

H M ON LANDMARK IRAN VISIT

Visit to reflect positively on region's stability and security, its outcome to be beneficial in regional and global arenas



Tehran, Iran - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik arrived in the Islamic Republic of Iran on Sunday for a two-day official visit.

An official reception ceremony was held in honour of His Majesty the Sultan. Upon arrival of His Majesty the Sultan's motorcade at the presidential building of Saadabad Palace in Tehran, Dr Ebrahim Raisi, President of Iran, headed the welcoming party. The Iranian President wished His Majesty the Sultan and his accompanying delegation a happy stay.

Then, the Iranian President accompanied His Majesty the Sultan to the dais of honour, where the Omani Royal Anthem and the Iranian national anthem were played. After that, His Majesty the Sultan, accompanied by the

president, inspected a guard of honour, which saluted His Majesty the Sultan.

After that, the two leaders headed to the reception building, where His Majesty the Sultan shook hands with senior members of the welcoming party from the Iranian side, including Dr Hossein Amirabdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ehsan Khandozi, Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs (Head of Mission of Honour), Brigadier Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani, Minister of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics, Javad Owji, Minister of Oil, Mehrdad Bazrpash, Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Gholam-Hossein Esmaeili, Head of the President's Office, Mahdi Niazi, Acting Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade, Mohammad-Reza Farzin, Governor of

Central Bank of Iran, Mohammed Jamshidi, Deputy Chief of Staff for Political Affairs in the President's Office, Ali Bagheri, Deputy Minister of Political Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mehdi Safari, Deputy Minister for Economic Diplomacy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ali Najafi Khoshroudi, Ambassador of Iran to Oman.

Then, the president shook hands with members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan.

Earlier, when His Majesty the Sultan arrived at Mehrabad International Airport in Tehran, he was received by Mohammed Mokhber, First Vice-President of Iran, and other high-ranking Iranian officials and several members of Oman's Embassy in the Islamic Republic.

ONA

H M THE SULTAN, IRANIAN PRESIDENT HOLD TALKS

Tehran, Iran - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Dr Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, held a session of talks at the Iranian presidential building in Tehran on Sunday.

The session dealt with various aspects of bilateral cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The two leaders also exchanged views on several current issues of common concern in the backdrop of developments in the regional and international arenas.

The meeting was attended from the Omani side by Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of Royal Office, and Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister.

From the Iranian side, the meeting was attended by Dr Hossein Amirabdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohammed Jamshidi, Deputy Chief of Staff for Political Affairs in the President's Office, Ali Bagheri, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ali Najafi Khoshroudi, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman.

After the private meeting, His Majesty the Sultan and the Iranian President held an expanded session of talks during which the two leaders pursued discussions on the historical friendship binding the two countries.

The meeting touched on various aspects of cooperation and coordination with a view to realising the interests of the two friendly countries and peoples and achieving their common aspirations.

The expanded talks were attended by the official Omani and Iranian delegations.

ONA

Oman, Iran sign MoUs, pacts to boost investments



Tehran, Iran - The Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran signed two memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and two co-operation agreements at Saadabad Palace in Tehran in a bid to enhance development and investments between the two countries.

The two MoUs deal with promoting investments, enhancing investment opportunities, and boosting development and investments in economic and free zones.

The two agreements deal with exchanging oil information and a joint study on the Hengam-Bakha field project.

The first MoU was signed by H E Qais Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and Ehsan Khandozi, Iran's Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs.

The second MoU was signed by H E Yousef and Hojatollah Abdolmaleki, Adviser to the Iranian President and Secretary of the High Council for Free Zones.

The two agreements were inked by H E Eng Salim Nasser al Auqi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and Ali Akbar Mehrabian, Iran's Minister of Energy.

The signing ceremonies were attended by the official delegations from both sides.

ONA

MoUs deal with promoting investments, enhancing investment opportunities, and boosting development and investments in economic and free zones



Erdogan wins third term in runoff vote

No VAT, customs or registration fee on electric vehicles

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Tax Authority has announced that electric vehicles and EV parts will be exempt from value-added tax (VAT), customs tax and registration fee in the sultanate. Simultaneously, the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) has intro-

duced a new regulation governing charging of electric vehicles.

According to the Tax Authority (TA), zero VAT on EVs will be applicable under specific conditions, including the car must be equipped with a fully electric motor or hydrogen-powered engine, and it must be registered in Oman as either an electric car or zero-emission ve-

hicle (hydrogen) in compliance with prescribed procedures.

Additionally, the EV must meet the specifications and standards approved in Oman. Purchase of the EV and its spare parts must be from a person or entity holding a registered VAT account in Oman.

TA emphasised that both VAT-registered and non-regis-

tered entities can import EVs or hydrogen-powered vehicles without incurring VAT. This aligns with the procedures set by the General Administration of Customs and customs tariff of corresponding items.

H E Salem bin Nasser Saeed al Auqi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of APSR, issued a decision (No 2023/15) to reg-

ulate EV chargers. The decision mandates that individuals who own or operate private or public electric charging points must adhere to the regulatory and technical requirements approved by APSR and the relevant authorities.

The new decision also permits individuals to instal private electric charging points within

their residences. However, it states that no person can instal a private or public electric charging point without obtaining prior approval from the concerned electricity distribution company.

The responsibility of installing and operating a private electric charging point rests with the property owner.

LANDMARK IRAN VISIT



Iranian President Dr Ebrahim Raisi hosted an official dinner in honour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq at Saadabad Palace in Tehran on Sunday



His Majest the Sultan (top) meets with Iranian officials during his visit to the republic, while Iranian President Dr Ebrahim Raisi and Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq bin Taimour al Said (below) exchange greetings



H M’s visit to reflect on region’s security, stability

Muscat - Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi has stated that the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to the Islamic Republic of Iran stems from the significance of the bilateral relations between the two countries. “The historic visit of His Majesty the Sultan to Iran reflects the importance that the leaderships of the two countries attach to deepening beneficial bilateral cooperation and their joint keenness to consult at the summit level on many regional and international concerns in support of the causes of peace, stability and prosperity,” Sayyid Badr said in a statement to Muscat Daily. Separately speaking to Asharq al Awsat newspaper on the occasion of the Royal visit to Tehran, Sayyid Badr said, “It is a well-known fact that Oman and Iran have developed historical relations of good neighbourliness based on firm principles of mutual confidence and respect.” Sayyid Badr pointed out that His Majesty the Sultan’s visit to Iran is taking place in the midst of a new phase of positive re-



gional relations. “It is a step forward in enhancing consultation and cooperation to address many current issues that will undoubtedly be the topic of discussion between the two leaders,” he said, noting that such discussions seek to consolidate the pillars of security and stability. He stressed that the Royal visit confirms the attention that His Majesty the Sultan accords to relations between the two countries and their peoples. “We in the Sultanate of Oman are optimistic that this historic visit will reflect positively on the region’s stability and security and that its outcome will be beneficial in regional and global terms,” Sayyid Badr said.



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TENDER/2023/05/ENG/008	Revamping of Lekhwair Filling Station in Al Dhahirah Governorate	100/-	05.06.2023	08.06.2023	13.06.2023
TENDER/2023/05/ENG/009	Construction of Filling Station at Yibal in Al Dhahirah Governorate	100/-	05.06.2023	08.06.2023	13.06.2023

Bank Name & Account NumberBank Muscat (0423005687760617)

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with a minimum of 3 years’ experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om.
- Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** The tender bid should be submitted in a sealed envelope and addressed to the Chairman of the Tender Committee, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.
- For any enquiry email us at (procurement@almaha.com.om) or by calling 24610289/24610287/24610355

Tourism sector rebounds, targets RO3bn investments by 2025

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) plans RO3bn in investments, increasing the number of hotel rooms to over 33,000 and raising the tourism sector’s contribution to the gross domestic product to RO920mn - representing 2.75-3 per cent of the GDP - all by the end of 2025. The tourism sector in Oman has achieved significant growth, in line with the objectives set by Oman Vision 2040. The ministry already has RO2.3bn worth of confirmed investments planned till 2025. Highlighting the targets of the tourism sector, Dr Rashid bin Saleh al Hinai, Director of Oman Vision 2040 Office, said these include attracting investments, achieving financial sustainability, and increasing its contribution to the labour market in alignment with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Efforts are also being made to develop additional indicators, such as labour market indicators, the identity and citizenship index, and the social welfare index in consideration of the objectives of the Omani tourism strategy and the comprehensive tourism development plan. Preliminary data for 2022 indicates positive growth in the tourism sector, with the number of international visitors increasing from 652,000 in 2021 to 2.9mn in 2022. “Government revenues from the tourism sector witnessed substantial growth, increasing from RO3.8mn in 2021 to RO12.4mn in 2022, demonstrating a growth of 227 per cent,” Hinai said. MHT’s investment programme comprises over 440 di-



INVESTMENT TARGET OF RO3BN

HOTEL ROOMS TO INCREASE TO 33,000

CONTRIBUTION TO GDP TO INCREASE TO RO920Mn

ITC INVESTMENT OF RO1.5BN

versified projects, with investments totalling approximately RO2.7bn from 2021 to 2025. Projects costing RO5mn or more, as well as those supporting local tourism, receive more attention. Integrated tourism complexes represent a significant investment area, with planned investments of about RO1.5bn from 2021 to 2025. Notable among these is the agreement to develop the Mandarin Oriental Project in Muscat. To support the targeted investments till 2025, MHT approves private projects based on supply and demand studies. Ten new project were approved in the first quarter of 2023, while the number of hotel rooms in the sultanate increased to 30,559 in this period. Furthermore, MHT aims to

sign 25 usufruct contracts and offer investment opportunities on land owned by the ministry this year. Financial capacity, employment plans, local content and tourism components are key requirements for investors. Hinai said that MHT is also dedicated to supporting small and medium enterprises by allocating investment opportunities that will be presented in packages in the near future. Contracts costing less than RO10,000 are awarded to SMEs. Efforts are underway to preserve heritage and culture by including archaeological sites like Bisya and Salut in the World Heritage List. “The ministry aims to enable the private sector and civil companies to invest in 25 historical monuments by 2025. Till now, we have signed 12 investment contracts, the most recent of which was for the Bahla Fort.” Hinai informed that various projects are in progress, including one to monitor meteorite falls, publishing a scientific book on meteorites, supporting private museums and heritage houses, producing sarooj (traditional Omani mortar) for restoration works, continuing archaeological excavations, and attracting archaeological missions.

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MCSY launches short films competition for the youth

Tawasul competition winner to take home RO5,000; total prize money of RO15,000

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY) has launched a competition - called Tawasul - for short films that promote acceptance of the plurality of viewpoints on social media platforms, future skills of young people, jobs related to the future, and the culture of self-employment.

An official at MCSY said, "The award will include various film formats - fiction, documentary and 3D. It aims to support Omani youth engaged professionally in photography and filmmaking."

He explained that the film-making industry has become a tool for communication between



(Supplied photo)

the youth themselves, between youth and society in Oman, and between youth and the world as well.

With Tawasul - or Communication - the ministry hopes to enhance communication with young people through the tools they prefer, while taking into ac-

count the diversity of the ways and languages in which they communicate.

The MCSY official further elaborated that the award explores prospects of using artificial intelligence and its relationship to the skills of today's youth, while also promoting the importance of

dialogue.

"The ministry has set October 1, 2023, as the last date of entry for participation in the award."

Films should not be of less than two-minute and not more than five-minute duration for consideration in the competition.

The award's website states,

"Films that have been submitted for other competitions in the sultanate, or have been shown to the public or previously published on any social media, will not be accepted. The film should also take into account public morals, respect all religions, sects and people, and diverse environments in human societies in general and Omani society in particular."

"The award's supervisors have the right to use the film to show it, including for the purpose of promoting the award, with the film's owner retaining its intellectual property and allowing it to be delivered in all languages, with Arabic subtitles in case it is presented in other languages."

The competition jury will select five films which will be put to vote by the audience on MCSY's website. However, the final decision will be that of the jury.

The winning films will receive RO15,000; RO5,000 for the first place winner, RO4,000 for the second, RO3,000 for the third, RO2,000 for the fourth and RO1,000 for the fifth place winner.

To register, log on to bit.ly/tawasul-shortfilm



(Supplied photo)

60% of Ain al Kasfa project complete

Our Correspondent
Muscat

South Batinah Municipality has stated that the Ain al Kasfa development project in Rustaq is 60 per cent complete. The project is being implemented in efforts to rejuvenate tourism and stimulate the economy.

A municipality official informed that the project, undertaken in collaboration with the Office of the Governor of South Batinah and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, has made substantial progress. "The comprehensive plan encompasses various enhancements, including expanding the car park to accommodate 33 vehicles, constructing new toilets, building a swimming pool, installing children's rides and setting up kiosks."

Additionally, as part of the development efforts, Ain al Kasfa will be covered with a transparent roof, while the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism will restore a watch tower adjacent to it to further enhancing the site's appeal.

Renowned for its therapeutic sulphur content, the Ain al Kasfa hot water spring attracts

The project is a collaboration of South Batinah Municipality with the Office of the Governor of South Batinah and Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

tourists in large numbers.

An official from the Office of the Governor of South Batinah emphasised the governorate's commitment to attracting investments and improving public amenities. Currently, the governorate is actively implementing 36 projects to develop various landmarks, with some nearing completion.

All these initiatives are part of the Governorates Development Programme, which aligns with the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. Each governorate has been allocated RO20mn in the 10th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) to foster growth of local economies.

Muscat Municipality builds rainwater canals in Amerat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality announced that it has offered a tender for the construction of Phase II of the rainwater drainage canal project in the Mahaj area of Amerat following completion of its first phase.

The area is prone to flash floods due to sudden overflowing of wadis, as it lacks a surface water drainage system, the civic body stated.

'Phase I of the project has been completed, including construction of a canal adja-

cent to the mountain to reduce the impact of water gushing down the mountain, which leads to flooding in residential areas.'

The project includes construction of a 18m wide and 1,100m long open canal, a box culvert - 3.5m wide, 2.5m high and 880m long - with three openings, and reconstruction of affected roads.

'These works will solve the problem of water accumulation in residential areas and enhance commercial movement in the area,' the statement added.

18 acres freed from encroachment

Our Correspondent
Muscat

South Batinah Municipality has successfully removed encroachments from 76,000sqm (18 acres) of land in the wilayat of Musannah.

In a statement, the municipality said its specialists detected multiple violations in Musannah. 'The municipality has taken all necessary legal and procedural measures to address these violations and ensure their removal.'

To proceed with the encroachment removal process, the municipality verified that no documents exist to substantiate legal ownership of the disputed land.

Procedures adopted to deal



(Supplied photo)

with encroachments vary from case to case, the civic body stated. Initially, violators are notified and instructed to leave the land. However, if the violator fails to comply, immediate action is taken to remove the unauthorised occupants, either by the municipality or by involving the relevant competent authorities.

Campaign to enhance competitiveness, prevent monopolies

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) launched a campaign called 'Together to Ensure Freedom of Competition' on Sunday to promote economic competitiveness in the sultanate.

The campaign, which will run till September 18, aims to raise awareness about the Centre for Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention and educate the public on the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Law and its executive regulations.

An official at MoCIIP informed that the main objectives of the



MoCIIP's 'Together to Ensure Freedom of Competition' campaign was launched on Sunday and will run till September 18

campaign include driving economic growth, strengthening competitiveness, fostering a cul-

ture that safeguards competition and prevents monopolies, and promotes the principles of a free

market.

Additionally, it seeks to familiarise community members with the provisions of the law and the role of the anti-dumping law in protecting national industries.

The campaign kick-started in Buraimi, targeting business owners, small and medium enterprises, factory owners, national product manufacturers, and individuals interested in competition protection, monopoly prevention and combating dumping practices.

"The campaign seeks to educate the public, including consumers, traders and investors, about the importance of fair competition, free market principles and competitive markets for

a thriving economy. Moreover, it aims to safeguard the national industry from harmful practices in international trade," the MoCIIP official said.

A key component of the campaign involves training and educational programmes that promote fair competition in the market, ensuring transparency, integrity, impartiality and accountability in economic transactions.

"The ministry is committed to providing consumers freedom of choice, establishing fair competition to maintain a competitive market structure, and ensuring compliance with laws, regulations, decisions and relevant instructions," the official said.

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Cloud computing to add \$13.7bn to Oman's GDP over next 10 years: AWS

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The rising adoption of cloud computing technology by the public and private organisations in Oman is expected to contribute around US\$13.7bn to the sultanate's gross domestic product (GDP) over the next 10 years, according to a new study conducted by Amazon Web Services (AWS).

AWS, an Amazon.com company, commissioned a new report quantifying the relationship between public cloud computing adoption, national productivity, and economic growth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The report highlights the potential for the MENA region to unlock US\$733.1bn of additional economic value over the next decade (2023-2033), representing 1.14 per cent of MENA's cumulative GDP, by accelerating adoption of cloud.

The AWS study provides a cutting-edge econometrical method for calculating the aggregate productivity gains realised by economies that adopt cloud computing.

Cloud computing represents the delivery of IT resources via the internet with pay-as-you-go pricing. Instead of buying, owning, and maintaining their own data centers and servers, private firms and public sector organisations



tions can acquire technology such as computer power, storage, databases, and other resources on an as-needed basis.

In 2021, cloud adoption made a significant impact on the MENA region's economy. According to the AWS report, it contributed 0.97 per cent to the regional GDP, generating an economic

value of US\$34.8bn. Over 86 per cent of this impact can be attributed to the national productivity gains or so-called 'spillover effects' on the economy. The remaining 14 per cent is driven by cloud spending from both public and private organisations in the MENA region.

On average, MENA countries experience a 0.07 per cent increase in GDP for every one per

cent increase in cloud penetration. Extrapolating this data, a 10 per cent increase in cloud penetration across the entire MENA region, would result in economic spillover effects amounting to an estimated US\$25.5bn per year.

Yasser Hassan, managing director, commercial sector, MENA and Turkey at AWS, said,

Amazon Web Services estimates that public cloud's contribution to the MENA economy could reach \$733bn by 2033

"The findings of this report highlight the tremendous opportunity for the MENA region to leverage cloud computing and accelerate economic growth. With significant untapped potential, the region can unlock additional economic value by increasing the current average cloud penetration."

The study demonstrates that the economic impact of cloud

computing is guided by returns to scale – greater adoption of cloud computing will lead to proportionally greater productivity gains and economic impact.

In 2021, 26.5 per cent of organisations in the MENA region embraced cloud computing, significantly lower than the adoption rates of 49 per cent in Western Europe and North America. This presents an opportunity for the MENA region to enhance its cloud penetration and reap substantial benefits.

"With the current forecast, the economic impact of the cloud is undeniable and is poised as a key catalyst for economic prosperity. As such, it is important for businesses in the region to invest in cloud computing technology to stay competitive and boost their economic potential," added Yasser.

The report identifies four key advantages of cloud computing: First, it enhances business efficiency and effectiveness, streamlining processes and improving outcomes; second, it offers access to a wide range of services, enabling businesses to leverage advanced technologies; third, it boosts productivity by facilitating collaboration, mobility, and agility within the workforce; fourth, cloud computing promotes environmental sustainability by reducing carbon emissions per unit of data transmitted.



EXIM Bank supports Omani firms in buying US products

Muscat – The members of the Oman American Business Center (OABC), along with fellow Omani business leaders and senior government officials, took part in an informative session with the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM) last week at the Diplomatic Club in Muscat.

The event was hosted in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the patronage of H E Tahir bin Salim al Amri, executive president of the Central Bank of Oman. The workshop discussed EXIM Bank's financing tools, congressional mandates, and special initiatives, while highlighting global best practices of companies that have benefited from EXIM.

EXIM is the official export credit agency of the United States and supports the purchase of US-made capital equipment and ancillary services by international buyers. In more

than 85 years of operation, EXIM has supported over US\$400bn worth of US exports to international markets. EXIM finance products are now available to both the Omani private and public sectors when procuring American goods and services.

EXIM can provide loan guarantees and medium to long-term direct financing at attractive rates for those wanting to buy American products. Projects that are considered transformational, such as biotech, AI, renewable energy, fintech, wireless communications, and water treatment, may receive enhanced, competitive financing options.

This opportunity for Omani businesses to utilise EXIM products further strengthens the long-standing business ties between the United States and Oman while stimulating economic growth.

Ali Daud, founder and chairman of the Oman American Business Center, said, "Being able to import high-quality, innovative US products duty-free (under the FTA) along with highly competitive financing options through EXIM presents a tremendous opportunity for Omani businesses."

He added, "As we look to achieve Oman's Vision 2040, agreements and programs such as the FTA and EXIM can help us obtain the necessary infrastructure and technology, but it's essential for businesses to take advantage of these opportunities."

Companies interested in learning more about the Oman-US Free Trade Agreement, EXIM finance products, or being put into direct contact with an EXIM representative should contact the Oman American Business Center at info@oabc.org or call 9418 9500.



Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani attending a meeting with transport ministry representatives in Baghdad on Saturday (AFP)

Iraq unveils \$17bn project linking Europe and Mideast

Baghdad, Iraq – Iraq on Saturday presented an ambitious plan to turn itself into a regional transportation hub by developing its road and rail infrastructure, linking Europe with the Middle East.

Once completed, the US\$17bn project known as the "Route of Development" would span the length of the country, stretching 1,200km from the northern border with Turkey to the Gulf in the south.

Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani announced the project during a conference with transport ministry representatives from Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

"We see this project as a pillar of a sustainable non-oil economy, a link that serves Iraq's neighbours and the region, and a contribution to economic integration efforts," Sudani said.

While further discussions are required, any country that wishes "will be able to carry out part of the project", the Iraqi parliament's transport committee said, adding the project could be completed in "three to five years".

"The Route of Development will boost interdependence between

the countries of the region," Turkey's ambassador to Baghdad Ali Riza Guney said, without elaborating on what role his country would play in the project.

War-ravaged and beset by rampant corruption, oil-rich Iraq suffers from dilapidated infrastructure.

Its roads, riddled with potholes and poorly maintained, are in terrible condition.

Those connecting Baghdad to the north cross areas where sporadic attacks are still carried out by remnants of the Islamic State group. Sudani has prioritised the reconstruction of the country's road network, along with upgrading its failing electricity infrastructure.

Developing the road and rail corridor would allow Iraq to capitalise on its geographical position, with the aim of making the country a transportation hub for goods and people moving between the Gulf, Turkey and Europe. Work has already started to increase capacity at the commercial port of Al-Faw, on the shores of the Gulf, where cargo is to be unloaded before it embarks on the new road and rail links.

AFP

Sharakah joins Beehive as new investor

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sharakah, a closed joint stock company incorporated by Royal Decree No (76/98), has come on board with Beehive, a leading financial technology (fintech) company, as a new investor.

Sharakah contributes to SME development in Oman and provides finance to support Oman's vision to diversify the economy. Together, Beehive and Sharakah look to help the growth of the SME economy by providing fast, accessible finance.

Beehive is a peer-to-peer lending platform headquartered in Dubai, which has funded GCC-based SMEs over AED1.5bn since inception in 2014. Beehive connects businesses seeking funding with investors, eliminating the cost and complexity of conventional finance.

The result is a more efficient, streamlined process that gives businesses faster access to lower cost finance.

With Sharakah on board as an investor, Beehive's liquidity will increase, enabling funding for more SMEs across Oman.



Beehive provides access to finance for SME growth, and will lend collateral free, debt-based finance to strong, creditworthy companies. Businesses can borrow from RO20,000 on repayment terms between 6-36 months.

In a press statement, Ali bin Ahmed Muqabail, CEO of Sharakah said, "This partnership with Beehive marks an important milestone for Sharakah in our mission to drive SME development in Oman and support the diversification of our economy. Through our collaboration with a reputed innovative fintech platform we aim to contribute to the growth of the SME sector and provide fast, accessible finance to empower businesses.

Together, we will create a favourable ecosystem that empowers small businesses and contributes to Oman's overall prosperity."

Craig Moore, founder and CEO of Beehive, said, "Beehive has been operating in Oman for six months and has facilitated over RO2mn in SME funding. This is the proof we need to

show how important easy access to finance for growth is for small businesses in Oman. We are thrilled to have Sharakah on board to help us work towards a more prosperous future for SMEs."

Beehive P2P Ltd is the largest regulated peer-to-peer (P2P) lending platform in the GCC. Beehive directly connects businesses looking for finance with investors, creating mutually beneficial partnerships for growth. Beehive's digital platform provides smarter finance solutions to businesses, financial institutions and investors. Since launch, Beehive has registered over 15,000 investors and successfully facilitated more than AED1.5bn to over 1,000 business funding requests.

The business expanded into Saudi Arabia in 2020 and Oman in 2022.

Investment in solar projects outshines oil: IEA

Paris, France – Investment in solar power is expected to overtake oil for the first time this year as clean energy spending outpaces that for fossil fuels, the IEA said in a report.

While that is a welcome development, the International Energy Agency warned that investment in fossil fuels is rising when it should be falling fast to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

"Clean energy is moving faster than many people realise," IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol said in a statement accompanying the release of the agency's latest report on energy investment.

"This is clear in the investment



trends, where clean technologies are pulling away from fossil fuels," he added.

Annual investment in clean energy is expected to have risen by 24 per cent from 2021 to more than US\$1.7tn in 2023, according to the IEA. The gain for fossil fuels was 15 per cent over

the same period.

Investment in clean energy and fossil fuels was equal only five years ago. But a combination of factors, in particular high oil and gas prices and a worry about supplies, has seen spending on renewables surge ahead.

"One shining example is investment in solar, which is set to overtake the amount of investment going into oil production for the first time," Birol said.

The IEA expects investment in solar power, essentially photovoltaic panels, to hit US\$380bn this year, while investment in oil exploration and extraction should come in at US\$370bn.

"This crowns solar as a true energy superpower," said Dave

Jones, head of data insights at the energy think tank Ember.

The low price of solar power generation will help propel decarbonisation efforts as electric car adoption gathers pace.

But the rebound in oil and gas investment, which is expected to return to 2019 levels this year, puts the industry further away from the IEA's 2050 net zero trajectory. The IEA says overall 2023 fossil fuel investment is expected to be more than double the amount the sector should be spending in 2030. For coal, it could hit six times the amount.

The IEA also noted that clean energy investment was concentrated in advanced nations and China, while the biggest in-

creases in fossil fuel investment are in Middle Eastern nations.

"The irony remains that some of the sunniest places in the world have the lowest levels of solar investment, and this is a problem that needs attention," said Jones.

The IEA also found that major energy companies, for the most part, are not putting considerable funds into the transition to green energy.

Just five percent of their cash flow last year went to low-carbon and renewable energies or carbon capture projects, only about a quarter of the amount that was paid out overall to shareholders.

AFP

Republicans, Biden reach debt ceiling deal

Washington, US – President Joe Biden and Republican leader Kevin McCarthy announced a deal late Saturday to raise the debt ceiling, dragging the United States back from the precipice of default with only a few days to spare.

Congress will vote on the deal to extend the government's borrowing authority on Wednesday, just shy of the June 5 "X-date" when the Treasury estimates the government will no longer be able to pay its bills, plunging the world's biggest economy into turmoil.

Biden said in a statement that the deal was "good news for the American people, because it prevents what could have been a catastrophic default and would have led to an economic recession, retirement accounts devastated, and millions of jobs lost."

McCarthy, who spoke with Biden on Saturday to close the deal, said there was still "a lot of work to do, but I believe this is an agreement in principle that's worthy of the American people."

The Republican speaker

added he would consult again with the president on Sunday and oversee final drafting of the bill, and the House would "then be voting on it on Wednesday."

'Compromise'

Raising the debt ceiling – a legal maneuver that takes place most years without drama – allows the government to keep borrowing money and remain solvent.

This year, Republicans demanded deep spending cuts – largely in social spending for the poor – in return for raising the debt ceiling, saying the time had come for bitter medicine to address the country's mammoth US\$31tn debt.

Biden argued that he would not negotiate over spending issues as a condition for raising the debt ceiling, accusing the Republicans of taking the economy hostage.

Both sides have now somewhat climbed down.

According to a source familiar with the negotiations, the deal includes freeing up the debt ceiling for two years, meaning there will



US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (left) looks on as President Joe Biden speaks during a meeting on the debt ceiling, in the White House in Washington, DC, on May 22 (AFP)

be no need for negotiations in 2024, when the presidential election will be in full swing.

The big cuts Republicans wanted are not there, though non-defence spending will remain effectively flat next year, and only rise nominally in 2025, the source said.

There will also be new rules

for accessing certain federal assistance programs, though the source said the deal protected Biden's signature Inflation Reduction Act and student debt relief plan.

Biden said "the agreement represents a compromise, which means not everyone gets what they want. That's the responsibility of governing."

Deadlines

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen had initially warned of a possible default around June 1 if Congress failed to raise the ceiling on borrowing, but gave lawmakers some breathing room on Friday when she updated the deadline

to June 5. Even so, the legislation will still have to clear Congress much more quickly than the normal timetable for even the most uncontroversial bills.

Under House rules, lawmakers have to be given 72 hours before voting once a bill is presented. And if it passes the House, it will then have to go through the Senate, where Democrats hold the majority.

McCarthy is hoping to bring the narrow House majority of 222 Republicans with him, but the deal is likely to face opposition from 35 far-right lawmakers who told him to "hold the line" against compromising on far more sweeping spending cuts. That means a large number of Democrats will have to be persuaded to vote with a reduced number of Republicans – something that rarely happens on big bills.

In a sign of the uphill battle McCarthy might face corraling his party's votes, hardline conservative Representative Lauren Boebert said she would oppose the deal.

"Our voters deserve better than this," she said in a tweet on Saturday night. "You can count me as a NO on this deal."

The Democrats, meanwhile, may face their own rebellion on the left of the party, which objects to any spending restrictions.

Congress was adjourned for an extended holiday weekend but lawmakers will be called back to vote.

If a default occurs, the government wouldn't miss loan repayments until mid-June but in the meantime it would likely have to halt US\$25bn in social security checks and federal salaries.

The battle has been monitored closely by the major ratings agencies, with Morningstar and Fitch both warning that they could opt for a downgrade, even if the crisis is averted.

When Barack Obama's administration narrowly averted a default 12 years ago, a ratings downgrade cost taxpayers more than US\$1bn in higher interest costs.

AFP

IMF lifts US 2023 growth forecast

Washington, US – The International Monetary Fund slightly raised its forecast for 2023 US economic growth Friday while noting that a slowing economy will likely lead to a small increase in unemployment in 2024.

"The US economy has proven resilient," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva said in a press conference, shortly after the updated figures were released.

Georgieva also had sounded a warning about the stalemate in the United States over raising borrowing limits before a June 1 deadline, and called for Republicans and Democrats in Congress to come to a "speedy resolution."

"We think of the US Treasury market as an anchor for the global financial system, and this

anchor needs to hold," she said.

Real GDP growth in the United States is expected to rise by 1.7 per cent this year, up from 1.6 per cent forecast earlier this year, before slowing to 1.0 per cent in 2024, the IMF said in a statement.

The US unemployment rate, which is currently at near-record lows, is expected to tick up slightly, with "slowing, but still-solid, growth" pushing it to increase to 4.4 percent by the end of next year, the IMF statement said.

The IMF's new US forecast follows recent data which indicates a resilient economy in spite of an aggressive campaign of interest-rate hikes to counter high inflation by the US Federal Reserve, and recent stresses in the banking sector.

Addressing inflation, Georgieva said resilient demand and a strong labor market had been "something of a double-edged sword" for the US economy.

"They have been certainly a boost to American families, but they have also contributed to more persistent inflation than had been anticipated," she said.

The IMF now expects inflation to remain stubbornly above-target into 2025.

As a result, Georgieva said, the Fed's job of raising interest rates "is not quite yet done."

Interest rates "will need to be somewhat higher for longer," if the Fed is to successfully bring inflation back down to its long-term target of two percent, she said.

AFP

EU clears UBS takeover of Credit Suisse

Brussels, Belgium – The European Commission approved the takeover by UBS of its embattled banking rival Credit Suisse, ruling that the merger does not harm competition in Europe.

The commission, which runs the EU's powerful anti-trust regulator, said "the merger would not significantly reduce competition in the markets where their activities overlap" within the European Economic Area.

In March, UBS, Switzerland's biggest bank, swooped in to buyout Credit Suisse, the country's second largest, in a government-brokered deal worth 3bn Swiss francs (US\$3.3bn) following fears of contagion from the collapse of three US regional banks.

Investors, rocked by the



stateside turmoil, sold Credit Suisse shares, forcing the Swiss government to intervene alongside SNB central bank and the FINMA financial regulators.

There are concerns in some quarters about the risks from the megabank and anger in Switzerland at Credit Suisse's leadership for how it handled the beleaguered bank.

The commission said, how-

ever, that the combined bank will still face "significant competitive pressure from a wide range of competitors in all of those markets, including several major global banks as well as specialist providers and strong local players".

Investment banking represents 25.2 per cent of UBS's turnover, compared to nearly 20.6 per cent at Credit Suisse,

with the pair running many similar activities such as mergers and acquisitions advice.

UBS in April said it would likely complete the takeover before the end of June.

Prior to the merger, Credit Suisse had been shaken by a series of scandals in recent years, including the bankruptcy of British financial firm Greensill.

AFP

OBITUARY

In Loving Memory

In this time of profound sorrow, our hearts reach out to
Mahesh D. Kala
who mourns the heartbreaking loss of his cherished wife,

Pushpa Kala

We extend our deepest sympathies as we stand united with the family during these difficult moments. May the support and love of colleagues, friends and family surround Mahesh, his sons, and close family, offering them courage and the reassurance that they are not alone.

With deepest sympathy,
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OETC takes part in IEEE Oman Electricity and Power Forum

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) proudly participated in the highly anticipated second edition of the Oman Electricity and Power Conference IEEE.

The conference, which commenced at the Grand Millennium Hotel, gathered international and local participation from key stakeholders in the electricity and energy sector. Under the esteemed patronage of H E Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

The three-day forum featured the latest developments within the electricity and energy sector. It provided a comprehensive overview of the advancements made by the Sultanate of Oman in its energy transition journey, in line with the objectives set forth by Oman Vision 2040.

Additionally, the event facilitated knowledge exchange, highlighting cutting-edge technologies, and fostering co-operation among participants, including industry experts, officials, and specialists from Oman and abroad. The conference's focal themes included market and policy updates, sustainable energy, distribution systems, power grids, energy management/efficiency, and asset management and optimisation.

The company's participation in the forum included presenting several working papers and managing some dialogue sessions.

Ahmed al Nadabi, the General Manager of Regulatory Affairs and Compliance, presented a working paper 'Access Charges Regulation in Oman' that addressed the restructuring of calculating the cost of electrical



energy transmission. The paper discussed the restructuring of the electricity sector, the current cost of electricity transmission, and the proposed plan for the new cost of electricity transmission that serves the aspirations of various network users, ranging from investors to electricity consumers, and enables the achievement of Vision 2040 in terms of diversifying sustainable energy sources, green hydrogen, and contributing to carbon neutrality. In addition, several related topics were discussed.

Eng Yaqoub Hamed al Shamli, Network Operation Application Support Section Head Load Dispatch Centre, presented an in-

sightful paper entitled 'Review on Future of Monitoring and Control of Power Grids using Synchro Phasors Technology'.

The paper explored the wide-ranging benefits of Synchro Phasors technology in achieving grid-wide observability, monitoring, and event analysis in control centres worldwide.

Shamli outlined the increasing complexity of electrical power systems and the expanding applications of Synchro Phasors, delving into situational awareness, wide-area monitoring, real-time operations, and power system planning. Furthermore, the paper summarized the experiences of various utilities in implementing

Synchro Phasors applications.

In another engaging presentation, Eng Anwar Nasser al Harthi, Network Studies and Performance Section Head, delivered a paper titled 'The Ancillary Services Requirements in Oman Power Sector'.

The paper highlighted the importance of developing Ancillary Services techniques considering the current developments in the network. The paper also emphasised the Ancillary Services requirements role on achieving the renewable energy integration plan while maintaining the secure operation of the power system.

Furthermore, Dr Rashid al Badwawi, Corporate Affairs

General Manager, expertly moderated a session titled 'Asset Management & Optimisation'.

The session encompassed in-depth discussions surrounding five key papers, including topics such as asset performance tool utilization through data analytics for Transco's power Transmission Network, statistical analysis of electrical faults in a 33kV distribution network (an oil field case), digitally optimised and innovative solutions for synchronisation in the transmission network, high impedance fault detection in the distribution network research, and a case study on the benefits and ROI of GIS implementation.



Vodafone opens it's next-gen network for post paid customers

Vodafone Oman is shaking up Oman's telecom industry with game-changing plans unoffered by anyone in the sultanate. Launching Vodafone Black post-paid packages, the operator has made a major move to revolutionise the way telecom services are experienced and enjoyed.

Backed by their next-gen network, the postpaid packages are the first-of-their-kind in Oman to offer customers non-stop data, data rollover and access to Vodafone's international network across 28 countries in addition to the GCC without roaming charges.

It also makes Vodafone amongst the first in the world to offer postpaid packages that allow for full digital onboarding thanks to eSIM activation in less than two minutes via the My Vodafone App. Other unique benefits include special launch bonus data of up to 30GB per month.

Honouring ambitious development plans announced in early 2023, the four new packages - Explore, Elite, Pioneer and Prime - bring Oman's customers closer to the future than ever before. The only 100% digital operator, Vodafone is rolling out the latest

cloud network technology called '5G NEXT' across the country. Customers using 5G-enabled devices in Muscat, Dhofar and other governorates will have access to a transformational network that is built for future technological advancements.

Mohammed al Hakmani, Head of Product Management from Vodafone Oman, said, "From day one, we had pledged to do things differently, pushing the sector forward with our unique approach, drive for innovation and scalable 5G capabilities. A year into our operations, the time came for us to address a new market segment and after carefully assessing their needs, wants and aspirations, we are proud to be introducing such a value-add proposition through our Vodafone BLACK postpaid."

With heightened connectivity, lightning-fast speeds, low latency and more, Vodafone customers on '5G NEXT' can expect quicker online response times, real-time updates, seamless gaming experiences and smart-device communication that will change the way they communicate with each other and with their surroundings.

Still time to win big on recharge for prepaid customers: Ooredoo

'Top up your prepaid credit now to win big with Ooredoo! There are still two more MINI Coopers to be won and the next draw takes place soon', stated Ooredoo.

Every time a Hala prepaid customer recharges by RO3 or more, they will be automatically entered into a lucky draw. Ooredoo will be giving away a MINI Cooper to two more lucky customers. Also, there will be a weekly winner of the latest iPhone 14; two winners of 500 free local minutes; two winners of 25 GB local data; one winner of 1,000 local minutes; and a weekly winner of 100 GB local data. 'The more



often you recharge, the more chances you have to win!' Ooredoo statement added.

Earlier this month, the first lucky winner of a MINI Cooper was selected at random from thousands of entries to the 'Recharge and Win Draw', alongside 35 other winners of

an iPhone 14, free data and local minutes. 'Missed out on your own chance to win big? Not to worry, you will still be automatically entered Ooredoo's upcoming draws if you top up your Hala prepaid credit by RO3 or more by the end of June,' Ooredoo stated.

OAB opens new flagship Ruwi branch

Oman Arab Bank has opened its flagship Ruwi branch with state-of-the-art services offering an improved banking experience for customers. Sheikh al Munthir Ahmed al Marhoon, wali of Muttrah, inaugurated the branch, a press release said.

The expansion marks an important milestone in the bank's commitment to providing exceptional financial services and supporting the growing needs of its customers.

Ruwi branch head Khalid al Amri said, "Our new Ruwi branch will provide immense support to our customers living in the area and will allow us to serve them more effectively. With a large consumer base in the CBD, we have designed a branch that caters to their needs and allows for more personalized



services.

"We look forward to growing our relationship with consumers in the community and enhancing our financial services further."

Customers visiting the new branch can expect leading services and facilities including digital banking solutions, convenient access to accounts and transac-

tion services and a team of knowledgeable staff that can support and provide personalised banking guidance to customers.

Khimji Ramdas' IFF, EPS set new standards with ISO certifications

Khimji Ramdas (KR), a leading business conglomerate in Oman, is thrilled to announce that Khimji Ramdas Interior Fit-outs and Furniture (IFF) and Engineering Products & Services (EPS) businesses have been awarded ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 and ISO 45001:2018 certifications.

These internationally recognised standards affirm the company's commitment to delivering exceptional services through an effective quality management system.

The ISO certifications signify the business's dedication to continually enhancing its services to meet and exceed customer expectations. By implementing the standard requirements of ISO, the company ensures improved

efficiency, better customer satisfaction and a systematic approach to addressing customer problems with appropriate solutions.

This achievement reinforces its position as a trailblazer in the market, showcasing its ability to plan and build successful business strategies whilst earning the trust of stakeholders and investors. ISO 9001:2015 stands for Quality Management System, ISO 14001:2015 for Environmental Management System and ISO 45001:2018 for OHSE System respectively.

"We are delighted to receive ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 and ISO 45001:2018 certifications. This achievement showcases our unwavering dedication



to delivering industry-leading services, improving customer satisfaction and aligning our organization with planned policies and goals," said Ravi Dhulipala, COO of the KR Infrastructure cluster.

"These certifications reinforce our commitment to quality and the success of our business strategies, thereby, strengthening our reputation as a trusted provider of interior fit-outs and furniture as well as engineering

products and services."

Hitesh Akarte, general manager of IFF & EPS, projected both these businesses as key collaborators in delivering relevant and cutting-edge technology across Oman's business sectors.

"Our aim is to be a one-stop solution for all B2B needs, including layout design, assistance in the right product selection, commissioning and complete service support."

In a highly competitive market,

he underlined the company's policy to recognise the importance of differentiation and uniqueness through operational excellence. To stay one step ahead, he said, the company is constantly striving to offer something unique and exceptional to its customers and other interested parties.

"With ISO certification, both IFF and EPS have established themselves as organizations committed to sustainability, process improvement and achieving their business goals," he added.

The Interior Fit-outs and Furniture business, part of the Khimji Ramdas Infrastructure cluster, has been a pioneer in the 'office furniture and interior works' category.

‘Intelligent’ Changan CS95 available in affordable EMI options in Oman

The high-performance intelligent seven-seat SUV Changan CS95 is now available for purchase with EMI options starting at RO162 for a six-year term announced by Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE) in Muscat.

The approximate EMI is calculated by banks based on a 20 per cent down payment for a loan tenure of six years, and is subject to credit approval till May 31. The Low EMI offer is applicable only for vehicles purchased for personal use and is subject to the terms and conditions of the lending institution.

“We are thrilled to offer low EMI on CS95 which is packed with endless features and has numerous advantages over its segment competition, CS95, a flagship model of Changan, is a perfect seven-seater SUV for a large modern family who wants to travel in luxury, with business class comfort in all road conditions with its intelligent 4WD system,” said a spokesperson for AGAE.

Changan CS95 impresses with its well-equipped features, elegant refinement, confident performance, and comfortable and reassuring ride quality.

The 4WD SUV, which is equipped with a 2.0L turbo engine, offers a superior driving experience with its sophisticated luxury and exceptional comfort. The vehicle has been designed to evoke and intensify the emotions of the driver, making it a truly thrilling ride.

Beneath the hood of the Changan CS95 4WD lies a Blue Core 2.0L turbocharged engine paired with a 6-speed automatic transmission, capable of producing 224 horsepower and 360 Nm of torque.

The SUV is also equipped with perforated leather seats that provide business-class comfort, and a lane departure warning system to enhance safety. The vehicle boasts a commanding presence and a muscular stance that demands attention wherever it goes.

The vehicle’s meticulous attention to detail is complemented by advanced technology, providing refined luxury to up to seven passengers on every drive.

With a range of innovative driving technologies, the CS95 delivers an assured sense of confidence and control to the driver. Its Blue Core Powertrain Technology based on the principles of



power, clean and quiet provides owners with a highly efficient and energy saving performance.

Changan CS95’s specifications include a length of 4949mm, a width of 1930mm, and a height of 1790mm. The SUV is powered by a Blue Core 2.0L T GDI Turbocharged Gasoline Direct Injection engine, with a wheelbase of 2810mm.

The engine is capable of pro-

ducing a maximum output of 233 horsepower at 5000-5500 rpm and a maximum torque of 360 Nm at 1750-3500 rpm. The Changan CS95 also features tyres with 55/245 R19 alloy wheels and a fuel tank capacity of 74 litres.

The wide-winged grille of the Changan CS95 4WD symbolizes strength and comfort, and its matte texture is well-comple-

mented by a bright strip. The original C-shaped light integrates position lights, steering lamps, and daytime running lights into one cohesive design. The sculpted waistline wraps around the entire body, creating an extraordinary visual.

The floating roof design affords the vehicle a sense of speed. The two-tone rim design highlights the dynamic outline.

Additionally, Changan shows ingenuity by integrating its V logo in the details.

The refined instrument panel with silver highlights aligns with the exquisite man-machine function button. Broad central control matches high-grade multi-functional storage space. Leather seats feature elaborate stitching.

A variety of seating combinations are offered to meet a diversity of customer needs. Second and third row seating is spacious and foldable.

The 2023 Changan CS95 4WD 7-seater is equipped with Bosch medium-range radar MMR evol4, enabling the SUV to detect forward vehicles. Its Adaptive Cruise Control System, which includes a move-stop function with a speed range of 0 to 150km per hour, allows the CS95 to intelligently accelerate or decelerate from a stationary position. The system also ensures that the CS95 maintains a safe distance, stops, or moves in tandem with the forward vehicle while adapting to varying road conditions, making it easier to

drive. Fitted out with Bosch MPC2Plus camera, CS95 can detect the lane line and to warn drivers when deviating from the lane, preventing accidents from fatigue or distracting driving. The distance lights and passing lights can be switched intelligently when driving at night. CS95 can also automatically detect speed limit and avoid speeding when driving on express way.

The three intelligent functions, car distance warning, forward collision warning, and collision mitigation, equipped in CS95 can avoid or ease the collision by alarm and auxiliary braking. CS95 is endowed with 10 Pioneer HiFi Speakers & DSP power amplifiers to deliver fresh, new audio experiences to every passenger.

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment has set up a spacious and state-of-the-art Showroom in Mawaleh, Qurm and Service centre in Aziaba, Muscat. AGAE has already tied up for Periodic Maintenance Services in many cities including Salalah, Sohar, Sur, Nizwa, Ibra and Barka. Changan Oman offers six years or 250,000 kms manufacturer warranty on all passenger vehicles in Oman.

Oxford University's Saïd Business School, Burjeel Holdings announce climate change challenge

In a bold new partnership to help address the climate crisis, the University of Oxford’s Saïd Business School has joined hands with Burjeel Holdings, one of the largest healthcare service providers in the MENA region.

The new collaboration will deliver a competition, known as the ‘Burjeel Holdings Oxford Saïd climate change challenge’, focused on raising awareness amongst high school students across the world of the risks of climate change, in the run up to COP28 later this year in the UAE.

The challenge will also extend to high school educators, who will be invited to submit lesson plans related to climate change, a press release stated.

The winning submission will be recognised in the UAE. The winners of the challenge and the educator will be invited to Oxford Saïd to participate in a climate



change programme in the spring of 2024. A delegation from Burjeel Holdings visited the school on Monday to launch the partnership and work on details of

the challenge, which will be announced in due course.

Soumitra Dutta, Peter Moores Dean at Oxford Saïd, said, ‘Climate change is the greatest and

most complex threat to humanity, and today’s young students will be living with its impacts in ways we do not yet understand. That is why this partnership with

Burjeel Holdings is both exciting and important. We look forward to working with them and are extremely grateful for their valuable support.’

The climate change challenge is supported by the world renowned Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford Saïd, which equips entrepreneurial leaders at the University of Oxford, and worldwide, to tackle the climate crisis and other systemic challenges.

“We are pleased to collaborate with Oxford Saïd for the climate change initiative. As healthcare providers, we recognise the well-being of our communities is deeply intertwined with the health of our environment and that a collective global effort is crucial to confront the climate crisis,” said Burjeel Holdings founder and chairman Dr Shamsheer Vayalil.



OPAZ wins 3D Printing Award at COMEX 2023

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) won the 3D Printing Award at COMEX Technology Show Awards 2023.

This award was received for using the 3D printing technology to build a commercial café with its facilities, and a residential unit with its facilities in the fishermen’s village in the Tourist Zone in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

Winning the 3D Printing Award marks an acknowledgment for OPAZ excellence in providing pioneering digital services in the investment sector and serving investors. Likewise, it is a tribute to its tremendous efforts towards digital transformation through introducing various electronic programmes and online applications, as well as adopting artificial intelligence technologies.

All these tools have been presented to simplify procedures and provide fast, safe and comprehensive services to investors.

Therefore, OPAZ is working on a strategic digital transformation plan that reflects its constant interest in innovation, development, and the use of modern technologies to improve the experience of investors and beneficiaries of the services it provides.

In addition, OPAZ always strives to follow best practices to improve its services, and thrive the special economic and free zones, and industrial cities,

which it supervises.

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) won this award for using the 3D printing technology in building the café, which was built over an area of 101sqm in about 35 hours only, while the residential unit was built over 72sqm of land, with the construction process took only 12 hours.

Such projects stand as a remarkable milestone in the world of construction compared to the traditional construction method. Further, the 3D printing technology is distinguished by the standard construction speediness as construction does not require using concrete bases and columns when building the structure. Instead, the 3D printing technology is based on converting the concrete material of this technology into an integrated structure using an automatic printer.

It is worth noting that the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has approved, since 2021, using the 3D printing technology in construction.

This comes as part of OPAZ efforts to support innovation, research and development in the fields of construction using modern technologies, encourage and localise these technologies in construction and accelerate the pace of construction in economic and free zones and industrial cities supervised by OPAZ.



IWG expands in Oman with 2 new HQ offices

IWG, the largest and fastest growing flex and office space provider worldwide, is marking its presence in Oman with the opening of a flagship HQ flex office in Al Khuwair, as demand for hybrid workspaces continue to rise steadily in the Omani capital. The company will also deliver a new HQ office in the commercial centre of Azaiba in Muscat.

Capitalising on the emerging signs of market stability in the real estate sector in Oman, IWG will occupy the ground, 1st and 2nd floor of the 7-storey Bait Eteen building in Al Khuwair.

Spread over 1,274sqm, IWG’s

new centre in Oman, scheduled for opening in August, will offer 76 fully serviced private offices in an inspiring environment to focus, connect and collaborate with colleagues, clients and other like-minded businesses. Suitable for any size of team, these flexible, fully customisable office rentals are available for both short-term and long-term needs.

Opening in partnership with building owners, the HQ centre at Bait Eteen building in Al Khuwair will also have six coworking desks, designed with collaboration in mind in a shared working environment.

JCDecaux Oman marching ahead in its net zero mission

JCDecaux Oman, the leading international outdoor advertising company, is marching ahead in its mission to minimise its dependence on conventional energy and completely shift to renewable energy for its needs by 2022.

‘JCDecaux Oman has achieved a significant milestone in its commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards in the city of Muscat,’ said a press statement.

By implementing a range of sustainable initiatives, JCDecaux Oman has not only established itself as a responsible corporate entity but has also contributed to the overall well-being of the local community, it further added.

‘JCDecaux is proud to recognise the vital importance of sustainability and has made it a core element of its operations. As part of this strategy, the company committed to sourcing 100% renewable electricity by 2022.’

JCDecaux Oman Branch has



actively participated in this endeavour for the previous few years. It stands out as one of the pioneering branches within the JCDecaux Group to pledge towards fulfilling the entirety of its electricity needs for its structures, advertisements, and street furniture assets in Oman. This commitment is achieved by equally contributing our electricity consumption to the production of renewable energy from solar, wind, and hydro power.

The company maintains high standards of governance and ethics, complying with local reg-

ulations and prioritising employee well-being. JCDecaux Oman’s exceptional performance in ESG standards sets a benchmark for responsible business practices and contributes to a more sustainable future for Muscat. ‘Collaborating with their local partners Muscat Municipality and Oman Airports, this initiative from JCDecaux Oman comes in line with Oman’s collaborative efforts and commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and our 2030 sustainable development strategy’, the company said.

Ukraine reports ‘most important’ assault by drones on Kyiv since Russian invasion

Kyiv, Ukraine - Russia unleashed the ‘most important’ assault by drones on Kyiv overnight on Saturday-Sunday since the start of the invasion, but nearly all were destroyed, military authorities said.

Forty of the 54 drones launched targeted the capital, killing two people and wounding three.

“In total a record number of explosive drones launched were counted: 54!” Ukraine’s air force said in a Telegram post on Sunday. ‘It’s the most important drone attack against the capital since the start of the invasion’ in February 2022, the regional military administration said on Telegram.

The attack ‘took place over several waves and the air raid alert lasted more than five hours!’

‘According to preliminary reports more than 40 Russian drones were destroyed by air defence’ systems over Kyiv, the administration added.

With most of the drones being downed, ‘debris fell on a

seven-storey building’ in the capital’s Golosiivskii district, killing one person and wounding another.

A fire broke out in a warehouse zone sending flames shooting 1,000 metres (3,300 feet) into the sky and also injuring one person, the administration said.

“The emergency services are at all the sites,” the regional authorities said.

Near a petrol station in the Solomianskii area, a 41-year-old man died and a 35-year-old woman was wounded and hospitalised, said Kyiv’s mayor, Vitali Klitschko.

‘Massive’ assault

It was the 14th drone attack on the Ukraine capital by Russia this month, the authorities said, noting an unprecedented number in a single month after Kyiv had been relatively spared at the start of the year.

The mayor described the assault as ‘massive’ with drones ‘arriving from several directions at once’.



A rescuer putting out a fire in a building as a result of falling debris after a massive drone attack mainly targetting the Ukrainian capital, in Kyiv on Sunday (AFP)

Sunday was to be celebrated as the capital’s special day, prompting the authorities to make an ironic statement: “Today the enemy decided to ‘congratulate’ the population on Kyiv Day with the help of their killer drones”.

The 54 attack drones were launched ‘from the regions of Bryansk and Krasnodar’ in Russia, said the air force, adding that

As the drone war rages, Russia has over the past few weeks seen its own territory attacked as well, blaming Kyiv for dozens of artillery, mortar and drone strikes on the southern Belgorod region.

The reports of drone attacks and sabotage raids in Russian regions bordering Ukraine come at a time when Kyiv says it is finalising plans for a major counter-offensive to recover lost territory, including the Crimea peninsula, occupied by Moscow’s forces.

But the drones can also strike hundreds of kilometres inside Russia.

On Saturday, a building from where an energy pipeline is administered was damaged by two drones in western Russia, governor Mikhail Vedernikov said.

A drone also hit an oil operation in the Tver region, northwest of Moscow, according to Baza, a Russian media outlet with sources in the secret services.

The regional government said only that a drone had ‘fallen’, causing no injuries.

The past week also saw an unprecedented two-day incursion from Ukraine claimed by two anti-Kremlin groups, with Russia using its air force and artillery to push back the fighters.

Russia’s defence ministry has vowed an ‘extremely harsh’ response to any further attacks on its soil.

Moscow has accused Kyiv - and its Western supporters - of the escalating number of attacks and sabotage operations, including on the most spectacular against the Kremlin on May 3, but Ukraine has denied involvement. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Sunday said Western nations were ‘playing with fire’ by agreeing to supply Ukraine with advanced US F-16 fighter jets. It was ‘an unacceptable escalation’ of the conflict, Lavrov said in an excerpt from a Russian TV interview posted on social media, denouncing an attempt to ‘weaken Russia’ by ‘Washington, London and their satellites in the EU’.

AFP

Somalia to introduce direct universal suffrage in 2024

Mogadishu, Somalia - Somalia’s government and federal member states said on Sunday that direct universal suffrage would be introduced with local elections set for June 2024.

The move follows a pledge by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in March to end a complex indirect system in place since 1969.

“The basic principles should be that the election of the Federal Somali Republic must be one that gives the public the opportunity to cast their votes democratically in a one-person, one-vote system,” the government said after reaching an agreement with state leaders.

The reform aims to ‘encourage the multiparty political system’ that is independent and ‘corruption free’, it added.

Somalia is struggling to emerge from decades of conflict and chaos, but is battling a bloody Islamist insurgency and natural disasters including a punishing drought that has left millions facing hunger.

The country has not had one-person, one-vote elections nationwide since 1969, when the dictator Siad Barre seized power.

Instead, clan affiliations have been the organising principle of Somali politics, with influential roles such as speaker, prime minister and president divided among the main groups.

State legislatures and clan delegates also pick lawmakers for the national parliament, who in turn choose the president. But rivalries between the clans have resulted in decades of strife and political wrangling, which in recent years have been exploited by the Al-Shabaab militants aligned with Al-Qaeda.

‘historic’ vote

On Thursday, Somalia held its first elections by universal suffrage since 1969, in a local ballot in the semi-autonomous state of Puntland.

Direct voting has also been held in Puntland’s neighbour Somaliland, which declared independence in 1991 but has never been recognised internationally.

Although the regional elec-

toral commission said the Puntland voting was marred by unspecified security incidents, the United Nations, the African Union and several neighbouring governments hailed a ‘historic’ vote. “The partners believe that Puntland’s experience with direct elections has the potential to inform and inspire the expansion of democracy across Somalia, at all levels of government,” they said in a statement.

The agreement for nationwide universal suffrage was reached after four days of meetings by the National Consultative Forum, which included Mohamud, Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre and federal state leaders.

But Puntland’s state president Said Abdullahi Deni did not attend the meeting as the region voted.

The agreement also calls for the implementation of a single presidential ticket in which voters would choose a president and vice-president, effectively quashing the prime minister post.

AFP

Local vote in Spain that ups pressure on PM

Madrid, Spain - Spaniards began voting on Sunday in local and regional polls which will be a barometer for a year-end general election that surveys suggest Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez will lose, heralding a return of the right.

The stakes are high for Sanchez, whose Socialist party governs the eurozone’s fourth-largest economy in coalition with the far-left Podemos.

Voters are casting ballots for mayors in 8,131 municipalities while also electing leaders and assemblies in 12 of Spain’s 17 regions - 10 of which are currently run by the Socialists.

Voting opened at 9am (0700 GMT) with some 35.5mn people eligible to cast ballots in the local elections and 18.3mn eligible to vote in the regional elections. Ballot boxes will close at 8pm.

With no exit polls, initial results are due out two hours later.

If the left ‘exceeds expectations and manages to retain control of most regional governments in play... this would suggest the national elections will be very closely fought, and bode well for the left’s chances of staying in power’, Eurasia Group analyst Federico Santi said this week.

But if surveys - which forecast



Spain’s Prime minister Pedro Sanchez of Socialist Party (PSOE) casts his ballot in Madrid on Sunday during local and regional polls (AFP)

Social democratic policies suit Spain a lot better than neoliberal policies, because we manage the economy a lot better

PEDRO SANCHEZ

a shift to the right - prove correct, success at a regional level will provide opposition leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo, head of the right-wing Popular Party (PP), with the ‘momentum’ he needs to win the end-of-year election, Santi said.

Sunday’s vote finds Sanchez, in office since 2018, at several disadvantages.

He faces voter fatigue with his left-wing government at a time of soaring inflation - even though the rate is lower in Spain than other EU nations - and the resulting fall in purchasing power.

He has also struggled to contain the fallout from repeated crises that have shaken his left-wing coalition.

Vulnerable

Feijoo has pushed hard to turn the elections into a national referendum on Sanchez.

He has denounced the prime minister as not only pandering to the far left, but also to the

Basque and Catalan separatist parties on which his minority government has relied for parliamentary support.

“I have come to ask for votes from the Spain that wants to overthrow ‘Sanchoismo’ this coming Sunday,” Feijoo said closing his campaign on Friday night, using a derogatory term for Sanchez’s policies.

In his own closing remarks, Sanchez focused on his government’s record in bolstering the economy, fighting a drought and managing Spain’s water resources - an increasingly important issue as climate change gathers pace.

“Social democratic policies suit Spain a lot better than neoliberal policies, because we manage the economy a lot better,” he said.

Of the 12 regions where new leaders will be elected, 10 are currently run by Socialists, either alone or in coalition.

The number of regions that the PP manages to wrest from the Socialists will be important in determining public perceptions of whether Feijoo has won this first round - and whether his election as premier in a general vote expected in December is a foregone conclusion.

AFP

China’s first homegrown jet makes maiden flight

Beijing, China - China’s first domestically produced passenger jet made its maiden commercial flight on Sunday, a milestone event in the nation’s decades-long effort to compete with Western rivals in the air.

Beijing hopes the C919 commercial jetliner will challenge foreign models like the Boeing 737 MAX and the Airbus A320, though many of its parts are sourced from abroad.

Its first homegrown jetliner with mass commercial potential would also cut the country’s reliance on foreign technology as ties with the West deteriorate.

“In the future, most passengers will be able to choose to travel by large, domestically produced aircraft,” state broadcaster CCTV said.

China Eastern Airlines flight MU9191 from Shanghai ‘arrived



China’s passenger jet C919 is seen before its first commercial flight from Shanghai to Beijing, at Shanghai Hongqiao Airport on Sunday (AFP)

smoothly’ in Beijing just after 12:30pm, around 40 minutes ahead of schedule, according to CCTV.

Footage showed passengers filing out of the plane and into the terminal, before a few dozen staff and officials posed for pho-

tographs in a brief ceremony on the tarmac.

“(The flight) was extremely smooth, comfortable and memorable. I think I’ll remember this fondly for some time to come,” a male passenger told CCTV.

The broadcaster had aired

footage of the plane rising into the skies above Shanghai Hongqiao Airport on Sunday morning, saying it had 130 passengers on board.

State media footage showed passengers gathering at the sun-drenched Shanghai airfield to admire the sleek white jet before embarking.

Passengers received red boarding passes and a sumptuous ‘themed meal’ to commemorate the flight, CCTV reported.

Other footage showed passengers waving national flags and singing a patriotic song while a cake was being cut during the flight.

China has invested heavily in production of the homegrown jet as it seeks to become self-sufficient in key technologies.

The aircraft is manufactured by state-owned Commercial Air-

craft Corporation of China (COMAC), but many of its parts - including its engines - are sourced from overseas.

Zhang Xiaoguang, COMAC’s director of marketing and sales, told state news agency Xinhua the flight was a ‘coming-of-age ceremony (for) the new aircraft’, adding the C919 ‘will get better if it stands the test of the market’.

From Monday, the C919 will operate on China Eastern’s regular route between Shanghai and the southwestern city of Chengdu, CCTV reported.

The first model of the narrow-body jet was formally handed over to China Eastern last year during a ceremony at an airport in Shanghai, hailed by state media as ‘an important milestone’ for the country’s aircraft industry.

AFP

POPE’S BLESSINGS



Pope Francis blesses attendees with the aspergillum as he celebrates Pentecost mass on Sunday at St. Peter’s basilica in The Vatican (AFP)

TURKISH RUNOFF

Erdogan returns for 3rd term after win in runoff

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday returned to power after winning a historic runoff vote that posed the biggest challenge to his 20 years of transformative but divisive rule.

The 69-year-old leader overcame Turkey's biggest economic crisis in generations and the most powerful opposition alliance to ever face his Islamic-rooted party to take an unassailable lead.

Near complete results showed him leading secular opposition rival Kemal Kilicdaroglu by four percentage points.

"We will be ruling the country for the coming five years," Erdogan told his cheering supporters from atop a bus in his home district in Istanbul. "God willing, we will be deserving of your trust."

Turkey's main cities erupted in jubilation as Erdogan spoke.

Traffic on Istanbul's iconic Taksim Square ground to a halt and huge crowds gathered outside his presidential palace in Ankara.

The opposition leader promised to make a statement later.

Turkey's longest-serving leader was tested like never before in what was widely seen as the country's most consequential election in its 100-year history as a post-Ottoman republic.

Kilicdaroglu cobbled together a powerful coalition that grouped Erdogan's disenchanted former allies with secular nationalists and religious conservatives.



Recep Tayyip Erdogan looks as his wife Emine Erdogan casts her ballot in a school in Istanbul on Sunday (AFP)

We will be ruling the country for the coming five years... God willing, we will be deserving of your trust

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

conservatives.

He pushed Erdogan into Turkey's first runoff on May 14 and narrowed the margin further in the second round.

Opposition supporters viewed it as a do-or-die chance to save Turkey from being

turned into an autocracy by a man whose consolidation of power rivals that of Ottoman sultans.

"I invite all my citizens to cast their ballot in order to get rid of this authoritarian regime and bring true freedom and democracy to this country," Kilicdaroglu said after casting his ballot on Sunday.

Opposition gamble

Kilicdaroglu re-emerged a transformed man after the first round.

The former civil servant's message of social unity and freedoms gave way to desk-thumping speeches about the need to immediately expel mi-

grants and fight terrorism.

His rightwing turn was targeted at nationalists, who emerged as the big winners of the parallel parliamentary elections. The 74-year-old had always adhered to the firm nationalist principles of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk - a revered military commander who formed Turkey and Kilicdaroglu's secular CHP party.

But these had played a secondary role to his promotion of socially liberal values practised by younger voters and big-city residents.

Analysts doubted Kilicdaroglu's gamble would work.

His informal alliance with a

pro-Kurdish party that Erdogan portrays as the political wing of Turkey's hard right was exposed to charges of working with 'terrorists'.

And Kilicdaroglu's courtship of Turkey's hard right was hampered by the endorsement Erdogan received from an ultra-nationalist who finished third two weeks ago.

Some opposition supporters sounded defeated already, after emerging from the polls.

"Today is not like the last time. I was more excited then," Bayram Ali Yuce said in one of Istanbul's anti-Erdogan neighbourhoods. "The outcome seems more obvious now. But I still voted."

Champion of poor

Erdogan is lionised by poorer and more rural swathes of Turkey's fractured society because of his promotion of religious freedoms and modernisation of once-dilapidated cities in the Anatolian heartland.

"It was important for me to keep what was gained over the past 20 years in Turkey," company director Mehmet Emin Ayaz said in Ankara. "Turkey isn't what it was in the old days. There is a new Turkey today."

But Erdogan has caused growing consternation across the Western world because of his crackdowns on dissent and pursuit of a muscular foreign policy.

AFP



Voters walk past containers acting as a polling station in the quake-hit city of Kahramanmaraş, Turkey, on Sunday (AFP)

A bridge between Europe and Asia

Ankara, Turkey - The modern state of Turkey emerged from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire to become a powerful strategic nation that acts as a bridge between Europe and Asia. The mainly Muslim country of 85mn people has been ruled since 2002 by the Islamic-rooted party of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the most important leader since Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish republic.

Here are some things to know about Turkey:

In search of lost glory

At its peak, the Ottoman Empire ruled a large arc of territory that stretched from the Balkans to modern-day Saudi Arabia and across the Mediterranean to North Africa.

But the empire suffered centuries of decline, culminating in its defeat along with other Central Powers in World War I and its subsequent collapse.

After a war of independence, Turkish military leaders

led by Ataturk were able to salvage a state, which became the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

A century later Erdogan is on a drive to rebuild the country's Ottoman-era influence and turn it into a global power.

Secularism debate

Ataturk, Turkey's first president until his death in 1938, made French-style secularism - the separation of state and religion - one of Turkey's founding principles. Critics accuse Erdogan of chipping away at that principle and turning Turkey away from the West.

Scarred by coups

Turkey's powerful military toppled governments in coups in 1960, 1971 and 1980.

The 1960 coup was followed by the hanging of ousted prime minister Adnan Menderes - who was Erdogan's political hero - along with two ministers. Erdogan clipped the wings of the military but was himself the target of a July 2016 coup attempt by a renegade army faction.

AFP

Milestones in Erdogan's two-decade transformative rule of Turkey

Istanbul, Turkey - President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has dominated Turkish politics since his Islamic-rooted AKP party swept to power two decades ago.

Here are the main milestones from his years of transformative rule.

2002: Rise of the AKP

Just a year after it is founded, the AKP scores a crushing victory in November 2002 polls.

The election ends years of political instability but sets off



Supporters of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan celebrate near Taksim Mosque, in Istanbul on Sunday (AFP)

alarm bells in the secular establishment and the army.

2005: EU accession talks

Ankara adopts a range of liberal policies - including lifting a ban on Kurdish-language broadcasts - that open the door to formal talks on joining the European Union in October 2005.

2013: Anti-Erdogan protests

In May 2013 security forces crack down on demonstrators

who rally against government plans to mow down a park near Istanbul's Taksim Square.

2015: Peace with Kurds collapses

In July 2015, a ceasefire between the state and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) collapses, reviving a separatist insurgency.

2016: Purges after failed coup

Renegade soldiers attempt a coup in July 2016 but it is swiftly

crushed. Erdogan blames the uprising on exiled US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen and his movement.

2018: Boosting powers

In June 2018, Erdogan wins sweeping powers in a new presidential poll held after a referendum that dramatically boosted his powers.

2020: US sanctions

Ties with the United States are strained over Turkey's contro-

versial purchase of a Russian air defence system. After multiple threats, Washington suspends Ankara's involvement in the F-35 joint strike fighter programme and sanctions Turkey's defence sector.

2022: Inflation crisis, Ukraine

Inflation soars to 85.5 per cent in October 2022 and the lira loses half its value as the Turkish economy goes from boom to bust.

AFP

Iraq warned to end oil addiction to avoid 'intensive care'

Baghdad, Iraq - Oil-dependent Iraq has been warned its economy risks going into 'intensive care' unless it diversifies in line with worldwide efforts to tackle the impact of fossil fuels on the climate.

The country's vast oil reserves are enough to produce crude at current rates for another century, but as the world works to wean itself off hydrocarbons, Baghdad has been slow to adapt.

For years the energy industry has faced calls to help meet the goal of keeping global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In April, the G7 countries - Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States - pledged to 'accelerate' their 'exit' from fossil fuels, aiming for carbon neutrality by 2050 'at the latest'.

But sales of the commodity make up 90 per cent of Iraq's budget revenue as it recovers from years of devastating conflicts and political upheaval, leav-



This file photo shows a water buffalo grazing in a field in front of the Nahr Bin Omar oil field and facility near Iraq's southern port city of Basra, on April 4 (AFP)

ing it overly reliant on the sector.

"Currently, the whole economy depends on oil and the price of oil," political scientist Ammar al-Azzawi said.

"If oil plunges, our economy will go to intensive care."

His suggested remedy is to

develop Iraq's industrial, agriculture and tourism sectors before the world shifts to alternative energy sources.

In March, the European Union said that by 2035 it would stop selling combustion engines in new cars, which will no longer be

able to emit any CO2.

A global 'energy transition is taking place, but not yet at the speed and scale that scientists and experts tell us is necessary to avert the worst impacts of climate change', said Ali al-Saffar, climate director at the New

York-based Rockefeller Foundation.

'Seize the moment'

Suffering from prolonged droughts punctuated by frequent sandstorms, Iraq's 42mn people are already witnessing those consequences.

The largely arid country is considered by the United Nations as one of the five most affected in the world by certain impacts of climate change.

In 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic, Iraq saw the downside of its oil dependence when global demand for crude plunged.

"Iraq's export revenues fell precipitously and poverty rates doubled in the country almost overnight," said Saffar.

Ravaged by decades of conflict and home to crumbling infrastructure, Iraq needs oil income to fund reconstruction.

Sixty per cent of public investment in 2021 was oil-related, compared with less than 17 per cent in 2010, the World Bank

said in a March report.

However, 'the ease with which oil income is generated and can be redistributed to maintain networks of (political) power weakens' any push for reforms, the global lender said.

Currently, the whole economy depends on oil and the price of oil. If oil plunges, our economy will go to intensive care

AMMAR AL-AZZAWI

It urged Iraq to 'seize the current moment of high oil prices' to begin its transition from oil dependence or risk facing more expensive and difficult reforms in future. Baghdad will 'diversify the economy' in the next 10 years, said Muzhar Saleh, economic adviser to Iraq's prime minister.

The government is focused on

agriculture and major projects funded through public-private partnerships along with associated industries such as fertiliser production, he said.

With the introduction of modern irrigation technologies, Saleh hopes Iraq will increase its use of arable land from less than one million hectares currently to 1.5mn. "In 50 years, we will not be as dependent on oil as we are today," he said.

'Green growth'

To initiate reforms needed to achieve 'green growth', the World Bank estimates Iraq must spend US\$233bn, spread out until 2040.

The bank said these investments include funding to increase the private sector's economic role and reform of the nation's failed electricity sector.

There are also several projects under way to reduce gas flaring, a polluting practice of crude extraction where natural gas escapes.

AFP

Narendra Modi inaugurates grand new Indian parliament

New Delhi, India - Flanked by priests, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a new Indian parliament on Sunday in a ceremony steeped in religious symbolism but boycotted by opposition parties.

The hexagonal new building - shaped like a coffin, one opposition party said - is the centre-piece of a remodelling of the heart of New Delhi by Modi aimed at ridding the Indian capital of the vestiges of British colonial rule.

"India is not only a democratic nation but also the mother of democracy," Modi said.

"This is not just a building... this is the temple of democracy that gives the world a message of India's determination."

The unveiling was preceded by a multi-faith prayer ceremony and Modi later entered the chamber accompanied by a posse of chanting Hindu seers in saffron robes before installing a ceremonial sceptre.

He later re-entered the chamber to chants of 'Modi Modi' by government lawmakers.

Secular constitution

Many in Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) party espouse the idea of Hindu hegemony in the Hindu-majority nation of 1.4bn people, which is home to multiple faiths and which has a strictly secular constitution.

Sunday's ceremony also took place on the birth anniversary of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, an important Hindu ideologue who was a mentor to the assassin of independence hero Mahatma Gandhi. Nineteen opposition parties boycotted the event because Modi, and not Indian Pres-



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi carrying the Sengol, a Tamil sceptre during the inauguration ceremony of the new parliament building in New Delhi on Sunday (AFP)

ident Droupadi Murmu, was inaugurating the new chamber, calling it a 'direct assault on our democracy'.

Modi 'has relentlessly hollowed out' parliament, with opposition lawmakers 'disqualified, suspended and muted' and laws

passed 'with almost no debate', a statement by the parties said.

'Coronation'

The new legislature building stands next to the ageing and cramped colonial-era parliament building designed by British ar-

chitects Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker in the 1920s that it will replace.

The often fractious legislature saw a string of noisy disruptions in February as the government blocked opposition demands - led by Congress leader Rahul

Gandhi - for a probe into links between Modi and tycoon Gautam Adani.

Adani's business empire has been hit by allegations of accounting fraud, which it denies.

Rahul Gandhi, the embattled scion of India's most famous political dynasty, was disqualified from the lower parliament house days later after he was sentenced to two years imprisonment in an unrelated criminal defamation case over a campaign remark in 2019.

"The prime minister is considering the inauguration of Parliament House as a coronation," Gandhi tweeted on Sunday.

This is not just a building... this is the temple of democracy that gives the world a message of India's determination

NARENDRA MODI

But Amit Malviya, who heads the BJP's social media campaign, pointed to the 1927 inauguration of the old parliament building by the British viceroy and attended by Gandhi's great-great-grandfather Motilal Nehru.

"The Congress, which then had no compunction genuflecting in front of the British, today, has a problem attending the inauguration, even though the person helping the ceremony is a democratically elected prime minister," Malviya told AFP. AFP



Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat is detained by the police while attempting to march to India's new parliament in New Delhi on Sunday (AFP)

Indian police detain wrestlers, clear protest site

New Delhi, India - Indian police dragged away and detained on Sunday two Olympic wrestlers and dozens of others as they tried to march to parliament demanding the arrest of the sport's federation chief over allegations of sexual harassment and intimidation.

In an escalation of the month-old standoff, police also cleared the site in central New Delhi where the wrestlers have been camped out while calling for the arrest of Brij Bhushan Singh, an AFP journalist at the scene said.

The wrestlers attempted to march to India's new parliament on Sunday just as it was being inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but they were halted by some of the hundreds of police on duty for the event.

Among those detained by police and hauled away into buses were Olympic bronze medallists Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia.

One video posted on social media by Malik showed police dragging away screaming protesters. "The goon who sexually exploits, Brij Bhushan, is sitting in Parliament and we are being dragged on the road. Sad day for Indian sports," Malik tweeted.

Broadcaster NDTV quoted a senior police official who said 'all

protesters were detained and forcefully boarded in buses' because they had 'violated law and order'.

Police also removed tents and other items from the site where the protesters have been camped out, the AFP journalist said.

Opposition politicians condemned the police actions.

"Strongly condemn the way Delhi Police manhandled Sakshi Malik, Vinesh Phogat and other wrestlers. It's shameful our champions are treated in this manner," opposition politician Mamata Banerjee tweeted, calling for their release.

Security in the nation's capital was tightened ahead of the inauguration of the new parliament building by Modi.

Personnel also stood guard on the borders of New Delhi after a group of farmers attempted to enter the city to support the protesting wrestlers.

Earlier this month, dozens of farmers broke down police barricades in the city to join the protest.

Wrestling federation chief Singh, who is from Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, has denied the accusations.

AFP

KARNEVAL DER KULTUREN



Revellers take part in the annual 'Karneval der Kulturen' (carnival of cultures) street parade in Berlin, on Sunday. The festival celebrates the German capital's ethnic and cultural diversity (AFP)

Texas lawmakers impeach attorney general

Houston, US - Texas Republican lawmakers on Saturday overwhelmingly voted to impeach the southern state's attorney general on corruption charges, suspending him from office until he faces trial in the Senate.

Attorney General Ken Paxton's temporary removal marked the stunning downfall of an ardent defender of former president Donald Trump with an ascendant national profile.

After an all-afternoon debate, lawmakers considering Paxton's impeachment voted 121 in favour, 23 against with two not voting.

"The evidence is substantial. It is alarming and unnerving," said legislator Andrew Murr, a Republican.

Paxton did not back down despite the overwhelming vote against him. "What we just witnessed is illegal, unethical, and profoundly unjust," Paxton tweeted after the vote.

Trump took to his Truth Social platform and said those who impeached Paxton were 'radical left Democrats' and 'RINOs' - or Republicans in name only. The 20 articles of impeachment against Paxton were for corruption, misuse of public funds, unfitness for office and obstruction of justice.

The indictment alleged that Paxton pressured his staff to protect a friend and donor from prosecution.

In exchange, the donor gave a job to a woman with whom the Republican had an extra-

marital affair and financed work on his house, the document asserted. It was not immediately clear when the Republican-led Senate would put Paxton on trial. His permanent removal from office would require a two-thirds vote by the Senate.

While the outcome is uncertain, Paxton, 60, has seen his support evaporate among Republicans in recent days, including from Governor Greg Abbott, who declined to support the ultraconservative attorney general in the runup to the vote.

Abbott, also a supporter of Trump, now must appoint a temporary replacement for Paxton. Elected in 2014 to head the Texas judiciary, Paxton was indicted for financial fraud in

2015, and his trial is pending. This did not impede him from winning reelection in 2018, and again in 2022.

In 2020, members of his team had warned of his abuse of power, and they were fired. These 'whistleblowers' later filed a wrongful dismissal claim.

Earlier this year, Paxton reached an agreement to end their lawsuits in exchange for US\$3.3mn. He had asked Texas to foot the bill, which prompted a congressional committee investigation and the impeachment vote that saw his suspension from office. Paxton is now only the third sitting official to have been impeached in Texas history, and the first since 1975. AFP

70 years after first summit, Everest captivates adventurers, tourists

Khumjung, Nepal - When Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa first climbed Everest 70 years ago, they paved the way for thousands of foreign climbers to try to follow in their footsteps.

The eight-day trek to the Everest base camp is among the most popular multi-day hikes in Nepal, with tens of thousands of tourists making the journey every year.

What were small agrarian villages when the British expedition passed through in 1953 have since been transformed into tourist hubs with hotels, tea houses and equipment shops, boosting the livelihoods of local communities. In many homes, three generations have found employment in mountaineering -

a far more lucrative occupation than farming or yak-herding.

The work is hazardous by definition, but in a climbing season of about three months, an experienced guide can make up to US\$10,000 - several times the country's average annual income.

And other Sherpas and Himalayan community members have opened restaurants and guesthouses that line Everest's money trail. Veteran mountain guide Phurba Tashi Sherpa was born and raised in Khumjung, a village about 10km (6.2 miles) from base camp.

He grew up watching his father and uncles go to the mountains for work, and soon joined them on expeditions, eventually



Teachers and students decorate the Khumjung School, established by Edmund Hillary, ahead of Everest Day celebrations in Khumjung (AFP)

climbing Everest 21 times before he retired. "There would be just a few expeditions before but now there are so many every year," he

said. "That means an increase in income. It has helped improve the lifestyle here. A lot has changed."

Since the first British teams set their sights on summiting Everest in the 1920s, Nepali climbers - mostly from the Sherpa ethnic group - have been by their side.

'Sherpa' became synonymous with high-altitude guiding as they became the backbone of the multimillion-dollar industry, bearing huge risks to carry equipment and food, fix ropes and repair ladders. Now local expedition groups - instead of playing second fiddle to foreign climbing agencies - bring the bulk of paying clients into Nepal.

And a younger generation of Nepali climbers is slowly being recognised in their own right.

Renowned Italian climber Reinhold Messner told AFP in a

2021 interview that it was a well-deserved climb up the ladder.

"It is an evolution," he said. "And this is also important for the future economy of the country."

'Gift of the mountains'

The first ascent of Everest brought Nepal to the world's attention and its mountains have since captivated adventurers and tourists alike. That has played a crucial role for Nepal's branding as a destination, according to tourism writer Lisa Choeygal.

"Through COVID and earthquakes and all the other setbacks, the insurgency even, that Nepal has suffered over the decades, mountaineering has really endured," she said.

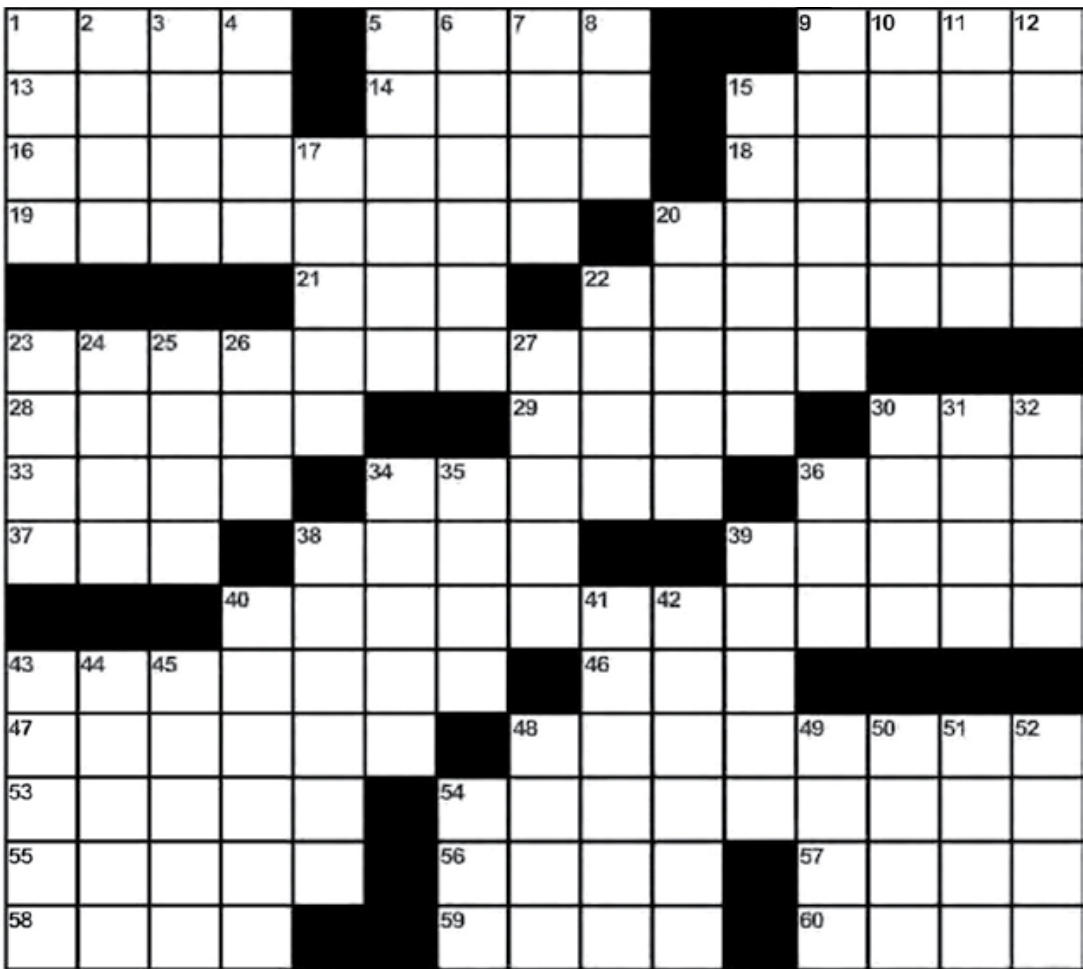
The Khumbu region welcomes more than 50,000 trekkers a year. "It is a gift of the mountains and we have to thank the first summit for opening this region to tourism," said Mingma Chhiri Sherpa, chairman of the local municipality.

"Education and modern amenities have come here because of it."

Driven to help the community he worked with, Hillary funded the region's first school in Khumjung and is said to have hauled timber himself to help build it.

One of its first students, Ang Tsering Sherpa, now owns an expedition company. AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Miss, eventually?
- 5) Dundee native
- 9) Woman in a Kinks song
- 13) Spanish pot
- 14) Edible seaweed
- 15) Danger
- 16) Legendary Don Cor-nelius show
- 18) Related on the mother's side
- 19) With sparse rainfall
- 20) Run off at the mouth
- 21) As to
- 22) Most ritzy
- 23) Genre for some singers
- 28) QE2, e.g.
- 29) Engage in a diatribe
- 30) Boxing legend
- 33) Wicked
- 34) Skiers' transport
- 36) Part of a crossword puzzle
- 37) Due for a change?
- 38) Good vantage point
- 39) Hesitant to commit
- 40) Most essential parts
- 43) Certain citrus drink

- 46) Prickly seed case (var.)
- 47) By mouth
- 48) Boulder's state
- 53) Swiss city
- 54) Mr. and Mrs. Right
- 55) Lack of muscle tone
- 56) Unwanted facial marks
- 57) Billy on piano
- 58) Actress Russo
- 59) Mary who married Abe
- 60) Bullets, briefly
- DOWN**
- 1) It grows on trees
- 2) _ vera
- 3) Homecoming attender
- 4) French Sudan, today
- 5) Horse-drawn carriage
- 6) Eau_, Wisconsin
- 7) Prolific Roman love poet
- 8) Get darker, in a way
- 9) High-protein bean
- 10) Speechify
- 11) Beers with fewer calories
- 12) Watchful and ready
- 15) Shell food?
- 17) Become narrower
- 20) Lunch times for many
- 22) Boris Godunov, for one

- 23) Sounded a trumpet
- 24) Like early TV
- 25) Army outfit, e.g.
- 26) Candidate for spitch-cocking
- 27) Unedited manuscript
- 30) Jason's mythical craft
- 31) In_ of (rather than)
- 32) Romantic interlude (var.)
- 34) Fawning sycophant
- 35) Tiresome person
- 36) Cooking fuel
- 38) "No doubt about it!"
- 39) Kind of drive
- 40) One of Saturn's moons
- 41) Be plentiful
- 42) Overruled or canceled
- 43) Pertaining to the lungs, e.g.
- 44) Very angry
- 45) Kind of jar
- 48) Chanel of fashion
- 49) Important Indian
- 50) Chemistry class subject
- 51) Judge to be
- 52) Capital on a fjord
- 54) Took a seat

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

A short and sweet conversation early in the day will plant the seeds for some interesting ideas in your head. These should blossom over the course of the day. Your mind is in an especially curious phase right now, and it will love digging into these new options or schemes. You should feel free to explore all their nuances so that you can get an idea of whether or not you will pursue them any further. Today is all about choosing a path. Don't take any steps just yet.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

One of your friends is being extremely indecisive right now, and it could be delaying some exciting social plans. Light a fire under them today and let them know that everyone is waiting for them to make up their mind and commit to a date, location, or some other important detail. It's up to you to wrangle your group together, just like it usually is! Right now you've got a way of making people do what you want without making them feel bossed around.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Sure, you know that you're totally right about how to fix a problem everyone's freaking out about, but your ideas are going to fall on deaf ears right now. It's not that people don't want to solve things, it's just that they're a little too wrapped up in their own egos to open their minds to what you have to say. So your course of action is simple: cut them out of the equation. Go over their heads and make things happen without their blessing. The outcome is up to you now.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Someone who holds some power over you might have a vested interest in discouraging you from moving forward with your goals, but they can't stop you, and that's what is important. You can't worry about the feelings or worries of others. Just worry about yourself. If you act too cautiously, right now, you'll be forced to go too slowly. Fast action is required, even if it might ruffle a few feathers. It's much better to ask for forgiveness later than ask for permission now.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You can change the minds of some influential people today. All you have to do is get a little bit of face time with each of them. Use your warm charm and some cold logic to enlighten these people. They don't know all the facts of the situation, and it's up to you to educate them. They're letting their own desires cloud their thinking, and you have to show them that by agreeing with you they're helping themselves just as much as the cause you believe in.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Today an average exchange of ideas will generate a sublime experience in your life, so be open to talking to anyone at any time. During an everyday email, text, or voicemail you should try to get a little bit more creative. Add a dash or two of your special brand of wit and you'll inspire other people to do the same. Express yourself honestly and show everyone you encounter today just how unique you are. Don't be afraid to raise a few eyebrows.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

If you've been playing a totally flirtatious game with a certain someone, be aware that it may need to come to a screeching halt today. You're about to find out that they aren't exactly as available as you thought they were! It's not worth your energy to chase after something that you'll never have. So turn your flirty energy toward somebody else. Lavish them with positive attention and give them a reason to smile. Your heart is bigger than even you realize.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Wanting to try new things is admirable, but today you should talk about new things. The same old topics of conversation just aren't cutting it, so it's time for you and your conversational skills to move into newer, greener pastures. There's someone in your life who always has something interesting to say, and they're who you should talk to first. Even if you don't know them very well, you should strike up a conversation and see where it goes. You have nothing to lose.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Today, you will be syncing up with a lot of different types of people, and they'll stimulate your creativity. This means it's a great time for you to start building a foundation for something unique and new in your life. Now is the time to take your craziest germ of an idea and bring it out into the world. It's likely to get quite a positive reception. You are well poised to gather many different types of admirers who think that your way of doing things is pretty special.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

If you're going to be at a party or networking get-together, don't spend all of your time trying to score points with that certain cutie or influential person. If you do, you'll be missing the entire point of the event! Parties are supposed to be places where you can relax and have fun. If you only see them as routes to getting closer to someone you think can make things better in your life, then you're selling yourself short. Have no ulterior motives.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

This is not a day to gloss over unusual minor details. If something brings up a red flag, no matter how small it may be, you need to pay attention to it! Is your car making a funny sound? Don't just turn the music up louder, look into it! Is a friend acting out of character? Don't just assume they woke up on the wrong side of the bed. Ask them what's wrong. And if you're having a physical ache or pain, don't just take an aspirin and hope it goes away. Schedule your next checkup!



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

The greatest thing about the energy you'll be feeling today is that it gives you all the focus you need to take the most complicated ideas and make them simple enough for anyone to understand. That makes today a wonderful day for teaching people things or showing someone how to do something. You are a born teacher, although you rarely get the chance to play that role to your full potential. You can communicate with others in a way no one else can.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Grand Central Terminal, Park Avenue, New York is the world's

- A. largest railway station
- B. highest railway station
- C. longest railway station
- D. None of the above

2. Entomology is the science that studies

- A. Behavior of human beings
- B. Insects
- C. The origin and history of technical and scientific terms
- D. The formation of rocks

3. Eritrea, which became the 182nd member of the UN in 1993, is in the continent of

- A. Asia
- B. Africa
- C. Europe
- D. Australia

Answers: 1. A 2. B 3. B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

P	O	A	T
M	P	L	C
L	U	T	A
S	K	P	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.

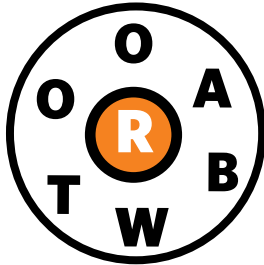
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

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

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

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

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

RECORD SETTERS

Lionel Messi scores as PSG win 11th French league title

Paris, France - Paris Saint-Germain clinched a French record 11th league title on Saturday as Lionel Messi scored in a 1-1 draw away at Strasbourg.

Messi's opener was cancelled out by a Kevin Gameiro equaliser, but the result gave PSG an unsailable four-point lead over second-placed Lens with one match of the season remaining.

PSG moved ahead of the previous record of 10 titles set by Saint-Etienne in 1981 and which they equalled a year ago under former coach Mauricio Pochettino.

It is PSG's ninth title in the last 11 seasons, a period in which they have dominated French football under Qatari ownership.

"This afternoon I watched the last day of the season in the Bundesliga and you can see that it is very difficult to win the league, any league," PSG coach Christophe Galtier told broadcaster Canal Plus.

"The reigning champions in all European leagues have often had problems this season, so we appreciate what this means.

"It is a title and we must not believe it is normal to win, even if we are Paris Saint-Germain."



Paris Saint-Germain's Lionel Messi (C) celebrates with team-mates after scoring against Strasbourg in their Ligue 1 match on Saturday (AFP)

The reigning champions in all European leagues have had problems, so we appreciate what this means. It is a title and we must not believe it is normal to win, even if we are PSG

CHRISTOPHE GALTIER

PSG started the penultimate weekend of the season six points clear of nearest rivals Lens with just six points to play for, and with a far better goal difference.

A Lens slip-up would have seen the capital side crowned champions with a game to spare

even in defeat, but in the end they needed the draw as their challengers eased to a 3-0 win over already-relegated Ajaccio.

Kylian Mbappe set up Messi to put PSG ahead just before the hour with his 16th Ligue 1 goal this season.

Ex-Paris striker Gameiro equalised with 11 minutes left, bundling in the rebound after Gianluigi Donnarumma had saved from Morgan Sanson.

The draw ultimately suited both teams as it enabled Strasbourg to guarantee their top-

flight survival.

PSG started the season superbly and did not lose a game in any competition before the World Cup.

However, they lost six of their first 17 league games in 2023 and were eliminated from the Champions League in the last 16 by Bayern Munich and in the French Cup at the same stage. Those results increased speculation that Galtier - who also won the title with Lille two years ago - will be replaced in the close season.

Messi is expected to depart when his contract expires at the end of the campaign, meaning next weekend's match at home to Clermont is likely to be his last in a PSG shirt.

Lens qualify for Champions League

Lens secured second place and a ticket for next season's Champions League group stage with their win against Ajaccio, which was sealed by first-half goals from Deiver Machado, Adrien Thomasson and Lois Openda.

Belgian striker Openda netted a penalty for his 20th goal in Ligue 1 this season.

Marseille, who lost 2-1 at home to Brest, must therefore settle for third place and will enter the Champions League in the third qualifying round.

Beneath them, Lille are in pole position to qualify for the Europa League after coming from behind to beat Nantes 2-1 and move up to fourth position.

AFP

PSG in need of reset in future without Messi

Paris, France - Now that Paris Saint-Germain have completed the job of retaining the Ligue 1 title, they can focus on the latest rebuilding job in the French capital, where sweeping changes are needed to the faltering Qatari project.

PSG's 11th domestic league triumph - their ninth in the last 11 years - was secured despite Christophe Galtier's team losing six games in 2023 while nearest challengers Lens have taken most of the plaudits.

"It has not been our best season but it has still been a good one," insisted captain Marquinhos recently.

It has been largely forgotten now, given their latest elimination in the Champions League last 16 at the hands of Bayern Munich, but PSG were superb at the start of the campaign.

They were unbeaten before the World Cup, when Kylian Mbappe, Lionel Messi and Ney-



Lionel Messi

mar appeared driven by the prospect of the approaching tournament in Qatar.

Yet the unravelling that followed was dramatic, with Neymar again cut down by injury and Messi being suspended for missing training after taking an unauthorised trip to Saudi Arabia.

The mood around the club in recent weeks has appeared sullen, with fans disaffected.

"When we take stock, we need to analyse the first half of the season and what state the players were in when they came back from the World Cup," Galtier said on Friday.

"But I understand the disappointment. It has been a very strange season."

Mbappe front and centre

The coaching job has at times seemed too big for Galtier, who arrived last year in the wake of Mbappe's decision to snub Real

Madrid and sign a new three-year contract.

Mbappe - scorer of 40 goals this season - might wonder now if he made the right choice, although the question of his future is bound to come up again soon.

According to reports, the 24-year-old's contract will run out next year unless he exercises an option to stay until 2025.

However, PSG must now seek to rebuild with Mbappe the focal point more than ever.

The ageing and out-of-contract Messi is expected to depart and the physically frail Neymar, now 31, is fading as a force.

All eyes will be on what Luis Campos, PSG's Portuguese recruitment guru, does in the transfer market. He is restrained by UEFA's Financial Fair Play rules and by the fact that PSG have an array of unwanted players on big contracts who are set to return after a season on loan.

AFP



Sergio Rico

PSG goalkeeper Rico in 'serious' condition after horse riding accident

Seville, Spain - Paris Saint-Germain back-up goalkeeper Sergio Rico is in "serious" condition after a horse riding accident, the French club confirmed Sunday.

The 29-year-old Spaniard was on the bench for PSG as they won the Ligue 1 title on Saturday with a 1-1 draw at Strasbourg before heading to Spain, where the accident happened in El Rocio.

"He is in serious condition," said a PSG spokesperson, while Spanish newspaper Marca report he is "stable".

Rico was taken by helicopter to Seville's Virgen del Rocio hospital, where he was placed on life support, according to local TV channel Canal Sur, citing medical sources.

"Lots of strength and a speedy recovery," wrote Sevilla, whom he played for previously, on Twitter.

Rico, born in Seville, won

Rico has made 24 appearances for PSG and has been capped once by the Spanish national team

two Europa Leagues with his hometown side before moving on loan to Premier League side Fulham in 2019.

The goalkeeper then moved to PSG on loan in 2019 before making the move permanent in 2020.

Rico was loaned by the French side to Mallorca in January 2022, before returning to PSG for the current campaign.

He has made 24 appearances for PSG and has been capped once by the Spanish national team.

Luton complete fairytale rise to Premier League riches

London, United Kingdom - Luton completed a fairytale journey to the Premier League after beating Coventry on penalties in the Championship playoff final at Wembley on Saturday.

The Hatters secured a fourth promotion in 10 seasons 6-5 in the shootout after the sides were tied at 1-1 after 120 minutes.

Financial experts estimate promotion to world football's most watched league to be worth around £170 million (\$210 million) for a club that have been through turmoil since they last played in the top flight 31 years ago.

Luton are the first club to go from the fifth tier to the top flight in the Premier League era.

Midfielder Pelly Ruddock Mpanzu has been on that whole journey and becomes the first



Luton's players celebrate after winning the penalty shoot-out against Coventry City in the English Championship play-off final on Saturday

player to go from the National League to Premier League with the same club.

"I feel like I completed football," said Mpanzu. It's been a journey. It's going to be a party all summer."

Some of Luton's cash windfall will go to upgrading the club's stadium, Kenilworth Road, which with a capacity just over 10,000 and set among rows of terraced houses, will be hosting the likes of Manchester United and Liverpool next season.

Luton had to recover from an early shock when captain Tom Lockyer collapsed on the field.

The Welsh centre-back was stretched off and taken to hospital, where the club confirmed he was responsive and able to talk to his family.

AFP

DRAMATIC CLIMAX

Bayern seize title as Dortmund collapse but major doubts remain

Dortmund, Germany - Despite a record 11th straight Bundesliga title win, Bayern Munich's immediate future has been thrown into serious doubt after the shock sackings of CEO Oliver Kahn and sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic.

Manager Thomas Tuchel revealed the decision had been pre-meditated, regardless of the result of Saturday's matches.

"I've known since yesterday" Tuchel said, saying "the two of them were responsible for the journey we've been on together. "I'm trying to process it now."

The drama continued after the sacking, with Kahn taking to Twitter and complaining he had been banned from the club's title celebration.

Kahn congratulated the team on their win, but said "I would love to celebrate with you, but unfortunately I can't because the club has prohibited me from doing so."

'Feel the pressure'

Pre-match, Dortmund looked set for a memorable championship win, having closed the gap with Bayern from nine points at Christmas to take a two-point



Bayern Munich players celebrate with the Bundesliga trophy on Saturday (AFP)

lead into the final round.

A veteran of now 12 Bundesliga titles, Bayern captain Thomas Mueller piled on the pressure on Friday, unleashing mind games via social media, saying he knew Dortmund's players would be nervous.

"I think 200,000 to 400,000 fans will be expected at the championship celebration," Mueller wrote, saying "if Dortmund want to win, you have to stand up to (the pressure) as a player."

"I believe that the players will also feel this pressure and that's

Bayern and Dortmund finished the season on 71 points, the lowest points total for a champion in Germany in more than a decade

where my hope lies."

The side were 2-0 down after 25 minutes, with striker Sebastian Haller having missed a penalty.

While Dortmund fought back to draw 2-2, the point was not enough as Bayern won the title - their 33rd Bundesliga crown -- on goal difference.

Bayern and Dortmund finished the season on 71 points, the lowest points total for a champion in Germany in more than a decade. Indeed, the failure to capitalise said a lot more about Dortmund's nerves than it did about Bayern's quality, with many of the Bavarians' European rivals less likely to be so accom-

modating.

While much of the post-match focus was aimed squarely at Dortmund's inability to take advantage of a golden opportunity, Tuchel indicated suggested the upcoming celebrations would be muted.

"Instead of celebrating, we now have another issue" the manager said in response to the sackings.

German football clubs give a greater degree of control to club officials than clubs in England and elsewhere, with the two seen as directly responsible for most

aspects of management in recent seasons, including recruitment. Kahn and Salihamidzic were behind the decision to sack coach Julian Nagelsmann and hire Tuchel in March, despite the manager having lost just three of 37 games in all competitions this season. The two also signed off on the exit of record-breaking forward Robert Lewandowski to Barcelona.

Bayern still clearly miss the goals of Lewandowski, with none of the side's star-studded forward line stepping into the void. The Pole scored 344 goals in

375 games for Bayern, winning the league in each of his eight seasons in Bavaria.

Lewandowski left Bayern frustrated at the public courting of then Dortmund forward Erling Haaland by Salihamidzic, later saying he felt disrespected after his service to the club.

Haaland eventually went to Man City and Bayern brought in Sadio Mane from Liverpool.

Mane, now 31, scored just seven league goals in 25 league games as he struggled with injury and form.

AFP

Inter see off Atalanta and secure Champions League qualification

Milan, Italy - Inter Milan secured their place in next season's Champions League with a 3-2 win over Atalanta which showed some fine form heading into the final of Europe's top club competition next month.

Simone Inzaghi's side rose to second in Serie A after winning the Italian Cup on Wednesday with an entertaining win over Atalanta after an early blitz from Romelu Lukaku and Nicolo Barella followed by Lautaro Martinez's simple finish in the 77th minute. Inter are eight points ahead of fifth-placed Atalanta, whose top four hopes are now over for the season, and looked in fine fettle with English champions Manchester City awaiting them in Istanbul on June 10.

Their win also means that fourth-placed AC Milan only need to avoid defeat at troubled Juventus on Sunday night to ensure their return to the Champions League after being knocked out in the semi-finals.



Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez celebrates with Romelu Lukaku after scoring against Atalanta on Saturday (AFP)

"I knew what this match meant for the club, I'm really happy... The boys somehow gave all that energy 48 hours after the cup," said Inzaghi. "Together you win trophies and reach Champions League finals, when you're not together as a team you have difficulties."

Lukaku put the hosts in the lead less than a minute into what

might be his last match at the San Siro as an Inter player, with his loan from Chelsea finishing at the end of next month.

The Belgium forward, who is hoping a deal can be struck with Chelsea to stay in Milan, rounded Marco Sportiello and rolled in his seventh goal in 10 matches after being sent flying through by Martinez.

Borussia Dortmund face 'brutal' reality as title dream vanishes

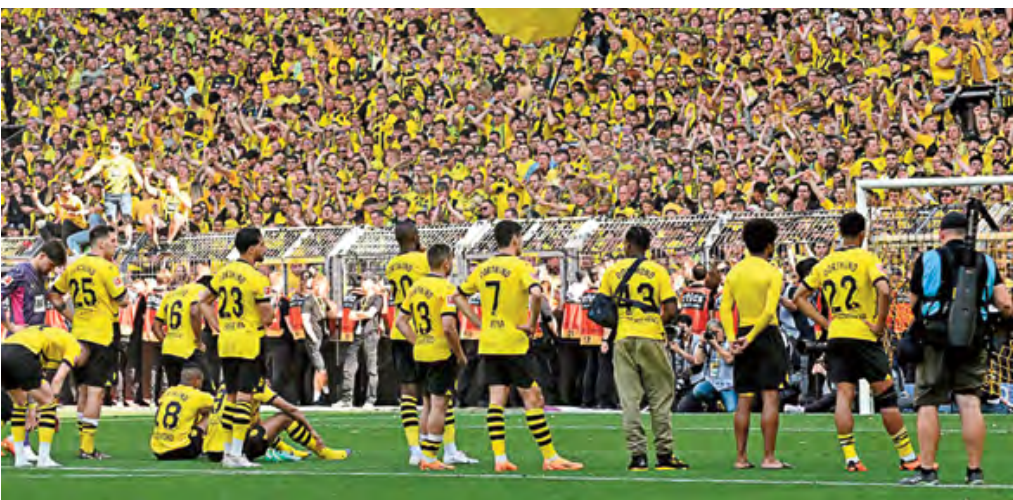
Dortmund, Germany - After the most dramatic final Bundesliga matchday in recent memory, Bayern Munich are again title winners as Borussia Dortmund go empty handed once more.

Heading into the round two points ahead of Bayern, Dortmund needed to beat mid-table Mainz at home to break the decades-long Bavarian stranglehold on the title.

After 25 minutes, Dortmund were 2-0 down, having conceded goals either side of a missed Sebastian Haller penalty, just the Ivorian's second miss in 28 attempts throughout his career.

The draw, coupled with Bayern's last-minute 2-1 win at Cologne, meant Dortmund gave away their best chance in a decade of winning the title.

Dortmund again finished second to Bayern, this time on goal difference, the seventh time in the past 11 seasons the club has ended as runners up, with the



Borussia Dortmund players are heart-broken as they greet their fans after their match against Mainz on Saturday (AFP)

title going to Munich in each of those seasons.

"The next few days will be brutal" said captain Mats Hummels, the only Dortmund player to have tasted title success with the side. Defender Thomas Meunier tweeted on Sunday "no apologies for this disastrous

end", saying "everything was in our hands (but) we destroyed the hopes of a city".

Club CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke, who watched Dortmund lose the title wearing his 'lucky' sweater on Saturday despite the May heat, told Kicker on Sunday it "feels worse than

the Champions League final loss of 2013".

That loss, again to Bayern, came during the heady days of the Jurgen Klopp reign when Dortmund had won two league titles and could realistically have expected the success to continue.



Red Bull's Max Verstappen celebrates with his trophy after winning the Monaco Grand Prix on Sunday

Verstappen extends lead with dominant victory in Monaco rain

Monaco, Principality of Monaco - Defending double world champion Max Verstappen extended his lead in this year's title race when he drove his Red Bull to a comprehensive victory in challenging conditions in Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix.

The 25-year-old Dutchman, driving with controlled aplomb in conditions that changed from warm sunshine to a downpour, came home 27 seconds clear of Aston Martin's two-time world champion Fernando Alonso.

It was his second victory on

the barrier-lined streets of the Mediterranean principality in three years, his fourth win this year and the 39th of his clear, stretching his lead ahead of Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez to 39 points in the championship.

Esteban Ocon finished a popular third for Alpine to become the first Frenchman to claim a Monaco podium since Olivier Panis won in 1996.

"That wasn't easy," said Verstappen. "It was quite a difficult one! I didn't want to go long on my first stint, but I had to stay out

It was incredibly slippery and quite difficult. I clipped the walls a few times, but that's Monaco

MAX VERSTAPPEN

when the rain came down and then it was very tricky to drive.

"It was incredibly slippery and quite difficult," he said. "I clipped

the walls a few times, but that's Monaco. It's nice to win and super-nice to win in this weather!"

Alonso secured his fifth podium finish in six races this year. "It was difficult," the Spaniard said. "Max drove superbly on the medium tyres in his first stint and it was complicated out there. I think everyone did an amazing job to stay on the track."

Ocon's success came in Alpine's 50th Grand Prix and after some recent strife in the team.

'GREAT ACHIEVEMENT'

India's Prannoy beat China's Weng to clinch maiden Malaysia Masters title

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - India's shuttler HS Prannoy defeated China's Weng Hongyang in a close battle to win the men's singles final in the Malaysia Masters on Sunday, earning himself a major career success.

Prannoy beat Weng 21-19, 13-21, 21-18 in their first ever face off. In the thrilling 94-minute marathon match, Prannoy, 30, exhibited calmness and grit over the 23-year-old Weng to win crucial points and end his six-year hunt for a title.

Prannoy's physical endurance, capped by his instinct to unleash powerful crosscourt smashes was pivotal to his victory.

"It is a great achievement for me, the draws were tough," he



India's HS Prannoy celebrates on the podium after beating China's Weng Hongyang to win the Malaysia Masters title on Sunday

said afterwards.

Meanwhile, Japan's top seed and world number one Akane

Yamaguchi clinched the women's singles title, overcoming Indonesia's Gregoria Mariska

Tunjung 21-17, 21-7 to seal her third title of the year. Yamaguchi has been a tournament standout as she demolished each of her opponents with relative ease without dropping a game.

"Malaysia seems to be a lucky place for me. It was fun to play in this venue, with so many fans cheering me on. It's important for me to play well with confidence every time," she said.

The Japanese shuttler was a class above the Indonesian in the final, especially in the second game with her crisp all-round display. Malaysia has become Yamaguchi's happy hunting ground after she also won the Malaysia Open in January, and followed that up by clinching the German

Open. Prannoy's triumph in the Malaysia Masters made him the first Indian men's singles shuttler to win this Super 500 event.

Prannoy gained a priceless lead on Sunday after he edged a tense opening game against Weng.

Weng, however, stormed back to win the second game. But a tough deciding match ensued, with Prannoy unleashing a powerful crosscourt smash that Weng could only push wide.

Thailand's top-ranked pair Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai won the mixed doubles, while South Koreans Baek Ha-na and Lee So-hee claimed the women's doubles title.

Ukraine's Kostyuk jeered at French Open

Paris, France - Aryna Sabalenka won a politically-charged French Open duel against Marta Kostyuk on Sunday as jeers rained down on the defeated Ukrainian who refused to shake hands with her Belarusian opponent.

World number two and Australian Open champion Sabalenka swept 10 of the last 12 games to win 6-3, 6-2 as she kick-started her push to reach the second week in Paris for the first time.

Kostyuk honoured her pledge not to shake hands with Sabalenka in protest at Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Belarus is a key military ally of Moscow.

"It was a very tough match, tough emotionally. I didn't know

if the booing was against me but thank you so much for your support, it's really important," said Sabalenka who apologised for her exaggerated, theatrical bow to the Court Philippe Chatrier crowd.

Kostyuk, 20, famously refused to shake hands with Sabalenka's Belarusian compatriot and former world number one Victoria Azarenka at the US Open last year. She opted instead for a cursory touch of racquets at the net.

The 39th-ranked Kostyuk, who has been a vociferous critic of the decision to allow Russian and Belarusian players to keep competing on tour since the invasion of her country, questioned the crowd's motives in booing her stance.

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Ambati Rayudu

Rayudu to retire from IPL after final against Gujarat

Ahmedabad, India - Ambati Rayudu has announced his retirement from the IPL. He said in a tweet on Sunday that the IPL 2023 final for Chennai Super Kings against Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad will be his last game in the tournament and that he will not be making a "U-turn" on his decision.

Last year, Rayudu had posted a tweet in which he had said IPL 2022 would be his final season in the competition. He, however, deleted it after intervention from the CSK management.

That wasn't the first time Rayudu had taken back a decision about his future in the game. In 2019, he had announced his retirement from all cricket after

being snubbed for the 2019 ODI World Cup. But he then returned to domestic and IPL cricket.

Rayudu has been a big part of the CSK set-up, having been with the side since 2018 after playing for Mumbai Indians from 2010 to 2017. This year, he's largely played as an impact substitute for CSK - coming in to bat in the middle order in place of/being substituted by a bowler - on their way to the title clash.

He hasn't had a great season, though: in 11 innings, he has scored 139 runs at a strike rate of 132.38. He scored a nine-ball 17 in tough conditions in the Qualifier 1 in Chennai to help take CSK to the final.

Rayudu is among the top-ten

most experienced IPL cricketers, and the second-most successful IPL cricketer, with five titles, with Mumbai Indians and CSK. Only Rohit Sharma (six) has won the IPL more times and Rayudu has the chance to equal the record if CSK win on Sunday.

Under Rohit, Rayudu won the 2013, 2015 and 2017 IPL titles with Mumbai Indians and then won the 2018 and 2021 IPL titles with CSK. Rayudu had missed the first two years of the competition because of his association with the Indian Cricket League.

Rayudu is currently on 203 IPL games. He has made 4329 runs with 22 half-centuries and one century, which came against Sunrisers Hyderabad in 2018.

RAINS PLAY SPOILSPORT

IPL final between Chennai Super Kings and Gujarat Titans postponed to Monday

FINAL

A wide-angle shot of the IPL final stadium at night, showing the pitch, stands, and bright floodlights. The field appears wet from rain. The logos of Chennai Super Kings and Gujarat Titans are visible in the top left corner of the image area.

Heavy rains and a waterlogged field forced the officials to postpone the IPL final between Chennai Super Kings and Gujarat Titans to Monday

For showman Gill, it's all about pushing the boundaries

Ahmedabad, India - Showmen like the big stage. They are at their best when the arc lights are firmly on them. They embrace pressure and meet it with the sort of confidence that says, 'I'm ready'.

On Friday night, Shubman Gill had the stage, and was at his best.

When a thunderstorm sent everyone scurrying for cover before the toss, Gill was pacing up and down the long stairway at the stadium. Perhaps it was the keenness to finish a job he couldn't quite in Chennai. Or maybe it was simply his way of warming up.

He exuded the confidence of a man at the peak of his game, ready with answers to anything Mumbai Indians were going to throw at him. When he walked off to a standing ovation after a 60-ball 129, you sensed another chapter had been written in Gill's T20 transformation.

From an accumulator who tried to bat long to make up for middling starts, to someone who goes for quick runs without trying to bash every ball - such a game can't be without risks, but to have the belief that such risks are worth taking takes quite some doing.

Gill's batting is a train of simple batting mechanics; one frame segues into another. A stable base, still head, minimal and unexaggerated back lift, and nimble feet movement - quick but unhurried. It's all proper coaching manual. But beyond everything, more than anything, there's the calmness - he can send the ball where he wants.

This can only come with clarity, not just in his game but also in the way he trains.



Shubman Gill

Gill's batting is a train of simple batting mechanics; one frame segues into another. A stable base, still head, minimal and unexaggerated back lift, and nimble feet movement - quick but unhurried

When Rahul Dravid was India Under-19 coach, he had a theory about judging a player's maturity. One part of it was to gauge how quickly they could develop

a routine, even if it was something as simple - or, perhaps, ridiculous - as not batting in the nets prior to a big game, instead of simply following a set of in-

structions that players can get used to.

Last week, prior to the game against Royal Challengers Bangalore at M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Gill exhibited a deep understanding of his own routines. He didn't bat for long in the nets, but the kind of work he put in within that time underlined this maturity Dravid has spoken of.

Gill batted for all of 15 minutes, not longer. The aim seemed to be to train specifically on his set-up against the short ball when it's aimed at the body from wicked angles. It involved a quick trigger movement from middle to off, and the opening up of the leg side to try and use as much pace from the bowler as he could and pick them behind square. Not in front, mind you, but behind.

The one in front of square is a shot Gill plays as well as anyone. So this was mostly to try and work towards strengthening another aspect of an already robust leg-side game. Twenty balls - same boring routine, of setting up, shuffling and manoeuvring deliveries bowled into his ribcage at different speeds and angles - and he walked out with the satisfaction of knowing his preparation was done.

The IPL is a beast, not least because of the travel and the stream of matches that come and go thick and fast, but because it can be difficult to get in quality training sessions within that whirl. It can leave you on a high when the runs are coming, but when they are not, it can be your biggest bugbear. Which is why Gill's training method and the sharp nature of it is intriguing.

ESPNCricinfo



Akash Madhwal finished with 14 wickets which included a best of 5 for 5 in the Eliminator

Mumbai discover uncut gems to make it farther than expected

Ahmedabad, India - Mumbai Indians were knocked out in the second Qualifier by Gujarat Titans, after finishing fourth in the league (eight wins and six losses) and winning the Eliminator against Lucknow Super Giants.

They began the season trying to cope with the absence of key players and won only three of their first seven games. But they recovered to win five of their last seven and made the playoffs after Royal Challengers Bangalore lost their last league match to Titans.

The good - Mumbai find more Indian talent

Mumbai unearthed not one but three promising players - Tilak Varma, Nehal Wadhwa and Akash Madhwal - in IPL 2023.

Varma had broken through last season and took his game to the next level this year. He started with a 46-ball 84 against RCB and finished with a stunning 43 off 14 balls in Qualifier 2. He ended the season with a strike

rate of 164.11.

Wadhwa, too, had a significant impact in the lower-middle order after making his T20 debut in the first game of the season. He scored 21 off 13 balls in that game against RCB, when Mumbai were 45 for 4, and struck back-to-back fifties against Chennai Super

Mumbai unearthed three promising players - Tilak Varma, Nehal Wadhwa and Akash Madhwal

Kings and RCB to finish the season with a strike rate of 145.18.

Madhwal was brought in only in the latter half of the season, and the Uttarakhand bowler, who had only played tennis-ball cricket until 2018, was a revela-

tion. His high pace coupled with pinpoint accuracy made him Rohit Sharma's go-to bowler at the death. Madhwal finished with 14 wickets, joint-second for Mumbai this season, which included a best of 5 for 5 in the Eliminator. His death-overs economy of 8.38 was the fourth best among bowlers who bowled at least ten overs in that phase this season. Among the overseas players, their big-money signing Cameron Green proved that he was a solid investment for the future. The 23-year-old allrounder scored 452 runs at a strike rate of 160.28 despite being moved up and down the batting order, and took six wickets as well.

Mumbai had lost Jofra Archer to injury last season. This year they first lost Jasprit Bumrah, Jhye Richardson and then Archer once again to injuries that left their bowling attack severely depleted.

ESPNCricinfo

Seventy years ago, New Zealander Edmund Hillary and Nepali Tenzing Norgay Sherpa became the first humans to summit Everest on May 29, 1953. The British expedition made the two men household names around the world and changed mountaineering forever.

Hundreds now climb the 8,849m peak every year, fuelling concerns of overcrowding and pollution on the mountain. AFP looks at the evolution of the Everest phenomenon.

‘Peak of the sky’s progress

Initially known only to British mapmakers as Peak XV, the mountain was identified as the world’s highest point in the 1850s and renamed in 1865 after Sir George Everest, a former Surveyor General of India.

On the border of Nepal and China and climbable from both sides, it is called Chomolungma or Qomolangma in Sherpa and Tibetan ‘goddess mother of the world’ and Sagarmatha in Nepali, meaning ‘peak of the sky’.

The 1953 expedition was the ninth attempt on the summit and it took 20 years for the first 600 people to climb it. Now that number can be expected in a single season, with climbers catered to by experienced guides and commercial expedition companies.

The months-long journey to the base camp was cut to eight days with the construction of a small mountain airstrip in 1964 in the town of Lukla, the gateway to the Everest region.

Gear is lighter, oxygen supplies are more readily available, and tracking devices make expeditions safer. Climbers today can summon a helicopter in case of emergency. And, every season, experienced Nepali guides set the route all the way to the summit for paying clients to follow.

Billi Bierling of Himalayan Database, an archive of mountaineering expeditions, however, said some things remain similar. “They didn’t go to the mountains much different than we do now. The Sherpas carried everything. The expedition style itself hasn’t changed,” he pointed out.

Base camp basics

The starting point for climbs proper, Everest Base Camp was once little more than a collection of tents at 5,364m where climbers lived off canned foods. Now fresh salads, baked goods and trendy coffee are available, with crackly conversations over bulky satellite phones replaced by WiFi and Instagram posts.

Hillary and Tenzing summited Everest on May 29 but it only appeared in newspapers on June 2, the day of Queen Elizabeth’s coronation - the news had to be brought down the mountain on foot to a telegraph station in the town of Namche Bazaar, to be relayed to the British Embassy in Kathmandu.

In 2011, British climber Kenton Cool tweeted from the summit with a 3G signal after his ninth successful ascent. More usually, walkie-talkie radios are standard expedition equipment and summiteers contact their base camp teams, who swiftly post on social media.

In 2020, China announced 5G connectivity at the Everest summit.

Climate change

Warming temperatures are slowly widening crevasses on the mountain and bringing running water to previously snowy slopes.

A 2018 study of Everest’s Khumbu glacier indicated it was vulnerable to even minor atmospheric warming, with the temperature of shallow ice already close to melting point.

“The future of the Khumbu icefall is bleak,” its principal investigator, glaciologist Duncan Quincey, told AFP. “The striking difference is the meltwater on the surface of the glaciers.” Three Nepali guides were killed on the formation this year when a chunk of falling glacial ice swept them into a deep crevasse.

It has become a popular cause for climbers to highlight, and expedition companies are starting to implement eco-friendly practices at their camps, such as using solar power.

Social media impact

Click, post, repeat - the climbing season plays out on social media as excited mountaineers document their journey to Everest on Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms.

These days, climbers’ post hashtags to keep their sponsors happy and catch the attention of potential funders. That applies to both, foreign climbers and their now tech-savvy Nepali guides.

“Everyone posts nowadays, it is part of how we share and build our profile,” said Lakpa Dendi Sherpa, who has summited Everest multiple times and has 62,000 Instagram followers.

Veteran Nepali guides Kami Rita Sherpa and Pasang Dawa Sherpa both scaled Everest twice this season, with the latter twice matching the former’s record number of summits before Kami Rita reclaimed pole position with 28.

There are multiple Everest record categories for first and fastest feats of endurance. But some precedents are more quixotic - in 2018, a team of British climbers, an Australian, and a Nepali dressed in tuxedos and gowns for the world’s highest dinner party at 7,056m on the mountain’s Chinese side.

AFP

70 YEARS OF EVEREST

MT EVEREST GEARS UP TO CELEBRATE THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY SINCE MOUNTAINEERS SCALED ITS GLORIOUS HEIGHTS – A BRITISH EXPEDITION BEING THE FIRST TO DO SO

SUMMIT UP



Phurba Tashi Sherpa, head of an expedition operator and guide



This picture taken on May 24, 2023 shows students erecting the national flag of Nepal in front of the bust of Edmund Hillary, at Khumjung School, which was established by Hillary, ahead of the upcoming Everest Day celebrations



These days, climbers’ post hashtags to keep their sponsors happy and catch the attention of potential funders. That applies to both, foreign climbers and their now tech-savvy Nepali guides



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