



H M receives credentials of envoys

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received credentials of 12 ambassadors accredited to the Sultanate of Oman separately at Al Alam Palace on Monday.

During meetings on the sidelines with His Majesty the Sultan, the ambassadors conveyed greetings of their countries' leaders and their best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to His Majesty. They wished the Omani people further development and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty.

They also expressed their great honour and delight at presenting their credentials to His Majesty and committed to exerting all efforts to promote relations of their respective countries with Oman in various spheres in a manner that serves the joint interests of the Omani people and

NEW AMBASSADORS		
Showkutally Soodhun , Ambassador of the Republic of Mauritius to the Sultanate of Oman	Duncan Mulima , Ambassador of the Republic of Zambia to the Sultanate of Oman	Jacques Yacoub Nahayo , Ambassador of the Republic of Burundi to the Sultanate of Oman
Christophe Farnaud , Ambassador of the European Union to the Sultanate of Oman	Razim Colic , Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Sultanate of Oman	Nikoloz Revazishvili , Ambassador of Georgia to the Sultanate of Oman
Jean-Philippe Linteau , Ambassador of Canada to the Sultanate of Oman	Roberto Ebert Grob , Ambassador of the Republic of Chile to the Sultanate of Oman	Miroslav Sestovic , Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to the Sultanate of Oman
U Tin Yu , Ambassador of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Sultanate of Oman	Dan Munyuza , Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the Sultanate of Oman	Uk Sarun , Ambassador of the Kingdom of Cambodia to the Sultanate of Oman

their countries' citizens.

His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the ambassadors, expressing his gratitude for their leaders' greetings and best wishes. His Majesty affirmed that

they would receive all support from him, the government and the Omani people to facilitate carrying out their duties.

The credentials presentation ceremony was attended by the

Minister of Diwan of Royal Court, the Foreign Minister, the Commander of Royal Guard of Oman, the Head of Royal Protocols, and the Military Aides to His Majesty.

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Oman jumps 99 places in environmental index



GCC RANKS	
UAE	49
OMAN	50
QATAR	69
KUWAIT	80
SAUDI ARABIA	89
BAHRAIN	120

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman has leapfrogged 99 places to rank 50th in the 2024 Environmental Performance Index (EPI), a major recognition for the sultanate. It was ranked 149th in the 2022 index.

The sultanate is ranked second in the GCC and the Middle East in the index published by Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy and Columbia University's Center for International Earth Science Information Network.

Released on Monday, the index ranks 180 countries based on 58 performance indicators to track progress on mitigating climate change, promoting environmental health, and safeguarding ecosystem vitality.

Compiled data evaluates efforts by the nations to reach UN sustainability goals, the 2015 Paris Climate Change Agree-

ment, as well as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Oman's EPI score is 51.9, performing exceptionally well - ranked first - in indicators like Marine protection stringency, Bottom trawling in economic zones, Bottom trawling in global ocean, Adjusted emissions growth rate for sulphur dioxide, Relative crop yield, and Adjusted emissions growth rate for black carbon.

The country is among top five, ranked fourth, in both the Wastewater collected and treated indicators.

In the GCC, UAE leads ranked 49th, followed by Oman, Qatar (69th), Kuwait (80th), Saudi Arabia (89th) and Bahrain (120th).

Estonia leads this year's rankings with a 40% drop in greenhouse gas emissions over the last decade, largely attributed to replacing dirty oil shale power

plants with cleaner energy sources. It is followed by Luxembourg, Germany, Finland, United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Austria, Switzerland and Denmark making the top ten.

Vietnam and other developing countries in Southeast and Southern Asia, such as Pakistan, Laos, Myanmar, India and Bangladesh are ranked the lowest, indicating the urgency of international cooperation to help provide a path for struggling nations to achieve sustainability.

The 2024 EPI also found that many countries that were leading in sustainability goals have fallen behind or stalled, illustrating the challenges of reducing emissions in hard-to-decarbonise industries and resistant sectors such as agriculture. In several countries, recent drops in agricultural greenhouse emissions have been the result of external circumstances, not policy.



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H M receives credentials of envoys

Continued from Page 01



Roberto Ebert Grob, Chile



Nikoloz Revazishvili, Georgia



Dan Munyuza, Rwanda



Razim Colic, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Uk Sarun, Cambodia



Showkutally Soodhun, Mauritius



Miroslav Sestovic, Serbia



Jacques Yacoub Nahayo, Burundi



Christophe Farnaud, European Union



U Tin Yu, Myanmar



Duncan Mulima, Zambia

Embassy of Italy marks National Day

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Embassy of Italy observed its National Day at Grand Hyatt Muscat on Sunday.

Held under the patronage of H E Khalid bin Hashil bin Mohammed al Muselhi, Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs in Foreign Ministry, the event was attended by State Council and Majlis A'Shura members, armed forces personnel, and Foreign Ministry and other government officials.

Addressing the gathering, H E Pierluigi D'Elia, Ambassador of Italy to Oman, said, "Today, we celebrate a successful 52-year-old story of friendship, bilateral cooperation and harmony between the two countries with a



shared mission towards a solid commitment to international peace and security, prosperity, justice and human development. "This reception highlights our years of friendship, mutual understanding and cooperation in many fields, including diplomatic relations, education, culture, economy, technology, sport and people."

Over 19,000 visit Sur al Khamis in Musannah in 4 months

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Sur al Khamis heritage site in the wilayat of Musannah in South Batinah has seen visitor numbers swell to 19,866 since its opening in early January till the end of April this year, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has stated.

Badriya bint Mubarak al Buisaidi, Director of Department of Castles, Forts and Historical Monuments in MHT, stated that an investment in Sur al Khamis by a private company managing the

site aligns with the ministry's efforts to utilise cultural heritage sustainably. "These efforts aim to create both direct and indirect job opportunities, empower small and medium enterprises, support productive families, establish marketing outlets for craftsmen, enhance local tourism, and revive cultural heritage sites." She explained that handing the management of Sur al Khamis to a private company is part of MHT's goal to develop and offer diverse tourist destinations and experiences across governorates.

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Over 40 new hotels to open in two years: Tourism minister

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is set to add over 40 new hotels in the next two years, according to Salim Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

The announcement was made at the inauguration of Mandarin Oriental Muscat held under the patronage of Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Sunday evening.

The event was graced by Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Special Representative of His Majesty the Sultan.

On the occasion, Nicolas Dubort, General Manager of Mandarin Oriental Muscat, said, "It is our great pleasure to introduce this beachfront gem to the local community and the world, as we commit to delivering



(Supplied photo)

exquisite experiences that honour Omani hospitality, mirror its rich culture and set the benchmark for its luxury offerings. This charming resort truly captures Muscat at heart".

Located in Shatti al Qurum,

Mandarin Oriental Muscat boasts of 103 rooms and 47 suites, in addition to several halls and other amenities. Designed by renowned French interior designer Xavier Cartron, the hotel stands out for its striking ele-

gance, promising unforgettable tourist experiences. Notably, the hotel's design incorporates elements inspired by Oman's natural beauty, showcasing locally sourced materials.

During the inauguration,

Mahrouqi underscored the significance of upcoming hospitality projects, highlighting their pivotal role within a broader spectrum of developments slated for this and next year.

"Oman is committed to introducing a diverse range of tourism infrastructure, including the unveiling of 40 to 47 hotels alongside complementary amenities like tourist resorts and guest houses," he said.

These projects, the minister stressed, are poised to make substantial contributions to Oman's economic landscape, particularly in the Muscat governorate, where these are expected to significantly boost the tourism sector.

Mahrouqi expressed optimism for Oman to attract unprecedented levels of tourists this year and beyond, consolidating its reputation as a premier destination on the global tourism map.

Forum highlights role of innovation in economic growth

Our Correspondent
Muscat



The Ministry of Labour, in cooperation with Dar al Khebra Investment, organised an event called Knowledge-Based Economy Conference on Monday to review the latest research and studies on the role of knowledge and innovation in achieving economic growth.

The conference aimed to facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge between experts and interested participants in this field.

The forum was attended by economic and development experts, representatives of economic planning and finance departments, project and initiative leaders, innovation experts, and entrepreneurs.

Key topics of deliberation at the conference included challenges and opportunities facing knowledge-based economies, emphasising the importance of enhancing economic coopera-

tion and partnerships to achieve sustainable development goals.

Discussions focused on the role of technology and innovation in stimulating economic growth and analysed the impact of economic policies on promoting knowledge and innovation. Additionally, the conference explored the roles of both the public and private sectors in supporting a knowledge-based economy, as well as the legislation regulating modern technology.

Construction of central fruits and vegetables market begins in Ibra

Our Correspondent
Ibra

North Sharqiyah Municipality has commenced construction of an integrated fruits and vegetables central market in the wilayat of Ibra.

Zubaida bint Salim al Shidhaniya, Spokesperson of Governorate of North Sharqiyah, informed that the project includes an integrated central market covering an area of



(Supplied image)

The wilayats of North Sharqiyah serve as a food basket of many seasonal crops. Consequently, the market will provide opportunities for investors and facilitate the promotion and sale of local products

ZUBAIDA AL SHIDHANIYA

approximately 1,404sqm.

"The wilayats of North Sharqiyah serve as a food basket of many seasonal crops. Consequently, the market will provide opportunities for investors and facilitate the promotion and sale of local products," Zubaida said.

The project will feature 12 shops, four cold stores, and an external yard for buying and selling. Additionally, it will include service facilities, public parking, external canopies, landscaping,

and recreational facilities.

Zubaida added that the central market will stimulate commercial activity in Ibra and throughout North Sharqiyah. "The project will be a significant contributor to local markets in the wilayat, supplying retail stores with vegetables and fruits. This is due to the diversity of agricultural crops in the governorate, including grapes, mangoes, lemons, leafy greens, various date crops and citrus fruits."

MAFWR helps set up 32 model farms in S Batinah to enhance food security

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) facilitated the establishment of 32 model farms worth RO1mn in South Batinah in 2023.

The ministry has developed an integrated package that includes modern irrigation systems, cultivation of suitable crop varieties, and effective horticultural practices to support setting up the farms.

Amer bin Humaid al Shibli, Director General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in the governorate, emphasised the multifaceted objectives of establishing these model farms. "We aim to bolster food security by leveraging modern agricultural technologies to cultivate various crops. These farms contribute to expanding

green areas within the region and supplying local markets with a diverse range of produce, while also increasing farmers' incomes and reducing reliance on imports."

The farms also play a crucial role in growing local varieties - including mangoes and grapes - while adhering to specifications and standards set by MAFWR.

The ministry's support to establishing model farms include providing land via usufruct contracts, streamlining procedures for obtaining land rights, offering guidance through field visits, and setting comprehensive schedules for production stages throughout the year. Some farms also receive electricity supply.

According to Shibli, ten new applications have been received for establishment of more model farms in South Batinah through the Tatweer platform.



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BRIEFS

Russia's Rosneft reports 93% jump in Q1 profit

Russian oil giant Rosneft increased its quarter-on-quarter income by around 92.8% despite market price volatility and western sanctions against Russia, the company said in its financial results statement.

Rosneft recorded a net income of 486bn rubles (roughly \$5.4bn) in the first quarter of 2024. The company had earned around \$2.8bn during the last quarter of 2023.

The company achieved growth in key financial indicators "despite market price volatility and increased external pressure, including new sanctions by unfriendly countries, as well as the impact of the OPEC+ agreement on operating performance," Rosneft's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Igor Sechin, said in the statement.

Bank lending up 2.9% in March, deposits jump 12%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Total outstanding credit extended by Oman's banking sector grew by 2.9% year-on-year to reach RO30.8bn at the end of March 2024, the latest statistics released by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) showed.

Of the total bank lending, credit to the sultanate's private sector demonstrated a relatively higher growth of 3.6% year-on-year to reach RO25.9bn as of March 31, 2024, the CBO said in its monthly statistical bulletin.

The shares of the non-financial corporate sector and household sector (mainly under personal loans) in total private sector credit stood at 45.4% and 45%, respectively. The share of financial corporations was 5.8%, and other sectors received the remaining 3.8% of total private sector credit.

The combined balance sheet of conventional banks showed a year-on-year growth of just 0.8% in total outstanding credit as of end-March 2024.

The conventional banks' credit to the private sector increased by 1.6% to RO20.3bn, while their overall investments in securities went up by 28% to RO5.7bn. The conventional banks' investment in govern-



Total assets of Islamic banks and windows rose 14.8% on a year-on-year basis to RO7.6bn and constituted about 17.7% of banking system's assets at end of March 2024

ment development bonds increased by 17.1% to RO1.8bn, while their investments in foreign securities dramatically increased by 139% to RO2.3bn at the end of March 2024.

On the other hand, Islamic banking entities provided total financing of RO6.3bn at the end of March 2024, recording a growth of 12% over that a year ago. The total assets of Islamic banks and windows increased by 14.8% on a year-on-year basis to RO7.6bn and constituted about 17.7% of the banking system's assets at

the end of March 2024.

The data issued by the central bank indicated that total deposits held with the banking sector registered a robust year-on-year growth of 11.7% to RO30.3bn at the end of March 2024. Total private sector deposits grew even higher at a 13.7% rate to RO20.2bn.

In terms of the sector-wise composition of private sector deposits, the share of household deposits stood at 49.8%, followed by non-financial corporations at 30.9%, financial

corporations at 16.5%, and other sectors at 2.8%.

Aggregate deposits held with Oman's conventional banks increased by 10.2% year-on-year to RO24.4bn at end-March 2024. The government deposits with conventional banks witnessed a decrease of 2.8% to RO5.2bn. Deposits from public enterprises grew 38.1% to RO2.5bn. Private sector deposits, which accounted for 65.7% of total deposits with conventional banks, increased by 9.7% as of March 2024 to reach RO16bn.



Sohar Port receives first shipment of marine biofuel

Suhaar - Sohar Port received its first shipment of biofuel to begin the experimental phase of using this fuel in tug and barge operations in cooperation with three companies: Svitzer, Woqod, and Hormuz Marine Company.

Through these operations, Sohar Port seeks to cut down greenhouse gas emissions by 17%, in line with Oman's plan for carbon neutrality by the year 2050.

Biofuel constitutes one of the renewable energy sources. It is produced locally from cooking oil and serves as an environmentally friendly alternative.

The move to use biofuel spearheads the strategy of Sohar Port and Freezone to promote the circular economy. It supports economic development in Oman by maintaining the sustainability of its natural resources.

Emile Hoogsteden, CEO of Sohar Port, said that the use of biofuels will significantly con-

tribute to reducing the level of harmful emissions. He pointed out that this project is an example to be emulated in the region and beyond.

The project is an outcome of efforts undertaken by the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology and its strategic partners in the Omani ports to develop strategic plans with the aim of transitioning to green mobility and achieving carbon neutrality in Oman by 2050.

The ministry is joining hands with other government units to implement 18 carbon laboratory initiatives in the field of green ports. It devised a roadmap for projects to reduce emissions, modify equipment to operate with electric power and smart systems, connect ships to sources of electric power, and remove carbon from the ports sector.

ONA

Oman Air upgrades its distribution capabilities

Muscat - Oman Air has unveiled a significant enhancement to its distribution capabilities, ushering in a new era of convenience and choice. Partnering with Accelya, a global leader in software and technology solutions, the airline has introduced cutting-edge functionality that will enable its trade partners to seamlessly manage their customers' travel needs.

Part of the airline's ambitious retail transformation programme, it leverages the latest IATA New Distribution Capability (NDC) technology, representing a substantial advancement from the previous booking tools available to travel agents.

"NDC stands as a pivotal tool, empowering us with enhanced flexibility and control over our distribution channels. Oman Air's NDC journey has yielded significant growth in recent years and our partnership with Accelya marks an important milestone in this journey," Con Korfiatis, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Air,



said in a press release.

"Not only does the new upgrade support us to streamline our customer experience and enable us to scale up and provide more robust services, it also represents a significant reduction in our distribution costs, paving the way for more efficient operations and revenue diversification," he added.

Sam Gilliland, Chief Executive Officer at Accelya, said, "We are delighted that Oman Air has chosen Accelya to take control of their retailing future and help them on the journey to Offer & Order transformation. More and more airlines, covering a range of scale and operating models, are

choosing Accelya's FLX Platform due to our track record of delivering fast, impactful results."

In addition to enhancing its distribution capabilities, Oman Air is bolstering its loyalty system, also powered by Accelya, with enriched customer relationship management (CRM) capabilities. This includes advanced campaign management features and a dedicated partner portal, enabling the airline to implement coalition loyalty programmes and unlock new revenue streams through loyalty points sales.

As an early adopter of NDC technology, Oman Air continues to be at the centre of shaping the future of retailing technology.

Liva Group partners with iO Health to revolutionise healthcare in GCC

Dubai, UAE - Liva Group, a leading multi-line insurer in the GCC, and iO Health, an AI and healthcare digital innovation company, announced a strategic partnership aimed at redefining transformative healthcare solutions, emphasising a holistic and innovative approach to health and wellness for Liva's customers across the region.

Liva and iO Health are uniting to address evolving healthcare needs by leveraging digital technologies to improve the healthcare experience. At the heart of this partnership is a shared commitment to revolutionise the healthcare ecosystem, focusing on a patient-centered model that transcends conventional healthcare delivery.

Together, Liva and iO Health will deploy the iO Health Intelligent Care Journey Platform, integrating advanced digital solutions to offer comprehensive, immediate, and personalised healthcare services. This includes tele-consultations, bespoke



healthcare management for primary and chronic conditions, exclusive health and wellness benefits, and continuous digital support, all aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of healthcare.

In a press release, Martin Rueegg, Group CEO of Liva, said, "At Liva, we recognise the opportunity for innovation and evolution in healthcare practices, both locally here in the UAE, and beyond. Our focus goes beyond mere technological advancements; it's about reshaping the fabric of how healthcare is delivered today. We are committed to pioneering this change and are excited to be working with like-minded partners in iO Health."

"Together, we aim to set new standards for healthcare accessibility, quality, and effectiveness that enhance the experience of the customer. This partnership marks a pivotal moment in our journey beyond insurance, towards a future where every individual has access to personalized, holistic healthcare solutions that prioritise well-being and preventive care," he added.

Dr Haidar al Yousuf, CEO of iO Health, said, "We are delighted to join forces with Liva. Our Intelligent Care Journey Platform is designed to enhance healthcare delivery by making it more proactive, personalized, and accessible. Partnering with Liva allows us to extend the reach of our innovative solutions, ultimately improving health outcomes and patient experiences across the GCC. Together, we're setting a new standard for what healthcare can achieve, demonstrating the power of technology to transform lives."

Leveraging AI, Digital Twin Technology, and comprehensive data analysis, the Intelligent Care Journey Platform promises a new era of healthcare that is proactive, predictive, and personalised.

This partnership not only aligns with Liva's mission to pioneer health sector improvements but also marks a significant leap towards a healthier, more informed community with sustainable healthcare costs.

Dhofar Global, Palmade join hands to promote sustainability across GCC

Muscat - Dhofar Global, a leading B2B supplier of essential products in the Middle East, and Palmade, a UAE-based company that offers locally manufactured biodegradable products, have announced a strategic partnership.

The partnership aims to deliver on the sustainability promises of both companies and advance the pressing green agenda by helping businesses throughout the GCC region replace single-use plastic products with eco-friendly, high-quality alternatives.

Using its extensive customer base, in-depth market expertise and wide geographic reach throughout the GCC region, Dhofar Global will further drive



sales across the region and introduce Palmade's biodegradable solutions to its wide range of clients in HORECA, facility management and corporate sectors.

In a press release, Faleh al Abri, CEO of Dhofar Global, said,

"Our collaboration with Palmade is a testament to our commitment to provide sustainable solutions to clients and help them reduce their environmental impact. We are particularly pleased with this partnership as it aligns

with our strategic goal of supporting local manufacturers and helping them grow by providing access to our extensive client base throughout the GCC region. The shift to sustainability is essential for preserving our planet,

and we aim to accelerate this transition by guiding our clients on this journey and promoting sustainable practices across various operational domains."

The sustainability goals of both Dhofar Global and Palmade

as well as their partnership align closely with UAE's resolution to ban single-use plastic items starting January 1, 2025. These items include shopping bags, plastic stirrers, table covers, cups, Styrofoam food containers, plastic straws and plastic cotton swabs.

Lamis al Hashimy at Palmade, said, "Dhofar Global's wealth of expertise and strong market presence position it as an ideal partner as we strive to broaden our horizons and introduce eco-friendly products to untapped businesses and markets. Through this collaboration we aim to connect with clients in the UAE, Oman, Qatar and beyond, further advancing our core objective of expanding and fortifying our mar-

ket footprint, ultimately shaping a more sustainable future for the region. Our commitment to sustainability remains unwavering and we are delighted to join forces with Dhofar Global in championing this cause."

Recognising the challenges faced in adopting sustainable practices, Dhofar Global and Palmade, are dedicated to catalysing this transition by showcasing the benefits of sustainable business operations to customers and end users. With a solid go-to-market strategy, Dhofar Global is well-equipped to ensure a successful collaboration with Palmade, supporting businesses of all sizes across the region to embrace environment-friendly practices.

IATA projects sustainable aviation fuels production to triple in 2024

Dubai, UAE - The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced that its projections for a tripling of Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) production in 2024 to 1.9bn liters (1.5mn tonnes) are on track. This would account for 0.53% of aviation's fuel need in 2024.

To accelerate SAF use, there are several policy measures that governments could take.

"SAF will provide about 65% of the mitigation needed for airlines to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. So the expected tripling of SAF production in 2024 from 2023 is encouraging. We still have a long way to go, but the direction of exponential increases is starting to come into focus," said Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General, in a statement marking his participation in the 80th IATA Annual General Meeting (AGM) and World Air Transport Summit, convening in Dubai from June 2 to June 4, 2024.

Renewable fuel production is shared by many industries and SAF is a part of renewable fuel production. That is why increasing the production of renewable fuel is key to increasing the potential of SAF.

Some 140 renewable fuel projects with the capability to produce SAF have been announced to be in production by 2030. If all of these proceed to production as announced, total renewable



fuel production capacity could reach 51mn tonnes by 2030, with production capacity spread across almost all regions.

Renewable fuel production potential could exceed this estimate as investor interest in SAF grows. With a typical three-to-five-year time lag from planning to production, investment announcements as late as 2027 could be in production by 2030. At the same time, it is also clear that not all announcements reach final investment decisions.

Through the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), governments set an am-

bition to achieve a 5% CO2 emissions reduction for international aviation from SAF by 2030. To achieve that ambition, around 27% of all expected renewable fuel production capacity available in 2030 would need to be SAF. Currently, SAF accounts for just 3% of all renewable fuel production.

"The interest in SAF is growing and there is plenty of potential. But the concrete plans that we have seen so far are far from sufficient. Governments have set clear expectations for aviation to achieve a 5% CO2 emissions reduction through SAF by 2030

and to be net zero carbon emissions by 2050. They now need to implement policies to ensure that airlines can actually purchase SAF in the required quantities," said Willie Walsh.

Renewable fuel facilities

There are several potential solutions to accelerate aviation's access to critical SAF quantities, including diversifying feedstocks, co-processing and incentives to improve the output mix at renewable fuel facilities.

The current renewable fuel facilities are designed to maximise

diesel production and often benefit from incentives in addition to the long-standing demand from road transportation. As road transport transitions to electrification, policies should be established to shift production toward the long-term need of air transport for SAF. Incentives aimed at SAF can help facilitate the renewable diesel-SAF switch, which requires minimal modifications at existing stand-alone renewable fuel facilities.

According to IATA, the production of all renewable fuels will need to scale up rapidly, and among them, the need for a

According to IATA, sustainable aviation fuels will provide about 65% of the mitigation needed for airlines to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050

growing share of SAF production will necessitate strong policy support.

"Incentives to build more renewable energy facilities, strengthen the feedstock supply chain, and to allocate a greater portion of renewable fuel output to aviation would help decarbonising aviation. Governments can also facilitate technical solutions with accelerated approvals for diverse feedstocks and production methodologies as well as co-processing renewable feedstocks in crude oil plants," said Walsh.

A recent IATA survey revealed significant public support for SAF. Some 86% of travelers agreed that governments should provide incentives for airlines to use SAF. In addition, the vast majority of air passengers agree (86%) that leading oil corporations should prioritize the production of SAF.

WAM

Oil prices rise after OPEC+ output cut decision

London, UK - Oil prices increased on Monday following the OPEC+ decision to extend output cuts by a year, although renewed ceasefire hopes in Gaza could trigger downward price movements.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$81.23 per barrel in morning trade in London, a rise of 0.15% from the closing price of \$81.11 per barrel in the previous trading session.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$77.11 per barrel at the same time, a 0.16% increase from the previous session that closed at \$76.99 per barrel.

The OPEC+ decision to extend group-wide output cuts into 2025 contributed to price rises.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, known as OPEC+, met on Sunday to discuss the production output of member countries.

The group's overall crude oil production in the Declaration of Cooperation will be around 39.72 million barrels per day (bpd) starting Jan. 1, 2025, until Dec. 31, 2025.

Anadolu Agency

Global LNG exports rise 4.3% in Q1 on competitive prices

Istanbul, Turkey - Global liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports rose 4.3% year on year to 107.3mn tonnes in the first quarter due to competitive spot prices, according to statistics from the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OAPEC) 2024 First Quarter LNG Market report.

The world's largest LNG exporters, the US, Australia and Qatar, accounted for 60.57% of total exports.

US LNG exports increased by 11.5% to 23.2mn tonnes in the first quarter, compared to the same period last year. Qatar and Australia's exports rose by 3.5% and 3%, respectively, to 20.9mn tonnes each.

Russia's LNG exports increased by 8.7% to 8.7mn tonnes in the same period. While demand for Russian LNG in the European market continued to increase, Spain, France and Belgium became the main markets for Russian LNG.

The report noted that Russia's three LNG plants, with an annual capacity of 29.3mn tonnes, are operating above full capacity to meet European demand.

In the first quarter, China saw the largest increase in LNG demand in the Asian market.



China's first quarter LNG imports amounted to 20.6mn tonnes, up 26% compared to the same period last year.

In the Asian markets overall, 72.9mn tonnes of total imports were made, marking a rise of 9% compared to the same period last year. Out of this total, 56.4mn tonnes were shipped to China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

Globally, first-quarter LNG imports increased by 3.2% to reach 107.9mn tonnes compared to the same period last year.

Europe's LNG imports, including those from Türkiye and the UK, fell by 13.8% year on year to 30mn tonnes in the first quarter.

The lack of LNG demand in Europe was attributed to the region's ample natural gas storage, mild winter weather, and a profusion of gas exports from Nor-

way and Algeria.

The US ranked first with 51% of the world's biggest share of LNG, followed by Nigeria with 4%, Algeria with 10%, Qatar with 8%, Norway with 4.1%, and Russia with 17.4%. The remaining 5.4% of the shares came from other countries.

North and South America's LNG imports rose by 72.7% year on year to 3.8mn tonnes in the first quarter, while Middle East imports rose by 71.4% to 1.2mn tonnes.

Algeria, Australia, Brunei, Equatorial Guinea, Malaysia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the US were among the countries that increased their exports in the first quarter compared to the same period last year.

Anadolu Agency

India heat wave drives up gas-based power generation and LNG demand

Muscat - India's natural gas-based power generation has surged in May on the back of heat wave conditions, driving up demand for more LNG cargoes for prompt deliveries in June from state-owned energy companies, according to a report from S&P Global Commodity Insights.

Indian gas-based power generation was 4,646.53mn kWhr as of May 29 for the month of May, compared to 2,631mn kWhr a year earlier, according to data by Central Electricity Authority (CEA). India's gas-based power generation was strong in August 2023 and September 2023, but did not rise above 4,000mn kWhr in that period, the data showed.

Generating 5mn units of electricity requires around 1 MMcm of natural gas, according to market participants in the power sector. This implies consumption of around 891.36 MMcm of gas during May or 29.71 MMcm per day, which is roughly an equivalent of over 10 LNG cargoes for the month.

The CEA does not provide separate data for power generation based on Regasified LNG (RLNG) and domestically-pro-



duced natural gas.

However, in the first quarter of 2024, total gas consumption in the power sector grew 1.4% year on year, to 14.8 MMcm per day, according to S&P Global Commodity Insights data. Imported gas or RLNG consumption by power plants increased by 45.5% year on year in the first quarter to about 2.7 Mmcm per day, while domestic gas consumption increased only marginally from 11.9 MMcm per day to 12.1 Mmcm per day in the same period.

Around 74% of India's elec-

tricity mix is coal-based, around 13% is from renewables like wind and solar, around 8% is from hydro, around 3% from nuclear and only around 2% from natural gas.

"The hot weather has caused power demand to reach new record highs. On May 29, daily power demand reached 242.3 aGW, beating the previous record of 237.9 aGW, set just five days earlier. During May 2023, daily power demand only reached a high of 215 aGW," Andre Lambine, power analyst at S&P Global Commodity Insights

said.

Heat wave demand

"India's recent heatwave has impacted areas in the Northwest the most. Between May 23-29, Cooling Degree Days in Delhi and Bhopal increased by an average of 20% year on year, but individual days were up to 50% higher on the year," Lambine said.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a red alert for heat wave across the northern and central states of Rajasthan, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, and Madhya Pradesh earlier this week, according to Press Trust of India.

Several towns and cities recorded maximum daily temperatures of over 49-50 C this week, disrupting daily life and driving up power demand for air conditioning, coolers and ceiling fans.

Peak power demand in the capital Delhi rose to an all-time high of 8,302 MW on May 29, the first time it has crossed the 8,300-MW mark, and power distribution companies had estimated a peak of 8,200 MW this summer, PTI reported.

Indian stock markets close at record highs on eve of election results

Mumbai, India - Indian stock indices closed at record highs on Monday, driven by fresh buying from investors after exit polls indicated a comfortable majority for the BJP-led NDA government.

The Nifty 50 index gained 733.20 points, closing at 23,263.90, while the BSE Sensex surged 2507.47 points to close at 76,468.78.

During the trading session, Nifty 50 touched an all-time high

of 23,338.70, and the Sensex reached a record high of 76,738.89.

The Bank Nifty Index also reached a new all-time high of 51,133.20, led by banking giants such as Bank of Baroda and State Bank of India.

"Equity markets jumped in line with expectations of a development-driven agenda, with the Nifty scaling a new record high. Additionally, the India VIX index, which measures market volatil-



ity, has cooled down post the exit poll numbers," said Pranav Haridasan, MD and CEO of Axis Securities.

In the NIFTY 50 index, by the time of closing, 43 stocks advanced while 7 declined during the trading session.

"PSUs space will remain exciting, but investors need to be more choosy and look for relative values. Long-term trajectory for markets looks very positive, though short-term volatility

could continue to remain high as it is not exactly cheap," said Porinju Veliyath, Founder of Equity Intelligence.

During the opening session on Monday, the Sensex surged by 1859.88 points to a record 75,821.19. Similarly, the Nifty jumped 603.85 points, starting the day at 23,134.55.

Notably, all 50 companies in the Nifty index saw advances, marking a rare and robust market performance on Monday.

The overall market sentiment was buoyed by the exit polls' prediction of a decisive victory for the NDA, which is expected to continue its development-driven policies.

The positive outlook, combined with cooling market volatility as indicated by the India VIX, has contributed to the optimistic environment for investors, despite the potential for short-term fluctuations.

ANI

MoH holds workshop on child health

H E Dr Saeed Harib al Lamki, Undersecretary for Health Affairs in the Ministry of Health, on Monday inaugurated a workshop on children's health, alongside a programme to update the Child Health Card (the Pink Card).

The event displayed the evolution of the child health card over the years.

Dr Badriya al Rashdi, Director General of Health Services and Programmes, welcomed the dignitaries and other officials to the event, as she highlighted the importance of conducting comprehensive psychological, physical, and social assessments for children and incorporating their inputs into discussions and sharing them with healthcare workers in healthcare institutions.

The ceremony, organised by the Directorate General of Health Services and Programmes, was represented by the Department of Woman and Child Health, a release stated.

Subsequently, several working papers were presented by specialists from the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, the Royal Hospital and Al Nahdha Hospital. They provided detailed explanations to healthcare workers about these updates at side event training workshop.

At the conclusion of the work-



shop, the specialists recommended the importance of raising awareness among parents about the significance of maintaining the pink card and bringing the child for the scheduled visits and encouraging parents to read the included recommendations and messages.

Representatives from the National Committee for Family Affairs, the Directorate General of Persons with Disabilities and the Child Affairs Department from the Ministry of Social Develop-

ment attended the workshop.

The inclusion of the periodic visit at the ages of three and four is considered one of the initiatives adopted by the National Committee for Family Affairs and is listed as one of the health initiatives within the framework of developing services for persons with disabilities.

The Department of Woman and Child Health has updated the Child Health Card as it seeks to continually improve the provided health services; introduc-

ing two periodic visits for ages 3 and 4 in order to continue assessing the child's growth until school age with the aim of early detection of disabilities and developmental delays.

The upgrading also included the addition of risk signs for developmental delays as well referral from primary to secondary healthcare system for early intervention. Moreover, the introduction of the Comprehensive Child Health Guide serves as a reference for health workers.

OOA hold symposium on coach training

Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), represented by Oman Olympic Academy (OOA), organised a special symposium for the better training of sports coaches in the sultanate.

'Designing Training Plans', which began on Monday, is being organised as part of the National Coach Certification Programme to develop and enhance the capabilities of sports coaches in Oman. The symposium, to conclude on Tuesday, is being held at the Sultan Qaboos University and the headquarters of OOA.

Dr Shihab al Din bin Ahmed al Riyami, Director of the National Coach Certification Program and a certified international lecturer for sports training, is conducting the session with the participation of 26 coaches from federations, committees, sports clubs, and the military sports sector.

The symposium topics varied between the theoretical and practical aspects, with the aim of providing participants with various sciences and studies as an essential part of the programme's strategy to ensure the provision of high-quality training.



It included many diverse topics and topics, including the goals, importance and design of sports training plans, time planning for training and its types, the main elements of its preparation, and annual plans and their sections.

In addition to the temporal planning of motor abilities and anatomical adaptations to physical abilities. The symposium also included training on using the NCCP programme to design seasonal training plans.

The participants are being given visual presentations to evaluate them and measure the

extent of their understanding and knowledge during the days of the symposium, and a work and evaluation mechanism will be implemented for the symposium according to international standards and programmes.

The programme aims to build a base of qualified trainers in the field of sports training, and gives the opportunity for coaches to participate in an educational programme that gives them a valuable opportunity to gain knowledge and experience, develop their skills and improve the performance of athletes.

ISWK organises investiture ceremony for primary section student council

The investiture ceremony at Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir, Primary Section, held on May 19, was a significant event in the academic calendar 2024-25, ISWK stated in a release.

Chief guest Pardeep Kumar, First Secretary of Labour & Community Welfare from the Indian Embassy, was welcomed by principal D N Rao, vice principal Ernst Schwan and others with a potted plant, highlighting the school's eco commitment.

The ceremony began with the traditional lighting of the lamp, followed by a prayer song. Deputy head girl-elect Nitha Mariam Ajesh and head boy-elect Parees Sushil Awasare delivered the welcome address.

The former 'house mistresses' handed over the responsibility of 'house-in-charge' to the new team. Pardeep Kumar and other dignitaries invested the Primary Student Council with their respective designations and flags. He administered the oath to the elected office-bearers, emphasising integrity, dedication, and service. The oath was ratified by the head boy, head girl, and the



Pardeep Kumar, First Secretary from the Indian Embassy, administered the oath to the elected office-bearers, emphasising integrity, dedication, and service

chief guest, and was witnessed by principal Rao.

The audience was treated to an uplifting video, followed by an enlightening address from the chief guest to the newly elected leaders and parents. Principal Rao presented a memento to the chief guest. The students performed a befitting pantomime titled 'Silent Courage'.

A vote of thanks was pro-

posed by the head girl Tanishka Gaurav Gupte and deputy head boy Niranjana Warriar, expressing gratitude to all attendees.

The ceremony concluded with the National Anthem of India, fostering patriotism and unity.

Under the guidance of the primary school vice-principal Ernst Schwan, the ceremony honoured student leadership and their accomplishments.

Vodafone's tech-telco experience demonstrated at COMEX booth

With more than 24,000 visitors, over 15 educational workshops, and 7 partnership agreements signed, Vodafone's booth at COMEX 2024 demonstrated the company's leading role in the tech-telco industry and underscored its commitment to digitalisation and collaboration for a better-connected tomorrow.

Following the successful launch of the company's enterprise solutions, Vodafone aimed to demonstrate the practical benefits it can offer Omani businesses by leveraging Vodafone's global expertise.

"Our dynamic display of technological expertise and strategic foresight at COMEX 2024 underscored our role as a leader in driving innovation and connectivity," said Vodafone CEO Bader al Zidi. "Through various aspects of our participation, we were able



to connect with visitors and businesses, showcasing our transformative solutions and their boundless potential. The positive feedback we received reinforced our commitment to leading the way for a future where digital transformation in Oman knows

no bounds."

The four-day conference saw Vodafone Oman sign several strategic agreements to amplify its social impact and drive further innovation and convenience for customers. Among these was an MoU with Ericsson to boost ICT

educational initiatives through the 'Connect To Learn' programme, fostering digital skills and attracting Omani youth to the ICT sector.

Vodafone also partnered with Huawei to expand its In-Country Value initiatives, exploring train-

ing and development opportunities for Omani talents in the sector. An agreement with Qpay will allow Vodafone customers to benefit from the platform's Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) service, offering short-term, interest-free financing for a wide range of tele-

com and non-telecom products. Additionally, Vodafone entered into a partnership with Global City Net Technology (GCNT) to launch a unique centralised bulk SMS service for corporate customers.

Further collaborations include teaming up with SoftwareWorld Oman to deliver the Odoo.city platform for business operations, and integrating BIMA into the My Vodafone App to offer a range of insurance solutions. Moreover, a partnership with Byanat will create an intelligent value management platform, leveraging big data and analytics to drive digital transformation and enhance operational efficiency across sectors.

Beyond exhibitions and signings, Vodafone Oman's engagement at COMEX 2024 included insightful educational workshops

and industry discussions. Aneth Guerra, Chief Operating Officer, shared the stage with key industry players to discuss digital transformation, emphasizing Vodafone's digital-native foundation and NEXT-LEVEL solutions. Guerra outlined Vodafone's plans for comprehensive business connectivity in Oman, reinforcing its commitment to empowering businesses in a digitalized landscape.

Vodafone's educational workshops at COMEX 2024 received an overwhelming response and left a lasting impact on attendees. Focused on critical themes such as AI, Digital Transformation, and Future-proofing Businesses, these workshops transcended traditional boundaries, offering participants actionable insights and tangible strategies for success.

EMEA Finance recognises Bank Muscat's leadership in private banking in Oman

As a culmination of its excellence in providing the best private banking services, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, won the 'Best Private Bank' in Oman from EMEA Finance, in recognition of the bank's innovative banking solutions in wealth management and achieving the aspirations of high-net-worth customers.

Being one of the most important awards in the banking sector in the Middle East, the EMEA Finance Awards honour banking institutions based on their financial performance, service quality standards, and excellence in the sector. They are based on key criteria in the selection process for the best banks, encompassing the growth of the bank's products in the market, innovation in products and services, as well as the quality of business strategy.

"We are delighted to receive this award from EMEA Finance, affirming Bank Muscat's leadership in offering exceptional banking services to private banking customers," said Abdulnasir N Al Raisi, general manager - Personal Banking, Bank Muscat.

"We focus on delivering innovative digital solutions and effective



wealth management options from investment solutions to wealth structuring and consulting. We extend our gratitude to all our customers for their trust in our products and services, and we remain committed to continually enhancing our offerings to serve them better."

Bank Muscat offers Private Banking customers a complete suite of investment options in global asset classes through its wealth management platform and tie-ups with international counterparties. The solutions offered include stocks, bonds, exchange-traded funds (ETFs) and mutual funds across global markets.

Bank Muscat Private Banking also offers selective exposure to private equity funds, real estate funds and commodity ETFs; offshore Banking and portfolio

management through globally reputed counterparties. Private Banking customers also receive regular research reports and briefings covering investment ideas, global macroeconomic outlook and updates on key economic and geographic events impacting performance of various asset classes.

Private Banking team also organises regular events for Private Banking customers for interacting with Global Fund managers who share their outlook on Macroeconomic trends and investments ideas across asset classes and geographies.

Private banking customers can get an exclusive Private Banking Visa Infinite Credit Card, a Visa Platinum Debit Card, and enjoy a premium level of service, including dedicated centers for Private Banking services at Bank Muscat headquarter's branch, Madinat Sultan Qaboos branch, as well as in Sohar mega branch, in addition to a dedicated relationship manager for each customer to ensure a comfortable banking experience. Private banking customers get daily cash withdrawal limit of up to RO2,000 as well as a daily purchase limit of up to RO30,000.

Royal Academy of Management ends 2nd 'Walis Programme'

Continuing its efforts to promote decentralisation, the Royal Academy of Management has concluded the second cohort of the 'Walis Programme'.

This achievement marks another milestone in the academy's ongoing commitment to the National Initiative for the Development of Local Governance, underscoring its commitment to advancing decentralisation in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Walis Programme aims to empower local leaders within the governorates to actively drive comprehensive and balanced local development. This initiative aligns with Oman's current and future directions towards decentralisation and the development of the governorates.

The programme is structured around five educational units, each meticulously designed to address key aspects of governance and leadership development.



ment. Employing contemporary executive learning methods, the programme integrates field visits, interactive lectures, workshops, and practical applications to complement the academic component.

Furthermore, it fosters engagement through dialogue sessions with specialists and leadership figures who possess expertise in strategy, planning, and executive experiences.

As part of its holistic approach, the programme includes a comprehensive review of both national and international models that have significantly influenced local development and economic diversification, aiming for a qualitative transformation.

The Royal Academy of Management launched the Walis Programme with 63 participants in two cohorts. The programme aims to strengthen the capabilities of local leaders in the governorates, thereby contributing to achieving comprehensive and balanced local development.

The programme is a key component of this national initiative and is implemented by the Royal Academy of Management in partnership with the Ministry of Interior. It aligns with the current and future trends of the Sultanate of Oman towards administrative decentralisation and the development of governorates.



Mopar's special offer campaign

MHD Automobiles, the official distributors of the iconic Stellantis brands - Jeep, Dodge, Ram, and Alfa Romeo - and the after-sales brand Mopar, announced a special offer for Jeep, Dodge, and Ram vehicle owners.

During this offer period, customers can enjoy discounts ranging from 25% to 50% on their 10,000km service, excluding VAT. This offer is applicable to Jeep, Dodge, and Ram vehicles from the 2019 model year or older, with open recalls, and is limited to the first 500 unique VINs, MHD stated in a release.

The company, however, pointed out that the said offer would not be applicable to Diesel, 1.3 Turbo, SRT, Hellcat, and 392 engines, adding that to check if their vehicles have an open recall, customers can call the CRM at 80022008.

"Eligible customers can avail themselves of the 10,000km service at the special rate of RO35 (excluding VAT)," it stated.

This special campaign underscores Mopar's commitment to customer satisfaction and vehicle maintenance, encouraging customers to check for open recalls and schedule their appointments promptly to take advantage of these significant savings.

"At MHD Automobiles, we are dedicated to providing our customers with the best service possible. This campaign is an excellent opportunity for our valued customers to benefit from substantial discounts while ensuring their vehicles are serviced and maintained to the highest standards," said Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles.

This offer is valid until June 17, MHD added.

Kaldi 850, al-woshil football team announce partnership

Kaldi 850, a leading name in premium coffee, has announced a dynamic new partnership with the al-woshil Football Team.

This collaboration aims to bring together the energy of sports and the rich tradition of coffee to create a vibrant and engaging experience for fans and the community, said Paul Biswajit, country head of Kaldi 850 Coffee.

As part of this partnership, Kaldi 850 will become the official coffee sponsor of the al-woshil Football Team, this partnership underscores Kaldi 850 Coffee's commitment to supporting local sports and community engagement.

The collaboration is likely to bring mutual benefits.

Indian Embassy hosts 'Marhaban Yoga' session for children

In connection with the upcoming international yoga day, the Indian Embassy in Oman organised a yoga session for children on May 31.

The event, held in association with New India Assurance Oman and the Bank of Baroda Oman, enjoyed the 'full and unwavering support of H E Amit Narang, the Indian Ambassador to Oman', the embassy informed.

The yoga session saw enthusiastic participation from a large number of children, making it a resounding success.

The session took place at the Indian Embassy building, where children gathered early in the morning, eager to learn and practice yoga. The initiative aimed to promote physical well-being and mental health among the younger generation.

Acharya Manoranjan Singh and Reena Jain, First Secretary (Culture) graced the occasion with their presence, highlighting the importance of yoga in main-



taining a balanced lifestyle. They commended the children for their enthusiasm and encouraged them to make yoga a regular part of their lives.

The event was further honoured by the presence of senior officials from the partnering organisations.

Gaurav Sharma, chief operating officer of New India Assurance Oman; I M Jacob, senior general manager of the insurance company; and Maneesh Prasad, COO of Bank of Baroda; besides the bank's senior officers Aravinda Shetty and Kanwardeep Singh, participated in the session, emphasising the importance of community wellness initiatives.

Both partnering organisations reiterated their commitment to supporting such activities that foster health and unity within the community.

The yoga session featured a series of exercises and postures designed specifically for children, ensuring that they were both engaging and beneficial. Yoga instructors guided the young participants through the session, providing valuable tips on maintaining physical fitness and mental tranquility.

Parents and guardians who accompanied the children expressed their gratitude to the organisers for creating a platform that promotes healthy living. The event concluded with a short meditation session and leaving the participants refreshed and invigorated.

Iran election: Who is in the race and who is likely to reach the finish line?

Tehran, Iran - On the penultimate day of registration for Iran's upcoming presidential election, more contenders filed their nominations, including some prominent political figures.

Since the registration process opened on Thursday at the Interior Ministry in Tehran, the nomination papers of 37 candidates have been accepted, including 20 on Sunday. More than 100 other applications were rejected for not meeting the requirements.

The snap presidential vote is scheduled for June 28, following the death of President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash in northwestern Iran on May 19.

Monday is the fifth and final day of registration. After that, the Guardian Council, the country's election supervisory body, will vet the candidates and release the list of qualified candidates on June 11. The candidates cleared by the vetting body will have two weeks to campaign, present their manifestos, and participate in televised debates before the polling on June 28.

Frontrunners

The candidates who have filed their nominations so far include some high-profile names from both the conservative and reformist camps, as well as centrists. One of the first candidates to join the race on the first day of registration was Saeed Jalili, the former nuclear negotiator and head of the country's top security body.

Only five applications were accepted on day one out of 30,



Since the registration process opened on Thursday at the Interior Ministry in Tehran, the nomination papers of 37 candidates have been accepted, including 20 on Sunday

The candidates who have filed their nominations so far include some high-profile names from both the conservative and reformist camps, as well as centrists

including Jalili, a prominent conservative figure who said his focus would be on 'service, honesty, efficiency, and justice'. Jalili contested the 2021 election but

withdrew in favour of Raisi. In the 2013 presidential election, he finished in third place after eventual winner Hassan Rouhani and runner-up Bagher Ghalibaf.

While Jalili is seen as a probable candidate representing the conservative camp, Ali Larijani, a former speaker of Iran's parliament, is believed to have the backing of the reformist camp.

Larijani, initially a conservative political figure, developed close ties with reformists during Hassan Rouhani's presidency when he served as the parliament speaker. Notably, Larijani, who is the member of the Expediency

Discernment Council, a top advisory body tasked with settling disputes, was disqualified by the Guardian Council in the 2021 presidential election.

After filing his nomination on Friday, he told reporters that 'solving the issue of sanctions' will figure prominently in his priorities, if given the mandate.

Other formidable candidates who could spring a surprise include Tehran Mayor Alireza Za-

kani, a candidate in the 2021 presidential election who later withdrew in favour of Raisi. Abdolnaser Hemmati, the former top banker and Raisi's main challenger from the reformist camp in the 2021 election, is likely to be a cover candidate for other heavy-weight reformists like in the past.

Disqualifications looming

After the registration process

ends on Monday, the applications of hopefuls will be reviewed by the 12-member election supervising body, the Guardian Council.

According to political observers, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former president who filed his nomination amid fanfare on Sunday, is again likely to be disqualified.

Ahmadinejad, a conservative hardliner who served as Iran's president from 2005 to 2013 and later fell out of favour with the country's top leadership, was disqualified in both the 2017 and 2021 presidential elections.

After filing his nomination, Ahmadinejad said the country's problems could be solved by making the 'maximum use of available capacities', adding that he was joining the race again 'at the request of the people'.

There is also a big question mark over Larijani's candidacy, who was disqualified in the 2021 presidential election when Raisi won by a landslide.

Many others who have successfully submitted their nominations are also expected to be disqualified, including many former lawmakers and academics.

There have been some unexpected nominations as well. Perhaps the biggest surprise was the registration of Zohreh Elahian, a former member of parliament who became the first woman to run for the presidency.

She announced that her election slogan would be 'healthy government, healthy economy, and healthy society'.

Anadolu Agency

Violent clashes erupt in parts of Sudan

Khartoum, Sudan - Violent clashes broke out on Sunday between the Sudanese army and members of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Khartoum, Al Jazirah and White Nile states and in the city of El Fasher, eyewitnesses told Anadolu.

They said the army carried out airstrikes on centres where the RSF gathered around the Al-Jaili Petroleum Refinery north of the capital Khartoum, adding that thick columns of smoke were rising due to the strikes.

The RSF still controls large areas in the city of Bahri north of Khartoum, including the Al-Jaili refinery, while the army is stationed in several neighbourhoods north of Bahri and at a weapons depot and Hattab and Kadroo bases in the city.

Army warplanes also carried out raids in areas south of Khartoum and in Alkotainh district in White Nile state, according to



eyewitnesses.

The Wad Madani Resistance Committees said in a release that military aircraft carried out raids against RSF gatherings in the village of Bika, west of the city of Wad Madani, the capital of Al Jazirah state.

Since December last year, the RSF has controlled several cities

in Al Jazirah state, including Wad Madani.

Eyewitnesses said that clashes also resumed between the army and RSF in northern and eastern El Fasher involving heavy weapons.

They added that the army launched airstrikes on RSF gatherings east of El Fasher. On Sun-

day, the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) announced that clashes had resumed on Saturday between the army and RSF in several western and southeastern neighbourhoods of El Fasher, leading to the displacement of 250 families and reports of casualties.

Anadolu Agency

Claudia Sheinbaum to become Mexico's 1st woman president

Mexico City, Mexico - Mexican climate scientist and former Mexico City mayor Claudia Sheinbaum celebrated her victory in Sunday's presidential elections as the candidate of the Let's Keep Making History coalition.

Sheinbaum delivered an acceptance speech in the wee hours of Monday morning after the National Electoral Institute issued the results of its rapid count. Preliminary results showed that she won with between 58.3 per cent and 60.7 per cent of the votes.

Sheinbaum, aged 61, will become Mexico's first woman president in its more than 200 years of independence.

Opposition candidate Xochitl Galvez garnered between 26.6 per cent and 28.6 per cent of the votes.

The only male candidate,



Claudia Sheinbaum at a polling station in San Andres Totoltepec (Xinhua)

Jorge Alvarez Maynez, who represents the Citizens' Movement party, had between 9.9 per cent and 10.8 per cent of the votes.

"I will become the first woman president of Mexico," Sheinbaum said with a smile at a downtown hotel shortly after electoral authorities announced a statistical sample indicating her

irreversible lead.

"We have demonstrated that Mexico is a democratic country with peaceful elections," she added. Sheinbaum will succeed her mentor, outgoing President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, on October 1, promising to continue his policies.

Agencies

After 6 postponements, Boeing Starliner set for June 5 launch: NASA

Washington, D.C., US - The next attempt of the first manned launch of the Indian-origin piloted capsule of Boeing's Starliner to the International Space Station is now planned on June 5, the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration said on Monday.

The launch comes after the inaugural test flight launch attempt was scrubbed on Saturday, and is next planned from Space Launch Complex-41 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida.

The Starliner mission, which will carry NASA astronauts, Sunita 'Suni' Williams and Barry-Butch' Wilmore about a week-long mission to the orbiting space station, was cancelled on June 2

several minutes before liftoff.

Saturday's scrubbing marked the sixth time the launch was called off due to technical issues.

"NASA, Boeing, and ULA (United Launch Alliance) are forgoing a Crew Flight Test launch attempt on June 2, to give the team additional time to assess a ground support equipment issue," NASA said on Monday.

"The next available launch opportunities are Wednesday, June 5, and Thursday, June 6," the US space agency said.

NASA astronauts Williams and Wilmore, who will be the first to launch aboard Boeing's Starliner spacecraft, remain in quarantine at the space agency's



NASA astronauts Sunita 'Suni' Williams and Barry 'Butch' Wilmore

Kennedy Space Centre and will take part in pilot proficiency and other training activities leading up to launch.

Saturday's launch was aborted as a ground system computer triggered an automatic abort command that shut down the launch sequence.

Technicians and engineers with ULA (United Launch Alliance) worked overnight to assess the ground support equipment at the launch pad that encountered issues during the countdown and identified an issue with a single ground power supply within one of the three redundant chassis that provides power to a subset of computer

cards controlling various system functions.

The chassis containing the faulty ground power unit was removed, visually inspected, and replaced with a spare chassis. No signs of physical damage were observed, the space agency said.

Once launched, the Starliner is expected to arrive at the space station after a flight of about 24 hours and dock with the orbiting research outpost some 402km above Earth.

The mission, dubbed the Crew Flight Test, will be a stepping stone to getting NASA clearance deeming Boeing's spacecraft ready for regular operations.

ANI

Israel’s starvation policy in Gaza puts 3,500 children at risk

Gaza City, Palestine - More than 3,500 Palestinian children are at risk of starving to death due to Israel’s starvation policy in the Gaza Strip, the media office in the besieged enclave warned on Monday.

The Gaza media office said in a statement: “More than 3,500 children under the age of five are at risk of death in Gaza due to Israeli policies of starving children.”

It pointed out ‘a severe shortage of milk and food, a lack of nutritional supplements, and the denial of vaccinations’.

Humanitarian aid has been blocked for the fourth week in a



Media office in Gaza Strip appealed to the international community to save the children in the besieged enclave

row, ‘amid deafening international silence’, it added.

Earlier on Saturday, a Palestinian child starved to death in central Gaza due to Israel’s ongoing blockade of the Rafah crossing, which has prevented humanitarian aid from entering for almost a month.

“A 13-year-old Palestinian child has died due to starvation in Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip amidst the closure of the Rafah border crossing,” the Palestinian official news agency Wafa reported.

So far, malnutrition and dehydration have claimed the lives

of 37 people in the Gaza Strip due to strict restrictions on humanitarian aid entering the besieged enclave, it added.

Israel has kept the Rafah crossing closed for 28 days in a row, raising fears of a deteriorating humanitarian situation due to a lack of essential supplies reaching Palestinians, particularly in the northern Gaza Strip.

Israel seized control of the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt on May 7, after a military action that ignored international appeals, closing it to outgoing wounded people seeking treatment and blocking already

scarce humanitarian aid.

The media office emphasised that these children are suffering from ‘acute malnutrition, affecting their bodies, exposing them to infectious diseases, hindering their growth, and threatening their survival’.

“These children lack access to essential services, and their conditions are worsening due to the deprivation of vaccinations and essential medications,” the statement added.

The office appealed to the international community to fulfil their responsibilities and save the children in Gaza.

Anadolu Agency

UN experts call to recognise Palestinian statehood

Istanbul, Turkey - A group of UN experts on Monday called on all nations to follow the example of 146 member states and recognise Palestinian statehood.

“This recognition is an important acknowledgment of the rights of the Palestinian people and their struggles and suffering towards freedom and independence,” the experts said in a statement.

They stressed that Palestine must be able to enjoy full self-determination, including the ‘ability to exist, determine its destiny, and develop freely as a people with safety and security’.

“This is a pre-condition for lasting peace in Palestine and the entire Middle East,” they stressed, and said that it begins with an immediate declaration of a ceasefire in Gaza and no further military incursions into Rafah.

The experts welcomed recent recognitions of Palestinian statehood by Norway, Ireland, and Spain.

Anadolu Agency

‘Not ready to stop’ war on Gaza

Israeli PM said the US president’s remarks about a ceasefire proposal were ‘inaccurate’

Jerusalem - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that he is ‘not ready to stop’ the ongoing war on the Gaza Strip, claiming that President Joe Biden’s remarks about a ceasefire proposal were ‘inaccurate’.

“I am not ready to stop the war,” the public broadcaster KAN quoted Netanyahu as saying during a secret discussion in the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee.

He claimed that the details of the ceasefire proposal laid out by Biden were ‘inaccurate’.

“The outline that Biden presented is partial. The war will be stopped for the purpose of returning hostages and then we will have a discussion,” he said.

“There are other undisclosed details. We could cease fighting for 42 days to facilitate the return of hostages, but we will not give up our goal of complete victory.”

The Israeli premier declined to discuss the number of Palestinian prisoners who would be released as part of a proposed hostage swap deal. “We will not agree to end the war without achieving its objectives,” Netanyahu said. “The number of hostages to be released in the first phase of the deal has not yet



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

been determined.”

On Friday, Biden said Israel presented a three-phase deal that would end hostilities in Gaza and secure the release of hostages held in the coastal enclave. Biden called on the Palestinian resistance group Hamas

to accept the proposal and urged Netanyahu to resist pressure from members of his governing coalition to reject the plan.

However, Netanyahu’s office reiterated on Friday that the government intends to continue its deadly offensive on Gaza until all

of Tel Aviv’s war ‘goals’ are met.

Hamas, for its part, said it will ‘respond positively to any proposal that includes a permanent ceasefire, a full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, reconstruction efforts, the return of the displaced, and the completion of a

comprehensive hostage exchange deal’.

Israel has continued its brutal offensive on Gaza following an October 7 Hamas attack despite a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire. More than 36,400 Palestini-

The outline that Biden presented is partial. The war will be stopped for the purpose of returning hostages and then we will have a discussion

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU

ans have since been killed in Gaza, the vast majority being women and children, and over 82,600 others injured, according to local health authorities.

Meanwhile, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said on Monday that more than one million Palestinians have been forced to flee Rafah city in the southern Gaza Strip due to continuous Israeli onslaughts.

“Forced displacement has pushed over one million people away from Rafah,” the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) revealed on X. The situation has escalated dramatically, with thousands of families seeking refuge in damaged and destroyed residential areas in Khan Younis, it added.

Anadolu Agency



Muslim nations under pressure to normalise ties with Israel, says Indonesia

Jakarta, Indonesia - The Indonesia foreign minister on Monday said Israel and its allies had been trying to get Muslim countries to normalise ties.

“There are systematic efforts by Israel and its allies to lobby and pressure Muslim countries into considering normalising ties with Israel,” Retno Marsudi told a conference at the Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, central Java province.

Jakarta has no diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv, but Israeli media

recently claimed Indonesia was mulling establishing ties to gain entry to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Israel is one of the members of the OECD, and Jakarta has to get its approval if it wants to have its membership bid accepted. The government has denied opening ties with Israel.

The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco signed in 2020 US-brokered Abraham Accords to normalise

relations with Israel.

The US is also pushing for an Israel-Saudi normalisation deal. Riyadh is said to have agreed to recognise Israel only if it adopts a two-state solution to its conflict with Palestine.

“Indonesia has consistently upheld universal principles and values to support Palestine. Consistency in embracing these principles is not easy. It is extremely hard to (keep this stance) amidst today’s messy world,” Retno said.

Anadolu Agency

Seoul suspends inter-Korean tension reduction pact signed with Pyongyang

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea on Monday decided to suspend the inter-Korean tension reduction pact signed with North Korea in 2018.

The decision was taken by the National Security Council which said the pact will remain suspended ‘until trust is restored’ between the two Koreas, the Seoul-based Yonhap News Agency reported.

Last November, North Korea ended a five-year-old military pact with South Korea. The deal aimed at lowering military tensions and the decision by Pyongyang came amid heightening military activities on the Korean Peninsula where the US has closed ranks with Seoul and Japan.

In February this year, the North Korean parliament voted to end all economic cooperation agreements with South Korea.

Seoul’s move to suspend the 2018 inter-Korean tension reduction pact came after Pyongyang airdropped balloons of trash into South Korea, drawing condemnation from Seoul.

Pyongyang confirmed sending around 3,500 balloons from last Tuesday until Sunday. Seoul said it detected around 1,000 such



Seoul’s move to suspend the 2018 inter-Korean tension reduction pact came after Pyongyang airdropped balloons of trash into South Korea, drawing condemnation from Seoul

balloons which caused some damage to properties.

The balloons carried 15 tonnes worth of debris, according to

North Korean Vice Defence Minister Kim Kang-il.

Kim said Pyongyang will halt airdropping trash if South Korea

stops sending anti-Pyongyang leaflets into North Korea.

The United States and South Korea on Sunday had condemned North Korea for its launches of trash-carrying balloons and a military spy satellite, vowing a firm response to the latest ‘provocations’.

US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin and South Korean Defence Minister Shin Won-sik met on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, the Seoul-based Yonhap News reported, citing a statement from the Defence Ministry in Seoul.

The two defence chiefs made it clear that North Korea’s ‘provocations’ and missile and nuclear development, alongside its ‘deepening military ties with Russia’, heighten tensions not only on the Korean Peninsula but in the Indo-Pacific region, the ministry said.

They vowed a ‘stern’ response, it added.

Shin was quoted as emphasising that Pyongyang’s launch of trash-carrying balloons is a ‘grave’ violation of the Armistice Agreement and pledged support for an ongoing investigation into the case by the UN Command.

Anadolu Agency

INDIA POLLS: RESULTS TODAY



CAPF to remain in West Bengal until June 19

New Delhi, India - To manage post-election violence, nearly 400 Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) companies (over 40,000 personnel) will remain in West Bengal until June 19, sources said.

A significant portion of the CAPFs will consist of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), said a source privy to the development, adding: "The decision was taken anticipating post-poll violence in West Bengal."

"The ongoing deployment of 400 CAPF companies in West Bengal aims to establish area dominance, build confidence among citizens, and ensure a peaceful environment while maintaining law and order in the state," said officials requesting anonymity.

As per the official source, the 400 CAPF companies consist of the CRPF, Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBP), and the

Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

Considering free, fair, and peaceful general parliamentary elections in West Bengal, the Centre deployed over 900 companies (90,000 personnel) of CAPF in the state gradually in

The Home Ministry took the decision anticipating post-poll violence in West Bengal

separate phases.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had sanctioned the deployment of CAPF in West Bengal following the request of the Election Commission aimed at conducting free, fair, and peaceful Lok Sabha elections, which started on April 19 and concluded on June 1 after seven phases of polls across India.

'Entire counting process is absolutely robust': CEC

New Delhi, India - Amid the opposition parties raising concerns over the counting process of the votes, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar on Monday said that the entire counting mechanism is robust and the whole process is codified in a certain manner that no error can be found in the whole procedure.

"Entire counting process is absolutely robust. We don't think anywhere there is a robust system like it. Every part is decided. The whole process is codified. Micro observers are in place. There cannot be any mistake in this process. Lakhs of people including counting officials, counting agents, micro-observers, ROs/AROs, observers present during the world's largest counting exercise. Before the elections, EVMs were randomised. All candidates and agents were present to observe that who were present at the booth," the CEC said at a press conference.

Earlier, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh through a post on his social media handle had alleged that calls have been made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to 150 district magistrates just days before the scheduled counting of votes (June 4). ECI sought factual information and details from the Congress general secretary.

Rajiv Kumar said that counting process of the postal ballots will start before the counting of



Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar addresses a press conference in New Delhi on Monday (ANI)

Electronic voting machines.

A delegation of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc leaders met with the Election Commission of India (ECI) to discuss issues related to the counting of votes. In their meeting with the poll body, the INDIA bloc said that ECI should

issue clear, detailed guidelines for the counting process on Tuesday.

After meeting with ECI, Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi said: "The vital importance of counting postal ballots first, and declaring the results of postal ballots first. This is very clearly stated in the

statutory rule. This has been understood by the Election Commission over the years. Our complaint is that this statutory rule of this 2019 guideline has been given goodbye."

Demands, as stated by INDIA bloc, were clarification on counting postal ballots first as per Conduct of Election

Rules 1961, ensuring CCTV-monitored safe movement of control units, verifying of date/time on control units and confirming voting start/end times, specifying slips, tags, and details for counting agents, display of poll date, candidates, and total votes before candidate-wise results and to avoid rushing, allowing agents to record results before proceeding. The CEC also said that process of Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir will begin soon.

"We are very enthused. It is one of the most satisfying moments for us here in the commission. We will start that process soon," he said.

"We failed to understand the fake narratives that were going on during the elections. But we have understood it now."

Election Commission members along with the CEC gave a standing ovation to all voters who took part in the Lok Sabha elections.

"We have created a world record of 642mn voters. This is the historic moment for all of us. This is 1.5 times the voters of all G7 countries and 2.5 times voters of 27 countries in the European Union (EU). We thank each and every one who took part in this festival of democracy. The Indian elections are indeed a miracle. Having no parallel in the world," Rajiv Kumar said.

AWAITING SWEET RESULTS



Sweets with political party symbols are put on display on the eve of the Lok Sabha election result, at a sweet shop in Howrah on Monday (ANI)

Section 144 imposed around Delhi airport till July 30

New Delhi, India - Delhi police have imposed prohibitory orders banning drone and laser beam activities in the funnel area falling within the approach path of flights to the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI).

Sources claimed that the prohibitory orders have been imposed due to VVIP aircraft's movement at the airport because of political developments in the national capital and the oath-taking ceremony of the Prime Minister.

The order shall come into force with effect from June 1 and shall remain in force up to July 30 (both dates inclusive).

The order copy accessed by ANI into the matter reads that the Air Traffic Control of IGI Airport, New Delhi, has reported incidents of vision distraction of the pilots by laser beams, especially while landing aircraft at IGI Airport, New Delhi, which is not only a source of a nuisance but may also cause danger to the safety and security of passengers, crew and the aircraft.

"And whereas, it has been found that a number of farms houses, banquets, hotels, restaurants, etc. have come up in and around the jurisdiction of IGI Airport wherein a lot of lights, including laser beams, are used on the celebration of mar-

riages, parties and different events held therein, which is a source of nuisance in general and cause of vision distraction to the pilots in particular," it reads.

It further reads that, at present, there are no rules and regulations to regulate the use of laser beams, especially in the open during night hours. And whereas, it is necessary to take immediate measures, in this regard, to prevent danger to human life and the safety of aircraft and to contain nuisance in the matter of the use of laser beams in and around IGI Airport, New Delhi.

12 people killed by floods in Sri Lanka

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka's State Minister of Defence Premitha Bandara Tennakoon said on Monday that 12 people have been killed and over 87,000 people affected by the recent floods in the South Asian country.

The official told a press conference that Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, Ratnapura, Kegalle, Galle and Matara districts in Western, Sabaragamuwa and Southern provinces are the most affected.

A total of 12 deaths have been reported, including four in Matara, five in Ratnapura, and three in Colombo, Tennakoon said, adding that five people are reported missing.

There are 119 evacuation and relief centres currently housing over 23,700 people affected by floods, he said.

The Department of Meteorology said on Monday that showers or thundershowers will occur at times in Western, Sabaragamuwa, Central, Southern and North Western provinces.

Besides, schools were also closed on Monday, and the education ministry announced that the reopening of schools would depend on how the weather develops.

Agencies

Pakistan: Khan, Qureshi acquitted in cypher case

Islamabad, Pakistan - The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday acquitted Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and party leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the cypher case, Pakistan-based Dawn reported.

IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb announced the verdict after accepting the appeals of Khan and Qureshi against their convictions in the cypher case.

The two PTI leaders are not expected to be released from prison due to Khan's sentences in the Toshakhana and Iddat cases and Qureshi's arrest in recent May 9 cases.

Earlier in January, a special court, established under the Official Secrets Act, had handed both Khan and Qureshi 10-year jail



Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan

sentences each in the case after Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain appointed a state counsel for them, according to Dawn report.

The cypher case is associated

The cypher case is associated with a diplomatic document that the Federal Investigation Agency's charge sheet alleges was never returned by former Pakistan PM Imran Khan

long held that the document included a threat from the US to topple his government. Khan and Qureshi were first indicted in the case in October. The two leaders had pleaded not guilty. The Is-

lamabad High Court had called the government's notification for a jail trial 'erroneous' and scrapped the entire proceedings.

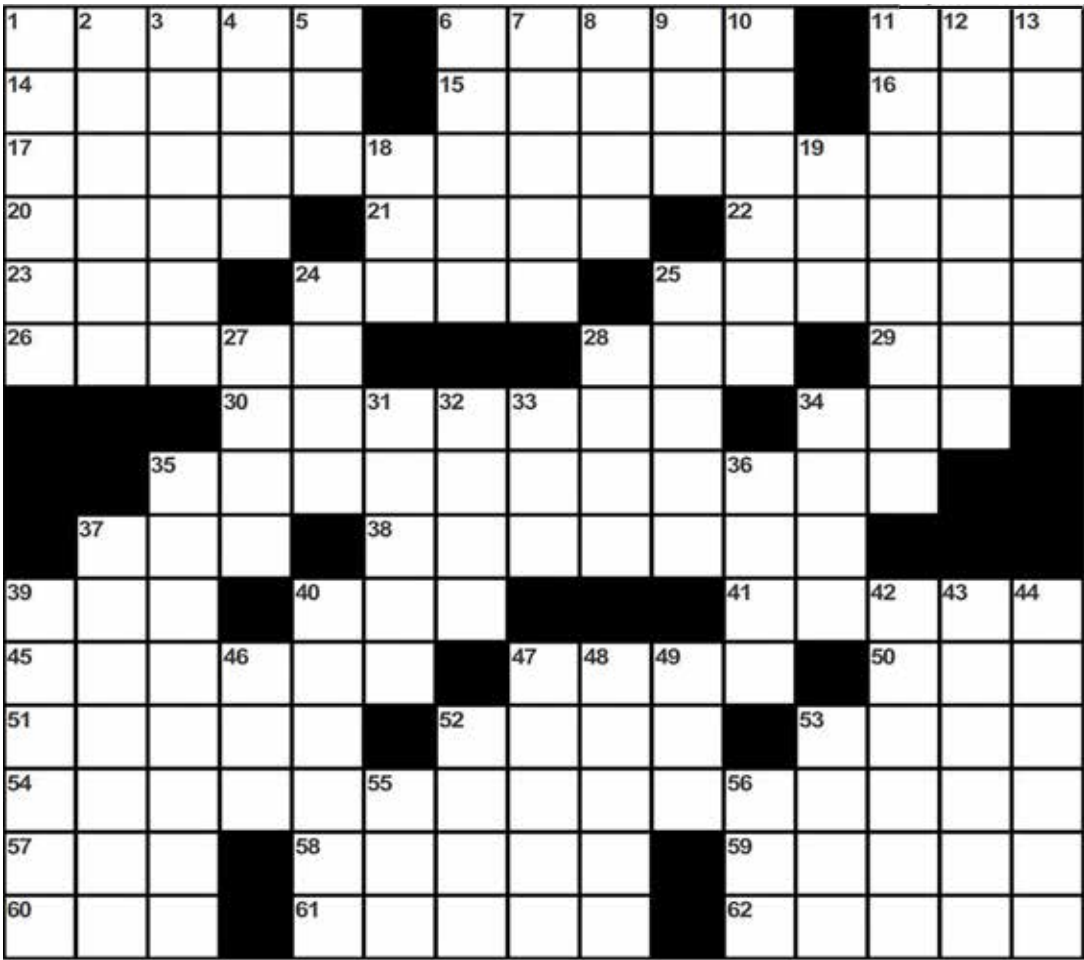
Earlier in May, a special court had started the cypher trial afresh at the Adiala district jail after the two leaders were indicted for a second time in the case on December 13.

On December 22, the Supreme Court approved the post-arrest bails of Khan and Qureshi. While Khan has been incarcerated in other cases, Qureshi's expected release was halted as he was manhandled and re-arrested in a fresh May 9 case.

Days later, Justice Miangul Hasan Aurangzeb restricted the special court from proceeding against the suspects.

ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Life of_ (carefree existence)
6) Flat-bottomed open boat
11) "Shogun" sash
14) Apparently amazed
15) Country of over 1 billion
16) Car tracking digits (abbr.)
17) Gain experience
20) Doubter's outbursts
21) Like most NBA players
22) Calorie-rich pastry
23) 67.5 degrees, on a compass
24) Retail center
25) Fence repairer
26) Bronco catcher
28) Deafening noise
29) Find in a mine
30) Hole in your head
34) Bums of documentaries
35) Provider of wide-angle shots
37) One way to get the gravy
38) Former or previous
39) Affectionate utterance
40) Cape_ (cottage style)

- 41) Olympic prize
45) Greyhound alternative
4 7) Crossing the Atlantic
50) Day before a holiday
51) Dutch shoe
52) "_ go bragh"
53) Hairy jungle creatures
54) Maryland state flowers
57) Be in pain
58) Model of perfection
59) "Beetle Bailey" character
60) "2001" mainframe
61) From Oslo, e.g.
62) More likely
DOWN
1) "Friends" female
2) Big lizard
3) Woodworker's machines
4) Classic poetry
5) Japanese currency
6) Twine fiber
7) Bell sound
8) Short poem (var.)
9) "Fee_ foe furn"
10) Enrich
11) Goes too far
12) Marsh heron
13) "Psst!" follower
18) Airport stat.

- 19) Billion years
24) Cow sounds
25) Prefix meaning "one thousandth"
27) Quick cut
28) Attempt to lose weight
31) Prepared Bond's martini
32) Work the bar
33) "The Catcher in the _"
34) Santa's seat?
35) Gridiron game
36) Mme. Bovary
37) Hom of Africa nation
39) "Rock the_" (The Clash hit)
40) Birch tree spike
42) Make an exit
43) Exact retribution
44) Not as great
46) Legendary elephant eater
4 7) Vicinities
48) Move like a crab
49) Coast Guard officer (abbr.)
52) You right now, theme-wise
53) " ... and make it fast!"
55) Tokyo, long ago
56) Place with a president

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

If you can imagine it, you can have it. That may sound crazy, overused, at least, but it's not. So, right now, take a minute to imagine what you want right down to the very last detail. Then make a list. If you're not sure how to map the whole thing out, start with step one and the end point. The middle is the toughest part, but it's also the most important. Take some time to think it out.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Your psychic abilities are running on high now, so whatever your intuition tells you, don't bother resisting or trying to talk yourself out of listening to it. Do what it takes to make that voice in the back of your head stop yelling at you. If it involves someone you've been keeping company with, think hard about whether or not you trust them. You've obviously made a connection with the powers that be, and they're trying to tell you something, so pay attention.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

If you're ready to have them all laughing in the aisles again and rejuvenate your reputation as a party animal, this is your day. If you're not, someone else will be only too happy to do it for you, someone who's seen you in action entertaining an entire room with a single facial expression or comment. And stop acting like it's an inconvenience! You know you want to come out and play, and you love the attention.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

An authority figure who seems to have been less than forthcoming lately is secretly planning to come clean and tell you exactly what's been going on in their mind, but there's no reason to worry. The news will be good, especially if you're brave enough to start the conversation yourself, and when have you not been brave? Get the business over with early too. Tonight was made for romance.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

There's passion and romance on the agenda for you, and you're most definitely game for it. You've been dealing with someone else's problems for what seems like weeks, and it's time for some fun with one special person. Even if you're out with a group, don't feel bad about ducking out early. Quality time alone is important to any relationship, and you two are due. How about some snuggling and hand-holding?



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

After days of feeling like that tension in your shoulders was never going to go away, you could wake up this morning feeling like a brand-new person. And it's probably going to keep getting better too. By tonight, whatever stress you're still feeling from recent events will be nothing more than a distant memory. Help the process along. Refuse to discuss anything more serious than where to have dinner.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Think about it: Exactly how long has it been that you've been thinking, wishing, hoping, and dreaming about taking off for parts unknown? (Unknown to only you and possibly one lucky companion, that is.) If you can't remember not feeling that way, it's definitely time to stop dreaming and start making plans. Get together with your sweetheart and firm up some dates. Do your homework on flights, hotels, and travel plans in the meantime.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Put all the nonsense of the past few days behind you and focus on the day ahead, which is due to be interesting and unusual. Oh, and speaking of interesting, start preparing yourself to meet someone new who will be quite different from anyone else you know. You could meet them under unusual circumstances too, a coincidence, you might say, but then everyone knows there's really no such thing as coincidences, right?



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You can come out now, and you can stop worrying too. You've been dealing with an internal tug-of-war for days, trying to decide whether to choose the responsible thing to do or the fun thing to do. If you're clever (and everyone knows you're extremely clever), you can do both. Be diligent during the day. In fact, work overtime a bit if you have to. But once quitting time comes, get out of there and put it all behind you.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Your home is a warm, comfortable nest, and everyone you know always wants to come over. You also love your privacy, but unfortunately you probably haven't had much of that lately, and you're just dying for some now. If things get a little tricky and you have too much company, mention that you'd like some time alone. Or yawn loudly and obviously. Better still, take off by yourself or with your sweetie for the day and tell your friends to lock up when they leave.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

It's the perfect astrological weather for you right now. You really couldn't do much better, and you'll know it as soon as you set your feet on the floor this morning. For once, everyone around you will be feeling everything just as intensely as you do all the time. You'll also notice that they're operating a bit more from their instinct and a lot less from the "shoulds" they were taught as a child.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

When it comes to your financial health, you can't leave it to chance. As not fun as it may seem, you need to do some research so you can make a decision you won't regret later. And if you're sensitive about being called a cheapskate, you need to get over that. The people who toss around those terms are the same people who are deep in debt. Being thrifty will help you increase your cash flow and dramatically decrease your stress level.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Where are the Nicobar Islands?

- A. Mediterranean Sea
B. Pacific Ocean
C. Atlantic Ocean
D. Indian Ocean

02. It was released as a video game in 1994, was restructured as a subscription-based MMORPG in 2004, and in February 2012 had more than 10 million subscribers. Which is it?

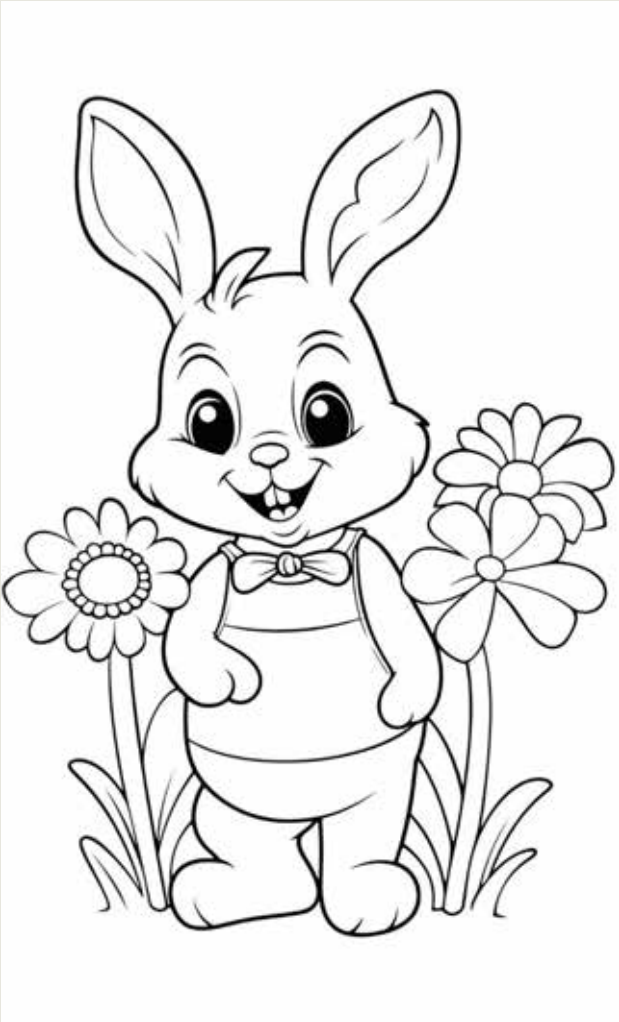
- A. Star Wars: the Old Republic
B. Warcraft
C. EVE Online
D. Final Fantasy

03. What is the name for a natural satellite that orbits a planet?

- A. Moon
B. Townshend
C. Entwhistle
D. Daltrey

Answers: 1. D 2. B 3. A

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

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

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

MEHRAN MAGIC IN VAIN AS OMAN LOSE THRILLER

All-round show from Wiese takes Namibia home in Super Over

Bridgetown, Barbados - There was drama till the end, and few would have imagined a match script swinging like a pendulum from one side to another. From the depths of despair to a near-delight for Oman, the opening Group B game between Oman and Namibia in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown will go down as one of the early thrillers of the 2024 edition.

In a match where both the teams scored a paltry 109 each to tie and force a Super Over, Namibia rode an all-round performance by their star David Wiese to scrape home but not before Oman produced one of the memorable fightbacks in the T20 World Cup.

It has been 12 years since the T20 World Cup witnessed a Super Over, the last was when West Indies beat New Zealand in Pallekele, Sri Lanka, on October 1, 2012.

The fighting spirit from Duleep Mendis-coached Oman will certainly be a big positive the team will take along as they continue their campaign in the World Cup. Not only did they apply brakes on the Namibian batters in the chase, a sensational final over from Mehran Khan saw Oman tie with Namibia as the latter were restricted to 109/6. Needing five



Mehran Khan took three wickets for just seven runs in three overs and came close to taking Oman to victory

of the final over, Mehran conceded just four to take the match into a Super Over.

However, Namibia's star all-rounder David Wiese dug in all his experiences as a leading franchise player, to power his team to victory in the one-over eliminator and earn two points.

Wiese and skipper Gerhard Erasmus hammered Oman's

main pace spearhead Bilal Khan in the Super Over for three boundaries and a maximum as they posted 21 runs. Wiese followed up his batting heroics with a tidy spell to restrict Oman to just ten runs and claimed the wicket of Naseem Khushi.

The Super Over began with a classic cover drive by Wiese off the first ball from Bilal and he

capitalised on a full toss off the next for a maximum over long on to set the tone. Erasmus slammed two successive boundaries to lead his team to 21.

Wiese's bowling spell ensured that Oman couldn't repeat the comeback they had orchestrated few minutes back on the magical spell from Mehran Khan, who defended five runs off the last over.

The fighting spirit shown by Duleep Mendis-coached Oman will certainly be a big positive for the team as they continue their campaign in the World Cup

scored 45, was dropped twice while Nikolaas Davin, the opening batter, also was dropped before he departed for 24.

Namibia found the chase tricky and brought it down to 18 off the last three overs with Frylinck at the crease till the last over.

Mehran, the 37-year-old experienced medium pacer, who made a comeback to the national team earlier this year after 2019, came up with an inspiring spell to bring back Oman from the jaws of defeat. He started the 18th over with four byes, but then had JJ Smit caught at long-on before

it missed the stumps. Had the throw hit the wickets, Oman may have recorded one of the most thrilling wins. Mehran finished with figures of 3-1-7-3.

Trumpelmann rips through

Trumpelmann's three-wicket spell in his first two overs set the tone of Namibia's dominance in the game. Kashyap Prajapati was leg before off the first ball and Ilyas returned to pavilion off the next ball. The left-arm pacer then sent back Naseem Khushi in his second over to have Oman reeling at 10/3. Former captain Zeeshan Maqsood and Khalid Kail took the team past the powerplay at 36/3 with a counterattack but Maqsood departed in the next over after powerplay, as left-arm spinner Bernard Scholz trapped him lbw in the seventh over.

With the spinners Scholz and Erasmus operating in tandem, Oman batters Kail and Ayaan Khan failed to break the shackles as they managed just five runs from the two overs after the powerplay. Ayaan Khan then gave charge to Scholz, hitting him for Oman's first six of the innings before Kail started the tenth over with a four off Erasmus.

Namibia bowlers' tight spell meant Oman failed to hit any boundaries for 44 deliveries and with pressure mounting Oman lost two more wickets.

Ayaan was caught at long-off off Erasmus and he then trapped Mohammad Nadeem in front in his next over. Mehran and Sha-keel Ahmed hit a couple of boundaries to take Oman past 100-mark before Wiese finished the final over with two wickets as they were bowled out in 19.4 overs.

Plenty of positives to take from defeat, says Maqsood

Bridgetown, Barbados - Defending a below-par target of measly 109 was always going to be a tough task for Oman against Namibia in their opening Group B match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup at the Kensington Oval ground in Bridgetown, Barbados on Sunday night (Monday morning, Oman time).

Despite the defeat in the Super Over, the mood in Oman camp was upbeat with former captain and the most experienced player in the squad, Zeeshan Maqsood, highlighting the team's fighting spirit that nearly pulled off a victory for the Men in Red.

Speaking at the post-match press conference, Maqsood, flanked by Oman team's media manager Varun Khimji, said: "It was an outstanding team effort even in the defeat. The bowlers were exceptional, and Mehran Khan was the pick of the lot. He was just awesome and brought us back into the game."

"We knew defending 109 on this wicket would be a challenge but we showed that under Aqib Ilyas' captaincy the players put in a fightback that we all can be proud of. Ilyas made some tactical bowling changes to keep the team in the running till the last over."

Maqsood said that the team "had to also pay a price for the 3-4 dropped catches."

He said: "Had we taken those, we could have won the game despite the wickets helping the bowlers. At the break time, we were not very confident of de-



Zeeshan Maqsood

It was an outstanding team effort even in defeat. The bowlers were exceptional, and Mehran Khan was the pick of the lot.

ZEESHAN MAQSOOD

fending 109 but with the pitch conditions assisting us, we fought back. We took the match into Super Over where David Wiese was outstanding with both bat and ball."

Maqsood added: "The defeat has given quite a few positives including a display of team's fighting spirit and the excellent display by the bowlers. We

hope to take these lessons into our next game against Australia on Wednesday night (Thursday morning, 4.30am, Oman time)."

Oman skipper Aqib Ilyas told the official broadcasters on the ground after the match. "We would have enjoyed the thriller more if we were on the winning side. Losing and winning is part of cricket but we possibly were maybe 15-20 runs short"

On the decision to bowl Bilal Khan in the Super Over, Ilyas said: "I think Bilal is one of the best bowlers you can have in Associate and this level. But there are days where you plan is not executed."

"He was clear, we were clear, but maybe the ball was wet, and he couldn't execute. Some days it is your day, some days it goes the opposite way."

Wiese: Oman put us under pressure

Bridgetown, Barbados - The hero of Namibia's Super Over win against Oman, David Wiese said that the opening Group B match was a "tight one."

In his post-match press conference, Wiese, who was also named the player of the match, said: "All credit to Oman to fight back and defend the under-par score. They put us under pressure, and we were lucky with the single off the last ball [that forced the tie and Super Over]."

Wiese said that "his experience of playing franchise cricket all around the world, helped him during the Super Over."



David Wiese

"When one plays franchise cricket, you come across such situations [Super Over]. It helped me today as I was in my zone during the eliminator. We are happy to have picked up two points despite the narrow margin," he said.

He added: "The pitch was difficult, didn't play the way we thought. But we adapted well. It was two-paced, it was a difficult wicket to get yourself in. One needed to spend a bit of time before capitalising. Lots of learnings from this game."

In his remarks to official broadcasters after the match,

Namibia skipper Gerhard Erasmus said: "The pitch was tough to get momentum. We tried that with running between the wickets but felt we needed that odd boundary. Unfortunately, we couldn't do that, and we need to take accountability for that before the next game."

He added: "Batting was tough on a tough wicket like that. It showed in the Super Over that if you put pressure there will be some scoring opportunity. It is great to be part of a Super Over. Winning a close game early breaks the duck and brings you into the tournament."

West Indies rally to beat Papua New Guinea

Georgetown, Guyana - Twice world champions West Indies plundered 52 from their final five overs to complete a five-wicket victory over Papua New Guinea with an over to spare in their opening match at the T20 World Cup at the Providence Stadium on Sunday.

Roston Chase struck an unbeaten 42 from 27 deliveries and the powerful Andre Russell hit an enormous six over mid-on as West Indies successfully chased down Papua New Guinea's 136 for eight.

West Indies had to fight hard against Papua New Guinea attack on a slow pitch but Chase kept cool in the latter stages to see his team safely home "I gave myself time and backed myself," said Chase, who was



Roston Chase struck an unbeaten 42 from 27 deliveries to help West Indies chase down Papua New Guinea's 136 for eight

named man-of-the-match. "To start the tournament with a win is always good. I had to take it home for the team and I did."

Papua New Guinea, making only their second appearance in

a T20 World Cup, were soon in trouble after West Indies won the toss and opted to field first.

The hosts had picked three spinners possibly in order to hasten the over rate with rain

forecast later in the day after torrential rain drenched the Guyana capital on the previous day.

Papua New Guinea lost Tony Ura for two in the first over when he was caught by Nicholas Pooran off Romario Shepherd, then Lega Siaka was bowled for one off Akeal Hossain's second delivery.

Captain Assad Vala made 21 before being caught by Chase off Alzarri Joseph and Sese Bau helped to stage a partial recovery by taking 14 off a Gudakesh Motie over and reached his half century from 43 balls before he fell lbw to Joseph for 50.

But wickets kept tumbling cheaply and Papua New Guinea could manage only 136 from their 20 overs.



Scaloni expects to continue as Argentina coach

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said he is fully committed to leading the national team and expects to stay in charge until Argentine Football Association (AFA) President Claudio Tapia decides otherwise.

Scaloni, 46, caused a stir when he said he was considering stepping down after Argentina beat Brazil 1-0 in a 2026 World Cup qualifier in November.

Local media reported in January that the coach had agreed to remain in charge until at least the end of the Copa America, which runs from June 20 to July 14 in the United States. Scaloni told reporters on Sunday he intends to continue at the helm after the continental showpiece.

"I was not having a good year and I felt it was time to stop the ball. Today I'm here with all my energy, which, to be honest, was not the case in

November," he said.

"As long as the president of the AFA wants me to be here, I'll be here."

Scaloni also gave an update on Lionel Messi's fitness and his decision to leave Paulo Dybala out of the 29-man squad for their final friendlies.

"The good thing is that Messi has had continuity in his team (Inter Miami), especially after his injury. That's important, that he gets more minutes. We see him at full fitness. He will join the squad for training tomorrow," he said.

"We have a special affection for him (Dybala), but we always say that the team comes first. Given the circumstances and the fact that we had problems in some positions, we decided not to include him.

"We know what he has given us. With all the pain in the world, this is the decision we have taken".

'YOUR DREAMS ARE NOW MY DREAMS'

Mourinho unveiled as new manager of Turkish club Fenerbahce

Istanbul, Turkey - Jose Mourinho was unveiled as the new manager of Turkish Super Lig club Fenerbahce in front of thousands of enthusiastic fans on Sunday.

Mourinho, 61, has been out of a job since he was sacked by Serie A side AS Roma in January.

The Turkish club held a signing ceremony for Mourinho in Fenerbahce's Ulker Stadium in Istanbul as thousands of supporters cheered the Portuguese coach's name and sang songs.

"Normally a coach is loved after victories, in this case I feel that love before victories. And that for me is a big responsibility that I feel and I promise you that from this moment I belong to this family, this shirt is my skin," Mourinho said in his address to the fans, waving a Fenerbahce jersey.

"Since the moment I met president Ali Koc and understood his ideas and projects, I wanted to play for you, I want to be the coach of all of you... From the moment I signed my contract, your dreams are now my dreams," Mourinho added.

"I welcome our coach Mourinho on behalf of our fans. He is one of the best coaches of world football history. I'm sure he'll be the winner coach here, as he had been in other clubs in the past," club chairman Ali Koc said.

Mourinho will replace Turkish boss Ismail Kartal, who Fenerbahce parted ways with on Friday after only one loss in the league last season. It's Mourinho's first job since he left Roma in January after two and a half years marked by winning the Europa Conference League in 2022 and a series



Jose Mourinho takes a selfie with Fenerbahce fans

Normally a coach is loved after victories, in this case I feel that love before victories. And that for me is a big responsibility that I feel and I promise you that from this moment I belong to this family, this shirt is my skin.

JOSE MOURINHO

of disputes with referees.

The Portuguese has not worked outside of the top five European leagues since 2004, when he left Porto after winning the Champions League and joined Chelsea, which was on the rise under then-owner Roman Abramovich. Since then he has

also coached Inter Milan, Madrid, Manchester United and Tottenham in a career filled with trophies and off-field controversy.

Fenerbahce were involved in a tight title race with Galatasaray but six draws proved costly as their Istanbul rivals won the league by three points.

Wonderkid Yamal ready to take Euro 2024 by storm

Madrid, Spain - Spain has become one of European soccer's most fertile grounds for producing world-class players who seem to break out at ever younger ages, with Barcelona's 16-year-old winger Lamine Yamal the latest to make headlines and ready to star at Euro 2024.

Following in the footsteps of fellow Barca academy teenage sensations Pedri, Gavi and Ansu Fati, Yamal has established himself as an important part of Barca's forward line and is expected to be highly influential at the tournament.

Yamal will turn 17 one day before the final, as Spain brace for the challenge of a highly anticipated Group B showdown in the so-called "Group of Death" alongside Croatia, European champions Italy and surprise package Albania in Germany.

Spain have been relying on young players as they try to rise from the shadows of a golden generation who enjoyed an historic six-year spell, winning back to back Euros in 2008 and 2012 while lifting the nation's first World Cup in between in 2010.

Pedri was a key part of Spain's run to the semi-finals of the last European Championship and, along with his club performances, won the 2021 Golden Boy and Kopa Trophy, awarded to the best player under 21.

He was followed by his team mate Gavi, who won the two trophies the following year and was Spain's darling at Qatar 2022, where he became the youngest



World Cup scorer since Pele in 1958 after helping his side to thrash Costa Rica 7-0.

But Yamal emerged from Barca's La Masia academy to break several records in 2023, some of which belonged to Gavi including Barcelona's youngest debutant in an official match and Spain's youngest international and scorer aged 16.

Yamal has thrived under the guidance of Spain manager Luis de la Fuente, who has experience with young players after a decade with the federation's (RFEF) grassroots teams, winning the

Euros with the Under-19s in 2015 and Under-21s in 2019.

De la Fuente has been willing to give chances to youngsters, calling up Barca's 17-year-old defender Pau Cubarsi recently and trusting in Athletic Bilbao's 21-year-old winger Nico Williams alongside Yamal, giving Spain an electric duo up-front.

"This kind of footballer is a special breed," De la Fuente told Reuters in an interview. "It's unusual for a 16-year-old boy to have that kind of self-confidence, the ability to play and look like a veteran."

Croatia's fortunes in Euro 2024 depend on rock solid Gvardiol

Manchester, England - While Croatia playmaker Luka Modric will hog the limelight in what is likely to be his swansong international tournament, the country's fortunes at Euro 2024 may equally depend on the form of defensive Lynchpin Josko Gvardiol.

The 22-year-old shot to prominence at the last World Cup, when his sterling work alongside Dejan Lovren helped propel Croatia to the semi-finals before their balloon was eventually burst by eventual champions Argentina.

Throughout the tournament Croatia boss Zlatko Dalic sang Gvardiol's praises and when they reached the knockout stages he did not hold back.

"Gvardiol is the best centre back in the world," he said. "To play this maturely, it's amazing."

Gvardiol may not be the



biggest but he is strong and quick and his performances in Qatar caught the attention of Manchester City, who splashed out 77 million pounds to take him from RB Leipzig last August.

Like many players do when they arrive in the Premier League, especially when they have to adjust to Pep Guardiola's exacting

The 22-year-old shot to prominence at the last World Cup, when his sterling work alongside Dejan Lovren helped propel Croatia to the semi-finals where they lost to Argentina.

tactical demands, the Croatian defender struggled initially to fit into the team. Gvardiol found himself operating mostly at left back but it was not long before he was earning rave reviews as an unlikely attacking weapon in City's latest title charge.

Playing left back was not entirely new for Gvardiol -- he was

used there in Dinamo Zagreb's youth academy and ex-Leipzig boss Jesse Marsch occasionally employed him in that position too - but finding his feet as a goalscorer certainly was.

He netted four times in 52 games for Zagreb, and got five in 88 games for Leipzig. Gvardiol made 32 appearances for City without scoring but then the floodgates opened.

A wonderful strike against Real Madrid at the Bernabeu in the Champions League quarter-finals began a run of five goals in seven games, including two at Fulham.

"Life is about confidence," Guardiola said after Gvardiol's double at Craven Cottage. "Coming to the Premier League for the first season when you are 21 years old, I would say it is not easy to handle it."

Wirtz aims to restore German glory at Euros

Berlin, Germany - Freshly-crowned Bundesliga champion Florian Wirtz has long been considered among the most talented players of his generation and the striker will be expected to help restore Germany to former glories at their home European Championship.

Despite early praise in his fledgling career, the 21-year-old had not enjoyed a true breakout season until this term when he led Bayer Leverkusen's march.

Wirtz also helped the club to



Florian Wirtz

reach the Europa League final, where they lost 3-0 to Atalanta, and book their place in the German Cup final in which they beat Kaizerlautern.

He was supposed to be his country's big new name at the 2022 World Cup but a cruciate ligament tear in March that year saw him miss the tournament, with Germany crashing out in the first round. He bounced back from that injury and Wirtz is now ready to carry that momentum.



Alex de Minaur

De Minaur stuns Medvedev to march into quarterfinals

Paris, France - Alex de Minaur broke a 20-year Australian hoodoo at the French Open on Monday as the 11th seed battled from a set down to stun fifth seed Daniil Medvedev 4-6 6-2 6-1 6-3 and advance to his first Roland Garros quarter-final.

De Minaur became the first man from his nation to reach the last eight at the claycourt Grand Slam since Lleyton Hewitt in 2004, with the victory on Suzanne Lenglen coming after a mid-match blip for Medvedev following a foot blister.

"It's great. It's amazing. It's a great position to be in," De Minaur told reporters.

"It's not just myself. The whole country is showing what we can do and the strength of the nation is extremely exciting for even everyone back at home, just to see all the numbers we got in the top 100, and we keep on pushing out there," he said.

"Just to show what the Australian chemistry is, I've got Thanasi Kokkinakis watching me today, supporting me. It's great to see, honestly."

JABEUR ON SONG

Tunisian star beats Tauson to reach French Open quarters

Paris, France - Tunisia's Ons Jabeur slid into the French Open quarter-finals for the second time when she earned a hard-fought 6-4, 6-4 victory over Denmark's Clara Tauson on Sunday, celebrating by having a sing-along with her fans.

World number nine Jabeur broke the 72nd-ranked Tauson's service in a tight third game and nearly dropped her own right afterwards in a marathon 26-point game but held firm and went on to clinch the first set.

With a superb passing shot, the 29-year-old Tunisian immediately took the lead in the second set but could not hold it and had to wait until the fifth game to break again as Tauson hit two mistimed unforced errors.

Tauson, who defeated 2017 Roland Garros champion Jelena Ostapenko in the second round and former runner-up Sofia Kenin in the third, nearly drew level in the 10th game but Jabeur kept the upper hand to wrap up victory in little over 90 minutes.

Jabeur waved her arms and bounced up and down while singing along with fans during her post-match interview on court, later saying that the song was a mix of Arabic, French and Italian that she loosely translated as "it's incredible, step by step to the final".

It's going to be difficult. She (Coco Gauff) is such a fighter. I know I can bother her also but it's going to be a great match.

ONS JABEUR

Jabeur, targeting a first Grand Slam title after finishing runner-up twice at Wimbledon and at the U.S Open last year, will face world number three Coco Gauff in the quarter-finals.

"It's going to be difficult. She's such a fighter," Jabeur said of the American. "I know I can bother her also but it's going to be a great match."



Ons Jabeur celebrates her victory against Denmark's Clara Tauson

Easy for Sabalenka

World number two Aryna Sabalenka pummelled American Emma Navarro 6-2, 6-3 in just over an hour on Monday to march into the quarterfinals with an emphatic performance that kept her on course for her first title in Paris.

Navarro had stunned the Belarusian at Indian Wells in March but Sabalenka broke her to love at the very start and followed that up with another break to race through the first set in 30 minutes. The Australian Open champion, unbeaten now in 11 straight matches at the majors this year without losing a single set, completely overpowered Navarro with her thundering baseline game and attacked the American's weak second serve at every opportunity.

"I was ready for a tough match, to fight for any point, for long rallies," Sabalenka said. "I am super happy with the level I played today."

On a day of glorious sunshine in the French capital after days of rain interruptions, Sabalenka got an early break in the second set courtesy of one of her 36 winners to go 2-1 up and leave Navarro with a mountain to climb.



Elena Rybakina celebrates a point against Elina Svitolina

Rybakina beats Svitolina to reach last eight

Paris, France - World number four Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan sent out a warning to her fellow title contenders as she eased to a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Ukraine's Elina Svitolina on Monday to reach her second French Open quarter-final.

After a sluggish start Russian-born Rybakina raised her

level and cruised through the first set.

In the second set, the 29-year-old Svitolina was no match again for Rybakina as the 19th-ranked Ukrainian showed signs of fatigue from the start and lacked precision under the long-awaited sun after a wet first week on the Paris red clay.

The Kazakh said she would need to be more consistent when she plays 15th-ranked Italian Jasmine Paolini who has reached the last eight for the first time. "It's all about focus now, the matches are getting tougher, the opening also, so I think it's a lot about the consistency, not having so many ups

and downs," she said.

Svitolina had reached the quarter-finals four times before, including 2023, but was unable to trouble the former Wimbledon champion. "I missed my chance, but she's a great player. It's always tricky because you feel like you're so close, but at the same time so far," Svitolina said.

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NECK EXERCISES

HEADS UP

Neck exercises are a common part of almost any treatment plan for neck pain. A typical neck exercise programme will consist of a combination of stretching and strengthening exercises, aerobic conditioning, and possibly trigger point exercises

Modern lifestyle, which involves sitting in front of a computer for several hours at work, watching long hours of television, using gadgets and smart phones for communication and routine tasks, invariably puts a lot of pressure on the neck without one knowing it. It comes to the fore only when your neck begins to ache and let you know that it cannot take it any longer.

When neck, chest, and upper back muscles become weakened, tightened, and/or elongated, the shoulders can become rounded and the head sags forward. This poor posture, in turn, puts more stress on the cervical spine's facet joints and intervertebral discs, as well as the muscles and ligaments.

Poor posture with the head too far forward may lead to chronic or recurrent neck pain that can also be accompanied by stiff joints, upper back pain, shoulder blade pain, and headaches. Fortunately, a neck exercise programme may be able to help address most of these symptoms. Consider these few stretches to ease your discomfort:

Corner Stretch

A basic exercise that is important for stretching the chest and shoulder muscles is the corner stretch. It is performed in the corner of a room.

- Stand approximately two feet back from the corner, facing into the corner - feet should be together.
- Forearms are placed on each wall, and elbows are a little below shoulder height.
- Lean in as far as possible without pain. Patients will feel a stretch in the front of the shoulders and chest.
- Hold the stretch for about 30 seconds to a minute.



Levator Scapulae Stretch

There are two levator scapulae muscles - one on each side of the neck - that attach to the top four transverse processes and go down to the shoulder. This muscle can become tight and may be tender where it attaches to the shoulder blade. Stretching this muscle can play a role in reducing neck pain. The levator scapulae stretch can be performed while sitting or standing.

- Lengthen the muscle by raising the elbow above the shoulder at the side to stretch.
- In this position, first rest the elbow against a door jamb. This action rotates the outside of the shoulder blade up and the inside of it down, which lengthens the levator scapulae muscle.
- Next, turn the head away from the side that is stretching and bring the chin down, stretching the back of the neck.
- Hold this for about 30 seconds to a minute.



Avoid Neck Circles

Neck circles, which involve the slow rotation of the head being tilted and rolled in a full circle, have been performed by most people in gym class or while participating in a sport or dance class. However, research shows that the combination of extending the head backward and rotating it puts undue stress on the cervical spine. Compared to other neck movements, neck circles could also cause more compression of the arteries that take blood to the brain.

HONEY VS WHITE SUGAR

When we hear so much about white sugar and the harm it causes, then we are often advised to use honey. Many have shifted to honey, by adding it generously to tea/coffee, oats, smoothies, and desserts. This gives a comforting feeling that we are enjoying our food without compromising on sweetness or calories. But is that true, let's check it out.

VANDANA CHAWLA



NUTRITION & YOU



Composition of honey and sugar

Both the sweeteners contain carbohydrates, glucose and fructose, with some minor differences. Sugar obtained from sugarcane or sugar beet has equal amounts of glucose and fructose, while honey is sugar nectar collected by bees, and in addition, contains water, maltose and minor amounts of pollens, enzymes, antioxidants, and nutrients.

Nutrition profile

Calories - Table sugar has slightly more calories than honey when taken on a per 100g basis, but since honey is liquid, when calculated on a volume basis, honey has more calories than sugar. As honey is sweeter than sugar, less of it is needed to give the necessary sweetness required in a recipe.



Glycemic Index - Next to calories, when we look at the glycemic index of

these sweeteners, then the difference between the two is minimal. The glycemic index is the rate at which the

blood glucose levels rise or fall after its consumption. Both, come in the category of High GI, which means, bringing a rise in the blood sugar after its consumption.

Health benefits - Not all honey is the same. Manuka honey contains anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties, owing to the presence of antioxidants including phytochemicals, flavonoids, and ascorbic acid. In addition, honey contains trace amounts of B vitamins and minerals, and the amount varies from plant and region where bees pollinate. Owing to the presence of all these, honey helps in healing wounds, alleviating colds, and works as a prebiotic when added to yoghurt.

When looking at sugar, there is no health benefit as such, as it is empty of calories and devoid of any nutrients.

Health concerns

The major health concern with honey is its safety for babies under 1 year of age, as honey can contain bacteria that cause infant botulism. Rare allergies have also been associated with

raw unprocessed honey.

Sugar has always been blacklisted and has been linked to more health concerns than honey. Increased intake of sugar is linked to weight gain, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, tooth decay and decreased immunity.

So, which is healthier?

From a calorie perspective, honey has slightly more and also from a nutritional perspective, honey ranks above sugar. But the amount of nutrients present is so less that large amounts need to be taken to get nutritional benefits. As for health benefits, honey ranks above sugar.

To conclude, replacing sugar with honey and using it generously will not support weight loss programmes. If taken as a health supplement, in small amounts, it will be beneficial in many conditions. Remember, excessive consumption, be it honey or sugar, will harm health.

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

MENTAL HEALTH

CATCH THEM YOUNG



There is a great deal of stigma associated with mental health issues amongst teenagers due to which they are unable to open up about their problems. Often, it all begins at home and gets swept under the carpet, causing untold harm to youngsters.

Mental health issues, if not tackled in good time, can lead to an array of complications in the long run which might need greater attention and therapy. The fact is, family members, who should be the first to detect abnormal behaviour, generally dismiss it as a passing phase.

According to Nutaila al Kharusi, managing director and psychotherapist at Al Harub Medical Center, parental attitudes and home environment play significant roles in mitigating these issues.

"The issue of mental health disorders among the youth in Oman is significant and requires urgent attention - a cultural shift is essential," she says, advocating storytelling and sharing testimonials, educational campaigns targeting schools and workplaces, as well as support groups that can help raise awareness and eliminate the stigma.

The misconceptions about mental health are mainly due to the lack of awareness amongst parents and close mindedness to any new information that is different from what they initially believed. Usually, youngsters with physical ailments get immediate attention while mental health issues are neglected.

Kharusi says, "In my clinic, I normalise conversations about mental health by discussing it as openly as physical health. I provide parents with information, share success stories and emphasise that seeking help is a sign of strength."

There are multiple words that are often

Mental health issues have their roots in teenage, and unless it is resolved early, it can lead to serious issues in adulthood that can hamper normal life, say practising psychologists in the capital

used by parents today in order to disregard the situation and avoid confrontation with mental health issues. For example, issues like bipolar disorder are often considered as 'mood swings', depression is seen as a 'passing phase' while the option of consulting a psychiatrist is considered taboo.

Bejoy Kurian, school counsellor, Indian School Al Ghubra, who has been advising students and parents for the past 14 years over a range of issues, says, "When parents use insults or critical language while interacting with their children, they may turn that criticism on themselves and engage in negative self-talk with phrases like 'I'm stupid', 'I'm fat' or 'I'll never do anything right'. If parents can create a supportive and non-judgmental environment, children can open up and feel the trust."

He also adds that some parents see mental health issues as a sign of weakness or shame, leading them to minimise or completely ignore their child's struggles. This can affect students, as they may feel ashamed of their own mental health issues, and suffer in silence.

Generational gap is one of the factors that seem to affect this situation. The differences in upbringing, environmental influences like the nature of peers and parents, hormonal and physical changes, excessive screen time, etc, also play a significant role in determining the issues teenagers may



The issue of mental health disorders among the youth in Oman is significant and requires urgent attention - a cultural shift is essential
NUTAILA AL KHARUSI



Peer group pressure, friendships, body image issues are some of the factors affecting mental health among the youth
ANUYA PHULE

face and how they tackle it.

Anuya Phule, clinical psychologist and psychotherapist at Hatat Polyclinic, says teenagers usually exhibit mental health issues in the form of anger, irritability or lethargy and parents often dismiss these as behavioural or disciplinary issues.

"Prevalent factors, like peer group pressure, friendships, body image issues and self-esteem are some of the common factors affecting mental health among the youth. I emphasise that teenagers should never self-diagnose their disorders based on information available on the Internet."

Dimple Mathew, a rehabilitation psychologist working at a special education school in Muscat, pointed out, "From a parents' perspective, they often experience emotional overload, frustration and helplessness while trying to help with children's mental needs. Fear and anxiety about their child's wellbeing and future is very common." Also, the fear of societal judgement, labelling them as 'bad parents', adds to their reluctance to seek help, she added.

Fatima al Balushi (name changed) an Omani student of Modern College of Business and Science, says that awareness about mental illnesses amongst teenagers' parents has increased but there is still a lot of progress that needs to be made. "In my culture, many do not believe in mental health illnesses, hence it is important for

parents to take the initiative of educating themselves about such common issues."

Omar al Siyabi (name changed), an Omani teenager residing at Bousher, said, "I was a constant subject of bullying at school and was scared to go to school since I did not want to face the bullies. I kept it as a secret until my mother guessed something was wrong and inquired from my schoolmates about the real issue. It was resolved and I don't fear school now."

Parents should listen to their children and avoid giving advice if it is not needed at that moment. Spending quality time within the family is a good way to detect dilemmas that weigh children down and to devise ways to amicably solve them before it becomes a disorder.

Ayesha al Sulaimani (name changed), an Omani parent of a teenage daughter and son, says, "I believe in being my child's friend rather than just a parent. Some common factors I have seen affecting children around me are bullying, social media influences, and copying bad habits of peers, like smoking." She also stressed that she has always prioritised her children's mental health and has taken her own son to therapy, too, and believes that seeking help is not wrong or a sign of weakness.

Phule further suggests that parents and teenagers use media platforms like TedX, Y2Y and get parenting tips to gain basic knowledge about mental health issues. "Teenage is a delicate phase when the brain is yet developing. If issues are not addressed at this stage, it could lead to some permanent personality traits that could negatively affect adulthood. Many parents wonder whether counselling can actually help, but unless you try it, you wouldn't know how effective it is," she assures.

(Contributed by Sneha Lijoys)

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