



H M HOSTS DINNER ON SAF DAY

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Supreme Commander, hosted a dinner at Al Barakah Palace on Monday on the occasion of Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) Day. The ceremony is a felicitation by His Majesty, the Supreme Commander, to all military formations and units of the Armed Forces on this glorious day. It symbolises his Royal recognition for their great dedication in performing the sacred duty to defend the homeland, protect it and ensure its stability and safety. It is a manifestation of the Armed Forces' role in safeguarding the national achievements to boost Oman's renewed renaissance and retain its status as an oasis of peace and harmony under the inspiring leadership of His Majesty

Phase 1 of RO183mn Rabt power project to open on Dec 14

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a landmark development to connect Oman's two stand-alone grids into one integrated national network, Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), which owns and operates the country's transmission system, will open the Rabt project on Thursday under the aus-

pices of H H Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. A statement issued by OETC said, 'The first phase of the project consists of 660km of 400kV overhead lines connecting five main grid stations in Nahida, Barik, Suwaihat, Duqm and Mahout. The total cost of this phase is RO183mn. The project aims to secure electricity



H H Sayyid Bilarab al Said

supply, enhance the economy, reduce costs, raise quality and achieve environmental objectives.' The statement added that the project has achieved 15mn safe manhours without lost-time incident. Saleh bin Nasser al Rumhi, CEO of OETC, informed that the project is expected to enhance the efficiency and integration of

national electricity transmission networks. It will also play a key role in securing the electricity network and open up new horizons for the use of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, which are abundant in Al Wusta region. The project will connect areas isolated from the main system such as Haima, Duqm and Mahout with the national grid.

Special unit to curb illegal expat workers

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In an effort to combat hidden trade and illegal expatriate workers, Ministry of Labour (MoL) and the Security and Safety Corporation signed an agreement on Monday to establish an inspection unit with the objective of improving inspection operations and enhancing efficiency in performing related tasks.

The agreement was signed by H E Dr Mahad bin Said Ba'owain, Minister of Labour, and Maj Gen Abdullah bin Ali al Harthi, Chairman of Board of Directors of Security and Safety Corporation, at MoL headquarters.

The agreement aligns with government directives to bolster the inspection efforts by supplementing these with security support services. It also involves the adoption of new policies to organise the Omani labour market with the aim of intensifying inspection campaigns on non-compliant establishments and undocumented labour, and streamlining procedures preceding inspection operations.

Represented by the Directorate General of Labour Welfare, MoL is working to foster improved relations among stakeholders through coordinated field visits to private sector facilities. The goal is to ensure compliance with labour laws and execution of minis-



terial decisions, as well as addressing violations of regulations. Additionally, the agreement will fortify the Omani economy and attract investments.

According to H E Ba'owain, inspection work requires a high level of competence. The agreement with Security and Safety Corporation aligns with national objectives, while organising the Omani labour market and accelerating procedures for integration among state institutions.

On his part, Harthi informed that the agreement would be fulfilled alongside training for human resources and logistical readiness to facilitate integration of relevant authorities. The agreement also opens up job opportunities in the security and safety sector, contributing to labour market developments and stability.

According to MoL data, 5,724 expatriates were arrested in Muscat in the first half of 2023 for labour law violations; 3,887 were subsequently deported.

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Oman to witness Geminid meteor showers tomorrow

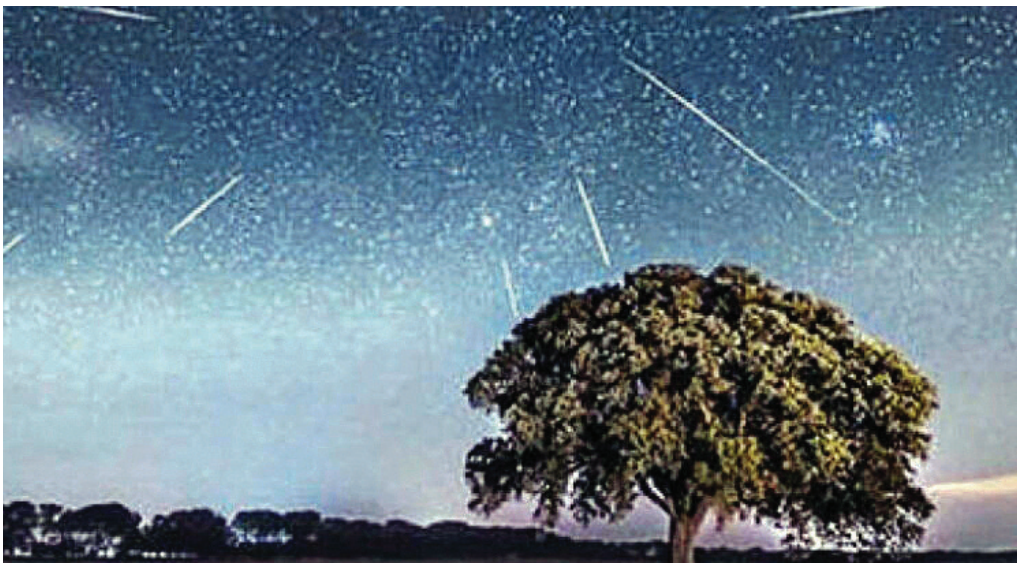
Our Correspondent
Muscat

The skies of Oman will brighten up on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday when the Geminid meteor shower - always a favourite among the annual meteor showers - is expected to peak for this year's show.

Ibrahim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, vice chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Astronomical Society, said that the month of December will witness a number of astronomical events, including some extraordinary meteor showers known astronomically as Geminids.

These meteor showers are one of the best throughout the year, as they fall at almost all hours of every dark night.

Astronomical calculations in-



dicade that this meteor shower will reach its peak on Wednesday evening and continue until Thursday dawn, as meteors and fireballs can be seen in the skies of the sultanate and the world in an

eye-catching scene, Mahrouqi stated.

He expects that the highest rate of falling will reach 120 meteors per hour, while remembering that the members of the

society monitored 1,063 falling stars during the six hours of monitoring the Geminid meteor shower of 2020 in an eye-catching scene. Its peak was between 1am and 1:59am, reaching 227

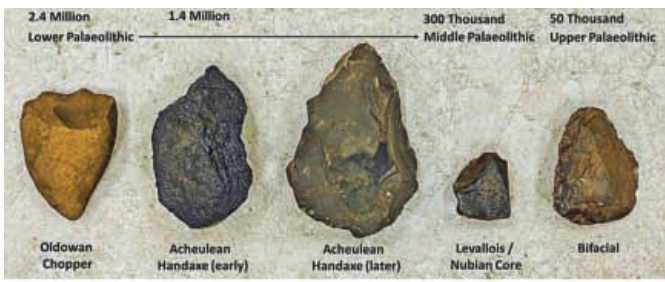
meteors in one hour.

Mahrouqi explained that unlike the rest of the meteors that come from comets, the Geminid meteors are from the debris of the asteroid known as Phaethon, which was discovered in 1982.

To witness this phenomenon unfolding, the Omani astronomer reminded that "an observation site must be dark - far away from any source of light and obstructions such as tall trees".

One must look towards the eastern horizon of the sky's dome from after midnight until before dawn on Thursday, he advised, noting that this event offers an opportunity for astrophotography to capture the dazzle of the sky.

This phenomenon is one of the astronomical phenomena that can be viewed with the naked eye.



Stone artifacts dating back to 1st millennium BC uncovered

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT), in cooperation with an archaeological mission from the Australian La Trobe University has discovered ancient stone artifacts dating back to the 1st millennium BC in Buraimi.

'Excavations carried out at the archaeological site in the wilayat of Mahdha in Buraimi governorate revealed stone tools dating back to the Paleolithic era', MHT said in a statement.

The ministry confirmed that the archaeological discoveries are like small monoliths - group of three stones erected in a py-

ramidal shape - dating back to the 1st millennium BC. This is considered the first discovery of the mission in the wilayat of Mahdha.

The ministry is also, in cooperation with the Italian mission from the University of Naples, carrying out a number of excavations at the Wadi Bani Khalid archaeological site in North Sharqiyah, which dates back to the Late Iron Age.

The site contains 11 defensive towers inside a settlement surrounded by a defensive wall built of stones.

The ministry explained that the excavations for the fifth season will take place inside residential rooms in which pottery fragments were found.

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Omani, Indian experts discuss challenges in fishing sector

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman, with its vast 3000km of coastline, stands on the threshold of an untapped economic opportunity in the fishing industry. This was discussed by a group of fishing experts from Oman and India at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industries (OCCI) on Monday.

Called the 'Opportunities in the Oman Fisheries Sector', the day-long seminar had more than ten experts from the industry and private sectors, besides the presence of Indian Ambassador H E Amit Narang as the guest of honour along with the other OCCI officials.

Despite this expansive coastal



stretch, Oman has only a handful of ports catering to fishermen, and the lack of infrastructure hampers the industry's potential for progress, the experts observed.

Speaking during the event, Mohammad Hanish, Principal Secretary, Industries, from the

southern Indian state of Kerala, shed light on the sector's challenges. "The fishing sector is not organised, and there is a significant lack of infrastructure. Currently, 95% of the catch relies on the traditional means. It's high time we move to a more sustainable model with organised, mod-

ern, and secure boats." Oman's fishing industry holds the key to substantial economic growth, but the lack of infrastructure and organised approach pose challenges, he added.

According to the MAFWR statistics of 2022, Oman's fishing industry witnessed a remarkable growth, with a recorded 74,000 metric tonnes of catch valued at RO469mn. This represents a 16% growth since 2016.

While these numbers are promising, they also underscore the immense untapped potential that could be unlocked with strategic investments, modernisation, and organisational reforms.

Davis Kallukaran, Director of Indo Gulf Middleast Chamber of

Commerce, emphasised the urgent need for addressing the unorganised fishing sector.

"Despite Oman's extensive coastline, we have only a few fishing harbours. To unlock the true potential of our marine resources, we need to address the unorganised nature of the fishing sector," he asserted, laying importance on "proper training and total organisation of the sector for Oman to not greatly rely on external resources".

The seminar culminated in signing two memoranda of understanding, one of which was signed between the Oman trading establishment group and Samudra shipyard LTD India for a boat building yard in Oman at an investment of over RO1mn.

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3D printing remodelling construction sector

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is at the forefront of embracing the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in construction, with a particular focus on 3D printing. This innovative approach has garnered attention globally and is now being actively pursued in Oman's higher education institutions and companies, supported by the private sector and academic research.

Focusing on questions like - Can buildings constructed using innovative and smart technologies be used on a large scale? What is the future of smart building technologies? - the latest issue of *Scientific Insights* magazine published by Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation sheds light on these issues.

According to Othman Mak-tourm al Mandhari, Founder and CEO of InnoTech, 3D printing technology is transforming the construction industry, allowing companies worldwide to put up buildings within days, while adhering to the highest quality standards and being environmentally friendly. This technology also significantly boosts energy efficiency due to superior thermal insulation.



3D printing technology is transforming the construction industry, allowing companies world-wide to put up buildings within days

OTHMAN AL MANDHARI



GUtech constructed the sultanate's first 3D printed concrete building in 2021, which was recognised as the world's largest such structure

MOHAMED AL SALMI



(Supplied photos)



Sohar University's initiatives focus on designing and manufacturing concrete 3D printers using local materials and expertise and democratising its knowledge

PROF GHASSAN AL KINDI

Mandhari further added that the initial high costs of this technology have reduced by up to 30% in 2023, making it more cost-effective than traditional construction methods. The global market for this technology is projected to reach US\$40bn by 2028.

Sharing InnoTech's journey in this field starting from 2019, Mandhari informed that the company overcame significant challenges and developed a local concrete mixture suitable for 3D printing in collaboration with

Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company and Petroleum Development Oman.

Highlighting the rapid evolution of 3D printing in building construction, Mohamed Sulaiman Mohammed al Salmi, Head of Smart Technology Solutions at German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech), was particularly impressed with the fast construction time and ease of building curved walls.

GUtech has made notable advancements in this field. The university constructed Oman's first

3D printed concrete building in 2021, which was recognised as the world's largest such structure, Salmi informed. In 2022, it completed the world's first printed cafe in Duqm. GUtech is also exploring the prospect of printing with natural eco-friendly materials, including clay.

For Dr Ahmed Said al Busaidi, Executive Director of Centre of Consultancy Services and Innovation Transfer at University of Nizwa, the technology's role in providing sustainable housing solutions at reasonable prices is

of significance.

He also pointed out the practical applications of this technology in disaster-prone areas, citing the example of the New Spirit Village in Oregon, USA, where 3D-printed homes were built for families affected by wildfires.

Busaidi emphasised the design flexibility and efficiency of 3D printed houses and predicted a shift towards more efficient smart housing solutions in the very near future.

Discussing the scientific fea-

sibility of concrete printing and Sohar University's efforts in manufacturing 3D metal printers, Prof Ghassan al Kindi, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, informed that the university aims to democratise its knowledge of the technology and its applications.

Sohar University's initiatives, led by Prof Kindi, focus on designing and manufacturing concrete 3D printers using local materials and expertise. The university has successfully built a mobile printer capable of con-

structing various building types and is currently experimenting with printing smaller objects like flowerpots.

These developments and insights are detailed in the latest issue of *Scientific Insights* available online in both Arabic and English. These pioneering works in Oman highlight the sultanate's commitment to innovation and sustainability in construction, aligning with global trends in smart solutions and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Seminar held on impact of climate change on coasts of Oman, UAE

Dubai, UAE - UAE University, in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University, held a seminar on the impact of climate change on the coastal areas of the two neighbouring countries at Expo City Dubai on Sunday, as part of UAEU's activities on the sidelines of COP28.

Addressing the seminar on 'Impact of climate change on coastal areas and shallow marine environments in the UAE and Oman', Prof Amer al Hinai, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Post-graduate Studies and Research at SQU, said that an ongoing research aims to secure an understanding of the effects of human and natural changes in the Sea of Oman.

"It is expected that this joint effort will achieve a number of goals, including assessing the effects of regional climate change on land and sea, surveying changes caused by various natural and human causes over the past decades, estimating environmental degradation of wildlife habitats and identifying continuing risks to the shallow marine environment and land-sea interaction," he added.

According to Prof Ahmed Murad, Associate Provost for Research at UAEU, the seminar reflects a commitment to combat impacts of climate change. It also enhances cooperation between SQU and the National Water and Energy Centre at UAEU on this vital subject.

Prof Murad described the



An ongoing research aims to secure an understanding of the effects of human and natural changes in the Sea of Oman

PROF AMER AL HINAI

seminar as an opportunity to share the latest research and knowledge about the impact of climate change on the UAE and Oman's coastal regions, work together to understand these challenges and develop strategies to preserve the fragile marine environment.

He informed that UAEU is conducting relevant research and will continue to work with all partners to achieve the goals of environmental sustainability and resilience and to continue this valuable dialogue and constructive cooperation for a better future of the coastal regions in the UAE, Oman and the world.

The seminar was attended by environmentalists, climate change professionals and academics providing a platform for dialogue on environmental sustainability and resilience, aligning with global efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change on fragile marine systems.

MHT to hold Omani Culinary Arts Forum on Wednesday

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to develop culinary tourism and arts, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) will hold an event called Omani Culinary Arts Forum on December 13.

The forum will open under the patronage of H H Sayyida

Meyyan bint Shihab al Said.

Culinary arts refer to the art of preparation, cooking presentation and service of food. While professionals working in this field - especially in establishments such as restaurants - are commonly called chefs or cooks, they are in essence culinary artist when engaging in their activities at higher and finer levels.



H H Sayyida Meyyan al Said

In a statement, MHT said, 'The ministry will launch a programme to develop food and culinary arts tourism as part of the implementation of the Oman Tourism Strategy. Omani cuisine is a valuable tourism product that provides authentic and innovative experiences. The forum aims to support food tourism and culinary arts, create diverse job op-

portunities, promote entrepreneurship and local content linked to supply chains, and showcase local culinary arts as a living embodiment of Omani culture and heritage.'

The forum will include initiatives such as documenting Omani cuisine, establishing the Oman Centre for Culinary Arts and supporting local food supply chains.

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Pakistan	737.32
Bangladesh	285.73
Philippines	144.50
Sri Lanka	850.08

*Rates as on December 11

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

US trade deficit rises to \$64bn in October

The US trade deficit rose \$3.1bn, or 5.1%, to reach \$64.3bn in October, according to data released Wednesday by the Commerce Department's Census Bureau.

The expectation was to show a deficit of \$64.2bn. The trade deficit in September was revised to \$61.2bn from \$61.5bn, according to the figures.

Exports in October were \$258.8bn, \$2.6bn less than September exports, while imports were \$323bn – just \$0.5bn more than the month before.

"The October increase in the goods and services deficit reflected an increase in the goods deficit of \$3.5bn to \$89.8bn and an increase in the services surplus of \$0.4bn to \$25.5bn," the Census Bureau said in a statement.

Oman's budget surplus shrinks to RO830mn in first 10 months

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's budget surplus shrank more than 31% to RO830mn in the first 10 months of 2023, compared to RO1.208bn surplus recorded in the corresponding period last year, mainly due to a decline in oil and gas revenues this year.

Total public revenues decreased to RO9.8bn in the January–October period this year, down 17% compared to RO11.862bn registered in the same period of 2022, according to the Fiscal Performance Bulletin published by the Ministry of Finance on Monday.

Net oil revenue decreased to RO5.446bn, a drop of 12% compared to RO6.193bn registered over the same period in 2022, mainly due to lower crude prices compared to last year. Oman's average oil price stood at US\$81 per barrel and average oil production was 1,053,000 barrels per day during the first 10 months of 2023.

Net gas revenue also dropped by whopping 43% to RO1.734bn in the first 10 months of 2023, compared to RO3.051bn registered in the same period of 2022.

'This decline (in net gas revenue)



due to the deduction of gas purchase and transport expenses from the total revenue collected from the Integrated Gas Company,' the Ministry of Finance bulletin noted.

The government's current

revenue slightly increased to RO2.608bn during the January–October period of 2023 against RO2.594bn collected in the same period of 2022.

Despite a decrease in budget surplus, Oman's debut burden is

expected to be reduced further this year amid spending restraint and supportive oil prices, according to Moody's Investor Service. Moody's on Friday upgraded the sultanate's sovereign rating for the second time this year.

Moody's estimates Oman's fiscal balance to still maintain a robust surplus of around 3.5% of GDP for 2023, following a surplus of 7.5% in 2022, the highest in a decade, and a deficit of 3.1% in 2021.

'Oman's fiscal and external sector metrics continued to benefit from supportive oil prices during 2023. While most of the

Of the total public spending, current expenditure amounted to RO6.872bn, down 12.8% compared to RO7.879bn registered over the same period in 2022. This is mainly due to the removal of gas purchase and transport expenses from the state's general budget, which were transferred to Integrated Gas Company.

Net oil revenue amounted to RO5.446bn in the first 10 months of 2023, a drop of 12% compared to RO6.193bn registered over the same period in 2022

fiscal improvement during 2022–23 was a result of higher hydrocarbon revenue, the government's spending restraint and the value-added tax introduced in April 2021 contributed to maximising the fiscal windfall,' Moody's said in a statement on Friday.

Spending falls 16%
Oman's total public spending for the first 10 months of 2023 decreased by RO1.684bn or 16% to RO8.970bn compared to actual spending of RO10.654bn over the same period in 2022.

During the first 10 months of 2023, development expenditure of ministries and government units totalled RO770mn, representing 86% of the total development spending allocated for the full year 2023.

The electricity sector subsidy and oil product subsidy amounted to RO408mn and RO236mn during the first 10 months of 2023, respectively. Furthermore, an amount of RO333mn was transferred to future debt obligations budget-item, according to the Ministry of Finance.

Green Hydrogen Summit to witness signing of several agreements

Muscat – The Green Hydrogen Summit Oman 2023 (GHSO), which is starting today, is poised to witness the signing of several crucial memorandums of understanding (MoUs).

Organised under the auspices of H E Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, the event signifies Oman's commitment to becoming a global leader in renewable hydrogen and its derivatives.

Taking place at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat, this three-day summit kicks off with the formal inauguration of a major exhibition that showcases cutting-edge technologies and innovations from around the world.

The highlight of the opening session will be the signing of agreements and MoUs by key entities, including Hydrom (the master planner and orchestrator of Oman's green hydrogen industry), ACME (an India-based group currently developing a



green hydrogen project in Duqm), and Takhzeen (an Omani-Italian partnership specialising in energy storage solutions).

An integral part of the proceedings on the opening day is the launch of the 'Future Energy Leaders' competition. This platform allows local and international students to present solutions to some of the world's toughest energy challenges. Dr

Sausan al Riyami, Director of Oman Hydrogen Centre (OHC), will provide an overview of the competition, while Dr Intisar al Busaidi of Sultan Qaboos University will welcome the contestants.

Taking center stage on Day 1 of the summit is an expo featuring more than 40 exhibitors from China, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Australia, the UAE, France, India, and The Nether-

lands, among other countries. Turnout over the course of the three-day show is projected to surpass 5,000 visitors.

The main summit proceedings, commencing on Wednesday, will cover a wide spectrum of topics at the heart of Oman's energy transition and green energy future. Over 100 distinguished speakers will address the summit and the masterclass sessions.

GCC states can manage physical climate risks for now: S&P Global

Our Correspondent
Muscat

GCC countries could become more vulnerable to the economic and financial impacts of physical risks from climate change over the next few decades if investments in adaptation and resilience stagnate, according to a new S&P Global Ratings report.

The rating agency, however, said that the region is generally well placed financially to implement future adaptation and resilience measures to fight the impact of climate change.

On average, absent adaptation, in a slow transition scenario, about 8% of the GCC region's GDP could be at risk per year by 2050 – slightly greater than the amount of GDP at risk in 2020 – mainly to extreme heat and water stress, S&P noted in its report.

The GCC's economic geography is relatively concentrated, which makes it highly exposed to water stress, extreme heat, and occasional flooding after ex-



treme rainfall. This is because most GDP is created in cities, hydrocarbon-producing facilities, or import/export free zones, according to S&P.

Adaptation and resilience measures can help soften or avoid impacts in some cases. S&P Global Ratings believes most GCC sovereigns have significant resources to continue their efforts in this area.

'Variations in climatic conditions are evident across the region. However, according to most classifications, GCC countries display a high degree of climatic homogeneity around their main centers of economic activity. With relatively limited agricultural capacity, and rural

populations, the main centers of economic activity are in cities or in hydrocarbon production and processing zones,' the rating agency said.

This concentration of economic output exposes almost all of the region's GDP to water stress and extreme heat, alongside occasional pluvial flooding, S&P added.

The rating agency noted that some adaptation and resilience measures are already in place in the GCC region. With limited groundwater resources and some of the highest average (and absolute) daily temperatures globally, extreme heat and water stress are already commonplace in the GCC.

CBO issues RO20mn worth of treasury bills

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) announced the issuance of government treasury bills worth RO20mn on Monday.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO15mn, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached RO98.660 for every RO100 bill, and the minimum accepted price arrived also at RO98.660.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.3747% and 5.4477%, respectively.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO5mn, for a maturity period of



364 days. The average accepted price reached RO97.095 for every RO100 bill, and the minimum accepted price also arrived at RO97.095.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 2.9129% and 3.0001%, respectively.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman acts as the issue manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities.

The interest rate on the repo operations with the CBO is 6.00% while the discount rate on the treasury bills discounting facility with the central bank is 6.50%.

Treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates.

Port of Duqm wins Quality Achievement Award

Muscat – The Port of Duqm Company received the Quality Achievement Award 2023 at the European Society for Quality Research Awards Ceremony held in Dubai on December 10, 2023.

This is a culmination of the distinguished efforts, innovative initiatives and commitment to quality standards, the company said in a press release.

Port of Duqm said that the award will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of maritime operations and enhancing the sultanate's reputation for excellence on the international stage.

Eng Hashim bin Taher al Ibrahim, Chief Business Support officer at Port of Duqm Company, said, "Winning this award at the



global level is an acknowledgment of our efforts and excellence in quality assurance processes, innovative pro-

grammes, initiatives and practices. The initiatives include continual improvement in operational processes, defining

benchmarks, ensuring monitoring of performance metrics."

The Port of Duqm continues to set standards and contributes significantly to supporting the sultanate's journey towards sustainable and diversified industrial sectors, which enhances its role as a beacon of excellence.

The European Society for Quality Research, which is headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland, was established in 1987 with the aim of strengthening co-operation between organisations concerned with the field of quality, excellence and sustainability, and building a network of governmental and private organisations in various sectors around the world.

Green hydrogen set to boost global energy transition

Abu Dhabi, UAE – A joint report by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and World Trade Organisation (WTO) published on Saturday provides insights on global hydrogen trade and related policies for scaling up production.

Hydrogen produced exclusively from renewable power – known as green hydrogen – is widely recognised as a key pillar in replacing fossil fuels and decarbonising sectors that cannot easily be electrified, such as some industrial processes, shipping and aviation.

The global energy transition will require a fast increase in the production of green hydrogen. IRENA estimates that hydrogen and its derivatives would meet 14% of global final energy consumption in 2050 in a scenario in which rising global temperatures resulting from emissions are limited to not more than 1.5°C.

At present, most global hydrogen production – around 95 megatons per year – is derived from fossil fuels, contributing substantially to climate change, rather than serving as a vehicle for decarbonisation.

The report stressed the urgency of transforming the hydrogen landscape, with existing uses transitioning to a clean hydrogen supply and overall hydrogen production expanding more than five-fold by 2050. This expansion will require an unprecedented scale-up of renewable generation capacity and electrolyser capacity.



The global energy transition will require a fast increase in green hydrogen production

WTO and IRENA estimate that hydrogen and its derivatives would meet 14% of global final energy consumption in 2050

“In a net-zero world, the current landscape of hydrogen production and consumption needs to change dramatically,” stated

Roland Roesch, Director IRENA’s Innovation and Technology Centre. “Global trade of green hydrogen and its derivatives will be crucial to link low production cost and high demand locations,” he added.

The report emphasised that green hydrogen production expansion will require the develop-

ment of new supply chains. This will have implications in terms of international trade of renewable hydrogen itself or commodities produced with it, as well as the trade of the necessary equipment and services along the value chain.

The publication highlights how lowering tariffs on key products, building reliable infrastructure, realigning domestic support programmes and developing green government procurement can foster the development of green hydrogen supply chains and the transition to a low-car-

bon economy. International trade could also play a significant role in matching supply and demand for green hydrogen, as the potential for domestic production in some economies might not be enough to satisfy domestic demand.

“Open, predictable and coherent trade will be key to fostering green hydrogen value chains,” said Aik Hoe Lim, the Director of the WTO Trade and Environment Division, at the publication’s launch event.

Considering specifically the importance of standards and verification procedures for building a sustainable hydrogen market, he added, “WTO disciplines can provide useful guidance on how to develop truly international standards, aligned national regulations and compatible verification procedures.”

The publication also addresses the challenges and opportunities for developing economies offered by green hydrogen and its derivatives, such as green methanol and green ammonia. It underscores the importance of international cooperation and the need to align regulatory frameworks to encourage technology development, enhanced transparency and market growth.

WAM

Green bonds and sukuk issuances in UAE reach AED15bn

Dubai, UAE – The UAE’s Securities and Commodities Authority (SCA) disclosed that the total value of green and sustainability-linked bonds and sukuk registered with the authority reached approximately AED15.45bn during the first 11 months of 2023.

Speaking to the Emirates News Agency (WAM) during COP28, Mohamed Ali al Shorafa, Chairman of the SCA, lauded the UAE for its commitment to sustainability approach. He highlighted the authority’s decision to regulate the issuance of green and sustainability-linked bonds and sukuk.

Shorafa stated, “Issuing green bonds and sukuk is one of the transformational projects in supporting the efforts to make the UAE the new global economic hub for the next ten years.”

The SCA’s decision to exempt companies wishing to list their green or sustainability-linked bonds or sukuk in a local market from registration fees for 2023, Shorafa said, “marked a significant start in the growing demand for the issuance of these Sukuk and bonds.”

“Issuing green bonds and sukuk is one of the transformational projects for which performance agreements were signed by federal government entities in 2022 in the presence of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister



Issuing green bonds and sukuk is one of the transformational projects in supporting efforts to make the UAE new global economic hub for next ten years

MOHAMED ALI AL SHORAF

and Ruler of Dubai,” said Dr Maryam al Suwaidi, Chief Executive Officer of SCA.

“These performance agreements represent forward-looking quality projects that will enhance the country’s competitiveness, and the transformational projects will greatly impact all sectors over short periods and ensure the implementation of the new government action model of the UAE government,” she added.

WAM

COP28 Presidency targets balanced package in talks

Dubai, UAE – Ambassador Majid al Suwaidi, COP28 Director-General and Special Representative, asserted that the COP28 Presidency is focused on achieving a balanced package in the negotiations, noting that they hosted a stocktaking plenary to outline progress made at the technical level and hear feedback on building areas of convergence.

During a press conference held in the Blue Zone of the 28th UN Climate Change Conference (COP28), as part of the Food, Agriculture and Water Day, Suwaidi said, “Food systems are extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change... and COP28 is proud to be elevating them to the highest level of discussions.”

He added that the COP28 Presidency is driving “momentum towards the objectives of the historic COP28 UAE Declaration on Agriculture, Food Systems and Climate Action, which was endorsed by 134 world leaders, representing 480mn farmers and 75% of global food production during the World Climate Action Summit last week”. “We have heard strong mes-



Majid al Suwaidi

sages from developing countries and as a result are asking parties to propose consensus solutions on the global goal on adaptation and further options on finance in the Global Stocktake,” he stated.

“For over 700mn people across the world, hunger is a daily reality, and a further 3bn people can’t afford to eat a nutritious diet. Quite simply, these are the symptoms of a broken food system, one that we want to bring to an end here in Dubai.

“During the World Climate Action Summit, we saw the

global community mobilise \$2.5bn to support the food-climate agenda. And the UAE and the Bill Melinda Gates Foundation launched a \$200mn partnership for Food Systems, Agriculture Innovation and Climate Action.”

Suwaidi affirmed that “COP28 signals a turning point, embedding sustainable agriculture and food systems as critical components in both dealing with climate change and building food systems fit for the future”.

WAM

Saudi Arabia affirms commitment to enhance climate action efforts at COP28

Dubai, UAE – Saudi Arabia emphasised its unwavering commitment to climate action during its participation in the 28th UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai Expo City.

Through its dedicated pavilions – the Saudi Green Initiative and the Saudi pavilion in the Blue Zone – the kingdom showcased its ongoing initiatives and hosted numerous dialogues and sessions addressing critical climate change topics, according to an Emirates News Agency (WAM) report. These sessions focused on the crucial transition to green sectors free from carbon emissions.

The Blue Zone pavilion alone hosted approximately 24 workshops, attracting a diverse audience and featuring presentations from 40 local and international experts across various fields. This robust participation underscores the kingdom’s commitment to fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing in the fight against climate change.

The kingdom also took part in various dialogue sessions to discuss solutions related to reducing emissions and energy transformation, including focus-



ing on the role of carbon capture, use and storage technologies in enhancing climate solutions, and the role of minerals in energy transformations and accelerating the pace of emissions reduction.

Saudi Arabia is working diligently on several fronts to lead ambitious climate action at the national level and within the region. It’s participation also highlighted this leadership in the side sessions it held at COP28 demonstrating its efforts in cli-

mate action and leading future solutions.

These sessions include specific topics such as achieving sustainable tourism, combating land degradation, protecting environmental diversity, adopting the principle of a circular carbon economy, and extraction technology solutions, in addition to highlighting the acceleration of clean energy solutions and reducing emissions.

Several Saudi institutions, including the National Centre for

Vegetation Cover Development (10bn trees), the Saudi Irrigation Organisation (2mn trees), the Saudi National Centre for Environmental Compliance (marine and coastal protection), the Saudi National Centre for Meteorology (rain enhancement), and the National Centre of Wildlife (protected areas, environmental awareness, wildlife conservation), are actively participating in diverse initiatives to ensure a greener and more sustainable future for Saudi Arabia.

Ammonia, methanol to lead decarbonisation in petrochemical sector

Muscat – Ammonia and methanol are key industrial chemicals with strong demand in agriculture, manufacturing, and construction sectors. Conventional ammonia and methanol production processes contribute to carbon emissions.

As governments around the world are pursuing various decarbonisation strategies, it has become imperative to curb emissions from these processes. The evolution of low-carbon hydrogen, a critical feedstock for both ammonia and methanol, can help in decarbonising these chemicals, said

GlobalData, a leading data and analytics company.

GlobalData’s thematic report, “Ammonia and Methanol in Energy Transition,” provides an overview of developments in the low-carbon ammonia and methanol markets. It further benchmarks leading companies in low-carbon ammonia and methanol production, such as Yara International, CF Industries, SABIC, OCI, and Nutrien, based on their active and upcoming capacity, emissions intensity, and net zero commitments.

Ravindra Puranik, Oil and Gas



Strong growth is expected in number of ammonia plants in this decade

Analyst at GlobalData, said, “Low-carbon hydrogen and carbon capture technologies are gaining prominence in the petrochemical sector. Companies such as Yara and CF Industries are actively harnessing these technologies to decarbonise their respective production processes for chemicals such as ammonia and methanol.”

Green hydrogen produced from electrolysis of water by harnessing renewable energy has an enormous potential in production of green ammonia and green methanol. Whereas blue hydrogen, which is produced by em-

ploying carbon capture technologies, offers a long-term alternative in the energy transition of ammonia and methanol production.

Ammonia is a key petrochemical product with the agricultural sector being a massive demand driver. It is the most widely produced petrochemical in the world. Methanol also has significant installed capacity among petrochemical products and has strong demand in the manufacturing sector.

Ammonia and methanol market segments can be more readily decarbonised using

low-carbon hydrogen for their production. It would also help mitigate the emissions from end use applications that rely on these two chemicals. In the global energy transition, ammonia is potentially viewed as a fuel in shipping and power generation, while low-carbon methanol can be blended with gasoline and diesel fuels.

Strong growth is expected in the number of blue ammonia and methanol plants in this decade. The number of green ammonia and methanol plants is expected to surge rapidly as 2030 draws closer.

Bank Dhofar forum concludes

In line with its constant endeavour to promote positive communication and retain a sustainable relationship with its customers, Bank Dhofar has announced the successful completion of a comprehensive customer forum initiative conducted across the Sultanate of Oman for its Al Riadah Priority Banking customers. This strategic initiative underlines the bank's commitment to customer-centricity.

In a series of one-to-one meetings, Al Riadah Priority Banking team engaged with their customers, to understand their preferences and requirements. This personalised face-face approach is aimed to get valuable insights, about the customer needs and ensuring a bespoke proposition that aligns with the unique needs of each customer. The meetings were conducted across Oman, including Al Buraimi, Sohar, Ibra, Ibri and Muscat, a press release said.

The bank used these meetings to share the benefits of Al Riadah priority banking and received direct feedback on services, products, and the bank's digital platforms from its customers. This interactive ex-



change facilitated a transparent and constructive dialogue.

These dedicated customer interactions reaffirm the bank's dedication to understanding and meeting the evolving expectations of its Priority Banking clientele customers and reinforces the bank's customer-centric approach.

"At Bank Dhofar, our customers' satisfaction lies at the heart of everything we do and

these direct interactions help us to have a better understanding of their needs and allow us to interact with them along with their dedicated relationship managers. Our products, services and financial solutions are well designed to meet their daily needs and exceed their expectations, and we believe that getting real-time feedback helps us enhance the overall customer experience. We were very pleased

with the overall outcome and we are thankful for our customers' time and sharing their valuable feedback." said Hind Abdul Malik al Sabbagh, AGM and head of Premier Banking at Bank Dhofar.

Al Riadah Priority Banking provides a unique range of banking products and services that are tailored to suit the unique lifestyle of priority customers, ranging from dedicated relation-

ship manager, priority processing of transactions, preferential rates for deposits and loans apart from personalized cheque book, exclusive Visa Infinite Debit and Credit Card, or MasterCard Platinum Credit Card. Customers can enjoy exceptional times at restaurants, shops, as well as procurement protection, extended warranty, access to airport lounges around the world, travel insurance, etc.



Bank Muscat floats cash back offer for travellers

As part of its strategy to provide customers with the best value proposition for its products to enhance their banking experience, especially during the travel season, Bank Muscat continues its offer on international credit card usage.

Customers can still get the chance to enter a monthly draw to enjoy 100% cash back on their spends (capped at RO100) for every RO100 spent using Bank Muscat credit cards internationally on POS machines or online. For every RO100 spent, customers will get an additional chance to win. The higher the spend, the higher the chances to win. There will be a total of 700 winners by the end of the campaign. The offer continues until

December 31, a press release said.

For those looking to participate in the offer, Bank Muscat offers a variety of credit cards carefully curated to fit the needs of its customers offering a plethora of benefits such as free travel insurance and rewards on spends and discounted offers across a wide range of categories including, lifestyle, health and beauty, entertainment, travel and hotel stays.

For those interested in travel, the Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum Credit Card in particular helps customers make the most of their trips, offering great rewards and privileges for shopping, dining, travel, lifestyle and entertainment.



Europcar leads in OGL second round

The second round of the Oman Golf League concluded with Europcar taking a significant lead, securing 88 points in the second round, bringing their total to 181 points.

Marafiq was in second spot with a total of 175 points, followed by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) in third place with 170 points. David Miles (PDO) was the best individual player with 38 points.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, "The competitive edge displayed by the teams is commendable, and we are thrilled to host such an inspiring event. Congratulations to the champions of this round.

Rashid Ali from the Renais-

sance team one, praised the course, saying, "The course is in pristine condition, the best I've experienced. Since it's mostly about networking, we are thoroughly enjoying our time at Al Mouj Golf."

Tom Annberg from the Asyad team, added, "Al Mouj Golf's course with its impeccable maintenance, serves as a testament to its fantastic setup, reflecting high standards we strive for at the league."

Nitin Sapre from the Europcar team, said, "Our spirit is high, and we are very optimistic about our performance. We are positive about finishing on top by the end of this league."

Mall of Muscat bags retail award at MENA 2023

Mall of Muscat has been honoured with the 2023 Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Shopping Centre and Retailer Award, securing its position as a leader in traditional marketing excellence category, for cause related marketing.

The event was held in Dubai, celebrating the most innovative and creative retail achievements across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Mall of Muscat's triumph in the 'cause-related marketing' category underscores its commitment to socially responsible initiatives, a press release said.

The Mall of Muscat's cause-



related marketing initiative was a strategic response to Oman's post-pandemic economic challenges. Recognising the surge in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as a critical economic

driver, the mall leveraged its resources to support some SMEs and students struggling with academic fees. Collaborating with Al Rahma Association, Oman Tourism College (OTC), and Scientific College of Design (SCD), they identified SMEs and students in need, offering them free stalls at the mall's main event during the Eid-Al-Fitr/Ramadan season.

This event, themed as an Open Ramadan Majlis, featured 21 stalls designed by SCD and occupied by selected SMEs and OTC students, allowing them to sell various products without any charge or fees.

Arrizo 8 shines at Red Sea International Film Fest

Chery recently provided designated vehicle services for the Red Sea International Film Festival (RSIFF) as its inaugural business flagship sedan, the Arrizo 8, took centre stage, showcasing the profound integration of 'automobiles and films' and the ultimate charm of the celebrity vehicle.

The 2023 RSIFF took place from November 30 to December 9 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, bringing together top global film producers, international media, industry professionals, and film enthusiasts, a press release said.



At the RSIFF's gala ceremony, with more than 120 renowned film and television stars, along

with celebrities in attendance, the Chery Arrizo 8 made a prominent appearance as the official designated celebrity vehicle, escorting all the stars. The sparkling Arrizo 8 fleet boulevard complemented each other, creating a picturesque scene at this RSIFF and showcasing the charm of the celebrity vehicle.

The positioning of the Chery Arrizo 8 as a business flagship sedan reflects a discreet and elegant temperament. The vehicle boasts impressive features such as aesthetic design, a luxurious interior, intelligent technology, and comprehensive safety, demonstrating extraordinary charm and outstanding prowess.

Guided by the design philosophy 'Glare in watery', the Arrizo 8 combines the dynamic beauty of water with the flickering play of light, captivating viewers with its artistic temperament, which is in harmony with the dazzling starlight at the RSIFF.

The front grille, resembling flowing streams intertwined with watery, maintains a discreet and elegant temperament without compromising its sharpness. The sharp double waistlines on the vehicle's side and its sleek profile, exude agile essence of a sports vehicle and sophistication.

Oman Arab Bank and Al Izz Islamic Bank hold joint board meeting

Muscat, December 10th 2023 – Oman Arab Bank (OAB) and Al Izz Islamic Bank (AIB) held a joint board meeting, attended by chairpersons and board members of both banks. The meeting was a platform for aligning strategic objectives, risk governance frameworks, and corporate governance principles, a press release said.

Rashad bin Muhammad al Zubair, chairman of Oman Arab Bank, said, "This joint Board Meeting holds significant importance in setting the tone and initiating crucial actions. We are confident that it will pave the way for both banks to align with a shared vision and common objectives of unlocking synergies, promoting coordination, aligning strategies, improving gover-



nance and exploring avenues for growth."

Yahya bin Said al Jabri, chairman of Al Izz Islamic Bank, added, "These meetings represent a significant step in our joint journey. We delved into various challenges and opportunities, focusing on aligning our strategic goals and corporate

values. Our united efforts are aimed at enhancing the success of both institutions, ultimately enriching the financial services landscape and offering better value to our stakeholders."

The meeting addressed several key areas, including a thorough analysis of strategic objectives, risk governance, corporate values, and governance principles. Additional discussions spanned current challenges, potential business opportunities, and strategies for shared success.

A cyber security training session, led by an industry expert, followed the meeting. The training aimed to elevate the board directors' and senior management's understanding of current cyber threats.

Israel attacks school housing displaced

Eyewitnesses said Israeli army targeted a school which hosts hundreds of displaced people in Gaza

Gaza City, Palestine - The Israeli army has targeted a school sheltering displaced people in the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, according to footage and first-hand accounts.

Eyewitnesses told Anadolu that a school run by the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which hosts hundreds of displaced people, was targeted on Sunday.

Videos of the attack circulated on social media, showing blood in the school yard, as well as fires burning in the targeted building.

In another clip, one of the displaced people, who did not reveal his name, said a several people were killed and wounded as 'one of the classrooms in the school (in which there were displaced people) was bombed by the Israeli army'.

Israel resumed its military offensive on the Gaza Strip on December 1 after the end of a weeklong humanitarian pause with the Palestinian group Hamas.

Nearly 18,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 49,229 others injured in relentless air and ground attacks on the enclave since October 7 following a cross-border attack by Hamas.

The Israeli death toll in the Hamas attack stood at 1,200, according to official figures.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army, on Monday, announced intercepting six missiles fired from Lebanon.



Videos of the attack circulated on social media, showing blood in the school yard, as well as fires burning in the targeted building

The army said that air defense batteries intercepted six missiles and targeted the source of the attack with artillery.

Sirens sounded in Israeli towns near the Lebanese border, according to Israeli media. For its

part, Lebanon's official National News Agency (NNA) reported that 'a large batch of rockets was launched towards an Israeli site off the Lebanese border, some of which were intercepted by Iron Dome and the rest fell inside the

occupied territories.'

The Israeli artillery shelled the outskirts of the towns of Naqoura, Alma el-Chaab, Jabal al-Labounah, the eastern outskirts of the town of Zabqin, and the outskirts of the towns of Yarin, Marwahin, Jebbayn, and Chihine, according to the NNA.

The attack came amid rising tensions along the border between Lebanon and Israel against the backdrop of the ongoing Israeli military offensive on

the Gaza Strip.

Lebanese group Hezbollah and Israeli forces exchanged cross-border fire over the past few weeks in the deadliest clashes since the two sides fought a full-scale war in 2006.

'Killed 40 Israeli soldiers'

The Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, announced on Sunday that they killed 40 Israeli soldiers and de-

stroyed 44 military vehicles in the past 48 hours.

"During the last 48 hours, the Al-Qassam Mujahideen managed to completely or partially destroy 44 military vehicles on all fronts of the fighting in the Gaza Strip," they said on their Telegram account.

"Our Mujahideen confirmed that 40 soldiers were killed and dozens of other Zionist soldiers were wounded," they added.

The statement reported the

use of booby traps to destroy buildings, targeting an Israeli field command centre, and using mortar shells and short-range rockets against areas where soldiers gathered.

Israel has not yet issued a statement regarding the announcement.

'No peace' sans cease-fire

World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus addressed the situation in Gaza on Sunday, saying that 'without a cease-fire, there is no peace'.

His statement came during his closing remarks at a special session of the WHO's executive board, during which a resolution was adopted saying that 'all parties to armed conflict must comply fully with the obligations applicable to them under international humanitarian law related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and medical personnel'.

The executive board unanimously adopted the resolution addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, emphasising the universal priority of health and the role of health services and humanitarian aid in building bridges to peace, even in challenging situations.

The resolution calls for the 'immediate, continuous and unimpeded' delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza, including access for medical personnel.

Anadolu Agency

Hundreds displaced from Khan Younis

Gaza, Palestine - Israel continues to forcibly displace hundreds of Palestinians in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, which is under intense air and ground attacks by Israeli forces.

Following threats from the Israeli army to target civilian settlements, many Palestinians from the eastern areas of Khan Younis were forcibly displaced to a 'humanitarian zone' in the Al-Mawasi area close to the city.

Areas in the east such as Cura al-Lut, Ash-Sheikh Nasir, Al-Ketibeh and Jalal Street along with the western region of 5th Street in Khan Younis have been subjected to intense Israeli bombardment in recent days.

Huzeyfe Sebir, previously displaced from Gaza City to Khan Younis, told Anadolu that the search for a safe area continues and they recently moved from Cura el-Lut to Rafah.

Sebir said they received an evacuation call from the Israeli army due to the intense attacks



Palestinians leave Khan Yunis for migrating to southern regions on Sunday (Anadolu Agency)

in Gaza. As part of the attacks, the army threatened and evacuated dozens of settlements in Khan Younis.

He said the army targeted many homes in Cura el-Lut, resulting in numerous casualties and injuries.

Ahmed Al-Ferra told Anadolu that the Israeli army sent text

messages to residents' phones instructing them to relocate to the Al-Mawasi area.

"This area is sandy land lacking all the basic necessities for life. It is not suitable for living, with no food or water, and there is no suitable place for settlement," said Al-Ferra.

He said he set up a tent in the

area hoping it is safe for his family but fears that like other claimed 'safe' areas, the Israeli army might target Al-Mawasi.

The UN has warned that the ongoing Israeli bombardments may accelerate mass displacements from the northern to the southern parts of the Gaza Strip.

Anadolu Agency

UN launches \$46bn appeal to meet humanitarian needs in 2024

Geneva, Switzerland - The UN on Monday launched a US\$46bn appeal for 2024 due to the dire humanitarian outlook around the world.

Communities around the world are devastated by conflict, climate emergencies and collapsing economies as some 181mn people in 72 countries are expected to need humanitarian assistance and protection next year, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a statement.

Some 128mn people received life-saving assistance in 2023, OCHA said, adding that 'a growing funding gap meant that support was cut back and millions of people were not reached'.

According to the statement, while one out of every five children lives in or has fled from conflict zones in 2023, there are about 258mn people who are facing acute hunger.



Also, the number of displaced people worldwide has doubled in 10 years, with one in 73 people currently being affected. Separately, disease outbreaks are resulting in preventable deaths across the globe, it added.

"Humanitarians are saving lives, fighting hunger, protecting children, pushing back epidemics, and providing shelter and sanitation in many of the world's most inhumane con-

texts", said Martin Griffiths, the UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator.

He added: "But the necessary support from the international community is not keeping pace with the needs."

Griffiths thanked the donors of 2023 for the US\$20bn gathered, but stressed that it is 'just a third of what was needed'.

Anadolu Agency

Another Israeli witness confirms Israeli tanks killed own citizens on October 7

Ankara, Turkey - Speaking about the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, a new Israeli witness revealed once again that on the day of the assault, Israeli tanks targeted both their own citizens and Hamas members, leading to the death of 14 Israelis, including children.

Israeli media reported earlier that a 12-year-old girl, Liel Hetzroni, was killed in the October 7 attack by Hamas on Kibbutz Be'eri in southern Israel.

According to the reports, following Liel's killing, her grandfather Avia, twin brother Yanai and aunt Ayala were taken to another location, where they were killed along with more than 10 other hostages and then Hamas allegedly set fire to the building.

The incident gained coverage

in the Israeli media under the title of 'Hamas brutality'.

However, after Yasmin Porat, who was in the house where the twins were held hostage, had said that the deaths were caused by Israeli tank fires, Hadas Dagan, the owner of the house where the hostages were held, also broke her silence.

In an interview with Channel 12 in Israel, Dagan confirmed that the Israeli army attacked the house where Israeli civilians were held by Hamas with tank fires and heavy weapons.

Recounting the horror over the killing of 14 people in the house, including her husband, Dagan talked about the moment Israeli soldiers arrived in front of their house. "At that point, it was clear to me that our role is to be a



human shield between our (Israeli) forces that arrived and them (Hamas).

"I will never forget the children's screams," Dagan said,

with tears falling down her face, as she described the moment of the twins' death.

Dagan, recounting the moment when Israeli soldiers began

attacking the house with heavy weapons, explained that her husband and she initially remained silent, and then they realised that their neighbours died.

"Suddenly, Adi (her husband) told me, 'Hadas, Ze'ev is no longer with us'. I looked over my shoulder and said, 'Pessi is also not with us'."

Dagan explained the moment she lost her husband with these words: "A suddenly horrific boom ... I couldn't move my legs. I was not hugging Adi anymore. At that moment, I told him once more that I love him so much. It was clear to me that there was a tank outside. And then came the second boom.

"I felt I was hurt. I looked and felt that so much blood was flowing on me, and I turned my head to see what exactly happened to me, and then I saw a hole in Adi's main artery. And I pressed my thumb on the artery to block the flow of blood, what else could I

do? Then I realised that he wasn't moving and there was no need to press my thumb on his artery since I was already in a pool of blood."

Another witness, Porat, had previously stated in an interview that the house where she was with Hamas members was surrounded by Israeli security forces, that there were fierce clashes between the parties, and that after a while one of the Hamas members decided to surrender and went out with her.

She said Israeli security forces interrogated her and the Hamas member, and during her interrogation, which lasted three hours, she informed them about the number of civilians in the house, where they were being kept.

Anadolu Agency

India: Top court upholds abrogation of Article 370

The Supreme Court also directed to hold Jammu and Kashmir Assembly polls by September 30, 2024

New Delhi, India - A five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court on Monday unanimously upheld the validity of the Union government's 2019 decision to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution which conferred the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, while pointing out that Article 370 is a 'temporary provision'.

A five-judge Constitution bench comprising Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, B R Gavai, and Surya Kant said: "It can be garnered from the historical context for the inclusion of Article 370 and the placement of Article 370 in Part XXI of the Constitution that it is a temporary provision."

The apex court also upheld the reorganisation of Ladakh as a Union Territory and directed the Election Commission of India to hold Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir by September 30, 2024. "The restoration of statehood shall take place at the



A five-judge Constitution bench pronouncing the judgement on a batch of petitions challenging the abrogation of Article 370 and the bifurcation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union territories, in New Delhi on Monday (ANI)

earliest and as soon as possible," the court said.

The Solicitor General, representing the Union of India, submitted that statehood will be restored to Jammu and Kashmir and that its status as a Union territory is temporary.

He submitted that the status of the Union Territory of Ladakh will not be affected by the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir.

"In view of the submission made by the Solicitor General that statehood would be restored of Jammu and Kashmir, we do not find it necessary to determine

It can be garnered from the historical context for the inclusion of Article 370 and the placement of Article 370 in Part XXI of the Constitution that it is a temporary provision

SUPREME COURT

whether the reorganisation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir is permissible under Article 3," the court said.

The apex court said Article 370 was enacted due to wartime conditions in the State and was meant to serve a transitional purpose. "Article 370 was introduced to serve two purposes. First, the transitional purpose: to provide for an interim arrangement until the Constituent Assembly of the State was formed and could take a decision on the legislative competence of the

Union on matters other than the ones stipulated in the Instrument of Accession, and ratify the Constitution; and second, a temporary purpose: an interim arrangement in view of the special circumstances because of the war conditions in the State," the Constitution bench stated in its verdict.

The petitioners, challenging the abrogation, had said that Article 370 was no longer a 'temporary provision' and it had assumed permanence post the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir. ANI



Javier Milei is an economist and former political commentator

Argentina: Javier Milei sworn in as new president

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Javier Milei sworn in as Argentina's new president on Sunday, sealing the ascent of a political newcomer who gained popularity by calling for economic reforms, CNN reported.

Milei is an economist and former political commentator who, during his election campaign, spoke about his intent to slash spending, according to CNN report. Javier Milei's predecessor, Alberto Fernandez, presided over the swearing-in ceremony before Argentina's Congress in Buenos Aires. Milei took the oath before giving his first speech as president, vowing to bring about sweeping changes.

Addressing a crowd from the grand stairwell outside Congress in Buenos Aires, Milei said: "Today, it's the start of a new era for Argentina; today we close a long and sad history of decadence and decline, and we take the road of reconstruction of our country."

He said: "Argentines have overwhelmingly expressed their

desire for change that has no turning back." Several world leaders including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, and former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro attended the swearing-in ceremony of Javier Milei. Milei (53) was elected as Argentina's president in the runoff on November 19. He received 55.9 per cent votes while 44 per cent votes were obtained by Sergio Massa.

Javier Milei gained national prominence after winning the elections and promising reforms like dollarisation and addressing the economic challenges faced by Argentina, CNN reported.

He has already held meetings with top US officials in Washington. Meilo's economic team has collaborated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to develop a plan aimed at reshaping Argentina's foreign policy and bringing the country's economy out of the current crisis.

He entered the race as a political outsider on a promise to 'break up with the status quo'. ANI

Pakistan: Election Commission rules out delay in holding polls

Islamabad, Pakistan - The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has confirmed that there is no apparent possibility of delay in the conduct of elections, according to The News International.

According to sources, the ECP considered some petitions and responded to those that landed in its office.

"The pleas before the Election Commission have mainly come up with two reasons for seeking delay in elections, i.e. security and harsh weather and these seem hardly convincing with the election schedule being announced most likely on December 14 while electoral rolls have already reached respective destinations in the districts across the country," the

ECP sources said.

However, they pointed out that the polling could be delayed in a specific constituency due to reasons if the electoral body deemed so after receiving reports from the concerned departments, as reported by The News International.

Although, as of now, they have added security and the law and order situation is satisfactory all around. Pakistan's Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikander Sultan Raja said preparations for the general elections are being made and the schedule for the elections will be announced in a few days, Pakistan-based Geo News reported.

In a statement marking National Voters Day, Sikander

Sultan Raja said the Election Commission knows its constitutional and legal responsibilities and added that it is committed to holding 'transparent and peaceful elections.'

He added that the poll panel is currently involved in preparations for elections and the printing and distribution of electoral rolls have been completed, according to the Geo News report. Raja reiterated that polls will take place at its scheduled time, stressing that the election commission will ensure complete security during the elections.

He also called on the people of Pakistan to use their right to vote for the 'bright future of the country and nation'.

ANI

WELCOMING LAMA



Local people perform as they wait to welcome Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama during his three-day visit to Sikkim, in Gangtok on Monday (ANI)

Cameroon aspires to become world's leading plantain producer by 2030

Yaounde, Cameroon - With his muddied bare feet and machete in hand, Ferdinand Tatah trudged down the hillside to his plantain plantation in Idenau, a coastal town in southwestern Cameroon.

He chose and cut several giant bunches of plantains, which will be transported to Cameroon's commercial hub of Douala, to be weighed, graded and sold.

"This is my life. I do this every day. I was born into plantain farming," said the 50-year-old father of five.

A stretch of favourable weather has led to a bumper crop for Tatah and many others in the central African nation where many people, buffeted by a difficult economy, are turning

to farming to make ends meet.

"Farming has never failed anyone. That is why I have invested much in this - my two-hectare plantain farm," Tatah said as he strolled through his farm.

The plantain, a savoury variety of bananas, plays a crucial role in Cameroon's food security. It is considered one of the staple foods and a reliable source of starch for many. It can be boiled, fried, and roasted.

According to Cameroon's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, plantains account for 16 per cent of farmers' income and 4.3 per cent of Cameroon's agricultural gross domestic product (GDP).

Plantain output in the country is estimated at over 5.4mn tonnes a year.



This photo taken on December 5 shows plantain cultivation in Limbe, Cameroon (Xinhua)

Cameroon wants to become the world's leading producer of the crop by 2030, with an annual production of 10mn tonnes, to strengthen and preserve national food security and increase farmers' income, said Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Gabriel Mbairrobe.

"Cameroon's desire to become an emerging country by 2035, depends on the development of production, processing and distribution activities for our various agricultural and pastoral products which offer real employment and wealth opportunities for our population," Mbairrobe said. "The government is determined to support the plantain industry in various ways."

The country, in collaboration

with the African Development Bank, is working to establish a plantain processing plant in Bangem, in the Southwest region, the first-ever in the region that produces over 30 per cent of the country's plantains.

"This plant will facilitate the production of three tonnes of plantains per day," Mbairrobe said.

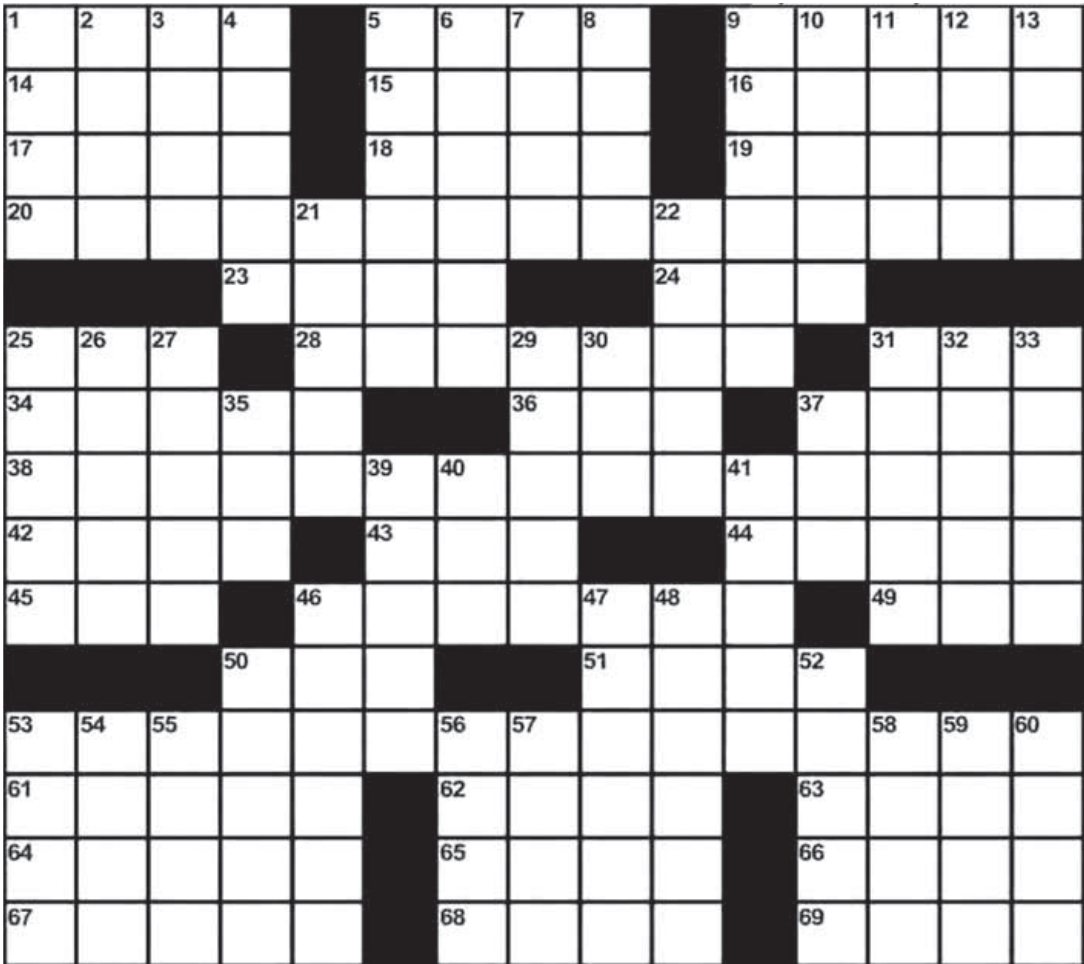
Mbairrobe spoke to Xinhua recently in the seaside resort town of Limbe, which hosted the second edition of the International Plantains Festival.

Tatah brought several bunches of plantains to exhibit at the festival.

"For us farmers, this is a rare opportunity to show the world our products and to look for new buyers and partners," he said.

Xinhua

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Lockable fastener
- 5) Hue fit for a duck
- 9) Toyota of old
- 14) "... happily, after"
- 15) Continental cash
- 16) Judge, at times
- 17) Big name in building blocks
- 18) Indeterminate long time
- 19) Crosswise to a ship's middle
- 20) Accepts a proposal
- 23) Telling sign
- 24) Buddhist discipline
- 25) Scratch, as furniture
- 28) Persevere
- 31) Cobbler's need
- 34) Belittle
- 36) Basker's quest
- 37) Skin lotion ingredient
- 38) Unwanted welcome
- BLISS?
- 42) Like Mr. Claus' cheeks
- 43) Profit ender?
- 44) Implant snugly
- 45) Vein glory?
- 46) Involve deeply

- 49) Recognizes
- 50) Royal flush card
- 51) Lifted, as an anchor
- 53) Things issued before peoples' "big day"
- 61) Ferric_ (rust)
- 62) Connect
- 63) Turn over_ leaf
- 64) Icicle sites
- 65) Clarinet kin
- 66) Pepsi, for one
- 67) Nobody's fool
- 68) "Ahem" alternative
- 69) Cookbook abbr.

DOWN

- 1) "SOS!"
- 2) Affirmatively allege
- 3) Lily variety
- 4) Trailer, briefly
- 5) Relative of 4-Down
- 6) Oregon city
- 7) "Iliad" deity
- 8) Type of cause
- 9) Pollen-bearing organ
- 10) Like city residents
- 11) Dock
- 12) Raise, as young'uns
- 13) Private organization?
- 21) Move forward

- 22) Ultraviolet index factor
- 25) Computer shortcut
- 26) Dislike, and then some
- 27) Aggressive poker bet
- 29) Metric unit of volume
- 30) Bunt that moves one along, briefly
- 31) Accused's need
- 32) Courted
- 33) Advances
- 35) Using trickery
- 37) Where to get your balance
- 39) Aden's country
- 40) Sleep cycle acronym
- 41) Annoy
- 46) Superlatively slippery
- 47) Thick-skinned behemoths, briefly
- 48) Bulb's place
- 50) Snake that puts two and two together?
- 52) Legislate
- 53) Travails
- 54) Academic challenge
- 55) Opera star
- 56) Hardly haute cuisine
- 57) Ad_ (improvises)

- 58) High-hatter
- 59) Congers

- 60) Cashless deal
- 12th September

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

All of your hard work and planning is finally starting to pay off for you in some major ways! But you need to keep going. Go the distance, and don't take your eye of the ball or slow your roll. You are so close to what you want right now that if you take even the slightest break from the action you could be making a huge mistake. You can take a nap some other day. Right now, you'll be having way too much fun to want to stop what you're doing anyway.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

All of the different emotions that are swimming around in your heart right now are combining to create a cocktail that's leaving you feeling mixed up and a little bit blue. It could take some time to work through all of what you are feeling, so you might want to reschedule one or two social outings. After all, you can't bluff a good mood. Everyone will see right through your act in minutes. Just give yourself some time. You'll be through with this soon.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

No one likes risk, but today you might not be able to avoid it no matter how hard you try. So take a new attitude. Embrace the danger and try to see any gamble you're forced to take as an opportunity to mix things up in your routine and add some excitement to your life. Sure, a million things could go wrong, but you need to remember that no matter what happens, you can handle it. Whether the risks reward you or teach you a valuable lesson, you are moving to better things soon.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. His name could be loosely translated as "rule by, or supported by, horses" and is enshrined in the traditional doctors' oath. Who is he?

- A. Confucius
- B. Aesculapius
- C. Frankenstein
- D. Hippocrates

02. Where do arboreal animals live?

- A. In burrows
- B. In trees
- C. Beside streams
- D. On the ground

03. What creature is on the flag of Bhutan?

- A. Elephant
- B. Eagle
- C. Dragon
- D. Lion

Answers: 1.D 2.B 3.C



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Your flexibility should take a back seat today. You need to make a plan and stick to it no matter what anyone else says or promises. You can't tolerate any distractions if you want to get through your ample to-do list! Your "no compromises" manner might put off a few people, but only the people who are trying to slow you down or distract you from reaching your goals. There won't be many of those around you today anyway, so don't worry.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Winning gives you a great high in life, but it is a temporary one. If you are in a competition right now, take a moment today to step out of the race and examine your gamesmanship. Make sure that you know how to be competitive without being overbearing or too aggressive. It's good to have your eyes on the prize, but you need to see the bigger picture too. You don't want to win and then lose something in the process. Personal relationships need to be maintained.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You're about to get a lot of attention, but this popularity could end up being a burden. People may become too demanding of your time. You need to be ready to refuse invitations and beg off on social responsibilities that you don't really want to fulfill. You should feel free to spend more time with the people you actually like, not the people you want to impress. All of the people who need to be impressed by you already are.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Today, you could become involved in an intellectual argument, but it might not be one worth having. Make sure you aren't just being contrary because you want to stir up some excitement or you just don't like the other person very much. You don't have to go out of your way to be harmonious, but you also don't have to go out of your way to disagree with them. If they are wrong, just let them be wrong. It's really not worth the energy to try and change their mind.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Your intelligence is obvious to everyone around you right now, so don't be too surprised if other people start looking to you for all the answers to their problems. But you can't give them the correct answer. They have to figure these things out for themselves. All you can really do when people ask for you advice today is flatter them, then convince them that they are capable of finding their own answers. Give them a pep talk but avoid telling them how to live their life.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

It's unwise to let yourself get caught up in any power struggles today. Steer clear of any turf wars or petty little arguments. It might be difficult for you to stay neutral in a certain situation, but you should do whatever you can to stay objective, even if that means keeping your mouth shut or running from the room. People are likely to be far less angry at you for not committing than for choosing the side that isn't theirs. You need to play it safe right now.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

When you encounter a self-centered person who just loves showing off today, keep in mind that they are probably acting that way in order to hide some serious insecurities, so try to have some compassion for them. Approach them with kindness and empathy instead of challenging their behavior and turning other people against them. You will go a lot further by being sensitive to their insecurities than you will by giving them a hard time.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

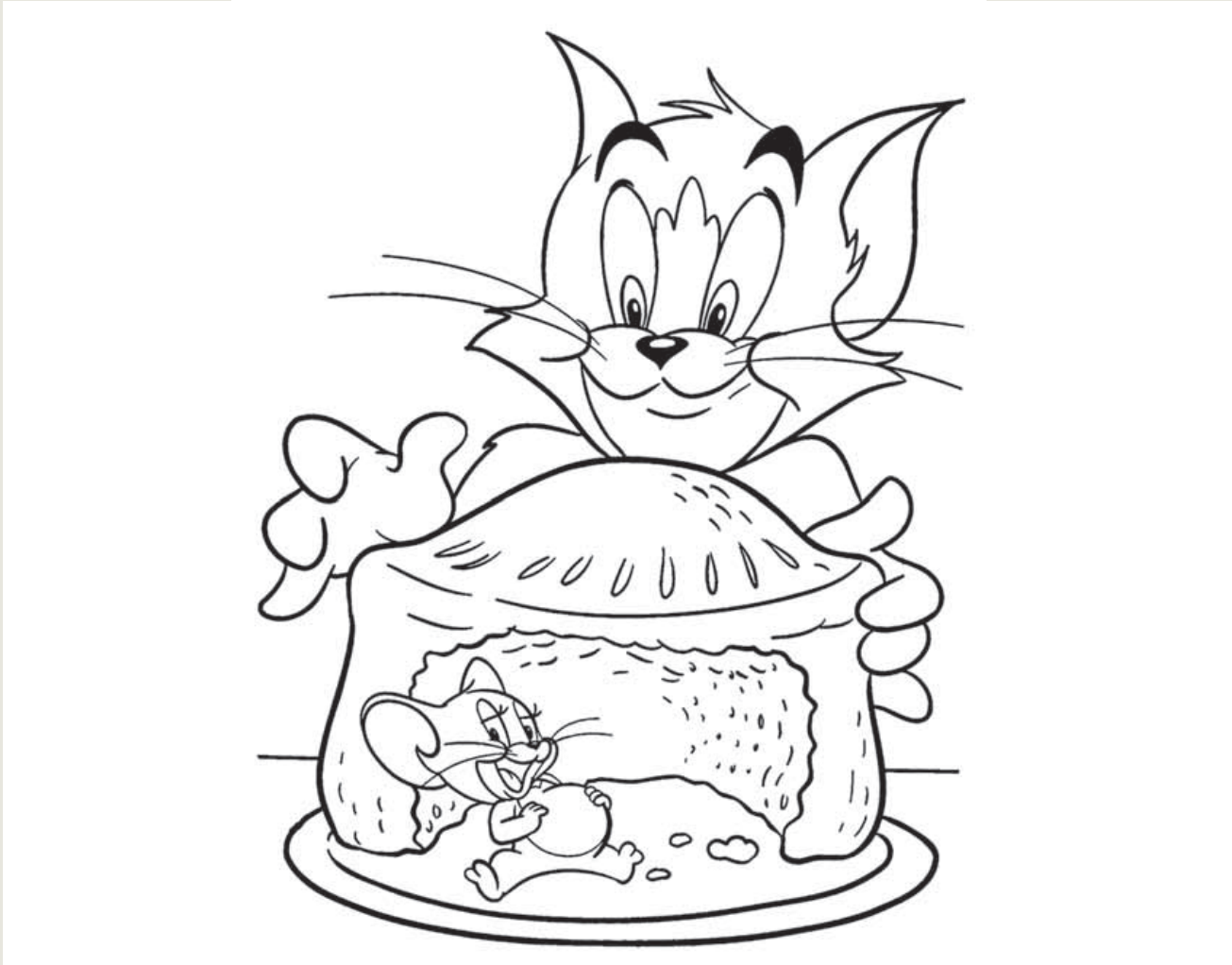
Clear your mind early this morning and get ready for your focus to shift to a brand-new challenge. But don't worry. This is a fun challenge that you have been waiting for. Take things slowly and stay in information gathering mode until you know you have everything you need to get started. Rushing will only force you to have to go back and revise your work later, and that's no fun. You are getting so close to a dream that it will be hard to hold back, but you've got to stay cool.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Just because a recent health concern turned out to be a false alarm doesn't mean that you should go right back to eating and (not) exercising the way you were before. Right now, you should take advantage of your increased awareness to make a few changes in your life. Focus on preventive measures and getting more active. Start playing the sports you enjoy instead of just watching them on TV. And add a few more vegetables to your daily menu.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

Y	I	I	R
B	E	D	S
U	I	R	S
A	G	A	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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

GIRONA STUN BARCELONA

High-flying side beat reigning champions 4-2 to restore LaLiga lead

Barcelona, Spain - Girona stunned Barcelona 4-2 away to reclaim the top spot in LaLiga and in the process handed the reigning champions their second league defeat of the season.

The match saw an impressive display from Girona who led 2-1 in the first half after goals from Artem Dovbyk and Miguel Gutierrez, with Robert Lewandowski scoring for Barcelona. Girona's Valery Fernandez and Cristhian Stuani also found the target after the break, while Ilkay Gundogan managed to pull one back for Barca.

This emphatic win propelled Girona to the league's summit with 41 points from 16 games, nudging ahead of Real Madrid, who are at 39 points after a draw against Real Betis.

Barcelona, who had previously only suffered defeat against Real at the end of October, now sit in fourth place with 34 points, level with Atletico Madrid, though Atletico have a game in hand.

"Girona have a lot of merit in what they are doing. They are in the lead, even more so today. They've got seven points more than us and that's well deserved," said Barca coach Xavi.

"It was an even game. If Barca won, we would also say it's fair. I think we shot 31 times. Maybe the errors in defence have taken their toll on us."

Girona were ahead in the 12th minute after a quick break through the right and Dovbyk



Girona's Miguel Gutierrez celebrates with teammates after scoring against Barcelona on Sunday

found the net with a shot that ricocheted off the bottom of the post, marking his eighth goal in his debut LaLiga season.

However, Lewandowski quickly answered for Barcelona, heading home a goal from a corner just seven minutes later, breaking his scoring drought

after almost a month.

Gutierrez added to Barcelona's woes before half-time, making a penetrating run into the box and securing a goal with a solo effort.

Fernandez further consolidated Girona's lead in the 80th minute, swiftly scoring a low shot

merely two minutes after stepping onto the field as a substitute. Although Gundogan managed to pull one back for Barcelona, Girona's Stuani sealed the deal with their fourth goal in stoppage time.

Girona's coach, Michel, praised his team's spirit, high-

lighting their belief in causing trouble for their opponents, especially against a formidable side like Barcelona. He acknowledged Barcelona's pressing play but emphasized that Girona capitalized on their strategy by making those crucial initial passes.

Despite Barcelona's 31 attempts during the game, with 11 on target, Girona's goalkeeper Paulo Gazzaniga thwarted numerous goal-scoring opportunities. Barcelona's defensive errors and Girona's efficiency in converting chances were reflected in the scoreline, with the visitors scoring from four out of their seven shots on target.

"This Girona side have a soul and believe they can hurt their opponents," coach Michel said.

"We knew that (Barca) were going to press hard but if we were able to make the first two passes, we would stand a chance."

The defeat is a setback for Xavi's Barcelona, who now face a mid-week Champions League fixture against Antwerp and an upcoming league clash against mid-table Valencia. Girona look to extend their impressive form when they host Alaves in their next league encounter on December 18th.

In another match, Atletico Madrid beat Almeria 2-1 with first half goals from Alvaro Morata and Angel Correa, extending the bottom side's winless streak to 16 games.



Manchester City's Jack Grealish scores against Luton City on Sunday

Man City edge past Luton to end four-match winless run

Luton Town, United Kingdom - Two quickfire second-half goals from Bernardo Silva and Jack Grealish earned Manchester City a hard-fought 2-1 win at Luton Town to secure a first league victory in five matches.

The champions, who were without the injured Erling Haaland, fell behind to Elijah Adebayo's header, but two goals in four minutes keep City in fourth, four points behind leaders Liverpool.

Pep Guardiola made four changes from the side that lost 1-0 to Aston Villa in midweek, with Haaland missing his first Premier League match of the season due to a foot injury.

Rico Lewis, John Stones and Manuel Akanji dropped to the bench, with Nathan Ake, Rodri, Mateo Kovacic and Grealish coming into the side. Julian Alvarez took up the centre-forward role in Haaland's absence.

City started brightly, with Phil Foden forcing a save from Thomas Kaminski before Silva blasted the rebound wide.

The visitors continued to probe for the opening goal, with Rodri's shot from distance stinging the palms of Kaminski before Foden forced another save from the Luton 'keeper.

But it was Luton who took a surprise lead in the second minute of first-half stoppage time through Adebayo.

Ross Barkley produced a sublime piece of skill in central midfield to initiate a Luton attack down the right. Andros

Townsend came back inside on his left foot, and his deep cross was headed in at the far post by Adebayo for the forward's fourth goal of the season.

City have now fallen 1-0 behind in three successive Premier League matches for the first time since November 2019, during the last season they failed to win the title.

Guardiola's side began the second half on the front foot, and went agonisingly close to equalising when Ruben Dias' shot was tipped on to the crossbar by Kaminski.

But the champions did level on 62 minutes, Rodri driving into the penalty area before the ball fell to Silva, who whipped a terrific strike into the bottom-left corner.

And City went in front three minutes later through Grealish.

After regaining possession in the final third, Alvarez got in down the right, and with Teden Mengi unable to intercept the Argentinian's cross, Grealish slotted low past Kaminski from a tight angle.

Everton secured a third consecutive league victory as second-half goals from Abdoulaye Doucoure and a first in the Premier League for Lewis Dobbin earned a 2-0 success over Chelsea at Goodison Park.

Fulham continued their rich vein of goalscoring form after they scored five goals for the second time this week as they comfortably dispatched West Ham United 5-0.

Richarlison double inspires Spurs to brilliant win over Newcastle

London, United Kingdom - Richarlison scored twice as Tottenham Hotspur beat Newcastle United 4-1 to earn their first win in six Premier League matches.

Destiny Udogie also scored his first league goal and Son Heung-min converted a penalty as Newcastle fell to a second consecutive defeat.

The result leaves Spurs in fifth with 30 points, four clear of seventh-placed Newcastle.

Newcastle went close to opening the scoring on nine minutes, but Ben Davies got his toe to Anthony Gordon's cross,



denying Alexander Isak a simple tap-in.

Spurs took the lead in the 26th minute through Udogie.

After playing the ball to Son down the left, Udogie ran into the penalty area and was on hand to slot in from the South Korean's low cross.

Miguel Almiron shot tamely at Guglielmo Vicario as Newcastle looked to respond, but it was Spurs who doubled their lead seven minutes before half-time.

Kieran Trippier was caught out by a long crossfield pass, and after Son dribbled past the New-

castle right-back, he cut the ball back to Richarlison, who swept into the far corner.

It was 3-0 on the hour-mark, with Pedro Porro's superb lofted pass finding Richarlison, who brought the ball down before slotting through Martin Dubravka's legs.

The Brazilian's two goals against Newcastle matched his tally from his previous 39 Premier League appearances.

Brennan Johnson crashed a shot against a post and Son flashed an effort across goal with Spurs now rampant.

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Florian Wirtz scored Bayer Leverkusen's equaliser against Stuttgart

'FAIR RESULT'

Leaders Leverkusen held 1-1 at Stuttgart for second straight draw

Stuttgart, Germany - Bayer Leverkusen were held 1-1 by VfB Stuttgart, the second consecutive draw for the Bundesliga leaders, who are still ahead by four points at the top of the table.

Xabi Alonso's side, unbeaten in the league this season have 36 points, while second-placed Bayern Munich, after a 5-1 loss to Eintracht Frankfurt, sit on 32 points with a game in hand. Stuttgart remained third on 31 points.

"It was a very interesting game with two different halves," Alonso said. "In the first half, we really felt the flow of Stuttgart.

They played really well.

"We reacted after the break, we were calmer with the ball and carved out our chances. It's a fair result."

The draw extended Leverkusen's unbeaten streak to 22 games across all competitions this season, showcasing their consistent form.

The match began at a high tempo, with Leverkusen's Amine Adli hitting the woodwork in the ninth minute. Meanwhile, Stuttgart missed a clear opportunity with Serhou Guirassy in the 26th after having come close on two prior occasions. Despite Lev-

erkusen's early dominance, it was Stuttgart who broke the deadlock five minutes before halftime, with Chris Fuehrich tapping in from close range.

Leverkusen showed resilience and emerged strongly in the second half. They swiftly found an equaliser just two minutes after the break, as Granit Khaka set up Victor Boniface down the left, whose cross was volleyed in by Florian Wirtz, the German international.

The visitors almost turned the scoreline in their favour when Khaka's strike hit the post in the 49th minute. Both teams had ample opportunities to clinch the win, with goalkeepers Lukas Hradecky and Alexander Nuebel making crucial saves throughout the game.

Roma hold Fiorentina despite double red cards

Rome, Italy - AS Roma managed a 1-1 draw against Fiorentina in Serie A despite finishing the match with nine men after losing two players to red cards.

Romelu Lukaku struck early, heading in Paulo Dybala's precise cross to give Roma the lead in the fifth minute. However, their advantage dwindled when Nicola Zalewski received his second yellow card, reducing Roma to 10 men. Shortly after, Fiorentina capitalised, equalising through Lucas Martinez Quarta's header.

The game took a more dramatic turn as Lukaku, already on the scoresheet, was sent off with a direct red card for a sliding tackle on Fiorentina's Christian Kouame, leaving Roma with nine players. Despite the numerical



AS Roma's Romelu Lukaku scores against Fiorentina on Sunday

disadvantage, Roma held on to secure the draw.

The result placed Roma in

13. Fiorentina are in seventh place with 24 points.

Fiorentina's M'Bala Nzola came close to finding the target in the first half, only to be thwarted by Roma goalkeeper Rui Patricio's quick reflexes. There were concerns for Roma's Dybala, who was substituted after appearing to twist his knee in a tackle.

"They were only down to nine for a few minutes. Our whole second half was extraordinary, we tried in every way to get it back on track after taking the wrong initial approach, which Roma made the most of," Fiorentina manager Vincenzo Italiano told DAZN.

In an earlier game on Sunday, Bologna beat Salernitana 2-1.

Muscat CT, Glam Homes win

Muscat - Muscat CT defeated Majees CC by six wickets in the Premier Division League powered by Muscat Pharmacy LLC at the Oman Cricket Academy grounds on Friday.

Ashish Odedra, with an unbeaten century, was the star for Muscat CT, who reached the target of 242 in the 47th over.

Earlier Zeeshan Maqsood (64), Lakpriya Ravindra (37) and Jan Shafiq, with a quick-fire 39, helped Majees CC make 241. Samay Shrivastav was the pick of the bowlers for Muscat CT scalping three wickets while Siddharth Prasad and Akash Mohite took two each.

In A Division, Glam Homes defeated Orient Travels. Orient Travels were all out for



Ashish Odedra scored an unbeaten century for Muscat CT

191 despite half centuries from Sajith Fernando and Ibrar Husain. Usman Ali and Yagnik Pandya took three wickets each for Glam Homes.

In reply, Glam Homes reached the target with three wickets and 10 overs to spare thanks to Mohammed Asghar's 47 and a cru-

cial half century by Shehbaz Nasar.

In another A Division match on Saturday, Vanderlande thrashed Sarco.

BRIEF SCORES: Majees CC 241/10 in 49.4 overs (Zeeshan Maqsood 64(73); Samay Shrivastav 3/40) lost to Muscat CT 244/4 in 46.2 overs (Ashish Odedra 105(107) by 6 wickets. Orient Travels 191/10 in 44 overs (Sajith Fernando 64(73); Usman Ali 3/40) lost to Glam Homes 196/7 in 40.4 overs (Shehbaz Nasar 54(49) by 3 wickets. Vanderlande 260/10 in 47.5 overs (Aiyappan Bakthavachalu 88(91); Guru Kotian 3/31) beat Sarco 58/10 in 20.3 overs by 202 runs.

First T20 between South Africa and India washed out

Durban, South Africa - The first T20I between South Africa and India, crucial for both teams ahead of the T20 World Cup, ended in a washout without a single ball bowled in Durban.

Drizzle persisted throughout the day, disappointing the capacity crowd as the match was abandoned nearly two hours after its scheduled start time.

The washout disrupts the teams' plans, particularly South Africa's strategy to field their best players ahead of the Tests.

The series' second and third matches are scheduled for Gqeberha and Johannesburg, respectively, but rain looms over St. George's Park on Tuesday.

MUSCAT DAILY

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1 YEAR

(Print edition)

R015

6 MONTHS

(Print edition)

R015

1 YEAR

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HAMMERTOES AND BUNIONS

If your second, third, or fourth toe is crossed, bent in the middle of the toe joint, or just pointing at an odd angle, you may have what's called a hammertoe. Ill-fitting shoes contribute to the formation of hammertoes, and your genetics may put you at greater risk, as well, according to Cleveland Clinic.

If your toe is still flexible, your doctor may suggest that you wear roomier, more comfortable footwear. In addition, wearing inserts or foot pads can help reposition your toe. But if your toe becomes fixed in the bent position, pain will set in, and you may need surgery, according to Mayo Clinic. When hammertoes press against the insides of your shoes, corns and calluses may also form on them.

A bunion is a bony bump at the base of the big-toe joint. The changes within the foot that cause the bump also cause the big toe to turn inward, toward the smaller toes. Bunions can result from congenital deformities, arthritis, trauma, heredity, or habitually wearing shoes that are too narrow in the toe.

Regardless of what caused them in the first place, bunions can be made worse by high heels and constrictive shoes. Conservative treatment for bunions includes wider shoes, padded shoe inserts, and over-the-counter pain relievers. If those methods fail to relieve pain and allow for normal walking, the Mayo Clinic says, surgery may be recommended to help return the big toe to its normal position.



Gluten-free diets



NUTRITION & YOU

People opting for a gluten-free diet has risen tremendously all over the world. From celebrities to the common man, all are vouching for this diet. Can this diet be taken up by anyone irrespective of age, or health status? In simple words, no one diet works for all and every diet has a specific purpose. In the same way, this diet is not for everyone. Let's get a little deeper into this and understand the risks associated with this diet and if it is really what you need.

What is gluten and gluten-free diet?
Gluten is a protein found in wheat and some other grains. A gluten-free diet means excluding all products made from wheat and wheat grains. It means

opting for fruits, veggies, animal food, dairy and highly processed gluten-free pasta and bread. Chickpea flour, almond flour, coconut flour, and millets are some of the examples of gluten-free flour which are used in making breads, pancakes, cookies and even cakes.

Gluten is a natural protein found in wheat but owing to its binding properties, it is also added to foods like pizza, pasta, baked goods, even in medications, ice creams or soya sauce.

A common mistake which is often seen is that people going for gluten-free, remove all carbs from the diet, which includes, rice, potatoes, some lentils and beans.

Who should opt for a gluten-free diet?
This has been broadly categorised into 3 groups:

- **People with wheat sensitivity**
In these individuals, the allergic reaction is in response to wheat and not gluten. Symptoms associated with this are headache, skin rashes, and sneezing. Gluten found in other foods, like barley or rye is well tolerated by these individuals.

- **People with gluten sensitivity**
Gluten intolerance is the cause for these individuals to remove gluten from their diet. There is no clear definition to explain gluten intolerance, but at the same time, gastrointestinal irritation should not always be related to gluten.
- **People with celiac disease**
It is necessary for people with celiac disease to remove gluten from their diet. Celiac disease is a condition wherein an autoimmune response to gluten results in an attack on the large intestine, resulting in cramps, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea. Diagnostic tools are available to check the presence of this disease.

From the above, it is very clear that only people with certain conditions can go for gluten-free. But if unknowingly or without proper understanding one goes for Gluten-free, then one could face some risks:

- Gluten-containing foods are good sources of healthy carbs, B vitamins and minerals, like, Magnesium and iron. Removing these foods can result in nutritional imbalance.
- Healthy carbs in foods help to regulate blood sugar levels in diabetics and also keep a check on cholesterol levels, hence going gluten-free, means a poor intake of healthy carbs which, in turn, increases the risk for chronic diseases.
- Highly processed gluten-free products are rich in sugar, sodium and fat. Regular consumption of these can result in weight gain, blood sugar swings, and high blood pressure.

Remember:

- Foods labelled gluten-free are not always healthy
- All gastrointestinal symptoms are not associated with gluten intolerance
- Avoid highly processed foods first to check if gastro symptoms subside, before attacking gluten.
- The potential risk associated with gluten-free is much more than the potential benefits.

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

Lower back pain red flags



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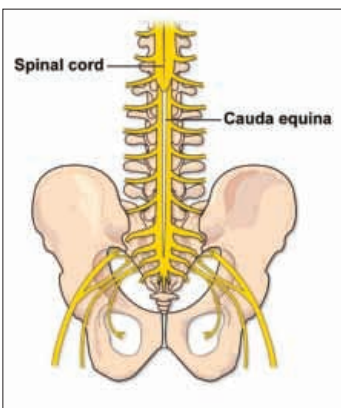
The human spine is so much more than a series of vertebrae that move your back and head. It helps control and protects the spinal cord, central nervous system, and peripheral nerve roots which are vital for your entire body's coordination and function. The spinal cord serves as a link between the brain and the rest of the body and organs.

There are 23 vertebrae in the spine interconnected by ligaments, muscles and intervertebral discs. The lumbar spine consists of five vertebrae - the largest part of the spine. It supports the upper body, distributes body weight, protects the spinal cord and cauda equina, and controls lower limb movement.

Lower back pain
Lower back pain can be a leading cause of disability. The incidence of low back pain is around 10% globally. The common form (more than 80%) of lower back pain is mechanical, non-important, and self-limiting in a maximum of six weeks.

Common risk factors
General causes include age, sex, poor general health, physical stress, psychological stress, smoking.

Specific causes include infection, malignancy, traumatic and non-traumatic fractures and dislocation, spinal cord and nerve root compression lesions.



Red flags

- The presence of low back pain under age 18 or over age 50 years
- New onset low back pain
- Anticoagulants or antiplatelet users with low back discomfort
- Low back pain and fever
- Genitourinary symptoms, urinary retention or incontinence or bowel incontinence
- Back pain in immune-compromised patients often present a challenge for clinicians
- Low back pain in IV drug abusers, haemodialysis patients alcohol abusers, and diabetics
- Back pain in recent back surgery history or epidural injections or epidural anaesthesia
- Low back pain after trauma, accident, falling
- Low back pain in patients with a history of malignancy
- Low back pain with weight loss
- Giving special attention to those

with unexplained weight loss, night pain, or pain at rest

- Back pain associated with radicular lower limb pain
- Low back pain with lower limb weaknesses
- Refractory lower back pain non-stop

It is necessary to examine back pain in elderly patients, especially in patients with sciatica develop cauda equina syndrome. The diagnostic criteria for CES are the presence of urinary or rectal retention/incontinence/sexual dysfunction as well as saddle or anal anaesthesia or hypoaesthesia.

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www.muscatdaily.com

Executive Chairman & Editor-in-Chief
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Printed at Apex Printing Press, Jiffnain

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