

H M visits Kuwait to offer condolences



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik offers condolences to Sheikh Misha'al al Ahmed al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, on Monday

Kuwait - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik offered condolences on Monday to Sheikh Misha'al al Ahmed al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, the Al Sabah family and people of Kuwait on the death of the forgiven, by the will of the Almighty Allah, the late Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf al Ahmed al Jaber al Sabah, when Sheikh Misha'al received His Majesty the Sultan at the Emiri Airport.

During their meeting, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere and heartfelt sympathies on the immense loss, praying to the Almighty Allah to have mercy on his soul, to rest him in peace in heavens and grant the Al Sabah family and the people

of Kuwait fortitude to bear the loss.

On his turn, the new Emir of Kuwait expressed his deep thanks and appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan and his accompanying delegation for their sincere sentiments. He prayed to the Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty the Sultan, grant him continued good health and spare Omani people any harm.

His Majesty the Sultan was accompanied during the condolence visit by an official delegation that comprised Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Council of Ministers, Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Sayyid Taimour bin Asa'ad al Said, Chairman of

Board of Governors of Central Bank of Oman, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of Royal Office, Sheikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of State Council, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr Abdullah bin Nassir al Harrasi, Minister of Information, Sayyid Faisal bin Hamoud al Busaidi, Advisor at Diwan of Royal Court, and Dr Saleh bin A'amir al Kharousi, Ambassador of Oman to Kuwait.

His Majesty the Sultan returned to Muscat on Monday evening.



Oman-India ties to secure stability in Indian Ocean region

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik returned to the sultanate on Sunday following a three-day state visit to the Republic of India.

Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, stated that the visit underscored the strength of bilateral relations between Oman and India, constituting a major milestone building on historical relations and paving the way for a new, positive stage in developing bilateral ties.

In a press statement, Sayyid Badr pointed out that the visit reflected joint commitment to strengthen cooperation that stems from long-standing foundations of friendship, cultural and economic exchange, and continuous interaction between the peoples of the two friendly peoples.

The meetings of His Majesty the Sultan with Droupadi Murmu, President of India, and Narendra Modi, Prime Minister, affirmed the existence of tangible cooperation that focuses on Oman-India's future perspectives on prioritising engagement in the fields of economy, technology, energy, trade and investment, Sayyid Badr explained.

The visit concluded with the endorsement of a joint vision that identified several basic areas of cooperation, showing the two countries' desire to conclude a joint economic partnership agreement, he added.

This partnership envisages consolidating cooperation in the fields of maritime security, the fight against terrorism and space technologies, Sayyid Badr stated, noting that the bilateral cooperation also covers a wide range of topics like research, training and cultural exchanges.

Sayyid Badr informed that Oman welcomes this significant boost of relations with India,

Plan announced to recreate historic maritime voyage

New Delhi, India - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an ambitious proposal to recreate a historic maritime voyage, reviving ancient trade routes between India and Oman.

'PM Modi and H M Sultan Haitham recalled the long history of maritime trade between India and Oman, enabling the exchange of goods and ideas across millennia. They reflected on the significant role played by dhows in facilitating trade and cultural exchanges, contributing to a longstanding and enriching history of interaction between the Indian subcontinent and the Arabian Peninsula, especially Oman,' a joint statement read.

The tentative plan outlines a journey that would see a ship setting sail from the port of

Mandvi in Gujarat to Muscat, with the anticipated timeline set for some time in 2025-26. Further voyages to other regions are also under consideration.

The leaders appreciated the proposal by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, to recreate a maritime voyage of a stitched ship, crafted with ancient knowhow in India.

On the sidelines of His Majesty the Sultan's visit, an India-Oman joint commemorative postage stamp was released, symbolising the long-standing cultural and people-to-people relationship between the two countries. The stamp depicts traditional folk dances, artfully showcasing the cultural heritage of India and Oman and will be cherished by philatelists and art enthusiasts in both countries.

which, he observed, would significantly contribute to stability and security in the Indian Ocean region. "The move will also help achieve our joint goals of sustainable economic development that generates benefits for the two countries and the region at large," said Sayyid Badr at the conclusion of the press statement.

During His Majesty the Sultan's visit to India, President Droupadi hosted a dinner in his honour at Rashtrapati Bhavan in the Indian capital. His Majesty the Sultan delivered a speech on the occasion as follows:

"We are delighted to arrive in New Delhi, the splendid capital of your hospitable country. We

would like to express our feeling of contentment and great satisfaction with the constructive dialogue that we exchanged with you, as well as the meetings and consultations with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and members of the Indian government.

"We together believe in the need to achieve fair peace and harmony in this region and in the world at large. We look forward to a future based on all that unites peoples and serves their aspirations, carrying the voice of the South to the entire world, so that this voice becomes a stream of development, science and knowledge - a catalyst for innovation, growth and progress."

Agencies

Royal Camel Corps added to ICESCO list of intangible cultural heritage

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by Royal Court Affairs in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Omani National Commission for Education, Science and Culture, succeeded in registering Royal Camel Corps on the

list of intangible cultural heritage of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO).

This announcement came during Oman's participation in the 11th meeting of the Heritage Committee of the Islamic World, which commenced on Monday at ICESCO's headquarters in Rabat, Morocco, and will

last for two days.

This international recognition confirms the role of Royal Camel Corps in preserving an intangible cultural heritage through the role it plays in preserving purebred Omani breeds, caring for camels, and showcasing this ancient cultural heritage.

Royal Camel Corps organises and practises activities related



to camels by holding the His Majesty the Sultan's Camel Racing Cup, heritage festivals, participating in various celebrations and presenting camel showmanship skills and musical performances on their backs, in addition to participating in conferences, exhibitions and scientific seminars on camels in and out of the sultanate.



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Oman bags two gold medals at Al Ula tent pegging event

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omani tent pegging team bagged two gold medals on the first two days of the Al Ula Tent Pegging Championship, which began in Medina, Saudi Arabia, on Sunday.

Omani rider Aahed Khamis al Balushi won gold medal on the first day of the championship, while the sultanate's national team took gold in the sword competition on Monday.

The tournament witnessed strong competitions on Sunday. Omani knight Aahed snatched gold in the individual category of the quad competition. The silver medal was won by Saudi knight Hassan al Asiri, while Kuwait's Abdullah al Daihani bagged the bronze medal.

In the individual sword competition, two Omani knights won two medals missing the gold for the country. Safwan bin Zaid al Maamari won the silver medal and Hamad bin Saif al Raisi won the bronze medal.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily* from Saudi Arabia, Aahed al Balushi said, "The championship, a global event attracting



the elite riders, witnessed participation of 11 countries, including Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, the UAE, Iraq, Jordan, Russia, Canada, South Africa, Kuwait, and Iran.

Talking about the preparation for the tournament, he said that the Omani tent pegging members had a month-long camp at Al Rahba Farm, in addition to competing in various events organised by the Oman Equestrian Federation throughout the year.

These events immensely help knights to prepare for various regional and international tournaments, he added.

"A rider needs daily training, patience and determination to achieve good results," he explained.

Aahed extended his gratitude to those who supported him during his training, including other fellow riders from Oman.

The Omani gold medalist encouraged the youth of his country to take part in this particular sport that has every element to build one's personality.

He expressed a strong desire to continue representing Oman in international tournaments and take the Omani flag to various global event.

28 arrested for violating labour law in Muscat: MoL

Muscat - Twenty eight workers were arrested for violating various provisions of the labour law during an inspection in Muscat governorate on Monday, according to the Ministry of Labour (MoL).

'The Ministry of Labour, represented by the Directorate General of Labour, conducted out an inspection campaign in Muscat governorate and arrested 28 workers for violating various provisions of the Labour Law,' the ministry stated.

Legal measures are being taken against them, it added.

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Dhofar Adventure and Exploration Team finds Dhalkut underwater thermal vents

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Dhofar Adventure and Exploration Team, in collaboration with Environment Authority (EA) and Bluefin Diving Centre, embarked on a mission recently to unravel the enigma of circular currents in the Arabian Sea off Dhalkut in Dhofar governorate. Abdul Hakim Amer al Ma'ashani, leader of the team, informed of the findings from their dives conducted from November 21 to November 23 for a coral reef cleaning campaign organised by EA. Ma'ashani explained that the team's dives led to the source of hot water springs near Dhalkut beach, known locally as 'Hamwa Yadwar'. Shrouded in mystery



The presence of deep faults allows water to descend to hot rock reservoirs deep underground, where it gets heated and rises back to the surface

DR ALI FARAJ AL KATHIRI



and reputed to be deadly, these circular currents have been a subject of curiosity for centuries. "The team's divers reached the source to find hot water springs at a depth of 18m, approximately 5,850m from the port of Dhalkut and 290m from the coast." The divers discovered multiple thermal vents where the water temperature rose to near-boiling levels. "Samples of water and rocks were collected for further analysis by specialists," informed Ma'ashani. According to geologist Dr Ali Faraj al Kathiri, hot springs are typically formed by magma heating water beneath the Earth's surface, which then flow out as fountains. "However," he pointed out,

"the Dhalkut hot springs might have a different origin. The presence of deep faults allows water to descend to hot rock reservoirs deep underground, where it gets heated and rises back to the surface as hot springs or steam. This theory aligns with Dhalkut's geological features, particularly the convergence of three faults near the documented hot springs area." The findings of Dhofar Adventure and Exploration Team not only demystify the circular currents but also contribute significantly to the understanding of the region's geothermal activity. These findings highlight the need for further research and exploration in the area, promising exciting scope of study of geothermal phenomena.

CPA initiates innovative campaign to boost Omani market standards

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a move to enhance consumer satisfaction and stimulate the economy, Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has launched an innovative initiative named 'Consumer-Friendly Establishments'. The initiative aims to elevate service standards and foster a customer-centric approach in commercial centres across Oman, benefiting both Omani and expatriate consumers. A CPA official informed that the initiative focuses on assessing commercial establishments on multiple aspects, including customer satisfaction, quality of services offered, and effectiveness in addressing customer feedback and complaints. Establishments scoring more than 80% of the set evaluation criteria will be recognised as 'Consumer-Friendly Establishments', receiving several benefits. The comprehensive evaluation report details performance metrics, areas of improvement, and a special pointer denoting their consumer-friendly status. Recognised establishments are also permitted to publicise their classification and leverage this



acknowledgment for marketing purposes. "The benefits extend to consumers as well, who will enjoy improved service levels, swift complaint resolution, enhanced shopping experiences, and incorporation of modern technologies at the establishments." Further underscoring CPA's commitment to market fairness, the official highlighted the authority's action plan to combat overpricing, particularly of non-taxed items. "Field teams have been deployed to inspect shops

and commercial centres, ensuring compliance with legal standards. Violations are promptly addressed as per the law." Another noteworthy campaign initiated by CPA was one called 'It is not possible to delay'. Launched on August 23, this two-month initiative focused on recalling faulty vehicles. The campaign aimed to fortify collaboration between government and private sectors to reduce traffic accidents caused by manufacturing defects and increase awareness of vehicle recall regu-

lations under the Consumer Protection Law. CPA's efforts have resulted in significant financial recoveries for consumers, with the third quarter of 2022 seeing a total of RO567,132 recovered through the resolution of consumer complaints. This figure reflects the authority's dedication to safeguarding consumer rights and enhancing the overall shopping experience in the sultanate, fostering a market environment where consumer interests are paramount.

Filmmaker wins several awards

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Coming as a shot in the arm for the Omani film industry, director Mohammad al Darwaish has bagged several awards in the last few weeks - each accolade a testament to the growing momentum and creativity of the sultanate's movie industry. Recognition for Darwaish include the Best Animation Film award at the International Children and Women Film Festival, held in Oman from December 4 to 6, for his film *Ta*. Written and directed by Darwaish, *Ta* was shot in October in 2022. "We employed software tools such as SONY Vegas, Photoshop and Adobe Premiere for the animation in the film. It was a complicated technical process," Darwaish informed. "*Ta* is not only a visual delight but also a narrative gem, earning the prestigious Best Narrative Film Award at the festival," he added. The graphics and design, masterfully crafted by Ali al



Hinai, added an extra layer of brilliance to the film's creativity. Darwaish also claimed the Jury Award at the International Children and Women Film Festival for the film *Azzal* of which he was director of photography. A silent movie directed by Fatima al Hinai, *Azzal* was shot over three days in July. The movie used diverse high-tech equipment, including SONY A7iii and A7S cameras, lenses ranging from 85mm, 50mm and 24mm, and drones to capture unique

perspectives. Earlier, at the Environmental Film Festival in Tunisia, Darwaish's documentary *Ophiolite* earned the coveted Incentive Award. This environmental exploration, encompassing various types of ecosystems, was directed and written by Darwaish. Made over more than a year, the film's extensive production involved filming using cameras such as Canon C300, 5D Mark and the versatile Blackmagic. For underwater scenes, GoPro cameras and drones were used; Darwaish was committed to capturing the essence of diverse environments. "I am thrilled that our hard work has paid off," Darwaish said, narrating how the team "covered wadis and mountains, interviewed numerous professors and put our hearts into every frame". "These awards are not just for me but for the burgeoning Omani film industry, showcasing the depth of talent and storytelling capabilities in our country," Darwaish added.



FM offers condolences at Kuwaiti Embassy

Muscat - Senior representatives of Oman's Foreign Ministry (FM) visited the Embassy of Kuwait in Muscat on Sunday to offer their condolences on the death of Sheikh Nawaf al Ahmad al Jaber al Sabah. The representatives expressed their sympathies to the State of Kuwait, praising

the role of the late sheikh in developing relations between the two brotherly countries, while stressing the strength of the historical relations between Oman and Kuwait. At the conclusion of the visit, the representatives signed the embassy's book of condolence.

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H M THE SULTAN GIVES AUDIENCE TO BUSINESS PEOPLE IN INDIA



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Saturday gave an audience at his residency in New Delhi to a number of business people in India. During the audience, His Majesty the Sultan exchanged views with business people on a number of economic and trade topics. His Majesty urged the business people to explore the promising investment opportunities available in various fields in Oman. On their turn, the business people expressed their great honour to have an audience with His Majesty. They affirmed that this audience would contribute to augmenting the trade and investment exchange between the two countries. The audience was attended by members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan during his visit to India (ONA)



Oman, India make progress on free trade agreement

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The negotiations between India and Oman for a free trade agreement have made substantial progress in the last few rounds of discussion, according to India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra.

Kwatra informed that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave a strong push to conclude the India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) as early as possible.

"Although the negotiations on CEPA have started only recently, they have made substantial progress in the last few rounds of discussion and both leaders gave strong impetus and push to conclude the CEPA agreement as early as possible," Kwatra said in a special press briefing in New Delhi on Saturday, as reported by ANI.

The formal commencement meeting for India-Oman CEPA took place on November 20, 2023, followed by the first round of negotiations in New Delhi from November 27 to November 29. The negotiations continued with the second round in Muscat from December 9 to December 11.



Oman is India's third largest export destination within the GCC region. Bilateral trade between two countries surged from \$5.01bn in Indian financial year 2018-19 to \$12.39bn in Indian financial year 2022-23, according to an ANI report.

In another significant development in the India-Oman economic partnership, the third tranche of the Oman-India Joint Investment Fund has been announced, marking a major milestone in trade and capital cooperation between the two na-

tions.

Kwatra highlighted the importance of this achievement during the state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to India. "An important achievement in terms of India-Oman trade and capital cooperation was the announcement of the third tranche of the Oman-India Joint Investment Fund," he said.

India's Foreign Secretary also said that the Oman-India Joint Investment Fund, a 50-50 joint venture between the State Bank of India (SBI) and the Oman In-

vestment Authority (OIA), aims to bolster economic ties by directing investments into the fastest-growing sectors of the Indian economy.

The third tranche of this fund would be worth \$300mn. The fund's earlier two tranches, valued at \$100mn and \$200mn, respectively, laid the groundwork for a strong economic alliance.

The announcement of the third tranche of the fund not only signifies a substantial financial commitment but also cements the long-term vision of both nations

to deepen economic and cultural ties.

Kwatra also informed that the discussions are underway between India and Oman about utilising the UPI stack, adding that talks on the possibility of rupee trade with Oman is still at the 'exploratory stage'.

"Another element of discussion where we would try to move forward is the possibility of rupee trade which can work between the two countries. This is still at an exploratory stage but can be an important element of cooperation going forward," Kwatra added.

On talks of digital payment cooperation between Oman and India, Kwatra said both sides discussed utilising the UPI stack with the potential corresponding digital stack in the Omanis ecosystem.

"There are also other elements of the Indian stack in terms of the digital infrastructure that can be suitable to Omanis priorities with regard to using now financial inclusion and financial technology payment systems; those are only one element of it but the interface of the UPI with a corresponding Oman platform is something we can talk about," he added.

Oil prices rise as Russia hints at further cuts

Muscat - Oil prices rallied on Monday due to naval and commercial ship attacks in the Red Sea that raised fears of possible disruptions to oil supply routes as well as the greater possibility of Russia reducing oil exports earlier than planned.

International benchmark crude Brent traded at \$77.31 per barrel in morning trade in London, a 1% increase from the closing price of \$76.55 a barrel in the previous trading session on Friday. The US benchmark, West Texas Intermediate (WTI), traded at the same time at \$72.50 per barrel, up 1% from Friday's close of \$71.78 per barrel.

After diving to six-month lows last week over uncertainties about the US interest rate decision, prices gained around 1% last week, supported by lower US inventories and sustained risk-on sentiment from the Fed's dovish pivot.

Prices started the week with a bearish sentiment over growing supply fears following the launch of new attacks by the Iran-backed Houthi group in Yemen on naval and commercial ships in the Red Sea.

The Suez Canal, the SUMED pipeline, and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait are strategic routes for Persian Gulf oil and natural gas shipments to Europe and North America.

According to the US Energy



Information Agency (EIA), total oil shipments via these routes accounted for about 12% of total seaborne-traded oil in the first half of 2023, and liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments accounted for about 8% of worldwide LNG trade.

Price upticks were also helped after Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said on Sunday that his country may increase oil export cuts by an additional 50,000 bpd or higher in December 2023 on top of the current cuts of 300,000 barrels per day (bpd).

"In December, we will add additional volumes. The figure will be more than \$300,000. We will decide based on the results in December. Maybe the additional volume will reach 50,000 barrels. Maybe more," Novak said.

The strengthening of other currencies against the US dollar further prompted investors to purchase cheaper dollar-indexed crude oil.

Agencies

Non-oil sectors to drive GCC growth in 2024

Dubai, UAE - The latest Economic Insight report for the Middle East, commissioned by ICAEW and compiled by Oxford Economics, reveals the region is expected to defy the global slowdown in 2024 as non-energy sectors continue to drive growth.

The pace of the Middle East's GDP growth is predicted to rise to 3.2% next year, above the global GDP growth forecast of 2.1%.

According to ICAEW's fourth quarter report, the Middle East economy will expand less than initially expected this year, with GDP growth expected at 1.3%. However, growth will improve in 2024 and outpace most advanced and emerging economies.

Projections for GCC growth this year have been scaled back to 0.7% due to a large negative contribution from the energy sector amid ongoing curbs in oil

production. However, there are promising signs within the non-energy sectors, notably in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The GCC's growth is expected to rise to 3.9% next year, primarily propelled by these industries.

The region's non-energy sector continued to deliver growth this year, especially in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The resurgence of travel and tourism across the region has been notably robust, surpassing pre-pandemic levels in nearly every GCC country.

Saudi Arabia's tourism industry continues to thrive, welcoming 27.6mn overnight tourists this year. This is expected to increase further, with a projected 30mn tourists by 2024 and more than 50mn by 2032. The government recently revised its 2030 visitor target to 150mn (both domestic and international), up from the previous 100mn.

India's GDP growth surges, defying global challenges

New Delhi, India - In a display of resilience and economic fortitude, India is charting a path of accelerated growth, outpacing global uncertainties. According to Asian Development Outlook, recent data reveals that India's GDP expanded at a robust rate of 7.1% in the first three quarters of the calendar year, propelled by strong industrial production and substantial investment.

India's industrial sector - Including manufacturing, mining, construction, and utilities - experienced double-digit growth, contributing significantly to the overall economic expansion.

The data for the second quarter of the fiscal year 2023 demonstrated a noteworthy GDP growth of 7.6%, underscoring the nation's economic vigour.

One of the key drivers behind India's impressive economic performance is the increased fixed investment, propelled by heightened capital spending by



both the central and state governments.

This surge in capital expenditure compensates for relatively lower growth in private consumption expenditure and weaker-than-expected exports.

While challenges persist, including the economic slowdown in major export markets and

power shortages, India's economic landscape presents positive indicators. The industrial sector's robust growth, coupled with government-driven investments, has created a favourable environment for sustained economic expansion.

India's inflation forecasts for the current fiscal year and the

upcoming fiscal year remain within expectations. Efforts to reduce inflation, including contractionary monetary policies and market-based exchange rate measures, are contributing to easing inflationary pressures.

The recent data aligns with the projections, maintaining a balance between inflation con-

trol and economic growth. India's economic surge significantly contributes to the revised growth forecast for South Asia, which is now projected at 5.7% for 2023.

The region's growth trajectory, led by India, showcases the resilience of economies despite global challenges. While some economies face uncertainties, India's growth story serves as a beacon of hope for the broader subcontinent. India's economic momentum signals a positive trajectory amid a complex global economic landscape.

The government's strategic initiatives and a robust industrial sector have positioned the nation as a key driver of growth in South Asia.

As India navigates the evolving economic landscape, sustained efforts and prudent policies will be crucial to ensuring the nation's continued economic vibrancy.

ANI

India tops global remittance charts with \$125bn in 2023

New Delhi, India – The World Bank's latest Migration and Development Brief reveals a continuing growth in remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in 2023, albeit at a slower pace compared to previous years.

According to the World Bank, the report highlights India's significant position as the top remittance recipient, drawing attention to the evolving dynamics in the remittance landscape.

Remittances to LMICs grew by an estimated 3.8% in 2023, reaching a total of \$669bn. Resilient labour markets in advanced economies and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries played a pivotal role in supporting migrants' ability to send money home. The report suggests a potential risk of a decline in real income for migrants in 2024 due to global inflation and low growth prospects.

In the South Asian region, remittance flows to India experienced notable growth, contributing to the overall positive trend. South Asia, as a whole, witnessed a 7.2% increase in remittances in 2023. The Indian economy, buoyed by a tight labour market in the United States and robust em-



ployment growth in Europe, outperformed previous forecasts by reaching \$125bn in remittances for the year.

Despite the positive trajectory, the report underscores challenges and potential risks. The Middle East and North Africa saw a decline in remittance flows for the second consecutive year, mainly driven by a sharp drop in flows to Egypt.

Remittance flows to Europe and Central Asia also decreased by 1.4% after a significant gain in 2022.

India retained its position as

the largest recipient of remittances, with an estimated \$125bn in 2023. This underscores the crucial role played by the Indian diaspora in supporting families and contributing to the country's economic resilience.

The top five remittance recipient countries include Mexico (\$67bn), China (\$50bn), the Philippines (\$40bn), and Egypt (\$24bn).

The World Bank report raises awareness about the potential impact of global economic conditions on remittance flows. The

expectation of weaker economic activity in several high-income countries and the prospect of weaker job markets may soften the growth of remittances to LMICs, projecting a 3.1% increase in 2024. The need for caution is emphasised, considering volatile oil prices, currency exchange rates, and the possibility of a deeper-than-expected economic downturn in high-income countries.

The World Bank's Remittances Prices Worldwide Database reveals that remittance costs remain persistently

high, averaging 6.2% to send \$200 as of the second quarter of 2023. The report highlights that banks continue to be the costliest channel for sending remittances, with an average cost of 12.1%.

A special section of the report emphasises the potential of leveraging remittances for development finance, particularly through diaspora bonds.

Diaspora bonds can be structured to tap into diaspora savings held in foreign destinations, providing a stable source of funds.

The report suggests that remittances have surpassed the sum of foreign direct investment and official development assistance in recent years, presenting opportunities for private capital mobilization.

India's prominence in the global remittance landscape is a testament to the significant role played by the Indian diaspora in supporting the country's economy. While challenges and risks persist, the report emphasises the need for inclusive labour markets and social protection policies to sustain remittance flows, which serve as vital lifelines for developing countries like India.

ANI

Russia may increase oil production cuts

Moscow, Russia – Russia may increase oil production cuts in December 2023 above the current 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) by 50,000 bpd or higher, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said.

"In December we will add additional volumes. The figure will be more than 300,000. We will decide based on the results of December. Maybe the additional volume will reach 50,000 barrels. Maybe more," he said.

As for the reduction in oil production volumes, they remain the same: 500,000 bpd in both December and January. "In December, production will be in accordance with the [OPEC+] agreement - 500,000 bpd less in accordance with our established quotas," he noted.

The Russian Deputy Prime Minister also said that his country's production complies with the obligations undertaken within OPEC+.

According to Novak, in December the production level was 500,000 bpd lower "in accordance with plans", which also continues in January.

Meanwhile, the Russian Ministry of Energy currently does not see any prerequisites for lifting the ban on the export of winter diesel. According to Energy Minister Nikolay Shulginov, the ministry is also reviewing the possibility of excluding a number of companies from paying duties



Alexander Novak

on the export of oil products.

"Yes, we are exploring options for excluding from the ban manufacturers of specific products that cannot be used to circumvent the protective duty on the export of motor fuel," he said.

In November, the Ministry of Energy reported that Russia had increased shipments of winter diesel fuel to the domestic market, as well as its production. At the same time, the ministry ruled out the risk of a shortage this winter, since its reserves exceed last year's levels.

From September 21, the Russian government introduced a temporary restriction on the export of gasoline and diesel to stabilize the domestic market. The ban was introduced indefinitely, its duration depended on market saturation and the results of this measure. Then the restrictions were partially lifted, but they still continue to apply to winter diesel.

TASS

Russia expects to reach agreement with China on new gas pipeline soon

Moscow, Russia – Russia is expected to reach an agreement with China on the ambitious Power of Siberia 2 gas pipeline project as soon as possible, according to Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak.

Russian energy giant Gazprom and China's CNPC are negotiating the terms of gas supplies via the Power of Siberia 2 gas pipeline, the parties may reach an agreement in the near future, Novak told reporters.

"As for the gas pipeline, commercial negotiations are underway between Gazprom and CNPC on the terms of the contract and supplies. As for the gas pipeline itself, it runs through the territory of Mongolia, and a feasibility study has already been done there, survey work is underway. We expect that the companies will come to an agreement in the near future," he said.

Power of Siberia 2 is a planned gas pipeline that will go through the territory of Western Siberia to China. Its maximum capacity will reach 50bn cubic meters per year.

Russia and China discussed the issue of gas supplies during a meeting of the intergovernmental commission on energy. According to Novak, Russian gas exports to China at the end of this year through the Power of



Power of Siberia 2 is a planned gas pipeline that will go through the territory of Western Siberia to China

Siberia pipeline will exceed 22bn cubic meters.

Energy cooperation between Russia and China is at its highest throughout its history and makes up to about a third of the

trade turnover, Novak said after the meeting.

"We discussed the issue of supplies. This year, supplies will surpass the plan. There were 22bn cubic meters, and in 10 months [the volume] reached almost 19bn cubic meters. That is, for the year as a whole it will be higher than 22bn cubic meters," he said.

On December 16, Gazprom set a new historical record for daily gas supplies to China via the Power of Siberia pipeline. Previously, the company noted that since mid-November it had significantly increased the volume of gas supplies to China in accordance with the previously

signed additional agreement.

"Energy cooperation between Russia and China is developing progressively. It is at present at the highest level and cooperation in the energy sphere amounts to about a third in the total trade turnover, which crossed the level of \$200bn during first eleven months of this year so far," Novak said.

Russia supplied more oil and petroleum products to China in ten months of this year than over the last year, the official noted. Russian coal exports to China will be record high and stand at more than 100mn metric tonnes in 2023, he added.

TASS

Rules required to avoid risks of cryptocurrencies: IMF

Washington, US – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said that a set of rules and the establishment of infrastructure are required to avoid the risks of cryptocurrencies.

"Crypto assets are not going away. Bitcoin is trading at its highest value since April 2022. The crypto market cap doubled over the last year," she said at the MOEF-BOK-FSC-IMF International Conference on Digital Money in Seoul, South Korea.

"Also, crypto asset adoption is high, especially in emerging market economies like India, Nigeria, and Vietnam," she said.

"The challenge is that high crypto asset adoption could undermine macro-financial



IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva

stability."

Georgieva said establishing clear tax rules and providing a solid legal foundation with a clear classification of crypto as-

sets is needed to avoid anti-money laundering and financing terrorism.

"Countries are implementing this guidance - turning it into legislation, training supervisors and overseers, and enforcing compliance. Korea, for instance, is showing leadership by amending its anti-money laundering law and setting up new legislation on crypto assets," she said.

The IMF chief warned that the use of a crypto asset, instead of domestic currency, can undermine monetary policy transmission, while it can also cause capital flow management measures, such as limits on foreign currency holdings, to be circumvented.

Anadolu Agency

QatarEnergy signs deal for Suriname offshore blocks

Doha, Qatar – QatarEnergy has signed two production sharing contracts (PSCs) for Suriname's offshore Blocks 64 and 65, which it had won during a bid round held in June 2023.

Pursuant to the signed contracts, QatarEnergy will own a 30% working interest in block 64, while TotalEnergies (the operator) will own 40%, and Petronas will own 30%. QatarEnergy will also own a 40% share in Block 65, while



Shell (the operator) will own 60%.

In a press statement, Saad Sherida al Kaabi, Minister of State for Energy Affairs, the President and CEO of QatarEnergy, said, "We are delighted to sign the production sharing contracts for blocks 64 and 65, which will increase our working footprint in the promising basins of Suriname. We are also pleased to work with TotalEnergies, Petronas, and Shell in

these blocks, and we look forward to achieving good results for the benefit of all parties involved."

Kaabi added, "I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Surinamese authorities and Staatsolie for their commitment and support that resulted in the signing of these agreements."

Both blocks 64 and 65 are located about 200-250km offshore Suriname in water depths of about 1,300-1,700 meters.

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- 4- Residential/commercial Building with an area of 1883 square meters in Saham, with a commercial building on it
- 5- Residential/commercial Building with an area of 547 square meters in Buraimi, a building containing 8 shops and 10 apartments
- 6- Two farms in the state of Bidiya/Ghubra, with an area of 22,619 square meters, the other 4,5000 square meters.
- 7- Residential plot for the Wilayat of Bidiya/Al Wasel, total area 96,847 square meters
- 8- Residential/commercial building, with an area of 1,572 square meters, it includes hotel apartments and shops in wilayat bidyah
- 9- Residential/commercial shops, with an area of 1944 square meters, it includes a market consisting of 19 shops in wilayat bidyah
- 10- Residential/commercial Land with an area of 1044 square meters and an existing hotel in the Wilayat of Mahut/Hajj
- 11- 4 industrial plots in Duqm, total area 30,000 square meters
- 12- One residential/commercial plot with an area of 900 square meters and a residential plot with an area of 594 square meters in Al-Qabil
- 13- Residential/commercial Land with an area of 750 square meters in Duqm

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NBO, Oman 70 Holding sign credit agreement

Solidifying a strategic partnership that will drive growth and development in Oman, National Bank of Oman (NBO) and Oman 70 Holding (Oman 70) have signed a Credit Term Facility Agreement.

Speaking on the partnership, Abdullah al Hinai, CEO of NBO, said, "National Bank of Oman is committed to supporting the development of local enterprises

and playing a pivotal role in Oman's economic progress. We are delighted and proud to partner with Oman 70 Holding and provide them with the financial resources they need to excel in their projects. This collaboration underscores our dedication to fostering economic growth and our commitment to being a catalyst for success in the local business arena."

The credit term facility is designed to enable Oman 70 to continue its investments in various sectors and play a significant role in the economic development of the Sultanate of Oman. NBO's dedication to supporting local businesses and promoting economic growth aligns seamlessly with Oman 70 vision to be at the forefront of diverse industries in Oman, a press release said.

Mohamed Hamoud al Sinawi, CEO of Oman 70 Holding, said, "This Credit Term Facility with the National Bank of Oman is a significant milestone for Oman 70 Holding. It will empower us to execute our strategic plans effectively and achieve our growth objectives. We look forward to leveraging the financial support from NBO to not only enhance our ongoing projects but also to

explore new opportunities. We are confident that this partnership will lead to a brighter future for Oman's business sector."

The signing of this Credit Term Facility Agreement underscores the joint dedication of both the National Bank of Oman and Oman 70 Holding to actively contribute to the economic development and diversification goals of Oman.

BankDhofar wins 'Best Digital Bank of the Year'



BankDhofar was declared 'Best Digital Bank of the Year' at The TAS Conclave 2023, which concluded at W Hotel Muscat on December 10.

The award was received by Amjad Iqbal al Lawati, chief Retail Banking officer, at the event that brought together CEO's, senior executives, business leaders, and senior government officials, a press release said.

The award recognised BankDhofar for its outstanding commitment to innovation, digital transformation, and excellence in banking services. It distinguishes the bank's efforts in advancing its digital infras-

tructure, enhancing user experiences, and introducing innovative financial technologies. The bank's digital offerings range from mobile banking app, internet banking and online account management to innovative payment solutions and personalised financial advisory services.

The award reflects BankDhofar's dedication to staying at the forefront of the financial industry's digital revolution and affirms its expertise in adapting to the evolving digital landscape by providing cutting-edge financial solutions to its customer.



Ministry of Education signs pact with Pocari

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Omani School Sports Association, signed a financing and cooperation agreement with Muscat Pharmacy and Stores Company, under the brand name Pocari Sweat, at the Ministry's General Diwan Theatre.

The agreement was signed on behalf of the ministry by Abdullah al Saadi, director general of the Directorate General of Financial Affairs and Treasurer of the Omani School Sports Association, and on behalf of the company by Bakul Shamaldas Mita, CEO of Muscat Stores and Pharmacy, in the presence of Mohammed Makhoulouf, director of Promotion at Pocari Sweets.

The importance of signing the agreement for the second consecutive academic year is to support the Pocari Sweat Football Championship for first cycle education students, with the participation of eight schools, from six educational directorates in the governorates of Al Wusta, Dhahirah, North Sharqiyah, Buraimi, Musandam, and South Batinah, in addition to the participation of Cheltenham Muscat School, which is hosting the tournament with the aim of instilling sports values, encouraging students to practice physical activity, discovering, and nurturing talented people, and creating a sports atmosphere.

The signing of this agreement

comes to consolidate the foundations of effective partnership between the government and the private sectors in the fields of education, to enhance the comprehensive development of Omani youth in a manner consistent with the association's goals and aspirations and Oman Vision 2040, in addition to embodying the Omani School Sports Association's commitment to developing school sports, and providing opportunities for first cycle education students to participate in sports activities that enhance their health, personal development, and intellectual, psychological, and social building.

This tournament will be held in its final stage at Cheltenham Muscat School in January 2024.

Before signing the agreement, Fahad al Moshaihi, secretary general of Omani School Sports Association, thanked the company and appreciated the great role played by community partnerships, which contribute significantly to the advancement of school sports in all its aspects.

Mohammed Makhoulouf, director of promotion for Pocari Sweat, pointed out the company's role in supporting community institutions, in general, and stressed that the goal of renewing the agreement with the association came after the great and clear work they had seen in the previous tournament.

MoE implements training workshop

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General Directorate of Educational Supervision, implemented a training workshop for the technical teams in accordance with Ministerial Resolution 302/2023 concerned with building the professional paths and licenses system.

The training workshop was held last week in the presence of Dr Sulaiman al Jamoudi, director general of the Directorate General of Educational Supervision and acting director of the Professional Teachers Licensing Office. The workshop took place at Muscat Hall in the Ministry's General Diwan, a press release said.

Dr Jamoudi said the main goal of the workshop was to advance the teaching profession. He touched on the national framework for the teaching profession and its four documents.



He also referred to the work that has been accomplished in the teaching sector, which is the starting point for work on other

educational categories. The training workshop included a visual presentation introducing the system of

professional paths and licenses, and a review of the category of teachers as an illustrative model.

22 teams in Huawei ICT regional finals in Bahrain

The Regional Final of the Huawei ICT Competition 2023-2024 Middle East & Central Asia kicks off in the Kingdom of Bahrain, in partnership with Bahrain Polytechnic and the University of Bahrain, from December 19.

The event will bring together exceptional young talents from across the region, inspiring them to embrace digital technology and become future industry leaders in the rapidly evolving digital landscape, hence bridging the digital gap and paving the way for vibrant digital economies in their countries, a press release said.

The seventh edition of Huawei's long-standing flagship ICT talent development initiative will witness 22 teams from 11 Middle Eastern & Central Asian countries, including Oman, Bahrain, Pakistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Qatar, Kuwait, and UAE. Since its launch in 2017, Huawei's ME & CA ICT Competition has become the largest and most influential initiative in the region, a powerful programme for cultivating ICT talent and improving ME & CA countries' national competitiveness with ICT



The Huawei ICT Competition underlines our commitment to nurturing young minds across the region

future leaders. More than 100,000 college students have signed up for the first six competitions.

Shunli Wang, vice president of Huawei Middle East & Central Asia, said, "ICT talents form the crucial backbone of Middle East and Central Asia's digital economy and Huawei is dedicated to providing students with a platform for knowledge transfer, healthy competition, and exchange of innovative ideas, focusing on enhancing their ICT knowledge and practical skills. The Huawei ICT Competition underlines our commitment to nurturing young minds across the region while being a focal platform that brings together visionary government leaders, forward-thinking academia, and enthusiastic students."

The Huawei ICT Competition 2023-2024 Middle East & Central Asia chapter kicked off in August this year and covered 21 countries in the region. With the support of UNESCO, and more than 20 ministries, operators, and industry partners, Huawei has attracted more than 27,500 students from over 600 universities across the region. This year's edition has achieved the highest level of participation ever in the competition's history.



MGM unveils Winter Festival

Muscat Grand Mall announced the launch of its Winter Sales Festival, set to be the premier destination for exceptional discounts on esteemed international brands.

Commencing December 21, and continuing until December 26, the festival promises an unparalleled shopping experience coupled with daily family entertainment.

Under the guidance of Hakan Altin, CEO of Tilal Development company (Muscat Grand Mall), this seasonal extravaganza aligns seamlessly with the forthcoming holiday season and the culmination of the year. Participating stores are poised to offer dis-

counts of up to 50% on a diverse array of acclaimed brands and outlets, including Sharaf DG Electronics, Play and Learn, Kushour Gallery, Riva Clothes, Riva Kids, Choice, The Toy Store, Family Outlet, Al Maha Gallery, among several other renowned names.

Altin emphasised that this year's Winter Sale Festival will feature daily entertainment segments catering to families, elevating the shopping experience with enchanting performances by magicians, bubble shows, clowns, and an array of engaging activities. These additions aim to infuse an element of joy and amusement into the shopping experience.

Israel using starvation as ‘weapon of war’

Israel is intentionally cutting people’s access to water and food, which is a war crime, said HRW

Gaza, Palestine - Israel is using starvation as a ‘weapon of war’ in Gaza by intentionally cutting people’s access to water and food, which is a war crime, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on Monday.

“Israeli forces are deliberately blocking the delivery of water, food, and fuel, while willfully impeding humanitarian assistance, apparently razing agricultural areas, and depriving the civilian population of objects indispensable to their survival,” the rights group said in a statement.

It pointed out to the statements made by high-ranking Israeli officials, including Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, and Energy Minister Israel Katz on their intention to ‘deprive civilians in Gaza of food, water and fuel – statements reflecting a policy being carried out by Israeli forces’.

Other Israeli officials, it added, have publicly stated that humanitarian aid to Gaza would be conditioned either on the release of hostages unlawfully held by Hamas or Hamas’s destruction.

“For over two months, Israel has been depriving Gaza’s population of food and water, a policy spurred on or endorsed by high-ranking Israeli officials and reflecting an intent to starve civilians as a method of warfare,” said Omar Shakir, HRW’s Israel and Palestine director.

“World leaders should be speaking out against this abhorrent war crime, which has devastating effects on Gaza’s population.”

The HRW said international humanitarian law, or the laws of war, prohibits the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare.



World leaders should be speaking out against this abhorrent war crime, which has devastating effects on Gaza’s population

OMAR SHAKIR

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, it said, provides that intentionally starving civilians by ‘depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival, including willfully impeding relief supplies’ is a war crime.

“Criminal intent does not require the attacker’s admission but can also be inferred from the totality of the circumstances of

the military campaign.”

Israel’s continuing blockade of Gaza, as well as its more than 16-year closure, amounts to collective punishment of the civilian population, a war crime, the non-profit based in New York said.

At least 18,800 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli attacks since October 7, mostly of them women and children, and 51,000 injured, according to Gaza’s

health authorities.

The Israeli death toll in the Hamas attack stands at 1,200, while more than 130 hostages are still being held by the Palestinian group in Gaza, according to official figures.

The war has left Gaza in ruins with half of the coastal territory’s housing stock damaged or destroyed, and nearly 2mn people displaced within the densely-populated enclave amid shortages of food and clean water.

The HRW called on Tel Aviv to immediately cease using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, and abide by the prohibition on attacks on objects necessary for the survival of the

civilian population and lift its blockade of the Gaza Strip.

“The government should restore water and electricity access, and allow desperately needed food, medical aid, and fuel into Gaza, including via its crossing at Kerem Shalom,” it said.

It also called on the US, UK, Canada, Germany, and other countries to ‘suspend military assistance and arms sales to Israel as long as its forces continue to commit widespread and serious abuses amounting to war crimes against civilians with impunity’.

More than 100 killed
Meanwhile, more than 100

Palestinians were killed and scores were missing following Israeli airstrikes on houses in the city of Jabalia in northern Gaza.

According to the Palestinian news agency Wafa, health sources reported on Monday morning that more than 100 Palestinians were killed in Jabalia, with as many people still trapped under the rubble. At least 20 people were also injured in the attacks.

On Sunday, it was reported that civil defense teams recovered more than 30 bodies.

Around 100 people are estimated to remain trapped under the rubble, according to the Palestine TV Channel.

Call for probe

Gaza health officials have called for probe after Israeli forces were accused of using bulldozers and unleashing attacker dogs during a raid on the Kamal Adwan Hospital.

Israeli forces raided the hospital last week after besieging and shelling it for several days.

At a press conference on Sunday, Munir al-Bursh, the general director of hospitals in the Gaza Strip, and the hospital’s pediatric department head Hussam Abu Safiya said Israeli forces destroyed some sections of the medical facility, denied access to aid, and attacked health workers, the wounded, and displaced civilians seeking refuge.

“The hospital gate and surroundings were bombed, shots were fired at buildings within the hospital compound, the second floor housing the maternity ward was bombed ... hospital director Ahmed al-Kahlout was detained and taken to an undisclosed location.

“Israeli soldiers gathered displaced civilians and health workers, who had sought refuge in the hospital, in a large pit, half-naked, and unleashed attack dogs on them. Israeli construction machinery demolished the hospital’s oxygen unit, water tank, central archive, and pharmacy,” he said.

‘Israeli forces used a bulldozer to dig a large pit in the hospital courtyard and threw approximately 12 bodies of those they had killed into the pit. We do not know if any of the wounded were among those thrown into the pit. We demand a relevant international investigation into these heinous crimes,’ he added.

Anadolu Agency

Hostages not ‘top priority’ for Israel

Ankara, Turkey - The Israeli hostages held by Palestinians were not Tel Aviv’s ‘top priority’ and they cannot be saved without a deal, according to Israeli intelligence sources quoted in a new investigative report.

According to the investigation conducted by the Tel Aviv-based +972 online magazine in cooperation with Local Call news website, since the beginning of latest conflict in Gaza on October 7, the Israeli leadership has ‘relegated’ the goal of ensuring the hostages’ safety in ‘favour of larger military and political goals’ in the occupied territory.

Intelligence sources who spoke to the outlets, before the shooting of the three abductees by the Israeli army on Friday, affirmed that ‘during the initial stages of the war, the Israeli army’s intense bombardment of Gaza was conducted without having a clear picture of where many of the more than 240 hostages were being held’.



People protest against the Israeli government demanding immediate hostage deal, in Tel Aviv, on Friday (Anadolu Agency)

The relentless airstrikes also continued ‘despite concerns that the bombings might endanger the lives of the hostages’, according to the sources the report quoted as saying.

The story said that according to testimonies from newly freed Israeli hostages, who were released as part of exchange deals

for Palestinian prisoners during a temporary cease-fire in late November, as well as from some of the hostages’ families, ‘one of the main fears of those held captive in Gaza was the threat of being hit by Israeli airstrikes and shelling’.

Many of the hostages, they said, were held above ground

rather than in tunnels, and were therefore ‘particularly vulnerable’ to such attacks.

“The IDF (Israel Defense Forces) shelled extensively, destroying half of Gaza, while having little intelligence,” the story quoted one of its intelligence sources as saying.

Anadolu Agency

Russia’s ruling party backs Putin’s reelection bid

Moscow, Russia - Russia’s ruling party unanimously backed Vladimir Putin’s candidacy for the March 2024 presidential election at its congress on Sunday.

The United Russia party held its 21st Congress in Moscow.

In his speech at the event, Putin said the party has been working for the interests of Russian citizens and the development and strengthening of the state for many years.

“Today, everyone has a great responsibility. We are faced with historical tasks. These require the unity of all nationalist forces,” he said.

Noting that Western countries are pursuing aggressive policies against Russia, Putin said ‘the Western elite wanted to destroy Russia’s economy and social sphere. Moreover, they wanted to destroy our political system. They thought and think that they will be able to create confusion in Russia.’



Vladimir Putin

“The methods of such destabilisation are well known, and Western elites in many regions of the world have used them more than once during the so-called colour revolutions. But these scenarios did not work, and I am convinced that they will never work in Russia - a free, independent and sovereign state. Our society, all branches of power and levels of government have proven their maturity, reliability and stability,” he added.

Anadolu Agency

Car smashes into Biden’s motorcade

Washington, US - A car smashed into a parked SUV that was part of US President Joe Biden’s motorcade on Sunday night while Biden was leaving his campaign headquarters in the US state of Delaware, according to a White House pool report.

The president was not harmed, the report said.

The president and First Lady Jill Biden emerged from the 2024 reelection campaign headquarters in Delaware’s downtown Wilmington around 8pm local time (0100 GMT Monday), it said.

The first lady entered the vehicle first, saying ‘Happy Holidays’ to the pool. The president then emerged and his exit was interrupted by a car that hit a motorcade SUV.

“A silver copper sedan with Delaware plates hit what seemed to be a motorcade SUV shielding the motorcade at the intersection across from the entrance of the campaign headquarters,” the report said.

“There was a loud bang and POTUS (The president of the United States) was standing outside the vehicle with a surprised expression on his face,” it said.

Agents quickly sprung into action, cornering the car and pulling weapons on the driver, who held his hands up, it added.

Xinhua

Pakistan’s jailed Khan uses AI-generated speech to reach out to voters

Karachi, Pakistan - Pakistan’s jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan used artificial intelligence (AI) to address his supporters across the country and abroad in the first event of its kind in the politics of the South Asian nation, his party’s spokesman said.

Khan Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party used an AI-generated audio clip, which was played over a photograph of Khan during an internet rally on Sunday evening, although marred by the internet disruptions. “Our party is not allowed to hold public rallies,” Khan said in the clip, urg-

ing supporters to turn out in large numbers at general elections set for February 8. “Our people are being kidnapped and their families are being harassed.”

Shoab Shaheen, one of Khan’s lawyers and PTI spokesman, told Anadolu that Khan’s speech was the work of artificial intelligence.

The virtual event drew more than 1.4mn views streamed on YouTube and attended live by tens of thousands on other social media. Social media platforms faced disruption across the country ahead of the virtual rally, an internet tracking group and social media users said.



Pakistan’s former Prime Minister Imran Khan

Users complained they faced difficulty accessing social media platforms in many cities, includ-

ing the capital Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar hours before the start of the vir-

tual event. Many also complained about internet services being slow. “Live metrics show a nation-scale disruption to social media platforms across Pakistan, including X, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube,” internet monitor Netblocks reported.

“Confirmed: Live metrics show a nation-scale disruption to social media platforms across #Pakistan, including X/Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube; the incident comes just ahead of a major virtual gathering organised by persecuted opposition leader Imran Khan’s party, PTI,” the tracking group further said in

a post on X.

The PTI accused the country’s state-run telecommunication regulatory authority of a ‘deliberate’ disruption to disturb the party’s power show.

“This is proof of the fear of the unprecedented popularity of Imran Khan’s PTI! In what was an expected move, the illegitimate, fascist regime has slowed down internet speed & disruption of social media platforms all across Pakistan, prior to PTI’s historic Virtual Jalsa (public meeting),’ the PTI said in a statement posted on X.

Anadolu Agency

INDIA



Opposition MPs, who were suspended from the Parliament for the remainder of the Winter Session, stage a protest, in New Delhi on Monday (ANI)

Biggest ever action: RS suspends 45 Opposition legislators in a day

New Delhi - In the biggest ever action in the history of Parliament in a day, the Rajya Sabha on Monday suspended 45 Opposition MPs for their 'misconduct' during proceedings of the House.

Of the 45 suspended MPs, 34 have been suspended for the remainder of the Winter Session, which concludes on December 22, while 11 have been suspended until the reports of the Rajya Sabha's Committee of Privileges is not received.

As per Rajya Sabha Secretariat sources, 'this is the biggest ever suspension in the history of Rajya Sabha, when 45 legislators were suspended in a day'.

Those suspended for the remainder of the Winter Session are Congress's Pramod Tiwari,

The fresh action of the Rajya Sabha came hours after 33 members were suspended from the Lok Sabha for 'misconduct' for the remainder of the monsoon session

Jairam Ramesh, Amee Yajnik, Naranbhai J Rathwa, Syed Nasir Hussain, Phulo Devi Netam, Shaktisinh Gohil, K C Venugopal, Rajani Ashokrao Patil, Ranjeet Ranjan, Imran Pratapgarhi and Randeep Singh Surjewala; TMC's Sukhendu Sekhar Ray, Mohammed Nadimul Haque, Abir Ranjan Biswas, Santanu Sen, Mausam Noor, Prakash Chik Baraik and Samirul Islam; DMK's M Shanmugam N R Elango, Kanimozhi N V N Somu and R Girirajan; Rashtriya Janata Dal's Manoj

Kumar Jha and Faiyaz Ahmad; CPI (M)'s V Sivadasan; JDU's Ram Nath Thakur and Aneel Prasad Hegde; NCP's Vandana Chavan; Samajwadi Party's Ram Gopal Yadav, Javed Ali Khan; Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's Mahua Maji; Kerala Congress (M) MP Jose K Mani; and Independent legislator Ajit Kumar Bhuyan.

Besides, those 11 MPs suspended and their names sent to the Rajya Sabha Committee of Privileges are Congress's Jebi Mather Hisham, L Hanuman-

thaiah, Neeraj Dangi, Rajmani Patel, Kumar Ketkar and G C Chandrashekhar; CPI's Binoy Viswam, Sandosh Kumar P; DMK's M Mohamed Abdulla; and CPI (M) legislators John Brittas and AA Rahim.

So far, a total of 46 MPs from Rajya Sabha have been suspended in this Winter Session of the Parliament. TMC's Derek O'Brien was suspended last week and his name was also sent to the Committee of Privileges. Those names referred to the Privileges Committee, which has been asked to give its report in three months, will be suspended until the report is submitted by the panel to the House.

The fresh action of the Rajya Sabha came hours after 33 members were suspended from

the Lok Sabha for 'misconduct' for the remainder of the monsoon session.

After the motion for suspension was adopted by the House, the Chairman asked the suspended members to leave the precincts.

He then adjourned the House for the day.

The motion for the suspension of MPs was moved by Rajya Sabha leader of the House, Piyush Goyal.

The suspension was announced soon after the Rajya Sabha assembled at 4.30pm following various other adjournments since morning as the MPs trooped into the well of the House and kept on sloganeering, which led to disruption of proceedings.

ANI



This file photo shows Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan confronting SFI supporters waving black flags at him, at Palayam, in Thiruvananthapuram on December 11 (ANI)

Kerala Governor Khan unfit for post, says CPI(M)

New Delhi - The Politburo of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Monday has issued the statement and said that Kerala Governor 'unfit for post'.

The statement from the party came in the back drop of ongoing controversy over defamatory posters of the Governor being placed in the campus of Calicut University.

CPI(M) in a statement said that the Kerala Governor, Arif Mohammed Khan, has overstepped all boundaries with his constant political attacks on the elected state government and his grossly erratic behaviour. The latest instance is his statement that 'there is the beginning of the collapse of the constitutional machinery in the state'.

Such threats levelled against the state government will be rejected outright by the people of the state, said

CPI(M) in the statement.

CPI(M) further said that the Governor is facing protests from students after he packed the nominated seats in the Senates of Kerala and Calicut universities with RSS nominees, misusing his position as Chancellor of these universities. While the students have the democratic right to protest peacefully, the Governor has sought to blame the Chief Minister for these protests and made insulting references to him.

"This is no way for a person holding the constitutional post of Governor to behave and he has proved himself unworthy of continuing in that post," the party said.

Earlier Kerala Chief Minister also criticised the Kerala Governor and accused him of attempting to disrupt the peaceful ambience in the state. ANI

Jaishankar pays condolences at Kuwait embassy on Emir's passing

New Delhi - External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, visited the Embassy of Kuwait in Delhi on Monday morning to express condolences and pay respects following the passing of Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, the Emir of the State of Kuwait.

Minister Jaishankar shared his sentiments on social media, stating: "Visited the Embassy of Kuwait in Delhi today morning to express condolences and pay my respects on the passing away of His Highness Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visits the Embassy of Kuwait to express condolences and pay respects on the passing away of Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, in New Delhi on Monday (ANI)

Sabah, the Amir of the State of Kuwait. The Government and people of India will always remember his notable contributions to the strengthening of our ties."

As a mark of solidarity and friendship, Jaishankar conveyed India's condolences to the embassy staff and signed the official condolence book. The minister highlighted the significant contributions made by the late Amir in fostering cooperation and understanding between the two nations.

The demise of Sheikh Nawaf

al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah is widely mourned, not only within Kuwait but also by the international community

Notably, state mourning across the country on Sunday was declared by the Indian government as a mark of respect for the departed leader.

The Indian Tricolour was also flown at half-mast at all buildings of Indian high commissions, embassies, consulates and India Houses all over the world. All official entertainment activities were cancelled.

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi too expressed condolences saying that he is 'deeply saddened' to learn about the unfortunate demise of the Emir of Kuwait. In a post on X, PM Modi wrote: "Deeply saddened to learn about the unfortunate demise of His Highness Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah. We convey our deepest condolences to the royal family, the leadership and the people of Kuwait."

Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah died at the age of 86 on Saturday. ANI

435,152 returned to Afghanistan, says Pakistan government

Islamabad, Pakistan - The repatriation of illegal foreign nationals, including Afghans, to their homeland, is ongoing in a secure and dignified manner, with 1,634 illegal Afghan nationals returning on Sunday, ARY News reported.

The total number of repatriated individuals has reached 435,152, according to official reports.

The National Action Plan's apex committee, chaired by Caretaker PM Anwaarul Haq Kakar, set a deadline during a meeting on October 3 for all foreign nationals residing illegally in the country to leave voluntarily by October 31 or face deportation.

The Pakistani government is actively facilitating the repatriation process for illegal Afghans at the Torkham and Chaman borders.

Caretaker Interior Minister

Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, addressing the Senate, emphasised the importance of a humane approach in the repatriation process. He said: "Prime Minister (Anwaarul Haq Kakar) has given very clear instructions that there should be no manhandling of illegal immigrants during the repatriation process." Bugti assured the House that any mismanagement on the borders would be addressed, and suggestions from political leadership in this regard would be welcomed.

He also clarified that 'no Afghan refugee having legal documents has been even touched', ARY News reported.

Meanwhile, various organisations have highlighted the urgent situation of returnees facing critical needs for food, shelter, and employment during the winter.

ANI

WHO calls for 'strong surveillance' on new COVID sub-variant

Geneva, Switzerland - In the wake of the surge in respiratory diseases and new JN.1 COVID sub-variant, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said that the virus is evolving and changing and urged the member states to continue with strong surveillance and sequence sharing.

The global body also shared a video of its COVID-19 technical lead, Maria Van Kerkhove, who explained the reason for the recent surges and what precautions can be taken.

"Dr @mvankerkhove talks about the current surge in respiratory diseases #COVID19 and JN.1 subvariant. WHO continues to assess the situation. Follow WHO's public health advice to keep your families and friends safe during this holiday season," WHO posted on X.

Maria Van Kerkhove also took to the social media platform and said that a number of pathogens have led to the rise in respiratory diseases across the world.

"Respiratory diseases are in-



Dr Maria Van Kerkhove

creasing around the world due to a number of pathogens incl #COVID19, #flu, rhinovirus, mycoplasma pneumonia & others SARS-CoV-2 continues to evolve. JN.1 (subvariant of BA.2.86) is already a VOI and continues to increase in circulation," she stated.

In the video message, Kerkhove said that the recent surge in respiratory infections is due to multiple reasons, including increased gatherings during the

holiday season and other infections. "It's not just COVID-19 that's circulating; we have influenza, other viruses, and bacteria. In other parts of the world, we are entering the winter months, and people are starting to gather for the holiday season. And as people gather, they spend more time indoors, especially if there is poor ventilation. These pathogens that spread efficiently between people and through the air will take advantage," she said.

She further explained that the rise in COVID cases is because the virus is evolving, adding that 68 per cent of the current cases are cases of XBB sublineages and other groupings like JN.1.

"COVID-19 is one of the diseases that is currently on the rise, and this is again due to a number of factors; the virus SARS-CoV-2 is evolving, changing, and circulating in all countries," Kerkhove said.

She added: "In some countries, we have these XBB sublineages, and they represent around 68 per cent or so of the sequences that are shared globally. The other grouping is BA.2.86, most notably JN.1 which causes the full spectrum, everything from asymptomatic infection. All the way to severe disease and death, similar to what we have seen with other Omicron sublineages."

The WHO expert urged the member states to continue with strong surveillance and sequence sharing so that proper steps can be taken to 'potentially modify'

the advice for the world.

She also advised people to get vaccinations and, in cases of infection, take clinical care.

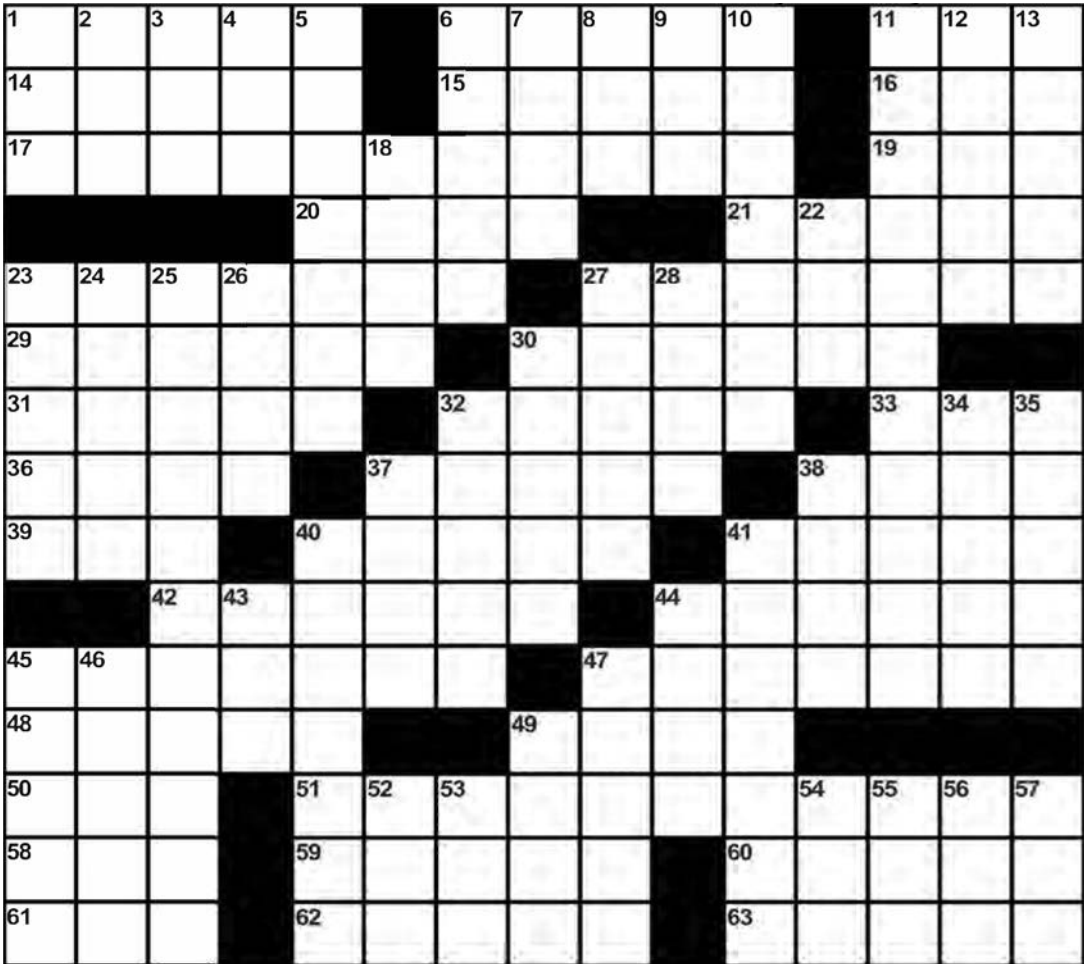
"Protect yourself from infection using a number of tools. But also make sure that if you get infected, you get clinical care and get vaccinated when it's your turn to prevent severe disease and death. All COVID-19 vaccines continue to provide against severe disease and death, and this includes all the circulating variants, including JN.1," Kerkhove said.

Meanwhile, India's Union Ministry of Health has initiated preparedness measures after a case of the JN.1 subvariant of COVID was found in Kerala as part of the ongoing routine surveillance conducted by the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG).

A mock drill is underway in health facilities across states, evaluating public health and hospital readiness.

ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Stops
6) Fastball speed detector
11) Increase (with " up ")
14) Vertical, while sailing
15) Nitrous_ (laughing gas)
16) Reptile that will put the squeeze on you
17) Without any significance
19) Commandment violation
20) Grimacing look
21) Accustom, as to hardship
23) Synthetic
27) Infuriated
29) Bring about, as suspicion
30) Threw rocks at
31) Capital of Belarus
32) Refers to
33) He preceded Jack as president
36) Untidy condition
37) Big picture?
38) Old lab burner
39) Certain pint
40) Feed a party
42) More likely to deceive
42) An essential vitamin
44) Successfully market used goods

- 45) Not to be missed, as a TV show
47) It's the best policy, it's said
48) Somewhat off
49) Greek cheese
50) Major U.S. network
51) Not suitable for use
58) Afternoon drink, for many
59) Depth charge target
60) Be bombastic
61) "Is that_?"
62) Speaks like the Lord?
63) Gave stars to
DOWN
1) Cheese and bread go-with
2) Do an impression of
3) Grazing expanse
4) Browning achievement?
5) Thing worn at Aspen
6) Scalawag
7) One of two on an automobile
8) Cease to exist
9) Program interrupters
10) Quits a job
11) Highly illogical situations
12) Fabric with a wavelike de-

- sign
13) Like glass windows
18) "Lymph" follower
22) Society page word
23) Broadway musical "_ Mia!"
24) Disney mermaid
25) Too bizarre to understand
26) "No_, no fuss!"
27) Essential oil from roses
28) Holiday tune
30) Ambulance sound
32) Adorable one
34) Genuflected
35) Before the due date
37) Defensive spray
38) "... or,!"
40) Mr. Clay before he was Muhammad
41) Capitol Hill person
43) "... only money"
44) Campus military org.
45) Kind of ray
46) Flower cluster
47) Late actor Ledger
49) House on campus
52) Lofty degree
53) Common Hawaiian dish

- 54) Popular savings vehicle
55) Household pet
56) Dined
57) Trailed no one

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Impulsive moves could misfire today. Reality is a bit unclear, and your outlook isn't very practical. Ideals seem to hold more truth than anything concrete. It may take some time to determine the viability of a certain project or pursuit. The good news is that you can bounce back quickly from any problems. If you realize your goal isn't going to work out after all, you'll simply switch to a newer, better one.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You're famous for your pride, as well as your lionhearted courage. But today, you're feeling unusually sensitive. Careless words and actions get right under your skin. It's unlikely that anyone is trying to hurt your feelings, but it certainly feels as if they aren't being thoughtful enough. Try to remember that any remarks that you find hurtful were probably delivered with the best of intentions. Summon that inner strength, Leo.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

A lazy mood sets in today. If your job requires high energy, don't be surprised if all you want to do is sit down and take a quick snooze. And if you're parked at a computer all day, the urge to doze off might be even stronger! Get a midday nap if you possibly can, or get to bed early. If you're feeling moody or nervous, yoga or meditation can also help.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What type of speech includes the words "for", "and", "nor", "but", "or", "yet", and "so"?

- A. Conjunction
B. Verb
C. Noun
D. Adjective

02. In 2014, how many colours were there on the New Zealand flag?

- A. 1
B. 5
C. 3
D. 4

03. Which of these scientists has been quoted as saying "God does not play dice"?

- A. Einstein
B. Newton
C. Archimedes
D. Galileo

Answers: 1.A 2.C 3.A



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Your best qualities emerge today: your patience, your warmth, your generosity. You have a kind word for everyone. Any tension that may recently have been affecting a relationship evaporates. What's left over? Just peace, harmony and togetherness. Connect with loved ones and really pay attention to them, using more than just your eyes and ears. You have an intuitive streak, and it will come out today if you tap into it.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

The harder you try to stay focused and organized today, the more chaotic life may seem. Perhaps an efficient, logical day just isn't in the stars. Try paying closer attention to your feelings, and to how your friends and family are doing emotionally. You might find that you were using logic or busy work to mask your feelings, or to avoid an emotional confrontation. But facing things is much more effective.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Reach out to a child, a pet or someone else you love today. Lending your assistance to someone who needs it is a great way to tap into the current energy. You're feeling tender and compassionate. If someone needs your strength, you can sense it, and you genuinely want to help. You're practical enough to keep your personal boundaries in place, too. That creates the perfect balance of helping others while protecting yourself.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Your escapist tendencies are heightened today. You rarely like being pinned down, since you're too energetic for that. But now, you just want to bypass the demands of your everyday life. The more responsibilities pile up for you, the more you'll fantasize about turning your back on all of it. So why not claim some alone time? It's a great day to keep your own company and pursue quiet, low-key activities.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're used to an active work and social life, but today it's good to slow down a bit. If your agenda or workspace is disorganized, it's hard to get anything done. But imposing order is difficult now, too. Your body is trying to tell you something: It's time for some rest and relaxation! Get some extra sleep, or build in time to zone out with a bubble bath or a good book.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

If you feel low-energy today or uncertain about some aspect of your life, it's best not to push it. There's no need to throw yourself into strenuous pursuits now; you'll only tire yourself out. And if you can't seem to make a decision, it's probably because there are still too many variables to mull over. Give yourself permission to withdraw today from anything fast-paced or challenging. You deserve a break.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

A tranquil mood sets in today. You're always generous with the people you care about, but now you're especially unselfish. Drawing a bath for your child or cooking a meal for your family -- tasks like these nurture yourself as well as others. You're softhearted enough to listen to a friend's problems with great compassion, and sturdy enough to give them the advice they need. This is real emotional balance, Cancer.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

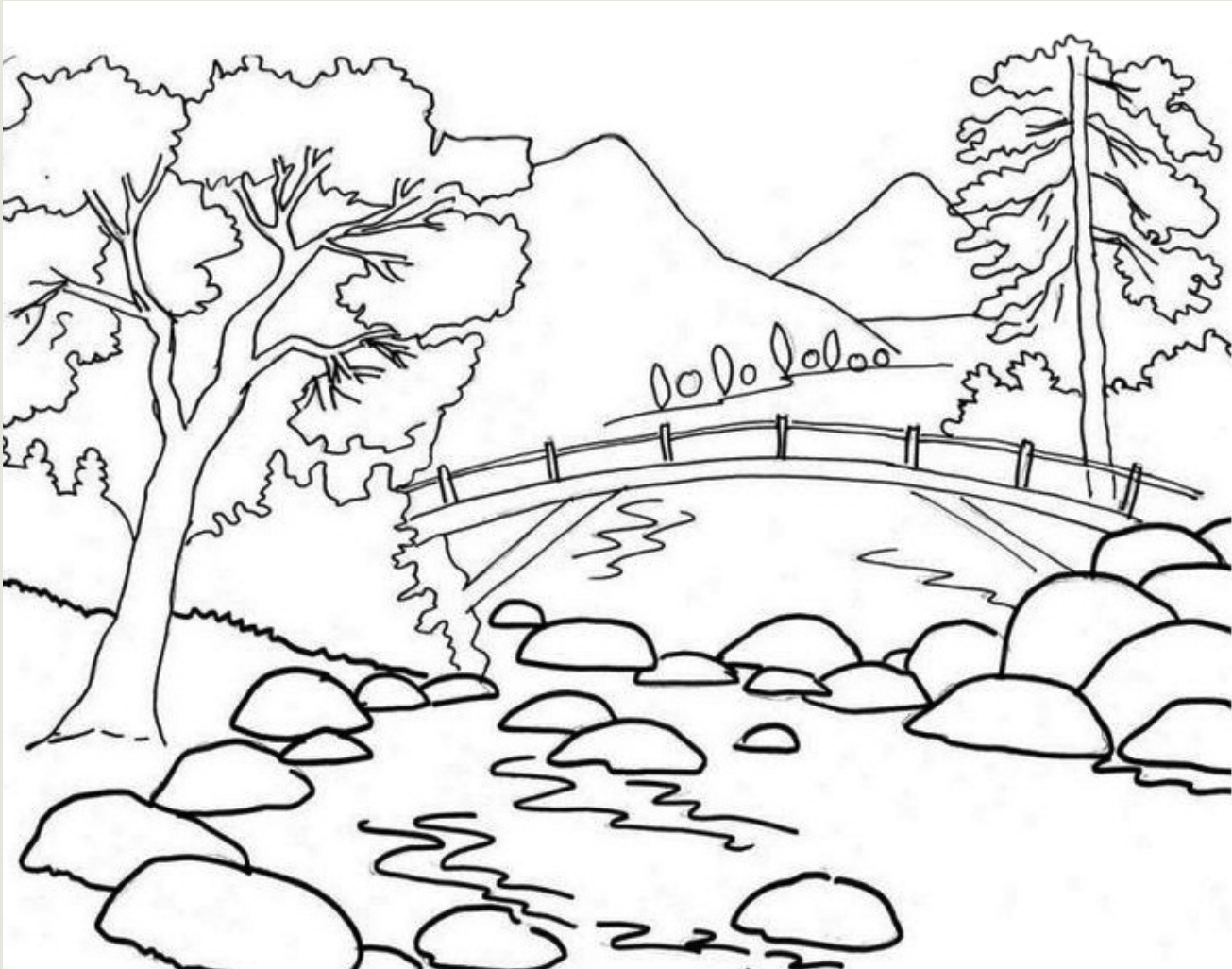
You feel unusually tender and softhearted today. Love and even romance flow easily now. Or you could soften on some issue that's been making things tense between you and someone else. If you're on your own, you can turn that kind, gentle attention toward yourself by indulging your creative side. You can also simply enjoy a day of rest and relaxation, and gear up for more energetic days ahead.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Your escapist side is prominent today. You want nothing more than to lose yourself in a book, a movie, or a dream-filled nap. Dreams and fantasies are very creative, you know. The time you spend letting your thoughts wander can actually be quite productive. No doubt your boss will be happy to learn this! Let yourself fantasize about the future. You can manifest your dreams later, when you're feeling more focused.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	S	S	A
A	L	S	Qu
U	R	S	I
E	B	L	A

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

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

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

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

Jesus, Havertz score as Arsenal beat Brighton

An impressive Arsenal moved top of the Premier League thanks to second-half goals from Gabriel Jesus and Kai Havertz as they became the first team since February to stop Brighton & Hove Albion scoring in a 2-0 victory.

Arsenal, who were unchanged in the Premier League for the first time this season, started brightly, with Bukayo Saka taking every opportunity to run at the 37-year-old James Milner, who was facing the Gunners for the 40th time in his career.

It was Saka who had Arsenal's first shot of the match, but his effort was saved by Bart Verbruggen, before Martin Odegaard's left-footed strike curled the wrong side of a post.

Brighton were dealt a blow just before the half-hour, when defender Joel Veltman limped off with what appeared to be a knee injury.

Odegaard and Saka then combined brilliantly, but the latter's cutback was fired over by Gabriel Martinelli.

Martinelli then had a shot kept out by Verbruggen, before Jan Paul van Hecke blocked from Havertz as Brighton were able to somehow repel Arsenal's continued pressure at half-time.

After the break, Brighton's willingness to play out from defence would prove costly and ultimately resulted in a deserved



Arsenal's Gabriel Jesus scores against Brighton on Sunday

lead for Arsenal on 53 minutes.

A poor pass from Verbruggen fell to Rice who passed to Saka, who then tried to find Odegaard but it was cleared for a corner by Van Hecke.

From that set-piece, Saka's in-swinging corner was inadvertently flicked on by Van Hecke for an unmarked Gabriel Jesus to head in his third league goal of the campaign at the far post.

It meant Brighton have now not kept a clean sheet in their last 21 Premier League matches.

Soon after Arsenal almost had

a second, but Ben White's header was cleared off the line by Lewis Dunk.

Odegaard forced another good stop from Verbruggen, while Havertz headed over as Arsenal pushed for a second.

However, Brighton came close to equalising against the run of play late on when a low cross from Kaoru Mitoma was met by the outstretched Pascal Gross, but the German could only hit the side-netting from close range.

With three minutes remaining, Arsenal finally added a second.

Substitute Eddie Nketiah made a driving run and put in Havertz, who shot past Verbruggen.

It was a first home goal for the German and his fourth in seven matches in all competitions.

Verbruggen denied Emile Smith Rowe late on, but two goals were enough for Arsenal, who move on to 39 points.

The result brings Brighton's 32-match scoring streak in the Premier League to an end, the first time they have failed to do so since February. They drop to ninth on 26 points.



Liverpool's Ryan Gravenberch (L) and Manchester United's Sofyan Amrabat battle for the ball during their Premier League match on Sunday

Man United stand firm to stop Liverpool's home run

Liverpool were denied a return to the top of the Premier League as a resolute Manchester United defensive display held their dominant hosts to a 0-0 draw at Anfield.

Andre Onana made his league-high eight saves in a match, while his team-mates battled to only the fourth goalless draw of the season so far to frustrate the home crowd.

Centre-back Ibrahima Konate replaced Jarell Quansah in Liverpool's only change from their late victory at Crystal Palace last weekend.

Erik ten Hag made four changes, with Jonny Evans, Raphael Varane, Rasmus Hojlund and Kobbie Mainoo all returning.

Liverpool started ferociously, winning a corner inside the opening 20 seconds, which was met by a roar from the Anfield crowd,

the largest since the 1960s thanks to the redeveloped Anfield Road stand being opened for the first time. The home side continued to apply the pressure, Darwin Nunez's back-post header testing Onana, who could only parry to the feet of Mohamed Salah, whose effort from close range was scrambled behind for a corner. Then Virgil van Dijk, up from the back for Liverpool's seventh corner, powered a header that Onana had to tip over.

With the first half approaching its conclusion, Ryan Gravenberch cut a low ball back to the edge of the box to find Salah, but his low shot was saved by Onana.

It was Man Utd who had the first real chance of the second half. Alejandro Garnacho was sent through on goal, but Trent Alexander Arnold got back to deny the Argentinian with a bril-

liant tackle.

Following his substitution for the injured Gravenberch on the hour, Cody Gakpo immediately found himself in space and passed to Salah, whose curled shot towards the top corner was comfortably saved by Onana.

The hosts came forward again, with Salah setting up Alexander-Arnold, whose fierce low shot brushed the near post.

But in the next minute, Man Utd, much against the run of play, came close to breaking the deadlock, with some neat passing resulting in a Hojlund shot from close range that was straight at Alisson.

With the contest now stretched Liverpool came forward once more, Salah jinking inside on to his left and bending a well-hit shot that forced Onana into another flying save.

Modric inspires Real to comfortable win

Madrid, Spain - Luka Modric pulled the strings in midfield with his trademark ease, provided a delightful assist and scored a goal as Real Madrid clinched a 4-1 home victory over Villarreal on Sunday to move to the top of LaLiga standings on Sunday.

However, the win was overshadowed by defender David Alaba's ACL injury in the first half, making him the third Real player this season to be sidelined with this particular injury, following Eder Militao and Thibaut Courtois.

Alaba's departure in the 35th



Real Madrid's Luka Modric celebrates with Brahim Diaz after scoring

minute was a major setback for Real Madrid, who bounced back from a disappointing draw last week to take their tally to 42

points, one ahead of Girona. They also widened the gap to seven points over third-placed Barcelona.

PSG stumble as Lille earn last-gasp draw

Lille, France - Ligue 1 leaders Paris Saint-Germain were held to a thrilling 1-1 draw by a determined Lille side on Sunday. The Parisians looked set to take all three points after Kylian Mbappé coolly converted a penalty in the 66th minute, but substitute Jonathan David had other ideas, heading home a dramatic last-minute equalizer to leave the home crowd erupting in joy.

"We hardly suffered in the first 80 minutes but a slight lack of control and Lille's pressure meant we ended up with a draw," PSG manager Luis Enrique said.



Jonathan David of Lille celebrates after scoring against Paris Saint-Germain on Sunday

"It's a shame, but you have to play matches to the last second. It's a result that doesn't necessarily do justice to the game we played, but that's the way it is."

Kane brace in Bayern's win

Bundesliga top scorer Harry Kane bagged two goals, one in each half, to lead Bayern Munich to a 3-0 win over VfB Stuttgart on Sunday. The win puts Bayern just four points behind league leaders Bayer Leverkusen, with a game in hand.

Kane, the league's most ex-

pensive signing ever, has been unstoppable, scoring a record-breaking 20 goals in only 14 games. He's only the third player ever to reach 20 goals so early in the season, and it took him the fewest games ever to do it.

Bayern also broke another record, scoring in their 64th straight Bundesliga home game, tying the mark set back during 1970-74. Even with injuries and last-minute illnesses, they cruised to victory.

Leverkusen are on 39 after a 3-0 win over Eintracht Frankfurt earlier on Sunday.

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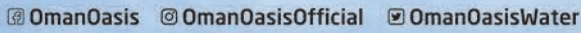
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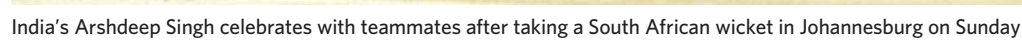
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Arshdeep, Avesh star as India thrash SA by eight wickets

Andile Phehlukwayo's valiant effort of 33 from 49 balls offered a flicker of hope for the hosts, but

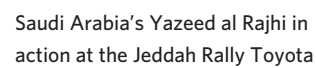


in more than a year. "I hadn't opened my account in ODIs having played three games before

"Before the game we thought there wouldn't be much movement, so we were surprised, but

India's chase was a clinical affair, reaching the target in a mere 16.4 overs.

The duo powered through the final 109 km stage that started at Khulais to set the fastest times and confirm the national titles. Victory in the motorcycle section fell to Bader al Hamdan on his Yamaha. Al Rajhi and co-driver Timo Gottschalk completely



dominated the car category in their new Overdrive Racing Toyota Hilux and won the final stage by 6 min 11sec to secure overall

Argentina's Nicolás Cavigliasso finished the stage with the second fastest time in the car category, but he retained third in the T3 rankings behind Saleh Al Saif and Dania Akeel.

City, who romped through their group stage with six wins, will host Copenhagen, who twice frustrated City's rivals Manchester United earlier in the competition. While the Citizens are heavy favourites, the Danes proved their resilience against



Arsenal v FC Porto
Barcelona v Napoli
Real Sociedad v
Paris St Germain
Atletico Madrid v Inter Milan
Borussia Dortmund v
PSV Eindhoven
Bayern Munich v Lazio
Manchester City v
FC Copenhagen
Real Madrid v RB Leipzig

Another potentially explosive

encounter pits Spanish giants Barcelona against Serie A champions Napoli.

Both teams are in fine form domestically and boast potent attacking threats.



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Tingling toes?

After an exercise routine, one expects to be out of breath, fatigued, sweaty, etc. However, when you experience something odd - like numb hands after lifting weights or a tingling sensation in your fingers/toes during your cardio session - it might make you feel disturbed.

Foot and hand tingling and numbness during workouts is quite common and most people experience it at some time of the other, so it may not be something to worry about. But if it per-

sists or crops up after your workout session is over and done, it could be indicative of something more concerning, depending on the frequency and severity of what you are experiencing.

Tingling or numbness in the hands is usually a sign that blood flow to the nerves is being blocked, not due to overworking your muscles. The countless nerves that run throughout our bodies are super sensitive, and even a slight change in blood supply to those nerves can affect what we feel, resulting in numbness and tingling - it's called paresthesia.

The most common cause for changes in blood supply to nerves in a healthy person is positional. It's the same reason your arm may get numb if you fall asleep on it - that position blocks blood supply to the nerves.

Positioning issues are especially common during cardio. When you're running, using the elliptical, or even vigorously walking, your arm is often bent at the elbow, forcing the ulnar nerve (funny bone) to stretch across the bone in your elbow, cutting off its blood supply. This causes, tingling in the last two fingers.

Clenching or pumping your arms too aggressively mid-workout can also cause numbness.. You can also experience positional issues when strength training, especially lifting.

While running, the inadvertent clenching that people tend to do can also cause tingling sensations. One should relax the grip and imagine lightly holding something between your thumb and pointer finger to prevent pumping your arms vigorously.

Also, while lifting weights, make sure you're not squeezing them tightly. Select appropriate weights and perform in front of a mirror to ensure proper form.

After each routine, simply shaking your arms and hands out can help get the blood flowing properly again. Do similar regarding your lower half, too. Regularly moving your feet can help reduce these sensations.



Today the market is flooded with wide range of food products from all over the world. It gets very difficult to make a right choice in terms of 'Healthy' or 'Not so Healthy' foods. Reading Labels on the packed products is one of the best tools available for healthy and smart shopping. Nutritional information on food packaging can appear confusing at first. You may feel reading label as cumbersome, time consuming, but believe me, once you get the simple tricks of reading labels, it is worth the effort.

An example will help you understand the importance of reading the food labels. When you buy a low-fat yoghurt pot, you may think that you made a healthy choice. But after reading the labels, you realise that it contained more sugar than the normal yoghurt pot. Hence, checking the label, will help you realise that opting for normal yoghurt pot with less sugar is a smart choice. Let's get into reading the labels.

Rules related to nutritional labelling vary in different countries. But almost all the packaged foods come with labels. Every label has 2 parts - Nutrition facts and Ingredient list.

First, check out the ingredient list. The food is considered good or healthy if it has:

Read food labels

- A short list of Ingredients - 10 words or less
- Words like whole grains or familiar words
- 'First in the line' means 'most'. If the bread is called 'whole wheat', then, 'whole wheat' should be first in the list. But if 'wheat' is first on the list, then it can also indicate refined wheat



Avoid foods that contain:

- A long list of Ingredients (ten words or more)
 - Unfamiliar words, like Hydrogenated Fats, partially hydrogenated or High Fructose Corn Syrup, Ammonium Sulphate etc.
 - Words with numerals E200 or so on, which indicate artificial colours or chemical additives.
- If you are looking at a food with less or no-sugar, then look out for any word in the list, ending with 'ose'. Sugar may appear as - Fructose, Dextrose or Sucrose etc.
- Mono-sodium glutamate, (MSG) is considered as an excitotoxin, which is known to alter the brain chemistry. MSG is often used in pan-Asian preparations and may appear as Hydrolyzed Vegetable Protein on the label. It is popularly known as 'aji-

nomoto'

Now coming to the nutrition fact label. Reading this part of the label, not only gives you the nutritional information, like number of calories, fat, sugar present but also helps you to make a quick decision about a product when comparing with similar items.

To read this part, firstly checkout the 'serving size' given on the top, which gives the amount the average person eats at one helping. Serving size is expressed in kitchen terms - cups, spoons or per 100g/ml, but remember, your serving size may be more or less than the amount mentioned.

Key points to note:

- Calculate total calories/fat/sugar as per your serving size not according to what is given on the label.
- If two similar products show same calories, then check for other nutrients, proteins, fat, added sugar, etc.
- If the fat content part of the label says, presence of 'trans fats', then understand it has bad fat.
- In addition, in the carbohydrate content, check for total added sugar as this will tell you, the amount of sugar present over and above the natural sugar.
- Always consider both, the nutrition fact and ingredient list to make a final choice.

Reading food labels is extremely important, not only from the health perspective, but also from the cost of product angle. Many products labelled 'Healthy' are usually more expensive.

(Vandana Chawla is an Online Nutrition Expert and a Registered Nutritionist-UKVRN)



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Breast augmentation options, and more

Breast augmentation, also known as augmentation Mammoplasty, is a surgical procedure that helps in increasing the size, shape, or fullness of the breast. It is usually done by any of the two methods - using an implant or fat transfer.

This procedure has become one of the commonest procedures done by plastic surgeons today, and is found to help in boosting the self-esteem and confidence in women.

Breast implants are the most common type of breast augmentation. It is a medical prosthesis that is placed inside the breast to augment, reconstruct, or create the physical form of the breast. There are two main types - saline implants (filled with sterile saline solution), and silicone gel filled implants (a silicone outer shell filled with a silicone gel).

Fat transfer augmentation uses liposuction to take fat from another area of your body and then inject that fat into your breasts. This is done in people who want a relatively smaller increase in their breast size. Fat is usually taken from your abdomen, flanks, back or thighs.

Breast augmentation is done to enlarge naturally small breasts, to restore breast size and shape after

pregnancy, weight loss or breast feeding, to restore symmetry when asymmetrical, and to restore breast after breast surgery.

A patient with an ongoing infection of the breast, active cancer of the breast, known autoimmune disease or who has an allergic reaction to silicone, are not usually suitable candidates for this procedure. These patients would be asked to quit smoking 4 to 6 weeks prior to this surgery, and to stop certain medications, so that complications during and after the procedure may not arise.

The surgical wound can be made usually at any of the following three places- at the crease under the breast (inframammary incision), in the armpit (trans axillary incision), and around the nipple (peri areolar incision). The options vary with each patient, and should be discussed with your Plastic Surgeon prior to the surgical procedure.

The breast implant is inserted into a pocket. Depending upon the nature of the breast and the approach, the implant can be placed either sub glandular (behind the breast tissue and over the pectoral muscles), or sub muscular (behind the pectoral muscles).

The patient will have to consult with a board-certified plastic sur-

geon, discuss with them the various options, approaches, sizes of the implant needed, risks, complications and expectations of the surgery. The patient would be evaluated wholly by the surgeon, for anything that might interfere with this surgery. Blood and other investigations are done for anesthesia workup. The procedure can be done as a day care surgery - the patient can be discharged on the very same day, provided she has a guardian for overnight observation.

The procedure is usually done under general anesthesia (the patient would be asleep). The planned incision is made, a pocket created, the implant inserted into the pocket, the incision is closed using sutures, and a dressing is given. Sometimes drainage tubes are also inserted, which have to be removed at a later date. The whole surgical procedure may take up to 45 to 90 minutes.

Patients show rapid recovery and can return to light work and activity within a week. Return to full activity can be done by 6 weeks. The surgeon would advise about certain exercises to relieve pain and discomfort.

(Dr. Krishna Kumar is available at Badr Al Samaa Hospital, Al Khoud. He is expert in performing breast augmentation surgeries).

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