sixth campus of the National University," he said. The National University's College of Medicine has set a benchmark by becoming the first in Oman to earn international accreditation for its MD programme from the Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Medical Education in March 2024. Dr Ali al Bimani affirmed the university's commitment to excellence in education, research, and training, underscoring the institution's strategic focus on innovation.

'CONSUMER-FRIENDLY INITIATIVE' TO BOOST CPA'S SERVICES

MUSCAT: The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) launched the second edition of the 'Consumer-Friendly Institutions Initiative', with the aim of improving service standards across Oman's commercial, industrial, and economic sectors. The initiative, designed to encourage competition among businesses, driving ongoing improvement in the services they offer to consumers, also seeks to reduce consumer complaints, increase awareness of consumer rights and responsibilities, and promote sustainability through the development of strategies that address consumer needs. In this phase, the initiative is targeting a wide range of commercial entities, including shopping malls and small and medium enterprises, all of which are encouraged to provide exceptional services to both Omani nationals and residents. The initiative is built on three main pillars: customer focus, mechanisms for satisfying customer needs, and the



The initiative seeks to reduce consumer complaints, increase awareness of consumer rights

development and innovation of services. The initiative also aims to increase consumer loyalty, leading to greater returns for businesses. It will leverage case studies, innovative analytical reports, and market organisation to eliminate negative practices. This effort will particularly benefit the retail and services sectors in Oman, while also reinforcing the concept of social responsibility among businesses.

Dhofar receives more than 400,000 visitors by July end

MUSCAT: The number of visitors to khareef season (Monsoon Season) from the beginning of the season until 31 July 2024 amounted to 413,122 visitors, an increase of 4.3 per cent compared to the same period in 2023, when the number amounted to 396,108 visitors, according to initial estimates of khareef season 2024 released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Estimated statistics showed that the number of Omani visitors increased by 3 per cent, recording 305,070 visitors, while the number of visitors from the GCC states reached 66,998 visitors, up from 59,555 visitors during the same period in 2023. The number of visitors from other nationalities reached 41,054 visitors, up from 40,418 visitors. As many as 316,434 visitors came to Dhofar Governorate via the land port by the end of July 2024, while 96,688 visitors came via air, recording an increase of 7 per cent compared to those arriving via air by the end of July 2023. It is worth noting that 95 per cent of khareef season visitors came during the period from July 1 to 31, while 5 per cent of the total visitors came during the period from 21 to 30 June 2024.

— ONA



95 per cent of khareef season visitors came during the period from July 1 to 31

Wadi Al Nakhr hiking event attracts over 100 women

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

Wadi Al Nakhr in the Wilayat of Al Hamra witnessed the organisation of the 'Women's Hiking' event, where the participants walked a path extending for five kilometres with the participation of more than 100 girls from different governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The participants lived an exceptional sporting experience in the embrace of the picturesque nature of Wadi Al Nakhr. The event comes within the programme of the Summer Sports

in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate for the year 2024. Iman bint Saeed al Dihaniyah, from the organising committee of the event at the Department of Culture, Sports and Youth in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, explained that the event witnessed a great turnout since the first day of its announcement, as women from different wilayats of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate contacted each other to register and participate. Iman confirmed that the event seeks to raise awareness of the importance of preserving the environment and promoting sustainable tourism, noting



The participants lived an exceptional sporting experience in the embrace of the picturesque nature of Wadi Al Nakhr.

that Wadi Al Nakhr is one of the important environmental sites in the Wilayat of Al Hamra, and invited everyone

to discover its natural beauty. She praised the team spirit that distinguished the participants, stressing the importance of

sports in strengthening social ties. She expressed her intention to continue organising similar women's events in the coming years, with the aim of developing women's sports in the governorate. For her part, Moza al Abri expressed her happiness to participate in the event, stressing the importance of sports for women as an essential part of life. She pointed out that hiking is one of the favourite sports for women, and has witnessed increasing interest from the relevant authorities in recent years. She explained that the event was an opportunity to enjoy the beauty

of nature and develop physical fitness, extending her thanks to the team in charge of organising the event. Reham al Abri, another participant, described the hiking experience in Wadi Al Nakhr as a unique and unforgettable experience, as it combined the beauty of nature with the spirit of challenge. She stressed that the organisation was precise and met the requirements of security and safety, expressing her hope that the Summer Sports Program in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate would witness more events for women in the future.



Media praised for showcasing Dhofar’s cultural legacy

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 11

The role of media has become crucial in capturing and conveying the essence of khareef season. Dr Mohammed bin Saeed al Shashai, Director General of Media in Dhofar Governorate, who has been at the forefront, has dedicated his expertise towards ensuring the media’s portrayal of Dhofar is as authentic and impactful as the season itself.

Recently, Dr Al Shashai undertook a series of inspection visits to various media outlets in the governorate, with a clear focus on enhancing the quality and reach of the media coverage during the khareef season.

His visit to the radio studio ‘Atheer Al Khareef’, located in the historical site of ‘Oudat Al Madhi’ in Al Saada, was a key part of this initiative. This visit was not just a routine check; it was a strategic move to ensure that the radio programmes broadcast from this studio resonated with the listeners and authentically represented the spirit of Dhofar.

Dr Al Shashai’s commitment to quality was further demonstrated through his visits to several TV outlets across the governorate. These visits were aimed at assessing



Dr Al Shashai undertook inspection visits to media outlets in Dhofar part of media’s portrayal of khareef season

the readiness of the media teams and ensuring that the content they produce is of the highest standard.

The khareef season, being one of the most significant cultural and tourist seasons in Dhofar, and demands a media presence that is both comprehensive and compelling. Dr Al Shashai’s oversight ensures that the media coverage not only highlights the natural beauty of the season but also captures the cultural richness that defines Dhofar. Dr Al Shashai also extended his gratitude to the Dhofar Municipality and all the relevant authorities for their exceptional efforts in supporting the tourist season.

During his visits, Dr Al Shashai emphasised the responsibility

of media outlets to portray the governorate accurately, focusing on its cultural, historical, and natural assets. He acknowledged the hard work of the media teams in covering the events and festivities of the khareef season, but he also issued a call to action: the need for continuous improvement and innovation in media content.

In alignment with this vision, a diverse array of programmes has been curated to provide comprehensive coverage of the khareef season. On television, programmes such as ‘Al Nas wa Al Khareef’, an award-winning show, offer viewers insights into the various aspects of the season.

‘Layali Al Khareef’, another popular programme, delves into

the heritage and cultural traditions that make Dhofar unique.

The radio segment is equally robust, with ‘Atheer Al Khareef’ leading the way as a cultural, social, and tourist-oriented programme that caters to a wide audience. Additionally, Al Khareef wa Al Shabab’ focuses on the youth, highlighting their involvement in the season’s activities and events.

In the digital sphere, the ‘Ain Platform’ provides live streaming of programmes and events, ensuring that those who cannot be physically present can still experience the khareef season in all its glory. Social media platforms, too, have been harnessed to offer diverse and engaging content that appeals to a global audience.

Dhofar beaches pose risks during khareef season

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During the khareef season, the beaches of Dhofar Governorate become a popular destination for tourists. However, the season also brings heightened dangers due to severe sea turbulence, prompting authorities to advise extreme caution.

Swimming is strictly prohibited during this period due to the high waves that characterise the region’s coastline. The khareef season coincides with strong southwesterly winds, causing wave heights to reach between three to five metres along Dhofar’s coasts and the central region. These conditions gradually calm as they approach Ras Al Hadd in the Wilayat of Sur.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority has highlighted the significant risk posed by strong currents, which are responsible for 95 per cent of drowning cases. These powerful currents, combined with high waves and dense sea foam, make it difficult to spot and rescue drowning victims.

Recent incidents underscore the danger: rescue teams recently recovered the body of a person who drowned in a water pool at Ain Jarziz in Salalah. In light of such tragedies, the Authority strongly urges visitors to avoid



Authorities warn of severe beach hazards in Dhofar Governorate

swimming in springs, waterfalls and beaches during the Khareef season.

Drowning accidents often occur due to a lack of awareness about the sea’s dangers, coupled with risky behaviour such as swimming in unsuitable conditions. Rip currents, created by the flow of water from the surf zone back into the sea, are a particular threat. These currents can stretch for tens of metres, reaching speeds of up to 9 km per hour, and can easily overpower swimmers, especially those who overestimate their abilities.

The Coast Guard Police Command advises beachgoers to take precautions, including using necessary safety equipment, avoiding areas with rip currents or deep waters, and refraining from swimming long distances without adequate physical fitness.

Adhering to these guidelines is crucial to preventing tragic accidents during the khareef season.

Gulf Science Forum 2024 showcases innovation



SALALAH: The Gulf Science Forum 2024 began on Sunday today at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, running until August 15.

Organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, through the General Directorate of Youth and aligned with the Youth Empowerment Committee’s 2024 action plan, the forum has garnered approval from their highnesses, excellencies, and the Ministers of Youth and Sports of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

The forum aims to foster and solidify the culture of innovation as a vital component in the economies of the Gulf nations, contributing to societal advancement, addressing challenges, and promoting the exchange of ideas and

The forum also features a hackathon competition named ‘Sadeem’ and visits to heritage, historical and tourist sites in Dhofar Governorate

experiences while spotlighting scientific talents.

Central to the forum is an exhibition featuring innovations and inventions by young innovators aged 18-25, covering six key sectors: food security, logistics, education, health, tourism and energy. These sectors are aligned with four Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): clean and affordable energy, industry, innovation, infrastructure, decent work,

economic growth, and partnerships to achieve these goals.

Under the auspices of Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, the forum’s programme includes a dialogue session titled ‘GCC Countries’ Trends in the Global Innovation Index: Reality and Hope’, presented by specialists from the participating countries.

The forum also features a hackathon competition named ‘Sadeem’ and organised visits to heritage, historical, and tourist sites in Dhofar Governorate. More than 60 participants from the GCC countries, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the Kingdom of Morocco are taking part in the forum, showcasing 38 innovative projects. — ONA

Khareef season equestrian events conclude

SALALAH: The equestrian events of Khareef season, organised by the Oman Equestrian Federation in collaboration with the Dhofar Equestrian Committee and the Office of the Governor of Dhofar, concluded at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.

Held from August 3-9, the events included three races, with Ghazi al Ghawazi, owned by rider Noah bin Abdul Rahim Al Balushi, winning the khareef season Endurance Race over a distance of 100 kilometres.

The Sultan of Oman’s Armed Forces (SAF) team won the Dhofar Autumn Championship for picking pegs at the team level, while Nasser bin Rashid al Siyabi, also from the SAF triumphed at the individual level. Mohammed bin Najib al Attar



The SAF team won the Dhofar Autumn Championship

won the horseback archery championship.

Hamoud bin Ali al Nasri, Secretary-General of the Oman Equestrian Federation, reiterated the Federation’s commitment to developing the equestrian sector in Oman and creating an ideal environment for training Omani knights. The event concluded with

Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, honouring the winners and supporters.

The equestrian events will continue with the Dhofar Arabian Horse Beauty Championship, scheduled to be held in the Wilayat of Mirbat from August 29-30.

— ONA

Salalah flood protection project 81pc complete

SALALAH: The project to construct a dam to protect against flood risks on Wadi Anar and provide side protection at Salalah Port in Dhofar Governorate has reached an 81 per cent completion rate. Implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the project is estimated to cost RO 23 million.

The dam will cover a water catchment area of 87 square kilometres with a storage capacity of 16 million cubic metres. It is a crucial component of Salalah’s flood protection system, aimed at mitigating the impact of rainwater and floods from the surrounding



mountains.

Eng Ali bin Bakht Bait Saeed, Director of the Water Resources Department at the General Directorate of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries and Water Resources in Dhofar Governorate, emphasised that the project includes the construction of a

1,680-kilometre-long earth dam, a water drainage channel, and a 430-metre-long concrete spillway.

Additionally, monitoring devices will be installed to measure groundwater levels, water levels in the lake, leaks in the dam, and the percentage of silt in the lake.

The side protection of Salalah Port involves constructing a concrete wall extending 1,610 kilometres with a height ranging between two and four metres. This lateral protection will redirect water from Wadi Adunub to the sea, safeguarding the port and reducing sediment buildup by up to 70 per cent. — ONA



DONATE ORGANS, SAVE LIVES



THE GLOBAL SHORTAGE OF ORGAN DONOURS IS A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE, FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE NEED FOR SOCIETAL ACCEPTANCE OF BRAIN DEATH DIAGNOSIS AND POST-BRAIN DEATH ORGAN DONATION. RAISING AWARENESS AND ENCOURAGING INDIVIDUALS TO BECOME ORGAN DONOURS DURING THEIR LIFETIME OR TO REGISTER POSTHUMOUSLY THROUGH THE SHIFAA APPLICATION IS VITAL

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

The significance of organ donation cannot be overstated, even if the topic often recurs in discussions. If you have reservations about donating or receiving transplanted organs, it's crucial not to let misconceptions stand in the way of saving lives.

Organ donation after death has the potential to save the lives of up to eight people. It carries a profound humanitarian message, offering a lifeline to those who have endured years of suffering. Tragically, many patients never receive that life-changing call informing them that a suitable organ donor has been found, missing out on their second chance at survival.

As a groundbreaking advancement in modern medicine, organ donation has dramatically transformed

lives, enabling individuals to live healthier and more fulfilling lives. The Sultanate of Oman has made significant strides in this field, particularly through efforts to raise awareness of organ and tissue donation.

These efforts reached a milestone in 2021 with the establishment of the National Centre for Organ Transplantation. Additionally, in 2018, regulations were introduced to govern the transfer and transplantation of human organs and tissues.

According to the Ministry of Health, over 12,000 individuals in Oman have registered as post-mortem organ donors. Last year alone, 19 kidney transplants and 11 liver transplants were successfully performed following the irreversible cessation of brain stem functions or the cessation of heart and breathing,

12,000
REGISTERED AS POST-MORTEM DONOURS

19
KIDNEY TRANSPLANTS PERFORMED IN 2023

11
LIVER TRANSPLANTS PERFORMED IN 2023

Living donors, too, play a critical role, particularly relatives up to the fourth degree or non-relatives, subject to the approval of the Organ Transplant Committee at the Ministry of Health.

Dr Qassim bin Mohammed al Jahdhami, Head of the Organ Donation Department at the National Organ Transplant Programme, emphasised that organ transplantation is the most effective treatment for organ failure, such as kidney and liver failure, conditions that afflict millions worldwide.

Organ donation and transplantation are among the most intricate medical procedures, requiring precise coordination between multiple parties, as well as advanced medical technologies and highly trained personnel. The National Organ Transplant Programme in Oman is actively

working to meet these requirements.

The global shortage of organ donors is a significant challenge, further complicated by the need for societal acceptance of brain death diagnosis and post-brain death organ donation. Raising awareness and encouraging individuals to become organ donors during their lifetime or to register posthumously through the Shifaa application is vital.

While contemplating death is challenging, considering organ and tissue donation can be even more daunting.

However, organ donors play an indispensable role in saving lives. By donating organs, individuals directly contribute to giving patients with organ failure a renewed chance to live. Since humans are the sole source of human organs, certain patients' lives depend entirely on the generosity of organ donors.






Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
303/2024	Purchase of anti-virus software for the Information Technology Department	Companies specialized in the field of IT services	Saturday 31-8-2024 02:00 PM	Thursday 19-9-2024 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
304/2024	Renewal of licenses for (9) firewalls devices affiliated to the Ministry	Companies specialized in the field of IT services	Saturday 31-8-2024 02:00 PM	Thursday 19-9-2024 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) . On **Monday 12/8/2024**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (**24402200**).

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry”

www.mosd.gov.om



More Gaza evacuations after school massacre

CAIRO: Israel expanded evacuation orders in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip overnight, forcing tens of thousands of Palestinian residents and displaced families to leave in the dark as explosions from tank shelling reverberated around them.

The Israeli military said it was attacking gunmen from the Hamas group who were using those areas to stage attacks and fire rockets. On Saturday, an Israeli air strike on a school where displaced Palestinians were sheltering in Gaza City killed at least 90 people, according to the civil defence service, prompting an international outcry.

In Khan Yunis in the south of the Gaza Strip, the evacuation instruction covered districts in the centre, east and west, making it one of the largest such orders in the 10-month-old conflict, two days after tanks returned to the east of the city.

The announcement was posted on X and in text and audio messages to residents' phones: "For your own safety, you must evacuate immediately to the newly created humanitarian zone. The area you are in is considered a dangerous combat zone."

Philippe Lazzarini, head of the United Nations' agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA, said people in Gaza were trapped and had nowhere to go.

"Some are only able to carry



Some are only able to carry their children with them, some carry their whole lives in one small bag. They are going to overcrowded places

PHILIPPE LAZZARINI
UNRWA CHief

their children with them, some carry their whole lives in one small bag. They are going to overcrowded places where shelters are already overflowing with families," he said.

Later on Sunday, an Israeli air strike near the Khan Yunis market at the centre of the city killed four Palestinians and wounded several others, medics said.

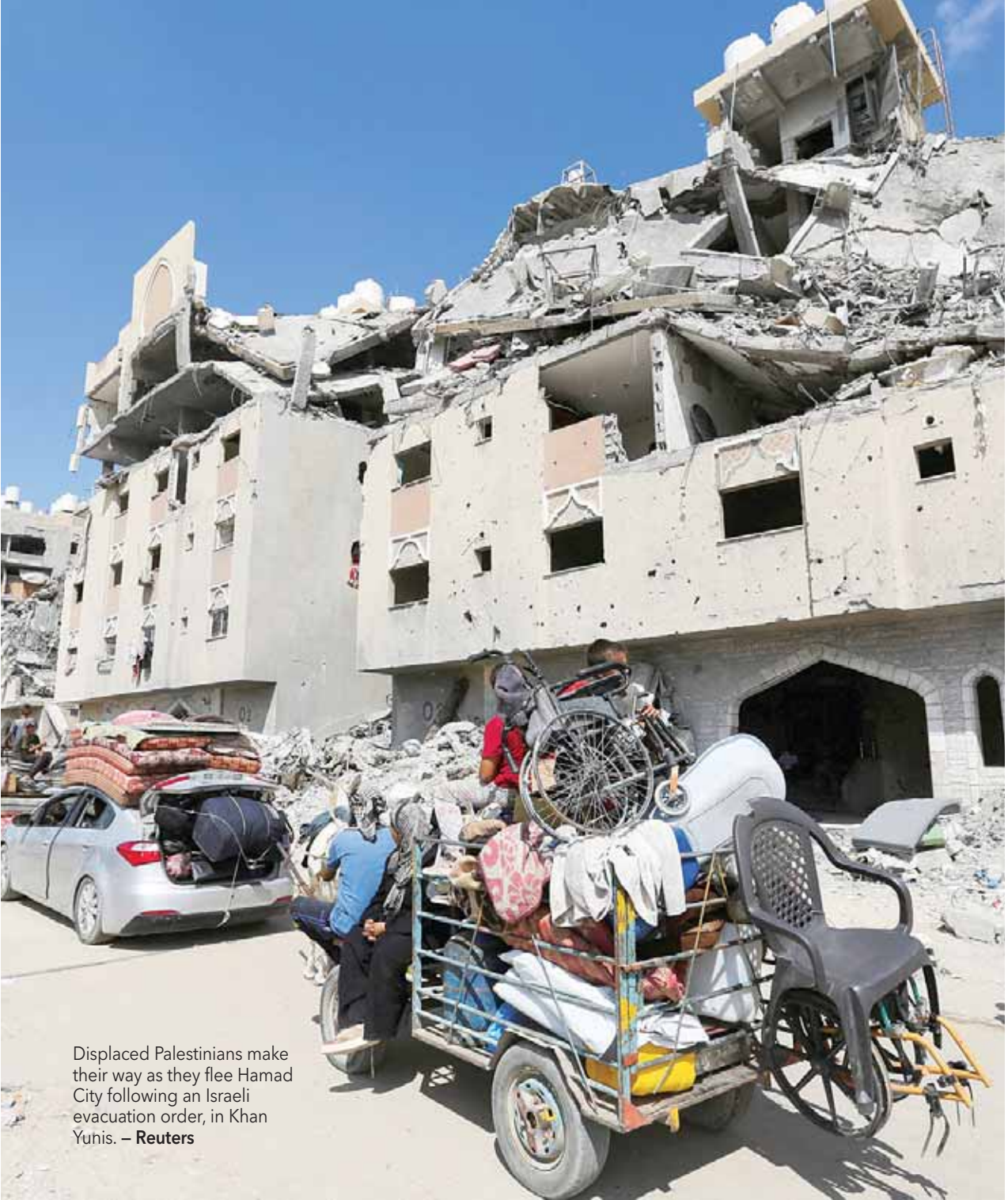
Lines of smoke rose from areas where Israeli planes carried attacks in the eastern and western parts of the city. Residents said two multi-floor buildings were bombed.

Nearly 40,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli offensive in Gaza since the war broke out last October and the toll is rising by the day, the Gaza health ministry says.

Most of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced from their homes, according to the United Nations, while their narrow strip of land has largely been reduced to a wasteland of rubble.

Palestinian and United Nations officials say there are no safe areas in the enclave. Areas designated as humanitarian zones, like Al Mawasi in western Khan Yunis where residents were being sent, have been bombed several times by Israeli forces.

Tens of thousands left their homes and shelters in the middle of the night, heading west towards Al Mawasi and north towards Deir Al Balah, already overcrowded with hundreds of thousands of displaced people. — Reuters



Displaced Palestinians make their way as they flee Hamad City following an Israeli evacuation order, in Khan Yunis. — Reuters

Bangladesh chief justice quits amid protests

DHAKA: Bangladesh's chief justice and central bank governor have resigned, officials said on Saturday, as student protests that forced Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to flee have widened to target more officials appointed during her time in office.

Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan resigned, the law ministry's adviser Asif Nazrul said in a Facebook video post, after students warned him of "dire consequences" if he did not.

Nazrul, an adviser in the new caretaker government, urged protesters to remain peaceful. "Don't damage any public property," he said in the post.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder has also resigned but his resignation has not been accepted given the importance of the position, finance ministry adviser Salehuddin Ahmed told reporters. Days earlier, four



Rickshaw drivers pass army personnel standing guard in front of the Shahbagh Police Station, in Dhaka. — Reuters

deputy governors were forced to resign after about 300 to 400 bank officials protested against what they said was corruption by top officials.

The vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, A.S.M. Maksud Kamal, has also resigned, the university said. Reuters was unable to contact Kamal.

The university has been the epicentre of deadly protests that escalated in July against quotas in government jobs before morphing into an oust-Hasina campaign.

Hasina has been sheltering in New Delhi since Monday following the uprising that killed about 300 people, many

of them students, ending her uninterrupted rule of 15 years in the South Asian nation of 170 million people.

Since her departure, the country has also seen the appointment of a new police chief as part of a shake-up of the security top brass that also included a new head of the technical intelligence monitoring agency and changes among senior army officials.

Improving law and order in Bangladesh is a priority for the new caretaker government, the adviser to the interior ministry said on Friday, as the nation limps back to normality.

Retired Brig. Gen. M. Sakhawat Hossain said that the interim government will first try to improve law and order. "And number two, bring back the confidence within the law enforcement agencies, which I feel has gone very drastically low," he said. — Reuters

IRAN PRESIDENT PRESENTS CABINET TO PARLIAMENT FOR APPROVAL

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian presented his cabinet to parliament on Sunday. Parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf announced the names of the 19-member cabinet presented by the president during an assembly session broadcast live on state television.

For the post of foreign minister, Pezeshkian has named Abbas Araghchi, a 61-year-old career diplomat who has led nuclear negotiations since 2013.

Known for his openness to the West, he played a pivotal role in the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers that was torpedoed three years later by the United States' decision to withdraw

from it.

Pezeshkian has also nominated one woman, Farzaneh Sadegh, who would become only the second Iranian woman to hold a ministerial post since the Islamic republic was established in 1979.

The reformist president has named as his future interior minister General Eskandar Momeni, a 60-year-old police commander and former member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

General Aziz Nasirzadeh, a former commander of the Iranian Air Force and deputy chief of staff of the armed forces since 2021, is set to take the helm of the defence ministry. — AFP



Iran's President Pezeshkian speaks at the parliament. — Reuters file photo

SHORT TAKES

ISTANBUL

Ethiopia and Somalia to hold new talks

Horn of Africa nations Somalia and Ethiopia will start a new series of talks in Ankara aiming to ease tensions between them, Turkiye's foreign ministry said.

The ministry said in a statement that talks scheduled to start on September 2 had been brought forward.

The talks aim to find a way to give Ethiopia access to international waters through Somalia without upsetting its territorial sovereignty.

Foreign ministers from the



neighbours held a first meeting in Ankara on July 1 with Turkiye's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan acting as mediator. Fidan went to Ethiopia on August 3 to meet its leaders. — AFP

KIGALI

Rwanda's Kagame sworn in for fourth term

Rwanda's President Paul Kagame was sworn in on Sunday for a fourth term after sweeping to victory in elections last month with more than 99 per cent of the vote.

Several dozen heads of state and other dignitaries from African nations joined the inauguration ceremony at a packed 45,000-seat stadium in Kigali, where crowds had started gathering from the early morning.

Kagame took the oath of office before Chief Justice Faustin



Ntezilyayo, pledging to "preserve peace and national sovereignty, consolidate national unity". Kagame is credited with rebuilding a ruined nation after the genocide. — AFP

KAMPALA

Uganda landslide death toll reaches 21

The death toll from a landslide at a vast garbage dump in the Ugandan capital Kampala has risen to 21, police said on Sunday.

Homes, people and livestock were engulfed in mountains of waste at the landfill in the northern Kampala district of Kiteezi after a collapse caused by heavy downpours.

President Yoweri Museveni said he had directed the army's special forces to help in the search and rescue operation and demanded to know who allowed



people to live near such a "potentially hazardous and dangerous heap".

14 bodies had been recovered on Saturday, and another seven on Sunday. — AFP



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In brief

■ BERLIN



COMMUNITY MOURNS VICTIMS OF GERMAN HOTEL COLLAPSE

Residents, relatives and rescue workers gathered for a memorial service in the western German village of Krövon on Sunday to commemorate those killed in a hotel collapse. Participants at the service, held in the parish garden of the local church, observed moments of silence and prayed for a Dutch man who was severely injured and placed in an induced coma. Clean-up efforts continued on Sunday, with debris and rubble still being removed from the site, according to police.

The public prosecutor's office has opened an investigation and commissioned an expert to find out how the accident could have happened. — dpa

■ ATHENS



FIREFIGHTERS BATTLE TO CONTAIN WILDFIRES NEAR ATHENS

Residents in two areas near Athens were ordered to evacuate on Sunday as dozens of firefighters battled to contain blazes fuelled by strong winds and hot temperatures.

Near the village of Varnava, some 35 km north of the capital, more than 190 firefighters were trying to contain a fire that had reached homes by late afternoon.

They were backed up by 40 trucks, 11 water-bombing aircraft and five helicopters.

Fire crews were also tackling a fire in a forested area near the town of Megara, west of Athens. The fires sent thick brown smoke over parts of Athens. — Reuters

■ CARACAS



VENEZUELAN OPPN DEMANDS MADURO END 'PERSECUTION'

Venezuela's opposition candidate called for President Nicolas Maduro to end "violence and persecution," hours after the country's high court said its upcoming ruling on the disputed July 28 election cannot be appealed. Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia posted a video demanding Maduro allow free political expression.

"I ask you on behalf of all Venezuelans to put an end to the violence and persecution and to immediately release all compatriots arbitrarily detained," Gonzalez Urrutia said. The court heard from all candidates, except for Gonzalez Urrutia. — AFP

Ukrainian troops carry major border incursion



Residents look at a residential house, heavily damaged following a Russian missile strike, in the Brovary district, Kyiv . — AFP

KYIV: Thousands of Ukrainian troops are taking part in a major incursion into Russian territory, aiming to destabilise Russia by showing up its weaknesses, a top Ukrainian official said.

Russia's army on Sunday appeared to acknowledge Ukraine had pierced deep into its territory in the six-day offensive, saying it had hit Ukrainian troops and equipment in places around 30 kilometres from the border. "We are on the offensive. The aim is to stretch the positions of the enemy, to inflict maximum losses and to destabilise the situation in Russia as they are unable to protect their own border," the security official said on condition of anonymity.

The shock offensive appeared to catch the Kremlin off guard. The Ukrainian official also said Russia's claims that it had deployed 1,000 troops were a major underestimation of the forces Kyiv has committed to the operation. "It is a lot more... Thousands".

After days of official silence, President Volodymyr Zelensky

Russia's army acknowledges Ukraine had pierced deep, saying it had hit Ukrainian troops and equipment in places around 30 kilometres from the border

acknowledged the offensive for the first time in his nightly address on Saturday, saying that Kyiv was "pushing the war into the aggressor's territory".

The defence ministry on Sunday said it had "foiled attempts" by Ukrainian troops, using armoured vehicles "to break through deep into Russian territory".

But in an apparent sign of how far some Ukrainian units have managed to advance, it said it had hit enemy units near the villages of Tolpino and Obshchy Kolodez, which are around 25 km and 30 km from the Russia-Ukraine border.

Journalists in Ukraine's Sumy region, from where Ukraine

launched the incursion, saw dozens of armoured vehicles daubed with a white triangle on Sunday — the insignia apparently being used to identify Ukrainian military hardware being used in the attack. Neither side has given precise details on the extent of their deployments to the new conflict zone.

Ukrainian authorities in the Sumy region have also announced plans to evacuate some 20,000 people close to the Russian border, which has come under fire in response.

At an evacuation centre in the regional capital of Sumy, retired metal worker Mykola, who had fled his village of Khotyn some 26 kilometres from the Russian border, said the offensive had given him a morale boost.

Russia has vowed a "tough" response to the incursion and a Ukrainian missile strike on a residential building in Kursk that it said injured 15. An overnight missile attack near the Ukrainian capital Kyiv killed a man and his four-year-old son, emergency services said. — AFP

Biden brands Trump a 'danger' to the US

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden, in his first TV interview since dropping out of the White House race, warned that Republican candidate Donald Trump was "a genuine danger to American security."

"Mark my words, if he wins... this election, watch what happens," Biden told CBS News in a pre-taped interview broadcast on Sunday. "He's a genuine danger to American security. Look, we're at an inflection point in world history... and democracy is the key."

In the short TV interview, recorded in the White House last week, he appeared frail but cogent, again admitting he failed in the debate but stressing that health-wise he has "no serious problem."

Explaining his exit, he said other Democratic Party politicians standing for re-election feared he would damage their chances — and added that his only priority was to stop Trump from returning to power.

"A number of my Democratic colleagues in the House and Senate thought that I was going to hurt them in the election races," he said. "A critical issue for me still is — not a joke — maintaining this democracy. "I have an obligation to the country to do what is the most important thing we can do, and that is — we must, we must, we must defeat Trump."

Biden said he was proud of his record on jobs, investment and Covid recovery — and vowed to campaign hard for Vice-President Kamala Harris, who has replaced him on the ballot. "I'm going to do whatever Kamala thinks I can do to help most," he said.

Biden's age had come to dominate the 2024 campaign, and the Democrats' hopes of winning have soared since his exit, as Harris has enjoyed a surge in support that has left Trump struggling.

The outgoing president said he had expected to serve only one term when he won in 2020, but that he had been persuaded to stay on.

"I thought of myself as being a transition president. I can't even say how old I am. It's hard for me to get it out of my mouth, but things got moving so quickly, it didn't happen," he told CBS's Robert Costa. — AFP



US President Joe Biden waves as he departs the beach, in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. — AFP

North Ireland fresh clashes cause police injuries

LONDONDERRY: Northern Irish police on Sunday criticised "disgusting" rioting by pro-Irish unity youths in Londonderry overnight that injured 10 police, the latest night of disorder to rock the UK region. The violent scenes in the city, also known as Derry, follow nightly disturbances in Belfast and elsewhere over the last week which initially mirrored unrest in English towns and cities in the wake of the Southport knife attack.

Police have blamed pro-UK loyalist paramilitary groups for helping to fuel the violence in the Northern Irish capital, which has outlasted the riots in England, where recent days and nights have been largely peaceful. The events there have been blamed on far-right agitators.

In Londonderry, the 10 officers were injured after rioters threw petrol bombs, fireworks and missiles late on Saturday.

"The scenes we witnessed were disgusting," said Derry City and Strabane police Superintendent William Calderwood. "To see our officers injured as a result of this violence is appalling," he said,



Police gather during clashes in Londonderry, Northern Ireland. — Reuters

adding that one arrest was made.

Up to 50 youths were involved in the clashes which followed a march through the city by pro-UK loyalists and lasted several hours.

The march, an annual Protestant parade through the Catholic-majority city near the

border with the Republic of Ireland, passed off earlier without incident. Disturbances during the annual Protestant marching season are a regular occurrence in Northern Ireland.

A week of racism-fuelled disorder in Northern Ireland, sparked by disturbances in

English towns and cities, is proving harder to end, with fears the UK region's sectarian divisions are feeding into the violence.

The violence has mirrored disorder across England, spurred by misinformation spread on social media about the suspected

Police have blamed pro-UK loyalist paramilitary groups for helping to fuel the violence in the Northern Irish capital, which has outlasted the riots in England

perpetrator of a knife attack in Southport on July 29 which killed three children. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) said on Saturday that 31 people have been arrested during the disturbances.

"On a fundamental level the Belfast attacks are similar in its dynamic to anti-immigration protests in white working class areas in England, the Republic of Ireland and elsewhere in Europe," said Peter McLoughlin, a politics lecturer at Queens University Belfast.

"It is driven by racism and fear of the other, but in Northern Ireland it also interfaces with sectarian political dynamics," he said. — AFP

Interactive fiction builds necessary skills



Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is Associate Professor, Dept of English and Translation, Sultan Qaboos University

“You are standing on a vast empty field with a single boarded door and a mailbox next to it.” Thus begins one of the most popular games of all times, ‘Zork’, a text-based adventure game or interactive fiction. Of late, these have become a popular way of teaching a variety of content and skills to learners across all ages.

Online interactive fiction is like a digital version of the traditional board game ‘Dungeon!’ which is set in a medieval world of make believe. There were also other games of choice like ‘Choose your own adventure’ series in the 1970s which was written in the second person, allowing the reader to make choices which determine the plot of the story. There is now a resurgence of this kind of fiction in digital form. They are in the form of text-based games, mobile application-based fiction and now, Artificial Intelligence powered texts as well. All of them have the same purpose: to enable users of all ages to enjoy and learn through

interaction in a digital space, often in real time with players from other parts of the world. For example, developers Telltale Games adapted popular television series like ‘Walking dead’ and ‘Game of Thrones’ into a game with dialogue choice. The direction of the story is thus dependent on the decisions that the player makes, making their stake in the story deeper and more consequential. ‘Pepi Wonder World: Islands of Magic Life’ is another immersive experience where children go on a journey that takes them to new places in a make believe world and where they follow instructions to complete a specific quest or purpose. All these fiction-cum-games develop much needed skills in learners. Digital interactive fiction has been known to help in cognitive development. It also helps in the improvement of emotional and social markers. For example, ‘Minecraft Story Mode’ and ‘Last Kids on Earth’, both available on OTT platforms, are very useful ways to develop listening comprehension skills as there is a choice of dialogue that determines

INTERACTIVE FICTION, WHEN USED IN A CLASSROOM, HELPS TO HONE SKILLS LIKE CLOSE READING AND LOGICAL THINKING

the direction of the plot, and eventually the ending. Such games thus empower the learner with a sense of independence, giving them a stake in the outcomes of the narrative. Also, as the choices made by the player-learner changes the narrative, interactive fiction also teaches soft skills like empathy — understanding another person’s emotions and dilemma before deciding on a course of action. For example, ‘Begscape’ puts the reader in the role of a beggar having to make ethical choices. We all love a good story. Interactive fiction, when used in a classroom, helps to hone skills like close reading and logical thinking. It also helps in critical thinking, and finally writing. It makes older learners aware of digital storytelling, potentially making some of them interested in this form. As the Internet continues to dominate our lives, we can only learn to leverage it for its advantages. Combining software with traditional stories is one of the best ways in which the old and new could be combined to provide positive learning outcomes.

A rude political awakening for Macron?

FABRICE RANDOUX & VALERIE LEROUX

The success of the Olympic Games has surpassed the wildest dreams of many in France but in the next weeks President Emmanuel Macron still will have to face the reality of the deadlocked politics created by his calling of snap legislative elections. With the Games just around the corner, the polls left France with three major blocs in parliament — the left as the largest followed by Macron’s centrist forces and the far right — with none of them close to mustering the numbers for an overall majority. The former government of Macron allies, under Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, has carried on in a caretaker capacity throughout the Games, but five weeks after the elections, the country still does not have a new prime minister. Macron may be hoping that the Games boost his embattled fortunes in the same way that France’s winning and hosting of the 1998 football World Cup dragged up former president Jacques Chirac’s popularity ratings. But even with Paris set to continue basking in the limelight while hosting the Paralympics from August 28 to September 8, Macron faces a potentially fraught return to reality. While the Games have lifted what was a morose mood in France, it is far from certain this will give a new impulse to the remaining three years of the unpopular president’s mandate. “The fact that things are going well, that we are seen as beautiful and successful abroad, has struck a chord in a country that was experiencing decline and was no longer capable of doing great things collectively,” said prominent political commentator Emmanuel Riviere. “This changes the collective climate but not the political situation: the situation remains blocked, many voters are frustrated... The French are putting things into perspective and remain very angry with Emmanuel Macron.” Macron’s approval ratings remain well under 30 per cent, with the president keeping a low profile during the election campaign and the Games, spending most of the Olympics ensconced in the Mediterranean holiday residence of the French president and making only occasional visits to Paris. “The country needed this moment of coming together. In terms of the political impact, I remain very reserved,” one minister from the outgoing government, who asked not to be named, said. When it comes to the Olympics, “we cannot make it a partisan success”, added another. — AFP

Exploring the Happiness gene



Karim Easterbrook

The writer is former Principal Cambridge United Kingdom

Have you ever wondered why some people seem to smile more, laugh more, and are generally much happier than you? Why do some people see a glass half filled with water as being half-empty whilst others see it as half full? This is often most noticeable with a husband and wife when one is a ‘half empty’ type and the other is a ‘half full’ type. When one is a pessimist and the other is an optimist. This is true of my marriage. My Omani wife is the optimist and I am, or so she insists, a pessimist. I disagree with my wife’s description of me. I see myself as a realist. I feel a bit like a doctor who has the difficult task of telling his patient two bits of news, one very bad and one not so bad. So let us leave the not-so-bad bit to the last and hopefully, allow you to walk away with a smile or in my case a half smile on your face. An influential article in the Review of General Psychology concluded that much of what makes us happy is inherited from our parents. It came to this conclusion by studying identical twins separated at birth and noting that happy or happier parents often give birth to children who grow up to be happier adults, whilst less happy parents often produce less happy progeny. It stated that 50 per cent of one’s achievable happiness level is inherited from your parents, 10 per cent depends on one’s circumstances, and 40 per cent on ‘intentional activity.’ For us pessimists, the idea that genetics decide how happy you can become in later life no matter what you do comes as no surprise. The introduction of more sophisticated anti-depressants in the last few decades has quite literally been a lifesaver for many. The question of nature versus nurture cannot be discounted and nurture surely must have some influence on one’s ability to lead a happy or more contented life. Even if you have parents, who are both pessimists but give you love, support and security in your early years this might dissipate some

of that genetically predetermined unhappiness or at least improve your chances of leading a happier adult life. Nevertheless, as the title of this article suggests, some of us are more disposed to being happier than others are. As a disclaimer, I should state that many experts in this field have rightly pointed out that owing to the many variables at play it is simplistic to give such accurate percentages in these matters. So let us just say that there is enough evidence for us to accept that your genes play a big part in how contented or happy you will be in your adult life. Now for the not-such-bad news. HARVARD RESEARCHERS SURVEYED A LARGE GROUP OF STUDENTS TO UNCOVER THEIR LIFE ASPIRATIONS. MOST MENTIONED HAPPINESS OR MONEY, OFTEN VIEWING THE TWO AS SYNONYMOUS

Over a period of 80 years, Harvard University carried out the largest study ever on what makes people happier or more content. The results were surprising. As part of their study, the Harvard researchers surveyed a large number of their students to discover what they hoped for in life. Most usually at some point mentioned happiness or money. For many these two words were synonymous in their minds. In other words, they thought that having more money was not only a mark of success but would bring them more happiness. One of the more interesting discoveries that came out of the study was that the amount of money they hoped to earn was less important than how their earnings compared to what other people earned. When given the choice of earning

say \$80,000 a year when everyone else only earned \$70,000 or earning \$100,000 when everyone else earned \$110,000, most preferred to earn the lesser amount. It was not so much about the amount of money they earned but how much they earned compared to others. In Richard Layard’s excellent book ‘Happiness’, he agrees that when earning money it is a person’s point of reference that matters most. Using the analogy of Olympic medallists, he states that the silver medallist is often less happy than the bronze medallist. The silver medallist is disappointed at not achieving gold whilst the bronze medallist compares himself to all those competitors who achieved no medal at all. Most researchers conclude that whilst, all things being equal, it is better to have money rather than be poor because money gives access to products, experiences, and most also conclude that wealthier people are not happier. Over the last 100 years, the highly industrialised countries of Japan, the UK and the US have seen a huge increase in their GDP resulting in their people having more money. However contrary to expectations cases of suicides and depression have increased not decreased. The Harvard researchers discovered that the thing above all else that resulted in the most happiness was having good family and social relationships. Good health is also important. Committing acts of compassion, kindness and generosity towards others was also shown to make people happier. Lottery winners have occasionally discovered that sudden riches can be a burden leading to unhappiness. They often become detached from their less wealthy family members and friends. Some also try to hold on to their unexpected windfall of money rather than becoming more generous to others. Add to that the tendency for some to overeat less healthily and drink more alcohol and you have a recipe for an unhappy life. The Beatles’ song ‘Can’t Buy Me Love’ had the lyrics ‘I don’t care too much for money, money can’t buy me love’, was perhaps more profound than they could ever have known.

Responsibility that counts more

There are people who pretend that life has been unfair to them! Perhaps, some of you might believe the same based on a certain perception or experience you have. As a common case in point, some might think that others have been given certain responsibilities or authority, which is beyond their ability to control. They wonder how this could be possible! Is it their luck or a responsibility being misplaced. Nothing can be changed or assumed about that, but to accept that fact as the way it is.

Irony of fate perhaps as those people think. In fact, it is all part of hidden secrets that life usually brings to human beings! Certainly, fortunes and fates have been bestowed by the Almighty Allah to all humans, regardless of their origins, religions, languages, interests and cultures. It is all about everyone's chance and hard work in life as some people are getting good fortunes and become wealthy while others are just means behind making others' dreams come true. Humans are paving each other's paths to live their destinies, make a living and fulfil ambitions.

Speaking of this subject, this has been highlighted in the Holy Quran: "We raise some of them above others in ranks, so that some may command work from others. But the Mercy of the lord is better than the (wealth) which they amass".

Those who have been given command of others are not always superior or better. Rather, they are given authority; thus, should be more responsible and fairer too in whatever they do. As the saying goes "with authority comes responsibility".

As they have accepted taking authority, they must shoulder the responsibility for their team, job-related tasks and productivity. Otherwise, they don't deserve to get the authority. Thus, they prove their disability to manage that position or mission.

If not being unfair to the authority that has been given, they could be



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SOME MIGHT THINK THAT OTHERS HAVE BEEN GIVEN CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES OR AUTHORITY, WHICH IS BEYOND THEIR ABILITY OF CONTROL

called unaccountable and dishonest to such responsibility. Not only that, but they are being disloyal to the commitment anticipated from them. Accordingly, such kind of people in charge would be unreliable and unsafe to work or collaborate with; their teams, colleagues would not rely on them even.

The irresponsibility of those people could be formed in different ways, some of which are the unwillingness to take decision, misleading their teams and disability to handle tasks or solve problems. Unfortunately, today there are many of those who got a leading position by fortune or in return for scratching other's backs. Thus, they are unable to handle responsibility with such big authorities. Sometimes, they could be challenged by their colleagues who are more competent and responsible.

Therefore, how could an irresponsible and incapable person lead a team?! Always a blind person is unable to guide others and show them the way. Instead, his colleagues will be unsafe as they can't rely on him or even feel the sense of belonging to his leadership. As Mother Teresa said, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."

Although people's talents in different spheres of life complement each other's needs, when it comes to leadership it should be given to a competent person.

Leadership and authority should be given to people who are more responsible, reliable, wise and self-confident. Otherwise, the return will be only disappointment and distraction to the team! A leader is always the one who shoulders the responsibility, but not who becomes a burden!

Though all that happens is part of one's experience in life and for their own good, it is not life, but humans who are not fair to one another. Hence, this is another way of how life is treating people and showing them the easy and hard way of perceiving things.

IN SEARCH OF NECTAR!



A bumblebee lands on a sunflower in a field on a hot summer day in Sarre, Britain, on Sunday. – Reuters

Will we survive the next 100 years?

In May, experts from many fields gathered in Montenegro to discuss "Existential Threats and Other Disasters: How Should We Address Them." The term "existential risk" was popularised in a 2002 essay by the philosopher Nick Bostrom, who defined it as referring to risks such that "an adverse outcome would either annihilate Earth-originating intelligent life, or permanently and drastically curtail its potential."

To appreciate the distinction between existential risks and other disasters, consider climate change. In some scenarios, runaway global warming could render most of the Earth too hot for humans to continue to live there, but Antarctica and some of the northernmost regions of Europe, Asia, and North America would become inhabitable.

That would reduce the potential of intelligent life on Earth, perhaps for millennia, but eventually the planet would cool, and the survivors' descendants would repopulate it. If these are indeed the worst-case scenarios, then climate change, disastrous as it could be, is not an existential risk.

To be sure, if the seriousness of a disaster is directly proportional to the number of people it kills, the difference between a disaster that kills nearly all of Earth's human population and one that brings about its extinction would not be so great. For many philosophers concerned about existential risk, however, this view fails to consider the vast number of people who would



Peter Singer

The writer is founder of the nonprofit organisation The Life You Can Save, is Emeritus Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University

EXISTENTIAL RISKS ARE RISKS THAT WOULD EITHER ANNIHILATE EARTH-ORIGINATING INTELLIGENT LIFE, OR PERMANENTLY AND DRASTICALLY CURTAIL ITS POTENTIAL

come into existence if our species survived for a long time, but would not if Homo sapiens became extinct.

The Montenegro conference, by referring in its title to "other disasters," was not limited to existential risks, but much of the discussion was about them. As the final session of the conference was drawing to a close, some of those present felt that the issues we had been discussing were so serious, and yet so neglected, that we should seek to draw public attention, and the attention of governments, to the topic. The general tenor of such a statement was discussed, and I was a member of a small group nominated to draft it.

The statement notes that there are serious risks to the survival of humankind, most of them created by human beings, whether intentionally, like bioterrorism, or unintentionally, like climate change or the risk posed by the creation of an artificial superintelligence that is not aligned with our values. These risks, the statement goes on to say, are not being treated by governments with anything like the seriousness or urgency that they deserve.

The statement supports its view with reference to two claims made by Toby Ord in his 2020 book, The Precipice. Ord estimated the probability of our species becoming extinct in the next 100 years to 16-17 per cent, or one in six.

He also estimated that the proportion of world GDP that humanity spends on interventions aimed at reducing this risk is less than 0.001 per cent.

In an update that appeared in July, Ord says that because new evidence suggests that the most extreme climate-change scenarios are unlikely, the existential risk posed by climate change is less than he thought it was in 2020.

On the other hand, the war in Ukraine means that the risk of nuclear war causing our extinction is higher, while the risks from superintelligent AI and pandemics are, in his view, lower in some respects and higher in others.

Ord sees the focus on chatbots as taking AI in a less dangerous

direction, because chatbots are not agents. But he regards the increased competition in the race to create advanced artificial general intelligence as likely to lead to cutting corners on AI safety.

Overall, Ord has not changed his estimate – which he admits is very rough – that there is a one in six chance that our species will not survive the next 100 years.

He welcomes the fact that there is now increased global interest in reducing the risks of extinction, and offers as examples, the inclusion of the topic in the 2021 report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and its prominence on the agenda of the international group of former world leaders known as The Elders.

The Montenegro statement urges governments to work cooperatively to prevent existential disasters and calls especially on affluent countries' governments to invest "significant resources" in finding the best ways to reduce risks of human extinction. Although the statement gives no indication of what "significant" means in this context, Ord has elsewhere suggested a commitment of 1 per cent of global GDP to reduce the risks of our species becoming extinct. That is a thousand times more than his 2020 estimate of how much governments were then spending on this task, but it would be hard to argue that it is too much.

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To appreciate the distinction between existential risks and other disasters, consider climate change.

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Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne lifts the trophy with team-mates.
– Reuters

LONDON: Premier League champions Manchester City beat FA Cup winners Manchester United 7-6 on penalties to win the Community Shield at Wembley on Saturday after the traditional season curtain-raiser finished level at 1-1.

Erik ten Hag's side looked on course to repeat their shock victory over City in the FA Cup final when Alejandro Garnacho put United ahead after 82 minutes, but City midfielder Bernardo Silva netted a minute from time to send the match to penalties.

City defender Manuel Akanji scored the decisive spot-kick after Silva had earlier missed in the shootout. United centre back Jonny Evans and winger Jadon Sancho failed to convert their penalties in the shootout.

United thought they had taken the lead soon after halftime when captain Bruno Fernandes beat goalkeeper Ederson with a stunning finish from distance, but the effort was disallowed for offside.

Substitute Garnacho ran through the City defence to slide the ball into the bottom corner of the net before Silva converted Oscar Bobb's from close range to send the game to a shootout.

MAN CITY BEAT MAN UNITED ON PENALTIES TO WIN COMMUNITY SHIELD

City won the trophy for the first time since 2019 to end a run of defeats in Community Shield matches, following losses to Arsenal last season, Liverpool in 2022 and Leicester City in 2021.

"I enjoyed the season against our rival in Manchester and to start the season with a title is good. We are really pleased," City manager Pep Guardiola

told ITV.

"We lost a lot of balls, after transitions they are one of the best teams in the world.

They are so dangerous to control. But in the end, we did it.

"It is nice to play this game because it means you won something in the previous season... The target

now is not to win the Premier League, it is 'OK next game try and win it'. This is what we have to do."

City's England players Phil Foden, Kyle Walker and John Stones as well as Spain midfielder Rodri were unavailable for selection, leading Guardiola to field an unfamiliar line-up with four academy players starting.

Their young side dominated possession after a slow start, however, with United's sloppy play handing the first chance of the game to youngster James McAtee who struck the post.

"Tough result to take. When the performance is right, when you lose everyone feels this. It hurts in your stomach. You have to feel pain and we have to hurt. We have to take this belief into the league," Ten Hag told ITV.

"We managed to be on an equal level with Man City... We created chances, we got pressure in the ball and in possession we had some very good chances from this so there are many positives we can take."

City begin their quest for a fifth consecutive Premier League title at Chelsea on August 18, while United start their campaign at home to Fulham on Friday.

— Reuters

Sports workshop to enhance health awareness

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

The General Directorate of Sports Care and Development at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, represented by the Department of Medicine and Sports Sciences, in cooperation with Abbott Nutrition, organised a workshop entitled 'Sports Science'.

The workshop aimed to spread awareness and health culture among athletes by providing specialised lectures in various fields of sports sciences, as part of a series of workshops and lectures provided by the department to enhance health knowledge among athletes.

The workshop saw the participation of 50 male and female players, coaches and physiotherapists from various national teams, federations and sports committees in all governorates of Oman taking part.

Abbott Nutrition contributed to enriching the workshop by providing a visual presentation introducing its products and their relationship to improving sports performance, which



highlighted the importance of healthy, balanced nutrition in enhancing sports performance.

Dr Ammar al Kashmiri said sports injuries may affect athletes during their physical activity. He explained that injuries vary between acute injuries that occur suddenly and cause immediate pain, and chronic injuries resulting from excessive pressure on the body's tissues. He pointed out the importance of preventing them, whether through medical examinations that target internal and external factors leading to injuries, or through carefully designed training programmes to avoid potential injuries.

Hossam Adely explained that physiotherapy plays a pivotal role in treating sports injuries, by rehabilitating athletes and

helping them regain their motor functions. He stressed the importance of coordination between the medical and sports teams to ensure the safe return of athletes to the stadiums, with a focus on avoiding recurrence of injury, and caring for the injured part to ensure full recovery.

Kamel al Zadjali stressed that proper nutrition is the basis of ideal athletic performance. He explained that athletes need a diet rich in vitamins, minerals and proteins to support the recovery process and muscle growth, in addition to providing the necessary energy during exercise. He also pointed out the importance of eating specific meals before and after exercise to support athletic performance and rapid recovery.

Oman U-17 wraps up camp ahead of Asian Championships

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

The Oman Under-17 football team concluded the short domestic camp on Sunday on a successful note. The gathering featured two friendly matches against Seeb and Nizwa U-19 clubs as part of the junior Red Warriors preparations for the events including the West Asian Championship and 2025 AFC U-17 Asian Cup Qualifiers.

In the first game against Seeb U-19 team, Oman team players managed to register a 3-0 win. The first goal came by Seeb's defender through an own goal while Osama al Maamari and Ahmed al Omrani netted the goals for Oman team.

In the following warm-up game, Oman young players over won Nizwa U-19 team by 1-0 and the only goal came by Ahmed al Omrani. In both matches, the head coach of Oman team Anwar al Habsi preferred to play with two different squads in order to test the players' technical performance and readiness.

Oman U-17 team will play against Yemen and Saudi Arabia in Group B at the 11th



edition of the West Asian Championship which will take place in Jordan from September 2 to 11. The tournament will feature participation of nine teams which will be distributed into three groups. Group A will comprise from the hosts Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon while Bahrain will secure slot against Syria and Palestine teams in Group C.

Oman begins their group matches at the West Asian tournament with a match against defending champions Yemen on September 2 on the opening day and then meets Saudi Arabia on September 4. The topper from each group will advance to the semifinal besides the best second-placed team among the three groups.

Oman junior Red Warriors

will eye to book slot at 2025 AFC U-17 Asian Cup Qualifiers. Oman team will compete against Tajikistan, Guam and host Singapore in Group J for the 2025 AFC U-17 Asian Cup Qualifiers. The qualifiers will take place from October 19 to 27 in Singapore. The ten group winners and five best second placed teams will advance to the finals accompanied by the hosts Saudi Arabia from April 3 to 20.

The national team will meet Singapore in the opener of the qualifiers on October 23 before meeting Guam in a key match on October 25. Then, the national team boys will conclude their group matches with an essential game against Tajikistan who is ranked as the top-seeded team in the group.

LEBRON’S USA CLINCH OLYMPIC BASKETBALL GLORY AS INGEBRIGTSEN STRIKES GOLD

PARIS: LeBron James’s USA won a fifth straight Olympic men’s basketball crown on Saturday while on the track Jakob Ingebrigtsen claimed the 5,000m after his disappointment at 1,500m.

The US edged Brazil 1-0 in the women’s football final at the Parc des Princes thanks to Mallory Swanson’s winner. The Americans claimed the gold medal for a record-extending fifth time.

The USA’s dream team of NBA superstars held off France 98-87 to take their tally of men’s Olympic basketball golds to 17.

In a rematch of the Tokyo Olympics final, the US again proved too much for France’s sensational NBA Rookie of the Year Victor Wembanyama and his teammates.

For Kevin Durant, it was a record fourth Olympic gold. James earned his third and Stephen Curry claimed his first in his maiden Olympic appearance, contributing eight three-pointers to the effort.

INGEBRIGTSEN’S GOLD, FINALLY

As the track and field programme wrapped up, Ingebrigtsen bounced back from his unaccustomed fourth place in the 1500m earlier in the week.

He made tactical errors in that race but in the 5,000m on Saturday, the Norwegian overcame the team tactics from his Ethiopian rivals to cross the line in 13min 13.66sec for gold with Kenya’s Ronald Kwemai taking silver.

Ingebrigtsen said: “It’s just an



(From L) USA’s Stephen, Kevin, Anthony, Tyrese, Derrick, Jayson, LeBron, Joel , Bam , Anthony , Devin and Jrue. – AFP

amazing feeling. The contrast in sports is unique: when you succeed, and sometimes you have a bad experience. It’s amazing to have this.”

In a lightning fast men’s 800m, Emmanuel Wanyonyi held off world champion Marco Arop of Canada. It was the fifth Olympics in a row that a Kenyan has won the event.

Wanyonyi, 20, clocked a personal best of 1min 41.19sec for victory, making him the third fastest man in history, and Arop took silver just one-hundredth of a second behind in a North American record.

Pre-race favourite Djamel Sedjati of Algeria claimed bronze with 1:41.50, and shrugged off a raid by anti-doping investigators

on the Olympic Village room of his coach earlier this week.

“Nothing (important) happened. These are things that athletes can face,” Sedjati said after Saturday’s race.

In a rare athletics gold for New Zealand, Hamish Kerr won the men’s high jump after a dramatic jump-off with American Shelby McEwen after both cleared 2.36 metres.

Masai Russell of the United States snatched victory in the women’s 100m hurdles, edging out France’s Cyrena Samba-Mayela who clinched the host nation’s first athletics medal of the Games.

The dominant Americans finished the track and field programme with 14 golds,

topped off by wins for both their 4x400m relay teams. Kenya were a distant second with four golds.

The women’s marathon will be the last athletics event on Sunday.

Earlier, Ethiopia’s Tamirat Tola broke the Olympic record to win the men’s marathon as reigning champion Eliud Kipchoge dropped out before the end.

In scenes captured by an AFP reporter, two-time Olympic champion Kipchoge turned to fans and handed over his shoes, bib and socks to supporters, receiving a rapturous reception.

In the boxing ring, Taiwan’s Lin Yu-ting won her final, ensuring that the two fighters at the centre of a major gender controversy both take home



Lebron James of United States in action. – Reuters

gold. A day after Algeria’s Imane Khelif clinched the 66kg title, Lin claimed the 57kg crown with a unanimous points decision win over Poland’s Julia Szeremeta at Roland Garros.

Lin and Khelif have been under intense scrutiny for much of the past two weeks in a furore that has drawn fire from the likes of Donald Trump and Harry Potter author J. K. Rowling.

CHINESE DOMINATION China underlined their total domination of Olympic diving by winning their eighth gold out of eight events, as Cao Yuan triumphed in the men’s 10m platform.

The Chinese also swept

the board in the table tennis for the sixth time in Olympic history, with China’s women overpowering Japan in the team event.

New Zealand’s Lydia Ko upgraded to a gold in the women’s golf, completing her set of Olympic golf medals during a tense final round, with Germany’s Esther Henseleit finishing two shots behind.

The former world number one won silver at the 2016 Rio Games and bronze in Tokyo.

Away from the sport, International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach said he would not see a third term, declaring “new times are calling for new leaders”.

— AFP

Hollywood ending for Sifan Hassan and Paris Olympics

PARIS: Sifan Hassan completed her mission impossible with a gruelling women’s marathon win on the sun-baked streets of Paris on Sunday, as Tom Cruise is rumoured to close the Olympic Games with a Hollywood ending.

With China and the United States grappling for dominance at the top of the medals table, fourteen golds were on offer on the last day of what is widely seen as a successful Olympics.

Dutchwoman Hassan had taken on what many considered to be a crazy gamble, competing in the 5,000m, the 10,000m and the marathon -- the last two events just two days apart.

But in a thrilling sprint finish, Hassan overhauled Ethiopia’s Tigst Assefa to take gold by three seconds in an Olympic record of 2hr 22min 55sec.

On Friday she had taken bronze in the 10,000m in the Stade de France after coming away with a bronze in the 5,000m.

She fell to the ground on the blue carpet in front of the golden dome of the Invalides memorial complex in the heart of Paris before grabbing a Dutch flag



Silver medallist Italy’s Nadia Battocletti, gold medallist Kenya’s Beatrice Chebet and bronze medallist Netherlands’ Sifan Hassan celebrate on the podium. – AFP

to celebrate an extraordinary achievement.

“It was not easy,” said Hassan. “It was so hot, but I was feeling OK. I’ve never pushed myself through to the finish line as I did today.” It was a sensational ending to an Olympics athletics programme that saw US sprinter Noah Lyles win the 100m by just five thousandths of a second.

The US dominated the athletics and are going for gold in the last event of the Games, as their women basketball stars hope

to add to the men’s title against hosts France.

An eighth straight triumph would give them the record for most consecutive golds in any team sport at the Olympic Games — breaking a tie with the US men, who won seven basketball titles in a row from 1936 to 1968.

“I think the gold medal is the standard,” US forward Alyssa Thomas said. “No matter where we are in the world, it’s our goal and that’s what we came here for.”

Wrestling, weightlifting,

water polo, volleyball, modern pentathlon, handball, and track cycling are the other sports to crown Olympic champions on the last day. Old rivals Serbia and Croatia meet for gold in men’s water polo in what could be a feisty affair.

PRECIOUS As the sport nears an end, attention turns to the closing ceremony at the Stade de France and the next Olympics in Los Angeles in four years.

LA is expected to play heavily on its Hollywood star power and will roll out its big guns, with pop star Billie Eilish, rapper Snoop Dogg, and the Red Hot Chili Peppers all confirmed.

The worst-kept secret in Paris is that “Top Gun” star Tom Cruise appears poised to close the ceremony with a spectacular stunt sequence.

Cruise is filming the latest episode of the “Mission Impossible” franchise in Europe and has been a regular feature at Olympic events in Paris.— AFP



Netherlands’ gold medallist Sifan Hassan crosses the finish in first place. – AFP

Swanson strike hands USA Olympic women's football gold against Brazil



PARIS: Mallory Swanson scored the winning goal as the United States edged Brazil 1-0 in Saturday's Olympic women's football final to claim the gold medal for a record-extending fifth time.

Brazil fought hard on a hot afternoon at the Parc des Princes, but the USA struck just before the hour mark when Swanson -- on her 100th cap -- ran through to finish past goalkeeper Lorena.

It is the first time the USA have taken the Olympic title in 12 years, their gold in Paris adding to those won in 1996, 2004, 2008 and 2012.

"I am just in awe of how hard everyone has worked to get here," said the winger Trinity Rodman.

"I believed the entire time, but to finally be able to hold (the gold medal) is so amazing."

The USA have now beaten Brazil in three of those Olympic finals, with the South Americans again having to settle for silver here just as they did in Athens in 2004 and Beijing four years later.

It was not quite the ending that their legendary captain Marta was hoping for, as she bowed out of her sixth and last Olympics aged 38 with a third silver medal.

"We surpassed ourselves

throughout the competition to get to the final. That was our main objective, to come away with a medal," Marta said. Brazil were never expected to get this far, while the USA's victory confirms their renaissance under new English coach Emma Hayes.

She only arrived from Chelsea in late May but has worked wonders with a team that a year ago was sent packing from the World Cup in the last 16.

"I am very emotional. It has been a dream of mine to be in this position," Hayes told broadcaster Eurosport.

She described her team as

"tremendous people and players and role models, I love them."

That World Cup campaign in Australia and New Zealand was the international swansong for USWNT icon Megan Rapinoe, who was among the crowd for Saturday's final, as was Tom Cruise. Much of the talk in the build-up was about Marta, with the Brazil great free to return for a farewell Olympic appearance after serving a two-game ban for a red card in her team's last group outing.

But the 38-year-old multiple winner of the Fifa world player of the year award was left on

the bench at kick-off by coach Arthur Elias. A younger Marta had played in Brazil's defeats in the 2004 and 2008 finals, both of which came in extra time.

This was also the second clash between the nations in a final this year, after the USA won 1-0 in the CONCACAF Gold Cup in March. The USA subsequently welcomed Hayes as coach and she oversaw wins against Japan and Germany in the knockout rounds to get to the Olympic final.

- **MARTA'S FAREWELL** - Brazil, meanwhile, scraped through their group as a best

third-placed team, before wins against hosts France in the quarter-finals and World Cup holders Spain in the last four, both achieved without Marta.

Their direct approach posed problems to the USA defence in the first half, and they had the ball in the net on 16 minutes.

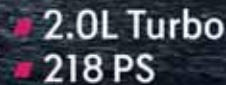
Ludmila turned Naomi Girma inside out in the box before finishing, but the goal was disallowed for offside.

Swanson was denied at the other end by Lorena after bursting into the box, yet it was Brazil who had the best chance of the opening half. — **AFP**













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US cyclist Valente wins second straight women's Olympic omnium gold

PARIS: American defending champion Jennifer Valente overpowered the field to defend her women's omnium title in the final velodrome race of the Paris Olympics on Sunday.

Valente finished 13 points ahead of Poland's Daria Pikulik, with New Zealand's Ally Wollaston taking bronze, six points further back.

The omnium is one of track cycling's most unpredictable events, featuring four separate races — the scratch, tempo, elimination and points — with riders collecting points in each.

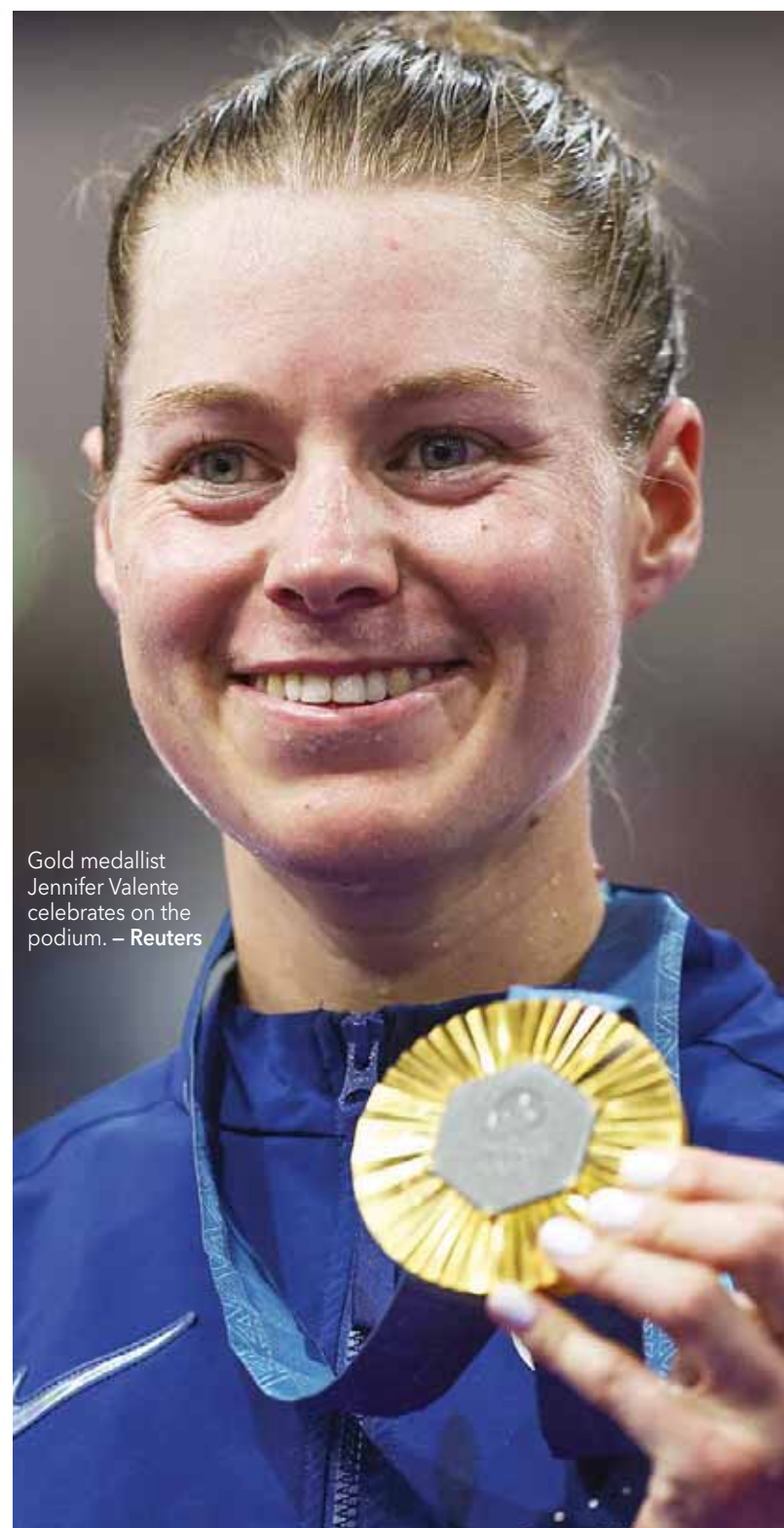
Valente timed the opening 30-lap scratch race to perfection, pulling clear on the final stretch to take the maximum 40 points ahead of Canada's Maggie Coles-Lyster.

Irish rider Lara Gillespie seized the initiative in the tempo, finishing first.

But Valente kept her overall lead, eight points clear of Australia's Georgia Baker and 18 ahead of Coles-Lyster.

The 29-year-old then won an energy-sapping elimination race, with Baker second and Coles-Lyster third to take a 10-point advantage into the final 80-lap race where she made no mistakes.

Valente upset then-world champion Yumi Kajihara of Japan to become the first American woman to win an Olympic track cycling gold medal at Tokyo three years ago. Since then, she has asserted herself as the woman to beat in the omnium, winning back-to-back world titles in 2022 and 2023. — **AFP**



Gold medallist Jennifer Valente celebrates on the podium. — Reuters



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TECH START-UP PLANS FIRST-EVER WASTE-TO-HYDROGEN PILOTS IN OMAN

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

An Oman-based clean energy startup has unveiled plans to introduce small-scale hydrogen production plants in the Sultanate of Oman that are designed to convert municipal solid waste into hydrogen for sustainable transportation and other green energy applications. Manah Hydrogen, the Muscat-headquartered entity behind the groundbreaking initiative, is the brainchild of Donald Winsor, a Canada-based international expert specialising in hydrogen-based solutions for clean energy, transportation, and industrial applications.

Manah Hydrogen, owned 100 per cent by Winsor, has pledged to invest an initial amount of RO 15 million in the construction of the first two pilots – one in the Wilayat of Manah (Al Dakhiliyah Governorate) and the other in Muscat Governorate. A collaborative arrangement with state-owned be’ah, which oversees the management of all solid wastes in the country, is envisioned as well.

“Our project has a bold vision to transform the landscape of energy production through sustainable practices,” said Winsor.

“In partnership with be’ah, we are leading the way with two pioneering waste-to-energy pilot initiatives, featuring a modular facility capable of scaling effortlessly with W2H and FLEET technologies. Our aim is to establish a dynamic circular solution that not only addresses environmental concerns but also generates valuable resources.”

Each pilot centres around the deployment of a 1-tonne per day capacity integrated plant that will utilise a mix of municipal solid waste, biogenics and waste plastics as feedstock. Clean energy output is estimated in the range of 110 - 140 kg per day of commercially valuable carbon-negative hydrogen.

With a physical footprint of just two 20-foot containers, the plant can be conveniently deployed at, for example, waste transfer stations, marinas, malls and local communities that generate organic and municipal waste as feedstock.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Winsor said



Representation of a 1-tonne capacity waste-to-hydrogen pilot

the company is currently discussing a partnership arrangement with be’ah covering not only access to municipal waste as feedstock, but potentially also supplying the latter with clean hydrogen for its fleet transportation requirements.

A memorandum of cooperation (MoU) is anticipated to be signed by the two sides before the end of this month, he stated.

Additionally, Manah Hydrogen is exploring the potential to install and operate a similar waste-to-hydrogen pilot at Al Mouj Muscat, the biggest and most prestigious of Oman’s integrated tourism complexes. The goal, said Winsor, is to enable communities, such as Al Mouj, to achieve their Net-Zero goals through the deployment of circular economy solutions that not only address concerns over waste disposal, but also generate sustainable clean fuels.

Given the potential for the wider rollout of waste-to-hydrogen (W2H) solutions across Oman, Winsor has invited local Omani players to partner with him in advancing his pioneering initiative.

“Having an Oman individual or company (as an investor) fits into our long term strategy of building an Omani company where, in the end, my foundation owns 20 per cent for creating generational sustainable legacies,” he added.

FSA’s incentives boost capital market for economic growth

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

The Capital Market Incentives Programme, unveiled by the Financial Services Authority (FSA) here on Sunday, will focus on enhancing long-term financing options through the capital market, showcasing its potential to reshape how companies approach funding and market participation, said Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President – FSA.

In exclusive remarks to the *Observer*, Al Salmi articulated the core purpose of the Capital Market Incentives Programme: to empower the capital market to play a more significant role in the national economy.

He pointed out that the programme aims to enable companies to leverage unconventional financing methods offered by the capital market.

By doing so, it seeks to address a critical need for diverse financing sources, particularly for long-term projects that require stable and sustainable funding solutions. Al Salmi noted that studies have consistently shown that financing through the capital market is often more cost-effective than traditional banking sector options. This is particularly



The programme aims to enable companies to leverage unconventional financing methods offered by the capital market. By doing so, it seeks to address a critical need for diverse financing sources, particularly for long-term projects that require stable and sustainable funding solutions.

SHAIKH ABDULLAH AL SALMI
Executive President
Financial Services Authority

advantageous for companies looking to invest in long-term projects, as the capital market can provide financing at lower costs, thus improving their financial viability.

The Executive President stressed that the programme’s design is intended to highlight and maximise these benefits, encouraging companies to fully explore and utilise the available opportunities.

Al Salmi underscored the importance of this shift, explaining that it aligns with broader economic goals by fostering a more dynamic and accessible capital market environment.

Another critical aspect Al Salmi discussed was the programme’s objective to enhance market liquidity.

He explained that as liquidity in the market improves, so does market activity, which in turn increases the flexibility for investors to enter and exit the market.

This enhanced liquidity not only makes the market more appealing but also leads to better pricing of products listed on the exchange.

Al Salmi emphasised that improved liquidity is crucial for the overall health of the market, as it supports more active trading and better price discovery.

Addressing concerns about the programme’s timeline, Al Salmi reassured stakeholders that even companies that join in the final month of the five-year programme will still benefit from its incentives for an additional five years.

He explained that the programme is structured to offer benefits over a five-year period, starting from now, and companies joining at any point within this timeframe would enjoy the programme’s advantages for the full five years following their entry.

Al Salmi expressed confidence that this duration is appropriate, providing ample time for companies to realise the programme’s benefits and for the programme to achieve its objectives.

Al Salmi’s remarks underscore the Authority’s clear vision for transforming the capital market into a more robust and effective financing tool.

By emphasising long-term financing benefits and improved market liquidity, the programme is positioned to make a substantial impact on the investment landscape in Oman. It is designed to not only attract local and foreign investments but also to deepen the capital market’s role in the national economy.

SEE ALSO PAGE 15

Promising companies market launched to boost Omani SMEs

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

In a significant move to boost the growth of private companies, family businesses, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the Financial Services Authority (FSA) has announced the establishment of the “Promising Companies Market” as a sub-market within the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

This initiative aims to create a conducive environment for these companies to gain experience in financial markets, explore financing alternatives, and prepare for conversion into public joint stock companies.

Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President of the FSA explained that the Promising Companies Market will operate under flexible listing requirements, supervised by the FSA.

Currently, the FSA is collaborating with the MSX to



The initiative aims to create a conducive environment for these companies to gain experience in financial markets, explore financing alternatives, and prepare for conversion into public joint stock companies.

finalise regulations and listing procedures, with an expected launch before the end of the year.

Mahmoud bin Abdullah al Owaini, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance, emphasised that the capital market incentives programme, endorsed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin

Tarik, aligns with the goals of the National Programme for Financial Sustainability and Financial Sector Development (Estidamah).

This initiative is expected to enhance the attractiveness of foreign investments and activate the capital market’s role in the national economy.

Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, noted that encouraging the conversion of limited liability companies into closed joint stock companies will foster growth, enhance

THIS INITIATIVE AIMS TO CREATE A CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR THESE COMPANIES TO GAIN EXPERIENCE IN FINANCIAL MARKETS, EXPLORE FINANCING ALTERNATIVES, AND PREPARE FOR CONVERSION INTO PUBLIC JOINT STOCK COMPANIES.

governance, and improve transparency.

This transition will provide more decision-making flexibility and boost confidence among stakeholders, ensuring the sustainability of companies and their contributions to the national economy.

Haitham bin Salem al Salmi, CEO of the Muscat Stock Exchange, highlighted the importance of the incentives programme in providing additional financing options for companies.

The programme is expected

to enlarge and deepen the capital market, stimulate the listing of new companies, and elevate the MSX’s status from a frontier market to an emerging market, attracting more internal and external investments.

Halima bint Rashid al Zariyah, Executive President of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, stated that the establishment of the Promising Companies Market aligns with the authority’s vision to enhance competition in the SME sector.

This market will encourage emerging companies, family businesses, and SMEs to convert into public joint stock companies, enabling them to access financial markets, secure project financing, and ensure their long-term sustainability and growth.

This initiative is poised to strengthen these companies, facilitating their transition across generations and enhancing their role in the national and international economic arenas.

BANK MUSCAT RECOGNISED AS BEST BANK FOR SMES IN OMAN

MUSCAT: Affirming the Bank’s role in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by providing tailored banking solutions and contributing to their growth, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has been honoured as the Best Bank for SMEs 2024 by Euromoney.

The Bank places a strong emphasis on supporting the SME sector through the ongoing enhancement of banking services that encourage a conducive environment for entrepreneurship.

On this occasion, Ibrahim bin Khamis al Balushi, Senior Assistant General Manager for SME at Bank Muscat, stated: “We are delighted to receive this prestigious award, which recognises the efforts of Bank Muscat in developing this business sector and supporting the economy.

“We support Omani youth by financing various projects across industrial, service and



commercial sectors, including retail, hospitality, industry, tourism, mining and agriculture.

“These achievements are a testament to the trust our customers place in our services and banking facilities. Surely we will continue to strive to meet the aspirations of our valued customers.”

Bank Muscat launched the Najahi Business Banking Unit in 2014, aiming to assist small, medium and emerging enterprises by offering customised banking services and facilities that help them grow and succeed.

The online corporate banking platform for Najahi customers simplifies transactions in local and foreign currencies, bill payments,

group payments, fund transfers and salary disbursements under the wage protection system.

Najahi current account holders can also open fixed deposit accounts, request checkbooks and block Najahi cards if lost or stolen.

The platform serves as a digital control panel, providing intelligent insights for timely decision-making.

It features the latest technology with world-class security and is user-friendly.

As part of its strategic plans to support SMEs, Bank Muscat has launched several initiatives, including Al Wathbah Academy.

This reflects the Bank’s commitment to sustainable development and enhancing the role of SMEs in economic development in Oman.

Al Wathbah offers a full range of banking solutions and non-banking services, such as education, training, workshops and networking opportunities for entrepreneurs.

NBO hosts dinner for Sadara priority banking clients



MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) recently hosted an exclusive dinner event for its esteemed Sadara Priority Banking clients at the luxurious Salalah Anantara Hotel on August 6, 2024.

The event was a resounding success, reaffirming NBO’s commitment to providing exceptional personalised banking experiences and fostering meaningful relationships with its high-net-worth clients.

The evening commenced with a warm welcome, followed by an insightful keynote speech. Guests enjoyed a short presentation highlighting the unique offerings of the services.

The night was filled with fine dining and live music, creating an ideal atmosphere for networking and engagement.

Ali bin Mustafa al Lawati, AGM - Head of Private Banking and Segments at NBO, commented on the significance of the event: “We were pleased to host this exclusive dinner for our Sadara Priority Banking clients.

“It was an excellent opportunity to showcase our dedication to delivering personalised wealth management services, premium benefits and priority access to financial solutions.

“Our purpose is to deepen our relationship with clients and help them experience excellence by offering tailored financial advice and bespoke services that cater to their unique needs.”

NBO’s Sadara Priority Banking is designed to enhance the banking experience for high-net-worth clients by offering a range of personalised services.

These include comprehensive wealth management, dedicated relationship managers and priority access to a suite of financial solutions tailored to meet the specific needs of each client.

Additional benefits include a chauffeur service to and from Muscat and Salalah airports, ensuring a seamless and luxurious experience for our valued clients.

The core objective of Sadara is to foster long-term relationships by delivering exceptional service and bespoke financial advice.



MASERATI DELIVERS QUATTROPORTE GRAND FINALE AND MC20 IRIS ONE-OFFS

MUSCAT: In the enchanting setting of Lake Maggiore, two special Maseratis – symbols of the Modena-based company’s most exclusive and extraordinary custom-built production – were delivered to a passionate Trident customer in the US, a significant entrepreneur in the biomedical sector.

One is the last Quattroporte – as well as the final model made with the V8 combustion engine – renamed for the grandiose Quattroporte Grand Finale farewell from the automotive scene.

The other, MC20 Iris, referring to all the colours of the rainbow (iris is the Latin equivalent) that feature all over the car, inside and out.

Thanks to the fine details and complex workmanship used in both cars, designed as part of the Maserati Fuoriserie customisation programme, the House of the Trident has produced two unique creations to fulfil the requirements of a customer who has witnessed the customisation of two leading lights in the brand’s history becoming a reality: the Quattroporte luxury saloon, for six generations the perfect interpreter of Maserati excellence, and the more modern Maserati MC20, an iconic super sports car with an unmistakable style.

The exterior of the Quattroporte Grand Finale features the elegant Blu Nobile colour, with the body kit made of carbon fibre, painted in the same tone, and brake callipers in brushed aluminium.

The last Quattroporte Maserati will ever make is equipped with the unforgettable, powerful 572-hp V8 engine. On the windscreen, and inside the driver door, the identification number of the car is imprinted: 999999.

A custom cover has also been created to house the roaring engine, imprinted with the signatures of the Fuoriserie team and the engineers who worked on the project.

BankDhofar debuts money market fund

MUSCAT: Harnessing its extensive expertise in Oman’s banking and capital markets, BankDhofar has unveiled a new initiative designed to provide investors with stable and consistent returns.

BankDhofar’s Money Market Fund (BDMMF or Fund), the newest launch from the Bank’s Asset Management Department, is an open-ended investment fund approved by the Financial Services Authority (FSA) of the Sultanate of Oman.

As a premier money market fund, BDMMF invests in low-risk securities, offering returns that typically reflect short-term market returns.

The fund’s primary objective is to maximise returns while ensuring the preservation of capital and daily liquidity. It achieves this by investing in liquid, high-quality securities issued by banks, governments, quasi-government entities and other organisations primarily in Oman and the GCC.

The new fund exemplifies BankDhofar’s commitment to enhancing the core value propositions underpinning its products and



services that cater to the evolving needs of its diverse clientele.

The Bank’s customer base encompasses not only life-stage banking segments, such as Children, Minor, Youth and Ladies, but also Premier Priority and Private Banking segments. At the same time, BankDhofar remains steadfast in delivering an exceptional customer experience across all customer touch-points across its vast network of branches and digital channels alike.

Affirming the fund’s commitment to

delivering competitive market returns, Abdul Hakeem al Ojaili, CEO of BankDhofar, said: “The fund offers daily liquidity, allowing investors quick access to their cash and providing much-needed flexibility in financial management. Our diligent investment team continuously monitors market conditions and adjusts the fund’s portfolio to optimise returns while effectively managing risks.

“Recognising the critical role of diversification in risk mitigation, BDMMF boasts a well-rounded portfolio. The fund has also appointed well-experienced industry leaders as part of the fund Management Body.”

BDMMF, the inaugural fund from BankDhofar’s Asset Management Department, showcases the bank’s renowned expertise and solid track record in Oman’s banking sector.

This fund is the first in a series of planned launches aimed at reinforcing Bank Dhofar’s presence in the investment arena. The fund is open for subscription to institutions, citizens and residents, with a minimum investment requirement of RO 1,000.

MG Motor honours excellence at MG Fleet & Government Annual Awards 2024

MUSCAT: MG Motor Oman proudly hosted the MG Fleet & Government Annual Awards 2024, a distinguished event dedicated to recognising the exceptional contributions of its valued customers and partners.

The ceremony, held on August 7, 2024, celebrated those who have significantly driven MG Motor’s success through their unwavering support and partnership.

The event commenced with opening remarks, setting a celebratory tone for the evening. An engaging presentation on the MG product lineup followed, showcasing the latest models and key features that have solidified MG as a preferred brand among consumers. This presentation underscored MG Motor’s commitment to innovation and excellence.

Next, an insightful presentation on MG’s after sales and service

offerings highlighted the comprehensive support provided to MG customers, ensuring their continued satisfaction and loyalty.

The highlight of the evening was the awards ceremony, celebrating the outstanding achievements of MG Motor’s partners across various categories.

These awards honour excellence in areas such as fleet management, customer satisfaction, innovative initiatives by SMEs, and corporate excellence in incorporating MG vehicles into their operations. Each category highlighted the remarkable efforts and achievements of MG’s partners in driving the brand’s success.

Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MG Motor, expressed his gratitude and admiration for the award recipients, stating, “We are immensely proud of the dedication and achievements of our partners. Their unwavering commitment



and innovative approaches have been instrumental in driving MG Motor’s success. We are honoured to recognise their exceptional contributions and look forward to continuing this journey of excellence together.”

MG Motor extends its sincere congratulations to all award recipients and looks forward to continuing this journey of excellence together. The company remains committed to delivering top-notch products and services to its esteemed customers.

Goods worth RO 356 million covered by credit insurance in 2023

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

Credit Oman, wholly government-owned trade credit insurance provider, is forging ahead in its efforts to enhance Omani exports and domestic trade through its insurance services provided to customers in the various governorates and wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman.

Credit Oman's statistics showed that Muscat Governorate topped the total value of insured sales for exports and domestic [sales] for the beneficiaries of its services in the governorate, with a total value



Businesses in Muscat Governorate topped the list of beneficiaries of credit insurance in 2023.

of RO 140 million by the end of the last year.

Credit limits granted to the insured reached RO 100.952 million, with as many as 52 firms benefitting from its services.

Al Batinah North Governorate came in second place, with the RO 135.024 million worth of insured goods, and credit limits reaching RO 70.864 million.

A total of 17 firms benefited from the service.

This growth is also attributed to the opening of the Credit Oman office in the governorate in cooperation with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and

Industry.

The choice of Al Batinah North Governorate was due to it being one of the promising economic regions in the country, especially with the presence of the Sohar Industrial City and Sohar Port, which are witnessing a large volume of investments.

The office and its employees contribute to closer communication with investors and manufacturers, and provide insurance solutions that meet their needs and support their growth and development.

In Dhofar Governorate, the value of insured sales reached RO

43.039 million, while the value of the granted credit limits reached RO 16.975 million.

Significantly, the total value of insured sales for exports and domestic [sales] by the end of 2023 amounted to RO 356.690 million.

Credit Oman works to strengthen the Omani economy through the insurance services it provides to manufacturers and exporters, which help them reduce commercial and non-commercial risks, sell with full confidence and safety, and enter promising and different markets around the world.

Personal data protection policy unveiled for Oman state units

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has unveiled a personal data protection policy for state administrative units in an effort to "enhance the performance of government units, increase their transparency and accountability, and encourage economic diversification and the use of data-based services".

Formally released in March this year, the policy aims to create a framework that balances individuals' rights with allowing data processing and retention, while adopting global personal data protection policies.

Furthermore, the policy aims to leverage the economic value of data, recognising it as an economic resource that helps drive innovation and supports economic transformations.

Additionally, it seeks to enhance the trust of data owners in the ability of government units to manage and handle personal data.

According to the policy, personal data is defined as data that identifies or can identify a natural person directly or indirectly by reference to one or more identifiers such as a name, civil number, electronic identifiers, location data, or reference to one or more factors related to the genetic, physical, mental, psychological, social, cultural, or economic identity.

The Ministry will assume responsibility for monitoring the compliance of state administrative units with the policy and present the results of compliance and adherence to the Council of Ministers.

According to the policy, data must be collected through



legitimate and fair means, mandating that the collected data should be limited to what is necessary to meet its legal requirements or direct operational activities.

Furthermore, the policy mandates the consent of data subjects to process their data. State administrative units must apply security measures to protect data from accidental or unauthorised destruction, accidental loss, or unauthorised alteration, disclosure, breach, or any other forms of processing.

In addition to establishing mechanisms to ensure the secure destruction of personal data to prevent unauthorised parties from accessing the data.

According to the policy, personal data must be processed within the geographic boundaries of the Sultanate of Oman "to ensure national sovereignty over this data and protect the privacy of its owners."

Government departments will be allowed to transfer or process data abroad under specific circumstances such as executing a contract to which the data subject is a party, pursuing or defending legal claims, and protecting the vital interests of the data subject, with the approval of the Cyber Defence Centre.

In the case of any data breaches, or unauthorised access to personal data, government units are required to notify the Cyber Defence Centre.

The policy is expected to come into effect in March 2026.

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

Asyad Group, Oman's global provider of integrated logistics services, has announced the launch of a tender to design, build, finance, operate and transfer an office complex covering an area of 4,925 square metres in the Muscat Airport Free Zone (MAFZ).

This call for partnership aligns with Asyad Group's commitment to enable and partner with the private sector on vital logistics projects in line with Oman Vision 2040. This tender is the second call for partnership inviting the local private sector to partner with Asyad in establishing and operating the much-anticipated free zone.

With the execution pace accelerating, more opportunities are on the horizon for local companies to play an integral part in establishing this strategic project and contributing to Oman's logistics sector and national economy.

Through the second MAFZ tender, Asyad aims to transform the designated project space into an integrated business centre ready to provide investors with the infrastructure they need to operate at the highest efficiency.

The anticipated centre will offer ready-to-move-in office space, retail areas and a diverse selection of function rooms, boardrooms, meeting



Muscat Airport Free Zone is proposed to be developed into a vibrant global business hub.

rooms, auditoriums and other event spaces that can be easily configured to meet various business needs and project requirements.

The latest undertaking will build a business-enabling environment that helps attract global and regional corporate headquarters, international financial and consultancy institutions, trading companies and startups looking for prime locations to expand their businesses.

By delivering an attractive value proposition, a strong business community will enhance the free zone's position as a global business hub that attracts

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by offering world-class logistics support and facilities.

Floated by Asyad Group, this tender is a unique opportunity for the private sector to build a 25-year partnership with Oman's leading logistics powerhouse, ensuring stability and sustainability for all stakeholders.

In addition, this engagement contributes to the development of high-value assets within a strategic free zone, advancing growth in the Sultanate of Oman's national economy and creating new jobs in key industries such as construction and logistics.

Highlighting Asyad's commitment to engaging the

local private sector, Faisal bin Ali al Balushi, Director – Muscat International Airport Free Zone at Asyad Group stated: "The launch of this tender represents a strategic step towards establishing the Muscat Airport Free Zone as a vibrant global business hub that can attract local and global investors.

We believe this project offers an opportunity to enhance the contribution of local enterprises in Oman's logistics sector by creating advanced business infrastructure and maximising the private sector's overall contribution to the national economy in line with Oman Vision 2040."

FSA DETAILS INCENTIVES AND RULES FOR CAPITAL MARKET PATHWAYS

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 11

The Financial Services Authority unveiled on Sunday the incentives and rules for the capital market pathways. These pathways collectively aim to foster a robust and dynamic economic environment by providing tailored incentives and support mechanisms for different categories of companies.

By focusing on specific needs and challenges, the Financial Services Authority (FSA) is paving the way for a more diversified and sustainable capital market in the Sultanate of Oman.

First path incentives and rules
The first pathway offers a comprehensive package of incentives to encourage the establishment of new public joint stock companies and the conversion of private and family companies with a market value exceeding RO 10 million.

The Ministry of Finance will refund two-thirds of the income tax paid by these companies for five years after listing on the Muscat Stock Exchange

(MSX). The Tax Authority will allow income tax payments in instalments and provide exemptions from additional tax for up to six months.

Companies listed on the MSX will receive a 10-per cent price preference in procurement contracts and tenders issued by the General Secretariat of the Tender Board for five years.

Additionally, listing fees, public offering prospectus fees, and other prospectus fees charged by the FSA will be waived for three years from the start of the incentive programme.

Companies will also receive guidance on legal and regulatory requirements with a direct communication line to qualified employees for one year.

The FSA will approve prospectuses within three working days of receiving completed documents, and the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company will exempt transfer agent fees for three years.

The Development Bank will fast-track financing applications for companies benefitting from the programme. These companies will also have preferential access to



Attendees are seen during the launch of the incentives programme by the FSA.

incentives such as land usufruct and opportunities in concession areas, coordinated with relevant authorities.

To qualify for these incentives, companies must list or establish within the five-year programme duration and have a capital or market value of at least RO 10 million.

The offering size must be at least

25 per cent of the company's capital, and the company cannot convert to another legal form for five years after the incentive period ends, except with FSA approval.

Second path incentives and rules
For closed joint stock companies aiming to list on the Promising Companies Market, the Ministry of

Finance will refund two-thirds of the income tax paid after listing. The Tax Authority will also allow instalment payments for income tax and exempt additional tax for up to six months. These companies will receive a 10-per cent price preference in procurement and tender contracts.

The FSA will waive listing fees and prospectus fees for three years and will provide guidance and advice for companies wishing to list.

A training programme will be offered to entrepreneurs and company owners, along with simplified prospectus forms and mitigated financial disclosures using a tailored form of international accounting standards.

The Muscat Clearing and Depository Company will exempt transfer agent fees for three years, and the Development Bank will fast-track financing applications. T

he MSX will cover the issue manager costs for the first five companies listed on the Promising Companies Market and will provide marketing support through media coverage. Detailed listing

requirements will be announced upon completion of legal procedures.

Third path incentives and rules
Companies transitioning from limited liability to closed joint stock companies in preparation for listing in the Promising Companies Market will benefit from a gradually implemented incentive package.

One-third of the income tax paid will be refunded for two years from the date of conversion, and a 10-per cent price preference will be granted in procurement contracts and tenders for two years.

These companies will also receive fast-track financing application processing from the Development Bank. To qualify, companies must have a market value of at least RO 500,000, verified by an FSA-approved valuation firm, employ at least 20 Omani citizens, be tax-compliant, and meet local added value standards.

By implementing these pathways, the FSA aims to stimulate economic growth, enhance the capital market, and support the sustainability and expansion of various companies in the Sultanate of Oman.

China’s formula for tech prowess: Surge of spending, flood of research



KEITH BRADSHER

The author is the Beijing bureau chief for The New York Times

China’s domination of electric cars, which is threatening to start a trade war, was born decades ago in university laboratories in Texas, when researchers discovered how to make batteries with minerals that were abundant and cheap. Companies from China have recently built on those early discoveries, figuring out how to make the batteries hold a powerful charge and endure more than a decade of daily recharges. They are inexpensively and reliably manufacturing vast numbers of these batteries, producing most of the world’s electric cars and many other clean

energy systems. Batteries are just one example of how China is catching up — or surpassing — advanced industrial democracies in its technological and manufacturing sophistication. It is achieving many breakthroughs in a long list of sectors, from pharmaceuticals to drones to high-efficiency solar panels. Beijing’s challenge to the technological leadership that the United States has held since World War II is evidenced in China’s classrooms and corporate budgets, as well as in directives from the highest levels of the Communist Party. A considerably larger share of Chinese students major in science, math and engineering than students in other big countries. That share is rising further, even as overall higher education enrolment has increased more than tenfold since 2000. Spending on research and development has surged, tripling in the past decade and moving China into second place after the United States. Researchers in China lead the world in publishing widely cited papers in 52 of 64 critical technologies, recent



CATL, a leading battery maker, showcases its technology at an auto trade show in Shanghai. – The New York Times

calculations by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute reveal. Last month, China’s leaders vowed to turn up the nation’s research efforts another notch. A once-a-decade meeting of China’s Communist Party leadership chose scientific training and education as one of the country’s top economic priorities. That goal received more attention in the meeting’s final resolution

than any other policy, except strengthening the party itself. China will “make extraordinary arrangements for urgently needed disciplines and majors,” said Huai Jinpeng, the minister of education. “We will implement a national strategy for cultivating top talents.” A majority of undergraduates in China major in math, science, engineering, or agriculture, according to the Education

Ministry. And three-quarters of China’s doctoral students do so. By comparison, only one-fifth of American undergraduates and half of doctoral students are in these categories, although American data define these majors a little more narrowly. China’s lead is particularly wide in batteries. According to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 65.5 per cent of widely cited technical papers on battery technology come from researchers in China, compared with 12 per cent from the United States. Both of the world’s two largest makers of electric car batteries, CATL and BYD, are Chinese. China has close to 50 graduate programmes that focus on either battery chemistry or the closely related subject of battery metallurgy. By contrast, only a handful of professors in the United States are working on batteries. Undergraduates in the United States are becoming interested in battery research, said Hillary Smith, a battery physics professor at Swarthmore College. But, she added, “they are going to compete for a very few spots if they want to do battery research, and most will have to choose something else.” The roots of China’s battery successes are visible at Central South University in Changsha, a city in south-central China and a longtime hub of China’s chemicals industry. Central South University has nearly 60,000 undergraduate and graduate students on an extensive, modern campus. — The New York Times

How to cope when the markets panic



JEFF SOMMER

The author writes a column on markets, finance and the economy for The New York Times

Time can speed up radically in the markets. It accelerated to supersonic speed over the past week, and you could have gotten whiplash if you tried to keep up with it all. Global stock and bond markets rose and fell and rose again in cascading waves, moving across oceans and time zones. Fears of a recession in the United States mounted, and the Federal Reserve came under pressure to cut interest rates and spur growth. Panic can happen easily in market declines, and it can vanish just as quickly. Late in the week, it was almost as if the seemingly calamitous market whirlwind had never happened. The episode provided a reminder of why, when your own money is at stake, it’s so important to pause, take a deep breath and think calmly. What we just experienced wasn’t all that severe, on a historical basis, at least not in the United States — but it could well presage deeper losses down the road. Big downturns are part of investing, much as recessions are part of economic life. Don’t act hastily when the markets are turbulent. But

when things are reasonably calm and you can think and act deliberately, remember that most of the time, broad diversification helps reduce risk. As I pointed out in a column written shortly before stock markets fell and bonds rose in value, it’s worthwhile to rebalance your portfolio periodically, making sure you still have a mixture of stocks and bonds that isn’t riskier than you can handle. Tokyo was the epicentre of the market action. The benchmark Nikkei 225 stock index fell 12.4 per cent on Monday, its biggest one-day decline since 1987. But this debacle was followed the next day with a boisterous rebound of more than 10 per cent. Behind the stock market volatility were big shifts in the value of the yen, and small ones in interest rates. The yen had been weakening for weeks — making oil and other commodities costly for Japan, which depends heavily on those imports — so the Bank of Japan raised interest rates for the second time in 17 years on July 31. That had the desired effect of bolstering the yen, but it made a classic financial manoeuvre, known as a “carry trade,” far less attractive. In such a trade, you borrow at low rates in a cheap currency like the yen and invest in a market that promises better returns, like the US stock market. For years, Japanese rates had been stuck at or below zero, making it an ideal borrowing spot. By disrupting that trade, the Bank of Japan’s sensible shift in interest rates contributed to the sudden weakness of what had been a booming Japanese stock market — and to the disorder in other world markets. By comparison, the US stock



The S&P 500s fall earlier this week was only 3 per cent, but that was still the biggest one-day decline since September 2022. – The New York Times

market was sedate. The S&P 500’s mere 3 per cent downturn on Monday was a faint echo of the harrowing fall in Tokyo, but it was more than enough to command attention. Even at just 3 per cent, it was the biggest one-day decline since September 2022. And while the US market mirrored Japan’s and rebounded on Tuesday, its bounce was comparatively small, a gain of 1 per cent. But it was enough to end the immediate panic. Even though the sell-off was fairly minor in the United States, there were alarming headlines and hints of real trouble in the markets. This fierce reaction occurred, I think, because the US markets had been lulled into complacency by the calm conditions that had largely prevailed since stocks bottomed in October 2023. Consider the remarkable

dance of the Vix index. Formally, its name is the CBOE Volatility Index, but it is often called Wall Street’s “fear index” because it tracks options on the S&P 500 that rise in price with market stress. On Monday morning, the Vix soared to screamingly high levels, only to flutter down by lunchtime to a level associated with run-of-the-mill market agita. Its extraordinarily brief rise and fall amounted to the fear index’s greatest one-day round trip since its introduction in 1993, according to researchers at the independent Bespoke Investment Group. In short, the data suggests that US professional traders were caught up in an outright panic as the market declines in Japan spread to Europe and then to New York on Monday — but they pulled themselves together

quickly. Investors may not be so fortunate next time. One saving grace amid the stock market tumult was the performance of bonds. Fixed-income markets have not received much attention lately, but they have delivered excellent news. Unlike in 2022, when stocks and bonds fell simultaneously and investors found few places to hide, bond gains in recent days partly offset stock losses. While the S&P 500 fell 6.1 per cent in August through Monday in the worst of the downturn, an index tracking long-term US treasury bonds leaped more than 4 per cent. If you held high-quality bonds through this stretch and were well-diversified in your overall portfolio, the overall market action was probably not too painful. In 2022, as inflation rose, so did interest rates, hurting bond returns (when rates or yields rise, bond prices fall, as a matter of bond math). Now, with inflation abating and unemployment beginning to rise, bond yields have been dropping, perhaps in anticipation of an economic slowdown — and of interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve. The timing of the next recession is an issue that has confounded market strategists and economists for the last couple of years. Typically, stocks are pounded in recessions, while investment-grade bonds, and particularly US treasury, flourish because interest rates are most likely to fall in these periods, bolstering bond prices. A weak jobs report on August 2 revived dormant worries about a possible recession and raised expectations that the Federal Reserve would cut rates at policymakers’ next scheduled meeting in September. There were even bets that the Fed would rescue the markets in an emergency session. The market-based probability of a half-percentage-point rate cut by September leaped to 70 per cent by August 7, from 5 per cent in early July. And traders expect that by the end of the year the federal funds rate will drop at least 1 full percentage point from the current range of 5.25 per cent to 5.5 per cent. These expectations put pressure on the Fed to act. Otherwise, the markets could resume their painful downward gyrations. I’d simply say that one thing is clear: A recession is coming. You can count on it. — The New York Times

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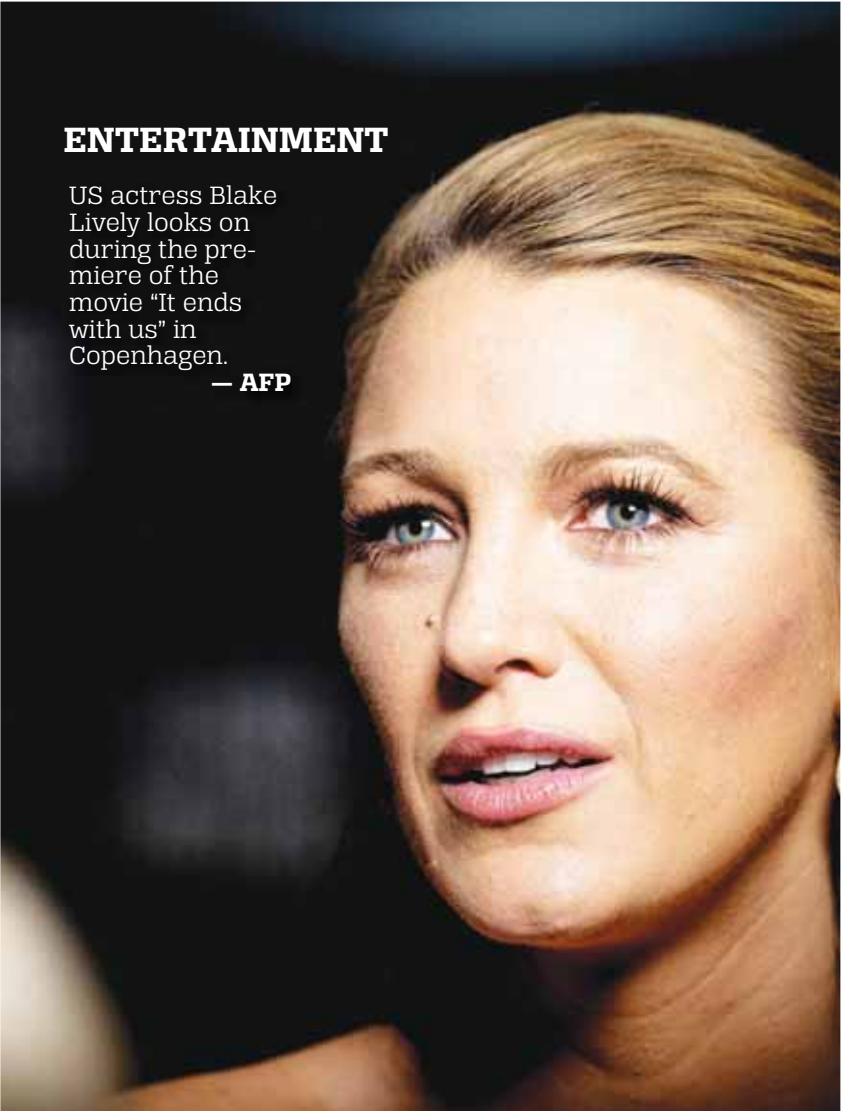
LIFESTYLE

A farmer dries harvested corn at a village in south-western China's Chongqing municipality. — AFP



FASHION

Models present creations during the Taraz Festival, aimed at promoting Armenian culture and, particularly, the national costume among Armenians and foreigners, in Yerevan. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

US actress Blake Lively looks on during the premiere of the movie "It ends with us" in Copenhagen. — AFP



CULTURE

An Osun priestess attend Arugba procession, which in Yoruba represents she who carries the calabash, to the sacred river during the Osun Osogbo festival in Osogbo, southwest Nigeria. — AFP



MUSIC

Australian bassist Michael Peter Balzary, also known as Flea, of the rock band Red Hot Chili Peppers performs during the Vieilles Charrues music festival in Carhaix-Plouguer, western France. — AFP

art & life

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DESCENDING AL SAYR WITH NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Has Oman been fully explored? Not yet. In this travel feature, the writer takes us on a daring expedition to abseil a 260-meter drop at Al Sayr. The team navigates rugged terrain, sets up complex gear, and captures breathtaking footage for the series Hidden Frontiers Arabia... P20

ENTERTAINMENT

Disney's D23 fan convention showcases 'Moana 2,' 'Avatar: Fire and Ice' and 'Incredibles 3' films

WALT DISNEY, WHICH reclaimed the top of the summer box office with Pixar animation's "Inside Out 2" and Marvel's raunchy "Deadpool & Wolverine," opened its D23 fan convention on Friday with a live performance from the anticipated animated film "Moana 2."

Dwayne Johnson, a featured star who was joined by Auli'i Cravahlo and Hawaiian dancers, told the 12,000 attendees that in reprising his role as Maui, he would once again be

singing, "in keys that don't exist."

The film reaches theatres on November 27.

Director James Cameron took the stage, along with "Avatar" stars Zoe Saldana and Sam Worthington, to show off art from the next sequel, and announce its title, "Avatar: Fire and Ash."

Pixar's chief creative officer, Pete Docter, announced a new "Inside Out" series based on main character Riley's dreams, "Dream Productions," that takes place between the first two movies and will premiere in 2025.

Docter also announced a new instalment of one of Pixar's biggest titles "The Incredibles," which is centred on a quirky superhero family and is getting a third film that will be directed by Brad Bird.

Disney said a slate of recorded live-Broadway musicals that will be arriving on Disney+, including the hit movie "Frozen." "We're really happy to announce that the hit musical (Frozen), which was filmed on stage, will premiere on Disney plus in 2025," said Jennifer Lee, Disney Animation's chief creative officer. Lee said the company is also developing a Broadway musical based on the film "The



Greatest Showman."

D23 shared an early look at the upcoming Disney+ series "Skeleton Crew," which is a coming of age science fiction "Star Wars" series created by Jon Watts and Christopher Ford.

Director Jon Favreau offered an early look at "The Mandalorian and Grogu," a big-screen adaptation of the Disney+ series due out in 2026.

Marvel reprised some of its greatest hits from last month's San Diego Comic-Con convention. It showcased the "Captain America Brave New World" and "Fantastic Four" films,

and the forthcoming Disney+ series, "Daredevil Born Again" and "IronHeart."

It also dropped a trailer for its upcoming horror series "Agatha All Along," based on the series "WandaVision" along with a haunting musical performance from the cast of witches in the series. The series includes original songs from the talent behind "Frozen" and "Coco."

"Percy Jackson," the series based on Greek mythology that follows its namesake protagonist demi-god, is returning for a second season called "Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters, after the original book title by author Rick Riordan.

The company touted the strength of its movies during an investor call this week, marking a return to form after losing its place as the highest-grossing Hollywood studio in 2023.

"It's never too late to have that big Hollywood comeback," said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for Comscore. "And they've certainly had that."

"Inside Out 2" is the highest grossing animated film of all time, with a global box office tally of \$1.6 billion, surpassing the record set by Disney's "Frozen II." A month later, "Deadpool & Wolverine" had the best domestic opening for an R-rated film and has

brought in more than \$850 million in global ticket sales.

"There is of course variability in the film business," wrote Deutsche Bank analyst Bryan Kraft in a note to investors. "But if Disney has found its box office magic once again, additional growth may be ahead, as a strong theatrical slate continues."

Disney CEO Bob Iger extolled the film studio's theatrical lineup over the next two years, which includes the animated sequel "Moana 2," a live-action version of "Disney's Snow White," a rebooting of the Marvel superhero franchise "The Fantastic Four: First Steps" and James Cameron's third "Avatar" movie.

"When you think about not only the potential of those in the box office, but the potential of those to drive global streaming value, there's a reason to be bullish about where we're headed," Iger said on the investor call.

The release of "Inside Out 2" helped generate more than 100 million views of the original film on Disney+, the company said.

Investors and fans are hoping for more details on Friday about future plans for the Marvel superhero studio. The company had to choose a new villain for future films. It also was forced to delay some titles because of strikes by Hollywood writers and actors last year. At last month's Comic-Con pop culture convention, Disney revealed that "Iron Man" actor Robert Downey Jr. will play the "Fantastic Four" villain, Doctor Doom. — Reuters

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MONTENEGRO'S ADRIATIC GEM STRUGGLES WITH TOURIST INFUX

A UNESCO World Heritage Site nestled on the edge of a picturesque Adriatic bay, the town of Kotor in Montenegro is struggling to cope with a surge in tourism that is clogging its narrow streets and raising environmental concerns.

Many visitors arrive on the hundreds of boats, yachts and cruise ships that dock daily in Kotor's harbour, leading some people to call for a hike in the 1-euro (\$1.09) fee that visitors from cruise ships are charged to enter the town.

The number of annual cruise ship arrivals has risen steadily over the past decade, with about 500 expected this year. On Wednesday alone, four cruise ships carrying about 5,000 tourists moored in the town, which featured in the 2006 James Bond film "Casino Royale".

While tourism contributes roughly a quarter of Montenegro's economic output, Kotor's 23,000 inhabitants are feeling the strain.

"Traffic jams are huge," said Doris Dajkovic, who works in a local souvenir shop.

A series of protests against excessive tourism has erupted in leading European destinations this year, including Venice in Italy, Barcelona in Spain and Santorini in Greece.

Local people say too many visitors drive up housing costs, pricing residents out of the market, and cause congestion and other environmental problems.

"The life of our neighbours is becoming increasingly difficult during the tourist season," said Jovan Ristic, director of the local tourist organisation, who backs an increase in the cruise ship visitor fee.

"All similar tourist destinations are working on reducing or selecting passenger ships and seriously collecting excursion fees," Ristic added.

In a world first, Venice introduced a 5-euro (\$5.44) charge in April for daytrippers arriving on particularly congested days, hoping the levy would deter some people from visiting.

LIFESTYLE

Jeweller's eye-popping watch is love letter to Albania

ALBANIAN JEWELLER PIRRO
Ruco laboured day and night for five years to capture the essence of his country in a spectacular luxury watch.

Now the timepiece, worth roughly \$1.4 million, is set to face off against the best watches from across the world at the Geneva Watchmaking Grand Prix in November.

Set under a sapphire dome, the hours are marked by 12 golden folk dancers — each in different regional dress — set on Murano glass, the minute and hour hands adorned with eagle talons in homage to Albania's national symbol.

Ruco's rollercoaster rise mirrors that of Albania, from poverty and isolation as the most closed communist regime in Europe, to rollicking capitalism.

Along the way the jeweller over-

He was questioned by intelligence agents and his workshop raided.

Down but not out, he was able to bounce back after crafting a ring bearing the image of the late husband of a member of the communist politburo and in July 1990 won a prize for a piece featuring Albania's 15th-century national hero Skanderberg.

But the very next day history intervened. The regime began to crumble and the collapse of Albania's communist rule in 1991 was followed by years of violent tumult as the country transitioned to a free-market economy.

Amid the ups and downs, Pirro stayed busy designing pieces for officials and celebrities.

During a trip to Basel in Switzerland in 2016, something new caught his eye.

"I wanted to make a watch. It was my new dream," he said.

For the next five years, Pirro said he focused on "doing something special, Albanian, and at the same time completely new and never before seen in the watch industry."

The new timepiece which he calls Primordial Passion was designed in collaboration with the Swiss watchmaker Agenhor.

"I never wanted to make jewellery, but art," the jeweller said.

"Sculptures, images of the country, pieces of culture... This watch is the culmination of all that, of this love for Albania," he added.

"It is more than just a watch. It combines the rich heritage of ancient Albanian culture with the notion of chronometry."

Pirro refuses to divulge the methods used to craft the watch, but remains hopeful the painstaking details will be recognised by the judges at the Grand Prix in Geneva.

Several collectors have already contacted him about buying the timepiece, he said, though it would be difficult to part with his creation.

"I set a price because I had to. But for me, it is priceless." — AFP

came jealousy, the secret police and being sent into internal exile to rise to the pinnacle of his profession.

It all began for Pirro — as he is known in his homeland — in 1985 when he was asked to make a medal in red and gold bearing the head of Enver Hoxha, the paranoid dictator who ruled the small Balkan nation with an iron fist for more than four decades.

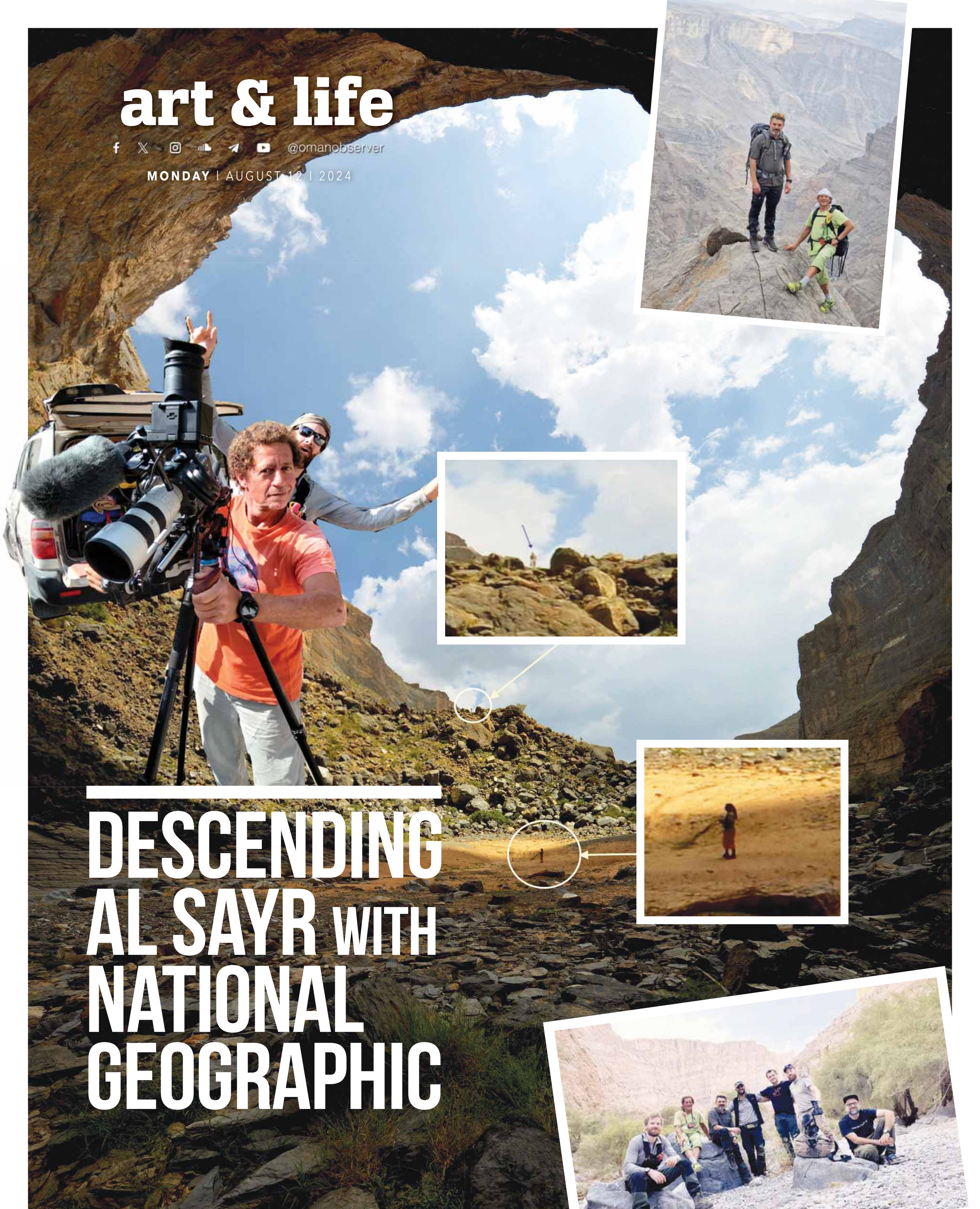
"That saved me," he said from his workshop tucked away in an alley in the capital Tirana.

The medals were awarded to the regime's most loyal supporters and later caught the eye of Hoxha's wife.

The turn of fortune saw thousands more produced and worn by communist cadres across Albania.

"All the congressional delegates had to wear it. I made a name for myself with it," he said. It also saved him from the textile mills where he had been sent because his family had been deemed "rebellious".

- 'PRICELESS' -
All this, however, was nearly derailed by an anonymous letter sent to authorities accusing Pirro of working with foreign agents.



DESCENDING AL SAYR WITH NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

DR KHALED ABDUL MALAK

In the summer of 2022, an incredible opportunity arose when adventurer and film-maker Reza Pakravan approached me to assist in producing a documentary series about Oman. The series, Hidden Frontiers Arabia, was slated to be broadcast on the Discovery Channel. I was thrilled by this unexpected opportunity. The series' director, Sam, first visited Oman to inspect and assess the sites I had proposed for inclusion in the documentary. Our first destination was a massive 260-metre free-fall drop called Al Sayr, which I had discovered years ago but never had the chance to abseil.

My initial exploration of the area was with my close friend, Khamis al Subhi, who hails from the small village of Maabit, nestled in the mountains between Tanuf and Qiyut, along with my son, Kevin. Wadi Maabit, a tributary of Wadi Al Hijri, is a main branch of Wadi Tanuf. I had previously visited this spot, reaching both the top and the base of the drop.

Early one Friday morning, we set out

with Sam, accompanied by my longtime friend and project partner, Justin Hall, to inspect the site. After a two-and-a-half-hour drive to the farm of Khamis' brother, where we parked our vehicle, we began a 45-minute hike to reach the top of the abseil. Sam was captivated by the area's scenery and decided to feature it in the documentary.

Over the following two days, we travelled to the Empty Quarter, where Sam intended to shoot another segment of the programme. Sam returned to Oman in January 2023 with a full crew, including Reza, to begin filming. Our adventure commenced the following day when we camped at Khamis' brother's farm. We planned to hike to the top of the drop and set up the abseiling ropes, enabling us to begin our descent early the next morning.

Equipped with 800 metres of rope and all the necessary gear, we spent seven hours setting up the anchors for the abseil. The team included Justin, Waldo (our safety and rope expert), Sam, Reza, and myself, while the rest of the crew were tasked with retrieving the ropes and driving down to Tanuf to meet us at Wadi Al Hijri.

After completing the setup, we hiked back to our camp and early, anticipating the long day ahead. As always, I found it difficult to sleep before embarking on a significant adventure.

We were all up by 7 am, ready to go after a hearty breakfast. Our backpacks were heavy, loaded with climbing gear, water, and provisions for the day. Jass, the drone operator, was prepared to capture the moment, and Reza was the first to abseil. He was visibly tense as he began his descent, but once he passed the edge of the cliff and disappeared from view, we monitored his progress on Jass's screen and communicated with him via radio.

Reza's descent went smoothly, and he reached the ground after about 30 minutes. When it was my turn, I felt relaxed, as I had experienced such significant drops. I had previously abseiled the 385-metre free drop at Jabal Shams, also known as Sheikh Al Majaneen, in 2010 with my "adopted son,"

Mihai Catrinari, and again in 2018 with Justin, Steve Backshall and Aldo Kane for the BBC series Expedition.

My descent was smooth, and I savoured the feeling of hanging in mid-air, hundreds of metres above the ground. I paused a few times to take photos, and I reached the ground safely after about 15 minutes. Justin followed, with Waldo being the last to abseil.

After a short break, we completed another 40-metre drop to reach the wadi bed. By the time we started our hike through the canyon, it was already 5:30 pm, and we had to navigate in the dark with our headlamps on. Progress was slow as we made our way between massive boulders, stopping occasionally to rehydrate and refuel.

It took us around six hours to reach the camp that the rest of the team had set up. They had been concerned, expecting us to arrive about two hours earlier.

This expedition was an extraordinary experience, one that will remain etched in my mind and heart forever.