

OMAN, SWITZERLAND UNDERScore IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTING TIES

Swiss President visits sultanate to mark 50th anniversary of establishment of Oman-Swiss diplomatic ties

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Alain Berset of the Swiss Confederation reaffirmed their interest in promoting more partnership initiatives and exchange of expertise at both the governmental and private sector levels, especially in the fields of economy, trade, investment, tourism, environment, logistics, renewable energy, education and research.

This was stated in a joint communique issued on the occasion of the Swiss President's visit to Oman.

'Based on the friendship, historical ties and close cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Swiss Confederation, and in response to the gracious invitation extended by His Majesty the Sultan on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, President Berset paid an official visit to Oman from Thursday to Friday,' the communique stated.



During the visit, His Majesty the Sultan discussed with President Berset a number of issues related to the friendship and cooperation between the two countries, and exchanged views on various regional and international developments.

In the context of political, security and human rights issues, both sides expressed their strong support for principles of dialogue, negotiation and mediation in resolving conflicts and addressing challenges in order to achieve security, peace, peaceful coexistence and stability for all.

They also expressed firm support to the principles of international law and respect for the multilateral international system to establish justice, freedom and the human right to a dignified life. His Majesty the Sultan and the

Swiss President commended the Global Health and Peace Initiative spearheaded by Oman and Switzerland within the World Health Organization, supporting the concept of health and peace for all through joint global cooperation.

The two countries signed several Memoranda of Understanding including in the areas of healthcare development and capacity building with the Swiss company Roche, cooperation in the tourism sector, and sustainable energy and technologies.

In the latter area, a concrete cooperation between the Ministry of Energy and Minerals of Oman and a consortium led by the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology will start in January 2024.

In addition, a letter of intent for cooperation between the Diplomatic Academy of the Foreign Ministry of Oman and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, and an agreement on the employment authorisation of accompanying persons of official employees were signed.

During the visit, a joint commemorative postage stamp was issued to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, symbolising the historical ties and friendship between the two countries and peoples.

President Berset expressed his deep gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty the Sultan, his government and the friendly people of Oman for the warm reception and generous hospitality extended to him and his delegation, and conveyed an invitation to His Majesty the Sultan for a visit to Switzerland.'

Jokha longlisted for Sheikh Zayed Book Award

Our Correspondent Muscat

Jokha al Harthi, arguably Oman's most recognised contemporary author, has been shortlisted for one of the most prestigious literary awards in the region.

Her latest book *Al-Jasad fi al-Ghazal al-Uthri* (*The Body in Arabic Love Poetry*), translated from English to Arabic by Zuwaina al Tuwya, is on the longlist for the Sheikh Zayed Book Award (SBZA).

The Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre announced the longlists for key categories, including Translation, Literary, Art Criticism and Contribution to the Development of Nations categories for the 18th edition of SBZA last week.

SBZA received the highest number of submissions in its history for the current edition, with 4,240 nominations submitted from 74 countries, including 19 Arab nations and 55 other countries around the world. Alongside Jokha, the longlist for the Translation category includes 11 titles from seven Arab countries.



Positive Vision Association to address HIV/AIDS issues

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International Day of Persons with Disabilities carnival held

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Civil Aviation Club in Muscat hosted 'Happiness Village Carnival' on Friday to celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Sponsored by H H Sayyid Muhammad bin Thuwaini al Said, the event was designed to promote inclusivity and integration of individuals with disabilities into society.

On the occasion, H H Sayyida Hujaija bint Jaffar al Said, who organised the carnival, informed that the event was aimed at over 1,848 children from various associations and institutions that cater to the needs of children with disabilities.

"This initiative, in collaboration with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Civil Aviation Club, focuses on enhancing abilities of persons with disabilities and enabling their integration into the community."

The carnival offered a plethora of activities, all tailored for the entertainment of persons with disabilities. Attractions included horse riding, horse carriage rides, entertainment shows and a variety of safe recreational games.

Children were delighted by the presence of cartoon characters, acrobatic artists, a food and beverage section, and engaging activities like science laboratory experiments, an inflatable castle and luxury car rides. The event featured several programmes specifically designed to cater to



This initiative, in collaboration with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Civil Aviation Club, focuses on enhancing abilities of persons with disabilities and enabling their integration into the community

HH SAYYIDA HUIJAJA AL SAID

the unique needs of the participants.

A highlight of the carnival was the signing of a cooperation agreement between National Finance Company and Sign Book to provide sign language translation services, underscoring the event's commitment to accessibility and inclusivity.

Sohar Investment Forum to explore opportunities in North Batinah

Muscat - Sohar Investment Forum 2024, scheduled for February 26-27, 2024, is set to be a landmark event in North Batinah, organised by the governorate's branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The forum aims to showcase and explore a plethora of investment opportunities across various sectors, reflecting the governorate's diverse economic landscape.

The forum will include a conference, an exhibition and business-to-business (B2B) meetings; it is designed to facilitate direct interactions and networking among participants, paving the way for fruitful discussions and potential partnerships, a press release stated.

"The forum is not just an event; it is an integral initiative in line with Oman Vision 2040. It seeks to highlight Sohar's emerging status as a dynamic and forward-looking investment landscape. This effort aligns with OCCI's broader objective to bolster Oman's profile as an attractive investment destination and support the private sector in capitalising on new business opportunities."

Highlighting the region's burgeoning economic potential, Said al Abri, Chairman of OCCI North Batinah, stated, "Sohar, known for its medium to large industries, many of which are export-oriented, has seen significant growth with over US\$35bn in cumulative investments from



Said al Abri

both domestic and foreign investors."

According to Abri, this thriving economic environment is a testament to Sohar's robust investment appeal. The forum will spotlight new and lucrative investment opportunities in rapidly expanding sectors. These include manufacturing, exports, logistics, tourism, energy, renewables, real estate, minerals, agriculture, food processing, IT, fintech, e-commerce, healthcare, education and retail, among others.

The forum is expected to draw over 600 high-ranking officials from Omani ministries and key agencies, alongside prominent business owners and investors from Oman, the MENA region, Europe, Asia and the Americas.

This diverse gathering will provide a platform to share and explore emerging opportunities in North Batinah. A highlight of the event will be the signing of several cooperation and investment agreements, further cementing the governorate's position as a prime destination for investments.

Digital philanthropy soars with Jood platform

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has made great strides in digital philanthropy with the successful launch of its Jood platform. Since October 5, Jood - translating to 'give generously' - has witnessed significant engagement with donations totalling RO260,376 from 7,204 individuals.

Jood is an online innovation designed to streamline the process of giving charity, supporting an array of charities and volunteer organisations within Oman. Through jood.om, both individual and institutional benefactors can effortlessly contribute via secure electronic channels.

An MoSD official informed that to date, the platform has at-

tracted 160,568 visitors, highlighting its widespread appeal. Currently, it hosts 17 charities and 36 volunteer teams, with plans to expand its network by including five more charities and

The platform has witnessed donations totalling RO260,376 from 7,204 individuals

28 additional volunteer groups. One of Jood's standout features is its user-friendly interface, offering dedicated pages for each registered organisation and a centralised system for managing charity programmes.

The platform is not only a donation conduit but also a robust

management tool. It meticulously assesses applications from charities, maintains comprehensive beneficiary records and ensures there are no double disbursements, thus avoiding overlapping assistance from multiple sources.

Additionally, Jood provides invaluable statistical reports, aiding benefactors and researchers in understanding the landscape of charitable activities in Oman.

The MoSD official underscored the platform's significance, noting its role in enabling transparent and data-driven decision-making in the charity sector.

This digital leap marks a new era in Oman's approach to philanthropy, blending traditional generosity with modern technology to enhance the efficiency and impact of charitable endeavours.

Muscat Dialogue Sessions to delve into sustainable development

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The 2023 edition of Muscat Dialogue Sessions will be held at Al Shafaq Club Hall in Azaiba on Monday. It is an event aimed at fostering community involvement in local development.

The opening session will be attended by Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi, Governor of Muscat, and Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, besides members of Majlis A'Shura, walis and their deputies, and representatives of various government agencies.

Organised in alignment with

the Royal Directives of His Majesty the Sultan, these dialogue sessions are a crucial step in supporting the ongoing development process and enhancing community partnership, a press release stated.

The sessions underscore the governorate's commitment to gathering ideas and suggestions from diverse social groups, ensuring inclusive participation in the development of prioritised projects in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Spanning three days, the sessions will delve into multiple themes central to promising sectors aimed at achieving sustain-

able development. The first day's discussions will revolve around the humanisation of cities and environmental volunteering. The following day will focus on exploring investment opportunities, technology and innovation. On the final day, a comprehensive session will review key results and recommendations from the discussions.

These sessions are not just for experts and officials but a diverse range of attendees, including academics, entrepreneurs, specialists, youth groups, college and university students, and other individuals interested in the discussion topics.

إعلان مناقصات

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

SOHAR Port and Freezone invites Tenderers to the following tenders

تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة الموردين للمشاركة في المناقصات أدناه

Tender No.	Tender Ref.	Tender Title	Tender Fee OMR (net)
1	SIPC 2023 - 063	Design of Water Diversion System for Sea Water Return Canal -Re-Float	52,500
2	SIPC 2023 - 069	Windows Replacement at SOHAR Port Admin Building	52,500
3	SIPC 2023 - 076	Removal of Seabed Sedimentation at SOHAR Port Basin and Approach Channel	52,500

• The above-mentioned tender fees including the VAT 5%.

• Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00 am on Sunday, 03/12/2023 until 4:00 pm on Thursday 14/12/2023.

• Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:

• **Step 1:** Interested Tenderers should remit the stated tender fees as per the below bank details:

• لتسليم رسوم المناقصة المذكورة أعلاه ضريبة القيمة المضافة ومقدراها 5%

• يمكن للمتقدمي المناقصات طلب استلام وثائق المناقصة إلكترونياً ابتداءً من يوم الأحد الموافق ٢٠٢٣/١٢/٠٣ الساعة ٩:٠٠ صباحاً وحتى يوم الخميس الموافق ٢٠٢٣/١٢/١٤ الساعة ٤:٠٠ مساءً.

• على مقدمي المناقصات اتباع الإجراءات والخطوات التالية للحصول على مستندات المناقصة إلكترونياً.

• **الخطوة الأولى:** يجب على مقدمي المناقصات سداد رسوم المناقصة وفقاً للتفاصيل أدناه.

Account Name اسم الحساب	SOHAR Industrial Port Co شركة ميناء صحر الحرة
Account Number رقم الحساب	3101-007970-500
Bank Name البنك	Oman Arab Bank SAOC - Main Br بنك عمان العربي فرع رئيسي - فرع صحر الحرة
SWIFT رمز الحساب	OMABOMRUXXX

Note: Bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted.
ملاحظة: التحويل البنكي هو الطريقة الوحيدة المقبولة للدفع

الخطوة الثانية:
يطلب من مقدمي المناقصات تسليم المستندات التالية:

- A request for the electronic tender documents Scanned bank transfer
- The firm's commercial registration documents
- All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address:
SIPC_offices@soharportfreezone.com

الخطوة الثالثة:
سوف يتسلم مقدمي المناقصات نسخة إلكترونية من مستندات المناقصة عبر البريد الإلكتروني.

- بطلب الشركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة قبول أو رفض أي مورد بغير الإضمار من السداد
- تقديم وثائق التسجيل التجارية والمواصلة (تقديم بطاقة براءة إلى جانب مستندات الشركة)
- في حال وجود أي أسئلة أو استفسارات تتعلق بالمناقصات الرجاء التواصل معنا عبر البريد الإلكتروني

• SOHAR reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reasons

• All SMEs are requested to provide their RYADAH Card along with the request documents

• For any clarification regarding the tenders please send an e-mail to:
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Cyclist rides 1,000km to celebrate National Day, promote tourism

Omran al Mundhiri cycled 7am to 11pm, 120km to 150km each day

Our Correspondent Muscat

In a display of national pride and endurance, 24-year-old Omran Marhoon Khamis al Mundhiri from Samail set off on an extraordinary cycling tour to commemorate the sultanate's 53rd National Day. Covering over 1,000km, he cycled through several wilayats, including Izki, Nizwa, Adam, Manah, Haima, Muqshin, and Thumrait, before ending the tour in Salalah. Mundhiri, who began his long-distance cycling odyssey in 2018, shared with *Muscat Daily* the details of this latest, most extensive trip.

Setting off on November 22, he embarked on a rigorous schedule, cycling from 7am to 11pm every day, traversing distances between 120km and 150km. His route took him through Oman's scenic landscapes, historical forts, bustling traditional markets and aflaj systems. The purpose of Mundhiri's adventure was twofold - to celebrate the National Day and to promote domestic tourism and sports, particularly cycling.



(Supplied photo)

His three-month preparations involved intense physical training and strategic planning, including cycling at different times of the day to adapt to varying conditions. During the journey, Mundhiri faced significant challenges, including extreme weather variations and strong winds. But his resolve remained unshaken, driven by determination and the unwavering support of his family.

Looking ahead, Mundhiri aspires to undertake more of such tours to promote tourism and sports awareness among Omani youth, while emphasising the importance of community participation and addressing social

issues. He is hopeful for financial backing to extend his cycling passion across the GCC states with the aim of spotlighting Oman's tourism and cycling potential to a wider audience. In a message to the youth, he said, "Join official sports clubs and engage in sports the right way for a healthier, more connected community."



(Supplied photo)

'Made in Oman' campaign promotes local products

Our Correspondent Muscat

In a concerted effort to bolster local industries, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), in partnership with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Joint Committee for External Exhibitions of Omani Products (OPEX), launched a campaign called 'Made in Oman' last week.

Graced by dignitaries, such as H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and H E Dr Saleh bin Saeed Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce & Industry, the event celebrated Oman's manufacturing capabilities.

The campaign, which will run till December 31, aims to spotlight and advance the nation's industrial sector and includes a range of activities to showcase Omani products in commercial centres and fuel stations across the sultanate. A crucial component of the campaign is educational visits to Omani factories, broadening the understanding and engagement of

students in the manufacturing process. Zahrah bint Ali al Siyabi, head of Industrial Development Department at MoCIIP, said that the campaign's role is to empower local manufacturers and increase efficiency and competitiveness of the industrial sector. "The initiative aligns with Industrial Strategy 2040, focusing on diversifying the sultanate's industrial base in sectors like food, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and more."

The campaign, which will run till December 31, aims to spotlight and advance the nation's industrial sector

The campaign also seeks to boost consumer confidence in Omani products, promoting these as the first choice due to their quality. It introduces a unified logo to identify Omani products, enhancing their recognition and creating a comprehensive database of value-added local products. OCCI representatives under-

scored their commitment to supporting Omani products through various stages of their lifecycle, from production to marketing and sales. The chamber's efforts focus on opening markets for Omani products, aiding their growth, and ensuring their presence in local and regional markets. Layla bint Salem bin Ali al Maashariya, head of Quality Conformity Development Department at the Directorate General for Specifications and Measurements, presented a visual overview of the Omani Quality Mark. She informed that it is an internationally recognised symbol of compliance with standard specifications. "This mark plays a pivotal role in enhancing exports and ensuring product quality, thus fostering trust among consumers while also identifying areas for product improvement." The 'Made in Oman' campaign represents a significant step towards enhancing the sultanate's industrial prowess, promoting local manufacturing, and contributing to Oman's economic diversification and growth.

Pact inked to develop artificial lake project

Our Correspondent Muscat

Buraimi Governor's Office has initiated a significant tourism development project by signing an investment agreement for an artificial lake in the wilayat of Buraimi. The agreement was signed by Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidi, Governor of Buraimi, and Khalid al Farsi, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Al Buraimi Development and Investment Company, on Thursday. Elaborating on the agreement's provisions, Musa bin Saeed al Abri, Director General of Buraimi Municipality, informed that Al Buraimi Development and Investment Company will undertake operations of the artificial lake, alongside management of a floating restaurant, a water park and various other retail outlets surrounding the lake over a 25-year period. The agreement aims to foster financial sustainability in the governorate, attracting in-



vestors, boosting employment opportunities, and paving the way for the involvement of small and medium enterprises, Abri added. He emphasised the agreement's role in enhancing the tourism sector and collaborations with the private sector for optimal economic outcomes. "This initiative is poised to transform the governorate into a vibrant tourist destination, reinforcing Buraimi's commitment to sustainable and inclusive economic growth."

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Oman's oil & gas expertise set to drive clean energy transition: IEA



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman holds significant potential to channel its deep expertise in fossil fuel production towards clean energy projects that could expedite the country's efforts to reduce carbon emissions and diversify its economy, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

The report, titled 'Leveraging Fossil Fuel Capabilities for Clean Energy Transitions: Assessment of Opportunities in Oman,' was released last week at the IEA's headquarters in Paris by IEA Chief Energy Economist Tim Gould and Oman's Undersecretary for Energy and Minerals, Mohsin al Hadhrami.

According to the report, Oman, a major oil and gas producer, is well-positioned to utilise

its vast infrastructure and skills in the sector to foster economic growth and achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Currently, oil and gas account for approximately 60% of Oman's export revenues, and domestic natural gas contributes over 95% to the

Oman has a unique opportunity to harness its expertise and productive capabilities in fossil fuels as a launchpad into the world of new energies and innovative energy partnerships

country's electricity generation.

The IEA report suggests that various components of Oman's hydrocarbon supply chains could be redirected towards domestic clean energy industries and new clean energy partnerships, including low-emission fuels such

as hydrogen.

The IEA's unique analysis, based on surveys conducted with 16 stakeholders in Oman, ranging from international oil and gas players to local operators and service providers, indicates that Oman could set an example

Chief Energy Economist Tim Gould.

The IEA noted that Oman has a unique opportunity to harness its expertise and productive capabilities in fossil fuels as a launchpad into the world of new energies and innovative energy partnerships. A strategy built on these advantages could help mitigate risks, attract necessary investment, and position Oman as a competitive frontrunner in new energy solutions.

"This strategic shift could also enable the country to strategically weave clean energy supply chains into its economic fabric, capitalising on a spectrum of diversification opportunities spanning upstream, where local goods and services can fuel clean energy technology, midstream and downstream industries, where low-emission manufac-

turing thrives," IEA said.

Repurposing a wide spectrum of oil and gas infrastructure and skills is pivotal to this transformation, as stated by the IEA. 'Oman can leverage its strengths in energy project design, chemical and thermodynamic engineering, and site preparation to construct a distinctive portfolio encompassing both fossil fuel and emerging energy sectors,' the report said.

The IEA pointed out that key assets with high transversality potential include gas pipelines (suitable for hydrogen transport) and refinery and storage facilities, followed by reservoirs for carbon storage and associated infrastructure. However, it added that challenges remain, especially in adapting existing gas pipelines for hydrogen transport, requiring technical finesse.



MedcoEnergi to acquire 20% stake in Blocks 60 and 48

Our Correspondent
Muscat

PT Medco Energi Internasional (MedcoEnergi), a leading Indonesian oil and gas company, announced that it has been granted Royal approval to acquire 20% interests in two blocks in Oman.

MedcoEnergi will acquire from OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP) a 20% interest in the Block 60 producing license and a 20% interest in the Block 48 exploration license, both located onshore in west central Oman, according to a press statement.

"The transaction is now expected to complete in December 2023. OQEP will remain the operator of both Blocks," MedcoEnergi said in a statement on its website.

Hilmi Panigoro, President Director of MedcoEnergi, said, "This acquisition is in line with our strategy of owning and developing high-quality, cash-generative assets with great

growth potential. Once completed, the acquisition will increase MedcoEnergi's daily production by approximately 13mn barrels of oil equivalent per day and contribute significantly to future gas and liquids reserves."

Oman's Block 60 holds two producing fields - Bisat oil field and Abu Butabul gas field. In January 2023, OQ announced the commissioning of its third crude oil processing plant in the Bisat oil field in Block 60, raising the oil field's production capacity to 60,000 barrels per day (bpd).

OQ recently announced that oil production in Block 60 rose to 61,000 barrels of oil equivalent in the first half of 2023, up from 49,000 barrels of oil equivalent in the first half of 2022.

OQEP currently operates three blocks in Oman (8, 48 and 60) and is a participant in a number of production and exploration joint ventures both in Oman and Kazakhstan.

Swedish firm Maha Energy exits Block 70 in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Swedish oil and gas company Maha Energy announced on Friday the divestment of its 65% working interest in Oman's Block 70 to Mafraq Energy, which already holds a 35% working interest in the block.

In a press statement, Maha Energy revealed that the consideration for the divestment of stake amounts up to \$14mn. Mafraq Energy will take over the project and cover all costs starting from December 1, 2023.

"Up to the closing date, Maha Energy will receive a parcel of the purchase price equivalent to \$2mn. The earnout will be up to \$12mn, linked to actual produced volumes from Block 70. Payments will start from a cumulative net production volume of 1mn barrels, with the maximum amount payable if the production volume reaches 12mn barrels," the company said.

From the closing date, Maha Energy will be released from all obligations and liabilities related to Maha Energy Oman. The exit is subject to signing a definitive sale and purchase agreement and satisfaction of the relevant



closing conditions, including approval from the government of Oman.

"The Block 70 has high viscosity oil. I believe the project has to consider a heat influx strategy to deal with this. It will require new tests, significant investments, and a very dedicated operator, which I believe we will have with Mafraq Energy, who has worked on this asset since the very beginning. We wish Mafraq Energy all the luck with their future work on Block 70. Maha will now be able to focus on developing the business in Latin America, where we are especially enthusiastic about our position in Venezuela," said Kjetil

Solbraekke, CEO of Maha Energy.

Talal al Subhi, CEO of Mafraq Energy, said, "Mafraq Energy and Oman value the wealth of experience and work that was injected into Block 70, and we look forward to continuing the project and creating value for Oman. Mafraq Energy will always value the relations with Maha Energy."

Maha Energy was awarded Block 70 in 2020. In 2022 and 2023, the company conducted a comprehensive work program and fully concluded the minimum work obligations of the initial phase of the exploration and production sharing agreement (EPSA).

COP28 chief calls UAE Finance Declaration a chance to accelerate climate action

Dubai, UAE - Dr Sultan bin Ahmed al Jaber, UAE Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, and COP28 President, Friday addressed global leaders at the World Climate Action Summit (WCAS), where he unveiled the COP28 finance agenda, describing it as "innovative thinking for financing the new climate economy."

In his speech, Jaber launched the COP28 UAE Declaration on a Global Climate Finance Framework (The Declaration) in response to the Global Stocktake, and to keep 1.5 °C within reach and to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.

"We all know that climate finance is not available, accessible or affordable enough. This is impacting lives and livelihoods across the Global South," Jaber said. "The Declaration is a framework for financing a new climate economy."

The Declaration delivers a holistic, united effort to combat climate change and unlock climate finance. Jaber launched the Declaration alongside a group of leaders from across the world who have been driving the climate finance reform agenda.

The Declaration aims to en-



COP28 President Dr Sultan bin Ahmed al Jaber

sure that climate finance is available, affordable, and accessible. Jaber said the Declaration focuses "First on rebuilding trust, second on reframing climate investments as economic opportunities and third on scaling up climate finance."

The COP28 President said, "No single initiative will create the climate finance system we need. Together, we must build a holistic ecosystem of solutions."

The Declaration will help to bridge the trust gap between the Global North and Global South, and will build on the momentum created by existing initiatives such as the Bridgetown Initiative, the Accra-Marrakech Agenda,

Drawing Rights to the IMF Resilience and Sustainability Trust to support climate resilience in developing countries. It follows a \$4.5bn commitment for clean energy projects in Africa earlier in the year.

The Declaration was launched in the context of a number of significant milestones on the climate finance agenda, including replenishing the Green Climate Fund, delivering on the decade-old promise to transfer \$100bn transfer to emerging economies hit by worsening climate change, and an agreement on 'Loss and Damage'.

The UAE also launched the Global Climate Finance Centre (GCFC), a private-sector-focused think tank that will be a climate finance centre of excellence and the first of its kind in the region. It will provide research, and capacity building to catalyze low-carbon, high-growth investments in the region and globally.

Jaber said, "The Global Climate Finance Centre will support the delivery of the Declaration by driving fit-for-purpose financial policies and project pipelines to unlock funds at unprecedented scale."

WAM

India remains fastest-growing major economy as GDP grows 7.6%

New Delhi, India - The Indian economy grew 7.6% during the July-September quarter of the current financial year 2023-24, remaining the fastest-growing major economy. India's GDP growth for the April-June quarter grew 7.8%.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had maintained real GDP growth for 2023-24 at 6.5% with Q2 at 6.5%; Q3 at 6.0%;

and Q4 at 5.7%.

The only thing about which the central bank showed utmost concern at its last monetary policy meeting was the rising inflation and its attached potential risk to the growth outlook.

Recently, industry body FICCI in a survey found that the Indian economy is projected to grow by 6.3% in 2023-24 with

a minimum and maximum growth estimate of 6 per cent and 6.6 per cent respectively.

The FICCI's Economic Outlook Survey was conducted in the month of September 2023 and drew responses from leading economists representing industry, banking and financial services sectors.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had in October

IMF had in October raised India's GDP growth forecast for the financial year 2023-24 to 6.3%, its second upward revision since the April

raised India's GDP growth forecast for India for the financial year 2023-24 to 6.3%, its second upward revision since the April report. IMF attributed stronger-than-expected consumption during April-June for the upward projection in the growth estimate.

The IMF growth forecast was raised from 5.9% in April, 6.1% in July, to 6.3% now, tak-

ing it closer to the 6.5% predicted by the Indian authorities.

For 2024-25, IMF pegged India's GDP growth at 6.3%, though unchanged from its earlier two projections.

Meanwhile, the combined Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) increased by 12.1% (provisional) in October 2023 as compared to the Index of October 2022.

The production of all eight core industries - cement, coal, crude oil, electricity, fertilizers, natural gas, refinery products and steel - recorded positive growth in October 2023 over the corresponding month of last year, according to an official release from the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

ANI

Brazil joins OPEC+ as group eyes increased market share, oil prices

Vienna, Austria – The major oil producers' group of OPEC+ is set to include Brazil, the world's eighth largest oil producer as its 24th member and now hopes to increase its declining market share in its attempts to use production cutbacks for raising prices to lucrative levels.

The decision came during the 36th OPEC and non-OPEC ministerial meeting held on Thursday in Austria's capital, Vienna, via videoconference.

OPEC+ endorsed their previous output cut decisions, which had been agreed to continue until the end of next year, in order 'to ensure a stable and balanced oil market.'

Soon after the meeting, several members of the group announced additional voluntary cuts by around 2.2mn barrels per day (bpd) for the first quarter of 2024.

The additional voluntary cuts announced by the OPEC+ countries include Saudi Arabia by 1mn bpd, Iraq by 223,000 bpd, United Arab Emirates by 163,000 bpd, Kuwait by 135,000 bpd, Kazakhstan by 82,000 bpd, Algeria by 51,000 bpd and Oman by 42,000 bpd.

Russia will cut 500,000 bpd for the same period from the average export levels of May and



June of 2023. It will consist of 300,000 bpd of crude oil and 200,000 bpd of refined products. The voluntary cuts will put in place from January until March of next year and will be returned gradually depending on market conditions "to support market stability."

Some production cuts had been expected by the market, however, the announcement that Brazil would be the 24th OPEC+ member as of January 2024 came as a surprise.

Additional voluntary cuts announced by OPEC+ countries include Saudi Arabia by 1mn bpd, Iraq by 223,000 bpd, UAE by 163,000 bpd, Kuwait by 135,000 bpd, Kazakhstan by 82,000 bpd, Algeria by 51,000 bpd and Oman by 42,000 bpd

Both the OPEC+ and Brazil will benefit from the fresh cooperation, said Cuneyt Kazokoglu, Director of Energy Transition and Energy Economics of Facts Global Energy (FGE), a London-

based energy consultancy. "It is too early to discuss the implications of Brazil's participation in OPEC+, however, what we know is that, for now, Brazil will not be included in the output cuts

announced on Thursday," Kazokoglu told Anadolu Agency.

Being among the OPEC + group's policy makers, who have the power to impact oil prices, "allows Brazil, a major oil producer, to benefit from first-hand market knowledge of the group and the chance to shape this policy," Kazokoglu noted.

According to Kazoko lu, OPEC+ benefits from admission of Brazil as this merger expands the group's borders to other continents and gives the chance to

grow further "Another aspect to Brazil's OPEC+ membership is the merger of the oil producers under state control," he underscored.

Emphasizing that the OPEC+ group's production capacity will reach a significant level with the inclusion of Brazil, Kazokoglu said managing such a large production in a coordinated manner "is a very important issue."

Norway-based Rystad Energy's Senior Vice President Jorge Leon said the outcome of the ministerial meeting was "a bittersweet victory" for Saudi Arabia, the group's kingpin.

"The Kingdom won the backing of some OPEC+ members to contribute to output cuts into next year, but others remain opposed or on the fence and are not included in this fresh round of reductions," he said.

Leon cautioned that the inability to secure a group-wide decision on production cuts "does not bode well for the group's unity and cohesion and limits the group's ability to balance the market." Recalling the sudden drop of oil prices soon after the announcement, Leon said such a price movement suggests that the market was disappointed by the outcome.

Anadolu Agency

Euro area inflation eases further in November

Frankfurter, Germany – The euro area annual consumer inflation rate slowed for the seventh straight month to hit a more than two-year low in November, according to flash estimates released on Thursday.

Consumer prices grew 2.4% year-on-year in November, the slowest pace since July 2021, the Eurostat data showed.

Headline inflation eased from 2.9% in October, and below market forecasts of 2.7%.

This was largely due to falling energy prices, which saw an 11.5% annualized decline in November.

The annual price rise for food, alcohol, and tobacco cooled to 6.9% this month from 7.4% in October.

On a monthly basis, the euro area consumer price index dropped 0.5% in November, after rising for three consecutive months. This was the largest monthly decline since January 2020.

In October, energy prices in the single currency area dropped 2.2% month-on-month, while food prices climbed 0.4%.

Agencies



US Fed chief hints interest rate hikes still possible

Washington, US – US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell on Friday indicated that lowering interest rates would be "premature" and that more rate hikes may happen in the coming months.

"It would be premature to conclude with confidence that we have achieved a sufficiently restrictive stance, or to speculate on when policy might ease," he said in a speech at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia.

"We are prepared to tighten policy further if it becomes appropriate to do so."

The Fed skipped an interest rate increase for the third time last month, keeping the federal funds rate in the 5.25%-5.5% target range – the highest in 22 years.

Many analysts believe that the Fed has come to an end in its unprecedented monetary tightening cycle during its fight against record inflation, which has been decelerating in recent months.

After soaring to 9.1% in June last year, its highest in more than 40 years, annual US consumer inflation dropped to 3% this June but climbed to 3.7%

in September.

Powell, however, said the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) members are taking a wait-and-see approach.

"We are making decisions meeting by meeting, based on the totality of the incoming data and their implications for the

We are prepared to tighten monetary policy further if it becomes appropriate to do so

JEROME POWELL

outlook for economic activity and inflation, as well as the balance of risks," he said.

The Fed's next two-day monetary policy meeting will conclude on Dec. 13, along with its economic projections.

The probability of a rate hike at that meeting only stands at 2.2% as of Friday, according to the FedWatch Tool provided by the US-based Chicago Mercantile Exchange Group.

Agencies

Improved financing structures could save up to \$50tn as world decarbonize: Report

Dubai, UAE – Ahead of the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), which is taking place in Dubai, the globally leading professional services firm, Deloitte, released a report titled Financing the Green Energy Transition, showcasing that new cost-reducing finance instruments can help de-risk green projects in developing economies while making investing in these projects more attractive, helping to fuel a global just energy transition.

Achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 will require an annual global investment in the energy sector ranging from \$5tn to \$7tn. However, the world currently invests less than \$2tn each year into the transition, which is far short of the financing needed to help put the world on course to meet our collective climate goals.

The report found that green projects currently suffer from underinvestment and high required return rates because private investors tend to see green technologies as riskier than alternative investments. The re-



port highlights the need for governments, financial institutions, and investors to jointly develop mechanisms to help mitigate risk from green projects by developing blended, low-cost finance solutions to mobilize private investment and help achieve economic growth and climate neutrality—especially in emerging economies.

It also highlights the benefits of taking action—the projected

savings of \$50tn through 2050 could reduce the annual investment needed by over 25%. The report goes beyond finance to provide a holistic overview, employing analysis and modeling to consider the technology landscape, policy environment, and a matrixed vision of financing challenges.

"Just as we are continually developing solutions and technology to rapidly decarbonise, we

must take definitive steps to remove financial barriers in order to accelerate a just energy transition, especially in developing economies," said Jennifer Steinmann, Deloitte Global Sustainability and Climate practice leader.

"Decisive and coordinated policy support and hand-in-hand action across the global finance ecosystem are critical to guiding investments toward green proj-

ects and supporting the growth of sustainable economies."

To win the race to net-zero, the world must invest wisely and identify areas for cost reduction. For instance, less than half of green investments are currently made in developing economies mostly due to greater risks and stricter public budget constraints for energy transition projects. However, to reach net-zero, nearly three-quarters of green investments (70%) would need to be made in developing economies by 2030 as these nations look to new, sustainable infrastructures and technologies.

"To further lighten the financial burden on the Global South, governments, financial institutions and international organisations must implement concessional finance—a loan made on more favorable terms than the borrower could obtain in the market—through innovative financing structures that mobilise private capital for climate action," said Hans-Juergen Walter, Global Financial Services Industry Sustainability and Climate Leader at Deloitte.

OECD cuts global economic growth forecast to 2.9% for 2023

Paris, France – The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on Wednesday cut its world economic growth projection for this year to 2.9%, but for 2024 left it unchanged at 2.7%.

World gross domestic product (GDP) growth was revised downwards by 0.1 percentage point, according to the OECD's November global economic outlook report.

"GDP growth has been stronger than expected so far in 2023, but is now moderating on the back of tighter financial conditions, weak trade growth and lower business and consumer confidence," said the report.

Global GDP is projected to



GDP growth has been stronger than expected so far in 2023

grow by 3% in 2025 with inflation going down and real incomes strengthening.

The Paris-based organization stressed that global growth remains highly dependent on fast-

growing Asian economies.

The OECD revised its growth forecast upwards for the US economy by 0.2 percentage points for both 2023 and 2024 to 2.4% and 1.5%, respectively.

GDP growth in the US is expected to come in at 1.7% in 2025 thanks to the easing of monetary policy.

It raised China's growth forecast by 0.1 points to 5.2% for this year and 4.7% for next year. The Chinese economy is projected to grow 4.2% in 2025 as the stresses in the real estate sector and continued high household saving rates are expected to continue.

The OECD projected G20 economies will grow 3.1% this year, 2.8% next year, and 3% in 2025.

Türkiye's GDP is foreseen to rise 4.5% in 2023, 2.9% in 2024 and 3.2% in 2025.

While household consump-

tion will be dampened by tighter financial conditions, subdued economic sentiment, and high inflation, investment growth will remain elevated due to ongoing reconstruction activity following the earthquakes that hit 11 provinces in southern Türkiye on Feb. 6.

Consumer price inflation in OECD countries is expected to fall from 7.0% in 2023 to 5.2% in 2024 and 3.8% in 2025 as borrowing cost pressures moderate.

"We expect that inflation will be back at central bank targets by 2025 in most economies," said OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann.

Anadolu Agency

Arabian Car Marketing Company launches Ford Everest SUV in Oman

The Arabian Car Marketing Company, the dealers for Ford vehicles in Oman, recently launched the next-gen Ford Everest 7-seater 4X4 SUV at the Ford showroom at Wattayah.

Gracing the occasion were dignitaries from the public and private sectors.

Speaking on the occasion, a representative from the Arabian Car Marketing said that as a brand, Ford has always prioritised high levels of customer satisfaction. “This passion is evident in all the Ford vehicles through their stylish designs, advanced technology and industry-inspiring safety features. Ford vehicles are more than just vehicles. They are reliable partners that take you further on every journey,” he asserted.

The next-gen Ford Everest unravels an exciting spirit of adventure and a pursuit for the extraordinary. What makes the next-gen 4X4 SUV truly distinctive is its remarkable features that are engineered to cater to the diverse needs of customers.

“Its impressive design that highlights its ruggedness and sophistication along with its technical advancements and a spacious and well-appointed interior, make the next-gen introduction stand as a testament to Ford’s distinction in craftsmanship and engineering excellence,” the company representative stated.

Sharing his thoughts on the 4X4 capability of the next-gen Everest, he said, “The Everest



SUV has a remarkable 4x4 capability. It is designed to take you places and conquer the most demanding terrains with confidence. With such a capability the Everest encourages you to explore and discover your desires. The Everest 4X4 SUV is your steadfast companion on the path less travelled.”

Expressing his gratitude to loyal Ford customers in Oman and to Ford Motor Company, he said, “We take this opportunity to thank our valued customers for their continued patronage. We would also like to thank Ford Motor Company, for their constant support and encouragement.”

Engineered to excite, the

Next-Gen Ford Everest has been built for the adventurous - with capability at its core. Inside, premium levels of craftsmanship have created a quiet and refined seats for up to seven, while class-leading technology and safety features offer driver and passengers comfort and peace of mind on every journey.

Everest’s wider track and longer wheelbase enabled designers to create a more progressive, muscular appearance. Designers also put a lot of thought into the function and feel of the interior, taking inspiration from modern homes and bringing in plush materials, premium finishes and ambient lighting in areas customers will appreciate



them best.

Everest’s sense of spaciousness is amplified by the full-width coast-to-coast instrument panel and centre console with dual cup-holder recesses, plus dash-

mounted ‘pop-out’ cup-holders for front-seat occupants. It is equipped with integrated wireless charging and a svelte new leather trimmed e-Shifter and an electric parking brake.

Next-Gen Ford Everest is loaded with Ford’s latest SYNC4 - a system, which comes customer-ready with its voice-activated communications, entertainment, and information systems.

The portrait-orientated 12-inch screen is linked to a 360-degree camera with split-view display to make parking a breeze in tight urban spaces or to assist when negotiating particularly tricky terrain while out exploring.

The Next-Gen Ford Everest is equipped with Ford’s proven, 2.3L EcoBoost Turbo petrol engine, mated to an efficient 10-speed SelectShift automatic which delivers Best-in-Class 296HP power and 420Nm of torque.

Everest comes loaded with new and enhanced driver assist technologies and safety features that are designed to take the stress out of driving and help drivers remain focused. They include airbags for front driver and passenger, dual side curtain airbags for all three rows, cruise control, Adaptive Cruise Control with Stop-and-Go and Lane Centering and more.

During the event, the first few customers of the next-gen Ford Everest 4X4 SUV were felicitated. Later, Ford enthusiasts went around viewing the vehicles on display and getting a first-hand experience of the all-new Everest.

The next-gen Ford Everest 4X4 SUV is now on display at all Ford showrooms.

Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital opens multispecialty centre

Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital, Al Ghubra, Oman has on Saturday launched the Aster Centre of Excellence (COE) in Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Therapeutic Endoscopy, reaffirming its dedication to providing cutting-edge medical care in Oman.

Spanning 25,750sqm, the 175-bed multispecialty tertiary care facility now stands ready to serve Oman’s 5mn population, symbolising excellence and innovation in healthcare across Oman and the Middle East.

The Department of Gastroenterology has been operational since the establishment of Aster Al Raffah Hospital in 2011.

Witnessing substantial

growth, it attained the status of a Centre of Excellence by 2013 and has consistently maintained its position as one of the foremost gastrointestinal units in the country.

The Aster COE is led by esteemed senior consultants, Dr Ashik Sainu Mohiyadeen and Dr Hisham al Dhahab, both renowned for their expertise and exceptional contributions to the field of gastroenterology.

Dr Ashik Sainu, with extensive international training and accreditation in gastroenterology, boasts over two decades of experience and holds fellowships in advanced endoscopy from prestigious institutions in the UK.



Dr Hisham al Dhahab, trained in Ireland and Canada, holds degrees in MBBS, MRCP, and

FACP, along with a Fellowship in Advanced Endoscopy from McGill University, bringing a

wealth of knowledge and expertise in advanced endoscopy to the forefront of his practice.

This distinguished department comprises two gastroenterology specialists and a fellow in gastroenterology, collectively serving a pivotal role in the hospital’s achievements.

Over the past decade, the Aster Centre of Excellence in Gastrointestinal Diseases has performed 20,000 upper endoscopies, 15,000 lower endoscopies, 2,000 ERCP procedures, 2,000 gastric balloons, and various other therapeutic interventions. Notably, the COE houses a dedicated GI motility lab and provides 24/7 GI bleed services to the population of Oman.

Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital

proudly stands as one of the top healthcare facilities in the region capable of performing complex gastro procedures and cases. This achievement highlights the unparalleled expertise and dedication of the Gastro Team, showcasing their proficiency in handling intricate cases with exceptional precision and care.

Excitingly, the Aster COE introduces Third Space Endoscopy services encompassing innovative procedures like POEM, EFTR, ESD, STER, spearheaded by globally acclaimed therapeutic endoscopist, Dr Amol Bapaye.

This specialised service marks a pioneering advancement previously unavailable in the country.

Omantel, Oman International Hospital team up to support healthcare in Oman

In continuation of its active role in community outreach, Omantel, the leading provider of integrated telecommunications services in the Sultanate of Oman, has teamed up with Oman International Hospital, to support the healthcare services provided by the hospital catering to a range of medical conditions, in association with the Ministry of Health.

A Memorandum of Understanding to this effect was signed by Aladdin bin Abdullah Baitfadhil, Chief Commercial Officer of Omantel, and Marcelo Pereira, CEO of Oman International Hospital.

Under the MoU, Omantel will engage with Oman International Hospital to help speed up the delivery of healthcare services to patients under sustainable medical programmes adopted by the Ministry of Health.

The partnership stems from Omantel’s commitment to supporting healthcare services from



government and private institutions, and thus contributes to the welfare and health of the Omani society.

Aladdin bin Abdullah Baitfadhil, Chief Commercial Officer at Omantel, said, “One of the pillars of Omantel’s corporate philosophy is to expand our social outreach and contribute to different areas in society, including the healthcare sector. This MoU mirrors that vision and boosts our ongoing efforts to support public

and private institutions, and promote their sustainable programmes to achieve common goals.

“We are particularly pleased with this partnership with the Ministry of Health and Oman International Hospital in implementing innovative health programs, which contribute to improving and enhancing medical services provided to patients and visitors,” Aladdin added.

Chery achieves impressive milestone selling 200,000+ vehicles in a month

Chery Group sold 200,313 vehicles in October, marking a 50.8% year-on-year increase and exceeding 200,000 in a single month for the first time, setting a new record.

Over the past four months, Chery Group has consistently exceeded the 150,000, 170,000, 190,000, and now the 200,000 monthly sales levels.

From January to October, Chery Group accumulated sales of 1,453,550 vehicles, marking a year-on-year growth of 41.6%.

According to the China Passenger Car Association (CPCA), it’s estimated that China’s narrow-definition passenger car retail sales in October reached approximately 2.02mn units, marking 9.5% year-on-year growth. Chery Group’s overall sales, as well as the sales of its various passenger car brands, have exceeded 50% growth, outpacing the industry’s performance by more than fivefold.



Among them, Chery Brand sold 140,360 vehicles in October, a year-on-year increase of 50.3%; sales from January to October were 1,049,734 vehicles, a year-on-year increase of 35.8%, marking the first time Chery Brand surpassed the million-unit mark. The Tiggo 8 and Tiggo 7, with monthly sales of 22,987 and 26,224 units, respectively, have become a star combination driving the group’s sales growth.

During the October 2023 GIMS in Doha, Qatar, Chery Brand unveiled five products from the Tiggo and Arrizo families, covering PHEV and ICE. Among them, two PHEV models, the Tiggo 8 Pro Plug-in Hybrid and Tiggo 7 Pro Plug-in Hybrid, made their global debut, contributing to Chery Group’s accelerated development in the new energy field.

Chery’s robust competitiveness in its products is under-

pinned by its solid technological foundation. In October, Chery Group’s ‘Technology within reach’ 2023 ‘Chery Tech Day’ demonstrated its technological investments and achievements to its global users.

Guided by the ‘Yao Guang 2025’ strategic framework, Chery made substantial upgrades in 19 core technologies, including platform architecture, chips, high-efficiency hybrid engines, hydrogen technology, electric drives, batteries, intelligent interaction, autonomous driving, and intelligent cloud platforms.

These advancements resulted in five world-class technological advantages in “Safety, Energy consumption, Space, Intelligent cabin, and Intelligent driving”, building a technological value innovation chain that caters to the needs of users in the new era.

In Oman, Chery will soon be launched by Saud Bahwan Group.

Over 100 Palestinians killed in refugee camp

Gaza Health Ministry said at least 193 Palestinians had been killed since Israel’s army resumed airstrikes

Ankara, Turkey - More than 100 Palestinians were killed and many more injured in an Israeli missile attack on the Jabalia refugee camp in the Gaza Strip on Saturday, with many still missing under the rubble of a collapsed residential building, Palestinian media reported.

“More than 100 Palestinians were killed on Saturday in a new massacre committed by Israeli occupation forces in the Jabalia refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip,” the official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported.

“A missile strike targeted a residential building belonging to the Obaid family in Jabalia camp,” the news agency said, adding that ‘dozens were injured, and many others are still missing under the rubble’.

The Israeli army resumed bombing the Gaza Strip early on Friday after declaring an end to a week-long humanitarian pause with the Palestinian resistance group, Hamas.

Earlier on Saturday, the Gaza Health Ministry said at least 193 Palestinians had been killed and 652 injured since Israel’s army resumed airstrikes after announcing the end of humanitarian pause on Friday morning.

The humanitarian pause began on November 24 as part of an agreement between Israel and Hamas to temporarily halt fighting to allow hostage swaps and aid delivery.

More than 15,000 Palestinians, mostly children and women, have been killed in Israeli attacks since October 7 following a cross-border attack by Hamas.

Around 1,200 Israelis have also been killed, according to official estimates.

Negotiations in Qatar to resume a humanitarian pause in the Gaza Strip have ‘reached dead end’, the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday.



The Israeli army resumed bombing the Gaza Strip early on Friday after declaring an end to a week-long humanitarian pause with the Palestinian resistance group, Hamas (Wafa)

Deliveries of essential supplies to Gaza must urgently resume and be restored at least to levels reached during the recent truce - but much more than that is needed

TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS

No official comment has yet been made by Hamas on the statement.

The Israeli army resumed bombing the Gaza Strip early on Friday after declaring an end to a week-long humanitarian pause.

The death toll from Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip has soared to 15,207 since the start of the conflict, the government media office in the blockaded Palestinian enclave said on Saturday. “70% of the victims are children and women, and more than 40,652 people have been

injured,” the media office said.

“The occupation (forces) continues to expand its bombing of civilians after the end of the humanitarian pause,” it added.

Since the start of the conflict, the office said, the Israeli attacks have killed 280 medical staff, while 31 others, including Director of the Al-Shifa Hospital Mohammad Abu Salmiya, have been detained for ‘a fascist interrogation under torture, abuse and hunger’.

As many as 130 health centres have been targeted, while 20 hospitals and 46 medical centers

have been put out of service.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that the deliveries of essential supplies to the besieged Palestinian enclave of Gaza must ‘urgently resume’.

“Deliveries of essential supplies to #Gaza must urgently resume and be restored at least to levels reached during the recent truce - but much more than that is needed,” Ghebreyesus, who heads the UN health agency, said on X late on Friday.

Noting that civilians in Gaza

need protection, food, water, shelter, sanitation and medicines, he said that the injured people need life-saving care and health workers need protection and supplies to provide care.

“And as we have repeatedly warned, overcrowding caused by a massive population displacement and unsafe living conditions - increases disease risk,” Tedros said.

He added: “There must be a cessation of violence, the release of remaining hostages, and an end to the siege.”

Anadolu Agency

US VP pledges new \$3bn to Green Climate Fund

Ankara, Turkey - US Vice President Kamala Harris announced a new US\$3bn pledge to the Green Climate Fund.

Addressing the COP28 UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai, Harris said: “Today I am also proud to announce a new US\$3bn pledge to the Green Climate Fund, which helps developing countries invest in resilience, clean energy and nature-based solutions.”

The US has increased its contributions to over US\$9.5bn this year alone, aligning with President Joe Biden’s US\$11bn goal by 2024, Harris added.

Highlighting the urgency of the climate crisis, Harris emphasised the importance of collective action, asserting that the world must come together to address this pivotal moment.

She acknowledged that both action and inaction on a global scale will have far-reaching



Kamala Harris

consequences for billions of people in the decades to come.

While recognising the progress made, Harris emphasised the ongoing challenges and the need for continued efforts. “Around the world, there are those who seek to slow or stop our progress. Leaders who deny climate science, delay climate action and spread misinformation. Corporations that greenwash climate inaction and lobby for billions of dollars in fossil fuel subsidies of their own,” she said.

Anadolu Agency

‘This is terrorism’: Pope Francis held ‘fraught’ call with Israeli President

Vatican City - Pope Francis engaged in a ‘fraught’ telephone conversation with Israeli President Isaac Herzog in late October, addressing the Israel-Hamas war.

According to a Washington Post report, the call was described as tense by a senior Israeli official. Herzog conveyed the profound shock in Israel after the October 7 Hamas attack, to which the Pope responded, stating unequivocally that it is ‘forbidden to respond to terror with terror’, according to the Israeli official.

A Vatican source confirmed to CNN that the call between the Pope and the Israeli president occurred at the end of October. However, CNN could not independently verify the Pope’s use of the term ‘terror’.

The Vatican released a statement to the Washington Post, as-



Pope Francis (AFP)

serting, ‘the phone call, like others in the same days, takes place in the context of the Holy Father’s efforts aimed at containing the gravity and scope of the conflict situation in the Holy

Land’.

Following his conversation with Herzog, Pope Francis spoke with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on November 2. Additionally, on

October 22, the Pope reached out to United States President Joe Biden regarding the ongoing conflict. The Pope has publicly characterised the Israel-Hamas war as an act of terrorism.

During a general audience in St Peter’s Square on November 22, Pope Francis said: “This morning, I received two delegations, one of Israelis who have relatives as hostages in Gaza and another of Palestinians who have relatives suffering in Gaza. They suffer so much, and I heard how they both suffer: wars do this, but here we have gone beyond war. This is not war; this is terrorism.”

The Pope has consistently advocated for a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas conflict and maintains regular contact with the Catholic community in Gaza, CNN reported.

ANI

Bird flu: 220 flamingos killed in Argentina

Catamarca, Argentina - An avian influenza outbreak, commonly known as bird flu, has claimed the lives of approximately 220 flamingos in Argentina’s Catamarca province, CNN reported.

The H5N1 strain, prevalent in more than 80 countries since 2022, has raised concerns globally. While the virus primarily spreads through wild aquatic birds, it poses a potential threat to domestic poultry and other bird species.

In Argentina, the James’ flamingo, or puna flamingo, a gregarious species, faces the risk of transmitting the disease during migration.

The H5N1 strain, detected in the flamingos near Laguna Grande and Laguna Diamante, underscores the challenges of monitoring and controlling the virus’s impact on wildlife populations, according to CNN.

The risk to humans remains relatively low, with 11 reported cases since December 2021. However, experts are closely watching the virus’s spread to other mammals, evident when over 50 sea lions succumbed to infection in Argentina.

ANI

Putin boosts Russian army with 170,000 additional troops

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin increased the number of troops on Friday in the army by approximately 170,000, bringing the military personnel count to more than 2.2mn.

Putin signed a decree increasing the personnel of the Russian Armed Forces to 2,209,130, with 1,320,000 soldiers, according to the Kremlin’s website.

The decision took effect from the day it was signed.



Earlier, under Putin’s decree, effective from January 1, the army had 2,039,758 personnel, including 1,150,628 soldiers. Compared to the previous decree, the number of soldiers increased 169,372, while there was no increase in other personnel.

‘No mobilisation decision’

The Ministry of Defense clarified that despite the approximately

170,000 additions to the army, there is no plan for a significant rise in conscriptions.

“There is no provision for mobilisation,” it said, attributing the army’s growth to the heightened threats linked to the ‘special military operation’ in Ukraine and NATO’s expansion.

The increase in the armed forces is deemed an appropriate response to NATO’s aggressive activities.

Anadolu Agency

India’s Aditya-L1 mission: ASPEX is operational, says ISRO

New Delhi, India - The Indian Space Research Organisation informed on Saturday that the Solar Wind Ion Spectrometer (SWIS), the second instrument in the Aditya Solar Wind Particle Experiment (ASPEX) of its maiden solar mission, Aditya L1 is operational.

“The Solar Wind Ion Spectrometer, the second instrument in the Aditya Solar Wind Particle Experiment payload is operational. The histogram illustrates the energy variations in proton and alpha particle counts captured by SWIS over 2-days,” ISRO said in a post on X.

As per a statement issued by ISRO, the ASPEX payload on-board India’s Aditya-L1 satellite is performing normally.

ASPEX comprises two cutting-edge instruments - SWIS and STEPS (SupraThermal and Energetic Particle Spectrometer). The STEPS instrument became operational on September 10. The SWIS instrument was activated on November 2, and has exhibited optimal performance, the statement mentioned.

ISRO further stated that the ASPEX has begun its measurements of solar wind ions.

“SWIS, utilising two sensor units with a remarkable 360° field of view each, operates in planes perpendicular to one another. The instrument has successfully measured solar wind ions, primarily protons and alpha particles,” the statement said.

“A sample energy histogram acquired from one of the sensors over two days in November 2023



illustrates variations in proton (H+) and alpha particle (doubly ionized helium, He2+) counts. These variations were recorded with nominal integration time, providing a comprehensive snapshot of solar wind behaviour,” it added.

The directional capabilities of SWIS enable precise measurements of solar wind protons and alphas, contributing significantly to addressing longstanding questions about solar wind properties, underlying processes, and their impact on Earth, ISRO said.

The statement added that as researchers delve deeper into the collected data, the international scientific community eagerly awaits the wealth of knowledge that Aditya-L1’s ASPEX is set to unveil about the enigmatic solar wind and its implications for our planet. In its update, ISRO on November 7, noted that the spectrometer on board Aditya-L1 recorded the impulsive phase of solar flares, during its first observation period from approximately October 29.

The X-ray spectrometer, HELIOS, attached to the Aditya-L1 spacecraft captured the first high-energy X-ray glimpse of solar flares. A solar flare is a sudden brightening of the solar atmosphere. Flares produce enhanced emission in all wavelengths across the electromagnetic spectrum - radio, optical, UV, soft X-rays, hard X-rays and gamma-rays.

Commissioned on October 27, the HELIOS X-ray spectrometer is currently undergoing fine-tuning of thresholds and calibration operations. It has been monitoring the Sun for hard X-ray activities ever since. In early October, the Aditya-L1 spacecraft that is carrying out India’s first solar mission performed a trajectory correction manoeuvre (TCM), for about 16 seconds.

ISRO then noted that the manoeuvre was needed to correct the trajectory evaluated after tracking the Trans-Lagrangean Point 1 Insertion (TLI) manoeuvre performed on September 19.

After the successful soft landing of Chandrayaan-3 near the South pole of the moon, the ISRO launched the country’s maiden solar mission - Aditya-L1 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on September 2.

ANI

US appeals court rejects immunity claim for Trump

The court rejected immunity over the January 6 violence at the White House

Washington DC, US - A federal appeals court in the US has rejected a broad assertion of immunity for former President Donald Trump over the January 6 violence at the White House, where his supporters attempted to thwart the certification of his election loss to Joe Biden, The New York Times reported on Friday.

It reported that the Supreme Court has held that the Constitution gives presidents immunity from being sued over actions taken as part of their official duties, but not from suits based on private, unofficial acts. The civil cases brought against Trump have raised the question of which role he was playing at the rally he staged on January 6, when he told supporters to ‘fight like hell’ and urged them to march to the Capitol.

Essentially, the appeals court ruled that at this stage of the case, that question has yet to be



Former US president Donald Trump (AFP)

definitively answered. It said Trump must be given an opportunity to present factual evidence to rebut the plaintiffs’ claims that the rally was a campaign event, scrutinising issues like whether campaign officials had organised it and campaign funds were used to pay for it, The New York Times reported.

“Because our decision is not necessarily even the final word on the issue of presidential immunity, we of course express no view on the ultimate merits of the claims against President Trump,” Judge Sri Srinivasan wrote for the

panel, as reported by The New York Times.

He added, ‘In the proceedings ahead in the district court, President Trump will have the opportunity to show that his alleged actions in the run-up to and on January 6 were taken in his official capacity as president rather than in his unofficial capacity as presidential candidate’.

The panel allowed three civil cases to proceed for now in Federal District Court in Washington against former US President Trump.

Meanwhile, the New York ap-

pellate court reinstated the gag order against former President Donald Trump in the ongoing US\$250mn civil fraud trial, CNN reported.

The gag order prohibits Trump and attorneys from making public statements about the courtroom staff in the ongoing trial.

Judge Arthur Engoron originally issued the order barring Trump from making public statements about his court’s staff after Trump made numerous comments about a clerk accusing her of being ‘biased’ against him.

ANI

Pakistan: Gohar Ali Khan elected as PTI chairman

Islamabad, Pakistan - Barrister Gohar Ali Khan emerged as the uncontested choice for the new chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), succeeding the imprisoned former prime minister, Imran Khan, as reported by ARY News on Saturday.

The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) conducted the intra-party elections held on the directives of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) with voters utilising an online app to cast their votes.

Nominated by the PTI founder a few days prior, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan assumed the top leadership position unopposed.

Speaking in Peshawar after his election as chairman, Gohar said he will keep fulfilling this responsibility as Imran’s representative. the Dawn reported.

He said that Pakistan has 175 political parties, all of which have been providing details of their intra-party polls to the ECP since 1960. “However, none of these polls have been scrutinised as closely as those of the PTI.”

“People are seeing this and will block the oppression,” he said. “We have to take the country forward.”

He further added that PTI’s purpose is to struggle, and that Imran Khan is in jail because of his efforts.

“When elections take place, we will defeat everyone,” Gohar said.

In the aftermath of the elections, PTI election commissioner



Newly elected chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Gohar Ali Khan

The PTI conducted the intra-party elections held on the directives of the Election Commission with voters utilising an online app to cast their votes

Niazullah Niazi revealed that former federal minister Omar Ayub Khan secured the position of secretary general, while Yasmin Rashid, despite being incarcerated, was elected as the PTI Punjab president, taking on the responsibilities of the provincial chapter, according to ARY News.

Similarly, Haleem Adil Sheikh and Ali Amin Gandapur, both facing incarceration, clinched the unopposed positions of party presidents for Sindh and Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provinces, respectively.

Earlier in the week, Barrister Ali Zafar made the announcement that Imran Khan, as the party chairman, would not be participating in the intra-party polls. Instead, Barrister Gohar Khan had been nominated for the coveted role of party chief. The development was officially communicated by PTI Senator Ali Zafar during a press conference in Islamabad, accompanied by Raoof Hasan and Barrister Gohar Ali Khan.

While a PTI spokesperson did not officially disclose polling details, Gohar’s nomination papers were received by Returning Officer Sardar Masroof Khan in Islamabad. PTI Chief Election Commissioner Niazullah Niazi told Dawn that elections are following the party’s 2020 rules, revised in 2022, with members voting for the entire panel.

ANI

US House votes to expel George Santos from Congress amid scandals, alleged crimes

Washington, US - The U.S. House of Representatives on Friday voted to expel New York Republican George Santos from Congress over the lies, scandals and alleged campaign finance crimes.

The lower chamber voted 311-114 to expel Santos, with 105 Republicans and 206 Democrats voting for expulsion. All Republican leaders voted against expulsion.

The latest action, which required a two-thirds majority, makes Santos, a first-term lawmaker, the sixth member of the House to be expelled in the body’s history. Such move hasn’t happened in more than 20 years.

Santos invented ties to the Holocaust and made false claims that his mother was at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. His detractors also mentioned several times his use of campaign



George Santos

funds for personal expenses.

The removal of the scandal-ridden 35-year-old Congressman came two weeks after a scathing House Ethics Committee report revealed details about his use of campaign funds for personal benefit. Santos, however, repeatedly debunked the report as political smear. Santos faces 23 federal felony counts. A 23-count indictment was filed in October in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

Xinhua

India: 18 Delhi-bound flights diverted due to low visibility

New Delhi, India - At least 18 Delhi-bound flights were diverted, while many others were delayed on Saturday due to low visibility and bad weather at Delhi’s Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport, said airport sources.

According to airport sources, the 18 flights were diverted to other cities, including Jaipur, Lucknow, Ahmedabad and Amritsar, between 7am and 10am as the national capital witnessed its first spell of the fog of the season.

The airport initiated low visibility procedures (LVP)-measures aimed at making landing for flights easier-when visibility dropped below 800 metres.

The visibility in several parts of Delhi on Saturday was relatively low, as the air quality in several areas of the national capital was recorded in the ‘very poor’ category. Multiple areas of the city were also covered with a layer of smog.

However, airlines kept updating the status of flights on their social media handles and requested that passengers contact



An early morning view of India Gate covered in a thick layer of smog as the Air Quality Index dips to ‘severe’ category, in New Delhi on Friday (ANI)

the airline for any inconvenience in the case of delays or diversions. Vistara Airlines Flight UK954 and Flight UK928 from Mumbai to Delhi (BOM-DEL) were diverted to Jaipur, said Vistara Airlines in a series of posts on X.

However, in a recent update, Vistara Airlines, taking to X, informed that Flight UK954 and Flight UK928 departed from Japiur and are expected to arrive

at Delhi airport before 11:30am.

Similarly, Delhi-bound Flight UK906 from Ahmedabad was diverted to Ahmedabad in view of bad weather and low visibility at Delhi’s Indira Gandhi International Airport.

“Flight UK906 from Ahmedabad to Delhi (AMD-DEL) has been diverted to Ahmedabad (AMD) due to low visibility at Delhi airport and is expected to arrive in Ahmedabad (AMD) at

1000 hours,” said Vistara Airlines in a post on X.

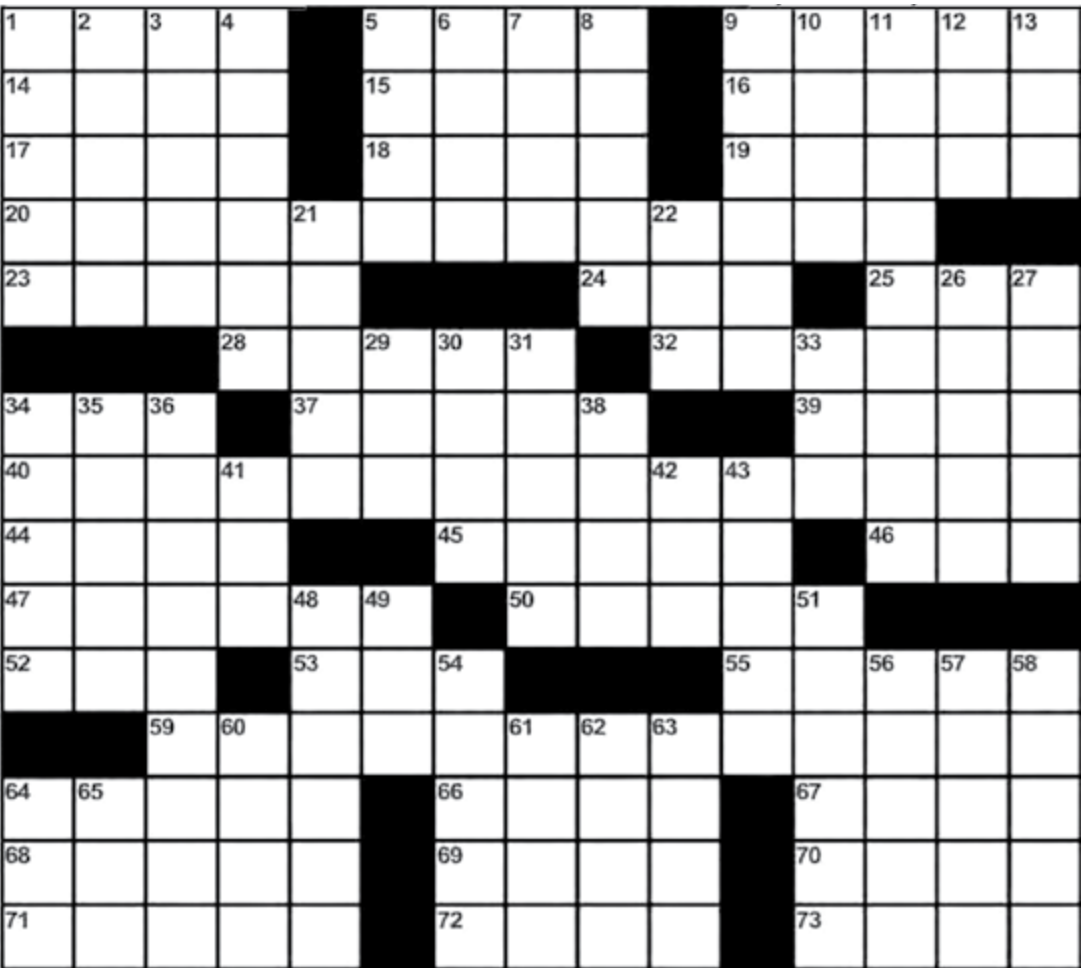
As per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the AQI reading at Terminal 3 of Indira Gandhi International (IGI) was 375 at 10am

The air quality in Anand Vihar and Ashok Vihar was recorded as ‘very poor’. Anand Vihar had an AQI reading of 388, while Ashok Vihar had an AQI reading of 386 at 6am on Saturday.

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said on Wednesday that Grap-3 has been lifted in the national capital but the government is trying to ensure that Grap-1 and 2 are strictly implemented. The air quality index from 0 to 100 is considered ‘good’, 100 to 200 ‘moderate’, 200 to 300 ‘poor’, 300 to 400 ‘very poor’ and from 400 to 500 or above ‘severe’.

ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) English dude
5) Instrument with some heft
9) Not a heavyweight
14) Frau's partner
15) Got dirty going home?
16) Blotto often
17) Jason's ship
18) Title character with the King of Siam
19) Battery terminal
20) Dilly-dalliers' activities
23) "Come in!"
24) " ... and you know the rest"
25) Spigot
28) Perform incorrectly
32) Force out of office
34) Word with "photo" or "black"
37) Extremely long films
39) Voice in the choir
40) The art of putting things off for tomorrow
44) Member of the Jackson 5
45) Glitterati member, briefly
46) Bawl
47) Acted badly

50) Like illegally parked cars, often
52) Don'ts partners
53) "Much _ About Nothing"
55) Come to mind
59) Delays leading to rescheduling
64) Bloodhound's guide
66) Material in a gym
67) Mine entrance
68) At a good clip, in poetry
69) Pre-owned
70) 5,280 feet
71) Word with "film" or "home"
72) Cushiony forest growth
73) Fortune-teller, supposedly

DOWN

1) Make sore by rubbing
2) "Great white" bird
3) Slanguage
4) For the time being
5) The last one was Nicholas II
6) Arm bone
7) Type of cherry
8) "Love is blind," e.g.
9) Batting position
10) Type of valuable vase

11) Relating to the Pope
12) Hallucinogenic drug
13) Caustic drain opener
21) Less humid
22) "... be an honor"
26) Mary of "The Maltese Falcon"
27) Indiana's state flower
29) Where to get a muddy face
30) LP or CD, e.g.
31) Santa's reindeer, collectively
33) Butter unit
34) Made a choice
35) First-rate, slangily
36) In a way
38) Fodder holder on a farm
41) Bunk
42) Not yet unwrapped
43) Crosswise, on deck
48) Resurrection Day
49) Banned bug killer
51) Enters REM sleep
54) Codeine source
56) Low-budget film, often
57) Attendance counter
58) Banana oil, for one
60) Fairy-tale opener
61) About

62) Words of denial
63) Concludes
64) First name on "Cheers"
65) Bean counter, for short

NOTE PAD

R	A	S	P		S	L	E	E	T		A	G	O	G
A	F	A	R		H	O	N	D	O		N	O	P	E
P	E	R	I		A	G	A	I	N		O	N	T	O
T	W	I	C	E	V	I	C	T	I	M	I	Z	E	D
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B	R	A	W	L	S		P	A	S	T				
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T	R	A	N	S	P	O	R	T	V	E	S	S	E	L
T	U	T	U		A	B	A	T	E		S	A	G	O
A	C	H	E		L	O	V	E	R		E	R	G	S
R	E	E	L		L	E	E	R	S		S	A	S	S

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You can't think twice if your ambition gets in other people's way today. Even if you step on someone's toes now and then, sometimes that's just what it takes to get where you want to go. You can't let manners and etiquette deter you right now. This is not the time or place. You cannot stop your personal quest just because it annoys or inconveniences someone else, because you know that if they were in your shoes, they would do the same thing.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Positive possibilities abound in your life right now, so it is a very good time to act boldly. Step more aggressively toward what you want out of life, whether it's a new job or a new relationship. You could meet someone who changes your opinion about what the best next step is in your health routine. They obviously know what they are talking about, so follow up and start learning more about their suggested techniques. Find out if they're right for you.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Try to set a good example for others today, especially if you are going to be around children. You might not realize it, but people look to you for clues about how to behave much more often than you think. You usually have good manners, but today you might have to take an extra moment or two to think about what you are going to say before you say it instead of just blurting out the first quip that comes to mind. It could backfire on you.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What is a jalapeño?

- A. Chilli pepper
- B. Olive
- C. Onion
- D. Potato

02. What are Italy's national colours?

- A. Green, gold and yellow
- B. Red, white and blue
- C. Black, gold and red
- D. Green, red and white

03. Who popularised the phrase "The buck stops here"?

- A. Mao Zedong
- B. Harry S Truman
- C. Richard Nixon
- D. Josef Stalin

Answers: 1.A 2.D 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

C	P	A	R
K	N	E	S
G	S	L	A
O	P	I	P

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

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

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

CONSOLATION WIN

India beat Australia in fourth Twenty20 to wrap up series

Raipur, India - India were limited to 174 for 9 by some accurate death bowling from Australia, but they still defended the target and wrapped up the series, with one game left. Ravi Bishnoi and Axar Patel were central to India's successful defence, returning combined figures of 8-0-33-4, on a two-paced Raipur track.

Travis Head, who was the only player from Australia's World Cup-winning XI in this T20I, dashed out of the blocks in the chase, taking Deepak Chahar for 4,4,0,6,4,4 in the third over. Just as India's fans were beginning to feel a sense of déjà vu, Axar cut Head's innings short on 31 off 16 balls.

At the other end, Bishnoi let rip one wrong'un after another, posing a threat to the pads and stumps. Despite the absence of Glenn Maxwell, Australia's middle order battled, but the rapidly rising asking rate was too much to overcome.

That India got to a decent total was down to the attacking enterprise of Rinku Singh and Jitesh Sharma, who had replaced Ishan Kishan. Rinku and Jitesh were the only Indian batters to strike at over 150.

In the third T20I in Guwahati, Gaikwad was on a run-a-ball 21 at one point, but he then hit higher gears to finish with an unbeaten 123 off 57 balls. In the fourth game, Gaikwad had a similar sluggish start, but he couldn't find those higher gears. He managed 32 off 28 balls and attempted to hit a boundary only five times.

Jaiswal was more aggressive at the other end, scoring 37 off 28 balls before Aaron Hardie had him holing out on the last ball of the powerplay. Shreyas Iyer, who returned to the T20I side, then fell to leg spinner Tanveer Sangha, as did Gaikwad.

With captain Suryakumar Yadav also perishing cheaply, the onus was on Rinku to repair the innings along with Jitesh, who



Rinku Singh plays a shot in the fourth Twenty20 against Australia on Friday

That India got to a decent total was down to the attacking enterprise of Rinku Singh and Jitesh Sharma, who had replaced Ishan Kishan. Rinku and Jitesh were the only Indian batters to strike at over 150

had made his T20I debut at the Asian Games earlier this year. Rinku, who came into bat in the ninth over, briefly tapped the ball into the gaps before he unleashed a ferocious reverse-swept six off Matt Short. In the next over, he

charged at Ben Dwarshuis and smote him for a 100-metre six over wide long-on.

Jitesh, who is among the most explosive batters in the IPL and the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, India's domestic T20 tourna-

ment, also kept taking risks and kept the scorecard ticking. He hit three sixes and holed out in the 19th over when he attempted another one.

Dwarshuis and Jason Behrendorf were right on the money with their variations in the last two overs as India lost five wickets for only 13 runs during that period.

Bishnoi and Axar both fronted up to bowl in the powerplay and ended up giving away only two boundaries between them.

Bishnoi struck with his very first delivery, knocking out Josh

Philippe's off stump for 8. Philippe was among five changes for Australia and in all both teams made nine changes on Friday.

In the next over, the fifth of India's defence, Axar drew a top-edged sweep from Head. Axar proceeded to dismiss Hardie and Ben McDermott with his stump-to-stump darts.

Axar's T20I future is uncertain - he is not part of the squad for the upcoming tour to South Africa - but he reminded the selectors that he's around as well with a statement performance.

ESPNcricinfo

Spinner Taijul stars as Bangladesh beat New Zealand

Dhaka, Bangladesh - In a commanding display of left-arm spin, Taijul Islam orchestrated Bangladesh's resounding 150-run triumph against New Zealand in the opening Test in Sylhet, claiming a remarkable match haul of 10 wickets on Saturday.

Chasing 332 for victory on a sharply turning track, New Zealand were in a precarious position at 113-7 heading into the final day against Bangladesh's spin-heavy attack.

Daryl Mitchell, overnight at the crease, notched up a hard-fought fifty, while skipper Tim Southee offered a brief resistance with a valiant 34. Yet, their efforts were unable to stave off Bangladesh's determined spin onslaught, culminating in the



Taijul Islam claimed ten wickets in the match

hosts clinching victory within 90 minutes on the final day and taking a significant 1-0 lead in the two-Test series. For a depleted Bangladesh side, missing key players due to injuries including regular captain Shakib Al Hasan, this win against a full-strength New Zealand squad stands as a memorable achievement.



Rafael Nadal

Nadal announces he will return in Brisbane

Barcelona, Spain - Rafael Nadal announced on social media on Friday that he will make his return in the first week of the 2024 season at the Brisbane International.

"Hello everyone. After a year away from competition, it's time to come back," Nadal said in Spanish in a video that has garnered millions of views. "It will be in Brisbane the first week of January. I'll see you there."

Two weeks ago the Spaniard confirmed that he would make his return. Now he knows where

and when.

The former World No. 1 played two tournaments this year — the United Cup and Australian Open — before missing the rest of the season due to an injury to the iliopsoas muscle in his left leg, for which he later underwent surgery.

Nadal will compete in Brisbane for the second time. The lefty played the ATP 250 in 2017, when he advanced to the quarter-finals before losing to then-World No. 3 Milos Raonic in three sets.

CLASSIFIEDS

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From all of us here in Mumbai, Kolkata, Muscat, Toronto, and Vinnytsia



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Gatti goal wins it for Juve

Stoppage-time strike helps Juve beat Monza and go top of Serie A

Monza, Italy - A stoppage-time winner from Federico Gatti helped Juventus clinch a dramatic 2-1 victory against Monza and move to the top of the table in Serie A.

The tense encounter saw Adrien Rabiot opening the scoring early for Juve, only for Valentin Carboni to equalise in the final moments before Gatti fired home after missing his initial shot.

Gatti was thrilled with his goal.

"How can I tell you about it? It's an incredible emotion to score such an important goal," Gatti said to DAZN.

"It's a shame for the goal we conceded because we could have done more, including myself. We were a little tired, but I made up for it immediately. These three points are so important."

Juve's early offensive intent was evident as they earned a penalty in the 11th minute, but Dusan Vlahovic's effort was thwarted by Monza's keeper Michele di Gregorio who made an impressive double save.

Despite the setback, Rabiot managed to break the deadlock with a header off a corner to put Juventus in the lead.



Federico Gatti of Juventus celebrates after scoring against Monza on Friday

It's a shame for the goal we conceded because we could have done more, including myself. We were a little tired, but I made up for it immediately

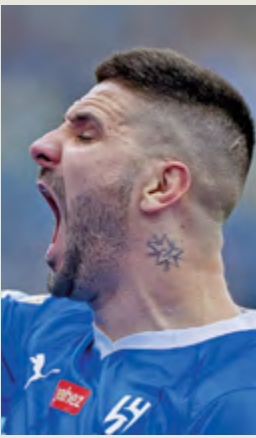
FEDERICO GATTI

Amidst pouring rain, the intensity dwindled in the second half, but the game witnessed a dramatic turn as Carboni's long-range strike levelled the scores in added time, seemingly securing a draw for Monza. However, Gatti and Juventus had other plans and the Italian defender's

composed finish secured a late victory for Juventus.

Massimiliano Allegri, Juventus' manager, lauded the significance of the hard-fought win against a formidable opponent. He acknowledged missed opportunities and highlighted the threat posed by Carboni. "It's an

important victory because it came against a strong team that plays well," Allegri said. "We had chances to double the lead, but they kept possession in the second half. We didn't risk much, but we left too much freedom to Carboni, who is a good player. We reacted immediately."



Al Hilal's Aleksandar Mitrovic celebrates after scoring against Al Nassr

Mitrovic stars with brace as Al Hilal blank Al Nassr

Riyadh - Al Hilal turned on the power in the second half to defeat Al Nassr 3-0 in a Saudi Pro League 2023/24 tie on Friday.

Sergej Milinkovic-Savic opened the scoring in the 64th minute with the in-form Aleksandar Mitrovic netting a late brace as the four-time Asian champions widened their lead at the top against their Riyadh rivals to seven points.

Al Hilal set the pace from the start but Al Nassr, unbeaten in 20 matches, were up for the challenge.

Mitrovic was the first to test Al Nassr goalkeeper Nawaf Alaqidi with a fierce shot from the edge of the box within the opening minutes.

Al Nassr gradually found a foothold, with Cristiano Ronaldo's well-struck shot from the edge of the box denied by Al Hilal custodian Bono.

After an exciting but goalless first half, the match took a crucial turn in the 64th minute with Milinkovic-Savic's powerful header from a cross by Abdulhamid breaking the deadlock.

Ronaldo thought he had equalised eight minutes later but the goal was ruled offside.

As Al Nassr pushed forward, Al Hilal capitalised with Mitrovic nodding home their second off a corner in the 89th minute, with the Serbian confirming the win with his second in added time - his 13th league goal of the season.

The match ended on a slight sour note for Al Hilal with Ali Albulayhi sent off just before the end.

The win took Al Hilal to 41 points, with Al Nassr in second, four points ahead of Al Ahli.



Lionel Messi

Messi focused on Copa America title defence, not long-term future

Mexico City, Mexico - Argentina captain Lionel Messi remains steadfastly focused on leading his nation's charge at next year's Copa America, aiming for a consecutive continental triumph.

the 2026 edition in the US, Mexico, and Canada is not being ruled out by the 36-year-old football maestro.

"As long as I feel good and I can continue to deliver, I'm going to do it," Messi said in an ESPN interview, underscoring his commitment to representing Argentina.

"Then time will tell whether I'll be at the World Cup or not. I'm going to be at an age (39) that normally doesn't allow me to play in the World Cup.

"It seemed that after the 2022 World Cup I was retiring, now I want to be with the team more than ever. We are experiencing a special moment, I want to enjoy it to the fullest, without thinking two or three years ahead, which in football is a lot."

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner has bittersweet memories of the last time the Copa America was held on American soil in the 2016 centenary edition, where Argentina reached the final but lost on penalties to Chile.

As long as I feel good and I can continue to deliver, I'm going to do it

LIONEL MESSI

The upcoming tournament in the United States holds his immediate attention, rather than contemplating his international future beyond that pinnacle event.

Messi had previously hinted that the 2022 World Cup in Qatar might mark the conclusion of his international journey, especially after guiding Argentina to their third World Cup title. However, the possibility of participating in

I enjoy a lot the way Spurs play, the approach they have, says Guardiola

Manchester, England - Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola showered praise on his Tottenham counterpart Ange Postecoglou ahead of their clash at the Etihad on Sunday, emphasizing how Postecoglou has elevated football and left a significant mark in the sport.

City, trailing Arsenal by a point, will face Tottenham, sitting fifth, with a three-point gap behind their upcoming opponents, amid Tottenham's recent three-match losing streak.

Recalling their initial encounter in Japan years ago when Guardiola's side faced Yokohama, managed by Postecoglou, the City boss reminisced about the impact that meeting had on him. "I met (him) just once in three or four pre-seasons ago when we played in Japan against Yokohama," Guardiola said. "Ange was the manager and I saw some clips before. It was the second pre-season game and I



Pep Guardiola (right) with Ange Postecoglou

said 'wow, there are things that I like.'"

Guardiola's admiration for Postecoglou's style transcended that meeting, as he followed Postecoglou's journey from Celtic to his current position at Tottenham. "I think he makes football a better place, people like Ange," Guardiola praised. "I've said many times that I am a manager but at the same time a

spectator, and I enjoy a lot the way they (Spurs) play, the approach they have."

In response, Postecoglou expressed his eagerness for the challenge of facing Guardiola's team, acknowledging the prestige of competing against one of the finest managers in the sport. "That's the kind of arena you want to be in, measuring yourself against the very best,"

Saudi Arabia to host AFC Champions League Elite final stage



The 2024-25 champions will get \$12 million, three times more than what the AFC Champions League winners will receive this season.

Finals, Semi Finals and Final - will be played in single-leg ties in Saudi Arabia.

The decisive battles of the AFC Champions League Elite - Final Stage 2024-25 are scheduled to be held from April 25 to May 4, 2025, with the eventual winners poised to claim the biggest-ever purse prize of \$12 million. The financial reward is three times more than the \$4 million that the eventual victors of the AFC Champions League will receive this season. Similarly, the losing finalist will also receive a threefold increase of \$6 million from the \$2 million for this season's runners-up.

On September 12, 2023, the AFC had issued an invitation to

all its Member Associations (MAs) to submit their Expressions of Interest (EOI) to host the AFC Champions League Elite - Final Stage for a minimum of two (2) seasons starting from 2024/25.

Subsequently, two MAs - the Iraqi Football Association and the SAFF had submitted their EOIs within the stipulated deadline on October 15, 2023.

The SAFF was selected as the eventual host after evaluating the infrastructure and accommodation requirements as well as all other key operational aspects needed to stage a tournament befitting the prestige and stature of the continent's premier club competition.

Hubert Vaz

Positive Vision Association (PVA) - the first non-profit organisation in Oman to be formed under the Ministry of Social Development - has begun its mission to develop and implement awareness programmes in HIV/AIDS and substance addiction.

Muscat Daily caught up with Positive Vision Association President Nashia Nasib to dive deeper into the global crisis that HIV/AIDS and substance addiction have caused for humanity. She also explains the role that the organisation plays in keeping the people in Oman safe. An excerpt of the interview follows:

Muscat Daily: Is PVA the first such initiative in the private sector? What type of ministerial support does it receive, with regard to resources, man power, policies, facilitation, etc?

Nashia Nasib: PVA operates as a non-governmental association, with no financial support from government entities. Our operations fall under the governance of the Ministry of Social Development. Our primary focus is to support individuals living with HIV/AIDS and those who are affected by drug use. We also work closely with their families to provide the support they need to create a safe and inclusive environment.

Our NGO has very recently been established in July 2023, and so our efforts are dedicated primarily to ensuring that our organisation is well-structured and operating efficiently. We have invested significant time and resources as a board into developing our strategy and action plan for 2024-25, in addition to setting up robust policies and procedures in place. By doing so, we aim to ensure that our organisation operates smoothly and effectively.

We actively partner with the Ministry of Health and the National Drugs Committee, along with other government bodies when necessary. We also seek the support of the UN agencies in the country, such as WHO, UNFPA and Unicef and plan to tap into their extensive resources, tools, and platforms to enhance our training programmes, strengthen our organisational capacity, and foster valuable networking opportunities within the NGO sector.

MD: What is your current assessment of the HIV/AIDS scene in Oman - how alarming is it?

Nashia: Globally, there are approximately 39 million People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV). In Oman, the first reported case was in 1984, and the country is classified as having a low prevalence of HIV. In 2022, there were 201 new cases reported among Omanis. The primary mode of transmission is through sexual contact, with 84.6% of new cases occurring among men. The age group most affected is 25-49.

Currently, there are 2,157 cumulative cases of PLHIV alive in Oman, with the highest concentration in the Muscat region. Over the years, AIDS-related deaths have significantly decreased, suggesting an increase in early diagnosis and access to treatment. This indicates that more individuals are being diagnosed early in the course of the disease, enabling them to start treatment and adhere to it.

MD: What are the current available treatments for people living with HIV/AIDS?

Nashia: To encourage testing and ensure anonymity, the Ministry of Health has designated health centres across the country where people can undergo anonymous testing. These voluntary counselling and testing sites are available in various locations, such as Al Khoudh Health Centre, Al Amerat Health Centre, Al Shadi Health Centre, Al Qurayat Polyclinic, North Al Khuwair Health Centre, Suhar Hospital, and Al Buraimi Hospital. These centres not only offer testing but also provide an opportunity for individuals to connect with counsellors, ask questions about risky behaviours that could lead to HIV transmission, and receive necessary support if they test positive. While there is currently no definitive cure for HIV infection, PLHIV can lead long and healthy lives similar to individuals with other chronic diseases. This is made possible through regular treatment with a combination of antiretroviral drugs. The goals of treatment include controlling the virus, alleviating symptoms, and reducing the occurrence of complications in infected individuals.

Although there is no definitive cure for

HIV infection, it is crucial to continue to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, encourage testing, and ensure access to treatment and support for PLHIV in order to improve their overall well-being and quality of life. The treatment aims to control the virus, relieve symptoms and signs of the virus and reduce the incidence of complications in people infected with the virus.

MD: Is this issue not a common concern of the public sector and private sector of healthcare in Oman? How much burden are the private sector hospitals currently shouldering?

Nashia: Patients can undergo HIV testing in the private sector; however, confirmation tests are only done at the Ministry of Health (MoH). The primary purpose of this confirmation test is to ensure that everyone who tests positive for HIV is registered and receives appropriate treatment. This step helps to maintain accurate records and enables healthcare providers to extend the necessary care and support to individuals living with HIV.

MD: Is there need for all government/private hospitals to provide a cell or dedicated beds for HIV/AIDS cases as well as a central agency to coordinate and tabulate relevant data?

Nashia: It is important to note that it is neither ethical nor necessary to have separate designated spaces for PLHIV in hospital settings being it outpatient or as inpatients, as this will only label and stigmatise them further. HIV/AIDS is also not airborne. As the symptoms of HIV/AIDS can vary widely throughout the course of the disease, ranging from common cold-like symptoms to skin conditions, severe

It is important to recognise that humans make mistakes, but these mistakes should not equate to a death wish or result in ostracism and stigma within society

NASHIA NASIB

weight loss, pneumonia, low immunity, and tuberculosis, among others. Patients seek specialised care from healthcare professionals based on the specific symptoms they experience.

Utilisation of medical services would be hugely impacted if PLHIV were to feel marginalised. They will stop seeking help due to the stigma and discrimination they would face which has a profound impact on their mental health and emotional well-being. Furthermore, it is vital to highlight that all medical staff are expected to adhere to good medical practice at all times, ensuring their own protection. When drawing blood from any patient for example, it must be done with care, taking all necessary safety measures.

Testing for HIV is the only way to determine an individual's HIV status, and unless

specifically requested, it is not routinely done. It is of utmost importance for individuals who may have been exposed to HIV to undergo testing and, if necessary, initiate treatment. By encouraging testing and providing access to treatment, we can support the well-being and health of those affected by HIV/AIDS.

MD: What is the most common type of transmission do you see in Oman?

Nashia: In Oman, the most common mode of HIV transmission is through sexual contact, which is also the predominant mode of transmission globally. Additionally, HIV can be transmitted through infected needles, particularly among injecting drug users. Other modes of transmission include mother-to-child transmission during pregnancy, delivery, or breastfeeding, as well as through blood transfusions.

To prevent mother-to-child transmission, routine HIV testing of pregnant women has been brought into practice as part of antenatal checkups since July 2009. This proactive approach has resulted in timely management of HIV-positive women and their infants, leading to a significant reduction in mother-to-child transmission over the years.

In 2022, Oman achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first country in the Eastern Mediterranean Region to successfully eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognised Oman's commendable efforts in this regard. This achievement showcases the effectiveness of comprehensive testing, timely interventions, and appropriate healthcare measures in reducing the transmission of HIV from mother to child.

MD: Is there need for any change in cultural values in this part of the world to tackle the bane of HIV?

Nashia: Given the conservative nature of our society and our region, discussing the subject of HIV/AIDS can be challenging. It requires addressing issues that people are often uncomfortable talking about, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or social standing. By acknowledging the existence of HIV/AIDS, we are accepting that it is a reality that affects our community, something that many prefer to ignore.

In order to bring about a change, we must confront this issue and raise awareness to protect our youth. It is crucial to approach individuals who are HIV-positive with empathy and understanding, without judgement or discrimination. Many young people find themselves in compromising situations that they may later regret, but fortunately, not all of them acquire HIV. It is important to recognise that humans make mistakes, but these mistakes should not equate to a death wish or result in ostracism and stigma within society. By embracing and accepting people, including their mistakes, we can prevent feelings of anger, depression, and negativity, which can have dangerous repercussions for individuals and the community as a whole.

It is essential to emphasise that HIV/AIDS is not solely linked to 'bad behaviour'. While some cases may be associated with behaviours such as unsafe sex or drug use, it is important to recognise that HIV transmission can occur through various means, including mother-to-child, infidel relationships, blood transfusions in the past. It is crucial to dispel misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding HIV, and instead, foster a supportive and understanding environment that encourages open dialogue and education.

MD: What type of cooperation/support does PVA expect from corporates as well as social welfare organisations in this battle against HIV/AIDS?

Nashia: To effectively carry out its mission, PVA will always require support from the corporate sector. This support can come in various forms, including financial contributions and in-kind donations. The involvement of the private sector is crucial, as it has a significant role to play in raising awareness not only within the community but also within their own organisations.

The corporate sector's support through funding enables NGOs to sustain their operations, implement programmes, and reach a wider audience with their initiatives. Financial contributions from businesses can provide the necessary resources to run awareness campaigns, education programmes, and support services for the target population. This funding helps NGOs expand their reach, mobilise resources, and make a greater impact on the issues they are addressing.

In addition to financial support, the private sector can also contribute through in-kind donations. This can include providing goods, services, or expertise that are valuable to the NGO's operations. For example, a corporate partner may offer pro-bono legal services, marketing support, or access to specialised resources or facilities.

Collaboration between NGOs and the private sector is a win-win situation. NGOs gain access to resources, expertise, and networks, while the corporate sector fulfils its corporate social responsibility objectives and contributes to positive social change. This synergy can create a powerful force for raising awareness, driving change, and making a lasting impact on the community and society as a whole.

MD: On the occasion of World AIDS Day, what is your message to people in Oman?

Nashia: The theme for 2023 World AIDS Day is 'Let Communities Lead'.

As a newly established NGO, this theme perfectly aligns with our official recognition as an NGO. It emphasises the crucial role that NGOs play as a powerful voice for change and progress. We have the unique ability to address important issues that may not always be prioritised by the government, yet are pivotal in addressing the challenges at hand and transforming lives.

While the Ministry of Health primarily focuses on treatment, our NGO, Positive Vision recognises the significance of tackling stigma and discrimination for People Living with HIV (PLHIV). We understand that advocating for the rights of PLHIV, including their rights to employment and equal opportunities, is essential.

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