

RO65mn urban, tourism initiatives planned

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) has unveiled proposals from several governorates for urban and tourism development, totalling more than RO65mn in investments.

The Dolphin Bay development project, spread over 200,000sqm and valued at RO10mn was proposed in Musandam. Buraimi submitted plans for Al Abela Park, covering 7mn sqm, valued at RO6mn, while Muscat proposed the RO6.5mn Hawiyat Najm project on 495,000sqm.

North Sharqiyah announced the 6mn sqm Souk el Arbaa project valued at RO5mn, while South Batinah presented the Pearl of Batinah project spread over 122,000sqm, costing RO10mn.

South Sharqiyah has proposed the Ras al Hadd seafont project on 172,000sqm, valued at RO8.5mn, while Al Wusta announced the RO10mn Haima Oasis project spanning 500,000sqm. Dhofar intro-



duced the 62,000sqm Space and Science Oasis project estimated at RO9.5mn.

MHUP stated that these projects aim to enhance local infrastructure, tourism offerings and urban amenities, reflecting Oman's commitment to sustainable development and economic diversification through strategic investment in various regions.

In addition, MHUP announced that the sultanate has achieved significant milestones in housing and urban planning in

the first half of 2024. Key projects include construction of 20 housing units in Kamzar village, Musandam, and 45 units in Al Ruhaibat, North Sharqiyah. Dhofar saw the completion of 20 housing units and maintenance of 32 more on the Hallaniyat Islands. Nineteen housing units were built in Wadi Bani Khalid and ten in Mandaa in Jabal Shams, Dakhiyah.

Additionally, 15 housing units were constructed in Jalan, South Sharqiyah, while 214 people in

South Sharqiyah received compensation - through cash, purchase of houses or building construction - for damage to their homes caused by weather extremes.

Financial allocations for 2022-2023 facilitated the construction of 478 houses, representing 40% of the total projects, while 747 housing units, accounting for 60% of the projects, were delivered to citizens. The National Strategic Plan for Housing Assistance saw 65% completion rate.

Asyad acquires global freight forwarding firm

Acquisition of Skybridge Freight Solutions to help Asyad expand into key trade hubs, including China, India and the USA

Muscat - Asyad Group, Oman's end-to-end global logistics provider, has acquired Skybridge Freight Solutions (SFS), a leading global freight forwarding company.

The landmark acquisition is the group's first international acquisition in core logistics activities and marks a strategic move to significantly expand Asyad's footprint through active operations in key trade hubs and the major economies of China, India, the USA and the GCC, supported by unhindered access to SFS' well-established network that covers over 90 geographies across six continents.

Ziyad bin Abdullah al Harbi, Vice-President of Strategic Planning at Asyad Group, said, "The acquisition of SFS will enhance our ability to enter global markets and broaden the range of services we offer." He added that the move will significantly boost the logistics sector's contribution to the GDP and create new opportunities for small and medium enterprises operating in the sector.

SFS is a premier freight solutions provider offering leading freight forwarding services across air, sea and land in addition to warehousing and distribution.



The fast-growing company boasts a strong financial footing and caters to a diverse array of major industries including food, energy, automotive, pharmaceuticals and construction. The company serves over 1,400 customers, including Fortune 500 and blue-chip companies, leveraging its long-standing relationships with global

multimodal logistics services to meet evolving customer needs. The impacts of the recent acquisition are far-reaching and will extend across the entire logistics ecosystem, with more capabilities in freight forwarding leading to advances in supply chain, e-commerce, ports and container lines.

The acquisition will significantly boost the logistics sector's contribution to the GDP and create new opportunities for SMEs in the sector

ZIYAD AL HARBI

freight forwarding networks, government bodies, shipping lines and airlines to carve a substantial competitive edge and open multiple avenues for growth.

With this acquisition, Asyad aims to bolster its competitiveness in the global marketplace by magnifying its end-to-end capabilities in providing unparalleled

Acquiring SFS will play a significant role in bolstering Oman's connectivity with vital global trade routes. By unlocking new connections and strengthening existing ones with the world's biggest markets, all logistics players will reap the benefits of unrestricted multimodal access and amplified trade opportunities resulting in higher volumes.

RAFO signs agreement with Bell Textron to buy helicopters

Muscat - Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) has signed a contract with the American aerospace manufacturer Bell Textron to purchase a number of helicopters.

The procurement of the aircraft is intended to enhance RAFO's performance and efficiency, aligning with modernisation and development requirements.

The selection of these helicopters meets the needs for flexibility and effective performance that suit RAFO's operational requirements. The purchase will add to RAFO's capacity to undertake national operational and developmental tasks, particularly those related to community service, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement.

capacity to undertake national operational and developmental tasks, particularly those related to community service, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement.

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MoCIIP announces first National Intellectual Property Exhibition

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), in collaboration with the National Intellectual Property Office, has announced the first National Intellectual Property Exhibition.

The event will be held from November 18 to 20 at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The exhibition aims to provide a platform for inventors to showcase their innovations in various technological and technical fields.

To participate, applicants must meet certain criteria: the work must be registered with the National Intellectual Property Office; it should be new, fully applicable in industrial practice and of high quality; and participants can be individuals or teams from emerging companies active in

technological and creative industries.

Submissions will be evaluated by a panel of experts for eligibility for participation.

The exhibition is a significant opportunity for innovators to gain recognition and support for their creative endeavours, stated MoCIIP. Registration is open till August 30. For more information, visit www.tejarah.gov.om

Municipality signs contract to establish new park, sweet factory in Mawaleh

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has signed an agreement with Saud bin Hilal al Sabri LLC to lease municipal land for the establishment of a uniquely designed park with public and commercial amenities in South Mawaleh, Seeb.

The agreement was signed by Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, and Saud bin Hilal al Sabri, owner of Diwaniya Omani Sweets, at the municipality building in Darsait.

The agreement leases a plot of municipal land in South Mawaleh, covering a total area of 31,182sqm, for a duration of 20 years to establish a public park with a variety of facilities designed to provide a recreational space for the community. The park will include walking and cycling paths, children's play areas, green spaces, sports courts, table tennis facilities, an amphitheatre and event spaces, kiosks and cafes operated by small and medium enterprises, as well as service facilities such as restrooms, car park and prayer areas.

Additionally, a part of the plot facing the public street will be allocated for establishment of the

Diwaniya Omani Sweets Factory, which will feature a visitor experience centre, offering guests a direct opportunity to discover traditional Omani sweets manufacturing methods and ingredients.

Commenting on the partner-

ship, Humaidi stated, "Muscat Municipality is committed to utilising its assets to achieve benefits beyond direct profits, focusing on the social impact of the investment. This agreement serves as a model for purposeful partnerships between the public and pri-

vate sectors. The municipality strives to enhance its efforts in the realm of social responsibility, launching initiatives that contribute to the development of cities and provinces, creating job opportunities for nationals, and maximising local value addition, thereby contributing to economic and social development goals."

Muscat Municipality continues its efforts to enhance cooperation between the public and private sectors and engage with the local community to create projects and initiatives that stimulate sustainable growth. The municipality is dedicated to providing all essential resources related to building neighbourhoods, enhancing tourism and boosting the economy, it stated.

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Sayyid Badr conveys condolences to Indian, Pakistani ministers

Muscat - H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, held phone conversations with Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, and S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India, following the gun attack in Wadi Kabir.

H E Sayyid Badr conveyed his condolences to both the ministers, expressing deep sorrow over

the death of four members of the Pakistani community and one Indian in the mosque attack.

H E Sayyid Badr and Dar underscored the need of fostering peaceful coexistence among diverse populations and rejecting extremist ideologies that promote discrimination. They highlighted the role of collaborative efforts in upholding the values of peace and mutual respect.

Dhofar Khareef Book Fair opens in Salalah

Salalah - Dhofar Khareef Book Fair 2024 was inaugurated on Monday in Salalah and will run for two weeks. The event has been organised by Southern Sail Exhibitions, in cooperation with Dhofar Municipality, under the patronage of Sheikh Tariq bin Khalid al Hinai, Wali of Taqah.

Around 35 publishing houses and libraries from Oman and abroad are participating in the fair, some through agencies.

Salem bin Mohammed al Yafei, Supervisor of the book fair, highlighted the significance of the event, noting its timing during the monsoon season, which attracts tourists from both within and outside the sultanate. "The fair aims to raise awareness on the importance of books and features a diverse range of publications that target different segments of society," he said.

The exhibition includes various cultural activities, seminars and workshops, and participation of the Dhofar branch of Writers Association, Al Jazer Association and the Ithra Cultural Initiative.

The book fair serves as a platform for literary engagement and cultural exchange, drawing attention to the pivotal role of books in society and fostering a love for reading among all age groups.

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

Anxiety runs high among Bangladeshi expatriates amid turmoil back home

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Anxiety and tension are running high among the Bangladeshi community in Oman with their country engulfed in violent protests.

Bangladesh continues to experience telecom disruptions, cutting off Internet and phone lines, leaving expatriates in Oman in a state of despair.

Bangladesh has witnessed clashes between police and mainly student protesters demanding an end to a quota that reserved 30% of government jobs for relatives of veterans who fought in the country's war of independence in 1971. The violence has resulted in over a hundred deaths.

The inability to reach loved ones has exacerbated the anxiety felt by many, raising widespread concern within the Bangladeshi community. The lack of communication during such a critical time has led to a pervasive sense of helplessness. Shabuddin Hassan, a Bangladeshi national working in a luxury hotel in Muscat, expressed his distress, saying, "My wife delivered ten days back. Luckily, she came back from the hospital just before the problems escalated. This is a very sorry state; I cannot keep in touch with them. Imagine my state."

Hassan's situation highlights



My staff was to come from Dhaka, but he got stuck. One of his family members is badly hurt. The Internet shutdown has completely cut us off from our families. This is inhumane and uncalled for

MAMMON ISLAM

the personal toll the unrest is taking on families separated by thousands of miles.

Mammon Islam, a businessman dealing in car parts in Mawaleh, shared his frustration and concern, stating, "My staff was to come from Dhaka, but he got stuck. One of his family members is badly hurt. The Internet shutdown has completely cut us off from our families. This is inhumane and uncalled for." He sup-

ported the student protest and said that such government reservations are a disgrace to the country's rich history.

Restaurant owner Robi ul Rehman called for immediate action to restore communication lines and provide assurance for the safety of loved ones back home. "The ongoing protests and the government response have created a crisis for Bangladeshi nationals abroad. It

is also strange that the embassy has maintained silence instead of helping us out."

Efforts to reach out to the Bangladeshi Embassy in Muscat for support and updates failed.

On Sunday, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh slashed the controversial quota in government jobs. The court reduced the 30% quota to 5% and the remaining quotas to another 2%, opening up 93% of jobs for all Bangladeshis based on merit.

However, the protesters have refused to end their movement until the government officially notifies these changes. They are also demanding justice for the more than 100 people killed in clashes between protesters and security forces.

Govt platform processes over 1bn electronic transactions in H1 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) has reported that over 200mn data exchange requests were monitored and more than 1bn transactions were executed through the Government Integration Platform during the first half of this year.

The platform currently offers 152 electronic services provided by 32 government institutions, benefiting 64 entities, including units of the state administrative apparatus and private sector institutions.

This achievement underscores MTCIT's dedicated efforts to enhance government service efficiency and improve the user experience as part of Oman's digital transformation plan.

The platform aims to streamline procedures and expedite the completion of government transactions by enabling relevant authorities to access necessary data and information instantly, eliminating the need for additional document requests from



Government Integration Platform offers 152 electronic services provided by 32 government institutions, benefiting 64 entities

beneficiaries, saving time and effort for citizens, residents and businesses.

The integration platform is a

crucial component of Oman's digital infrastructure, serving as a central hub for secure and seamless data exchange between various government agencies. It also facilitates data sharing with Gulf Cooperation Council countries through a secure Gulf network.

MTCIT is committed to further developing the platform and expanding its services. This aligns with Oman's national goals to build and develop a thriving digital economy that provides smart and efficient government services to all.



Silal market boosts Oman's vegetable, fruit business

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Since its inauguration on June 29, the Silal Fruit and Vegetable Central Market in Khazaen Economic City has received over 1,100 refrigerated units, handling more than 26,000 tonnes of goods from local and neighbouring markets.

Othman bin Ali al Hatali, Director of Operations at Silal, stated that the market, located in the wilayat of Barka, aims to enhance wholesale trade in the vegetable and fruit sector. The market boasts advanced equipment and facilities designed to support traders, importers and exporters. "The current capacity of Silal market exceeds 25,000 tonnes of vegetables and fruits. The facilities were built to maintain the quality of produce, reducing waste through proper storage," he said.

The market features a 30,000sqm air-conditioned wholesale hall and 90 refrigerated warehouses, each covering 126sqm. Hatali informed that all the refrigerated units have been rented, indicating the market's significance and high demand among merchants.

Silal market offers compre-

hensive services, including regulatory and administrative support from government agencies, customs inspection, quarantine, and food safety services. "We provide a single inspection station and an integrated laboratory for examining samples promptly," Hatali added. The market also supports efficient logistics with seven modern gates designed for truck entry, ensuring separate entrances for trucks and light vehicles.

Emphasising the market's focus on local produce, Hatali said, "Silal serves as an integrated hub for Omani agricultural products, receiving goods from various governorates and redistributing these to main markets nationwide. The market encourages Omani farmers to expand their activities by providing facilities for product reception and inspection, enabling export and increasing the economic value of Omani products."

He welcomed retailers from across Oman, noting that ample parking and various services are available to enhance their purchasing experience. "The early success of the market underscores our goals to develop the wholesale sector, support re-exports, and encourage merchants to use Silal as their primary hub."

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

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*Rates as on July 22

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Eurozone's debt-to-GDP ratio rise to 88.7%

The ratio of government debt to gross domestic product (GDP) across the euro area stood at 88.7% in the first quarter of 2024, according to official figures revealed on Monday.

The 27-member bloc's statistical department Eurostat said that as of the end of the first quarter of 2024, the ratio of general government gross debt to GDP increased from 88.2% on a quarterly basis.

The figure also increased on the EU side from 81.5% to 82.0% over the same period.

On a yearly basis, the government debt to GDP declined in both the euro area (from 90.1% to 88.7%) and the EU (from 83.0% to 82.0%).

In another release, Eurostat said that in the first quarter of 2024, the seasonally adjusted general government deficit to GDP ratio stood at 2.6% in the euro area and in the EU.

Oil prices under pressure amid concerns over China demand

Muscat – The rising concerns over Chinese demand are weighing on global oil prices. Crude prices decreased on Monday over demand uncertainties in the US and China, the world's largest oil consumers.

Oman crude price sharply fell 2.4% to \$82.33 per barrel at the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) on Monday. The average price of Oman crude for July delivery has stabilised at \$83.89 per barrel, which is \$5.41 per barrel lower than June delivery, according to the DME data.

Global benchmark Brent crude traded at \$82.45 per barrel in morning trade in London, a fall of 0.22% from the closing price of \$82.63 per barrel in the previous trading session on Friday. The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$78.45 per barrel at the same time, a 0.24% drop from the previous session that closed at \$78.64 per barrel.

The US Federal Reserve will review its monetary policy during July 30-31. While investors expect the US central bank to keep rates unchanged, they will also look for further evidence that a rate cut will happen at the September meeting.

Experts believe that keeping interest rates at high levels for a sustained period may pose risks



Oman crude price sharply fell 2.4% to \$82.33 per barrel on Monday. The average price of Oman crude for July delivery has stabilised at \$83.89 per barrel, which is \$5.41 per barrel lower than June delivery

to the oil demand outlook. On the other hand, reducing policy interest rates soon would support economic activity in the country, resulting in higher oil demand.

The slower-than-expected economic growth in China, the world's largest crude oil importer, weighed oil prices down

after the figures sparked concerns last week over the country's demand for crude.

China's GDP rose by 4.7% in the second quarter of 2024, below market expectations, according to official data, which followed figures showing a softness in oil imports.

Moreover, the country unex-

pectedly lowered a key short-term policy rate and benchmark lending rates on Monday to boost the economy. Sentiment amid market players surrounding Chinese markets remains weak.

Meanwhile, Morgan Stanley expects oil prices to drop to the mid-\$70s next year amid a surplus on the market.

Currently, the oil market is tight and warrants the \$80s per barrel price range, but with seasonal demand starting to abate in the fourth quarter, market balances are set to return, the investment bank said in a note carried by Reuters on Monday.

In the fourth quarter of 2024, the market would be balanced 'when seasonal demand tailwinds abate and both OPEC and non-OPEC supply return to growth,' Morgan Stanley's analysts wrote.

Next year, the market will even tip into a surplus amid rising

supply from both OPEC+ and non-OPEC+ producers, the bank's commodity strategists reckon.

According to the bank, global refinery runs will hit their 2024 peak in August and are not expected to reach this level again until July next year. That's why Morgan Stanley expects Brent Crude prices to drop from current levels to the mid \$70s to high \$70s per barrel range in 2025.

Morgan Stanley reiterated in the note its price forecast of \$86 per barrel Brent oil for the third quarter of 2024.

The Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC), the OPEC+ panel monitoring the oil market, is not expected to recommend in August any changes to the current production policy plan of the group, OPEC+ delegates told Bloomberg last week.

When the panel meets again on August 1, the meeting is expected to be a routine one, and no recommendations on oil production policy – other than the OPEC+ group has already announced – are expected to be issued, according to Bloomberg's anonymous sources among the OPEC+ delegates.

(With inputs from agencies)

UAE's Masdar raises \$1bn to fund global projects

Abu Dhabi, UAE – Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (Masdar), the UAE's clean energy powerhouse, announced that it has successfully raised \$1bn through its second green bond issuance, under its Green Finance Framework.

The announcement comes one year after the company's first successful issuance of \$750mn on the International Securities Market of the London Stock Exchange.

The issuance comprises dual tranches of \$500mn each, with tenors of five and ten years and coupons of 4.875% and 5.25%, respectively.

There was strong appetite from regional and international investors with the orderbook peaking at \$4.6bn, an oversubscription of 4.6 times. Allocation was finalised with an average split of 70% to international investors and 30% to MENA investors.

The \$1bn proceeds from the issuance will be deployed to fund Masdar's equity commitments on new greenfield projects, several in developing economies, as



the company pursues a target portfolio capacity of 100GW by 2030.

Mohamed Jameel al Ramahi, Chief Executive Officer of Masdar, said, "Following the successful launch of our first green bond in 2023, our second green bond issuance for \$1bn underscores investor confidence in Masdar's financial robustness and its sustainability credentials. The funds will be pivotal in advancing our ambitious portfolio of renewable energy projects, further cementing our role as a key player in supporting an equitable energy transition by increasing energy access in emerging markets and the Global South."

Mazin Khan, Chief Financial

Officer of Masdar, added, "As we have committed under our Green Finance Framework, we are raising green bonds and other green finance instruments to invest in new dark green projects. This is an important component of our investor relations story, but it is also a commitment that we are transparently fulfilling through the publication of our audited annual allocation and impact reporting. Few companies as strongly rated as Masdar offer investors bonds that can make such a positive impact across the ESG spectrum. Even fewer companies can tell investors exactly where every dollar of their money is going and its impact."

WAM

flydubai's expansion plans hindered by delays in Boeing delivery schedules

Dubai, UAE – Dubai-based flydubai has announced that its expansion plans have been significantly impacted by Boeing's latest update regarding ongoing delays in its aircraft delivery schedule.

The carrier is currently evaluating its route development plans and potential frequency revision across the network due to a lack of new aircraft deliveries over the next few months. flydubai urges Boeing to honour and renew its commitment to meet its delivery obligations.

Commenting on the ongoing delays, Ghaith al Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer at flydubai, said, "We are extremely disappointed to learn that Boeing will not be able to fulfill its commitment to deliver more aircraft for the remainder of the year. Boeing's short-noticed and frequent delivery schedule revisions have hindered our strategic growth plans resulting in significant disruptions to our published schedules. The reduced capacity will ultimately affect our customers as well as our projected financial performance."



flydubai's plans for this year were initially based on the commitment to receive 14 new aircraft

"flydubai has always valued its longstanding partnership with Boeing and both airline and the manufacturer have been resilient and agile in tackling challenges over the years. We urge Boeing to take immediate action and implement measures to stabilise its

production and delivery processes to avoid further delays while upholding the highest standards. We look forward to a swift resolution of this issue," added Ghaith.

The unpredictability of the aircraft delivery schedules from Boeing over the past few years has put significant pressure on the carrier and its ability to firmly plan for its projected growth, especially as it geared up to meet the strong demand for travel after the pandemic.

flydubai's plans for this year were initially based on the commitment to receive 14 new aircraft. The carrier continues to

explore all possible avenues to mitigate the impact of these delivery delays.

flydubai operates a single fleet-type of 88 Boeing 737 aircraft and includes: 29 Next-Generation Boeing 737-800, 56 Boeing 737 MAX 8 and 03 Boeing 737 MAX 9 aircraft.

Ongoing challenges with Boeing's delivery schedule resulted in fewer aircraft being delivered every year for the past three years. Multiple revisions of the delivery schedule for 2024 meant that Boeing will not deliver the 14 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft originally scheduled for the year.

Microsoft says 8.5mn devices affected globally by CrowdStrike glitch

Redmond, US – Microsoft has estimated that around 8.5mn computers around the world were affected by the recent global IT outage caused by CrowdStrike glitch.

It's the first time the company has put a figure on the scale of the outage and suggests it could be the worst cyber event in history.

On the official Microsoft blog, the company said that while the bug affected less than one percent of all computers running Windows, "the broad economic

and societal impacts reflect the use of CrowdStrike by enterprises that run many critical services".

The glitch was caused by a corrupted update issued by security company CrowdStrike which caused computers running Windows to crash.

That caused havoc across much of the world from Thursday into Friday with flights unable to take off or land, some businesses unable to take card payments and hospitals and clinics having to cancel opera-



tions.

CrowdStrike's CEO George Kurtz apologised for the chaos and said late on Friday that the

company had issued a fix and that computers were slowly returning to normal but warned it could be "some time" before all

systems were running normally.

"I wasn't that surprised that an accident caused severe global digital disruption. I guess I was a little surprised that the cause of it was a software update from a very well-respected cybersecurity company," said Ciaran Martin, the former Head of the UK's National Cyber Security Centre.

"We've talked for a long time in the industry about the inherent fragility of foundational parts of the internet, these little bits of activity and infrastructure that underpin the whole thing and if

they go wrong they can have really serious global consequences."

Meanwhile, the former head of cyber at the UK's intelligence and security organisation GCHQ stressed the outage highlighted the scale of dependency most people have on their computer systems and the devastating impact that disruptions like this can have.

"It does emphasise that we live in a world of dependency and vulnerability and that disruption can and will happen and

IT is at the core of our day to day operations, our businesses, our economies, everything about our lives. So this will happen and will continue to happen," said Sally Walker.

Walker also warned of "malicious" actors who will exploit the ambiguity and confusion surrounding an outage.

That message was echoed by the National Cyber Security Centre, which warned people and businesses to be on the lookout for phishing attempts.

Agencies

India's economy to grow by 7% on sustained basis: Economic Survey

New Delhi, India – The Economic Survey presented in the Indian Parliament by Finance Minsiter Nirmala Sithraman on Monday says in the medium term Indian economy can grow at a rate of 7%.

The Economic Survey stated, "In the medium term, the Indian economy can grow at a rate of 7% plus on a sustained basis if we build on the structural reforms undertaken over the last decade."

Achieving a sustained growth rate of over 7% will require a tripartite compact between the Union Government, State Governments, and the private sector, the Economic Survey said.

The Economic Survey suggests that the government's focus must shift to bottom-up reforms and strengthening governance to ensure that the structural reforms of the past decade result in strong, sustainable, balanced, and inclusive growth.

The growth strategy for the medium term, termed "Amrit Kaal," hinges on six critical areas. First, there must be a deliberate focus on boosting private investment. Second, the growth and expansion of India's MSMEs should be a strategic priority. Third, the potential of agriculture as an engine of future growth must be recognised, with policy impediments removed. Fourth, securing the financing of India's green transition is essential. Fifth, bridging the education-employment gap is necessary.

Finally, focused building of



India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sithraman presented the Economic Survey in the Parliament on Monday

India's forex reserves rose highest globally

New Delhi, India – India's foreign exchange (forex) reserves, in the recently concluded financial year 2023-24, increased the highest among major reserves-holding countries globally, asserted the Economic Survey tabled in Parliament on Monday.

During the financial year, the foreign exchange kitty had in-

creased by \$68bn. A moderation in the current account deficit amidst large capital inflows into India enabled the addition of foreign exchange reserves in 2023-24, the government said in the Economic Survey. The buffer of foreign exchange reserves insulates domestic economic activity from global spillovers. "These reserves act

as a cushion and provide liquidity, ensuring India can meet its external obligations," the Economic Survey read. The reserves stood at \$653.7bn on June 21, 2024, enough to cover more than 10 months of imports projected for 2024-25 and more than 98% of total external debt outstanding at the end of March 2024.

India's foreign exchange reserves have been touching fresh lifetime highs on and off. Foreign exchange reserves are assets held by a country's central bank or monetary authority. It is generally held in reserve currencies, usually the US dollar and, to a lesser degree, the Euro, Japanese Yen, and Britain's Pound Sterling.

ANI

state capacity and capability is required to sustain and accelerate India's progress.

The financial inclusion strategy has emphasised the usage of accounts through direct benefit

transfers, promoting digital payments via RuPay cards, UPI, and more. As the sector evolves, it

must brace for potential vulnerabilities, requiring agile and flexible policy and regulatory

China extends US tariff exemptions on certain goods

Beijing, China – China will continue to exempt certain US goods from additional tariffs until the end of February 2025, the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council said Monday.

According to a previous statement issued in December last year, certain items from the United States were excluded from the tariff countermeasures against the US Section 301 measures until July 31, 2024. After the extension, the exemption will last until February 28, 2025, the commission said in a statement.

Meanwhile, China's Ministry of Commerce on Friday called on relevant countries to resist economic coercion from the US in the semiconductor sector.

A ministry spokesperson made the remarks following media reports that the United States is considering tougher measures to exert pressure on enterprises from countries such as Japan and the Netherlands to restrict their trade of chips with China to a greater extent.

The ministry said that China hopes relevant countries will adhere to market principles and the spirit of their contracts, resist the economic coercion from the US, and work together to safeguard the stability of global industrial and supply chains.

The semiconductor sector is highly globalised after decades of growth, and this is the result of market law and the choices enterprises have made, the spokesperson said.

Xinhua



China cuts key interest rate to buoy economic recovery

Beijing, China – China on Monday cut the market-based benchmark lending rate, in line with market expectations, as authorities stepped up monetary support to shore up the economy.

The one-year loan prime rate (LPR) came in at 3.35% on Monday, down from the previous reading of 3.45%, according to the National Interbank Funding Center.

The over-five-year LPR, on which many lenders base their mortgage rates, was lowered by 10 basis points to 3.85%.

The monthly-released data is a pricing reference rate for banks and is based on rates of the People's Bank of China (PBOC)'s open market operations.

To better manage expectations and align the LPR release with market operations, the PBOC has announced a change in the monthly release time of the rates to 9:00am from 9:15am, typically around the 20th of each month.

The adjustment takes effect on Monday, the PBOC said.

The LPR cut came in response

to market expectations and this move will gradually reduce financing costs for the real economy, thereby encouraging borrowing and investment, according to analysts.

The reduction to the over-five-year LPR came in the wake of a series of supportive measures aimed at bolstering the property sector. On May 17, China announced new policies to stimulate home purchases, ranging from lower minimum down payment ratios to the cancellation of mortgage rate floors for first and second homes.

Analysts believe that these policy measures will help inject impetus into the healthy development of the real estate market.

Earlier on Monday, the central bank also lowered the interest rate on seven-day reverse repos, a key short-term policy rate, from 1.8 percent to 1.7%. The move aims to strengthen counter-cyclical adjustments to better support the real economy, the PBOC said.

The rate adjustment was announced after the PBOC gover-

nor Pan Gongsheng said last month that the central bank will further improve the market-oriented interest rate mechanism with the short-term operational rate serving the function of the primary policy rate.

He said that the central bank will further enhance the quality of LPR quotations to better reflect the interest rate levels of the market.

In the first half of this year, China's central bank has rolled out an array of monetary policy instruments to ensure sufficient liquidity, reduce the social financing costs and stabilize market expectations, said Dong Ximiao, chief researcher at Merchants Union Consumer Finance Company Limited.

Dong expected that the PBOC will continue to guide financial institutions to increase support for key areas and weak links of the real economy in a bid to create an appropriate monetary and financial environment to boost macroeconomic recovery and high-quality development.

Xinhua



الشركة العالمية لإدارة الفنادق ش. م . م

Hotel Management Company International SAOG

THE CHEDI, MUSCAT شيدى . مسقط

P. O. Box 964, P.C. 133, Al Khuwair, Sultanate of Oman

ص.ب: 964 الخوير - الرمز البريدي 133 سلطنة عمان

BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I hereby present the second quarterly report ending 30 June 2024 of the Hotels Management Company International SAOG.

The company achieved the following financial results during the period:

1. The company generated a total revenue of RO.4,522 million (vs. related period previous year RO.4,141 million) which is an increase of 9.19% as compared to the corresponding period of previous year in total revenue.

2. The company has a Net income after income tax of RO 0.499 million vs. the related period previous year's net income of RO. 0.301 million. It shows an increase of 65.56% compared to the previous year of the same period.

Achievement:

1. After six months of 2024, The Chedi Muscat (CMU) has achieved a 10% occupancy growth compared to last year. Concentrating on CMU's traditional markets and consistent exposure in secondary markets helped us achieve this fantastic growth.

2. Summer packages are well received by the market. Compared to last year, there is a better demand for the local packages. CMU saw a significant drop in room nights last year from its source markets during May and June. We managed to bridge this gap in 2024 and regain our market share during these months.

3. A higher occupancy helped to have a better capture ratio in all outlets, which helped CMU achieve a 17% increase in Food and Beverage revenue compared to last year. Throughout the year, CMU has managed to entice the local clientele by offering unique dining concepts and events, which helped to grow outside covers significantly.

Outlook

Two new luxury hotels opening in the first week of June will impact overall occupancy. There are no new flights into the market, which will affect all hotels.

With its unique concept, design, and experience, CMU will still be the most favored spot for clients who want to have a distinct, authentic Omani vacation. This will help CMU maintain its fair share of the market.

New openings will bring new opportunities. Oman will have better exposure in main source markets. Pre-opening marketing efforts from these new properties will help Oman gain much-needed exposure in clients' minds. With targeted activities in these markets, CMU will be able to emerge successfully and maintain its market dominance.

Appreciation

The members of the Board of Directors join me in acknowledging sincere thanks to our valued guests and shareholders for their continuous confidence in our hotel. We wish to convey our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Financial Service Authority and Muscat Exchange for their prudent supervising and guidance on our endeavors.

We also convey our sincere thanks to the management and staff for their great job and efforts.

We salute and pledge our allegiance to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said as he takes the country on continued progress and prosperity.

The Chairman
Hotels Management Company International SAOG

UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 30 June 2024

	30-Jun 2024	30-Jun 2023
Non-current Assets	6,292,688	9,086,713
Property, plant and equipment	5,129,520	5,178,867
Fixed deposits – long term	681,074	3,531,074
Deferred tax Asset	432,747	426,119
Current Assets	5,141,629	2,307,530
Inventories	381,611	425,164
Debtors and Prepayments	612,835	878,050
Due from related parties	12,470	15,263
Bank and cash	4,134,713	989,053
Total assets	11,434,317	11,394,243
Current Liabilities	1,960,386	1,973,657
Current portion of term loan	700,000	700,000
Creditors and Accruals	1,250,963	1,271,902
Due to related parties	9,423	1,755
Income Tax payable	0	0
Non-current liabilities	2,299,228	2,541,406
Term Loan	1,750,000	2,100,000
End of service benefits	549,228	441,406
Total liabilities	4,259,614	4,515,063
Net assets	7,174,703	6,879,180
Equity		
Share capital	3,000,000	3,000,000
Legal reserve	1,000,000	1,000,000
Retained earnings/(accumulated losses)	3,174,703	2,879,180
Total equity	7,174,703	6,879,180

UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
For the Period ending 30 June 2024

	30-Jun 2024	30-Jun 2023
Turnover/ Revenue	4,521,820	4,141,378
Operating costs	(3,489,719)	(3,366,932)
Operating profit	1,032,101	774,446
Administration & selling expense	(328,643)	(311,974)
Impairment loss/reversal of loss on trade receivables	(12,110)	4,058
Management & licence fees	(143,670)	(127,760)
Net Operating Profit	547,678	338,770
Interest expense	88,140	103,652
Interest income	(63,985)	(90,314)
Profit on disposal of property, plant and equipment	14,890	2,285
Profit for the period	586,723	354,393
Taxation	(88,008)	(53,159)
Profit after tax provision	498,715	301,234
Earnings per share	0.166	0.100

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request the company in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request.

Geely Emgrand X7 Sport: The unbelievable journey of 530,000km on one car in Oman

Geely, the renowned automotive brand and Towell Auto Centre LLC (TAC), the exclusive distributor of Geely vehicles in Oman, celebrates a monumental achievement with one of our amazing customers in Oman.

Muhamed Muhsin, the proud owner of a Geely Emgrand X7 Sport Trendy SUV has just crossed a mind-blowing milestone for a whopping 530,000km. That's right, you read that correctly, half a million kilometres on a Geely!

That's an incredible feat achieved by our happy Geely customer here in Oman. Muhsin purchased his SUV in November 2017, because of its testament to reliability and performance built. He added that he has been cruising across Oman's diverse landscapes for over six years now, and his Geely is still going strong. He even shared his experiences and feedback with the Geely team, reflecting on the vehicle's remarkable features and the outstanding support he received.

To gain further insight into what makes Geely the perfect travel companion for him, let's hear from Muhsin himself.

Superior features at unbeatable prices

Muhsin wasn't just looking for a car, he was looking for a partner for the road. Geely impressed



him with the perfect blend of modern features, competitive pricing, and sleek design. Boasting modern features like a user-friendly touchscreen infotainment system keeps him well connected and entertained on the roads. The competitive price tag made it a smart choice, making it a fantastic value-for-money SUV.

But what truly sealed the deal

was the sleek design. The Emgrand X7 Sport turned heads wherever he travelled, making every journey a stylish adventure. It's a winning combination for Moshin proving one doesn't have to break the bank to experience a feature-rich and head-turning driving experience. His X7 offered him a blend of practicality, affordability, and undeniable flair all-at-once.

Outstanding service and support

This incredible feat wasn't just about the car, but also the dedicated service. Owning a car is a journey, and just like any good road trip, reliable support by your side makes all the difference. That's what Muhsin experienced with Towell Auto Centre and Geely's innovative after-sales program, forever IP (Infinite Pos-

sibilities). "The service has been fantastic, which is why my car has successfully covered so many kilometres. I am extremely happy with the service," Muhsin shared. "Forever IP goes beyond basic maintenance. They offer transparent pricing and explain everything clearly. Plus, their 24x7 roadside assistance provides peace of mind on long journeys." This commitment to

exceptional service, coupled with genuine parts guaranteed by Forever IP, is a key reason why Muhsin's Geely Emgrand X7 Sport is still cruising strong after half a million kilometres.

What amazes Muhsin is the vehicle's remarkable durability. He emphasises the car is cost-effective, stating, "I drive long distances for business, and the maintenance costs are quite reasonable." Adding to the praise, he states, "The vehicle's performance has been very well, and I find it highly durable."

Exceptional interior and comfort

Those long journeys were a breeze for the whole family, says Moshin. The comfy interior with its awesome centre console and display screen kept everyone entertained, making every mile a joyride. "While driving long distances, my family feels extremely comfortable. The seating capacity is excellent, and my son can play and sleep inside the car without any issues," he stated while speaking about his experience.

Muhsin also commended the vehicle's adaptability to Oman's diverse terrains. He went ahead and highlighted that "the suspension components remain in excellent condition, requiring no replacements despite the high

kilometres clocked." This adaptability has ensured smooth and uninterrupted journeys across the country for him.

Memorable journeys, enduring durability

Memories made, miles conquered. Muhsin is used to putting his Geely through its paces, conquering Oman's diverse landscapes. He has embarked on numerous memorable journeys during his ownership, routinely travelling to destinations like Dubai and Salalah. Additionally, his weekly business trips to Sur demonstrate the vehicle's exceptional durability and resilience. These extensive journeys consistently provided comfort and safety for his family.

Muhsin's extensive experience with his Geely Emgrand X7 Sport Trendy SUV has solidified his confidence in the brand. He wholeheartedly recommends Geely to potential buyers, citing its exceptional value proposition. "The combination of competitive pricing, strong performance, and low maintenance costs makes this car a truly compelling choice," Muhsin shared.

Surpassing the impressive 500,000km mark signifies more than just a numerical achievement. "I feel wonderful driving 530,000km in just six years!" he said, reflecting on his journey.

NBO Muzn Islamic unveils alternative to bill discounting

Demonstrating its commitment to innovation, National Bank of Oman (NBO) Muzn Islamic Banking has announced the launch of its ground-breaking product, Term Wakala Finance an alternative for bill discounting.

This sharia'a-compliant financial solution offers customers a hassle-free way to settle their financial obligations across various sectors. This pioneering product marks a significant advancement in Islamic banking, highlighting Muzn's dedication to providing innovative financial solutions.

"The Term Wakala Finance an alternative for bill discounting offers our customers a unique combination of convenience and compliance with sharia'a principles," said Salima al Marzooqi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer at Muzn.

"By choosing this product, customers can efficiently manage their financial obligations across various sectors, ensuring smooth transactions with both



local and international merchants. This solution, which is available to all Muzn customers now, not only simplifies bill settlement processes but also aligns with our commitment to ethical and transparent banking practices. With this launch, Muzn continues to lead the way in Islamic banking innovation, providing tools that enable our clients to manage their financial responsibilities with ease and confidence."

Muzn's Term Wakala Finance an alternative for bill discounting, which is based on the concept of Wakala bil Istithmar.

BankDhofar mobile banking makes travelling abroad more relaxed

BankDhofar is pleased to highlight the convenience and accessibility of its Mobile Banking services. Designed to help customers stay connected to their finances anytime, anywhere, BankDhofar's Mobile Banking is the perfect companion during the travel season.

BankDhofar's Mobile Banking app offers a wide range of features that allow customers to manage their accounts, make payments, and stay updated on their financial activities with ease. Whether travelling abroad, working at a summer internship, or enjoying the picturesque Salalah or Jabal Akhdar, BankDhofar's Mobile Banking app ensures that your financial needs are always within reach.

Key Features of BankDhofar's Mobile Banking:

Manage and pay bills: Customers can pay utility bills, traffic fines, Electricity, Charities, PASI, account transfer, children's fee and much more. They can even set up auto pay for bills that



come due on a regular schedule in predictable amounts, so customers wouldn't have to worry about them.

Manage account: Customers can increase their withdrawal

limit to RO5,000, check account balances, transaction history, and statements anytime, from anywhere.

Instant transfer: Customers can make international payments

BankDhofar's mobile banking app offers a wide range of exclusive services which are available only through the app

easily and instantly. There are a wide range of options including international remittances, Western Union, SWIFT, and Quick Remittance to India. There is no exchange mark ups.

Secure transactions: State-of-the-art security features ensure that your financial information is protected at all times.

Real-time notifications: Receive instant alerts and updates on account activity, keeping you informed and in control.

Contactless payments: With Dhofar-Pay and Samsung pay, customers can effortlessly tap and transact using their NFC-en-

abled Android phones, without the need to carry physical cards, providing convenience and security with seamless payment experience for customers.

BankDhofar's mobile banking app offers a wide range of exclusive services which are available only through the app.

The services include; instant transfer to any bank in the Sultanate of Oman, a mobile top-up for telecom providers in the Sultanate, as well as Debit & Credit Card controls and management, BankDhofar customers can access the financial services through a wide network of branches, ATMs and CDMs around the sultanate.

The network includes 124 branches, 360 ATMs, CDMs, FFM's and MFK's that work round-the-clock with highest ATM uptime in the Sultanate. The Bank launched Cardless ATM Banking Services using mobile, which enables customers to conduct ATM transactions easily only by using their mobile numbers.

The St Regis Al Mouj resort redefines exquisite summer staycations

Are you tired of balancing between your home and office negotiating summer blues? Prepare to indulge in the ultimate luxury staycation this summer at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort where opulence meets tranquility. Nestled in the prestigious Al Mouj Muscat community, the resort stands as a beacon of sophistication offering locals and residents a chance to escape the ordinary and embrace the extraordinary.

The 'Exquisite Getaway' package and the 'Unwind and Dine' package both promise a memorable getaway experience with exceptional room rates. Guests will savour a breakfast buffet for

two at Karibu, enjoy 20% savings at select restaurants, and have access to the resort's world-class facilities, including a state-of-the-art gym.

The packages also include special welcome amenities, dedicated butler service, complimentary pressing and late check-out subject to availability.

The 'Unwind and Dine' offer sets itself apart by including a dinner for two at Karibu, where flavours from Zanzibar, India, and Oman come together in a delectable culinary symphony.

"We are absolutely delighted to present these exclusive summer packages at our newly revealed heaven of glamour in the



beating heart of Muscat," said Tarek Mourad, General Manager of The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort.

"Our aim is to create an unforgettable rejuvenating experience

majesty of Omani hospitality, all while indulging in the highest standards of opulence and comfort."

The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort stands as a pinnacle of

We are absolutely delighted to present these exclusive summer packages at our newly revealed heaven of glamour in the beating heart of Muscat

TAREK MOURAD

that combines the epitome of luxury accommodations with unparalleled personalised service and outstanding amenities. We invite our guests to unwind from the hustle and bustle of life and immerse themselves in the

luxury in Al Mouj Muscat, Oman's premier lifestyle destination. With its breathtaking beachfront location, the resort offers an immersive luxury experience that seamlessly blends local charm and global sophistication.



WHO regional head visits Dubai Humanitarian for 'emergency response' collaboration

Dubai Humanitarian welcomed Dr Hanan Balkhy, the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, during her recent visit to the world's largest humanitarian hub.

Dr Balkhy's visit underscored the ongoing collaboration between Dubai Humanitarian and WHO in addressing global emergencies, particularly the ongoing crises in Gaza and Sudan.

Dr Balkhy met with the Dubai Humanitarian team and WHO staff, acknowledging their relentless efforts in supporting WHO's mission to provide critical health services during emergencies. She toured the warehousing facilities, including the showroom, the cold

WHO's partnership with Dubai Humanitarian exemplifies the strength of collective action in addressing regional and global health emergencies

DR HANAN BALKHY

chain, the kitting center, and the Knowledge and Development Center, witnessing firsthand the support and resources offered by Dubai Humanitarian, which has been crucial in facilitating swift and effective responses to urgent health needs.

"We are proud to support WHO in its vital mission to deliver health services during emer-

gencies," said Giuseppe Saba, CEO and Board Member of Dubai Humanitarian.

"Our partnership has enabled the rapid deployment of aid and resources to areas in desperate need. Our collaboration with the World Health Organization is longstanding, as seen through the Humanitarian Logistics Data-bank, during the COVID-19 pan-

demic, the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria, and the ongoing crisis in Gaza and Sudan, demonstrating the power and importance of working together to make humanitarian efforts more efficient and sustainable."

"WHO's partnership with Dubai Humanitarian exemplifies the strength of collective action in addressing regional and global health emergencies," said Dr Balkhy. "The resources and support provided here have been instrumental in delivering timely aid to those in need. This collaboration is a model of how strategic partnerships can drive impactful health interventions, ultimately saving lives and improving health outcomes in the

most challenging circumstances."

The visit underscored the Dubai hub's pivotal role in recent emergency responses. Dubai Humanitarian organised 17 air shipments for Gaza through El Arish in Egypt, transporting over 1,400 metric tonnes of aid from the stocks of UN organisations hosted at the hub. Most of these rotations carried aid for WHO.

Discussions during the visit also focused on strengthening future collaborations, utilising best practices and innovations, and fostering networking and knowledge-sharing through the Knowledge and Development Center, all aimed at enhancing humanitarian action.

Harry Redknapp joins Fuelre4m for green campaign



The UAE-based Fuelre4m, innovators of the groundbreaking Re4mx products and technology, is thrilled to announce the endorsement of their Green Goals campaign by Harry Redknapp, the legendary English football manager and TV personality.

This campaign harnesses the star power of football legends to drive awareness and action for sustainability, a subject that both parties are proud to share focus on. When asked about the role of football in promoting sustainability, Harry Redknapp didn't hold back: "With the global football industry emitting over 30 million tonnes of Carbon Dioxide each year, more top players need to join in to make a bigger impact. Football's carbon footprint is massive, and players do have a responsibility to help. They can do more by getting involved in green campaigns, pushing for eco-friendly stadiums and clubs, and using social media to spread awareness and influence fans."

Harry's decision to back the Green Goals campaign is driven by his passion for football and his commitment to making a positive environmental impact. "Football has the power to inspire millions. If we can use that influence to promote sustainability, we can make a real difference. That's why I'm excited to

be part of Fuelre4m's Green Goals campaign," he added.

Rob Mortimer, Managing Director of Fuelre4m, highlighted the significance of Harry Redknapp's support. "Having Harry Redknapp on board is a game-changer. His influence in the football world is immense, and his support for our campaign underscores the importance of sustainability in sports. Harry's involvement will undoubtedly motivate players and fans to take action, amplifying our efforts to reduce the environmental impact of fossil fuels."

FuelRe4m's innovative Re4mx technology is a powerful, completely organic, fossil fuel reforming nano-biotechnology that enhances the combustion process in engines. By breaking down impurities and complex hydrocarbons in liquid fossil fuels, Re4mx ensures a more efficient and cleaner burn, resulting in increased power output, lower fuel consumption, and a significant reduction in harmful emissions.

Fuelre4m is positioned to serve industries that heavily rely on fossil fuels, including ports, maritime and shipping, power generation, rail, and public transport, mining and quarries. The company understands the unique challenges faced by these sectors and offers green solutions.

Haili doors and gypsum carvings attract visitors to Beit Hail Festival in Saudi

The 'Haili Wooden Doors and Gypsum Carvings' pavilion, part of the activities of the third edition of the Beit Hail Festival at Aja Park, attracted many visitors from the region and beyond.

They observed the methods, techniques, and tools used in crafting and engraving these beautiful artworks, which added an authentic traditional touch to the festival.

Craftsman Abdullah al Khazzam, a native of Hail registered with the National Handicrafts Programme (Bari), shared his beginnings in the clay building hobby that started in his childhood with a continuous passion and ambition to master the craft of making wooden doors and engravings, including the old Haili house door made from tamarisk and other types of wood.

Khazzam honed his talent in drawing and engraving on the Haili door and participated in various models, including the Najdi door, which consists of three beams, unlike the Haili door, which consists of four beams. These models received appreciation and admiration from festival visitors for the precise craftsmanship in the



Craftsman Abdullah al Khazzam showcased traditional carvings for the historical majlises, symbolising the owner's social and economic status at that time

smallest structural details.

In his pavilion, Khazzam also presented Islamic gypsum carvings inspired by the region's environment, which are part of Najdi architecture to adorn buildings, entrances, and majlises.

He also showcased traditional carvings for the historical majlises in Hail, symbolising the owner's social and economic status at that time, attracting many festival visitors to purchase some of these doors and decorate their current majlises with them as a heritage feature.

Khazzam's talent was not limited to making wooden doors but extended to various models such as the pulley known in the past as 'Al-Suwani' and 'Al-Shadad' placed on camel backs.

He also participated in drawing and engravings that adorned old mud houses, some containing wise sayings and decorative engravings.

Toyota Yaris comes with exciting benefits to offer summer delights

The Toyota Yaris - a pragmatic yet stylish fuel-efficient automobile crafted for creating pleasurable city-life experiences - is now being presented with Toyota's Summer Delight offers to beat the heat this summer.

New Toyota Yaris owners can experience huge savings and achieve peace of mind with free service upgrades up to 3 years/30,000km or 10 years/100,000km (whichever comes first). Double up on savings with 1-year free insurance or a cash gift in lieu ranging from RO125 to RO450 and 3-month EMI holiday opportunity, exclusively brought to you by Toyota Oman, the company stated.

"Moreover, relish the summer fun by getting a chance to enter the Grand Raffle draw and win an all-paid Türkiye holiday for a family of four or an 10 iPhone 15 Pro Max. Grab the limited-time opportunity before the campaign ends on August 1 this year", it added.

Toyota Yaris delivers a dynamic driving experience with its four-cylinder engine that is equipped with 16-valve DOCH and dual VVT-i. The vehicle is available with a 1.5-liter capacity engine that delivers smooth acceleration and a quick response, producing 105 horsepower and 138Nm of torque with fuel consumption of 20.5km per litre.



This is paired with Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT), which simulates a seven-speed sequential shift transmission to deliver powerful, smooth acceleration from start-off and at low speeds, and quiet, efficient transmission at higher speeds with excellent fuel efficiency and optimal performance output.

Experience the luxe spacious cabin that is designed to provide greater comfort and convenience for both the driver and passengers. A 7-inch Thin Film Transistor (TFT) multi-information display and digital LED speedometer with customisation options. Load your belongings in

the back with the spacious 475-litre capacity for everyone.

The vehicle is utilitarian and exhibits simplicity, yet maintains its class. It features an 8-inch multimedia screen with Apple CarPlay & Android Auto together with a USB port on the head unit and two ports at the rear console that enable passengers to connect external media devices. Additional features include a four or six-speaker sound system and an automatic air conditioning system with two rear vents for extra passenger comfort.

Meanwhile, parents benefit from the added peace of mind provided by Toyota's ISOFIX

safety system, which attaches baby seats securely using specially designed tethers.

The all-new Yaris maintains Toyota's sterling safety standards. Its safety system is complemented by Toyota Safety Sense, an advanced safety technology package that includes a Pre-Collision System (PCS), Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC), Lane Departure Alert (LDA), Lane Departure Prevention (LDP), as well as a new Front Departure Alert (FDA) feature that gives drivers a visual and audible warning when a stationary vehicle in front begins to move forward.

US poll: All eyes on Kamala Harris

US President Joe Biden, who withdrew his candidacy, has endorsed Harris to replace him in the poll

Houston, US - US President Joe Biden announced on Sunday that he is withdrawing his candidacy for the 2024 presidential election against former President Donald Trump, endorsing Vice President Kamala Harris to replace him in the bid for Democrats to keep the White House.

The unprecedented decision puts the Democratic Party into scramble mode to choose its official nominee for the November 5 presidential election. Time is ticking, as the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois from August 19-22 is quickly approaching.

Biden's endorsement does not guarantee that Harris will be the Democratic presidential nominee, but if Harris is chosen by her party and wins the presidential election in November, she will become the first female president in American history.

Harris was born in 1964 in Oakland, California to a biologist mother who came to the United States from India as a student. Her Black father was an economics professor who came to the US from Jamaica, also as a student.

Harris studied political science and economics at Howard University in Washington, D.C. before receiving her law degree at the University of California, Hastings College of Law. She had a storied legal career, becoming



Joe Biden's endorsement does not guarantee that Vice President Kamala Harris will be the Democratic presidential nominee

the first female district attorney for San Francisco in 2004. She also won the 2010 race for California attorney general and was victorious in her reelection bid for her second term as attorney general in 2014.

In 2016, Harris won the US Senate race in California, becoming the first senator of South

Asian origin and the second Black senator to enter Congress from that state. She launched a campaign for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination in January 2019 but dropped out of the race less than a year later in December.

When Biden was officially nominated as the 2020 Demo-

cratic presidential candidate, he announced in August 2020 that he had chosen Harris as his vice-presidential running mate. After Biden defeated Trump in the 2020 election, Harris became the first woman to serve as the 49th vice president as well as the first Black woman and person of South Asian descent to serve in

the nation's second highest office.

During her vice presidency, Harris travelled to more than 19 countries and met with over 150 world leaders. She also worked with Biden to reduce unemployment in the US by investing in the economy. Harris actively engaged in fighting against racism

and sexism.

After entering Congress, Harris first made a name for herself with her reaction to a regulation that banned travel to the US from seven Muslim countries which Trump signed into law on January 28, 2017 as soon as he took office. Despite her impressive credentials, Harris remains a polarising figure for Democrats, so receiving the endorsement from Biden does not make her a shoe-in for the Democratic presidential nominee. Her views on every topic, includ-

Harris' views on topics, including immigration, health care, student debt relief, climate change and the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, are being scrutinised from top to bottom

next month, Biden was expected to receive the party's nomination hands-down with nearly 3,900 delegates from all 50 states pledging to support his candidacy, double the 1,976 delegates needed to win the nomination. Now, those delegates are free to vote for whoever they want to.

Other names being talked about in Democratic political circles include Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, California Governor Gavin Newsom, Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear and Maryland Governor Wes Moore, as well as US Senators Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota and Cory Booker of New Jersey.

If Harris is nominated as the Democratic Party's presidential candidate, recent polls have put her on equal footing with Biden's numbers facing Trump, with some polls giving the vice president a slight edge, although given the margins of error in many polls, a potential race between Harris and Trump would be too close to call.

A CBS News/YouGov poll showed that Trump led Harris by three points (51%-48%) compared to a five-point difference versus Biden (52%-47%). An Economist/YouGov poll had Trump leading Harris by five points (44%-39%) whereas Trump only led Biden by two points (43%-41%).

Anadolu Agency

‘Harris may shift US stance on Gaza conflict if elected’

Washington, D.C., US - US Vice President Kamala Harris, the frontrunner for the Democratic presidential nomination, is expected to continue much of President Joe Biden's foreign policy if she succeeds him, but her stance on the Israeli war on Gaza may differ, NBC News reported on Monday.

Harris has shown a willingness to publicly criticise Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and expressed empathy for Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, according to former officials and analysts.

This marks a shift from Biden's approach and could appeal to Arab American voters, younger voters, and progressives who oppose Biden's stance on the Israeli actions, the report said.

"Because she's not seen as responsible for Biden's Israel

policies," according to a source close to the Biden administration. "The hope is that will help her numbers," it added.

In March, White House officials softened Harris' speech advocating for a ceasefire and humanitarian aid in Gaza, though the original draft was more critical of Israel.

However, Harris' ties to the Jewish community remain strong. Her husband, second gentleman Doug Emhoff, is the first Jewish spouse of a vice president, and actively engages with the Jewish community and combats anti-Semitism, the report noted.

Aaron David Miller, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said that while a Harris presidency might alter the tone regarding Israel, it is unlikely to

bring about substantial policy changes, it said.

"I would look for a much more balanced rhetorical posture," Miller said, according to the report. "She clearly is going to be much more sympathetic when it comes to the issue of Palestinian statehood and even Palestinian rights."

However, Miller emphasised that Harris remains an advocate of America's traditional support for Israel and is unlikely to deviate dramatically from that stance, it noted.

"When it comes to Israel, she has very moderate views," Miller also said. "To the left of what Biden is prepared to do but way to the right of those who argue we need to impose costs and consequences on Israel to make it clear we're the superpower and they're not."

Anadolu Agency

IN SEARCH OF VICTIMS



A rescuer works at the site of a bridge collapse in Zhushui County in Shangluo City, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, on Sunday. Rescuers have found the bodies of 15 victims, while more than 20 vehicles had plunged into the Jinqian River on Friday (Xinhua)

Joe Biden, who ended US reelection campaign, was a ‘man of the middle’

Washington, D.C., US - In the end, it was his age that prevented Joe Biden from running for president again.

Calls from his allies in the Democratic Party and the US media for the president to withdraw his candidacy had been getting louder since his disastrous performance in a TV debate against Donald Trump on June 27. Biden's frail appearance and his many bungled answers had fuelled concerns that, at 81, the president was too old for the job.

While he maintained for months that he had every intention of running again, he eventually withdrew from the race on Sunday. It marks the twilight of an illustrious political career, which Joseph Robinette Biden Jr began at 30 as one of the youngest senators in US history. When he entered the White House in 2021 at 78, he was the

oldest US president ever to be inaugurated.

Tested by tragedy

Biden grew up in modest conditions. Scranton, Pennsylvania, where he was born on November 20, 1942, had once been a prosperous mining hub but was suffering by the 1950s. After a brief career in law, he decided to challenge Delaware's long-standing Republican senator in 1972.

Despite having little money and few apparent chances - family members filled many campaign staff roles - Biden won the election at the age of 30, making him the sixth-youngest senator in US history.

A few weeks after Biden won his Senate election, his wife, Neilia, and their 1-year-old daughter Naomi died in a car crash that also left their sons Beau and Hunter badly injured.



It was his age that prevented Joe Biden from running for president again

Though Biden initially wanted to resign, he was persuaded to take office. On January 3, 1973, he was sworn in at the hospital where his sons were being treated. He started to commute

between Wilmington and Washington, D.C.. His sister Valerie moved into his home to help with the children and stayed until 1977, when Biden married Jill Jacobs, with whom he had a daughter, Ashley.

ter, Ashley.

Obama and Biden: A good team

During his six terms as Delaware senator, Biden earned a reputation for seeking bipartisan support for his legislative plans. When he later became vice president under President Barack Obama, he was seen to be an in-

The withdrawal from presidential election marks the twilight of an illustrious political career, which Joe Biden began at 30 as one of the youngest senators in US history

termediary to middle America. Biden had twice tried for the Democratic presidential nomination. In 1988, he ended his campaign after being accused of plagiarising a speech by British

Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock. In 2008, he failed to gain traction in primaries against Obama and Hillary Clinton. When he became vice president, however, he was instrumental in the passage of the Affordable Care Act, a health care bill which many consider Obama's greatest legacy.

Against this backdrop, it was a particularly tragic twist of fate

that next befell his family. While he was fighting for health care for low-income families, his oldest son, Beau, died of a brain tumour.

"To know Joe Biden is to know love without pretense, service

without self-regard, and to live life fully," Obama said in 2017, when he awarded Biden the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Running against Donald Trump

"Maybe the most important thing my mom and dad taught me was that everyone should be treated with dignity," Biden said after announcing that he would run for president in 2020 against incumbent President Trump. "Today, too many middle class and working class people, they're not able to look their kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be OK', and mean it. That's why I'm running."

It's because Biden was considered a 'man of the middle' that many Democrats thought he could bring together a wide coalition of voters to defeat Trump. DW

Germany:
90-year-old
trapped in
church,
saved by bell

Apolda, Germany - Police rescued a 90-year-old man on Sunday morning from a protestant church in Apolda, in the central German state of Thuringia, after the man rang church bells around 3am local time (0100 GMT) as a call for help.

The man is a resident of a local nursing home. He was scheduled to visit an event at the local Lutheran church on Saturday evening. After he failed to check in at the home at 8:30pm, however, the nursing home employees reported him as missing.

They described him as 'extremely (mentally) reliable and focused', according to a police statement.

Police launched a search involving six patrol cars in the vicinity of the church and the usual hangout spots for nursing home residents. However, they were not able to locate the missing man.

But a police officer on duty overnight was alerted by the sound of church bells at 3:15am, prompting him to send a patrol to the church.

The Apolda Lutheran church, like many other churches in the modern day, uses automated systems rather than traditional human bell-ringers to sound off the bells.

The officers at the scene managed to get in touch with the man inside and talked to him through the door. Eventually, the pastor was called in to unlock the church and free the trapped man.

DW

Israeli strikes kill 20 in southern
Gaza following evacuation orders

Gaza, Palestine - At least 20 people were killed in Israeli attacks in the southern Gaza Strip shortly after Israel issued new evacuation orders on Monday, local media reported.

On Telegram, Al-Aqsa TV channel said: "Twenty martyrs fell and several were injured in airstrikes and artillery shelling on towns east of Khan Younis."

Israeli fighter jets also conducted a strike targeting a site in the village of Qizan an Najjar in the city, the channel added.

The attacks came after the Israeli army issued new orders earlier in the morning for Palestinians in the eastern neighbourhoods of Khan Younis to 'evacuate immediately' and move towards the newly established humanitarian zone in al-Mawasi.

In a statement, Israeli army spokesperson Avichay Adraee claimed that 'the presence of multiple military operations and rocket fire from the eastern part of the humanitarian zone has made staying there dangerous'.

Urgent call
for blood donations

Meanwhile, Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis issued an urgent call for blood donations through a statement published by Gaza's Ministry of Health, citing a severe shortage of blood units for the injured and patients within the facility amid the latest Israeli operations in Khan Younis.

Israeli military orders for Palestinians to evacuate immediately from areas deemed combat zones and move to the humanitarian zone in al-Mawasi do not guarantee their safety. Two weeks ago, the Israeli army committed a massacre in Al-Mawasi, which it claimed was safe, resulting in the deaths of 90 Palestinians and the injuries of 300 in a



Injured Palestinians are brought to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital for medical treatment after the Israeli attacks on the central part of Gaza in Deir al Balah, Gaza on Monday

The attacks came after the Israeli army issued new orders earlier in the morning for Palestinians in the eastern neighbourhoods of Khan Younis to evacuate immediately

series of airstrikes targeting tents and displacement shelters.

Following the bombing in al-Mawasi, Khan Younis, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed in a press conference that the target was the military leader of Hamas, Mohammed Deif, and his deputy, Rafiq Salama. However, he admitted there were no confirmations of their deaths.

Hamas denied the Israeli claims that the strike targeted

Deif, Salama, or any of its leaders.

Attack on UN convoy

Israeli forces targeted a United Nations convoy heading to Gaza City, the head of the UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) said on Monday.

Writing on X, Philippe Lazzarini said: "While there are no casualties, our teams had to duck and take cover."

The incident occurred on Sunday, the UN official said, adding

that teams were traveling in 'clearly marked UN armoured vehicles and wearing UN vests'.

"One vehicle received at least five bullets while waiting just ahead of the Israeli Forces' checkpoint south of Wadi Gaza."

"The car was severely damaged; it left the convoy. The teams re-assembled and finally reached Gaza City," he said.

Lazzarini noted that the convoy had been coordinated and approved by Israeli officials before departure. "Humanitarian aid workers are #NOTATarget. Those responsible must be held accountable," he wrote.

Demolition in
East Jerusalem

The Israeli army on Sunday de-

molished two commercial establishments and excavated a land belonging to Palestinians in Beit Hanina in occupied East Jerusalem.

The Israeli army raided the town of Beit Hanina, demolishing a commercial shop and a car showroom, and excavating a land, according to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa.

The agency did not mention the reason for the Israeli army taking this measure, but it usually uses 'construction without a permit' as an excuse in similar cases.

According to the Palestinian Authority's Wall and Settlement Resistance Commission, Israeli authorities demolished 318 commercial establishments in the

West Bank belonging to Palestinians during the first half of this year and issued demolition notices for 359 others, including 85 in Jerusalem.

The Israeli municipality in Jerusalem refrains from granting building permits to Palestinians, and demolishes or forces them to demolish their homes and establishments.

Tensions have been running high across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, amid the deadly Israeli offensive and at least 578 Palestinians have since been killed and nearly 5,400 others injured by Israeli army fire in the occupied West Bank, according to the Health Ministry.

Anadolu Agency

Zelensky thanks Germany
for new Patriot system

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has celebrated the arrival of another German Patriot system, bringing the total Ukraine has thus far received up to three.

"The German Patriot has arrived," Zelensky said in his nightly video address. He added that it has likely reported readiness for deployment.

"We will be able to do more in the sky," Zelensky added. "Of course, there is still much to be done, and protection is by no means guaranteed, but it is nevertheless a gain for Ukraine."

Zelensky has recently repeatedly highlighted the need for additional air-defence systems, as Russia presses forward with its ongoing invasion.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian president also hailed US President Joe Biden's 'tough but strong' decision to drop out of the presidential race, thanking him for his critical 'unwavering support' for Ukraine.

Ukrainian FM
to visit China

Ukrainian foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba is set to visit China from July 23-26 to discuss an end to Russia's invasion of his country, his office announced.

The Ukrainian foreign ministry said that the 'main topic of discussion will be the search for ways to stop Russian aggression and China's possible role in achieving a sustainable and just peace'.



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

Beijing has confirmed the talks with Kuleba, with foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning saying the visit had been initiated by China's foreign minister.

During a state visit to Beijing in May, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he was 'grateful' for Chinese efforts to resolve the conflict in Ukraine. NATO leaders in July labelled China a 'decisive enabler' of Russia's war against Ukraine and called its deepening ties with Moscow a cause of 'deep concern.'

'Ukrainian drone
kills civilian'

Meanwhile, a tractor driver in Russia's Belgorod region was killed by a Ukrainian drone, said regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov on Monday.

There was no immediate comment from Ukraine. Reuters news agency said they were unable to independently verify the claims.

Belgorod region which borders Ukraine has been repeatedly attacked by Ukrainian artillery, drones and proxies over the past year. Besides, Russia's Defence Ministry said 75 Ukrainian drones flying over several regions have been destroyed by air defence systems overnight.

Forty-seven of the drones were destroyed over the southwestern Rostov region, 17 over the Black and Azov seas and eight over the Krasnodar region near the town of Tuapse on the Black Sea, the ministry said on the Telegram messaging app, with single drones also reported over the Belgorod, Voronezh and Smolensk regions.

Although the ministry did not mention damage from the attacks, Russia's RIA news agency and local officials in Krasnodar reported that infrastructure at the Tuapse oil refinery had been hit.

DW

Are we seeing slow decline of ECOWAS?

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been facing turmoil following recent exits of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali from the bloc. The three countries, which are all currently under military rule, formed a new alliance last September, known as the Alliance of Sahel States, after cutting their ties with ECOWAS.

The decision to exit the bloc came in protest of ECOWAS policy of condemning the coups that took place in those countries and imposing sanctions, including the threat of military involvement.

Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger said they would use their new union to fight off any external aggression.

Mixed messages
from ECOWAS

Adib Saani, a foreign policy and security analyst at the Jatikay Center for Human Security and Peace Building in Accra, Ghana, told DW that this stand-off followed the bloc's past failure to deal with autocratic regimes had eroded its diplomatic influence over the years.

"ECOWAS has a protocol on governance, elections and security. Unfortunately for many years on, there have been ... dictatorial tendencies exhibited by certain leaders within the sub-region which ECOWAS did nothing about," he said, adding that this lack of intervention directly contributed to military regimes taking the liberty 'to impose themselves on the people'.

Since 2020, there have been six successful and two attempted



Since 2020, there have been six successful and two attempted coups in West Africa under ECOWAS' watch

ECOWAS has been trying to push through several reforms for years to make the organisation more viable and effective

coups in West Africa under ECOWAS' watch.

Who is to be blamed?

Fidel Amakye Owusu, an International Relations and Security Analyst working for Riley Risk, believes, however, that ECOWAS' structures, policies and protocols cannot be blamed for recent instabilities in the region. "The main reason for these coups wasn't coming the side of ECOWAS. It came from insecurity,

violence extremism that had taken hold in northern Mali and was spreading its tentacles in the region," he told DW, highlighting that 'ECOWAS was incapable of preventing (these) coups'.

But Owusu stressed that ECOWAS did fail in its response to these developments: ECOWAS' protocol stipulates that it is to condemn coups and impose sanctions. However, rather than serving as a deterrent to other countries, this protocol appears to have failed in the past four years.

"(ECOWAS) didn't handle the situation very well," he said, highlighting that the threat to invade Niger after its military takeover was a particularly 'bad move'.

"They knew very well that they could not prosecute, and that really rendered them as toothless bulldog," Owusu explained, stressing that this move was the

final straw that triggered Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso to break away from the bloc in January this year.

ECOWAS meanwhile has been trying to push through several reforms for years to make the organisation more viable and effective. According to Saani, however, the bloc is yet to live up to that vision, with weak national governments showing even weaker commitment to the bloc.

"It has been a challenge because of the lack of commitment from member states. ECOWAS' success rate depends on commitment demonstrated by the member states," he said. "(F)or ECOWAS to succeed would largely depend on the governments. ECOWAS has to work on harnessing trust and confidence between the entity and West Africans."

DW

Top Indian court puts on hold discriminatory order against eateries

New Delhi, India - India's Supreme Court on Monday put on hold directives issued by authorities in two Indian states for eateries to identify their owners.

The court passed the interim order while issuing notice on a batch of petitions challenging the government directives, legal news website lawlaw reported.

The bench, however, clarified that the eateries should display type of food being served, it said.

Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, India's largest socioreligious Muslim or-

ganisation, expressed concern about the order in the northern Uttar Pradesh state and Uttarakhand, asking eateries - including roadside carts - to display the names of their owners to 'avoid confusion' during a Hindu holy pilgrimage when thousands of worshippers will make the journey on foot.

Last week, police in the Uttar Pradesh state's Muzaffarnagar district initially ordered all eateries along the pilgrimage route to display the names of their own-



ers. Subsequently, a non-governmental organisation and several others moved to Supreme Court regarding the order.

Days later, the state government had extended the controversial order across the state, according to local media.

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

A minister from Uttar Pradesh, however, defended the government's stance as a 'matter of social harmony'.

The yearly pilgrimage takes place from July 22 to August 2, which is the Hindu holy month of Sawan. Hindu devotees of the god Shiva trek for days or weeks at a time to pilgrimage spots along the sacred Ganges river in order to gather water to be offered at Shiva temples.

The majority of the pilgrims are young males who travel to and from temple towns via

states like Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi, and Rajasthan.

Usually, police are called in to keep the peace and there are traffic restrictions in place. However, there have been reports of violence and vandalism in recent years as a result of the lack of crowd management as huge groups of young men pass through popular cities, sometimes walking in the centre of the road.

Anadolu Agency

Bangladesh student group halts protests

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

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

On Sunday, the country's Supreme Court scaled back the controversial quota system.

Students' demands

Hasnat Abdullah, a coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, told the Associated Press (AP) news agency that they were withdrawing their calls for a complete shutdown. "But we are issuing an ultimatum for 48 hours to stop the digital crackdown and restore internet connectivity."

Abdullah called for the withdrawal of security officials deployed at universities should the reopening of student dormitories. The group also demanded an end to the curfew and for the government to restore the internet.

Halting protests

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

"We started this movement



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

for reforming the quota," Islam said. "But we did not want quota reform at the expense of so much blood, so much killing, so much damage to life and property."

According to information from hospitals, nearly 150 people died in the protests.

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

The Bangladesh job quota

The quotas originally reserved

30 per cent of positions in the civil service for the families of people who fought for independence from Pakistan in the so-called Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971.

The quota rules were scrapped by the government in 2018, but a court reintroduced

the system last month. The move caused widespread anger, particularly among the country's young people, who make up around a fifth of the population.

The Supreme Court ruled that just five per cent of civil service jobs would remain re-

served for children of independence war veterans and two per cent for other categories.

Travel advisories

Meanwhile, the German Foreign Office had advised citizens to avoid travel to Bangladesh. "There is a curfew in place fol-

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

NAHID ISLAM

lowing violent clashes, and internet and mobile services are blocked," the ministry said in an X post on Sunday.

The office expects the situation in the South Asian nation to get worse. "More than 100 people have already died during the demonstrations and protests," the report said.

Germans already in Bangladesh have been advised to register with the crisis preparedness list.

The US State Department had also warned Americans on Saturday not to travel to Bangladesh and announced it would begin removing some diplomats and their families from the country.

DW

Croatia: Several dead in nursing home attack

Zagreb, Croatia - A gunman has shot dead five people in a nursing home in the Croatian town of Daruvar, some 130km (80 miles) east of the capital, Zagreb, Croatian media and officials reported on Monday.

The Index news portal said five people died immediately, while others were wounded and still receiving medical assistance. The suspect fled the scene, but the police soon caught him in a cafe near the facility, the report said.

Police officials said in a statement that they were carrying out an investigation, but gave no details.

Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that 'We are appalled with the killing of five people in the Daruvar nursing home'.

The Croatian newspaper Jutarnji list and the N1 regional television station said the alleged shooter was a war veteran who killed his mother along with other residents and staff,

DW

Chinese, Maldivian diplomats meet in Beijing

Beijing, China - China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi hosted his Maldivian counterpart Moosa Zameer in Beijing on Monday for bilateral talks.

"We explored opportunities to advance our cooperation in key areas of mutual interest, including infrastructure, health-care, and tourism," Zameer said on X, formerly Twitter, calling the meeting as 'productive bilateral discussions'.

Zameer expressed appreciation to China's support under Belt and Road Initiative to Maldives, 'which has been instrumental in our socio-economic development'.



Reiterating Maldives' commitment to the one-China principle, Zameer asked for China's 'support' to Maldives to carry out fiscal reforms.

He said the reforms 'will foster consumer and investor confidence' in the economy of island nation 'which would then positively impact our economic resilience', a statement by Maldivian Foreign Ministry read.

Earlier this year, the two sides upgraded bilateral ties to comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership.

Wang told Zameer that China was 'willing to continue to strengthen' multilateral cooper-

ation with Maldives, including in climate change and safeguarding peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, according to a readout from Beijing.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties 52 years ago, Wang said the two countries have 'always respected and supported each other, setting an example of equal treatment and win-win cooperation between large and small countries'.

Relations with Maldives are 'standing at a new historical starting point', Wang said, calling for 'deepening political mutual trust'.

Anadolu Agency

Louvre Abu Dhabi: A cultural convergence of the world in UAE

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The Louvre Abu Dhabi stands as a gateway to cultural dialogue, marking a prominent tourist and heritage landmark that has attracted five million visitors since its opening in 2017, solidifying its status as a cultural icon of unprecedented global significance.

Spanning approximately 24,000 square metres, the museum is the first global museum of its kind in the Arab world.

In a statement to the Emirates News Agency (WAM), Manuel Rabate, Director of Louvre Abu Dhabi, said that the museum, designed by the renowned French

architect Jean Nouvel, exemplifies the flourishing cultural and artistic ecosystem in Abu Dhabi. It reflects numerous cultural achievements of the UAE and plays a crucial role in transforming the cultural district of Saadiyat into a distinguished cultural tourism destination in the region.

He added that this year, the museum has displayed around 6,000 artworks by over 313 artists from diverse cultures. These artworks, from prehistoric pieces to modern creations, are exhibited side by side, providing visitors with the opportunity to



explore significant cultural connections and foster intellectual exchange.

Rabate also highlighted the museum's permanent collection, which features rare global treasures. He also noted that the museum has hosted important exhibitions, including 'Cartier, Islamic Inspiration and Modern Design' and 'From Kalila wa Dimna to La Fontaine: Travelling through Fables'.

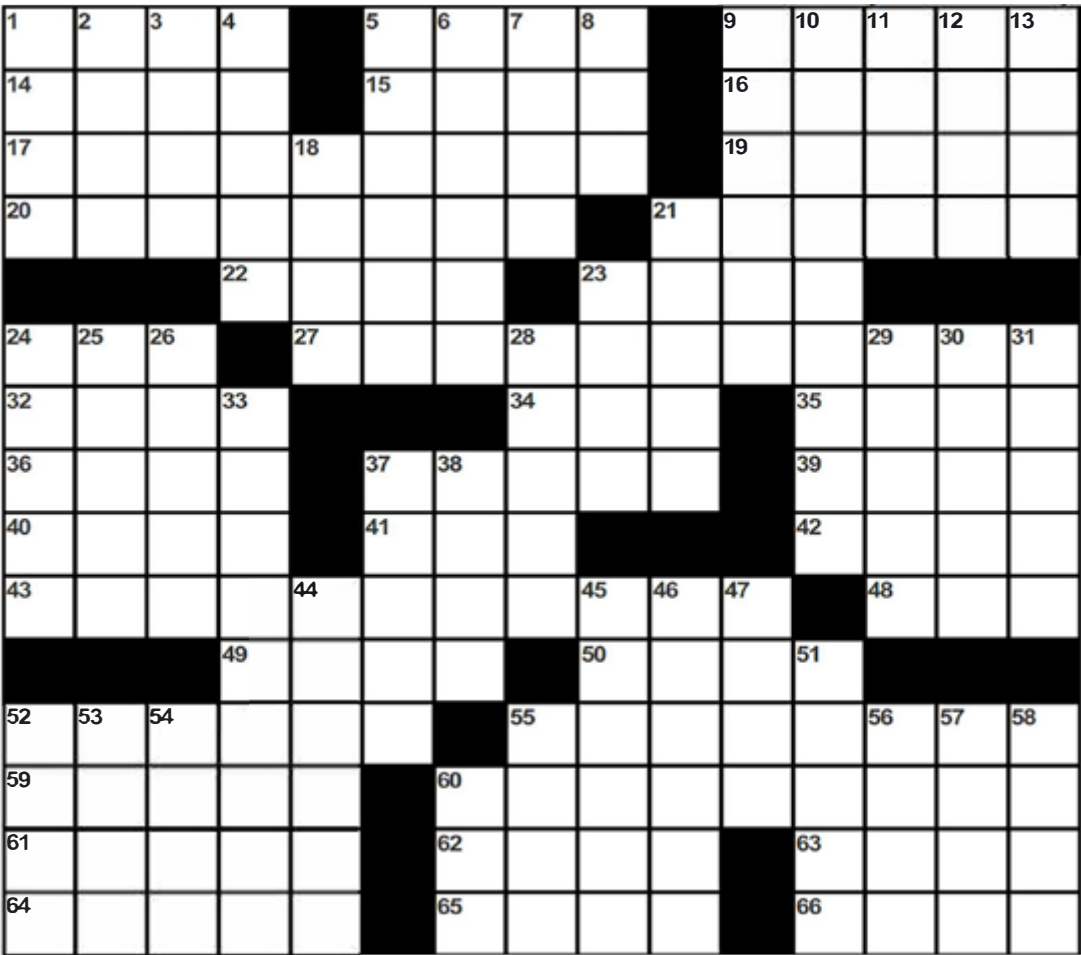
He noted that since the museum's opening in 2017, it has welcomed five million visitors, with UAE nationals and residents accounting for 28 per cent of this

total, while international visitors made up 72 per cent, with the majority coming from Russia, China, India, France, the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, and the Philippines.

In terms of future plans, Rabate said: "We plan to expand our educational initiatives to include a range of creative programmes that blend technology with traditional learning methods to engage young minds. This includes integrating interactive technologies such as augmented reality and virtual reality into our exhibitions."

ANI/WAM

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Nut center
- 5) Bring up
- 9) Ekberg of "La Dolce Vita"
- 14) " _ Angel" (Mae West movie)
- 15) Director Kazan
- 16) French red wine
- 17) In shape for Waikiki?
- 19) For all to see
- 20) Full scholarship, informally
- 21) Hall of Famers
- 22) Ancient Iranian
- 23) Take wing
- 24) Spray graffiti on, say
- 32) Curative vegetation?
- 37) Part of UAR
- 34) Feedbag morsel
- 35) "A," in NATO code
- 36) Lower-class, to Brits
- 37) Gridiron series
- 39) Minor complaints
- 40) Knot or watt
- 41) First lady McKinley
- 42) Pub missile
- 43) Stolen indoor ball?
- 48) Carrier to Bergen

DOWN

- 1) Offend a bit
- 2) Kuwaiti bigwig
- 3) One chip, perhaps
- 4) Tribal carving
- 5) Dwell
- 6) Slipped past
- 7) River of Leeds
- 8) UK fliers
- 9) Indifferent to ethics
- 10) Peter Pan's home
- 11) Creative spark
- 12) Grounds for a suit
- 13) Takes measures
- 18) City near Provo
- 21) Petting zoo animals
- 23) Read the UPC of
- 24) Show some backbone, slangily
- 25) Quaker's Rice_
- 26) Took to the clink
- 28) Dubuque native
- 29) Disney's middle name
- 30) TV workers' union
- 31) Goes hungry
- 33) Totally ruined
- 37) Loses on purpose?
- 38) Bookie's concern
- 44) Carousel units
- 45) Roman or Ottoman
- 46) Chewed out
- 47) Nail salon need
- 51) Not as stale
- 52) Stylish Brits of the '60s
- 53) One on a pedestal
- 54) Like a hermit
- 55) Wild party
- 56) Fill to the gills
- 57) "See ya" (Abbr.)
- 58) Direct deposits, e.g. (Abbr.)
- 60) Oft-fried fish

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Someone close to you may try to manipulate you, but that doesn't mean they'll get away with it or that you'll even let them get close. Once they start their pitch, in fact, your best bet may be to excuse yourself just after you announce that you're wise to their game. That is, of course, provided you don't lose it when you hear the whine in their voice. Try to remain calm. Saying no before they finish is enough to let you know you've won, isn't it?



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

This won't be a boring day. In fact, it could be close to a nine on a scale of one to ten. The best part is that you and you alone will be responsible for making this a day to remember, and that one simple question will get the show on the road. So if someone you care for happens to ask you a question (the kind you can automatically tell will get your dander up), think before you start to answer.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

One more day of hiding out from the world, and you'll be back in the mood for your usual gig: putting even the most accomplished social butterfly to shame. In the meantime, don't allow yourself to be dragged into the spotlight if you're not ready to go. Rest, relax, and regroup. If anyone deserves some time alone to get those batteries recharged, it's you. and the audience will wait for your next performance.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Everyone's had the experience of being infatuated, and everyone's known the mixed feelings that it involves. One minute you're ecstatic, the next you're depressed, and one phone call later you're back up there on cloud nine. You're due to experience all those feelings once again, and you'll find them next to impossible to pass up, even if you know the end result may not be the answer to all of your dreams.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

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



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

When it comes to the world at large, you've always been able to smile and have them thinking that you're on the same page, whether or not that happens to be true. That's going to be even more the case now. But if you have feelings you really do need to share, don't stifle them for the sake of being nice. You don't have to offend anyone. Just excuse yourself and find a loved one you're sure understands you.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

There's nothing but fire in the air. Well, that and a little bit of intrigue, which makes quite the exciting combination for someone as curious as you are. Needless to say, you're going to love every minute of this day, especially if you have a partner in crime in tow. And when have you ever had a problem finding someone who fits that description? Just be sure to keep things calm. As calm as possible, anyway.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're an expert when it comes to reading people. You know what they're up to before they do, just by listening to the tone of their voices and watching their eyes. Those talents will come in handy now, especially if you cross paths with someone who thinks of you as an easy target. You're so far from that right now that it's actually laughable, but it won't hurt to let them keep thinking along those lines.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You're feeling benevolent, generous, and extremely charitable toward your fellows. So no matter what anyone needs, you'll be only too happy to do whatever you can to help. That's a rare and wonderful gift that will be much appreciated right about now, because there could be a few folks out there who won't be at all sympathetic to anyone else's needs. Go ahead. Get out there and spread your good feelings around.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Here we go with the "if you loved me, you would..." thing. You hate it, and you've tried to make it clear that you're not going to fall for it ever again. But for some reason every time you hear it, it works. Those words seem to bring back all the old-school guilt you were sure you'd sworn off for good. This time, do yourself a favor and as soon as you hear the words, excuse yourself. If they follow you out, tell them you're allergic to guilt.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You pride yourself on being a master judge of character. At the moment, however, your talents in that department aren't quite fully operational. One minute in the company of that certain someone you've been thinking about nonstop will prove that to you. Better step back and take a deep breath, especially if you've been asked for a favor you know isn't quite on the up and up. There's nothing more memorable than strength.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You're feeling benevolent, generous, and extremely charitable toward your fellows. So no matter what anyone needs, you'll be only too happy to do whatever you can to help. That's a rare and wonderful gift that will be much appreciated right about now, because there could be a few folks out there who won't be at all sympathetic to anyone else's needs. Go ahead. Get out there and spread your good feelings around.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Which extra element did Einstein include in his understanding of general relativity, which he had not previously included in the theory he published in 1905 of special relativity?
- A. Electromagnetism
 - B. Time
 - C. Mass-energy equivalence
 - D. Gravity

2. Anthony Wilding is the only New Zealander in what sport's Hall of Fame?
- A. Surfing
 - B. Golf
 - C. Tennis
 - D. Archery

3. Who was shot by Valery Solanas on 3 June 1968?
- A. Larry Hagman
 - B. John Lennon
 - C. Ronald Reagan
 - D. Andy Warhol

Answers: 1.D 2.C 3.D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

A	O	E	O
T	O	S	U
O	B	N	L
Y	R	B	S

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.

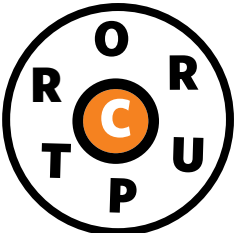
SOLUTION
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

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

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

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

'WE ARE GOING TO BE ON SAME PAGE'

India's new coach Gambhir and Kohli share the common goal of team's success

Mumbai, India - Gautam Gambhir, whose stint as the new India head coach will start with the tour of Sri Lanka later this month, has had his share of on-field run-ins with Virat Kohli in the past, but said their equation is "between two mature individuals" and not for public consumption. He also said that the two are "on the same page" when it comes to the shared goal of achieving success for the men's national team. "Good for the TRP, but my relationship is not public," Gambhir said on Monday when asked about Kohli in his first press conference since assuming his new role. "What kind of relationship do I share with Virat Kohli, I think it is between two mature individuals.

"On the field, everyone has got the right to fight for their own team, for their own jersey, and want to come back in a winning dressing room. But, at the moment, I think you are representing India and representing 140 crore Indians and I am sure we are going to be on the same page

and try and make India proud. "I share a very good relationship off the field and we will continue to do that. But yes, to make it more public what kind of a relationship [we have] I think it is between two individuals." Kohli and Gambhir had a scrap during an IPL match in 2013, when Gambhir was the Kolkata Knight Riders captain. Later, there was another incident when Gambhir was the Lucknow Super Giants mentor in IPL 2023. Gambhir, while celebrating LSG's one-run win over Royal Challengers Bengaluru, was seen shushing the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, a gesture which Kohli reprised at Lucknow's Ekana Stadium when RCB won the return fixture. Kohli and Gambhir had to be pulled apart by people around them in the end. During IPL 2024, however, the two were friendly with each other in public. When asked about his relationship with Kohli, Gambhir had said "perception was far from reality". And when Kohli was asked about it during



Gautam Gambhir (L) with Virat Kohli

Good for the TRP, but my relationship is not public. What kind of relationship do I share with Virat Kohli, I think it is between two mature individuals.

GAUTAM GAMBHIR

the season, he said: "I hugged Naveen [ul-Haq, with whom he had an altercation in IPL 2023], and then the other day, Gauti bhai came and hugged me... We're not kids anymore." Gambhir said that he and Kohli have had discussions in recent times, but didn't want to divulge the details. "How many chats have I had with him, after my announcement or before my

announcement, during the games, after the games - I think sometimes just because we want headlines - it is not important," Gambhir said. "The most important thing right now is that we both have got to be working extremely hard to make India proud. And that is our job. "He is a thorough professional, he is a world-class athlete, he is a world-class player. I have

Bashir stars as England beat West Indies to win series

Nottingham, England - Spinner Shoaib Bashir took five wickets as England bowled out West Indies for 143 to secure a 241-run victory on the fourth day of the second test at Trent Bridge on Sunday and take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series. The touring side, chasing 385 to win, started well thanks to a solid opening partnership of 61 between captain Kraigg Brathwaite and Mikyle Louis. The dismissal of Louis by Chris Woakes, however, prompted a collapse as West Indies lost five wickets in 35 balls. After Louis was caught by wicketkeeper Jamie Smith for 17, Kirk McKenzie edged Bashir to Smith for one and Brathwaite fell for 47 when he feathered a catch to Smith off Woakes. Kavem Hodge, who made a century in the first innings, was trapped lbw by Bashir for a duck and Alick Athanaze edged Bashir to Joe Root at slip for one to leave the West Indies reeling at 82-5. Kevin Sinclair skied a catch off his wrist to Zak Crawley in the slips off Mark Wood, and Gus Atkinson trapped Joshua Da



England's Shoaib Bashir celebrates with Ben Stokes after their win against West Indies in the second Test at Trent Bridge on Sunday

Silva lbw for 14. Atkinson bowled Alzarri Joseph for a duck, Bashir bowled Jason Holder for 37 and the spinner bowled Shamar Joseph for eight to complete figures of 5-41. "I didn't see it happening that

quickly after the opening partnership," England captain Ben Stokes told the BBC. "You could see at the end of our innings the wicket started misbehaving. I thought the way we fought back after that first wicket was im-

pressive. On a wicket that didn't really do that much, I thought Shoaib showed his class." Earlier, Root compiled a stylish century to lead England to a second-innings total of 425 all out. Root made 122, his 32nd test hundred, after Harry Brook plundered a rapid 109. Brook, who faced only 132 deliveries, struck 13 fours in his fifth test century and first on home soil, sharing a fourth-wicket partnership of 189 with Root to give England control of the match. Brook was caught by wicket-keeper Da Silva off Seales and Stokes (eight) and Jamie Smith (six) were dismissed shortly before lunch. Root held firm, however, and reached three figures with a crisp drive for four. Woakes fell for 12 and Root's innings ended when he drove Holder straight to McKenzie at cover having passed West Indian Shivnarine Chanderpaul to climb to eighth on the all-time list of leading test run scorers. Wood was bowled by Jayden Seales for a duck, and the West Indies fast bowler also bowled Bashir, leaving Atkinson unbeaten on 21.

Schauffele wins British Open after flawless finish

Troon, Scotland - American Xander Schauffele emerged from a tightly-bunched leaderboard to win the 152nd British Open with a supreme blemish-free final-round 65 at Royal Troon on Sunday. Beginning the day among a group of players one stroke behind leader Billy Horschel, unflappable world number three Schauffele was in total control as he produced an immaculate display to finish on nine-under 275. When Schauffele tapped in for par on the 18th green the Claret Jug was his, even if South Africa's Thriston Lawrence, who had earlier led the tournament, was still to finish his round. Justin Rose, bidding to become the first Englishman to win the Open since Nick Faldo in 1992, was left to ponder what might have been as he finished two shots back in tied second place having barely put a foot wrong over the weekend. American Horschel birdied

the 18th to join Rose on seven under and Lawrence was fourth on six under with another American Russell Henley fifth on five under and Ireland's 2019 Open champion Shane Lowry sixth on four under. The 30-year-old Schauffele had not won a major until dominating this year's PGA Championship in May when he finished on a record 21-under-par to edge out Bryson



Xander Schauffele celebrates with the British Open trophy

DeChambeau. He took his new-found swagger to the Ayrshire coast, however, to claim the Open in commanding fashion. Precision golf meant he hit 16 of 18 greens in regulation and he hit nine of 14 fairways. "Hearing your name called with 'Open champion' after it is something I've dreamt of for a very long time," Schauffele said after being presented with the Claret Jug. Schauffele's victory means the last seven majors have all been won by Americans and for the first time since 1982 Americans have swept all four majors in a season. After the wild weather on Saturday had left 24 players within six shots of the lead, the year's final major looked set for a nerve-jangling climax. Midway through the afternoon that seemed likely, but Schauffele was simply too accurate off the tee, on the fairways and the greens, making six birdies and not a single bogey in a masterful exhibition of links golf.



Justin Rose

Rose 'choking back tears' as Open bid falls short

Troon, Scotland - England's Justin Rose admitted he was "gutted" when he walked off Royal Troon's 18th green on Sunday having narrowly missed out on winning the British Open for the first time. The 43-year-old barely put a foot wrong over the four days as he was buffeted by the worst of the Ayrshire coast elements. He topped the leaderboard at various times in Sunday's final round but a birdie on the 18th

was in vain as ice-cool American playing partner Xander Schauffele produced a faultless round of 65 to claim the title by two strokes. Former U.S. Open champion Rose dropped only five shots all weekend as he showed that despite having to qualify this year, he remains a force capable of challenging for majors. "Gutted when I walked off the course and it hit me hard because I was so strong out there

today," Rose, who was laser-focused throughout the day but saw several birdie putts fail to drop, told reporters after his second Open runner-up finish. "I won second place, I won points, I won prizes, FedExCup points, all that stuff too. At that point, you're being a professional. Then I walk 10 steps later and I'm choking back tears. So that's the shift." Rose burst into the spotlight in 1998 when he finished fourth at

the Open as a 17-year-old amateur. He won the 2013 U.S. Open and looked on the brink of becoming the first Englishman to win the Open since Nick Faldo in 1992. "I really played the way I wanted to today. I got off on the front foot. I played my way right into the tournament early doors," Rose said. "Did a lot of the hard things really well on the golf course today. "Just a critical moment mid-

way through the back nine just momentum-wise. Obviously, Xander got it going. I hit a couple of really good putts that didn't fall, then suddenly that lead stretched. I left it all out there. I'm super proud of how I competed." Rose, a stalwart of Europe's Ryder Cup team with six appearances, paid tribute to the 30-year-old Schauffele's mentality after he added the Open crown to the PGA Championship title he won in May.



TADEJ'S TOUR DE FORCE

Pogacar roars to Tour de France victory to cement his greatness

Paris, France - Battered and bruised in the two previous editions, Tadej Pogacar made his return to the top of the Tour de France podium with a loud, big bang on Sunday to cement his place among the cycling greats. The Slovenian became the first to win both the Giro d'Italia and the Tour in the same season since the late Marco Pantani in 1998, in brutal, ruthless fashion as he crushed defending champion Jonas Vingegaard, whom he beat by six minutes and 17 seconds. Belgian Remco Evenepoel was third overall and on the final stage.

"I'm super happy, I cannot describe how happy I am after two hard years in the Tour de France, always some mistakes and this year, everything to perfection," Pogacar said.

Pogacar won the 33.7-km individual time trial from Monaco to Nice in a time of 45 minutes and 24 seconds, destroying his

rivals with a gap of one minute and three seconds over Vingegaard, winner of the last two Tours.

The winner could easily have played it safe having started the final day with a commanding lead over Vingegaard, but once

Pogacar's UAE Team Emirates won the team classification, while Evenepoel, who won the stage seven time trial, took the white jersey for the best young rider in his first Tour, finishing 9:18 behind the winner.

Last year, Pogacar paid the

but Pogacar hit him hard every time he could and it quickly became evident that the rider who drew comparisons with the great Eddy Merckx would come closer to the 'Cannibal'.

It would now be unfair to call Pogacar just the 'Baby Cannibal'. In three weeks from Florence, Italy, to Monaco, Pogacar has taken on a new dimension.

His swashbuckling style, take-no-prisoner approach, have given him titles in all three grands tours and in three of the five Monument classics, and won him the hearts of the fans.

While Merckx won five Tours and the Giro five times as well and claimed all five Monuments, it came at a time when cycling was not yet globalised.

"We could have made a whole peloton with the new Merckxes," Merckx himself said.

"This one's different. If you want me to predict a career similar to mine, I'd say yes. He

started winning at a very young age, and I sense a huge desire in him to win everything.

"There's a rage whenever he's on a bike. I like that. Yes, I'm really saying it, and not to please those who ask me: Pogacar is my true heir.

"If there's any room for improvement, it's in the time trial, where he can still take time. And later on, he'll have to put on a bit of weight if he wants to win Paris-Roubaix."

Pogacar has been ticking all the boxes since he started, notably winning the 2018 Tour de l'Avenir, a year before he turned professional.

He then won Liege-Bastogne-Liege, the Giro di Lombardia and the Tour of Flanders, coming third in Milan Sanremo this year. While Paris-Roubaix, the Queen of the Classics, seems out of reach due to his light weight, Pogacar is by far the most successful road rider of his era.

I'm super happy, I cannot describe how happy I am after two hard years in the Tour de France, always some mistakes and this year, everything to perfection

TADEJ POGACAR

again he showed no mercy and from the off he went for the stage win, his third in a row, to finish the Tour in style.

Eritrea's Biniam Girmay won the green jersey for the points classification with Richard Carapaz of Ecuador taking the polka dot jersey for the mountains classification.

price for a preparation that was disrupted by a crash in April, and this time, it was Denmark's Vingegaard who entered the race diminished after sustained broken ribs and a collapsed lung three months before the start in Florence.

Vingegaard made good impression in the opening week,



Jonas Vingegaard

Vingegaard to miss Vuelta a Espana after 'exhausting' outing

Paris, France - Jonas Vingegaard will not be competing at the Vuelta a Espana, the Vismalease a Bike rider said after finishing second in an "exhausting" Tour de France.

Slovenian Tadej Pogacar became the first rider since 1998 to achieve the Giro d'Italia and Tour de France double, winning his third tour title on Sunday by defeating the defending champion Vingegaard. The Dane, who won the last two tours, entered this year's event after a three-month hiatus following multiple serious injuries, including a collapsed lung and fractured rib. He sustained in a crash at the Tour of the Basque Country in April.

year, but for sure I will be there again in the future.

"It's been quite some journey because it's only three and a half months ago I had the worst crash of my career, breaking almost every bone in the upper right side of my body, and puncturing both

I'm tired, I don't think I've ever been this tired after a Grand Tour before. To be honest, I'm exhausted.

JONAS VINGEGAARD

The 27-year-old never really appeared like he could retain his title after the injuries, though he did secure a stage win.

"I'm tired, I don't think I've ever been this tired after a Grand Tour before. To be honest, I'm exhausted," Vingegaard told Eurosport. "Of course I want to come back and win it again. I think now I need a bit of rest."

"Unfortunately I will not be at the start of the Vuelta a Espana. I have different priorities this

lungs," he said.

Vingegaard's teammate Sepp Kuss will look to defend his title in the Vuelta, which begins on August 17, after missing the Tour de France due to COVID.

Vingegaard will not be competing at the Paris Games either, starting on Friday. Mads Pedersen, Mattias Skjelmose, Michael Morkov and Mikkel Bjerg will make up the Danish men's road cycling team.

Rakitic joins Hajduk Split

Zagreb, Croatia - Former Croatia midfielder Ivan Rakitic is joining Hajduk Split after Saudi Pro League club Al-Shabab terminated his contract by mutual consent following a six-month spell.

The 36-year-old scored once in eight games after joining Al-Shabab in January 2024 as they finished eighth on 52 points.

"The club management agreed with the Croatian player Ivan Rakitic to terminate the contractual relationship between the two parties by mutual consent," the Saudi club posted on the X social media platform.

Hajduk Split on Sunday announced the signing of the former Barcelona and Sevilla midfielder for one season with



Ivan Rakitic

the option of an extra year in what will be his first campaign in Croatia.

Rakitic, who was born in Switzerland, played 106 games for Croatia, scoring 15 goals, and helped the country reach the World Cup final in 2018.

Nadal happy to avoid injuries before Olympics

Bastad, Sweden - Rafa Nadal may not be too pleased with the level of his tennis in his first final since winning the 2022 French Open title but the injury-plagued Spaniard said it was important to avoid any damage in Bastad ahead of the Paris Olympics.

The 38-year-old, who missed almost all of 2023 with a hip problem and has been limited to six events this year because of a muscle tear and fitness issues, lost 6-3 6-2 in the



Rafael Nadal

Swedish Open final to Portuguese seventh seed Nuno Borges on Sunday. After beating fifth seed Cameron Norrie on Thursday, Nadal won tough three-set matches against fourth seed Mariano Navone and Duje Ajdukovic in his next two rounds and appeared to feel the effects in the final.

"The level was so far from what it should be. Probably the energy too. It has been a long week with long matches. Even if my body, I don't have damage,

that's important - but mentally and physically, I'm not used to playing four days in a row and playing long matches.

"I need to analyse well and find the reason why I played that way, even if the energy wasn't right ... Things like this can happen, and that's the situation. I don't have to lie or hide anything."

Nadal opted to skip Wimbledon this month to prepare for the Olympics on the clay courts of Roland Garros.

Paris hopes to balance security and celebration for Olympics Opening

Paris, France - As Paris makes final preparations for the Summer Olympics, the grand opening ceremony along the river Seine on Friday has created an unprecedented security challenge that organisers hope won't dampen the party vibe.

For the first time, a Games opening ceremony will not take place in a stadium.

Instead, dozens of boats will carry thousands of athletes and performers on a 6-km (3.7-mile) floating parade down the Seine, showcasing the beauty

and history of the French capital.

More than 300,000 people are expected to line both banks of the river to watch the ceremony - along with 45,000 police, including members of France's elite special intervention forces trained in counterterrorism.

Snipers will be deployed on the top of buildings along the route and an anti-drone system will be in place.

"There's a balance to be found between top security,



France is at high level of security in the wake of wars in Gaza and Ukraine

which is absolutely the priority," Tony Estanguet, president of the Paris 2024 organising committee, told a press conference on Sunday.

"It's part of the objective to guarantee the security and to propose a fantastic celebration of the Games...But to have this kind of unique celebration, you also need to have a very, very strong security plan. And that's the case."

The ceremony, which will start at 7:30 p.m. local time (1730 GMT), will be "a

large fresco" celebrating Paris, France and the Games and will interweave the traditional parade by athletes with artistic performances and elements of protocol, said Thomas Jolly, the artistic director of the opening ceremony.

With wars in Gaza and Ukraine, and security concerns at home, France is already at its highest level of security.

The crowds set to descend on Paris will be in marked contrast to the atmosphere of the last Summer Olympics in Tokyo

in 2021 which played to empty arenas, and a year later than scheduled, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

French officials have said there are no specific terrorism threats for the ceremony that will launch the Games in Paris, which run until Aug. 11.

However, should specific concerns arise, there are backup plans, that would either see the ceremony restricted to the Trocadero square near the Eiffel tower, or switched to the Stade de France stadium.



Lando Norris (L) with his McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri

I didn't deserve to win the race today, says Lando Norris

Budapest, Hungary - Lando Norris kept Formula One fans on tenterhooks as he ignored pleas by McLaren to hand back the lead to teammate Oscar Piastri at the Hungarian Grand Prix on Sunday, but after finally giving way he conceded the Australian deserved to win.

The Briton's eventual compliance allowed Piastri to celebrate a first victory and a one-two finish that sent McLaren second overall.

"I didn't deserve to win the race today. Simple as that. So the fact I was in that position was incorrect," Norris told reporters.

"I shouldn't have been in that position in the first place. I shouldn't have been given that hope of 'I'm here, I'm leading a race'."

Norris said he was always going to give back the place but, as a racing driver, was obviously going to question the situation and challenge the orders.

"I was going to wait until the

last lap, the last corner," he added.

"But then they (McLaren) said if there was a safety car all of a sudden, and I couldn't let Oscar go through, then it would have made me look like a bit of an idiot. Then I was like, 'yeah, it's fair point'. And I let him go."

Norris recognised it might have played out differently to television viewers, but said the highlighted messages gave the wrong impression - even if there was no doubting his disappointment.

"You can make what you will of what you hear and what you think you know and that kind of stuff," he said. "But I know that I always was going to give it back unless they changed their mind on what they were saying. And they didn't. So all good."

Norris, who started on pole position, said he lost the win at the start when Piastri went through to take the lead into the first corner.

TARGETING GLORY

Oman shooter Al Khatri looks to impress on Olympic debut

Muscat - Oman's shooter Said al Khatri is eyeing a standout performance as he makes his Olympics debut in Paris.

Al Khatri arrived in Châteauroux, France, on Sunday to participate in a warm-up camp in preparation for the men's trap event.

Determined to leave a significant mark on his first Olympic appearance, Al Khatri is focused on achieving high scores. Competing against several world-ranked shooters, he will surely gain valuable technical experience and essential skills to excel at the highest level.

The preliminary qualifications for the men's trap shooting event are scheduled for July 29 and 30 at the Châteauroux Shooting Centre. Shooters will be divided into groups, with the top-ranked participants advancing to the final rounds to compete for medals.

Al Khatri is honing his skills under the guidance of Italian coach Luca Marini, who recently joined the national team's coaching staff.

Marini is renowned for his expertise, having coached numerous top teams and shooters. This is the first Olympics where shooters can train at the Châteauroux Shooting Center more than ten days before the



Said Al Khatri arrived in Châteauroux, France, on Sunday and will participate in a warm-up camp under the watchful eye of his Italian coach Luca Marini

competition starts.

Located 200 kilometres south of Paris, the centre is the largest of its kind in Europe, providing Al Khatri with a prime opportunity to train at top-notch facilities and acclimatise to the Olympic atmosphere while also getting accustomed to his rifle and other environmental factors.

Al Khatri's participation in the Paris Olympics follows his successful fulfilment of all requirements and points needed to obtain the Olympic invitation card. The positive relations of the

Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) with the Olympic Solidarity Committee and international sports federations also played a role.

A prominent shooter on the national team, Al Khatri has achieved significant accomplishments and titles in his career. He won the Kuwait Amir's Open Shooting Championship last year and was ranked among the top eight shooters in Asia advancing to the Asian finals and securing seventh place in the 2023 Asian Cup held alongside the open championship in Kuwait.

Said Al Khatri is honing his skills under the guidance of Italian coach Luca Marini, who recently joined the national team's coaching staff

Meanwhile, Ali Salim al Busafi, Oman's Chef de Mission, arrived in Paris on Monday to ensure all preparations and arrangements are in place for the arrival of national team representatives in the coming days.

Al Busafi will attend the first meeting of Chefs de Mission at the Olympic Village on Tuesday. The meeting will cover various topics, including accommodation arrangements for Oman's delegation members and requirements for the official Olympic opening ceremony on Friday.

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CELEBRITY STYLE

Margot Robbie knew that she had to make a splash with her first maternity outfit after announcing her pregnancy earlier this week. And what better locale than Day 12 of Wimbledon?

Margot distracted from the tennis as she packed on the PDA with husband Tom Ackerley at Wimbledon on July 12, in her first public appearance since revealing the couple were expecting their first child.

The pair looked more loved up and there as they packed kisses and both rested their hands on the star's growing bump.

Margot and Tom were among the spectators at the men's singles semi-finals, where they watched Daniil Medvedev face off against Carlos Alcaraz. While their eyes may have been glued to the match, we couldn't help but train ours on the actor's fresh-off-the-runway maternity look.

Putting a funky spin on Wimbledon whites, Margot wore a draped Alaïa dress by Pieter Mulier from fall 2024, featuring an asymmetrical hemline and one-shouldered cape. Although it appears the dress is patterned with small black polka-dots, it's actually affixed with snaps and grommets, allowing the wearer to customize the fit. (Margot opted to wear her dress differently than on the runway, which connected the skirt to the cape for a more severe asymmetrical hemline.)

Margot continued the Alaïa streak with her accessories. She added a pair of black heeled peep toe mules, sculptural cat-eye sunglasses, and the black-and-white iteration of the brand's Le Teckel bag.

It's safe to say that, in her first official outing since her pregnancy reveal, Margot aced pregnancy style at Wimbledon. We can't wait to see what she serves up next!, Vogue stated.



MATERNITY Dressing

Margot Robbie on high-fashion spin

DREAM NURSERY

Margot is designing the dream nursery for her first baby with husband Tom. Margot and Tom are educating themselves about baby care and preparing to become parents, per a source.

The duo "are reading up on everything, like what to expect, and how to prepare, and what to have in place before the baby arrives".

A tipster told Life & Style that the *Barbie* star is "working with a designer" for the baby's nursery.

"Having kids is something Margot and Tom have talked about and wanted. But they waited eight years to start a family because she had a lot of things she wanted to accomplish first," the mole explained.

They added: "They are so excited!"

The *Babylon* star revealed her pregnancy on July 7 when she was spotted out and about with Tom. The duo were seen again when they attended Wimbledon on July 12.

The spouses also produce movies together via their production company LuckyChap Entertainment.

Tom previously talked about how seamlessly the duo transition between spouses and business partners.

"We don't have a toggle on, toggle off," he told *The London Times*. "It's all become one thing."



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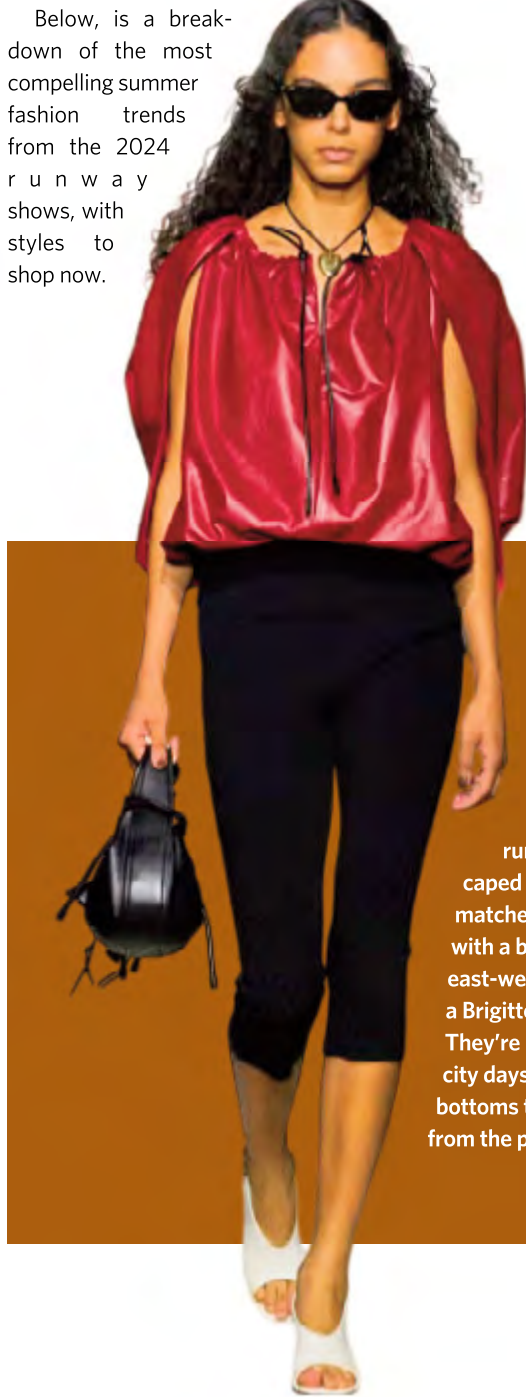
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Summer Trends

With the summer solstice officially behind us, all of us are thinking about what we're going to wear for the hot months ahead. (That is, when we're not in our favourite swimwear or summer jeans.) The best summer 2024 fashion trends are runway-approved, but work just as well for steamy city sidewalks.

On the runway, everyone from Bottega Veneta to Proenza Schouler showed crafty fishnet ensembles. Brands like Miu Miu and Wales Bonner took a more sporty approach with athletic shorts and ringer tees, while Altuzarra and Coperni offered a more polished look with colorful column dresses in soft, elegant hues. Or, for a subtle hint of skin, try Carven or Missoni's sheer skirts. (Styling tip: When fall comes around, throw on an over-size blazer to look equal parts provocative and tailored.)

Below, is a breakdown of the most compelling summer fashion trends from the 2024 runway shows, with styles to shop now.



CAPRI PANTS

This '90s-inspired silhouette is like what happens when you cross board shorts with tailored trousers: the perfect mix of sporty and minimalist. The ultimate high-water pants, they were styled on the runway. Phillip Lim paired them with a leather caped parka top, while Atlein and Coperni matched them to tops. They are a great signature with a boatneck Breton stripe shirt, a headband, east-west oval sunglasses, and Mary Jane flats for a Brigitte Bardot-coded French-chic summer look. They're not only functional for busy city days, they're also ideal travel bottoms that can take you straight from the plane to the sea.

SPORTY STYLE

Maybe designers were thinking about the upcoming Paris Olympics, or maybe they all had Challengers fever - whatever the cause, athletic looks have been having a moment. Miu Miu doubled down on sporty shorts quite literally, layering two pairs of board shorts with a preppy polo on top. Grace Wales Bonner has a long-standing collaboration with Adidas and has infused a sporty element into her collections for many seasons. This summer, she showed a track jacket and plenty of ringer tees. There were sneakers all over the runways, too, which pair perfectly with a canvas bag for a chic athleisure balance. The best part? You can wear head-to-toe sporty styles, but they look equally cool as separates.



From sporty shorts to elegant column dresses

FISHNET & CROCHET

The idea of crochet in the summer is like wearable art. Designers took a range of approaches to the open-knit trend, from the fishnet dresses at Bottega Veneta and Proenza Schouler to woven bags at Gabriela Hearst. Rachel Scott at Diotima designs incredible crochet, and each piece is handmade in Jamaican artisanal communities, making it truly one-of-a-kind. And let's not forget the mesh flat, which was all the rage on the runway and beyond.

Stumped on how to wear a crocheted top to the office? I like layering mine over a black T-shirt with a pair of Carhartt WIP utility pants, which makes it feel cool and accessible. Just swap in a dressier pair of pants if your workplace is more formal.



WHITE WITH A TWIST

Ruffled tops, eyelet dresses, layers of lace, and poplin circle skirts were all over the runways. From Jonathan Anderson's stunning white dress at his Loewe show to Jil Sander's caped and layered angelic look, this season's summer whites are full of personality, but they still offer enough

of a blank canvas to make styling fun. Spring 2024's accessory trends like preppy shoes and pendant cord necklaces still make a lot of sense here. I particularly love the idea of contrasting an ethereal white dress with down-to-earth loafers.

THONG SANDALS

This trend has quite literally flipped and flopped over the years, but it's back on top again, thanks to Chanel, which showed a handful of Spring/Summer 2024 runway looks with velvet thong sandals. From the jelly thongs at the Row and Ancient Greek Sandals to the colourful leather versions at Tory Burch, these come in a range of fabrics and colors, all easy to walk in. Wear them with circle skirts, bucolic ruffled dresses, or almost any pair of 2024 trending jeans - these sandals just feel fun for the summer.



COLUMN DRESSES

Dresses for summer are always a good idea, and the best maxis this season were all column dresses. Try a drop-waist style to elongate the body, and add height with a pair of platform summer sandals. For an additional graphic touch, go for a bright summer tote to add some spunk. I love these as a base to wear from day to night, throwing on a lightweight utility jacket when the temperature dips.

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