

Omani passport gets stronger; visa-free travel to 86 nations

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has jumped seven places to 58th in the Henley Passport Index in first half of 2024, which is based on official data from International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Oman was ranked 65th in the 2023 rankings when its citizens could travel visa-free to 82 countries. This has now gone up to 86 destinations.

The index ranks all the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.

In the GCC, the UAE made it into the top ten for the first time, having added an impressive 152 destinations since the index's inception in 2006 to achieve its current visa-free score of 185, and rising a remarkable 53 places in the ranking from 62nd to ninth



position in the process.

Dr Juerg Steffen, CEO of Henley & Partners, said the country's meteoric ascent "is the result of concerted efforts by the Emirati government to position the UAE as a global hub for business, tourism and investment".

In the GCC, the UAE is followed by Qatar - ranked 46th with visa-free travel to 107 countries - Kuwait (49th and 99), Saudi Arabia (56th and 88) and Bahrain (57th and 87).

Singapore breaks away from the peloton of six countries that shared the top spot on the Henley Passport Index issued at the beginning of the year, reclaiming its title as the world's most powerful passport in the latest ranking published on July 23.

The city-state also sets a new record score, with its citizens

now enjoying access to 195 travel destinations out of 227 around the world visa-free.

France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Spain dropped to joint-second place, each with visa-free access to 192 destinations, and an unprecedented seven-nation cohort, each with access to 191 destinations without a prior visa. Austria, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, South Korea and Sweden now sit in third place on the ranking.

The UK hangs onto fourth place along with Belgium, Denmark, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland, despite its visa-free destination score falling to 190. The US, on the other hand, continues its now decade-long slide down the index, dropping down to eighth spot, with access to 186 destinations visa-free.

Afghanistan remains firmly entrenched as the world's weakest passport, losing access to yet another destination in the past six months, leaving its citizens with access to only 26 countries visa-free - the lowest score ever recorded in history of the 19-year-old index.

Commenting on the July 2024 edition of the *Henley Global Mobility Report*, Dr Christian H Kaelin, Chairman of Henley & Partners, said, "The general trend over the past two decades has been towards greater travel freedom, with the global average number of destinations travellers are able to access visa-free nearly doubling from 58 in 2006 to 111 in 2024. However, the global mobility gap between those at the top and bottom of the index is now wider than it has ever been, with top-ranked Singapore able to access a record-breaking 169 more destinations visa-free than Afghanistan."

Travel advisory for Bangladesh

Muscat - The Foreign Ministry of Oman has issued an advisory urging Omani citizens to avoid travel to the Republic of Bangladesh due to the security situation in the country.

In a statement released on social media, the ministry said, 'Due to the current security situation in Bangladesh, the ministry would like to draw the attention of Omani citizens that it is inappropriate to visit during this period.'

Omani citizens currently in Bangladesh are requested to contact the Embassy in Dhaka in the event of any emergency on +880 1811241175 or +880 1601188566.

Additionally, citizens are encouraged to register their presence in the country through the Foreign Ministry app, which can be downloaded from its official website.

The ministry is continuing to monitor the situation closely. It urged all citizens to stay updated through official channels for any further advisories.

Child casualties up 250% in West Bank since start of Israeli aggression

New York, USA - United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) has monitored a 250% increase in the number of children killed in the occupied West Bank since the start of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023.

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

Unicef reported that the first nine months of 2023 witnessed the death of

41 Palestinian children.

Additionally, more than 440 Palestinian children have been injured with live ammunition.

The figures raise serious alarm over unnecessary and excessive use of force against the most vulnerable, the agency added.

"For years now, children living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have been exposed to horrific violence," said Catherine Russell, Executive Director of Unicef. "The situation has deteriorated significantly, coinciding with the

escalation of hostilities inside Gaza. We are seeing frequent allegations of Palestinian children being detained on their way home from school, or shot while walking on the streets. The violence needs to stop now."

The casualties have been reported in ten out of 11 governorates in the West Bank, with more than half of the killings taking place in Jenin, Tulkarm and Nablus. These areas have seen an increase in large and militarised law enforcement operations over the past two years, indicating a shift in intensity and

09

Palestinians to form interim national government: China's top diplomat

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Musandam bolsters tourism initiatives

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat - Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in Musandam is implementing several initiatives to bolster its tourism industry, leveraging the governorate's rich heritage and cultural assets.

Musandam has offered several forts for private sector investment, besides developing archaeological sites into tourist destinations, and supporting the growth of private museums.

In 2023, Musandam's castles, forts and historical monuments attracted 25,009 visitors. In 2024, the number of visitors had already exceeded 23,500 by the end of June.

Maryam bint Ahmed al Shehhi, Head of Handicraft Heritage Section at the Heritage and Tourism Department in Musan-

dam, highlighted the appeal of the governorate's historical landmarks to both Arab and foreign visitors. These include Khasab Fort, Al Kamazara Fort, Bukha Fort and Dibba Fort, each with unique historical features.

Maryam noted that offering these forts - Khasab, Al Kamazara, Bukha and Dibba - for investment allows private entities to operate and innovate, creating job opportunities and enhancing the tourism experience. This initiative aligns with Oman's 10th Five-Year Plan, which prioritises developing heritage sites and cultural elements to foster sustainable investment and contribute to the national economy.

The ministry is working with local authorities to organise events for productive families, craftsmen, and small and



(Supplied photo)

medium enterprises, showcasing their products and promoting Omani crafts.

Bassam bin Mohammed al Kamzari, Head of Department of Antiquities and Museums at the Heritage and Tourism Department in Musandam, announced ongoing projects to transform archaeological sites into tourist destinations. Construction of the Dibba Archaeological Visitors Centre began earlier this year, funded by OQ Company and Musandam Governor's Office. Discovered in 2012, this site dates back to the 1st millennium BC and is one of Oman's most significant archaeological sites.

Kamzari explained that the site includes numerous tombs from the early Iron Age, and over 190 skeletons and various artefacts, including pottery, stone

and bronze vessels, and gold and bronze jewellery. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in cooperation with archaeological missions, is actively involved in excavation and construction efforts at the site.

Efforts are also underway to support private museums, providing modern or restored buildings to house rare artefacts. This ensures the preservation and display of these pieces while adding to Oman's public museum facilities. Specialists regularly visit private museums and archaeological sites to evaluate and support them, ensuring high-quality services for visitors.

These initiatives aim to create a diverse and engaging tourism experience in Musandam, fostering economic growth and preserving the region's rich cultural heritage.

Liva Insurance: A Pioneer In Workforce Development

In leading the way towards growth at Liva Insurance, fostering a robust and dedicated workforce is emphasized as crucial by Ms. Fathiya Al Hajri, Head of HR, who outlines key strategies and goals shaping the organization's path forward.

1. What are the practices in place for staff engagement and creating a healthy work atmosphere at Liva?

At Liva Insurance, we believe in keeping our team engaged and fostering a healthy work environment through numerous initiatives. For instance, we regularly offer training opportunities tailored to the specific skill sets our staff needs, ensuring everyone has a chance to grow and excel.

Gallup, an analytics and management consulting company that offers a global perspective on human resource development, presents strong evidence that decreasing the number of disengaged workers drives positive outcomes within their organizations. Low employee engagement reportedly - and rather worryingly - costs the global economy US\$8.9 trillion, which translates to 9 per cent of the global GDP.

Keeping that in mind, we have taken strong steps to fulfill our employee satisfaction goals. To imbibe a sense of team spirit and celebrate cultural diversity, we regularly organize activities that coincide with significant events during the Holy Month of Ramadan,



plan an effective employee upskilling for the workforce?

When it comes to upskilling our workforce, we take a thoughtful and thorough approach. We start by assessing the skill sets our company needs and identifying any gaps. From there, we design specific skill development strategies that outline the training and development needs.

Once we have a clear plan in place, we launch targeted training and skill development programs. The onus is then on us to ensure the delivery of these skills, so our employees are well-equipped to meet the evolving demands of our industry.

4. What are the strategies for talent acquisition and recruitment at Liva Insurance?

Our talent acquisition and recruitment strategies are designed to attract and retain the best talent. We have a robust Talent Acquisition Strategy in place, focusing on finding top candidates who fit our culture and needs.

We emphasize learning and development, investing in our employees' growth to help them reach their full potential. This commitment not only helps us retain our current staff but also makes us an attractive option for prospective employees. Additionally, our strong employer branding showcases our dedication to a positive work environment and employee development, making Liva a desirable place to work.

Advertorial

Eid, National Day, Women's Day, and World Cancer Awareness Month, among many others.

We also arrange quarterly team lunches, complete with fun activities, to help bring everyone closer together. Alongside that, we encourage our employees to volunteer for societal causes, adding a sense of purpose and community to our workplace.

This comes from our understanding that employee engagement extends beyond employees; it significantly impacts customers as well. The way employees feel about their employer is evident in their interactions, influencing the entire transaction process. These members are more likely to go above and beyond to ensure that customers have a positive experience.

2. What are Liva Insurance's strategies for staff retention?

We recently came across a perturbing statistic that nearly 20 per cent of the world's employees experience daily loneliness. To offset this, we have outlined strategies to keep our team members happy and committed. At Liva, we offer flexible working hours and the option to work from home, making it easier for our staff to balance work and personal life.

For critical team members, we provide a retention bonus to ensure they stay with us. Our yearly appraisals come with increments and bonuses for eligible staff, and we consistently recognize and promote our outstanding employees.

Beyond that, if someone is looking for a change, we offer the option for transfers or skillset changes, giving our team members the chance to explore new roles within the company.

3. How does Liva Insurance

Sharqiyah Expressway project Phase 2 begins

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has initiated the second part of Phase 2 of the Sharqiyah Expressway project.

This section extends from Al Kamil w'al Wafi to Sur and is being executed by Al Tasnim Projects LLC. The project connects the wilayats of North Sharqiyah and South Sharqiyah governorates.

Costing over RO68mn, the project includes several stages. It involves upgrading the current road to a dual carriageway with three lanes, covering approximately 52km from Al Kamil to Sur. Additionally, the 3km road from Sur roundabout to Sur Plaza Hotel will be upgraded to a dual carriageway with two lanes.

Key components of the project include construction of an overpass, several wadi crossing bridges and overpasses, tunnels and pedestrian underpasses.



Lighting works and installation of traffic signals in Sur will also be completed as part of the project.

This vital infrastructure work aims to facilitate traffic and improve road connectivity between North Sharqiyah and South Sharqiyah, thereby enhancing economic and social development. The project is expected to take about 22 months to complete.

Significantly, the project will also involve converting the Bilad Sur roundabout into a signal intersection and installing lighting along a 3km stretch of the road in Sur.

Workshop held to boost trade through Omani ports

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A workshop titled 'Boosting Exports and Imports Through Omani Ports' was held in Muscat on Tuesday with the aim of attracting investments and enhancing trade activities.

The event marks the first in the third phase of workshops and clinics organised by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

Organised in collaboration with National Economic Diversification Programme and Oman Logistics Association, with participation of Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Directorate General of Customs of Royal Oman Police, and Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, the workshop sought to develop a unified vision for targeting new global markets.

Key objectives included exploring opportunities, monitoring challenges in imports and exports, simplifying procedures, enhancing governance, and improving the efficiency of the import and export system. The workshop also focused on overcoming obstacles faced by Omani exports and imports.

Visual Participants made presentations detailing its role in promoting trade, discussed challenges related to direct imports and exports, facilitated exchange of experiences and best practices, and proposed new initiatives. It also set targets for the next five years and reviewed import and export policies.

The workshop featured several specialised clinics, including one to identify challenges and proposals from companies.

BIDS INVITED

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

Instructions to Bidders:

RFQ Collection Deadline: 22nd July 2024, 5:00 PM

Proposal Submission Deadline:

29th July 2024, 5:00 PM

Requests for RFQ documents and clarifications must be sent via email to: drsolution@muscatdutyfree.com

MoHERI announces 32,625 seats for higher education

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) has announced a total of 32,625 study seats for the academic year 2024-25.

These seats include placements in government higher education institutions, internal scholarships, private sector grants, and external scholarships from partner countries.

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Azri, Director General of the Unified Admission Center at MoHERI, said that of the total available seats, the lion's share has come from government institutions, opening 20,449 seats up for grab. Another 11,573 seats would be filled through internal scholarships and grants in private institutions, and 603 through external missions and grants.

Azri highlighted the variety of programmes and specialisations including health sciences, natural and physical sciences, agriculture, engineering, IT, education,



Special provisions have also been made for students with disabilities in institutions within Oman and abroad

AHMED AL AZRI



business, culture, arts, and philosophy, which come under the current allocation of seats.

New programmes introduced in private institutions this year cover fields such as artificial intelligence, sustainable systems engineering, cybersecurity, emergency medical services, visual communication design, port management, sustainable shipping, and business administration with focuses on international business and e-business.

The stage for modifying preferences will begin on Wednesday and end on August 4 (Sunday) at 2.30pm. This period allows General Education Diploma students to finalise their registration based on their academic results and the centre's expected acceptance outcomes.

An appendix to the student

guide for the academic year 2024-25 will be released soon, Azri said, confirming that the guide would detail new developments and important information. "Students are advised to review this guide carefully and verify their basic data and grades upon entering the unified admission system," he added.

The MoHERI admission centre will announce the names of

candidates for admission tests, interviews, and medical examinations on August 8, with tests scheduled from August 11 to 15. The results of the first selection will be announced on August 20. Accepted students can complete their registration procedures between August 21 and 27, with the second selection phase announced on November 1.

Azri noted that 2,611 students did not receive a study offer due to limited programme choices. He encouraged these students to use the modifying preferences stage to increase their options and improve their chances of securing a study seat.

Additionally, 1,000 study seats have been allocated for flexible programmes within internal scholarships. Students can choose their preferred private higher education institution and specialisation directly through the unified admission system.

Special provisions have also been made for students with disabilities in institutions within Oman and abroad, he added.

Agricultural growth in North Sharqiyah boosts food security

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Agricultural production in North Sharqiyah governorate has seen significant growth over the past three years, with the total production reaching 250,000 tonnes.



This was disclosed by Dr Abdul Aziz bin Ali al Mashaikhi, Director General of Agriculture and Water Resources in North Sharqiyah, as he highlighted the governorate's achievements during the period.

The areas dedicated to fruit crops in the governorate increased by 2.3%, covering almost 285 hectares of land with 4,238 tonnes of yields.

The area under date palm cultivation grew by 1.3%. The total land area under this is now over 3,000 hectares with production of 54,188 tonnes of dates.

North Sharqiyah ranks fourth in date production among all governorates, contributing 14% of the national total. The number of palm trees in the governorate stands at 940,490.

majority of 21 have been proposed for the agricultural sector covering over 127 hectares. Ten of those 21 opportunities have been chosen for grape cultivation in Ibra on 20 hectares of land and six in Bidya for growing legumes on 40 hectares of land.

The Badran scheme in Al Mudhaibi offered four opportunities, including two for growing legumes on 40 hectares and two for growing onions using modern technologies, also on 40 hectares. Additionally, an area of 4 hectares has been designated for vegetable cultivation in greenhouses and open fields in Ibra.

Modern technologies and greenhouses have been extensively used to maximise crop production during the past few years. The governorate now hosts 2,008 greenhouses and 21 agricultural nurseries. Over the past three years, close to 100 hectares of land has come under model farms, Dr Mashaikhi informed.

The governorate is second in producing Basour (Mabsali) dates, with a production of 8,694 tonnes and 129,540 Mabsali palm trees. Mashaikhi emphasised the rapid growth in enhancing food security and agriculture's contribution to the national economy.

The governorate is offering investment opportunities, with a proposal to employ modern technologies and greenhouses to boost production.

Dr Mashaikhi said that North Sharqiyah presented 27 investment opportunities this year, a

MoH signs agreement to expand blood bank services in Bausher

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Tuesday signed a funding agreement to support the expansion of the Department of Blood Banks Services in Bausher.

The agreement was finalised with the project's financiers, represented by the heirs of the late

Mohammed Jumaa al Lawati. Dr Badriya Mohsen al Rashidi, Director General of Health Services and Programmes, from the Ministry of Health and Ali Mohammed al Lawati, acting as the legal representative of the heirs, signed the agreement.

The expansion aims to enhance the quality and efficiency



of health services, increase the number of beneficiaries, and improve the operational capacity of the Department of Blood Banks Services in Bausher.

The new facility will feature a two-storey building with a large reception hall for blood donors, electronic registration, facilities for haemoglobin examination and platelet donations, two

waiting areas, a meeting hall, additional workspaces, and advanced technological services.

The initiative addresses the growing demand for services provided by the Blood Banks Services Department.

Construction is expected to begin in November and will take approximately 18 months to complete.



Oman Across the Ages Museum begins student camp for startup ideas

Muscat - The Oman Across the Ages Museum, in collaboration with the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development and the Career Guidance and Student Counseling Center, has launched a five-day startup ideas camp for school students.

The camp, which began on Tuesday, aims to empower 50 students with entrepreneurial skills and innovative thinking.

The camp focuses on fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and startup development among young participants. It emphasises the importance of creative and innovative thinking, particularly in the use of artificial intelligence technologies in business ventures.

Students will receive training on essential skills and knowledge to build their own projects. They will be guided and supported by experts and successful entrepreneurs in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation.

This initiative is part of broader efforts to develop the capabilities of young people and enable them to contribute effectively to building a prosperous economic future.

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Muscat Private Hospital Pioneers First Augmentation of Vocal Cord Paralysis Procedure in Oman's Private Healthcare Sector

Muscat Private Hospital proudly announces the successful completion of the first Augmentation of Vocal Cord Paralysis procedure within the private healthcare sector in Oman. This groundbreaking achievement reflects the hospital's commitment to pioneering medical advancements and delivering top-notch patient care.

Vocal cord paralysis, a condition characterized by a weak voice due to the immobility of one of the vocal cords, has found a remarkable solution through the expertise of Muscat Private Hospital's medical team. Dr. Shaden Al Riyami, Consultant in ENT surgery and phono surgery, led the innovative procedure that brought

relief to a 7-year-old Omani woman suffering from this condition. Dr. Shaden's expertise in vocal cord surgeries has paved the way for a successful augmentation of the paralyzed vocal cord, significantly improving the patient's voice and breathing.

This revolutionary procedure marks a pivotal moment

in Oman's medical landscape, showcasing Muscat Private Hospital's dedication to adopting cutting-edge medical techniques. Dr. Shaden's meticulous approach ensured the smooth execution of the augmentation, highlighting the hospital's state-of-the-art facilities and the medical team's exceptional skill.

As Oman's premier private healthcare institution, Muscat Private Hospital continues to lead in advanced medical procedures, transforming lives and shaping the future of healthcare in the country. This successful augmentation of vocal cord paralysis serves as a beacon of progress and a promise of enhanced quality of life for patients.

Adventorial

MARKET WATCH

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Philippines	151.93
Sri Lanka	788.84

*Rates as on July 23

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Oil prices rise on expectations of Fed rate cut

Oil prices increased on Tuesday following growing rate cut signals from the US Federal Reserve and moderate investor profit-taking while global demand uncertainties and cease-fire attempts in Middle East limit price rises.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$82.48 per barrel in morning trade in London, an increase of 0.10% from the closing price of \$82.40 per barrel in the previous trading session.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$78.52 per barrel at the same time, a 0.15% rise from the previous session that closed at \$78.40 per barrel.

Analysts expect the US Federal Reserve to cut interest rates three times by the end of the year, according to the pricing for the future policies of the bank.

Meanwhile, the signals received from the latest data point to a cooling in the labour market as one of the factors that reduce the risk perception on the grounds that it opens up space for the Fed's expansionary policy steps.

Shell picks KBR tech for Duqm project

Our Correspondent

Muscat

KBR, a US-based technology firm, announced that its blue ammonia technology has been selected by Shell for its Blue Horizons low-carbon hydrogen and ammonia project in Duqm.

The facility will utilise KBR's leading ammonia synthesis loop technology to deliver cost-competitive and low-carbon intensity ammonia, KBR said in a press statement.

Under the terms of the contract, KBR will provide licensed



Photograph for illustrative purpose only

KBR will provide licensed proprietary engineering design for the 3,000 metric tonnes per day ammonia plant utilising hydrogen produced by Shell's Blue Hydrogen technology

proprietary engineering design for the 3,000 metric tonnes per day ammonia plant utilising hydrogen produced by Shell's Blue Hydrogen technology.

"We are excited to work with Shell on this breakthrough project in Oman and contribute towards achieving Oman's Vision 2040 targets," said Jay Ibrahim, President, KBR Sustainable Technology Solutions.

"Our blue ammonia technology allows our clients to implement their energy transition projects with a cost-competitive solution at the lowest carbon intensity," he added.

KBR is a world leader in ammonia technology and has been at the forefront of innovation in the ammonia market for decades. The company delivers science, technology and engineering solutions to governments and companies around the world.

Oman Shell is the developer of the proposed project in Duqm which aims to supply blue (low carbon) hydrogen and ammonia to local and international markets enabled by capturing and storing the carbon dioxide (CO2) associated with the production process.

ESCWA, QDB sign MoU on hosting third Arab SMEs Summit

Doha, Qatar – As an endeavour to further support and promote small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Arab region, Qatar Development Bank (QDB) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on hosting the third Arab SMEs Summit.

The regional event will be held in partnership with "Rowad Entrepreneurship Conference 2024", under the slogan "Navigating Digital Horizons", from November 17 to 19 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC) in Qatar.

The Arab SMEs Summit is an important interactive space for women and men entrepreneurs from the Arab region. Participants discover the

About 1,300 participants from across the Arab region are expected to take part in the Arab SMEs Summit in Doha

Amman and Marrakesh, hosts of the previous two editions," said QDB Chief Executive Officer Abdulrahman Hesham al Sowaidi.

About 1,300 participants from across the region and sectors are expected to take part in the summit, to be source of inspiration and motivation. Sessions will involve decision makers and policymakers who will discuss empowering SMEs and improving the entrepreneurship environment in Arab region to support sustainable development.

Discussions will also focus on opportunities and challenges imposed by the digital era, including digital business transformation, technological innovation, and regional cooperation to strengthen the digital economy.



Indian, Omani firms seek to boost trade in food sector

Our Correspondent

Muscat

The Embassy of India in Muscat organised an India-Oman Business-to-Business (B2B) Meet at the Sheraton Oman Hotel on Monday.

The event saw the participation of 27 Indian companies from the agriculture and food sectors, led by Dr Sudhanshu, Secretary of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA). More than 30 Omani companies also participated at the event.

The meeting facilitated direct interactions between Indian exporters and Omani importers, focusing on sectors where India excels, such as rice, poultry, and agricultural products.

The event was honored by the presence of Dr Masoud bin Sulaiman al Azri, Director General of Agricultural and Fisheries Marketing, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources; Eng Hussain Hassan Ali Abdulhusin, Member of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Redha Juma al Saleh, Member of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and Lubna al Harthi, Director of Export Development, Ministry of Commerce and Investment Promotion as Guests of Honor.

H E Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to Oman, addressed the gathering, noting that "India's agricultural exports are rapidly expanding, making the country an important contributor to the global food basket and showcasing the tremendous potential to enhance India-Oman trade relations."

A comprehensive Market Study Report on the food, agriculture, and marine sectors, highlighting key opportunities and strategies for enhancing trade between India and Oman, was launched by the Ambassador and the esteemed guests of honour.

Additionally, the delegation visited the Indian embassy on Monday and interacted with the ambassador. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the potential for future collaboration and strengthen existing trade relations between the two countries.

India, recognised as a global leader in agriculture and food production, offers a diverse and extensive range of products. The country's advancements in these sectors are driven by its rich agricultural heritage, innovative practices, and commitment to quality.

The visit of the Indian delegation to Oman provided an excellent platform for showcasing India's capabilities and exploring new business opportunities with Omani counterparts.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR
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Services of Health Insurance Companies are solicited for health insurance of
Employees of Pakistan International Airlines FY 2024-25

Pakistan International Airlines in Muscat, Oman, invites proposals from reputable Health Insurance Companies for provision of Health Coverage Services for employees of Pakistan International Airlines and their dependents for up to 25 persons.

Complete proposals for Group Health Insurance directly or through brokers, should reach before 10 am August 20, 2024, on the below mentioned address. Bids shall be opened on the same day at 11 am at PIA Country Manager's Office. This RFP is also available on PIA and Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) websites www.piac.com.pk & www.ppra.org.pk

Country Manager – Oman
Pakistan International Airlines,
Bldg. 54, Block 127, Way no.2726
P.O. Box. 1335 Ruwi, PC 112, Muscat, Sultanate of OMAN, Tel: 968 - 24792471
Email address: mctuupk@piac.aero & mctabpk@piac.aero



Pakistan International Airlines reserves the right of
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BIDS INVITED

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

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

Requests for RFQ documents and clarifications must be sent via email to: warehousetender@muscatdutyfree.com

'Insurers can withstand loss from IT outage'

Muscat – Insurers could withstand preliminary loss estimates from the recent software incident at US-based cybersecurity provider CrowdStrike, Fitch Ratings said Monday.

"The recent cybersecurity software incident at CrowdStrike is unlikely to have a material impact on global (re)insurer financial results," Fitch said in a statement.

Fitch said several mechanisms will limit insured losses, including lack of insurance coverage.

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INDIA BUDGET 2024

INDIA HIKE SPENDING FOR KEY SECTORS, SCHEMES

In terms of sector-specific allocations, defence receives the highest allocation at ₹4.547tn. Rural development is allocated ₹2.658tn, reflecting the government's focus on boosting rural economies

New Delhi, India - India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the country's Union Budget 2024-25 on Tuesday, outlining a detailed financial roadmap aimed at driving economic growth and ensuring fiscal stability. The budget reveals a comprehensive picture of government revenues and expenditures, highlighting increased fund allocations to key sectors and schemes.

The revenue to the government is generated from multiple sectors. Income tax contributes 19%, borrowings and liabilities stand as the largest source at 27%, and goods and services tax (GST) along with other taxes accounts for 18%. Corporation taxes contribute 17%, followed by non-tax receipts at 9%, customs at 4%, excise duty at 5%, and non-debt capital receipts at 1%.

On the expenditure side, the budget outlines significant allocations to various public sectors. Interest payments consume 19% of the total expenditure, central sector schemes account for 16%, and states' tax devolution takes up 21%. Subsidies represent 6% of the spending, while defence expenditures stand at 8%. The Fi-



India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman shows the Budget tablet at the Ministry of Finance before heading to the Parliament to present the Union Budget 2024-25, in New Delhi on Tuesday

nance Commission and other transfers take up 9%, centrally sponsored schemes another 8%, pensions 4%, and other expenses 9%.

In terms of sector-specific al-

locations, defence receives the highest allocation at ₹4.547tn. Rural development is allocated ₹2.658tn, reflecting the government's focus on boosting rural economies.

Agriculture is set to receive ₹1.518tn, while home affairs are allocated ₹1.509tn, underscoring the importance of internal security.

Education, a criti-

cal sector for future growth, is allocated ₹1.256tn. The IT and telecom sector, pivotal for digital transformation, receives ₹1.163tn.

Health is allocated

The budget outlines significant allocations to various public sectors. Interest payments consume 19% of the total spending, central sector schemes account for 16%, and states' tax devolution takes up 21%

₹892.8bn, emphasising the ongoing commitment to improving healthcare infrastructure.

The energy sector is earmarked ₹687.69bn, social welfare ₹565.01bn, and commerce and industry ₹475.59bn.

The budget also highlights significant increases in allocations to major schemes. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) sees an increase from ₹600bn in fiscal year 2023-24 to ₹860bn in 2024-25, aimed at enhancing rural employment.

ANI

CAPEX TARGET KEPT UNCHANGED AT ₹11.11TN

The Indian government kept the capital expenditure (capex) outlay at ₹11.11tn for 2024-25, as was announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her interim budget, ahead of the General elections. A capital expenditure, or capex, is used to set up long-term physical or fixed assets.

"Significant investment the Central Government has made over the years in building and improving infrastructure has had a strong multiplier effect on the economy," Nirmala Sitharaman said in her budget speech, outlining the priority of her government on infrastructure.

"This year, I have provided ₹11.11tn for capital expenditure. This would be 3.4% of our GDP," she added.

Last year 2023-24, which was the last full Budget under the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's second term, the government proposed to increase capital expenditure outlay by 33% to ₹10tn, estimated to be 3.3% of the GDP. In 2024-25, it is an 11.11% raise in capex.

The substantial increase in capex is central to the government's efforts to enhance growth potential and job creation, crowd in private investments and provide a cushion against global headwinds.

FISCAL DEFICIT TARGET REDUCED TO 4.9%



Presenting the Union Budget for 2024-25, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday pegged the fiscal deficit target at 4.9% of gross domestic product (GDP). In the Interim Budget tabled on February 1, she had pegged it at 5.1% of GDP.

In 2023-24, the Indian government pegged the fiscal deficit target for 2023-24 at 5.9% of gross domestic product (GDP). Later, the fiscal deficit for 2023-24 was downwardly revised to 5.8%.

The government intends to bring the fiscal deficit below 4.5% of GDP by the financial year 2025-26.



Shareholders and brokers monitoring the data during the Union Budget 2024-25 presentation at a Share Market in Kolkata on Tuesday (ANI)

TAX SLABS HIKE FOR PERSONAL INCOME TAX

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has given some relief to taxpayers by hiking tax slabs for personal income tax. The new tax slab will now have nil tax up to an income of ₹300,000, like the previous year.

But now income between ₹300,000-700,000 will attract a tax rate of 5%, earlier 5% tax was applied on income of

between ₹300,000-600,000. Income of between ₹700,000-1000,000 will now be taxed at

10% earlier it was for income of between ₹600,000-900,000. Income between

₹1000,000-1,200,000 will now be taxed at 15%, earlier it was for income between ₹900,000-1,200,000. ax on income between

₹1,200,000-1,500,000 will remain same at 20% and income above ₹1,500,000 will also remain constant at 30%.

The finance minister has also given relief on standard deduction which has been hiked from ₹50,000 currently to ₹75,000 now. Deduction from family pension of ₹15,000 is increased to ₹25,000 under the new tax regime.

TAX RATES ON CAPITAL GAINS RAISED WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT

In what may come as somewhat of a dampener for stock market investors, India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as part of her budget speech on Tuesday announced an increase in both long-term and short-term capital gains tax.

As per the definition, any profit or gain that arises from the sale of a 'capital asset' is a capital gain. Sitharaman announced that short-term capital gains on "specified" financial assets will henceforth attract a tax rate of 20% instead of 15%. While all other financial assets and non-financial assets shall continue to attract the "applicable tax rate". Long-term gains on all financial

and non-financial assets will attract a tax rate of 12.5% instead of 10.0%.

On the positive side, for the benefit of the lower and middle-income classes, it was proposed to increase the limit of exemption of capital gains on certain listed financial assets from ₹100,000 to ₹125,000 per year.

Listed financial assets held for more than a year is classified as long-term, while unlisted financial assets and all non-financial assets will have to be held for at least two years to be classified as long-term.

Microsoft says EU to blame for the world's worst IT outage

Microsoft says the European Union is to blame for the world's biggest IT outage on Friday following a faulty security update.

A 2009 agreement insisted on by the European Commission meant that Microsoft could not make security changes that would have blocked the update from cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike that caused an estimated 8.5mn computers to fail, the Big Tech giant said in comments to the Wall Street Journal newspaper.

Thousands of flights were delayed or cancelled, leaving passengers stranded at airports worldwide, the UK's NHS service was affected and contactless payments failed to work.

The problem was triggered by a defective update for CrowdStrike's Falcon system which was designed to prevent cyberattacks. It has privileged access to a key part of a computer known as the kernel.

Microsoft has Windows Defender, its in-house alternative to



CrowdStrike, but because of the 2009 agreement made to avoid a European competition investigation, had allowed multiple security providers to install software at the kernel level.

Apple in EU's sights over competition rules

The European Commission had been accusing Microsoft since the early 2000s of having an unfair advantage over other companies because of its popular Windows software.

Microsoft's main competitor, Apple, in 2020 blocked access to the kernel on its Mac computers, arguing it would improve security and reliability.

Speaking to the Wall Street Journal, a Microsoft spokesman said the company could not make a similar change because of the EU agreement.

Up to 8.5mn Windows devices were affected by the outage, Microsoft confirmed, saying it was less than 1% of all machines using the software. How-

ever, it said, there had been major impacts because CrowdStrike is widely used by businesses.

CrowdStrike has said "a significant number" of the affected computers are back online and has apologised for what happened.

Under its new Digital Markets Act, Europe is currently trying to force Apple to give access to its iPhone to allow alternative app stores and web browsers to be used.

(Source: Euronews.com)

'Summer sensations' with Kia Seltos SUV

Kia Oman is thrilled to present SUV enthusiasts with an exclusive, limited-time 'Summer Sensations' offer to purchase a Seltos. This was declared by the company in a release, inviting people to go for the new SUV with free insurance for the first-year, besides free registration.

There are also 'assured scratch-and-win coupons for an opportunity to win gold coins, iPhone 15s, or service upgrades up to 200,000km/20 years, Kia Oman added.

Moreover, the owner of a new Seltos SUV can also participate in the raffle draw to bag the opportunity to win a dream holiday in Singapore.

The group is encouraging SUV lovers to upgrade to a bold Kia Seltos SUV featuring modern aesthetics, exceptional safety, and a spacious cabin to groove into your everyday lifestyle. 'Kia's hottest-selling power-packed sub-compact SUV, the Seltos, complements family and a busy corporate lifestyle,' it asserted.

Making its way up the SUV lineup, it exudes confidence on the roads with its eye-catching exterior, exhilarating performance, and high-tech features catering to all segments, whether young or old.

"It's the holiday season so relish the summer fun with Kia. The Seltos is a powerhouse of innovations and technology, coupled with Kia's promise to deliver the best-in-class SUV," a representative from KIA Oman commented.



"It's a win-win season; walk into your nearest Kia showroom with a valid driving licence to participate in the raffle draw and win an all-inclusive Singapore holiday for a family of four," he further said.

"Double up on savings with first-year free insurance cover-

age, a registration fee waiver, and 30,000km/3 years of service benefits offered on purchase. All customers are eligible for an assured scratch-and-win coupon to win the latest iPhone 15 256 GB or hit a jackpot with 24k 10 grams of gold coins or upgraded service benefit up to

200,000km/20 years," the team at Kia Oman highlighted.

Exploring the Seltos, it features a robust 1.5L engine producing 113 hp at 6,300 rpm paired to a VVT transmission. Conclusively, the SUV delivers exceptional performance and an impressive fuel efficiency of 17

KMC/litre, increasing your savings and contributing towards a greener future.

The 18,000mm x 4385mm wheelbase and 17-inch alloy wheels create a firm grip, making it ideal for longer drives. Delve into the luxurious comfort of roomy legroom, wider

headspace, and ventilated front-row seats.

Enjoy seamless connectivity with the wireless charging tray and an 8-inch audio display with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto integration. Lighten the inside mood with custom ambient lighting and power up your de-

vices with USB ports spread across. Enjoy the spacious comfort and increased luggage capacity in the boot as you set off for your next adventure.

Cruise the narrow city landscape or navigate wider terrains with its advanced safety and tech features made considering today's passenger needs. The five-seater is augmented with Auto AC & ventilated Seats, cruise control, manual speed limit assist (MSLA), electronic parking brake, Parking Distance Warning (PDW), rear-view monitor, and front and back sensors. Kia's attentiveness towards life-saving driver-assist technologies for enhancing the driving experience helps achieve peace of mind.

Visit your nearest Kia showroom to get a first-hand experience with the Seltos and join the Kia family. Grab the coolest gadgets, hassle-free car service packages and incredible prizes before the Summer Sensations campaign ends on July 25. The Kia team eagerly anticipates your arrival to support and enhance your Kia ownership experience.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), Kia's distributor in Oman, ensures a rewarding ownership experience with excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities.

Recognised globally, RIA has received prestigious accolades, including the 'Good Partnership' award, the 'Family Like Care' Service Award, and the 'Kia Distributor of Distinction' award.



Kalyan Jewellers launches campaign to gift 25 gold bars

Kalyan Jewellers, one of the most trusted and leading jewellery brands has recently announced the launch of its '25 Gold Bars' Giveaway offer, wherein 25 patrons stand a chance to take home a 10gm gold bar, on their jewellery purchases from Kalyan Jewellers.

With this unique offer, Kalyan Jewellers aims to celebrate the season in a distinctive manner. The offer can be availed till August 30 across all their showrooms in Oman.

As part of this campaign, customers are entitled to receive 1 raffle coupon on purchase of gold jewellery worth RO50 and above, whereas patrons will receive 2 raffle coupons on purchase of diamond jewellery worth RO50 and above.

Speaking on the campaign, Ramesh Kalyanaraman, executive director - Kalyan Jewellers - said, "At Kalyan Jewellers, we have been taking consistent steps towards creating a holistic ecosystem while catering to the distinct needs of our customers, enhancing their shopping experience. Through this special offer, we aim to provide our patrons with exceptional benefits on their jewellery purchases. We are confident that our customers in the region will continue to show their love and support for the Kalyan Jewellers brand."

All their showrooms stock

Kalyan's popular house brands, including Muhurat (Wedding Jewellery Line), Mudhra (Handcrafted Antique Jewellery), Nimah (Temple Jewellery), Glo (Dancing Diamonds), Ziah (Solitaire-like Diamond Jewellery), Anokhi (Uncut Diamonds), Hera (Daily Wear Diamonds), Rang (Precious Stones Jewellery), and the recently launched Lila (Coloured Stones and Diamond Jewellery).

With this offer, Kalyan Jewellers aims to celebrate the season in a distinctive manner

Headquartered in Kerala, India, Kalyan Jewellers is one the largest jewellery retailers in India with a presence in the Middle East. The company has enjoyed a long-standing presence in the Indian market for nearly three decades and has set industry benchmarks in quality, transparency, pricing and innovation.

Kalyan offers an array of traditional and contemporary jewellery designs in gold, diamonds and precious stones catering to the distinct needs of the customers. Kalyan Jewellers has over 270 showrooms across India and the Middle East.

Dhofar Islamic unveils travel financing

Dhofar Islamic, the Islamic window of BankDhofar, has highlighted the increasing popularity of its Travel Finance products, which have been tailored to fulfil the needs of customers seeking sharia'a-compliant travel solutions.

Elaborating on the product, Amor Said al Amri - DGM & Head of Retail Banking - Dhofar Islamic - said that the Dhofar Islamic offers to finance all costs of travelling, including transportation and accommodation. The facility also covers tourism packages in addition to hajj and umrah packages with all the services offered by travel agents.

"Similarly, those who are travelling for health tourism, which are packaged through travel agencies, can also avail this facility," Amri added.

Dhofar Islamic's Travel Finance product gives customers the flexibility to avail better packages and destinations as well as the capability to take extended family members for the trip.

It also provides a boost to the tourism sector as it opens the



Financing includes travel tickets, car rental, transportation expenses, accommodation, trips, etc

doors for avid travellers to explore exciting domestic and international destinations. As the leading Islamic banking services

provider in the Sultanate of Oman, Dhofar Islamic is committed to cater to the evolving needs and requirements of its re-

tail and corporate customers by expanding its diverse array of customised sharia'a-compliant products and services.

"This product has been developed to add more convenience to our customers and help them finance their travel costs in a sharia'a compliant manner. It is

based on the Islamic financial contract of Service Ijarah where Dhofar Islamic purchases the services and leases them to customers. The product is available for Omani nationals and expatriates with valid residence visa. It is a very easy and convenient facility which comes with fast approval, simple process and flexible financing period of up to three years," he said.

The Travel Finance facility adds to the wide range of Islamic financial solutions, innovative products and best-in-class services that Dhofar Islamic offers to cater to the needs of its retail and corporate customers. These solutions include: Credit card, home finance, auto finance, goods finance, education finance, savings account, current account, Savings Plan, Ameen term deposit, etc.

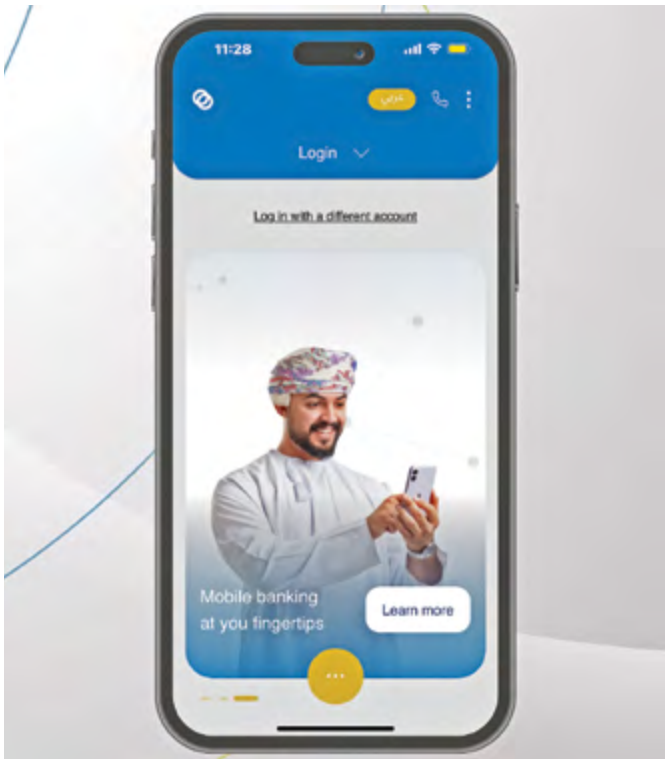
As part of its strategic plan, Dhofar Islamic continues to distinguish itself by focusing on providing prominent customer service, developing and launching new products, as well as investing in technology.

ahlibank's app set to enhance customers' experience

As part of its ongoing efforts to lead digital transformation in the Sultanate of Oman, ahlibank aims to improve operations and drive innovation with advanced technologies that enhance customer experiences.

By using unique digital solutions, ahlibank has revamped its mobile banking application with added new features, exceeding traditional banking standards and offering an impressive range of products and services.

Whether at home, at work, or on the go, ahlibank's user-friendly mobile banking app makes it easy and hassle-free to manage finances efficiently and effectively. Through the new and enhanced app, customers can now schedule branch appointments, keep track of their finances with the personal finance manager, and



make quick transfers using the 'send again' feature to make repeat transfers quickly and easily. Moreover, customers can make utility payments using the app, all in one go.

Further, they can manage their cards, open additional savings accounts instantly, view balance, and perform transactions on Pearl Points from ahlibank's Loyalty Program. ahlibank's mobile banking app is the most inclusive solution to meet customers' banking needs, and is a smarter avenue to bank in tune with their evolving lifestyles.

ahlibank seeks to provide its customers an exceptional banking experience. The new and revamped mobile banking app has a distinct look and feel, bringing the latest and most innovative financial tools to the bank's client

tele in order to assist them in carrying out their transactions with ease and efficiency. The redesigned mobile banking app gives customers what they need in accordance to their preferences, as they embark on a seamless and highly rewarding journey. It will elevate users' experiences with guaranteed satisfaction, signalling the next intuitive step towards redefining digital banking in the sultanate.

ahlibank is among the pioneers in the highly competitive market, fostering a culture of perseverance and continuous improvement. By revamping the app, ahlibank envisions a future where digital solutions empower customers to achieve greater goals with definitive success, reaffirming its position as a partner in excellence.

Oman debuts in eSports World Cup

Oman is for the first time taking part in the eSports World Cup, which began in the Saudi capital Riyadh on July 3.

Sharing this information, Saba al Busaidi, chairperson of the Omani Gaming and Electronic Sports Committee, told *Muscat Daily* that the sultanate has sent one participant to the event after conducting a qualifying round in Muscat over two days.

“We conducted local qualifiers in Muscat at the Youth Center in Grand Mall, featuring 24 eFootball players over two days. The qualifiers used a best-of-three format, requiring players to win two out of three matches to advance. After a series of intense competitions, one player from Oman emerged victorious and is representing us in the World Cup,” she elaborated.

Notably, this player is ranked second globally in eFootball for that week when the qualifying took place.

“Regarding the World Cup for E Sports, we are pleased to announce that we have recently been accredited by the International Esports Federation (IESF). As the only Omani committee recognised by the IESF, we have met all the required conditions and our membership in the General Assembly of the Federation has been approved for 2024, despite the challenges we encountered,” Saba further informed.

Although newly accredited federations are typically not eligible to participate in the World Cup for ESports immediately and must wait a year, “we were granted permission to compete in this year’s qualifiers for eFootball,” she added.

The event in Saudi, which will run until August 25, offers an unprecedented prize pool of more than US\$60mn with the participation of more than 1,500 players arriving in Saudi Arabia from around the world.

On Oman’s participation,



Faisal bin Hamran, CEO of eSports at the eSports World Cup Foundation, recounted his experience of witnessing the talents of Omani participants in various games in Saudi Arabia.

“During my work at the Saudi Electronic Sports Federation, I witnessed the participation of the Omani national team and the Omani teams in a group of continental and regional tournaments that was held in the kingdom.”

These games include the Arab-African League for Electronic Sports, and the Gulf League for Electronic Sports.

“There were distinguished participations from Oman that reflect the amount of talent that the sultanate possesses,” he underlined, while asserting that the future of Oman in this field “is certainly promising due to the presence of talent and the great



work being done by the Omani Committee for Games and Electronic Sports, headed by Saba al Busaidi.”

“I hope that Saba and her team have every success in their endeavours and achieve their goals in advancing this sector in Oman.”

Hamran also spoke about the

I hope that Saba al Busaidi and her team have every success in their endeavours and achieve their goals in advancing the sector in Oman

importance of fat prize amount for athletes and clubs participating in eSports. “These large financial prizes attract the most prominent talents from all over the world, and this has become clear through the participation of more than 1,500 athletes from more than 500 of the most famous international clubs in the

tournament competitions hosted by Riyadh, these awards also raise the level of competitions to professionalism, motivating generations of athletes to devote the time and effort necessary to compete at the highest professional levels in the field of e-sports.”

He pointed out that the impact of the huge size of the prizes extends beyond the concept of attracting talent, to clubs and athletes who are seeking excellence and professionalism to compete and are seeking to advance their business structure to include appointing coaches, analysts and other professional support staff, in order to reach the highest levels.

“It is necessary to point out here the importance of financial prizes in terms of the reputation and fame that accompany them. It is known that major tourna-

ments that enjoy large financial prizes receive great public and media attention, which leads to enhancing the fame of athletes and clubs locally and internationally. This will be confirmed by media coverage across 59 global platforms and the event developments were conveyed across more than 30 languages throughout the tournament.”

The CEO of eSports at the eSports World Cup Foundation also spoke about the potential benefits that may accompany the huge prizes of the eSports World Cup, which aims to support and develop the eSports scene, saying: “The eSports World Cup plays a pivotal role in enhancing the eSports scene. We believe that the huge financial prizes for the tournament will provide many opportunities for growth and development in the sector. For example, the large

size of the prizes confirms the vitality of this sector, which constitutes an important factor in attracting sponsors and investors, which increases the factors that contribute to the further development of the sector. Development factors include improving infrastructure, increasing the number of tournaments, leading to organizing more major international events and activities, thus providing more opportunities for athletes and clubs.”

He also emphasised other benefits, such as the size of the turnout, public participation, and the percentage of views, as competitions with large financial prizes enjoy high public follow-up and an increase in the number of viewers, which paves the way for future editions to obtain more sponsorship opportunities, advertisements, media coverage, and global attention.

He added that huge financial prizes contribute to building and sustaining gaming and e-sports communities, and the increase in the value of financial prizes and intense competition to obtain them is accompanied by great public interaction, which is sufficient to reshape the vital communities that support the e-sports system in various ways, including providing fan content and sales of related products and direct attendance at events.

In addition, the huge financial prizes open new horizons of opportunities in various fields, such as event management, content creation, marketing, communications and many others, which contributes to the growth and development of various aspects of the e-sports sector.

“The prize pool of US\$60mn has been divided into four categories, including the Main Event category involving 22 tournaments, with a total of US\$33mn, and prizes in the qualifying category in select games, worth US\$7.6mn,” Hamran added.



Mubadala owned Sanad, Rolls-Royce to groom future aviation leaders

Sanad, the global aerospace engineering and leasing solutions leader wholly owned by Mubadala, has collaborated with Roll Royce, a global leader and manufacturer in the aerospace industry, focused on nurturing the next generation of leaders in the aviation sector.

The agreement was signed at the Farnborough International Airshow in the United Kingdom in the presence of Amer Siddiqui, Group Chairman of Sanad, Ismail Ali Abdullah, Head of UAE Clusters at Mubadala, and Omar Ali Adib, Senior Vice President of Rolls-Royce.

Starting in September 2025, Rolls-Royce and Sanad will jointly select outstanding talents from Sanad who demonstrate

robust leadership potential to join the Rolls-Royce team in the United Kingdom for a six-month period.

This annual initiative aims to equip future leaders with industry-leading skills in aerospace Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) operations, thereby bolstering both Sanad’s and the UAE’s efforts to cultivate top-tier talent in the aviation industry.

Abdulla said, “Mubadala has maintained a strong and productive relationship with Rolls-Royce for many years, and we are excited to elevate this collaboration to new heights. This partnership will significantly benefit Abu Dhabi and further our ambition to establish it as a global aviation hub.”

Mansoor Janahi, Managing Director and Group CEO of Sanad, highlighted the ongoing partnership with Rolls-Royce since 2013 as a testament to their shared commitment to excellence. The new collaboration will offer employees a six-month training programme at one of Rolls-Royce’s locations worldwide to develop their skills and best practices.

Omar Ali Adib, in turn, said, “We are eager to collaborate with Sanad on this innovative training programme. By combining our expertise and resources, we aim to create exceptional development pathways for future aviation leaders, driving innovation and excellence within the industry.”

Qatar Airways unveils highly anticipated ‘Qsuite Next Gen’ in Farnborough airshow

On the first morning of the Farnborough International Airshow 2024, Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Badr Mohammed al Meer, unveiled the new, ultra-modern ‘Qsuite Next Gen’.

This latest iteration of the award-winning Qatar Airways Qsuite brings the World’s Best Business Class in commercial aviation to new heights. The reveal was held in the presence of Jassim bin Saif bin Ahmed al Sulaiti, the Qatari Minister of Transport; and Mohamed Faleh Alhajri, Acting President of Qatar Civil Aviation Authority.

In the Qatar Airways Discover Lounge at the Farnborough International Airshow, Meer introduced the Qsuite Next Gen with Sama - the World’s First AI Digital Human cabin crew. Sama built up the audience’s excitement through an interactive conversation on how the World’s Best Airline has once again redefined luxury and innovation, elevating the industry’s benchmark in business class experiences.

During the reveal, Meer highlighted the Qsuite Next Gen’s new and enhanced features, including fully customisable Quad Suites; Companion Suites in window aisles; 4K OLED manoeuvrable in-flight entertainment (IFE) screens; along with increased space and privacy in each suite.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Badr Mohammed al Meer, said: “We are excited to have finally revealed



the long-awaited Qsuite Next Gen at the Farnborough International Airshow. Qatar Airways has once again raised the bar for its award-winning product, the Qsuite. We look forward to welcoming media and partners to our stand throughout the week to experience the future of business class travel with the World’s Best Business Class on-board the World’s Best Airline.”

The game-changing Qsuite Next Gen aims to facilitate a mindful work-life balance with its revolutionary attributes for all professionals, friends, and families. The redesigned Quad Suite is now equipped with movable 4K OLED Panasonic Astrova IFE screens – a first for any airline in the world. The screens can be

repositioned to the side to create the largest social and productivity space in the sky for up to four passengers in the Quad Suite, and up to two passengers in the Companion Suite.

Rest and relaxation on-board the Quad Suite has also been enhanced with increased space for dining together – a hallmark of Qatari heritage, as well added privacy with taller, digitally controlled dividers. With larger lie-flat and double beds, the new Quad Suite will also offer the 5-star Qatar Airways turn-down service with a dedicated ‘Make My Bed’ feature. The new Companion Suite has similar characteristics to the Quad Suite, now with the noteworthy revamp of offering the same shared space

in window aisles.

Adopting new technologies for increased passenger convenience and connectivity, the Qsuite Next Gen delivers a vast array of customisation options, ranging from ambient lighting to privacy controls, through its upgraded touchscreen Passenger Control Units. The Qsuite Next Gen will be featured on-board the Qatar Airways Boeing B777-9 aircraft by 2025.

“Qatar Airways is also showcasing its state-of-the-art Boeing B787-9 Dreamliner and Qatar Executive’s all-new Gulfstream G700. We continue to build on our promise of delivering unparalleled excellence in each and every iteration of our products and services,” Meer stated.



Josep Borrell

EU withdraws informal meetings from Hungary

Brussels, Belgium - Hungary will not host the EU informal foreign affairs meetings in August due to its stance in Ukraine, the bloc's foreign policy chief said.

"I have decided to convene informal meetings of EU Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers in Brussels, after the summer break," Josep Borrell wrote on X on Monday, following the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Brussels.

"At today's #FAC, EU Member States overwhelmingly criticised Hungary's lack of sincere and loyal co-operation," he added. Previously in a news conference following the meeting in Brussels, Borrell slammed Hungary for accusing the EU of being 'pro-war'.

He reiterated that Russia bears the responsibility for the ongoing war in Ukraine, and stressed that the EU wants a fair, lasting peace that would preserve Ukraine's freedom and independence. "Any so-called 'peace mission' that ignores these basic fundamentals is, at the end of the day, only benefiting Putin and will not bring peace," Borrell added.

Anadolu Agency

US election: Harris promises to unite Democrats, defeat Trump

Uniting the party is an important first step because Harris is not yet the official nominee

Washington, D.C., US - Now that Joe Biden has withdrawn from the presidential race, US Vice President Kamala Harris is seeming the likely choice for the Democrats' nominee. But can she beat Donald Trump?

Harris' presidential campaign has hit the ground running. Shortly after US President Joe Biden had announced via social media that he was withdrawing from the presidential race, he shared a second post endorsing Harris as the Democratic candidate for president. Former US President Bill Clinton and former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, former Speaker of the House and grande dame of the Democratic Party Nancy Pelosi, as well as many Democrat Congress members and governors, followed suit.

Harris' campaign also set a new record for a presidential campaign's fundraising, with US\$81mn in donations coming in during the first 24 hours of Harris' candidacy. That sum was raised across the campaign, Democratic National Committee and joint fundraising committees. Another important factor for her campaign going forward: more than 888,000 grassroots donors contributed in those 24 hours, and 60 per cent of them were first-



US Vice President Kamala Harris attends an event on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, D.C., the United States, on Monday (Xinhua)

Harris' campaign also set a new record for a presidential campaign's fundraising, with US\$81mn in donations coming in during the first 24 hours of Harris' candidacy

time donors in the 2024 election cycle. That means they hadn't donated to Biden's campaign, but took out their wallets for Harris. And as vice president, Harris also has access to all the funds that were raised for Biden. The current president's nearly US\$96mn campaign fund was transferred to Harris on Sunday.

Harris herself said in a statement that she would do everything in her power 'to unite the

Democratic Party - and unite our nation - to defeat Donald Trump'.

The first step

Uniting the party is an important first step because Harris is not yet the official nominee. For that, she has to win a majority of delegates' votes at the Democratic National Convention, which is taking place from August 19 to 22 in the midwestern city of Chicago.

"Right now she needs to (run) a double campaign," Stormy-Annika Mildner, the executive director of the Aspen Institute Germany, a transatlantic think tank based in Berlin, told DW. Harris has to 'unite the Democrats so that they stay behind her, and with an eye on the November elections also speak to the (American) people and win them over for her campaign'.

Harris is the only candidate who would be allowed to use the millions of dollars in donations already collected by the Biden campaign, since she was part of the ticket that the donations came in for. Furthermore, as vice president, she is more well-known across the country than

certain others who have been mentioned as potential candidates. But there are also factors that don't speak in her favour.

"One of the big weaknesses is that her popularity ratings are really not much better than Biden's," Mildner said.

Another is that she was tasked with tackling the border crisis and stemming mass immigration from Central and Latin America and has been criticised by opponents for not being up to the job.

"This is something where people would say she failed. I think that's a little unfair, because the situation is so difficult at the border," Mildner said.

"But this is something which

the Trump campaign... will use as a strong case against her."

Donald Trump, the Republican candidate for president, has to pivot now from a campaign largely focused on and against Biden to one focused on a new nominee. If it turns out to be Harris, what are her chances of winning the election on November 5?

"As we see in some of the early surveys that pit her directly against Donald Trump, she at least matches him or beats him by two to three percentage points," Cathryn Clüver Ashbrook, a transatlantic expert with the German Bertelsmann Foundation, told DW.

DW

What next for Rwanda after President Paul Kagame's landslide election win?

Kigali, Rwanda - Paul Kagame won a fourth term in office, with more than 99% of the vote in Rwanda's recent presidential elections, according to partial results from the National Electoral Commission.

Kagame, who ran under the banner of the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in the election on July 15, faced challengers Frank Habineza of the opposition Democratic Green Party of Rwanda and independent candidate Philippe Mpayimana.

Both Habineza and Mpayimana congratulated him after collectively receiving less than 1% - 0.53% and 0.32% respectively. Provisional results are expected this week, with final results on July 27. The electoral authority reported a voter turnout of 98% among the approximately 9.5mn eligible voters.

Who is Paul Kagame?

Kagame grew up in Uganda as a refugee following the 1959-1962 revolution, which led to the Tutsi group being driven out of Rwanda by the Hutu.

He was a founding member of current Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's rebel army in 1979, where he headed its intelligence wing, helping Museveni seize power in 1986. Kagame received military training in Uganda, Tanzania, and the US.

Rwanda experienced a civil war from 1990 to 1994 due to deep ethnic divisions between the Hutu and Tutsi.

The climax of the war, the



Paul Kagame ran under the banner of the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front

This year, Paul Kagame sought reelection, following a constitutional amendment in 2015, allowing him to run for three more terms

1994 genocide against the Tutsi, killed about one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Kagame is credited with leading the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), the armed wing of the RPF, in stopping the 100-day genocide and fostering unity and

peace in the aftermath.

Following the genocide, Rwanda's economy was destroyed, and society was torn apart when Kagame's RPF captured power in 1994.

Kagame served as vice president and defence minister before becoming president in 2000. He has since won subsequent elections, including the 2017 election with over 98 per cent of the vote.

This year, Kagame sought reelection following a 2015 constitutional amendment allowing him to run for three more terms and giving him the green light to pursue a seven-year third term in 2017.

However, the amended constitution shortened presidential

term limits to five years starting in 2024.

Kagame, 66, claims it is the ruling party and Rwandans who have asked him to stand for another mandate, noting that he could 'comfortably go home and rest' at a personal level.

Policy path

Olivier Mushimire, a commentator, believes Kagame's legitimacy is not solely built on his revolutionary credentials as someone who defeated a genocidal regime, but also on the tremendous progress Rwanda has made since 1994.

He has been praised for positioning Rwanda as one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, aspiring to achieve middle-income country status by 2035.

The country's dramatic turnaround has earned praise from development partners, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with an average economic growth rate of 7.2% between 2012 and 2022.

At a press conference a day before the elections, Kagame said his priority after the election is to continue progress in areas of security, stability, and socio-economic development.

"Rwandans want more development and it is what I am thinking of providing in the next term. More investment, being able to feed themselves - if we can move faster to deliver that to them, the better," he said.

Anadolu Agency



Kimberly Cheatle tendered her resignation amid scrutiny of security lapses related to Trump assassination attempt

US: Secret Service chief Kimberly Cheatle resigns after security failures

Washington, D.C., US - Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle has resigned on Tuesday, following pressure from lawmakers for security failures during an attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump.

Citing sources, CNN said Cheatle tendered her resignation amid scrutiny of security lapses related to the July 13 assassination attempt. Cheatle was grilled by lawmakers in the House of Representatives on the timeline of the shooting during a hearing on Monday, and faced demands from several members to step down.

During the hearing, Cheatle called the assassination attempt 'the most significant operational failure' of the Secret Service.

She said the agency's mission is to protect US leaders and added: "On the 13th, we failed. As a director of the United States Secret Service, I take full responsibility for any security lapse of our agency."

In addition, Republican House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer, and ranking member Jamie Raskin, demanded Cheatle resign on Monday in a bipartisan statement.

"In the middle of a presidential election, the committee and the American people demand serious institutional accountability and transparency that you are not providing. We call on you to resign as director as a first step," the statement said.

US President Joe Biden said

Cheatle 'selflessly dedicated and risked her life to protect our nation throughout her career in the United States Secret Service'.

"As a leader, it takes honour, courage, and incredible integrity to take full responsibility for an organisation tasked with one of the most challenging jobs in public service," he said in a statement. He noted that an independent review to get to the bottom of what happened July 13 continues, saying: "I look forward to assessing its conclusions."

"We all know what happened that day can never happen again. As we move forward, I wish Kim all the best, and I will plan to appoint a new Director soon," he added.

Anadolu Agency

Death toll from landslide in southern Ethiopia climbs to 157

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - At least 157 people have died after a mudslide in Ethiopia, local authorities said on Tuesday.

The landslide was caused by heavy rains in Gofa Zone in the remote south of the country on Monday.

Some people remain unaccounted for after a group of people were covered by mud while they were trying to rescue others.

"We are still searching for the missing," said Markos Melese, director of the disaster response agency in Gofa Zone.

Photographs showed people digging through the mud with the bare hands, with little sign of emergency services at the scene.

The Gofa Zone Communications Affairs Department said 96 men and 50 women were among the victims. It added that the search for bodies was 'continuing vigorously'.

"There are children who are hugging corpses, having lost their entire family, including mother, father, brother and sister, due to the accident," local



administrator Dagmawi Ayele said.

He added that at least five people have been pulled alive from the mud.

The disaster struck just before noon local time, according to state-owned Fana Broadcasting Corporate.

"Ninety-six men and fifty women, including children, were lost due to the mishap," said the Zonal government representative and disaster committee lead, Habtamu Fetena.

Another local official, Misikir Mitiku, told Fana that rescuers are also among the victims, with some going missing during search and rescue efforts.

Following the deadly landslide, Gofa Governor Dagmawi Ayele issued a statement emphasising the need for the community to be better equipped to deal with such disasters in the future.

"The community from now on should be equipped and be ready to guard itself from such disasters, as the area is the most vulnerable," Ayele said.

Agencies

Palestinians to form interim national government, says China's top diplomat

Beijing, China - Palestinian factions on Tuesday agreed to form an 'interim national reconciliation' government focused on the post-war governance of Gaza, China's foreign minister said.

Wang Yi's announcement came after representatives from 14 groups of Palestinian factions signed Beijing Declaration after holding talks in Beijing since Sunday. The Palestinian factions pledged to 'end divisions and strengthen unity', the declaration read.

"The key to the internal reconciliation process of the Palestinian factions is to maintain firm confidence, grasp the direction and proceed step by step," Wang said, according to a statement released by China's Foreign Ministry.

Wang said the 'most significant highlight' of the Beijing Declaration among the Palestinian factions 'is the agreement to form an interim national reconciliation government focused on the post-war governance of Gaza'. "The strongest call is for the creation of a truly independent Palestinian state in accordance with relevant UN resolutions," Wang said.

He added: "The core outcome is to make clear that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is the sole legitimate representative of all the Palestinian people."

Video footage released by the



Chinese FM Wang Yi's announcement came on Tuesday after representatives from 14 groups of Palestinian factions signed Beijing Declaration after holding talks in Beijing, China, since Sunday

Chinese state media showed Wang walking along with the representatives of the Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Fatah, after their meeting in Beijing. "Reconciliation is an internal

matter for the Palestinian factions, but it cannot be achieved without international community's support," said the top Chinese diplomat.

"On the road to promoting reconciliation, China shares the same direction and goals as the vast majority of Arab and Islamic countries," Wang said.

It was the second time since April that representatives of

'Committed to national unity'

Senior Hamas official Musa Abu Marzuk, who attended the meeting, said: "Today we sign an agreement for national unity and we say that the path to completing this journey is national unity. We are committed to national unity and we call for it."

"The Beijing declaration is an additional positive step on the way to achieve a Palestinian national unity," said Husam Badran, a member of Hamas's political bureau and head of its national relations office, in a statement on the group's website.

Badran noted that during the Beijing meetings, it has been agreed to form a national unity government that supervises Gaza reconstruction and prepares the conditions for holding elections.

He added that having a national unity government is the best national solution for the Palestinian situation after the war on Gaza, and prevents regional and international interventions that 'seek to impose realities against our people's interest'.

Anadolu Agency

Biden to keep working for end to Gaza war

Washington, D.C., US - US President Joe Biden promised on Monday to keep working to end the war in the Gaza Strip.

"We've got to keep working for an end to the war in Gaza."

"I'll be working very closely with the Israelis and with the Palestinians to try to work out how we can get the Gaza war to end, and Middle East peace, and get all those hostages home," Biden said in remarks in a call into

campaign headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware. His remarks came ahead of an expected meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who arrived in Washington, D.C. to address a joint session of Congress on Wednesday.

Biden and Netanyahu are expected to discuss ways to reach a deal on a ceasefire in Gaza and the return of hostages.

Netanyahu is also expected to



Jordan condemns Israel's designation of UNRWA as a 'terrorist organisation'

Amman, Jordan - Jordan condemned a decision on Monday by Israel's parliament, the Knesset, to classify the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) as a terrorist organisation, considering it a violation of international law and Israel's obligations as the occupying power.

In a statement, the Jordanian Foreign Ministry said the Israeli move is an 'attempt to kill the agency, assassinate it politically and target its symbolism, which affirms the right of Palestinian refugees to return and compensation under the international law'.

The statement stressed UNRWA's role in providing 'vital' services to Palestinian refugees in its five areas of operations, especially in Gaza, which is suffering an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe because of the ongoing Israeli war since October 7 last year.

The ministry urged the international community to keep providing political and financial support to UNRWA so as to continue its humanitarian role until the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved based on the two-state solution by establishing an independent and

sovereign Palestinian state within the June 4, 1967 borders.

The Knesset early on Monday passed three bills to shut down UNRWA and deem it as a 'terrorist' organisation. The bills will require two more readings to become effective.

Last May, the Knesset passed a preliminary motion to approve a bill designating UNRWA as a 'terrorist organisation'. Israel has been lobbying hard to have UNRWA closed, as it is the only UN agency to have a specific mandate to look after the basic needs of Palestinian refugees.

Anadolu Agency

A WALK THROUGH AN ANCIENT CITY



Tourists are seen visiting the ancient city of Ephesus in Izmir, Turkey on Monday (Xinhua)

INDIA

Spilt verdict on release of GM Mustard

Supreme Court has given a split verdict on environmental release of genetically modified mustard

New Delhi - Supreme Court on Tuesday gave split verdict on the aspect of environmental release of genetically modified (GM) mustard.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Sanjay Karol disagreed with each other on aspects of the environmental release of genetically modified mustard and referred the matter to a larger bench.

The top court directed the registrar to place the matter before Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud to constitute a larger bench on this issue.

However, both judges agree that the Centre should evolve national policy in relation to GM crops. The top court directed the government to consider a policy with regard to genetically modified crops.

Justice Nagarathna disagreed with GM Mustard's release in India and criticised the government for showing undue haste in getting the GEAC approval. Justice Nagarathna held that the approval by GEAC dated October 18, 2022, and consequent decision is under gross violation of the law.

Justice Nagarathna said that the failure to adequately assess health is in gross violation of the principle of intergenerational equity and public interest as well. In a dissent view, Justice Sanjay Karol said that he did not find any evidence of arbitrariness or irregularity on GEAC decision on GM mustard in October 2022.



The top court directed the registrar to place the matter before Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud to constitute a larger bench on this issue

Justice Karol noted that the approval granted by GEAC is by an expert body.

The court was hearing various pleas against the Centre's decision on environmental release of GM mustard. Attorney General R

Venkataramani and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta argued on behalf of the Centre Government and advocates Prashant Bhushan and senior advocate Sanjay Parikh represented the petitioner in the matter.

The SC had said that it will decide on GM mustard issue on the basis of what is good for the country, as it cannot go into a

scientific debate on the matter.

Earlier, Attorney General R Venkataramani justified the government's decision to approve the commercial cultivation of GM mustard.

Various petitions were moved in the Supreme Court challenging the Union Environment Ministry's decision to approve commercial cultivation of

GM mustard.

In an affidavit filed earlier by Centre, the government submitted that the Union of India is committed to increasing farm productivity and the income of farmers through development of low-input, high-output agriculture and make the country self-sufficient in edible oil and grain legumes. To achieve this

objective, several nations around the world have safely employed genetic engineering (GE) technologies. To safely encourage this endeavour in India, an elaborate statutory scheme exists to ensure effective regulatory review for the research, development and commercial use of GE technologies.

Approximately 55-60 per cent of edible oil in India is imported. Strengthening of plant

ted that the inquiry of this Court may be limited to whether there is an adequate regulatory mechanism in place governing this field and whether there has been material compliance with the same, the union government had submitted.

Centre had also said that the controversy raised by the petitioners concerns a conditional approval made to the CGMCP for environmental release of

Justice Nagarathna disagreed with GM Mustard's release and criticised the government for showing undue haste in getting the GEAC approval

breeding programmes, including use of new genetic technologies such as GE Technology, is critical for meeting emerging challenges in Indian agriculture and ensuring food security while reducing foreign dependency, the Centre has said.

Centre had submitted that issues raised by the petitioners fall within the domain of the executive, aided by scientific and other technical experts and the research, development and use of genetic engineering technologies is a highly technical matter guided by views that emerge from scientific consensus among subject experts. As such, it is most humbly submit-

transgenic mustard hybrid DMH-11 and its parental lines bn 3.6 and modbs 2.99 containing barnase, barstar and bar genes prior to commercial release. This conditional approval has been made after a long and exhaustive regulatory review process which commenced as far back as in 2010.

It is to be noted that this approval of environmental release prior to commercial release is for the purpose of undertaking seed production and testing of hybrid of DMH-11 and developing new parental lines and hybrids under the supervision of Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR).

ANI

‘No systemic breach in exam’: SC on re-exam for NEET-UG

New Delhi - The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to cancel the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Under Graduate (NEET-UG) 2024 examination held on May 5, holding that there was no systemic breach in the exam.

A bench of Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said that at the present stage, there is an absence of material on record to lead to the conclusion that the result of the exam is vitiated or that there is any systematic breach.

It said the data on record is not indicative of a systemic leak of the NEET-UG question paper, which would indicate a disruption of the sanctity of the exam.

However, it acknowledged the fact that the leak of the NEET-UG paper took place at Hazaribagh and Patna and said that it is 'not in dispute'.

The apex court also said that



Police stop All India Students Association (AISA) supporters during their protest march toward Vidhan Sabha regarding canceling NEET UG 2024, abolishing NTA and withdrawing Agnipath Scheme, in Patna on Tuesday (ANI)

the report submitted by the government shows probe is on and the central agency indicates that material shows 155 students drawn from the exam centres at Hazaribagh and Patna appeared to be the beneficiaries of the fraud.

"The probe by the CBI, however, has not attained finality," it added.

The bench also said that directing a fresh NEET-UG exam for the present year would be replete with serious consequences for over 23 lakh stu-

dents who appeared in this exam.

"Ordering a re-exam will lead to disruption of the academic schedule, causing a cascading effect in the coming years," the bench stated in its order.

ANI

Jaishankar to take part in FMs' meetings under ASEAN

New Delhi - External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will visit Vientiane, Lao PDR (Lao People's Democratic Republic), from July 25 to 27 to take part in the Foreign Ministers' Meetings under the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) framework in the format of the ASEAN-India, East Asia Summit (EAS), and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) informed in a press release.

The visit underlines India's deep engagement with and the importance India attaches to the ASEAN-centred regional architecture, strong commitment to ASEAN unity, ASEAN centrality, the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and taking forward the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the release said.

It is of particular significance that this year marks a decade of India's Act East Policy, which



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar (ANI)

was announced by the Prime Minister at the 9th East Asia Summit in 2014, the ministry added.

The External Affairs Minister is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from other countries in Vientiane, Lao PDR, on the margins of the ASEAN-related meetings.

ASEAN is a political and economic union of 10 countries in Southeast Asia. Speaking to ANI in the Laos

capital Vientiane earlier this month, the Director General of the ASEAN department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR, Chatoulong Bouasivath, said that India is a valued partner of ASEAN.

After the announcement of the real-time payments linkage system between India and Singapore, India announced that it is working with Malaysia and other ASEAN countries to operationalise it for more countries in the region.

This year, India celebrates a decade of its 'Act East' policy, keeping ASEAN as its central pillar of the policy.

India has reiterated its full support for ASEAN Centrality, ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), and Lao PDR's ASEAN Chairmanship's priorities and deliverables under their theme 'ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience'.

ANI

Anti-corruption rallies in Uganda: Dozens detained

Kampala, Uganda - Police and military personnel were out in force around the Ugandan capital Kampala on Tuesday as people began to take to the streets to join anti-corruption rallies.

Dozens of people have reportedly been detained as the demonstrations got underway. Security forces were deployed around the parliament building, with all roads leading to it blocked off for all apart from lawmakers.

Authorities banned a planned protest against corruption and human rights

abuses the demonstrators say are rife in President Yoweri Museveni's government.

Police said that the youth-led protests would lead to looting and vandalism. Museveni, who has held onto power for almost four decades, had warned protesters that they were 'playing with fire' in comments over the weekend.

A crackdown against the opposition began already on Monday evening, with the headquarters of the National Unity Platform (NUP) being put 'under siege'. DW

Curfew, internet blackout continue in Bangladesh

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Curfew, internet blackout and military patrols continued on Tuesday to quell the unrest that claimed at least 187 lives across the country over the reforms in the public jobs.

In a fresh order, the government extended the curfew until Thursday. The curfew was imposed, along with military deployment, last Friday night.

In line with the ruling of the apex court, the government issued a gazette notification on Monday night bringing down the quota to 7% from 56% in public jobs.

Protesting students, who gave a 48-hour ultimatum to bring normalcy, said in a state-



ment they would respond to the government after normalcy is restored.

The student protests turned

violent after police and ruling Awami League party men allegedly opened fire on protesters last week.

Dhaka Medical College Hospital police outpost inspector Md Bachchu Mia told Anadolu that on average 70-80 students and people were admitted to the hospital daily since last Tuesday.

At least 187 people were killed and hundreds of others injured since Tuesday last week. Of them, 13 died in hospitals on this Monday, national newspaper Prothom Alo reported on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, business leaders, during a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday, termed the ongoing complete blackout of internet service 'bloodshed' of business.

They extended their support to the prime minister and demanded early restoration of digi-

tal services.

The prime minister, however, said curfew, and blackouts would continue until the situation improves.

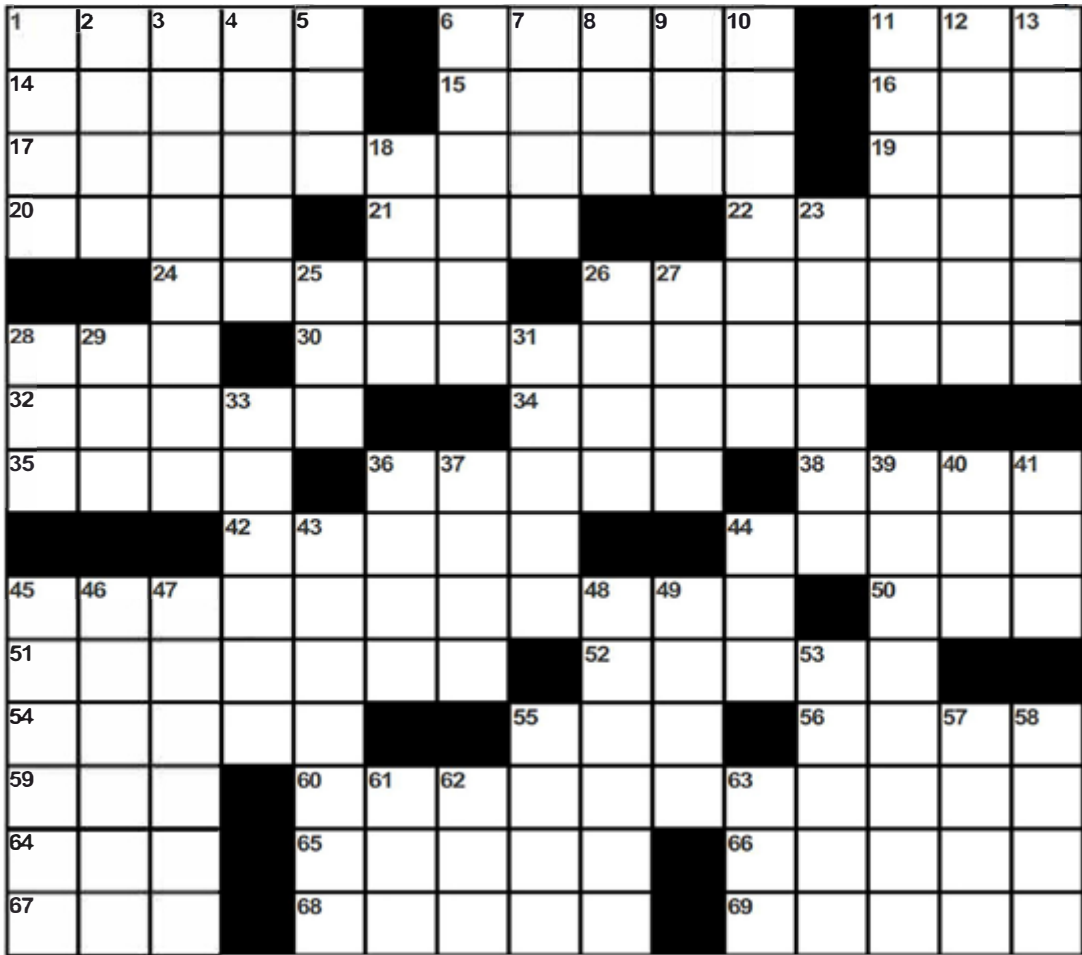
On charges of violence, over 2,000 people, mostly opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-e-Islami men, were arrested across the country.

Protests surged in the South Asian since last week against the 56% quota system, with the government closing educational institutions in response to the unrest.

Some 30% of the 56% quota in public jobs were reserved for the relatives of independence war veterans.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - 1) Chew out
 - 6) Chowderhead
 - 11) Not "a gin"
 - 14) Imam's book
 - 15) Having a musical key
 - 16) Hurler's stat
 - 17) Sitcom with the theme song "This Is It"?
 - 19) Prefix with dent or pod
 - 20) Apple-splitting archer
 - 21) Corrida cry
 - 22) Standard typeface
 - 24) Neighbor of St. Pete
 - 26) Card game with melds
 - 28) Crackerjack pilot
 - 30) Cowboy's topper?
 - 32) Port of Iraq
 - 34) Social pariahs
 - 35) Start the pot
 - 36) Goody-goody
 - 38) Mayberry souse
 - 42) Pick up the tab
 - 44) Quick on the uptake
 - 45) England-France conflict of 1337-1453?
 - 50) Largo or West
 - 51) Iced tea brand
 - 52) Sans assistance
 - 54) Showy flower
 - 55) Comics bark
 - 56) "Diana" singer Paul
 - 59) Wolfed down
- 60) Sincere plea for forgiveness?

64) Kia or Fiat

65) Porkers

66) "For_ sake!"

67) H.S. yearbook section

68) Went for congers

69) Welcome at the door

DOWN

 - 1) Bit of improv
 - 2) Programmer's output
 - 3) Exam without pencils
 - 4) Classic Eric Clapton tune
 - 5) Paternity lab evidence
 - 6) "Hogan's Heroes" camp
 - 7) Mall bag
 - 8) Prefix with "sex" or "corn"
 - 9) Dawber of "Mork & Mindy"
 - 10) Franklin's first lady
 - 11) Fixation of sorts
 - 12) Boo-boo list
 - 13) Read the riot act to
 - 18) "... the mornin' !"
 - 23) Kidnapper's demand
 - 25) "Rosemary's Baby" star Farrow
 - 26) Clump of earth
 - 27) Emollient source
 - 28) Lawyers' org.
- 29) Part of a six-pack

31) Touches on

33) Key in again

36) Burst of laughter

37) Pinker than medium

39) Pay close attention

40) Ill temper

41) Home to 65-Across

43) Play again, as a role

44) Sign of a full house

45) Designer Arnold

Scaasi's real surname

46) GM's roadside assistance service

47) Many John Wayne movies

48) Bent out of shape

49) Sporty Italian auto, for short

53) Consumer advocate

Ralph

55) Top-ranked

57) Body part that may be "skinned"

58) Support staffer (Abbr.)

61) Run up a bill

62) Dipstick coating

63) Dungeons & Dragons, e.g. (Abbr.)

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You know that old saying about how denial ain't just a river in Egypt? Right now, someone you know (or possibly you) could have just bought beachfront property on that river. If you're avoiding an issue or trying to close your eyes when something is staring you right in the face, change tactics fast. Avoiding it might just make things worse instead of better. If someone close to you is the one who won't face facts, try to (gently) open their eyes.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

If you were a superhero, your name would be Captain Good Times. You're determined to lead your crew to the biggest possible source of fun, and nothing is going to get in your way. Hey, if anyone can do it, you can. Just make sure all your day-to-day duties are out of the way before you get this party started. Like all superheroes, you have a sense of responsibility.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Every good tailor knows that the tiny things make a garment fit like it's made for you. All that care and attention can take a simple piece of clothing and turn it into a statement. Mix things up today There's something in your life right now that deserves that same kind of care and attention when it comes to even the smallest components.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Who was on the English throne at the time of the "Gunpowder Plot" to blow up the House of Lords?

A. James I

B. William I

C. King Canute

D. Harold I
2. It originated in the 5th century BCE or earlier as training for the military, could involve up to 200 a game, was fêted for both men and women in Persian poetry and art. Which game is it?

A. Shinty

B. Lacrosse

C. Polo

D. Football
3. Before 1972, what was Sri Lanka known as?

A. East Pakistan

B. Burma

C. Ceylon

D. Persia

Answers: 1. A 2. C 3. C

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Going berserk on someone if they say something that ticks you off is certainly an option, but it probably isn't the one you want to exercise if you want this person to stick around. Take a step back and a deep breath. Were they really out to insult you? Was it maybe just a slip of the tongue? While it's all well and good to stand up for yourself; you don't want to lash out if it was a genuine mistake. Be careful before making your next move.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 23

If you were a superhero, your name would be Captain Good Times. You're determined to lead your crew to the biggest possible source of fun, and nothing is going to get in your way. Hey, if anyone can do it, you can. Just make sure all your day-to-day duties are out of the way before you get this party started. Like all superheroes, you have a sense of responsibility.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Have a little patience, hold back on any urge to push, and all the little details might just work themselves out. It's a hard stance to take, especially for someone who's as driven and hardworking as you are, but one of the tricks about life is knowing when to rest and take a step back and when to push forward with all your effort. Now is a moment in which you should rest.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Emotions might be running high, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. Think of it as a sign that it's time to do some mental house cleaning, especially when it comes to feelings or something in your past that you've been putting off dealing with. Address this situation now, and the future looks bright ahead. Avoid it, and it may keep cropping up in your life in increasingly uncomfortable ways. The choice is yours.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

If you were a superhero, your name would be Captain Good Times. You're determined to lead your crew to the biggest possible source of fun, and nothing is going to get in your way. Hey, if anyone can do it, you can. Just make sure all your day-to-day duties are out of the way before you get this party started. Like all superheroes, you have a sense of responsibility.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Ambition can be pretty heady, like an expensive perfume or that new car smell, and you're both drawn to it and a little afraid of it. Ambition, like most strong forces, is an excellent servant but a bad master. As long as you remain aware of your ambition and make sure it doesn't get too outsized, you should be just fine. So go ahead and reach for the stars. They're reaching back.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Does someone keep hanging around even though it's long past time for them to go? If that's the case, now is the moment for you to firmly (but gently) get them out the door, especially if you want to maintain cordial relations with this person. Remind them of that old proverb about how fish and houseguests both start to smell after three days. Don't be afraid to be assertive either. It's high time you had some space to yourself.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

They may just have to invent a new word for magnetic once they get a load of you. The power you're exuding could knock someone off their feet if you weren't careful (fortunately, you're almost always careful). Whatever it is you want to accomplish right now, you have more than enough resources to accomplish it, and then some. Your confidence is at an all-time high, and with good reason!

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Stop going in circles. Like being on a merry-go-round, it's lots of fun at first, but then after a few minutes you start to feel just a touch nauseated. Even if you're not sure where you want to go just yet, it's imperative that you clear your head before you make any big decisions. Take your time and move at your own pace while you're at it. Rushing into something could be a big mistake.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

K	R	E	N
V	S	O	S
A	O	E	T
U	E	Y	T

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

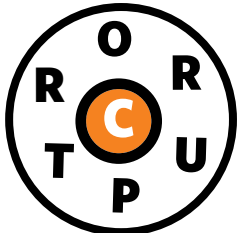
SOLUTION
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola with Kevin De Bruyne

'KEVIN IS NOT GOING'

Man City boss Guardiola ends rumours about De Bruyne's move to Saudi Arabia

Raleigh, US - Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has poured cold water on reports linking Kevin De Bruyne with a move away from the club amid speculation the Belgian midfielder may depart for Saudi Arabia.

De Bruyne, whose contract expires in 2025, said last month that he is not ruling out a move but Guardiola believes there will be no major changes to the squad before the end of the transfer window, which closes on August 30.

"Kevin is not going," Guardiola said at a press conference at North Carolina State University on Monday ahead of their open-

At my age you have to be open to everything. You're talking about incredible amounts of money in what may be the end of my career. Sometimes you have to think about that.

KEVIN DE BRUYNE

ing U.S. tour match against Celtic.

The manager, whose only summer signing has been the winger Savinho, went on to say: "If someone leaves, we're going to talk about that. Of course, until the last day, we have chances [to make transfers]. I don't rule it out the option to have new players

but I think there is an 85-90% chance we will have the same squad.

"I feel comfortable, because the quality of human beings we have in the squad is difficult to be replaced, and the quality is there. But we'll see.

"I don't know in the last moment if someone comes for

some players and they leave, we're going to decide."

Last month De Bruyne told the Belgian newspaper Het Laatste Nieuws he was fond of the idea of a lucrative payday in the latter stages of his career. "At my age you have to be open to everything," he said.

"You're talking about incredible amounts of money in what may be the end of my career. Sometimes you have to think about that."

We've made an impact in the market (over the years) and every situation is different. I feel comfortable because the quality we have in the squad is difficult to replace."

City signed 20-year-old Brazilian winger Savinho last week and Guardiola confirmed that Calvin Phillips, who was on loan to West Ham United, has been training with the first team.

"Savinho can play on the wing, and when he is one-v-one, he is devastating," the Spaniard added.

"He is young and to bring in one or two players to keep things fresh, it is necessary but we cannot change six or seven. It is impossible and unsustainable.

"Many players want to come here but we didn't get agreements from the clubs and when they ask a very high price we don't do it."



Hansi Flick

Flick's Barcelona to 'focus a bit more on scoring'

Barcelona, Spain - New Barcelona coach Hansi Flick said he respects the club's traditional passing style but he also wants to inject a more direct approach focused on scoring.

Barca appointed the former Germany and Bayern Munich manager as head coach on a two-year contract in May after sacking Xavi Hernandez, tasking him with turning around the club's fortunes following their trophy-less run last season.

"Here the tradition is to play with passing, but I also want them to go straight to the goal," Flick told Barca ONE in an interview released on Monday.

"They should focus a bit more on scoring. I don't think my style has any major changes.

"I'm looking for the same thing, to press high up, and to play in the opponent's midfield. But, at the end of the day,

everything is about winning games."

Barcelona face Manchester City in Florida on July 30 before starting their Spanish league campaign at Valencia on August 17.

Mamadou Fall joins from MLS

Los Angeles FC completed the permanent transfer of defender Mamadou Fall to Spain's FC Barcelona in a reported \$4 million deal, according to GiveMeSport.

Fall, 21, signed with LAFC in 2021 and played 36 games with the club, scoring five goals, including two in a game against Sporting Kansas City. A native of Senegal, Fall was sent to FC Barcelona on loan in September and made 22 appearances with the club's "B" team.

Fall also spent a season on loan to Spain's Villareal CF in 2022-23 prior to joining Barcelona.

Aguirre appointed Mexico head coach for third time

Mexico City, Mexico - Javier Aguirre was appointed head coach of Mexico's national soccer team on Monday, replacing Jaime Lozano who was sacked this month after a disappointing Copa America group-stage exit, the country's football federation (FMF) said.

The move comes as Mexico prepares to co-host the 2026 World Cup with Canada and the United States.

It will be the 65-year-old's third stint in charge of the side having taken Mexico to the knockout stages of the 2002 and 2010 World Cups and winning the CONCACAF Gold Cup in 2009.

Barcelona reserve team manager Rafael Marquez was named Aguirre's main assistant coach.

The length of Aguirre's contract was not specified



Javier Aguirre

"Both are undisputed leaders with distinct personal styles," said men's national team director Duilio Davino.

"Aguirre is characterized by being a leader who guides and convinces his players and coaching staff through his vision and

by creating bonds with his team "Rafa leads by example, supported by the fact that he was a high-performance footballer in Mexico and Europe."

Aguirre guided Mexico to 38 wins, 12 losses and 11 draws in his previous two coaching stints.

Villa sign midfielder Onana from Everton

London, England - Aston Villa have signed defensive midfielder Amadou Onana from fellow Premier League side Everton, both clubs said on Monday.

Neither Villa nor Everton disclosed financial details, but British media reported the deal was worth around 50 million pounds (\$64.6 million). Villa did not reveal the length of the 22-year-old Belgium international's contract.

Born in Dakar, Senegal, Onana started his senior career at German side Hamburg before moving to Ligue 1's Lille in 2021. He made 75 appearances for Everton after joining them in 2022.

Villa finished fourth in the English top flight last season.

Hojbjerg joins Marseille on loan

Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg has joined Olympique de Marseille on loan



Amadou Onana

with an option to buy, both clubs said on Monday. While financial details were not disclosed by either club, British media reported that Marseille have agreed to pay around 16 million pounds (\$21 million) for the 28-year-old, who has a year left on his contract with Spurs, if they opt to make the move permanent.

The Danish international has made 184 appearances and scored 10 goals for the North London club.

He joined Spurs in 2020 after a four-year spell at Southampton, having previously played for Bayern Munich.

Hojbjerg slipped down the pecking order at Spurs last season, with Pape Matar Sarr, Yves Bissouma and Rodrigo Bentancur favoured in midfield.

Marseille, who appointed Roberto De Zerbi as head coach last month, begin their Ligue 1 campaign at Brest on August 18.



Alex De Minaur

De Minaur spearheads Australia's Olympics challenge

Melbourne, Australia - Australia's Alex De Minaur said he is ready to fulfil his Olympic dream after shaking off a hip injury that cut short his Wimbledon campaign and threatened his participation at the Paris Games.

The world number six pulled out of his Wimbledon quarter-final against Novak Djokovic earlier this month after sustaining a cartilage tear in his hip in the closing stages of his fourth-

round win over Arthur Fils.

De Minaur was unable to play at the Tokyo Games three years ago after contracting COVID and the hip injury sparked fears he might miss another Olympics but the Sydneysider said on social media on Monday he was ready to compete again.

"To finally be able to represent Australia in the Olympics is a dream come true," De Minaur said.

I'm very passionate when I play for my country and wear the green and gold, so this is another one of those moments

ALEX DE MINAUR

"I'm very passionate when I play for my country and wear the green and gold, so this is another one of those moments.

"I'm extremely excited to lace up for Paris 2024."

De Minaur spearheads an Australian team that also includes Alexei Popyrin, Ellen Perez, Matthew Ebden, John Peers, Olivia Gadecki, Ajla Tomljanovic, Daria Saville and Rinky Hijikata.

The Olympic tennis event will be held on the clay courts of Roland Garros from July 27-August 4. De Minaur cracked the top 10 in the world rankings for the first time this year and proved he can be a force on clay after reaching the French Open quarter-finals in June.

"I showed that I'm perfectly capable," De Minaur said at the end of his French Open campaign.



Max Verstappen (R) with Gianpiero Lambiase

Horner insists Lambiase's 'childish' comment not aimed at Verstappen

BUDAPEST, Hungary - Red Bull team boss Christian Horner has clarified a radio exchange in which Max Verstappen's race engineer appeared to call the triple world champion childish during Sunday's Hungarian Grand Prix.

Gianpiero Lambiase (GP), who has worked with Verstappen for some eight years and is known for standing up to the driver in forthright fashion, had a series of exchanges with an increasingly unhappy Dutchman at the Hungaroring.

Verstappen had complained about Mercedes' seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton's driving after they collided, with the Red Bull pitched on its nose and off the track in a battle for third.

"I am not even going to get into a radio fight with the other teams, Max," Lambiase said.

"We'll let the stewards do their thing. It's childish on the radio, childish."

The comment raised eye-

brows for its tone, between individuals with one of the closest driver-engineer relationships.

Horner said Lambiase was not actually referring to Verstappen, however, but the radio traffic from members of rival teams seeking to push the stewards into penalising him.

"I don't think GP's reference at that point was in reference to Max," he told reporters. "Others (were) obviously goading for penalties because obviously the stewards are listening to the radio as well."

Verstappen, who finished fifth after seeing stewards who took no further action, was not backing down afterwards when questioned about his radio messages and the swear words bleeped out for the global television audience.

"I don't think we need to apologise," he said. "I just think we need to do a better job."

Horner said the team would discuss behind closed doors what they should have done better.

SREEJESH READY FOR 'LAST DANCE IN PARIS'

Indian star to retire from international hockey after Olympics

New Delhi, India - Indian hockey goalkeeper PR Sreejesh has confirmed that the Paris 2024 Olympics will be his last international outing with the senior national side.

The 36-year-old Sreejesh, set to become a four-time Olympian in Paris, was one of the architects of India's men's hockey team's bronze medal win at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Having made his debut for the Indian national hockey team in 2006, PR Sreejesh has played 328 matches for his country.

"As I stand on the threshold of my final chapter in international hockey, my heart swells with gratitude and reflection," Sreejesh said, reminiscing his 18-year-old career with the national team. "This journey has been nothing short of extraordinary, and I am forever grateful for the love and support from my family, team-mates, coaches and fans."

"I still remember my father selling our cow to buy my first kit. His sacrifice ignited a fire within me, pushing me to strive harder and dream bigger," he pointed out. Besides the career-high bronze medal achievement at



PR Sreejesh is set to become a four-time Olympian in Paris

My team-mates have stood beside me through the tough and arduous times. We all want to give our absolute best and certainly, the desire is to change the colour of our medal.

PR SREEJESH

Tokyo 2020, Sreejesh has also won three Asian Games medals including two golds - at Incheon 2014 and Hangzhou 2022.

The Asian Games gold medal in Hangzhou last year also helped

the Indian men's team secure a Paris 2024 quota.

"As I prepare for my last dance in Paris, I look back with immense pride and forward with hope," Sreejesh said. "This journey has

been nothing short of extraordinary, and I am forever grateful for the love and support... Thank you for believing in me."

PR Sreejesh had discussed with the team about his decision to retire post-Olympics.

"My team-mates have stood beside me through the tough and arduous times. We all want to give our absolute best here in Paris and certainly, the desire is to change the colour of our medal."

The 36-year-old goalie also helped the national side win two

Commonwealth Games silver medals - at Glasgow 2014 and Birmingham 2022. Sreejesh was decisive in India's third-place finish at the FIH Hockey Pro League 2021-22.

PR Sreejesh was bestowed the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award in 2021 and is only the second sportsman from India to win the award of World Games Athlete of the Year in 2021. He has also won back-to-back FIH Goalkeeper of the Year awards in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

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5	Cuplock Vertical 2 Mtr	2300
6	Telescoping Leg - 2mtr	300
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8	Cup Lock Ledger 1.8 Mtr	1800
9	Cup Lock Ledger 1.6 Mtr	1500
10	Cup Lock Ledger 1.2 Mtr	7500
11	Cup Lock Standard 1.8 Mtr	130
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IOC President Thomas Bach expects a spectacular Olympic Games in Paris

Paris, France - The Paris Olympics will be a spectacular event at a time of historic global disruptions and growing divisive forces, International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said on Monday, four days before the Games opening ceremony.

The Olympics in the French capital will see several firsts, with an opening ceremony on barges along the river Seine instead of the traditional ceremony in an Olympic stadium.

The Games will also incorporate the city's major landmarks, including the Eiffel tower, into the competitions, many of which will be staged in urban areas across the city.

It will also be the first Olympics to have gender parity, with equal numbers of men and women participating.

"Like billions of people around the world we are awaiting with impatience the youngest, most inclusive, most urban and most sustainable Games," IOC President Thomas Bach said at the opening of his organisation's session in the French capital.

"We are convinced that together with the entire world we will experience spectacular Olympic Games," he said, with French President Emmanuel Macron in attendance.

More than 10,500 athletes representing 206 national Olympic Committees will compete at the 16-day multi-sports event, 100 years since the last time the French capital staged



IOC President Thomas Bach (2R) at the Olympic athletes' call for peace at the Olympic Village

them, with more than 30,000 security officers on duty.

Bach also highlighted the global sports body's challenges in what he called a new world order. "We are witnessing a new world order in the making," he said.

"Historic disruptions are upending the system of international relations that has been in place since the second World War."

"The trends are clear: decoupling of economies; beggar-thy-neighbour; narrow self-interests trumping the rule of law; "Global South" vs "Global North". Everywhere you look, multilateralism is on the back foot."

"These trends are deeply disturbing to us because they are going straight against our mission to unite. Grounded in and united by our Olympic values - we must

be ready to face this sea-change."

He said the IOC's focus on solidarity, which will be fuelled by increased revenues over the next years that are to be distributed to national Olympic committees, international federations and other stakeholders, was crucial.

Bach said the IOC had already secured \$7.3 billion for the years 2025-28 and had raised \$6.2 bil-

We are witnessing a new world order in the making. Historic disruptions are upending the system of international relations that has been in place since the second World War.

THOMAS BACH

lion in deals for the period 2029-2032. He said changing lifestyles of young people in a digital world risked alienating the Olympic movement from a young generation. "We can and we must change before we are being changed," Bach said.

"For this change we need to

change our mindset. We need the mindset of the digital natives. We have to go where the young people are, in the real world and the digital world. If we want to remain relevant in their digital lives we must engage with this digitally native generation in their digital way of living," he said.



Andy Murray

Murray 'proud to get to do it one final time'

London, England - Briton Andy Murray, the first male tennis player to claim two Olympic singles gold medals, said on Tuesday that he will play the final event of his glittering career at the Paris Games before heading into retirement.

Murray, widely regarded as one of Britain's all-time great sportsmen, won gold in London 2012 beating Roger Federer in the final and successfully defended his title in Rio four years later defeating Juan Martin del Potro.

The 37-year-old, who in 2013 ended a 77-year wait for a British men's singles champion at Wimbledon and won the trophy again in 2016, had previously said that he was unlikely to continue his career beyond this year.

"Arrived in Paris for my last ever tennis tournament @Olympics," Murray said on social media, alongside a picture of himself on the Rio podium. "Competing for Britain has been by far the most memorable weeks of my career and I'm extremely proud to get to do it one final time."

The injury-plagued Murray received a star-studded, emotional farewell earlier this month at Wimbledon, the venue where he won two of his three major titles, following a first-round doubles defeat partnering his brother Jamie.

The Scot, who had surgery on June 22 to remove a spinal cyst which was compressing his nerves and made him lose control and power in his right leg, decided he was not fit enough for the demands of singles competition at the All England Club.

Tunisia, sans Hafnaoui and Jabeur, send smallest team in 20 years

Tunis, Tunisia - Tunisia will send its smallest delegation for two decades to the Paris Games with the North African country's two best known elite athletes, swimming champion Ahmed Hafnaoui and tennis star Ons Jabeur, both absent because of health issues.

Tunisian Olympic chief Mehrez Boussiane said the limited participation - 26 athletes qualified for Paris compared to the team of 63 for Tokyo - was down to financial difficulties as well as tougher qualification pathways.

"In some sports it is no longer enough to be a continental champion to qualify," the



Ahmed Hafnaoui

Certainly, the economic and financial difficulties experienced by the country have cast a shadow on the sports sector

MEHREZ BOUSSIANE

Tunisian Olympic Committee presidentsaid. "So you find, for example, that in judo, where we used to qualify at least four athletes, we have a single athlete participating.

"Certainly, the economic and

financial difficulties experienced by the country, like the rest of the world, have cast a shadow on the sports sector.

"That is reflected in the programmes of different federations in many specialties, as they find themselves unable to provide adequate and high-quality training for our athletes to enable them to develop their technical levels, in addition to infrastructure problems."

While Jabeur, who competed at the last three Olympics, said in June she would skip Paris because of knee issues, the reason for Hafnaoui's absence is less clear. The 21-year-old stunned the swimming world by winning

the 400 metres freestyle in Tokyo as a teenager and backed that up by winning the 800 and 1,500 double at last year's world championships in Fukuoka.

After a miserable showing at this year's worlds in Qatar, however, there were reports that Hafnaoui was struggling with an unspecified injury as well as mental health issues.

Boussiane said his absence was injury-related and remained convinced that Hafnaoui would again bring honour to his country at future Olympics. "After he left the United States, where he was training, Hafnaoui faced some health issues that require follow-up," he said.

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Injured Vondrousova and Hurkacz pull out

Paris, France - Olympic silver medalist Marketa Vondrousova has withdrawn from the Paris Summer Games due to a hand injury, the Czech 25-year-old said on Monday, with Poland's Hubert Hurkacz also withdrawing.

Vondrousova reached the women's final in Tokyo three years ago as an unseeded player, losing to Swiss ninth seed Belinda Bencic. The Swiss, who gave birth to a daughter in April, will not be in Paris to defend her title.

"I am very sorry, but due to health reasons I will not be participating in this year's Olympic Games in Paris," Vondrousova posted on Instagram.

"I hoped until the last moment that I could go at least in doubles, but problems with my hand won't allow me on the court."

Katerina Siniakova, who won

gold at the last Olympics in doubles and is a nine-times Grand Slam champion in women's doubles, will replace Vondrousova in the singles and Linda Noskova will play doubles with Karolina Muchova.

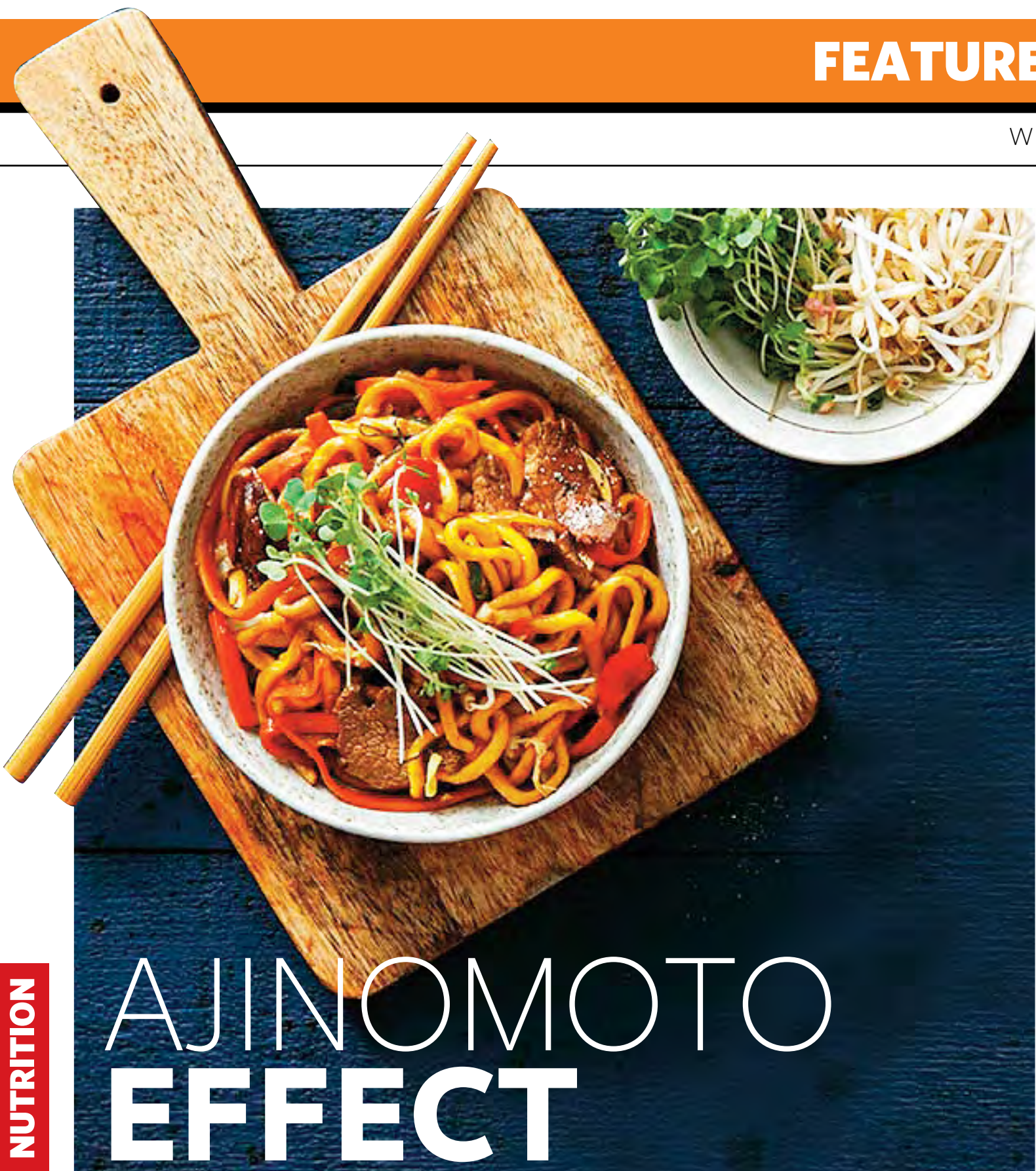
Vondrousova won her first Grand Slam at Wimbledon last year, the first unseeded woman to win the singles title.

Hurkacz was forced to retire from his Wimbledon second round match earlier in July when he dived for a volley but landed badly and injured his knee, and has not recovered in time to compete in Paris.

"My rehabilitation is going very well, and I am making continuous progress. However, my team and I have decided that I am unable to compete in the Olympic Games in Paris," Hurkacz said.



Marketa Vondrousova



NUTRITION

AJINOMOTO EFFECT

If you love Chinese food, watch out, MSG - a popular ingredient in the flavouring - might've got you in its sway, and it may not be good for the health of those prone to allergies

Watch the chefs preparing Chinese food, dexterously tossing ingredients into a wok, lightly banging wooden spatulas against them, and sprinkling a variety of seasonings in precise proportions. Alongside chilli flakes and crushed black pepper, you'd find them sneaking in what could be the cause of allergies and mild disorders for certain people.

Monosodium glutamate (MSG), popularly known as 'Ajinomoto', is most commonly associated with Chinese food, but this odourless, crystalline additive is used throughout the restaurant industry, and is even added to many packaged foods you may be eating.

MSG is a flavour enhancer that's frequently added to canned vegetables, soups, deli meats, and restaurant foods to lend a savoury, rich flavour. It's made from sodium and L-glutamic acid, a nonessential amino acid that occurs naturally in umami-rich foods like tomatoes, anchovies, mushrooms, and Parmesan cheese.

A Japanese chemist named Kikunae Ikeda extracted glutamate from an umami-rich seaweed broth to produce the first man-made MSG in 1908. Today, MSG is made by fermenting starch, sugar beets, sugar cane, or molasses into an odourless white powder that can be sprinkled into your food like table salt. And while MSG is frequently associated with Southeast Asian cooking, it's an ingredient that's used in various types of cooking around the world.

Why is MSG added to certain foods?
On its own MSG doesn't taste like anything, but it lends a savoury, meaty flavour to foods it is added to, making it a popular additive for both restaurant and home chefs.

While the FDA considers the addition of MSG to foods to be 'generally recognised as safe', it still requires food manufacturers to list MSG on the ingredient panel. You'll see it listed as monosodium glutamate. And if a food includes any ingredient that contains naturally occurring MSG (such as yeast extract, hydrolysed yeast, or protein isolate) it cannot claim 'no MSG' or 'no added MSG' on its packaging.

What foods are more likely to contain MSG?
Although Chinese dishes are often associated with MSG, many non-ethnic restaurants (and fast-food joints) also use MSG to flavour their food. MSG is also found in many processed and packaged foods, and in many hot dogs and lunch meats. Condiments like salad dressing, mayonnaise, ketchup, and barbecue sauce also frequently contain MSG, as do packaged seasoning blends, frozen pizzas, and instant noodles.

Is MSG bad for you?
In the 1990s, the FDA asked the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) to look into the safety of MSG. FASEB concluded that MSG is safe. They noted that any ill effects were mild and short-lived, and were typically associated with large doses (more than 3g) of MSG that were consumed without food.

Most people don't ingest MSG on its own, and since most recipes call for a scant amount - ¼ to ½tsp per pound of meat (enough to feed four to six people) - it's unlikely you'd consume it in high enough quantities to be affected.

Who can be at increased risk?
While most people can eat a meal with MSG without issue, a small subset - less than 1% of

the general population - may be particularly sensitive to MSG. Symptoms typically appear in the first two hours after consuming foods with MSG, and can include headache, skin flushing, sweating, nausea, numbness, and fatigue. An even smaller subset of people can have a serious allergic reaction.

Should one limit consumption of foods with MSG?
While MSG itself likely doesn't deserve its reputation as a toxic ingredient, there are reasons to avoid eating foods with MSG. Foods that contain MSG are often highly processed convenience foods that contain high amounts of sodium, fat, and other refined ingredients that aren't good for us. Seeing monosodium glutamate on an ingredients list should prompt you to look at the other ingredients included — and to consider trying to make that food at home, or to seek out a healthier alternative instead.

How much sodium does MSG contain?
While it may be best to avoid or reduce packaged foods containing MSG, the flavour booster could actually help you reduce the amount of sodium you consume when cooking at home. Despite having 'sodium' in its name, monosodium glutamate contains only 12.28 grams of sodium per 100g. That's about one-third of the sodium found in table salt (39.34g/100g).
If you replace ½tsp of table salt with the same amount of MSG, you'll reduce the sodium content in your food by about 37%, without losing much flavour. As a home cook, that means using MSG could help enhance the perception of saltiness while reducing the actual sodium content in your food.
(Courtesy: health.harvard.edu)

WALKING AFTER EATING

The health benefits of walking are notable no matter what time of day you lace up. Still, a mounting body of scientific evidence hints that you might accrue even more benefits by timing some of those steps wisely.

Here are four reasons why a little walk after eating a meal can take you a long way:

Balances blood sugar

After we eat a meal, the foods we digest are converted to glucose, a source of energy for our body, explains Mary Stewart, RD, a registered dietitian and the founder of Cultivate Nutrition in Dallas. If we get back to business immediately after eating and stay fairly sedentary, this glucose is stored in the liver and muscles as glycogen to be used for energy later on.

But when we move our body by walking, we are activating our muscles which use that glucose for energy, which reduces the post-meal blood sugar spike, Stewart says. Since our muscles are asking our bodies for fuel (in the form of glucose) to power that post-meal movement, less of it stays in our blood. As a result, walking after eating not only helps keep our blood sugar in check, but can even help lower it.

Promotes smoother digestion

Have you ever finished a meal and felt bloated or overly full? This is a common sensation, especially if you tend to eat or drink at a fairly fast pace. Besides slowing down your rate of eating and opting for portion sizes that better agree with your stomach and intestines, taking a walk after eating has been shown to stimulate digestion.

Walking after eating for 10-15 minutes has been shown to help adults who frequently experience bloating feel markedly less bloated after eating. What's more, a post-meal stroll can help reduce forms of gastrointestinal (GI) distress, like gas.

Increases circulation

In addition to kickstarting the digestive process and getting food and drink moving through our system, walking after eating also helps improve blood circulation, according to William W Li, MD, a Boston-based internal medicine physician and author of Eat to Beat Disease: The New Science of How Your Body Can Heal Itself. This means that more blood is pumped to our muscles and brain - another reason why you might feel even more invigorated by walking after eating rather than working (or snoozing, scrolling, or sitting) after a meal.

"Walking helps to mobilise stem cells into the bloodstream, too," Dr Li adds. "These stem cells assist in healing and regenerating organs that need to be repaired."

Boosts mood

According to a 2022 review published in the journal JAMA Psychiatry, adults meeting the physical activity recommendation of 2½ hours per week saw improved mental health, including a 25 per cent lower risk of depression compared to those who did no physical activity.

"Being active post-meal - or really any time of the day - can be a mood booster," Ehsani says. "Physical activity can boost your circulating levels of 'feel good' hormones, including endorphins and dopamine."

Dr Li adds that walking also helps make your brain more sensitive to the neurotransmitter serotonin which makes you feel calmer, happier, and more even-keeled.



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SUMMER ENERGY

Sunshine – boost your mood

One of the biggest and often over-looked aspects of health, is having a well-balanced body clock. When our own body clock or 'circadian rhythms' are aligned with the rhythms of the day, we're much more likely to experience good energy levels and optimal sleep, healthy digestion, and healthy hormones. There are four big players when it comes to setting the body clock - light, food, movement and social interaction.

Summer is the season when we can make the most of the morning sunlight to get our internal rhythms back on track, which has a huge impact on getting good quality sleep too. When we step outside in the morning, light receptors in our eyes absorb the natural 'blue' lightwaves which send a message to the brain that it's daytime. When the brain gets this message, it's a little like turning the key in an engine.

Summer is linked to the 'pleasure' hormone dopamine? It turns out, that when we get this dose of morning sunlight, it triggers a dopamine release into the body, giving us a natural mood boost to start the day.

Studies show that the later this light exposure happens, (if we sleep in or stay indoors for long periods of time) the more likely we are to feel depressed and lethargic, unmotivated and sluggish throughout the rest of the day.

To make the most of morning sunlight, try stepping outside within 30 minutes of waking. It only takes around 5 to 10 minutes for the light to have a positive and awakening effect on the body, so you could move through a few rounds of Sun salutations, sip your morning coffee, or practice a pranayama technique whilst you're there.

SET YOUR BODY CLOCK

IF SPRING IS ALL ABOUT MAKING PLANS AND GRADUALLY EMERGING FROM WINTER HIBERNATION, SUMMER IS THE TIME WHEN WE PUT THOSE PLANS INTO ACTION, FEELING MOTIVATED AND FULL OF ENERGY



Summer foods and herbs

With more movement and activity throughout summer, there also comes a little more oxidative stress. Oxidative stress is the natural reaction of cells and tissue breaking down when we move and exercise, and spend time in lots of sunlight

In order to prevent oxidative stress from becoming damaging when we're engaging in a more 'yang' lifestyle in the summer, it's useful to consume more foods high in antioxidants.

Of course, nature knows this, and so many of the foods in season during Summer are rich in them. Opt for strawberries, gooseberries, blueberries and blackcurrants, beetroot, broccoli, and peppers, which are all high in antioxidants and vitamin C. If you love juicy fruits like melon and papaya, or bananas and pineapple, this is the season to indulge in them.

In terms of herbs and spices, choose those that will help calm and cool you. According to Ayurveda, summer is the season of high 'Pitta' energy, which when excessive, can make you feel overly hot, irritable, inflamed and acidic. To remedy and prevent this, add fresh herbs like mint, basil, dill, coriander, and parsley to your salads, and dry herbs like fennel and chamomile in tea.

For those who enjoy foraging and can do so safely, search for in-season wild onion, nettle, watercress, and seaweeds like sea rocket, sea purslane, and kelp. To reduce excessive heat and Pitta energy, favour the tastes of naturally sweet, bitter and astringent foods. Think fruits, leafy greens, broccoli, sprouts and courgette.

(Extracted from: ekhartyoga.com)

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