

► NEWS BRIEF

OMAN HOSTS GCC STANDING COMMITTEE FOR WOMEN AFFAIRS

Muscat - Oman hosted the first meeting of the GCC Standing Committee for Women Affairs.

The meeting discussed the status of women in GCC countries and a decision of the Ministerial Council in its 154th session on joint GCC action in the field of women's affairs.

On the sidelines of the meeting, H E Dr Laila Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, met Jassim Mohammed al Budaiwi, Secretary-General of GCC. They reviewed means of enhancing the role of women and their active participation in the joint GCC action.

04



Ominvest-led consortium plans to acquire Ahli Bank

Ministers, shura discuss joint action

H H Sayyid Fahd receives chairman and members of Majlis A'Shura

Muscat - H H Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, and others members of the Council of Ministers received the Majlis A'Shura Chairman H E Khalid Hilal al Ma'awali and its members on Tuesday.

The meeting was held within the framework of joint coordination between the Council of Ministers and Majlis A'Shura.

The two sides held a joint meeting as stipulated by the Basic Law of the State and Majlis A'Shura Law. The meeting aimed to enhance the process of continuous coordination among all establishments of the state. It underlined the need to arrive at common visions for supporting programmes to promote economic and social aspects.

At the outset of the meeting, H H Sayyid Fahd commended the shura's stance in cooperating



(ONA)

The meeting between the Council of Ministers and Majlis A'Shura aimed to enhance the process of continuous coordination among all establishments of the state

with the government for maintaining efforts to serve Oman and its citizens, while at the same time advancing the supreme interest of the country.

H H Sayyid Fahd highlighted the factors that enhance cooperation

between the two councils and their efforts to consolidate joint coordination.

During the joint meeting, emphasis was laid on the government giving priority to initiatives that support the role of the shura

as a partner in the national action aimed at implementing plans of comprehensive development.

Pursuing this approach, ministers will answer the shura's requests to present and discuss ministerial statements on ways to implement projects that focus on providing the best services to citizens. This is in addition to dealing positively with the shura's proposals for plans and programmes implemented at each stage.

The joint meeting reviewed its agenda, which included several

topics, significantly among these being steps to activate the role of a joint ministerial coordination committee.

The committee will have a mandate to enhance joint cooperation between the two sides towards promoting goals of sustainable development.

On its part, the shura will continue to spread social awareness on joint national action.

The chairman of the shura and its members underscored the significance of the meeting. They

touched on various aspects for maintaining joint coordination between the Council of Ministers and the shura. They also expressed gratitude to the government and its leadership for the keenness to consolidate the pillars of constructive cooperation between the two councils. They expressed confidence that the outcome of the meeting would enhance joint coordination aimed at maintaining Oman's accomplishments in its march of progress and prosperity.

Towards net zero: 22,000 EVs by 2040, all electric vehicles by 2050

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In line with its commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, Oman will have at least 22,000 new electric vehicles (EV) on roads by 2040 and phase out all fossil fuel powered vehicles by 2050.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) has launched a special programme to reduce carbon emissions and reach net zero by 2050.

An official at MTCIT said the programme includes a number of projects and initiatives in several sectors, one of these being the transport, communications and information technology sector, which accounts for nearly 20 per cent of the total carbon emissions in Oman.

According to the official, the ministry has set its plan for zero carbon neutrality in three stages. In the first stage, the target is to reduce emissions by three per cent



7,000
ELECTRIC VEHICLES BY 2030
140 EV
CHARGERS BY END OF 2023
350 EV
CHARGERS BY END OF 2026
34%
EMISSION REDUCTION BY 2040

by 2030, 34 per cent by 2040 in the second stage and 100 per cent by 2050 in the third and final stage.

He informed that in the first stage, the ministry plans to have around 7,000 EVs, or 35 per cent of new light vehicles, on the road, besides reducing emissions by 40 per cent from heavy equipment by using dual combustion technology developed locally.

"In addition, biofuels will be used substantially in public transport, while work is already underway to convert some equipment in ports to environmentally friendly types using solar energy."

In the second phase, the ministry aims to have over 22,000 new EVs by 2040, which will constitute 65 per cent of new light vehicles.

MTCIT is also working to de-

termine the operating age of public transport vehicles in a way that contributes to reducing emissions, in addition to establishing a regional centre to supply ships with green fuel. This move will constitute a quantum leap in the field. MTCIT is also looking to build bus stations and buildings fitted with solar panels, further contributing to reducing emissions.

In the third phase, the ministry aims to use hydrogen or electric technology in all trucks and heavy equipment to reduce emissions by 100 per cent. New light vehicles will all be electric to achieve the target percentage and achieve declared zero neutrality in 2050.

MTCIT has engaged intensively with the private sector to improve infrastructure and prepare for adoption of electric cars. The ministry has drawn up a short-term plan to install over 140 electric vehicle chargers by the end of 2023, and more than 350 by the end of 2026.

Oman, Luxembourg expand ties

Muscat - H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, held a session of political talks with Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, who is currently on an official visit to Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the march of bilateral relations. They also discussed means of enhancing cooperation, exchanging expertise and striking further agreements and memoranda of understanding during the coming period in the fields of economy, renewable energy and avoidance of double taxation, as well as aviation, banking, finance, science and culture.

The two sides touched on several regional and international matters of mutual interest. They underscored the importance of



(ONA)

tackling issues and challenges on the basis of justice and respect for international law, through peaceful means and dialogue.

H E Sayyid Badr lauded the role of Luxembourg in the European Union. He also affirmed the keenness of the sultanate to continue developing bilateral relations in all fields.

H E Sayyid Badr reiterated the importance of exchanging views on various matters of mutual

concern.

On his turn, Asselborn praised Oman's role in the region. He also expressed the keenness of his country to boost cooperation in various fields.

The meeting was attended by Khalid Hashel al Muselhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department, Munthir Mahfoudh al Mantheri, Head of Europe Department, and several officials from both sides.

Mishandling of luggage soars after pandemic

Paris, France - The rate of lost, damaged or delayed luggage nearly doubled last year as air travel rebounded and the sector faced staff shortages following the COVID-19 pandemic, a study found on Tuesday.

The report by SITA, an IT provider for the air transport industry, said 7.6 bags per thousand passengers were mishandled in 2022, up from 4.35 the previous year. The surge follows more than a decade of reduction in the rate of mishandled luggage, according to SITA.

In total, 26mn bags were mishandled last year, compared to 9.9mn in 2021, as the number of travellers neared pre-COVID levels, according to SITA.

AFF

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

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Companies specialized in the field and registered with Tender Board, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link:
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/21/084 2023/MM/HQ-12	Construction of Storm Water Drainage System In Al Mahaj Area - Wilayat Al Amarat Phase 2	250	05/06/2023	26/06/2023	Excellent
PRE/22/055 2022/MM/HQ-5	Design and Improvement of Al Jami Roundabout and Drainage Works Near to Maizoon Mosque(Re-Call)	300	05/06/2023	26/06/2023	Excellent
PRE/22/113 2023/MM/HQ-13	Consultancy Services for Geotechnical Study and Design of Slopes Protection in Darsait Area	25	05/06/2023	26/06/2023	First
PRE/22/128 2023/MM/QS-30	Design and Construction of Bus Bays at Muscat Governorate	25	05/06/2023	26/06/2023	First
PRE/23/002 2023/MM/QS-31	Supply and fixing of lighting poles/Electrical connections for Msar project at Al Amarat	25	05/06/2023	26/06/2023	Specialist
PRE/23/027 2023/MM/HQ-14	Design & Construction of Roads in Al Khoudh Village	150	05/06/2023	26/06/2023	First
PRE/23/040 2023/MM/HQ-15	Consultancy Services for Design of Internal Roads in North Falaj Sham	25	05/06/2023	26/06/2023	First
PRE/23/070 2023/MM/HQ-16	Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC)Of Oracle E-Business HRMS & Financial System	25	05/06/2023	26/06/2023	Specialist
PRE/23/091 2023/MM/QS-32	Power Supply to Mubaila park at As' Seeb	25	05/06/2023	26/06/2023	Specialist
PRE/23/092 2023/MM/HQ-17	Supply and Installation of benches in Public Parks in Muscat Governorate	25	05/06/2023	26/06/2023	Specialist
PRE/23/096 2023/MM/HQ-18	Development of one way road system in Al Khuwair	225	26/05/2023	31/05/2023	Excellent

Tender Conditions :-

1- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.

- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+96824402200/24402330).

E-scooters - affordable but risky

Motorists view e-scooters warily due to these two-wheelers' ability to zip in and out of traffic

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A new sight on Muscat's roads is prompting many to do a double take - in awe as much as fear. Electric scooters - the new mode of transport in the city - have become increasingly popular and are used as an affordable and convenient mode of transport. But these can also be safety hazard for both motorists and scooterist themselves when the latter fail to follow road rules or don't use protective gear.

Most vehicle drivers view e-scooters warily due to these two-wheelers' limitless manoeuvrability and ability to zip in and out of traffic unhindered.

Alen, a Filipino resident who rides an e-scooter, said, "I find it very easy to go to work; I can avoid traffic jams and get to my destination quickly. E-scooters can be particularly useful in congested cities where traffic is heavy during rush hour."

These are inexpensive to charge, easy to maintain and have fewer parts that can break down. "Besides convenience and affordability," Allen said, "these are environmentally friendly. But they also come with risks, particularly when used on busy roads."

Alen has a colleague, Maria,



(Muscat Daily)

who also uses an e-scooter. "Earlier, I used to walk home from work for lunch under the scorching sun. It was exhausting. It took me around 20 minutes; it felt like such a waste of time. With the scooter, I can save time and my

health."

Maria counts the ease in parking scooters and their ability to enter narrow lanes easily as the biggest advantage.

Asked about safety concerns, Maria said she always makes

sure to wear a helmet and doesn't go too fast. She also encourages colleagues using e-scooters to wear helmets and drive at a safe speed.

However, taxi driver Ali al Habsi considers e-scooters a

safety hazard. "Unfortunately, the use of electric scooters has spread quickly on public roads. Riders often break traffic rules."

According to safety expert Sultan al Rawahi, many e-scooter riders also carry heavy loads.



I find it very easy to go to work; I can avoid traffic jams and get to my destination quickly. E-scooters can be particularly useful in congested cities where traffic is heavy during rush hour

ALEN

provide special tracks for them to ride, like in European countries."

Mohammad Nabi, a Ruwi resident, recently saw three children ride an e-scooter on the main road in Mumtaz Area. "I was shocked and wanted to click a photograph to post on social media, just to create awareness on the matter. But I couldn't as I was driving."

An official at Royal Oman Police said, "We call on parents to urge their children to drive electric scooters in designated areas, and to adhere to traffic safety measures to avoid accidents."

TRA to conduct trial of early warning weather service in Dhofar today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), in cooperation with Civil Aviation Authority, will conduct trials of an early warning broadcast service on weather conditions via mobile phones in Dhofar on Wednesday.

This is being done with the objective of ensuring weather alerts reach people as quickly as possible.

In a statement, TRA said that the trial will be held in the wilayats of Salalah, Taqah, Mirbat, Rakhut, Dhalkhut, Sadah, and Shalim and Hallaniyat Islands on May 17.



A trial was conducted in Muscat governorate on Tuesday. The service features broad-

casting messages warning against all nature of emergencies, including hurricanes, tsunamis,

heavy rains, strong winds and poor horizontal visibility. The messages are sent in four languages - Arabic, English, Hindi and Urdu.

The trials will continue in North Batinah on June 13, followed by South Batinah on June 14 and Musandam on June 15.

In the trial stage, warning messages of emergency are being sent to Omantel and Ooredoo subscribers.

According to TRA, the service will help send warning messages to subscribers in a particular area using mobile communications networks to alert about emergencies in line with international standards.



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Selection will be based on interview of the candidates short listed by the Bank and the Bank reserves the right to consider/reject any application without assigning any reason thereof.

Chief Executive Officer

Salalah House, Ground Floor, Bait Al Falaj Road, CBD Area, P.O.Box 264, P.C.112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
Phone : 24704232 / 3, Fax : 24788966, Web : www.sbioman.com

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



No streetlights behind Sultan Center

I request the concerned authorities in Muscat to instal streetlights in Qurum on the road behind The Sultan Center/ Qurum Hills to Telal al Qurum complex. The area has many apartments and villas.

What makes the situation dangerous without streetlights is the fact that the road crosses a wadi. When the wadi is flowing, especially at night, it is difficult to judge the level of water.

Although electricity poles have been installed on the road, these have not been connected by the electricity department.

It is very risky as this is the only road to reach Telal complex.

During rains, it is a challenge to reach the complex as it gets cut off from the main road.

I hope the concerned departments in Muscat Municipality take immediate action.

Hiten Dutia
Via email, Qurum



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MOH No: 558/2023

Over 47,000 tourists visited two popular tourist sites in Q1

Our correspondent Muscat

As many as 47,368 people visited Jabal Akhdar and Ras al Janz during the first three months of this year, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) reported.

The latest data released by the ministry show that the number of tourists who visited Jabal Akhdar was 31,335, while 16,033 visited the Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve in the first Quarter of 2023.

Jabal Akhdar is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Oman. Its moderate climate during the summer months and freezing cold during winters make it an ideal place for eco and adventure tourism.

Visitors can enjoy walking in the wadis, climb mountains, and explore caves, which in turn allows them to get acquainted with the local culture.

There are many ancient sites in Jabal Akhdar, which

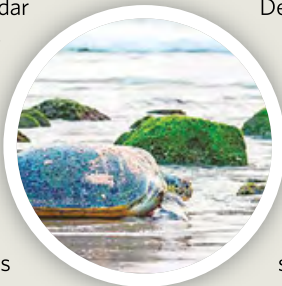
make its villages popular among foreign tourist as well.

The reserve in Jinz Beach in South Sharqiyah governorate is a world-renowned nesting site of green turtles (Chelonia mydas). It is perhaps one of the most important nesting places in the coastline of the Indian Ocean.

The Ras al Jinz Reserve was established via a Royal Decree in 1996 to preserve one of the rarest natural elements of the country and includes an interactive museum.

The statistics also show that the number of guests in 3-5 star hotels in Oman witnessed a significant jump of 25.8 per cent to reach 523,494, during Q1 2023 as compared to the figures during the same period last year.

Revenues of 3- to 5-star hotels increased 49.9 per cent to touch RO73.3mn, while occupancy in those hotels recorded a growth of 54.5 per cent during the same period this year.



Banned pesticides damaging environment, says MAFWR

Our correspondent Muscat

Use of banned pesticides and improper methods of using licensed ones on agricultural crops cause damage to the environment, which negatively affects human health, animals and plants, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) stated.

Eng Nasr bin Saif al Shamsi, Director of Plant Protection Department at MAFWR, said that improper use of pesticides, whether of banned products or for unscientific methods, contributes to the exacerbation of global warming following gaseous emissions that eventually may cause acidic rain.

Improper or unscientific use of pesticides results in soil pollution, besides causing toxic pollution in the environment, he explained.

"Soil pollution also impacts aquatic life, besides harming plants, which in turn raises the risk of poisoning for anyone consuming fish or plants or vegetables from the area."

According to Shamsi, inspectors from the Agricultural Control and Licensing Department made 1,710 visits to local farms in 2022,



and took 263 crop samples to study pesticide residue. "Around 97 per cent of the samples were found to be free of pesticide residues, while 3 per cent had traces of residues. Legal meas-

ures were taken against the culprits," the MAFWR official said.

The ministry created the Agricultural Control and Licensing Department to complement the system of work in agricultural

development, and to implement campaigns on farms, agricultural establishments and markets to ensure compliance with agricultural pesticides trading in the local market, limit the circulation

Oman is keen to accede to six international agreements concerned with restricting and banning some highly dangerous materials

IBTISAM KHAMIS

of banned and expired pesticides, and arrest violators.

Ibtisam Khamis, head of the Chemical Classification and Management Department in the Department of Chemicals and Waste Management of the Environment Authority, confirmed that the potential threats from pesticides include health risks for being carcinogenic, physical risks for being highly inflammable, and environmental risks for causing pollution, besides making water bodies toxic.

"Oman is keen to accede to six international agreements concerned with restricting and banning some highly dangerous materials, the production and use of these materials, and the study of their effects on the environment," she added.

MoE, US embassy hold special teachers' workshop

Our correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Special Education and Continuous Learning, in cooperation with the US Embassy, on Tuesday began a two-day workshop on 'Teaching Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities'.

The workshop targeted 25 teachers from special education schools, supervisors and senior supervisors from the special education department in the ministry.

Talking about the importance and objectives of the workshop, Shannouna al Habsi, assistant director general of Special Education in MoE, said, "Within the framework of the fruitful cooperation between the government



and the US Embassy in Muscat, to support the education of people with disabilities and hone the skills of workers, comes this workshop conducted by Sandra Story."

Sandra is an American expert in education for people with special needs.

The workshop provided the participants with the knowledge

and skills of 'Universal Design for Learning', introducing them to the practical applications of strategies for teaching people with disabilities, exchanging experiences among them, and getting acquainted with the different international models for teaching students with disabilities.

The workshop includes several topics, including methods

and strategies for teaching English language to students with disabilities, activating technology in teaching these students, reviewing comprehensive education for them, and strategies for integrating social-emotional learning, diversity, and equity.

Sandra said, "We reviewed a number of concepts of learning difficulties, and we also worked

to enrich these participants with strategies to support the educational process for learners with disabilities, as well as comprehensive design for learning was reviewed."

She added that these learners with disabilities have human needs and are not necessarily special, as these strategies support the learning process for all learners of all abilities.

"The US Embassy is proud to partner with the Ministry of Education on the special needs' workshops for educators. The joint efforts to bring a US Department of State specialist to teach this two-day programme is a sign of the strong partnership between the US and Oman," said Cameron Tyrone, deputy chief of public affairs and acting director of the US Embassy's Media and Cultural Affairs Department.



French delegation calls on Defence Secretary General

Muscat - Dr Mohammed Nasser al Za'abi, Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence, received in his office at Al Murtafaa Garrison on Tuesday a delegation from the French Senate.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and exchanged views on matters of common concern.

The meeting was attended by senior officers of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and ambassador of France to Oman.

The French delegation later visited the Maritime Security

Centre (MSC) where Commodore Jassim Mohammed al Balushi, Director of Operations and Plans at the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) welcomed the guests.

The delegation toured the centre's facilities and got introduced to the latest equipment and technologies used in carrying out its national duties. The members were also briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in the safety of the maritime environment.

ONA

Renaissance funds drive to put reflective collars on camels

Muscat - Reiterating its commitment to create a positive local impact through its CSR initiatives, Renaissance has lent full support to a project aimed at preventing road traffic accidents caused by stray camels and protecting motorists and this valued livestock from death and injury.

Renaissance has funded over 10,000 reflective collars for camels in North Batinah in recognition of the challenge faced by authorities to make



camels visible in the dark. The project will be implemented in the wilayats of Shinas, Liwa, Sohar, Saham, Khabourah and Suwaiq. Besides reflective collars, the funds will be used to raise awareness among camel breeders and owners of the importance of this initiative.

Renaissance formalised this commitment with Eng Abdullah al Hadabi, Director General for North Batinah in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources at an event held on

Monday, in the presence of Sheikh Mohammed Sulaiman Hamood al Kindi, the Governor of North Batinah.

Khamis al Balushi, Director General, Government Relations, Renaissance said, "At Renaissance, CSR is all about making a meaningful contribution to communities. We are proud and honoured to be part of this campaign which will contribute towards bringing down fatalities and injury to people and to camels."

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Bangladesh	279.31
Philippines	145.86
Sri Lanka	805.41

*Rates as on May 16
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS
EU agency revises down first quarter growth figure
The European economy expanded less than previously thought in the first quarter of 2023, the EU statistics agency said Tuesday, revising its previous figure.
The full 27-member EU grew by 0.2 per cent instead of 0.3 per cent in the first three months of the year compared with the previous period, Eurostat said after compiling revised data.
The agency, however, recorded no change for the single currency eurozone area's economic growth of 0.1 per cent in the first quarter of 2023.
Despite the revision, the EU still avoided a recession last winter after GDP contracted by 0.1 per cent in the last three months of 2022.
On Monday, the European Commission boosted its 2023 economic growth outlook for the 20-country euro area by 0.2 points to 1.1 per cent.
The EU executive also raised its growth forecast for the bloc as a whole for 2023, but it remains lower than the eurozone at around one per cent.

Ominvest-led consortium plans to acquire Ahli Bank

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest) is planning to lead a consortium that will make an offer to acquire the entire issued share capital of Ahli Bank.
"The Ominvest board, at its meeting held on Monday, resolved to announce the intention for Ominvest to lead a consortium that will make an offer for the entire issued share capital of Ahli Bank," Ominvest said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.
It said the offer will be made by certain entities separately controlled by Ominvest and Arab Bank (consortium), adding that certain other investors have also expressed their desire to join the consortium.
Ominvest said that the consortium shall be a committed anchor investor who will support Ahli Bank's growth and provide further strategic direction.
According to the disclosure, the consortium will make a cash offer of 185bz per share (base offer price) for Ahli Bank. The consortium does not anticipate incorporating any conditions regarding the percentage of acceptance by shareholders of Ahli Bank. The base offer price represents a premium of approximately 28 per cent over Ahli Bank's average one-year market price of 144bz.



Ominvest-led consortium will make a cash offer of 185bz per share (base offer price) for Ahli Bank. The base offer price represents a premium of 28% over Ahli Bank's average one-year market price of 144bz

mately 28 per cent over Ahli Bank's average one-year market price of 144bz and an 8 per cent premium compared to the closing stock price for Ahli Bank as of March 31, 2023.

"We believe that the offer is attractively priced," Ominvest noted in its disclosure.
For the purpose of this shares acquisition offer, Ominvest has categorised the Ahli Bank shareholders into three categories: (i) strategic long-term investors, holding more than 25 per cent shareholding, who provide strategic direction and assistance in the transformation of Ahli Bank; (ii) significant financial investors, holding between 10 and 25 per cent shareholding, who have significant influence over Ahli Bank and participate in its policy-making process; and (iii) other investors, holding less than 10 per cent shareholding.
Under the terms of the offer, Ahli Bank shareholders who accept the offer will be entitled to receive as follows: strategic long-term investors will receive the base offer price plus 15bz; significant financial investors will receive the base offer price plus 7bz; and other investors will receive the base offer price.



Following the announcement about the offer, Ahli Bank shares rose more than four per cent at the Muscat Stock Exchange, while OAB shares jumped 9.3 per cent on Tuesday. Ominvest shares, however, closed two per cent lower for the day.
Ominvest pointed out that the proposed offer shall be funded by the members of the consortium from their own funding sources, thereby resulting in a positive foreign direct investment (FDI) in Oman.
"The offer is subject to the approvals of the relevant boards, shareholders, regulators, and any other applicable requirements. Further information shall be provided in due course and in line with the Takeover Regulations and disclosure requirements," Ominvest added.
This merged entity, subject to regulatory and other approvals, will create a large and robust financial institution in Oman," Ominvest added.
According to Ominvest, the premium over the base price is to compensate strategic long-term and significant financial investors for the loss of significant influence over Ahli Bank as a result of selling their shares. This is based on the concept of a control premium paid for large blocks of shares.
Ahli Bank-OAB merger
Ominvest informed that the members of the consortium already have a substantial stake in Oman Arab Bank (OAB), and the acquisition of Ahli Bank is viewed as a strategic opportunity to further strengthen Ahli Bank in advance of its potential future merger with OAB.
"This merged entity, subject to regulatory and other ap-

CBO issues RO28mn treasury bills

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Central Bank of Oman, on behalf of the Ministry of Finance, issued two tenders of the government treasury bills worth RO28.4mn this week.
In the first tender, the value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO28mn, for a maturity period of 91 days.
The average accepted price reached RO98.755 for every RO100 bill, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO98.755. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.9929 per cent and 5.0559 per cent, respectively. For the second tender, the value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO400,000, for a maturity period of 28 days.
The average accepted price reached RO99.650 for every RO100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.650. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.5625 per cent and 4.57852 per cent respectively.
The interest rate on the repo operations with the CBO is 5.75 per cent while the discount rate on the treasury bills discounting facility with the central bank is 6.25 per cent.
Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

Russian oil exports hit highest level since start of Ukraine war

Paris, France - Russia's oil exports rose in April to the highest level since its invasion of Ukraine, boosting revenues by US\$1.7bn despite Western sanctions, the International Energy Agency said Tuesday.
The Paris-based organisation said Russian exports increased by 50,000 barrels per day to 8.3mn bpd last month, estimating that the country did not fully deliver on a threat to cut production sharply.
"Indeed, Russia may be boosting volumes to make up for lost revenue," the IEA said in its monthly oil market report.
The country's oil export revenues rose by US\$1.7bn to US\$15bn in April.
The figure, however, was 27 per cent lower than the same month in 2022. Russia's tax receipts from its oil and gas sector were down by 64 per cent year-on-year, the agency added.

The Group of Seven wealthy nations and Australia have set price caps on Russian petroleum products and crude in coordination with the European Union in an effort to cut a key source of funding for its war on Ukraine.
The EU has also imposed embargoes on the country's key oil exports.
In response, Russia has threatened to cut off countries and companies that comply with the price cap.
It has also announced a production cut of 500,000 barrels per day while its allies in the OPEC+ group of oil producers, including Saudi Arabia, also agreed to slash output.
The IEA said Russia crude output held "broadly steady" in April at 9.6mn barrels per day and that the country must cut a further 300,000 barrels per day in May to bring itself into line.

"Russia seems to have few problems finding willing buyers for its crude and oil products, frequently at the expense of fellow OPEC+ members in the two-tier market that has emerged since the embargoes came into force," the IEA said.
The agency said China and India accounted for nearly 80 per cent for Russian crude export destinations.
China's emergence from nearly three years of Covid restrictions is also expected to lift world oil demand this year as the IEA raised its forecast by 2.2mn bpd to an average of 102mn bpd. AFP

Tethys Oil's production in Oman exceeds 276,000 barrels in April

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Swedish energy firm Tethys Oil, which operates Oman's Blocks 3 and 4, announced that its oil production in the sultanate crossed 276,000 barrels mark during April 2023.
"Tethys Oil's share of the production, before government take, from Blocks 3 and 4 onshore Oman, in April 2023 amounted to 276,740 barrels of oil, corresponding to 9,225 barrels of oil per day," the company said in a production update announcement on its website.
Tethys Oil said that the official selling price for Oman export blend crude oil for the month of April stood at US\$82.23 per barrel. The official selling price, as published by Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals, is the benchmark price for Tethys Oil's monthly oil sales excluding trading and quality adjustments.
Tethys Oil's share of production from Blocks 3 and 4 during the first quarter 2023, before government take, amounted to 847,002 barrels of oil, corresponding to 9,411 barrels of oil per day.

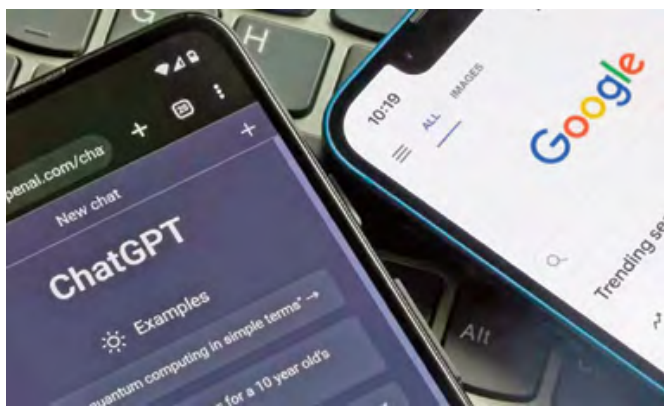


The net entitlement, Tethys Oil's share of production after government take, amounted to 440,441 barrels of oil, corresponding to 52 per cent of the total production.
Tethys Oil, through its wholly owned subsidiary Tethys Oil Block 3 & 4 Ltd, has a 30 per cent interest in Blocks 3 & 4. Partners are Mitsui E&P Middle East with 20 per cent interest and the operator CC Energy Development (Oman branch) holding the remaining 50 per cent.
Tethys Oil is an oil exploration and production company with focus on onshore areas with known oil discoveries.
The company's core area is Oman, where it holds interests in Blocks 3 and 4, Block 49, Block 56 and Block 58.

Online search to make up lost time with artificial intelligence

San Francisco, US - Online search, dominated by Google for 25 years, has become as banal as making a phone call, but it could finally be getting a profound reset thanks to artificial intelligence.
The classic search and click made ubiquitous by the Google behemoth is getting a major AI makeover as bots ChatGPT, Bard or Bing see hundreds of millions of web surfers seek answers to life's questions in a new way.
"People are realising how many times they use Google search, not to find a webpage, but to answer a question," said Stefan Sigg, Chief Product Officer at Germany-based Software AG.
Microsoft, long considered big tech's boring uncle, has jumped fearlessly and some say blindly into generative AI search with an update to Bing, the long struggling also-ran to Google.

Bing's bot, which was released worldwide after three months of testing, responds directly to a query instead of throwing out a pageful of links for the search user to wade and click through.
With a prompt, Bing will compare two products, brainstorm vacation plans or reassuringly help prepare a job interview, for example.
'Heavy lifting'
"Now, search does the heavy lifting for you," said Cathy Edwards, VP Engineering at Google, during the company's annual I/O developers conference in California.
The user no longer has to "sift through the information and then piece things together," she said.
At the conference, matching Bing, Google presented the latest iteration of its web search juggernaut, but instead of the constellation of links that confronts



you today, a chatbot offered a few paragraphs to answer what you were looking for.
Google's AI amped search engine will slowly be released in the United States as a start, the company said.
"What we're trying to do is make it more natural and intuitive, as easy as asking a friend and getting information from someone who's really knowledgeable for any question you have in the world," Elizabeth Reid, Vice President of Search, told AFP.
Beyond search, Google and Microsoft have deployed generative AI tools to other products, from cloud to word processing, presenting bots as helpful "co-pilots," to use the term hammered home by the Windows-maker.

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Personal 'genie'
"I think search is going to be fractured into a million pieces, and integrated into all sorts of interfaces, and not just one monolithic centralized place, which is what Google has become," said John Battelle, author and media entrepreneur.
But if every website acts like a faithful friend, it will become ever more difficult to distinguish good information from bad, he warned.
"Would you trust an AI travel agent to give you the right deal? No," Battelle said.
"I want my own 'genie', my 'agent' to negotiate with the website. If it's just me against an AI, I'm gonna lose. I want one on my side."
Battelle's "genie" would digest a user's information from the smartphone, computer, TV or car to help answer and act for the user in life online.

The bot, powered by personal data, would buy the best vacuum cleaner according to your tastes, habits and current promotions, sparing a long and tedious search.
The AI personal assistant would have to come for a fee, ensuring that personal data wasn't harvested and sold to the highest bidder for advertising or online tracking, as it is on social media.
Startups such as Replika, Anima and others are already moving into the companion AI space.
For the time being, Google isn't going to disappear, said Jim Lecinski, professor of marketing at the Kellogg School of Management.
"We could have had this same conversation about four years ago with the advent of voice assistants like Alexa or Siri."
"Oh wow, search is going

away because people are just going to speak their query to their car and device on their kitchen counter. Well, here we are," he said.
The disruption of generative AI could, however, challenge the internet's business model, as it can allow users to find the product they want "without having to click on an ad," Lecinski said.
But he has no doubt that the giants, ad-based Google and Meta first among them, will find solutions.
In the new version of Google search presented on Wednesday, the ads still appear, either up at the top of the page or lower in the results, depending on the question asked.
"I don't think we can predict what the future will have, but we do think ads will continue to play a vital role," said Google's Reid. AFP



China economic data miss expectations as demand cools

Beijing, China – China's economic data for April missed expectations last month, official figures showed Tuesday, as low demand and high youth unemployment led to a patchy recovery after lifting strict Covid rules.

Retail sales – a key indicator of domestic consumer activity – grew 18.4 per cent on-year, data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed.

The reading was short of the 21.9 per cent forecast in a survey of economists by Bloomberg, even as shoppers and diners returned to malls and restaurants.

Low domestic demand despite low inflation has slowed China's economic recovery.

Beijing has set a growth target of around five percent this year, the lowest goal in decades, with Premier Li Qiang warning it "will be no easy task".

Zhang Zhiwei, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management, said: "The growth target for this year is set at a low level, which leaves room for the government to wait and see."

Unemployment among China's urban 16-24-year-olds reached a record high of 20 per cent in April, as the services sector was slow to absorb millions of rural migrants flocking to cities.

Overall urban unemployment slipped to 5.2 per cent in April, from 5.3 per cent in March.

Industrial production for April rose 5.6 per cent, a little more than half the 10.9 per cent growth expected as factories gradually returned to full capacity after scrapping disruptive lockdown rules.

Fixed asset investments from January through April increased

4.7 per cent, below the 5.7 per cent forecast, as debt-laden local governments were forced to cut back on big infrastructure projects.

China's central bank yesterday said the world's second-largest economy was not on course to suffer from deflation, after data showed consumer prices edged up just 0.1 percent year-on-year in April, the slowest rate recorded since 2021.

"Consumer prices are still rising moderately... and economic operations continue to improve, which does not conform to the characteristics of deflation," the report reviewing monetary policy implementation in the first quarter said.

"In the medium and long term, there is also no basis for... deflation."

AFP



Vodafone's new CEO axes 11,000 jobs in fresh tech cull

London, UK – British mobile giant Vodafone is to axe 11,000 jobs over three years in the latest cull to hit the tech sector, as new boss Margherita Della Valle slammed recent performance.

"Our performance has not been good enough," Vodafone chief executive Della Valle said alongside news of flat annual revenue at the phone group.

At 11,000 positions, Vodafone is seen axing more than 10 per cent of its global workforce, which stood at 104,000 staff last year.

"To consistently deliver, Vodafone must change," Della Valle, a Vodafone veteran, added in a statement.

"We will simplify our organisation, cutting out complexity to regain our competitiveness," said the Italian national, recently appointed CEO on a permanent basis after a short spell as interim boss.

Vodafone's announcement follows the axing this year of tens of thousands of jobs across the global tech sector, including by Facebook parent Meta, as soaring inflation weakened the economy.

Della Valle's predecessor Nick Read stepped down in early December after a four-year tenure marked by a steep fall in the company's share price.

He left with Vodafone in talks

over merging its UK operations with rival Three UK, owned by Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison.

Media reports say a deal worth £15bn is close to completion.

Vodafone on Tuesday added that group revenue stood at 45.7bn euros (US\$50bn) in its financial year to the end of March, almost flat compared with 2021/22.

It added that net profit surged to 11.8bn euros from 2.2bn, reflecting its part-disposal of European mast division, Vantage Towers.

"We will be a leaner and simpler organisation, to increase our commercial agility and free up resources," the company said Tuesday.

It announced "11,000 role reductions planned over three years, with both HQ and local markets simplification".

Vodafone, which has more than 300mn mobile customers in Europe and Africa, is heavily focused on accelerating rollout of 5G in the UK.

Vodafone is banking on the merger of its UK operations with Three to expand broadband connectivity to rural communities and small businesses.

The rollout of faster 5G connectivity has been hampered by Britain's ban on the Chinese giant Huawei from involvement in the

technology.

Following Tuesday's announcements, shares in Vodafone slid 7.4 per cent to 83.33 pence in late morning deals on London's benchmark FTSE 100 index, which was up slightly overall.

Investors were spooked by news of a hefty drop in free cash flow this year.

"Della Valle says she wants to focus on customers, simplicity and growth. It is the latter which may well determine if she is perceived as a success by shareholders," noted Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

She "has been at the company for some time and needs to demonstrate she can really be the breath of fresh air the company needs".

Alongside her role as CEO, Della Valle remains chief financial officer until a replacement is found.

Vodafone last week announced a strategic partnership with United Arab Emirates peer e&, its largest shareholder, to collaborate on procurement and cross-border digital services.

At the end of 2022, Vodafone unveiled a blockbuster deal with investment firms GIP and KKR to form a joint venture that would maintain its majority stake in Vantage Towers.

AFP

US debt fight raising govt borrowing costs: Yellen

New York, US – The US government is facing increased borrowing costs due to the political crisis surrounding the nation's borrowing limit, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Tuesday.

"We are already seeing the impacts of brinksmanship: Investors have become more reluctant to hold government debt that matures in early June," Yellen said in prepared remarks ahead of a speech before the Independent Community Bankers of America, a trade group.

"The impasse has already increased the debt burden to American taxpayers," she warned.

The rate on one-month US Treasury bonds rose to 5.74 per cent on Monday, the highest in at least 20 years, and significantly higher than the Federal Reserve's benchmark rate of between 5.0 and 5.25 per cent.

In mid-April, one-month Treasury bonds rates were 3.29 per cent.



US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen

The rate's rise comes with a corresponding drop in the price of the bonds, meaning the US government must borrow more than under ordinary conditions.

Yellen said new data reinforced an earlier warning that the US could default on its debts as early as June 1, ahead of crunch talks Tuesday between President Joe Biden and Republican leaders.

The Treasury has warned of

"catastrophic" consequences if the US runs out of cash to pay its bills, which would leave it unable to pay federal workers and trigger a likely surge in interest rates with a huge impact for businesses and mortgage holders.

"We still estimate Treasury will likely no longer be able to satisfy all of the government's obligations if Congress has not acted to raise or suspend the debt limit by early June, and po-

tentially as early as June 1," she wrote on Monday in a letter to the Republican speaker of the House of Representatives, Kevin McCarthy.

Republicans, who control the House of Representatives, are currently in a standoff with Democratic President Joe Biden, demanding public spending cuts as a condition for lifting the so-called debt ceiling.

Negotiations were scheduled Tuesday between Biden, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and the three other top political leaders in Congress, in hopes of reaching a deal.

"Too many businesses" are being forced to spend time "planning around the potential risk of US default, instead of thinking about longer-term investments," Yellen said in her prepared remarks.

She again called on Congress to "address the debt limit as soon as possible."

AFP



Gulf International Chemicals SAOG

(An ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company)

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Gulf International Chemicals SAOG (GIC), I am pleased to present you a brief report on the company's activities for the first quarter of 2023

The Group's total revenue for the period under review was RO 489,603. The net profit after taxation amounted to RO 23,042 and the net asset per share stood at 124 Baiza

During the first quarter of 2023, regional construction markets continued to the slow pace. Both Oman and UAE markets are in oversupply and less demand situation for construction chemicals due to sharp reduction in construction projects which is mainly attributable to limited government spending on construction and infrastructure projects.

The down trend pace of construction sector in regional markets along with continued slow down for Covid-19 effects during the last two years, significant increases in raw materials & shipping costs and disruptions in the global supply chain have all put pressures on margins and on timely collections in our local markets. The outlook for the remaining of year 2023 is very conservative due to unlikely immediate recovery in the construction sector as it is mainly linked to the improvement of regional circumstances, availability of raw materials, and improvement in the local investment climate in the real estate and construction sectors.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty's Government for its generous support and for paving the way for growth and prosperity.

Best Regards,

Chairman

CONSOLIDATED UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2023

	Group 2023	Group 2022
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	109,923	152,608
Right-of-use assets	12,266	10,734
Intangible asset	65,229	73,140
Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income		
Deferred tax asset	283,419	661,161
Total non-current assets	544,853	970,491
Current assets		
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss -Inventories	272,500	298,791
Trade and other receivables	1,066,162	915,374
Term deposits	650,000	-
Income tax receivable	4,195	1,767
Cash and bank balances	436,533	917,745
Total current assets	2,429,390	2,133,677
Total assets	2,974,243	3,104,168
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserves		
Share capital	2,100,000	2,100,000
Legal reserve	599,721	598,849
Fair value reserve	(195,539)	(123,747)
Revaluation reserve	50,112	50,112
Retained earnings	42,550	14,333
Total capital and reserves	2,596,844	2,639,547
Non-current liabilities		
Lease liabilities	11,996	9,705
Employees' benefit liabilities	88,147	76,297
Total non-current liabilities	100,143	86,002
Current liabilities		
Lease liabilities	1,636	1,636
Trade and other payables	274,055	376,983
Income tax payable	1,566	-
Total current liabilities	277,257	378,619
Total liabilities	377,399	464,621
Total equity and liabilities	2,974,243	3,104,168
Net assets per share (OMR)	0.124	0.126

CONSOLIDATED UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Group 2023	Group 2022
Revenue from contracts with customers		
Cost of sales	(337,089)	(434,130)
Gross profit	152,514	97,473
Other income	12,387	11,931
	164,901	109,405
Expenses		
General and administrative expenses	(100,843)	(83,817)
Selling and distribution expenses	(42,821)	(32,501)
Profit from operations	21,237	(6,914)
Finance income	6,233	4,185
Finance cost	(181)	(285)
Profit before tax for the period	27,289	(3,014)
Taxation	(4,247)	-
Net profit after tax for the period	23,042	(3,014)
Earnings per share	0.001	(0.000)

Oman Cricket official to attend ICC programme

Oman Cricket official, Richa Sharma, is one of the 25 women leaders, who have been picked by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for the 2023 Future Leaders Programme.

Richa, who is the sponsorship and marketing manager at Oman Cricket (OC), is one of the only two women from the GCC region to be part of the future female leaders in cricket, announced by the world cricket governing body, based in Dubai, the UAE.

The other woman selected is Kuwait national women's team captain Amna Tariq, who will have former South African captain Mignon du Preez as mentor.

Richa's mentor will be South African Kass Naidoo, International cricket commentator and founder of GSport4girls in South Africa.

"I'm glad to share that I have been selected in the third batch of the 100% Cricket Future Leaders Programme," said Richa after the announcement. "I am confident that it will be a valuable and enriching experience for me, and certainly it will be an enormous opportunity for me to grow and enjoy this journey under Kass Naidoo."

She added, "I would like to thank the entire team of Oman



Richa Sharma

Cricket, International Cricket Council and 100% Cricket Future Leaders Programme for encouraging equal participation in sports for women and girls starting from grassroots level."

Kass Naidoo welcomed Richa on board the ICC programme and said, "I am looking forward to working with Richa."

This is the second time that Oman Cricket will be represented in the ICC Future Leaders Programme.

Vaishali Jesrani, Oman women's team captain and advisor to Oman Cricket board, was selected for the inaugural programme that featured 40

women from across the world in 2021.

Vaishali was mentored by Anthony Everard, then Cricket Australia's executive general manager of fan engagement.

The 2023 programme is the third edition of the ICC 100% Cricket Future Leaders Programme, which begins on May 18. It comprises a record-breaking intake of 25 future women leaders in cricket.

According to an ICC media release, the mentees, who have increased from 20 in 2022, will be paired with senior leaders from across global cricket to work on a one-on-one basis over a six-month period and will receive training and support in their areas of expertise in dealing with real-time and real-world issues and projects.

The programme will also include two full online group workshops and a debrief session with programme guide, Belinda Clark AO as well as smaller mentee peer working group sessions.

The Future Leaders Programme is a mentorship programme for future women leaders in the sport and forms part of the ICC's long-term commitment to accelerate the growth of women's cricket and

women in the game.

It falls under the 100% Cricket campaign, the objective of which is to promote gender equity, as well as to empower women and young girls through cricket.

The programme's aim is to address the low percentage of women in leadership positions in global cricket and to promote and support emerging female talent in the cricket landscape from coaching, officiating, administration, and broadcast, to marketing, digital and technology, journalism, and events.

ICC Chief Executive, Geoff Allardice said: "We have had an overwhelming response to the first two editions of the Future Leaders Programme and are delighted by the continued growth in interest for year three.

"We look forward to another group of talented female leaders in our sport emerging with more tools and knowledge to apply to their respective areas, and hopefully resulting in them spearheading the change we want to see in cricket.

"The programme has been well-supported by our member associations, and we are grateful to our mentors who have volunteered their time and knowledge for this important assignment."



BNI Oman convenes meeting on visitor info

Business Network International (BNI) Oman has hosted a highly successful visitor info meeting at Hotel Grand Millennium Muscat.

"The energy and enthusiasm of the participants were remarkable, from which it became evident that 1st chapter of BNI Oman is flourishing," a release stated.

BNI Oman is experiencing remarkable response from the business community in Muscat. Over 50 diversified businesses attended the early morning meeting, which evidently displays the amount of attention and importance that BNI enjoys.

BNI - the world's largest and most successful business referral networking organisation - started its operations to provide opportunity to like-minded business professionals to become members and support each other for growth.

BNI organises weekly business meetings for its members to connect to customers, partners and suppliers. BNI members are

supported by national, regional and global teams, which provide them world-class business mentoring, structure and technology.

Recently, Oman has been officially recognised as the 77th country of BNI globally.

Graham Wehmiller, global chairman and CEO of BNI, emphasised that the Oman-based enterprises now have the opportunity to engage BNI services to increase their businesses and grow their customer base using the modernised business networking and globally proven system of the network.

"BNI is a great initiative towards Oman Vision 2040 and we proudly started working on it," said Saleem Althaf, National Director BNI Oman. "BNI creates opportunities socially and economically to businesses, families and communities. It is expected to bring smile to over 50,000 people in Oman by the end of 2040."

The UAE and Qatar have over 1000 business houses drawing

benefits with the support of BNI since many years.

BNI recently started its operation in Bahrain. 'It offers a great opportunity to Oman-based business houses to connect to other business houses in the GCC efficiently through BNI', the organisation stated.

On November 16, 2022, Oman participated in the world's largest business networking conclave in Singapore along with other 76 countries. The conclave gave the projection internationally that BNI members can start business with Oman based businesses.

BNI stated that a few of its core members from Oman are excited to participate in its global conclave at Madrid, Spain in November this year and showcase their businesses.

BNI's greatest asset is its vast network of over 300,000 fellow entrepreneurs and business professionals. Each member has to enrol to a team also called as chapters.



Mercedes-Benz announces exclusive summer offers

Mercedes-Benz Oman announces exclusive, limited-time service packages for its extensive passenger car range.

The offers, which began on May 14 will run until June 30. It comes with a five-year/105,000km service package and ensures vehicle value retention thanks to Mercedes-Benz Genuine Parts.

The service package offer is

available for the CLA, C-Class, GLE, and Mercedes-AMG GLE Coupé range respectively - covering the cost of parts, labour and operational fluids needed for the scheduled maintenance operations. This way, customers can count on transparent maintenance costs and have peace of mind knowing they will not be affected by any future increase of the service package's prices.

Scott Shears, General Manager - Passenger Cars at Mercedes-Benz Oman, said, "We have our customers covered when it comes to regular inspections and maintenance.

Thanks to our qualified technical specialists at our authorised service centres, customers are guaranteed best-in-class service - ensuring the value retention of their vehicles."

Fever in children: What you must know

Fever is probably the main reason for children to visit hospitals

A fever is usually caused by infections from viruses (such as a cold or the flu) or bacteria (such as strep throat). The fever itself is not the disease, only a sign that the body's defences are trying to fight an infection.

Let's discuss common questions parents have regarding child's fever.

What is fever?

A rectal temperature of over 38°C (100.4°F), axillary temperature of over 37.2°C (99°F) is considered as fever. A fever can't always be detected by feeling your child's forehead. It's usually necessary to record their temperature as well.

What should I do when child develops fever?

Do the following to make the child comfortable:

- 1) Do not overdress the child. Have him wear loose clothes, as per season.
- 2) Keep the child well hydrated. Children may lose more fluids during fever.



Dr Makarand Jewrikar
Specialist Paediatrician
Badr Al Samaa Hospital, Nizwa

- 3) Medications (acetaminophen, ibuprofen) can be used in doses recommended by a doctor. Tepid sponging with water at 28-30°C can be done to reduce the temperature after medication is administered.
- 4) It is preferred to not send a child to school during febrile illness.

What is the role of antibiotics?

Fever in children is most com-

monly caused by viral infections. They are not effective against viruses. In a febrile illness, your pediatrician will decide whether the child needs antibiotics, depending on if he/she is suspecting a bacterial infection.

When should I be worried for fever?

If the age is less than three months. Babies at this age are too young to describe how they feel, and so a fever is an important signal that something is wrong.

Most febrile illnesses are not serious. However, you should visit the pediatrician immediately if your child is younger than three months old or has any of the following: Extreme lethargy, drowsiness, excessive cry or irritability.

Not to worry if-

The age is more than two years and is playful and active during interfebrile period.

What to do when fever is not responding to paracetamol?

Paracetamol is the safest drug

for fever to be used in children. In children who are unable to take orally, you can give paracetamol suppository through rectal route. Avoid overdosing if the fever does not normalise.

You can repeat the next dose after 4-6 hours if required. Other medicines (ibuprofen), are also available, and should be used only in consultation with your pediatrician.

What to avoid in fever?

Do not overclothe the child. Keep him/her in a cool airy environment. Do not sponge the child with cold water or ice. Always use tepid water (28-30°C), if needed.

Take home message

Look of the child during fever and in between fever is the most important feature.

If child is active and playful in between fever spikes - self limiting illness, observe at home with common antipyretic medications.

If child looks really sick, he/she needs to be evaluated in hospital.

ISM holds junior prefects' investiture ceremony for 2023-24

The most solemn event - Junior Prefects Investiture Ceremony - of Indian School Muscat was celebrated on May 8, with full zeal, zest and enthusiasm.

The Investiture Ceremony signifies the confidence and the hope that the school believes in the newly appointed school cabinet. The momentous occasion was dignified by the gracious presence of the honourable chief guest Colonel Jörn Pung, senior defence attaché at the US Embassy in Oman.

The ceremony began with the majestic marching of the newly elected Junior Prefects of the Middle Section in harmony with the mighty drum beats that replicated the aura of the ceremony.

The Junior Prefects of Class VIII, vice captains, head boy and head girl designate then marched to the dais.



The programme commenced with the invocation song followed by the welcome speech of the head girl designate, Namia Najeeb.

The chief guest was welcomed with a potted plant in accordance with the school's belief

of building a green environment. School principal Dr Rajeev Kumar Chauhan administered the Oath of Office.

The chief guest Colonel Jörn Pung invested the head boy and the head girl, the two pillars of the student council in the Middle

Section.

The school head boy Harsh H S of Class VIII, head girl Namia Najeeb of Class VIII along with the captains and vice captains of all the four houses were conferred with badges, and flags and other junior prefects were also

invested with their badges.

The chief guest, an accomplished team leader, actuated the Student Council members to be the role models and render their responsibilities sincerely as the nation builders of tomorrow.

He advised the office bearers

to work with a spirit of unity in the interest of students at large.

He congratulated them and rightly quoted the notion 'To Try, To Fail, To Succeed' and remarked that failure is a part of life and urged them to think wide to become good leaders.

Principal Chauhan invested the newly appointed House Masters and Mistresses for the academic year 2023-24. Head boy Harsh H S took the pledge on behalf of the vice-captains and the junior prefects.

The council members promised to carry in their hearts, the values that they have imbibed over the years. They also swore to do their duties to the best of their abilities.

The proceedings of the function were embellished with the spell binding rendition of the song 'If You Believe', spreading the belief that each one of us can reach for the stars with determination and perseverance.

The ceremonial occasion came to a glorious end with the school anthem, preceded by the expression of gratitude proposed by the head boy.

ahlibank awarded for being 'Best Private Bank in Oman'

As part of its journey towards excellence and innovation in the banking sector, ahlibank, one of the fastest growing banks in the Sultanate of Oman, has been conferred the Best Private Bank in Oman award at the MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2023.

The award attests to ahlibank's status as a leading player in the sultanate, worthy of recognition for its continuous efforts to be a thriving centre for banking.

The prestigious award was received by Najla al Lawati, AGM - head of Private Banking & Wealth Management at ahlibank, at a ceremony held in Dubai on May 10.

Organised by MEED in partnership with Retail Banker International and Private Banker International, the awards were given in recognition of the Middle East and North Africa region's fast growing markets in the banking and financial service sectors, and for the notable changes in the vast financial landscape.

They put the spotlight on the leading institutions in the banking industry, and ahlibank was recognised for its outstanding contributions in the private bank-



ing sector.

"At ahlibank, we continuously strive to achieve greater heights in the fast-growing and competitive market," Najla al Lawati said. "The banking industry as a whole has had massive growth in

the last few years. Moreover, with perseverance and agility, we have been able to evolve to cater to this change, displaying a consistent positive trajectory.

"We extend our gratitude to MEED and its partners, Retail

Banker International and the Private Banker International, for recognising our efforts and awarding us the Best Private Bank in Oman award. We are humbled and honoured to have received this award, which is a

testament to our innate zeal that inspires us to go the extra mile. Needless to say, the ahlibank team is at the centre of this growth and success."

"Moving forward, we will continue our relentless pursuit to provide innovative and digital products and services that meets our customers' needs, and we will remain steadfast in delivering a superior, holistic, and seamless banking experience.

"As a bank that places customer-centricity at its core, ahlibank will go beyond the norm and will deliver a superior banking experience to its customers, align with the Vision 2040, and stand apart in delivering banking for an ever changing world," she added.

ahlibank offers a wide portfolio of innovative products and services to its customers that are smooth and efficient. The bank's keen emphasis on customer-centricity has placed it among the most growing banks in the country.

The Best Private Bank in Oman award is a testament to its unwavering efforts and leading contributions to the market. ahlibank will continue its path towards strong and sustainable growth.

Let's Read names winners of kids' writing challenge

The Let's Read Team is delighted to announce the winners of its 17th Children's Writing Competition. This year, the participants were requested to write an original story set in Oman or to rewrite a traditional Omani tale in their own words.

Each story was to be accompanied by a colourful illustration depicting the Omani landscape or characters from the story.

Participants could write their story in either English or Arabic. Jane Jaffer, chairperson of the Let's Read Programme, said, "We were delighted that children, aged eight to eighteen, from fifteen schools across the country, participated in the writing competition.

"We would like to thank our sponsors: Renaissance Services, the London Speaker Bureau, and KPMG, for their support and sponsorship of this year's competition."

Stephen R Thomas, CEO, Renaissance Services said, "Renaissance was very happy to be part of this initiative, which gave children skills that cannot be taken away and will

only grow over time while expanding their horizons."

Tom Kenyon-Slaney, chairman of the London Speaker Bureau, added, "The process of participating in a writing competition is one of the most comprehensive and helpful super-curricular activities for a prospective school or university applicant."

Maythaa al Mandhary, CEO of the Let's Read Team and a judge of the Arabic entries, said 'We received more than one hundred and fifty entries and some very exciting stories from the students this year.'

The award-giving ceremony will take place at the Let's Read Charity Bookshop on 3rd floor of Oman Avenues Mall on Saturday at 4pm.

Thirteen judges spent many hours reading and assessing the entries. Entries to the competition were divided for assessment into three different age groups.

Entries were read by at least three judges and graded according to specific criteria: Descriptive setting, vivid characters, an exciting story, and colourful illustrations.

Burjeel Hospital Oman performs life-saving surgery on man

Burjeel Hospital Oman successfully conducted a life-saving surgery on Kishorenathan, a 27-year-old merchant navy officer, the hospital announced.

Kishorenathan had developed an infection from his wisdom teeth, which had progressed into severe swelling with pus and sepsis, involving the potential areas of the face and neck.

With his expertise, dedication, and passion for patient care, Dr Khadar Shaik performed the surgery with precision, carefully removing the infected tissue and thoroughly cleaning the affected areas.

"Thanks to his skillful surgery, I am now on the road to recovery and feeling much better. I am grateful to the Burjeel Hospital team for their exceptional care and support throughout my treatment," said Kishorenathan.

Dr Shaik is a highly experienced surgeon who specialises in advanced treatments such as dental implants, corrective jaw surgery, oral pathology, and a wide spectrum of oral surgeries. With years of experience and expertise in the field, Dr Shaik has

gained a reputation for delivering exceptional results to his patients.

"I am delighted to have been able to help Mr Kishorenathan," said Dr Shaik. "My priority is always to provide the best possible care to my patients, and I am pleased that I was able to achieve a positive outcome for him. This case highlights the importance of regular dental check-ups and the potential risks of ignoring dental pain."

'Burjeel Hospital Oman is committed to providing personalised and compassionate care to its patients, and its team of doctors plays a crucial role in achieving this mission. With an unwavering commitment to excellence, Burjeel Hospital Oman has assembled a team of highly qualified and experienced doctors, each with a unique set of skills and expertise,' the hospital stated in a press release.

The hospital's team of doctors includes specialists in areas such as cardiology, gastroenterology, orthopedics, neurology, and more. They are supported by a team of skilled nurses and allied

healthcare professionals who work together to provide comprehensive care to patients.

"Our exceptional team of doctors is one of our key strengths. They bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the table, and their commitment to providing patient-centered care is unmatched," said Nelson Prabhakaran, director Operations of Burjeel Hospital Oman.

"At Burjeel Hospital Oman, we are dedicated to providing our patients with the highest quality of care possible, and our team of doctors is instrumental in achieving this goal," Prabhakaran added.

Burjeel Hospital Oman is a leader in the field of healthcare in the Sultanate and the wider region. The hospital's commitment to providing exceptional care and treatment has earned it a reputation as one of the best healthcare providers in the region.

Patients who come to the hospital can be assured that they will receive the highest standard of care from a team of experts who are dedicated to delivering exceptional results.

BankDhofar-supported summit focuses on resilience in fragile global economy

As one of the leading financial institutions in the sultanate, BankDhofar was the 'Banking Partner' of OER Business Summit 2023.

The high-profile summit was recently held under the auspices of Salim Mustahail al Mashani.

The summit brought together business leaders and experts from various business sectors to share knowledge and insights. This year's edition of the summit focused on ways of augmenting revenues from alternative sources and by way of diversification in areas of strength to achieve the economic growth objective.

The discussion panel titled 'Business resilience in a fragile global economy' shed light on business areas related to building business resilience, attracting foreign direct investment, technology usage and digitalisation, growth enablers, sustainability and governance, among other areas of concern.

Vikesh Mirani, chief financial officer at BankDhofar participated in the panel discussion



and shared his thoughts and experience in this area.

"On a global scale, the banking sector is one of the important business sectors that help to fund economic operations, create employment opportunities, and maintain financial stability," Mirani said.

"BankDhofar has been playing a crucial role and has contributed effectively in driving the growth of the national economy, as we have set our strategy to be in line with Oman Vision 2040. The OER Business Summit 2023 was a good plat-

form to share thoughts and insights with practitioners about this important topic."

BankDhofar has set a clear banking strategy that is in line with Oman Vision 2040, and has effectively contributed to driving the growth of the national economy.

Since its inception in 1990, BankDhofar has established itself as one of the leading financial institutions in the Sultanate, with a strong presence in Corporate Banking, Retail Banking, Treasury and Project Finance.

The bank has been catering

to customers' needs and requirements, and setting the standard for the best customer experience within the banking industry in the Sultanate through innovative products and creative solutions.

Following best international banking practices, the provision of outstanding customer experience, in addition to its commitment to community development and contribution to the growth of the national economy, has placed BankDhofar at the top of the list of best banks in the region.

Indian School Sur's investiture ceremony held with great zeal

Indian School Sur conducted the investiture ceremony of the elected school council for the academic year on May 10, with great zeal and enthusiasm.

The ceremony was a celebration of leadership and a commitment to cultivating and nurturing the next generation of responsible and visionary leaders. The ceremony commenced with an invocation seeking the blessings of the divine, as presented by the school choir team.

Insha Kamran of Class X delivered the welcome address, followed by the presentation of the school flag by the school principal Dr S Srinivasan, to head boy Mohammed Zaki and head girl Keerthana C S.

Subsequently, the house masters presented the house flags to



the boy captains, and the house mistresses gave the placards to the girl captains of all four houses.

School management committee (SMC) president Jami Srinivas Rao conferred the sashes and badges upon the school council members.

In his address, Rao said that by working together, the stakeholders, along with the school's student council, have an opportunity to positively impact the school community and leave a lasting legacy that future generations of students can be proud of.

He also emphasised that the school council is not just a platform for personal achievement or recognition but a genuine opportunity to make a difference in the lives of fellow students.

SMC convener T P Saeed, members Shabeeb Mohammed and Nishreen also attended the ceremony, a release stated.

The oath-taking ceremony of the prefectural council was administered and led by the principal, Dr S Srinivasan.

After the oath-taking, the school choir team delivered a captivating rendition of the song *I Have a Dream* by Abba.

Head boy Mohammed Zaki delivered an induction speech, followed by an acceptance speech by head girl Keerthana C S. The prefectural heads pledged to lead the school, setting an example and bringing out the best in others.

Karis Stafrina of Class X proposed the vote of thanks for the programme.

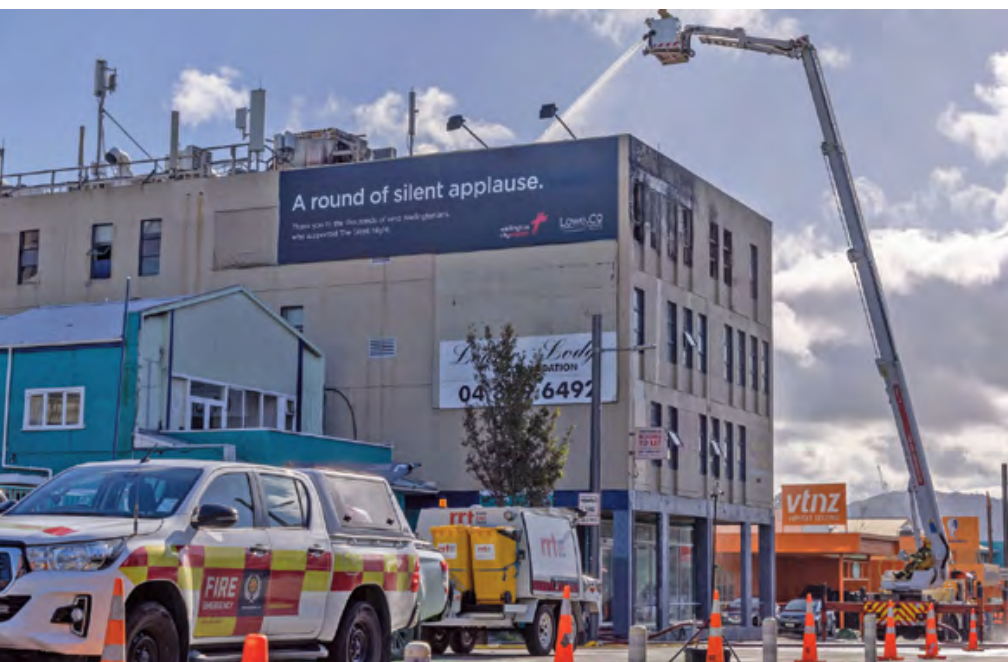
IN BRIEF

WHO warns against using artificial sweeteners
Geneva, Switzerland - Artificial sweeteners, used to replace sugar in a vast range of products, do not help in losing weight and can have serious health effects, according to the World Health Organization. The United Nations' health agency released new guidelines on Monday advising against using so-called non-sugar sweeteners, or NSS. A systematic review of available evidence 'suggests that use of NSS does not confer any long-term benefit in reducing body fat in adults or children', WHO said in a statement. In addition, results from the review 'suggest that there may be potential undesirable effects from long-term use of NSS, such as an increased risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and mortality in adults'.
At least three killed in New Mexico shooting
Los Angeles, US - An 18-year-old gunman killed three people and injured several others including two police officers during a shooting in a New Mexico city on Monday, law enforcement said. Officers responding to multiple emergency calls found 'a chaotic scene where a male subject was actively firing upon individuals', local police deputy chief Baric Crum told a press conference. Four officers confronted the subject and 'were able to stop his actions', Crum said. "The suspect is deceased, but prior to that, we know that three civilians were killed by this person's actions," he said. The shooting took place in Farmington, a town located some 200 miles (320km) from state capital Santa Fe.
Death toll in Senegal clashes rises to three
Dakar, Senegal - Three people died during clashes on Monday between Senegalese police and supporters of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, the authorities said, raising the toll by two. In a statement early on Tuesday, the interior ministry said it had been 'informed of the discovery of the bodies of two young people'. One of them apparently died of knife wounds in a suburb of the capital Dakar, while the second was found in the southern city of Ziguinchor, it said, without giving further details. AFP

New Zealand hostel fire kills at least 6

Police said the final toll could be confirmed only after a ‘methodical’ examination

Wellington, New Zealand - A fire ripped through a four-storey hostel in New Zealand's capital in the early hours of Tuesday, killing at least six people as others fled for their lives, with some plucked from the roof. Towering flames and thick smoke could be seen pouring from the top-floor windows of the Loafers Lodge hostel in central Wellington during the night, as 80 firefighters and 20 trucks battled the blaze. Firefighters found six bodies inside the charred building, but a roof collapse on the top floor prevented them from searching all of the 92-room hostel, emergency services said. Police said the final toll could not be confirmed until they had entered the building for a ‘methodical’ examination once it was made safe, probably on Wednesday. Six people were taken to hospital, one in serious condition, the city's ambulance service said. An additional 15 people were treated at the scene. More than 50 people were rescued. Firefighters used a ladder truck to save people trapped on



Emergency services dampen down hot spots at the site of the fatal fire at the Loafers Lodge hostel building in the Wellington suburb of Newtown that has killed up to 6 people in Wellington on Tuesday (AFP)

the roof, said Fire and Emergency deputy national commander Brendan Nally. "They plucked quite a few people off the top of the roof from an area directly above the fire," Nally told local media. "There was no other way. Those people were going to perish, except for the intervention of our team. Multiple people are walking around because of it." There were no sprinklers in the hostel, Nally said. The fire was being treated as 'suspicious', Fire and Emergency New Zealand region manager Bruce Stubbs told reporters. But police stressed it would remain 'unexplained' until their investigators could examine the scene.

‘I had to jump’

One of the hostel residents, Tala Sili, said smoke had rushed in under his door before he decided to jump to a roof two floors below. "I was on the top floor and I

couldn't go through the hallway because there was just too much smoke, so I jumped out the window," he told Radio New Zealand. "It was just scary, it was really scary, but I knew I had to jump out the window or just burn inside the building." Hemi Lewis, 56, still smelled of smoke as he recounted his escape from the third floor of the hostel, which had been his home for four months. "I opened my door and there was just smoke everywhere. There were flames coming from the roof. I couldn't breathe. So I hit the floor and crawled the three flights down to the bottom," he told reporters at an evacuation centre. "I have no idea what to do now, I've lost everything. It's all gone. I'm in the same clothes." Some residents said the building's smoke alarm went off so often that they doubted it was an emergency when it rang during the night. Others said they heard nothing. About 90 people were thought to have been in the building when the blaze began, fire services said.

‘Incredible effort’
Prime Minister Chris Hipkins described the fire as 'an absolute tragedy'. Hipkins praised the 'incredible effort' of firefighters to extinguish the blaze and evacuate people. "I acknowledge the victims and their families - an absolutely tragic set of circumstances," he said, promising a 'thorough review' of the disaster. "There will be an opportunity to test whether this building was fully compliant with all of the rules that it needed to be compliant with but obviously the focus at the moment is supporting our firefighters," Hipkins said. The New Zealand leader said many shift workers were staying in the hostel, making it difficult to know how many people were in the building. Wellington Mayor Tory Whanau said the hostel was home to a mix of long and short-term residents, including some on lower incomes or staying in the country on a 'transitional' basis. AFP

UN migration agency gets first woman chief

Geneva, Switzerland - White House veteran Amy Pope hailed an 'extraordinary day' after becoming the first woman elected to head the UN migration agency, promising a more 'comprehensive' approach to helping migrants. Pope, currently a deputy director at the International Organization for Migration, was elected by acclamation after her boss, former Portuguese government minister Antonio Vitorino, bowed to her lead and withdrew from the contest. The IOM announced in a statement that she would become the organisation's first woman chief on October 1, after its 175 member states elected her to a five-year term. "It's really an extraordinary day," Pope told reporters after the win, insisting 'this is an incredible moment in time in terms of the work our organisation can do'. Pope, 49, pointed to the more than 100mn people who have already been displaced by conflicts and disasters worldwide, in addition to the many migrants simply searching for a better life.



Amy Pope (AFP)

Climate change impact
"With the impacts of conflicts and poverty and climate change, there will be even more work that we can do." She is calling for 'a much more comprehensive' approach to migration, including using data to identify vulnerabilities linked to for instance climate change early on, before they force people from their homes. The IOM was founded in 1951 to handle the displacements in Europe following World War II but the agency only joined the UN fold seven years ago. The race for the top job at the organisation came as global numbers of migrants soar, with

some 281mn migrants throughout the world, according to a 2020 estimate. After a first round of voting, Pope was just 12 votes shy of the two-thirds majority needed to declare victory. Instead of allowing the vote to go to a second round, Vitorino decided to bow out of the race.
‘Shock’ challenge
The unusually acrimonious leadership campaign had pitted the United States, eager to regain its traditional hold on the IOM's top job, against its European allies, observers said. Within the UN system, agency chiefs who wish to take on a second term are typically shooed in without challenge, and a European diplomat told AFP Pope's candidacy 'was a bit of a shock'. Pope however told reporters she 'never saw this as a battle between the United States and Europe', stressing she looked forward to 'working comprehensively with all of our partners'. She has called for a broader focus on the impacts of climate change on migration. AFP

German court sentences five over spectacular museum heist

Dresden, Germany - A German court on Tuesday sentenced five members of a criminal gang to up to six years in prison for snatching priceless 18th-century jewels from a Dresden museum in what local media have dubbed the biggest art heist in modern history. The thieves made away with a haul worth more than €113mn (US\$123mn) from the Green Vault museum in November 2019. Some, but not all, of the loot was recovered after four of the defendants made confessions in court. The thieves are members of the so-called 'Remmo clan', an extended family known for a web of ties to organised crime in Germany. The regional court in the eastern city handed down three sentences ranging from just under to just over six years for armed robbery, aggravated arson and grievous bodily harm. Two of the men, who were minors at the time of the crime, received juvenile sentences of five years, and four years and four months respectively. A sixth defendant was acquitted because he produced a credible alibi - an emergency surgery at a Berlin hospital.



One of the pieces stolen from the Royal Palace in Dresden (AFP)

The trial, which began in January 2022, shed some light on the spectacular case but left key questions unanswered. Although many of the historic pieces were recovered as part of a plea deal, some are feared lost forever in what prosecutors called an act of 'remarkable criminal drive and recklessness' by the thieves. The loot included a sword with a diamond-encrusted hilt and a shoulder piece which contained the famous 49-carat Dresden white diamond. Prosecutor Christian Weber said on the opening day of the trial that the defendants had stolen 'unique and irreplaceable treasures... of outstanding cultural and historical significance'. Two of the defendants, Wisam and Mohamed Remmo, were already serving time for the daring 2017 theft of a massive gold coin from a Berlin museum. In a statement read in court in January by their lawyer, they said the idea for the Dresden job was hatched after a younger acquaintance 'came back from a field trip to the Green Vault... raving about the green diamonds on display there'. The court found that the defendants, aged between 24 and 29, slipped into the museum through previously damaged bars on a window, broke a display case with an axe and grabbed 21 pieces encrusted with 4,300 jewels in less than five minutes. The thieves were able to escape in a getaway car that they later set ablaze in an underground car park. For months after the crime, authorities thought the haul was lost for good, with detectives scouring Europe's shadowy stolen goods markets for signs of the Saxon royal artefacts. That was until December 2022, when authorities said they had recovered a 'considerable portion' of the items. AFP

Greece’s Mitsotakis eyes new term in uncertain ballot

Athens, Greece - Greeks will vote on Sunday in the most unpredictable national polls in a decade with an inconclusive result likely to lead to the election needing to be re-run. Outgoing conservative Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis holds a clear lead of around 6 per cent over his nearest rival, leftist former premier Alexis Tsipras. But under the election's proportional representation rules, no party is expected to win by a margin large enough to secure an outright majority in the 300-seat parliament. A follow-up election by early July will likely be necessary, and will use a new system that would grant the winner bonus seats in parliament. Mitsotakis, campaigning on four years of tax cuts, tourism revival and steady growth, has warned denying his New

Democracy party a strong mandate would lead to 'paralysis' at a time of international uncertainty. "Currently there is no other credible proposal except a self-reliant New Democracy (government)," the 55-year-old told the *Kathimerini* daily last week. Tsipras and his Syriza party promise to restore faith in a country shaken by a scandal over wiretapping by the security services and Greece's worst-ever rail disaster that claimed 57 lives in February. In 2015 he led a high-stakes negotiation with the European Union that nearly crashed Greece out of the euro.

‘Democracy strikes back’
"Democracy strikes back to topple the rotten regime ruling over us," the 48-year-old leftist said



(L-R) Leader of socialist party PASOK Nikos Androulakis, leader of Syriza party Alexis Tsipras and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis attend a televised debate in Athens on May 10 (AFP)

on the campaign trail on Sunday. "(Mitsotakis) does not care about the many, only about the powerful." In 2012, back-to-back ballots were needed before a coalition government could be formed between New Democracy, the socialist Pasok party and a

now-defunct leftist party, Dimar. This time, the Greek socialist Pasok-Kinal party founded by political veteran Andreas Papandreou is seen as a possible coalition ally for both Mitsotakis and Tsipras. But the party's leader, former European parliament deputy

Nikos Androulakis, has refused to back either of his two rivals for prime minister. "We will fight against anyone who undermines the public interest," Androulakis, who was controversially a target of the wiretap scandal, said in his home island of Crete over the

weekend. Mitsotakis' New Democracy party has promised to further increase the monthly minimum wage to €1,000 (US\$1,090), reduce unemployment and heavily invest in Greece's underfunded public health system that was stretched by the pandemic. "I've always believed that two four-year terms are required for someone to change Greece," he said last month. Tsipras vows to combat inflation which he blames on domestic 'cartels', increase public spending on education and boost wages for civil servants and health workers. "Greece has Bulgarian wages and British prices," he said last week.

One in 10 undecided
One in ten Greeks are undecided on how to vote, and many

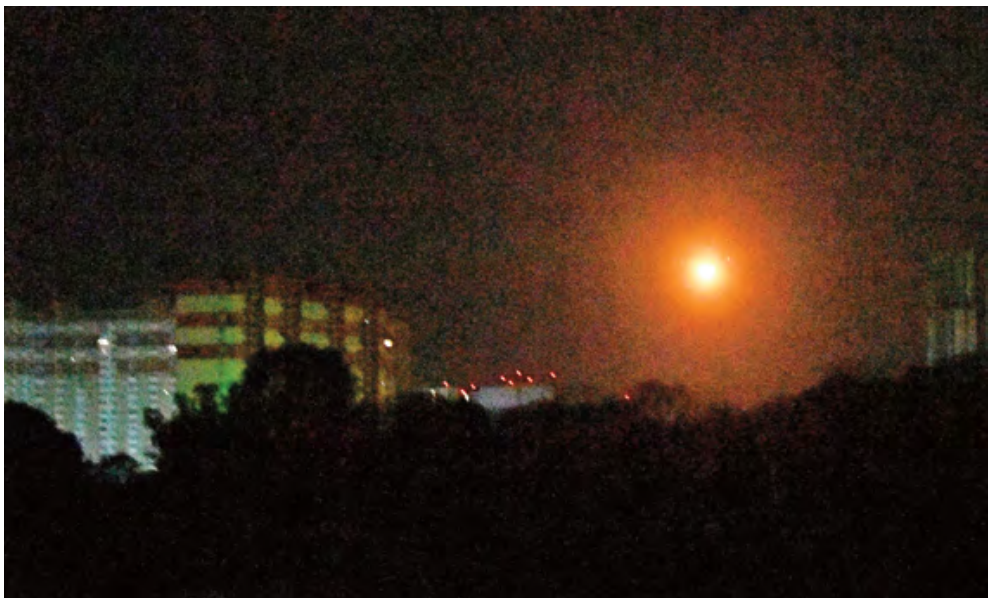
say they are disillusioned by politics. "For the first time in my life, I have not yet decided who to vote for. Maybe I will cast a blank ballot," said Andreas, a 30-year-old former Syriza supporter. "Who thinks of us? (Campaign) promises are not kept and our daily life gets worse by the year," said Nikos Dimitriadis, 62, complaining that their pension payment did not last a full month. Mitsotakis has never lost an election against Tsipras, beating him three times - at national, local and European level. He taunted his opponent last week, saying: "In the US, when we played (pickup) basketball, it was 'lose and you're out.'" Almost 10mn Greeks are eligible, and nearly 440,000 Greeks as young as 16 will vote for the first time. AFP

INVASION OF UKRAINE

Ukraine downs barrage of Russian drones and missiles

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine said on Tuesday it had downed an entire barrage of Russian drones and missiles overnight - including six hypersonic Kinzhal missiles - hours ahead of a visit from China's special envoy.

The wave of strikes came just over a week after Kyiv announced it had shot down a Kinzhal nuclear-capable hypersonic missile for the first time, using US-supplied Patriot systems.



An explosion is seen over Kyiv during a Russian missile strike early on Tuesday (AFP)

Ukraine's mounting success in taking out dozens of Russian drones and missiles illustrates its bolstered air defences, after a winter of Moscow's strikes on key infrastructure.

"Another unbelievable success for the Ukrainian air forces!" Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said in a Twitter post.

The defence ministry said Ukrainian air defence systems had knocked out a total of 18 missiles, including types the Kremlin had touted as 'ideal', as well as nine drones.

Three people were injured in Kyiv and some rocket fragments fell on the capital's zoo, but neither staff nor animals were hurt, Mayor Vitaliy Klitschko said.

Russia said all the targets assigned by its military had been hit.

China envoy

China's special envoy, Li Hui, was expected to arrive in Kyiv

for a two-day visit as part of a European tour to promote Beijing-led peace negotiations on the war in Ukraine.

Ending the war with a compromise at the expense of Ukraine will not work

UKRAINIAN OFFICIAL

A senior Ukrainian official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Ukrainian authorities planned to further discuss Kyiv's stance on the

conflict and China's peace mission. "The president already said at the Vatican that we don't need mediation for the sake of mediation," the official said, referring to Zelensky's recent talks with Pope Francis.

He said the same message would be relayed to Beijing's envoy.

"Ending the war with a compromise at the expense of Ukraine will not work."

Li will become the highest-ranking Chinese diplomat to visit the war-torn country since Moscow's invasion last year. His trip comes three weeks after Zelensky spoke by telephone to Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Beijing has said the aim of the tour is to 'communicate with all

parties on the political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis'.

Xi, who has aimed to position China as a neutral mediator and visited Moscow in March, has been criticised for refusing to condemn the Kremlin's attack on its neighbour.

Li's visit follows hot on the heels of Zelensky's whirlwind tour of major European capitals to urge Ukraine's allies to increase military support.

'Like rats in a mousetrap'

His tour to shore up military assistance to help make his troops more battle-ready began in Italy, with weekend visits to France and Germany, followed by a stop in the UK.

But Zelensky has yet to succeed in his goal of enlisting Western fighter jets to seize command of the skies, although UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced on Monday preparations to open a flight school to train Ukrainian pilots.

France, too, has offered to train Ukrainian fighter pilots, although President Emmanuel Macron ruled out sending warplanes to Kyiv.

Nevertheless, Zelensky said late on Monday he was 'returning home with new defence packages'.

On the front line, fighting has picked up in the eastern Donetsk region, in particular for the battle-scarred city of Bakhmut.

In recent days, Ukraine has been posting its first gains around the city in weeks and the head of Russia's Wagner paramilitary group has blasted the performance of Moscow's regular troops around the key city.

The commander of Ukraine's ground forces, Oleksandr Syrskiy, said on Tuesday he had visited Bakhmut to hand out awards to troops fighting in the longest battle of the invasion.

"Wagner's men went into Bakhmut like rats into a mousetrap," he said.

"Using the principle of active defence, we are using counter-offensive actions in some areas near Bakhmut," he added.

AFP



South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol shaking hands with Ukraine's First Lady Olena Zelenska at the presidential office in Seoul on Tuesday (AFP)

Ukrainian first lady meets South Korean president in Seoul

Seoul, South Korea - Ukrainian first lady Olena Zelenska met South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol in Seoul on Tuesday as a special representative of her husband, President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Zelenska said she was seeking 'more radical' backing for Ukraine in its fight against Russia, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

South Korea, the world's ninth-largest arms exporter, has sent humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and has also sold tanks and howitzers to Poland.

However, it has a longstanding policy of not providing weapons to active conflict zones.

In her interview with Yonhap, Zelenska also responded favourably when asked if Ukraine planned to invite Yoon to Kyiv. She said Ukraine was 'always waiting for its friends'.

"Such a visit would be very supportive to Ukrainians because it is a way to share our confrontation with us, at least

for a day of our lives," Yonhap reported Zelenska as saying.

Yoon expressed the South Korean people's 'support and solidarity to Ukraine, and our deepest condolences to the families of the victims', his office said.

"Under no circumstance will the use of force and inhumane acts resulting in horrific harm to innocent lives, especially women and children, be tolerated," Yoon said. The president's office said last month Seoul's decision on whether to send military aid to Kyiv depended on Russia's actions.

A large attack against civilians could tip the balance, it said.

"When there is a criminal in the house, the owners clearly need not only humanitarian aid, food and medicine, but something more radical to drive the criminal out," Zelenska told Yonhap.

"We say to everyone - give us a resource and we will drive the criminal out of our home."

AFP

Has the counter-offensive against invasion actually begun?

Paris, France - Fighting is raging and Kyiv is relentlessly pressing its allies for more military hardware. But has Ukraine's long-promised counter offensive against the Russian invasion actually begun?

Analysts say Ukraine has stepped up its activity along the front line, seeking notably to pin Russia down and inflict maximum casualties around the flashpoint town of Bakhmut.

Meanwhile, President Volodymyr Zelensky has been on a whistlestop tour of European allies, winning pledges from Britain, France and Germany of increased military support while insisting Kyiv needs



A Ukrainian serviceman of a reconnaissance team flies a drone at a front line near the town of Bakhmut, Donetsk region on May 8 (AFP)

more.

Western capitals are eager to see the offensive start, in the

hope Ukraine can make gains, force Russia to the negotiating table on Kyiv's terms and open a

path to ending the conflict.

Ukraine is seeking to take back control of territory occupied by Russian forces in the wake of the February 2022 invasion and also areas, including Crimea and parts of the Donbas, seized by Russia in 2014.

The battle for Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine has turned into the longest standoff since the Russian invasion.

Ukraine is now saying it is advancing in the area, retaking Russian positions in Bakhmut's suburbs.

"I lean towards the interpretation that Ukraine is fixing Russian forces in Bakhmut to keep them committed to a par-

ticular front while Ukrainian forces probe different areas," said Ivan Klyszcz, a research fellow at the International Centre for Defence and Security in Estonia. "My preliminary conclusion is that these probing and shaping operations will be ongoing but remain at the tactical level, that is, until the leadership decides the best moment to launch a larger operation," he told AFP.

'Probing Russian defences'

Moscow's forces switched several weeks ago into a defensive posture, employing a large number of soldiers, sometimes three

lines deep, to hold positions.

Their set-up includes anti-tank ditches, barriers, pre-fabricated lines of defence like the small anti-tank concrete pyramids known as dragon's teeth, and trenches for the men.

The Ukrainian counter-offensive consequently risks being deadly and costly in terms of equipment for Kyiv.

But it appears Ukraine has started a period of tests to measure the effectiveness of this defence.

"Ukraine has conducted local counter-offensives in and around Bakhmut to roll back Russia's flanks and gauge defences in the region.

"Elsewhere, Ukrainian forces are likewise probing Russian defences and reaction behaviours," said Lucas Webber, co-founder and editor of the Militant Wire news site on global military activity. He said it was 'difficult' to say whether the full planned counter-offensive has begun.

"However, these actions suggest Ukraine is preparing for something much larger.

"These could be shaping operations to put Ukraine in a better position when the real action starts."

He said the full counter-offensive was likely to involve multiple fronts.

AFP

Palestinians mark 75 years since 'Catastrophe' in occupied West Bank

Ramallah, Palestinian Territories

- Thousands from across the occupied West Bank demonstrated on Monday, waving Palestinian flags to mark the 75th anniversary of the 'Nakba' or 'catastrophe' which they associate with Israel's creation.

According to the UN, more than 760,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes in 1948.

In Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority, protesters carried black banners that read 'Return' and also raised images of old keys, a symbol of the Palestinians' plight and demand for recognition of their right to return.

Commemoration of the Nakba this year comes during heightened tensions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has claimed more than 170 lives on both sides since the start of the year.

Thirty-five people, almost all of them Palestinian, were killed



Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas speaks during a high-level event to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Nakba at the United Nations headquarters in New York on Monday (AFP)

during five days of fighting between Israel and armed groups in the blockaded Gaza Strip last week.

Israel was established on May 14, 1948 following a United Nations vote in November 1947 that divided the British Mandate for Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state.

A day after Israel declared statehood, five Arab armies attacked the young nation. In the war that ensued, Israel defeated the Arab forces.

During the conflict, more than 600 communities were destroyed or depopulated by Jewish forces, according to the Israeli organisation Zochrot.

Palestinians have since demanded a right to return, which Israel has steadfastly denied, claiming it would be tantamount to a demographic surrender of the state's Jewish nature.

According to the United Nations, there are now 5.9mn Palestinian refugees living in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jor-

dan, Lebanon and Syria.

Israel celebrated its 75th Independence Day on April 26, according to the Jewish calendar.

'Respect international resolutions'

For the first time, the United Nations commemorated Nakba at its headquarters in New York on Monday, after a resolution was passed in November.

Palestinian Authority president Mahmud Abbas, whose 'State of Palestine' has UN observer status, spoke in Arabic at a special session of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

"We demand today officially, in accordance with international law and international resolutions, to make sure that Israel respects these resolutions or suspend Israel's membership of the UN," Abbas said, referring to hundreds of UN resolutions over the

years that Palestinians view as guaranteeing their rights.

During the hour-long speech he said that Nakba 'did not start in 1948 and it did not stop after

Israel continues its aggression against the Palestinian people... and rejects international resolutions

MAHMUD ABBAS

that date'.

"Israel the occupying power continues its occupation and its aggression against the Palestinian people and continues to deny this Nakba and rejects international resolutions regarding the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland."

Back in Ramallah, 64-year-old Khairy Hanan, dressed in a tradi-

tional Palestinian costume, was carrying an old suitcase and an old key, symbolising the displacement of 1948.

"We are here to tell the occupation (Israel) that it was like this that they have chased away our parents and grandparents, only with the clothes on their backs", said Hanan, resident of Tulkarm in the northern West Bank.

Within Israel, about two million people - more than 20 per cent of the population - are Palestinians and their descendants who remained there after the state was founded.

The community of Arab-Israelis, as Israel calls them, was also represented at the gathering in Ramallah.

"One of the greatest mistakes committed by the Zionist movement was that between 150,000 and 160,000 Palestinians remained (in Israel) after the Nakba," said Mohammed Baraka.

AFP

INDIA

Modi hails ‘fair, faster’ recruitment system

New Delhi - Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday laid down the steps taken by his government to boost employment in the country and said that every policy formulated in the last nine years has acted as a ‘door to generating employment’ for the youth.

The Prime Minister’s remarks came while distributing appointment letters to 71,000 new recruits in the National Rozgar Mela on Tuesday. Addressing on the occasion virtually, Modi said: “During the last nine years, there has been a great focus towards boosting employment opportunities in the country. Be it building modern infra or rural development, every plan and policy of the government acts as a door to generating employment for the youth.”

The Prime Minister highlighted that during his governance, the government has also given priority to making the government recruitment process ‘faster, more transparent and fair’.

“Today, the entire process from applying for recruitment to getting results has become online. Interviews for recruitment in Group C and D are also over. The advantage of these efforts is that the possibilities of cor-



PM Narendra Modi addresses after distributing appointment letters to newly inducted recruits in government departments and organisations during the Rozgar Mela via video conference, in New Delhi on Tuesday (ANI)

ruption and nepotism have ended,” Modi said.

Lauding the schemes and policies of the government, he said that it is creating new employment opportunities for the youth.

“Every scheme of the Government of India, every policy is creating new employment opportunities for the youth. In the last nine years, the Government of India has spent about Rs 34 lakh crore on capital expendi-

ture,” the prime minister said.

Modi congratulated the candidates and their families for getting the appointment letter.

He further said that the speed and scale at which India is working today is also unprecedented in the history of 75 years of independence.

He further shed light on the ‘new revolution’ the country has witnessed in the start-up culture. “The nature of jobs has also changed very fast in the

last nine years. In these changing circumstances, new sectors have emerged for the youth. The central government is continuously supporting these new sectors as well. In these nine years, the country has witnessed a new revolution in start-up culture. Nine years ago, there were around 100 startups in the country whereas the number stands at around 1 lakh, today,” he said.

“Both the Foreign Direct In-

vestments in the country as well as the record exports from the country are generating employment opportunities. This transforming picture has brought to the table, the new sectors of employment for the youth. The central government is consistently supporting these new sectors,” he added.

Referring to the pre-2014 period, Modi highlighted the change of pace in the spread of rural road networks.

“Prior to 2014, the country’s rural road network spanned less than 4 lakh kilometres, but it has since expanded to over 7.25 lakh kilometres. In terms of air travel infrastructure, the country only had 74 airports before 2014. Today, this number has surged to about 150,” he said.

“A few days back, I met Walmart’s CEO and he said that his company will do an export of Rs 80,000 crore in the next 3-4 years. It’s big news for youth who want to work in the logistics and supply chain sector. Cisco CEO also told me that they are also targeting to export Made-in-India products worth Rs 8,000 crores..Next week I will meet CEOs of big companies and they all are excited to invest in India,” the prime minister added.

ANI

Land-for-jobs scam: CBI raids multiple locations

Patna, Bihar - The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday conducted searches at nine locations in Bihar’s Patna and Arrah linked to Rashtriya Janata Dal leaders- MLA Kiran Devi and former MLA Arun Yadav in connection with the alleged land-for-jobs scam.

The CBI also conducted searches at the premises of Rajya Sabha MP Prem Chand Gupta at Noida, Delhi and Gurugram in the alleged scam. In its chargesheet filed earlier in connection with the scam the CBI had stated that irregular appointments of candidates were made in Central Railways, violating the laid down norms and procedures of Indian Railways for recruitment.

As a quid-pro-quo, the candidates directly or through their immediate relatives/family members, sold land to the family members of Lalu Prasad Yadav (then Union Railway Minister) at highly discounted rates up to one-fourth to one-fifth of the prevailing market rates, according to the CBI.

The agency further stated that investigation has revealed that Lalu Prasad Yadav during the period 2007-08, when he was the Minister of Railways, with the intent to acquire the land parcels situated in Vill-

Mahuabagh, Patna and Vill-Kunjwa, Patna which were located adjacent to the land parcels already owned by his family members; entered into a criminal conspiracy with his wife Rabri Devi, daughter Misha Bharati, officers of Central Railways namely Sowmya Raghvan the then general manager, Kamal Deep Mainrai, the then chief personnel officer, and residents of Vill-Mahjabagh, Patna and Vill-Bindaui, Bihta, Patna and Patna City namely Raj Kumar Singh, Mithlesh Kumar, Ajay Kumar, Sanjay Kumar, Dharmendra Kumar, Vikas Kumar, Abhishek Kumar, Ravindra Ray, Kiran Devi, Akhileshwar Singh, Ramashish Singh.

According to the CBI, all the candidates were subsequently regularised after their engagement as substitutes. In lieu of getting them appointed in the Railways, Lalu Prasad Yadav got lands transferred owned by candidates and their family members in the names of his wife Rabri Devi and Misha Bharti for sale consideration which was much lesser than the prevailing circle rates as well as the prevailing market rates.

The CBI had filed the chargesheet in this regard in October last year.

ANI

India slams UN SR’s comments on Kashmir ahead of G20 meet

Geneva, Switzerland - India’s mission to United Nations slammed Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues over the comment on G20 meet in Srinagar and called it ‘baseless and unwanted’.

Taking to Twitter, the Indian mission to the UN in Geneva said: “We @IndiaUNGeneva strongly reject the statement issued by SR on minority issues @fernanddev & the baseless & unwarranted allegations in it.

As G20 President, it’s India’s prerogative to host its meetings in any part of the country.”

India accused UN’s Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues

Fernand de Varennes of ‘acting irresponsibly’ and politicising the Jammu and Kashmir issue.

“We are aghast that @fernanddev has acted irresponsibly to politicise this issue, misused his position as SR to publicise on social media his presumptive and prejudiced conclusions in a gross violation of the Code of Conduct for SRs,” the mission added.

Earlier, Varennes tweeted that holding a G20 meeting in Jammu and Kashmir while massive human rights violations are ongoing is lending support to attempts by India to normalise the brutal and repressive denial of democratic



Security personnel inspect a vehicle as security got beefed up ahead of the G20 event, in Srinagar on Tuesday (ANI)

and other rights of Kashmiri Muslims and minorities.

“G20 should on the contrary uphold ‘International human rights obligations & the #UN Declaration of Human Rights should be upheld... and the situation in Jammu and Kashmir should be decried and condemned, not pushed under the rug and ignored with the holding of this meeting’,” Varennes added.

Srinagar will be hosting the G20 meeting of the working group on tourism from May 22 to 24.

Pakistan too had raised its objection regarding the G20 working group meeting during

the SCO Foreign Minister Meeting, which took place on May 4 and 5 in Goa.

When Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari raised the issue, the external affairs minister S Jaishankar said: “I don’t think there is a G20 issue to debate with anybody, certainly not with a country which is nothing to do with G20. Jammu and Kashmir was, is, and will always be a part of India.”

“The G20 meetings are held in all the Indian states and Union Territories, so it is completely natural that it is held there,” he added.

ANI

16 killed in Pakistan tribal clash over land dispute

Peshawar, Pakistan - Sixteen people were killed over a decades-long land dispute between two tribes in Pakistan’s coal-rich northwest, police said on Tuesday.

The Akhoral tribe opened fire on the Suni Khel tribe from an elevated position on Monday, police said, as the latter marked the boundaries of their territory in the mountainous area of Darra Adam Khel, less than 100km (60 miles) from the Afghan border.

“The tribes were equipped with powerful firearms, and within a matter of minutes, the violent clash had resulted in a significant number of casualties,” Farhan Khan, a senior police official, told AFP.

Khan said the clash followed several previous jirgas - tribal councils of elders responsible for settling disputes - that had failed to yield any resolution. “The clash left 12 individuals from the Suni Khel

tribe and four individuals from the Akhoral tribe dead, while an additional four people sustained injuries,” said local police spokesman Fazal Naeem.

Inter-family feuds are common in Pakistan, but in the mountainous northwestern region - where communities abide by traditional tribal honour codes - they can be particularly protracted and violent.

Darra Adam Khel is a part of the Kohat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, home to the largest coal reserves in the region, with disputes over deposits common between tribes. Despite safety concerns and a lack of regulatory oversight, mining is a vital source of employment and income for the local community.

The police said that since the shooting, the situation in the area had been brought under control with the involvement of a local jirga.

AFP

Cyclone Mocha death toll rises to 60 in Myanmar

Bu Ma, Myanmar - The death toll in cyclone-hit Myanmar rose to 60 on Tuesday, according to local leaders and junta-backed media, as villagers tried to piece together ruined homes and waited for aid and support.

Packing winds of up to 195km (120 miles) per hour, Mocha made landfall on Sunday, downing power pylons and smashing wooden fishing boats to splinters. In Rakhine state, at least 41 people died in the villages of Bu Ma and nearby Khaung Doka Kar, inhabited by the persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority, local leaders told AFP reporters at the scene.

Thirteen people were killed when a monastery collapsed in a village in Rathedaung township north of Rakhine’s capital Sittwe, and a woman died when a building collapsed in a neighbouring village, according to Myanmar state broadcaster MRTV.

“There will be more deaths, as more than a hundred people are missing,” said Karlo, the head of Bu Ma village near Sittwe.

Nearby, Aa Bul Hu Son, 66,



A girl walks past destroyed houses at Basara refugee camp in Sittwe on Tuesday, after cyclone Mocha made a landfall (AFP)

said prayers at the grave of his daughter, whose body was recovered on Tuesday morning.

“I wasn’t in good health before the cyclone, so we were delayed in moving to another place,” he told AFP. “While we were thinking about moving, the waves came immediately and took us.”

“I just found her body in the lake in the village and buried her right away. I can’t find any words to express my loss.”

Other residents walked the seashore searching for family members swept away by a storm surge that accompanied the cyclone, AFP correspondents said.

State media had reported five deaths on Monday, without offering details.

Mocha was the most powerful cyclone to hit the area in over a decade, churning up villages, uprooting trees and knocking out

communications across much of

Rakhine state.

China said it was ‘willing to provide emergency disaster relief assistance’, according to a statement on the Facebook page of its embassy in Myanmar.

Higher sea surface temperature

The United Nations refugee office said it was investigating reports that Rohingya living in displacement camps had been killed in the storm.

It was ‘working to start rapid needs assessments in hard-hit areas’ of Rakhine state, it added.

Widely viewed as interlopers in Myanmar, the Rohingya are denied citizenship and healthcare, and require permission to travel outside of their villages in western Rakhine state.

Many others live in camps after being displaced by decades of ethnic conflict in the state.

In neighbouring Bangladesh, officials told AFP that no one had died in the cyclone, which passed close to sprawling refugee camps that house almost one million Ro-

hingya who fled a Myanmar military crackdown in 2017.

“Although the impact of the cyclone could have been much worse, the refugee camps have been severely affected, leaving thousands desperately needing help,” the UN said as it made an urgent appeal for aid late on Monday.

Cyclones - the equivalent of hurricanes in the North Atlantic or typhoons in the Northwest Pacific - are a regular and deadly menace on the coast of the northern Indian Ocean where tens of millions of people live.

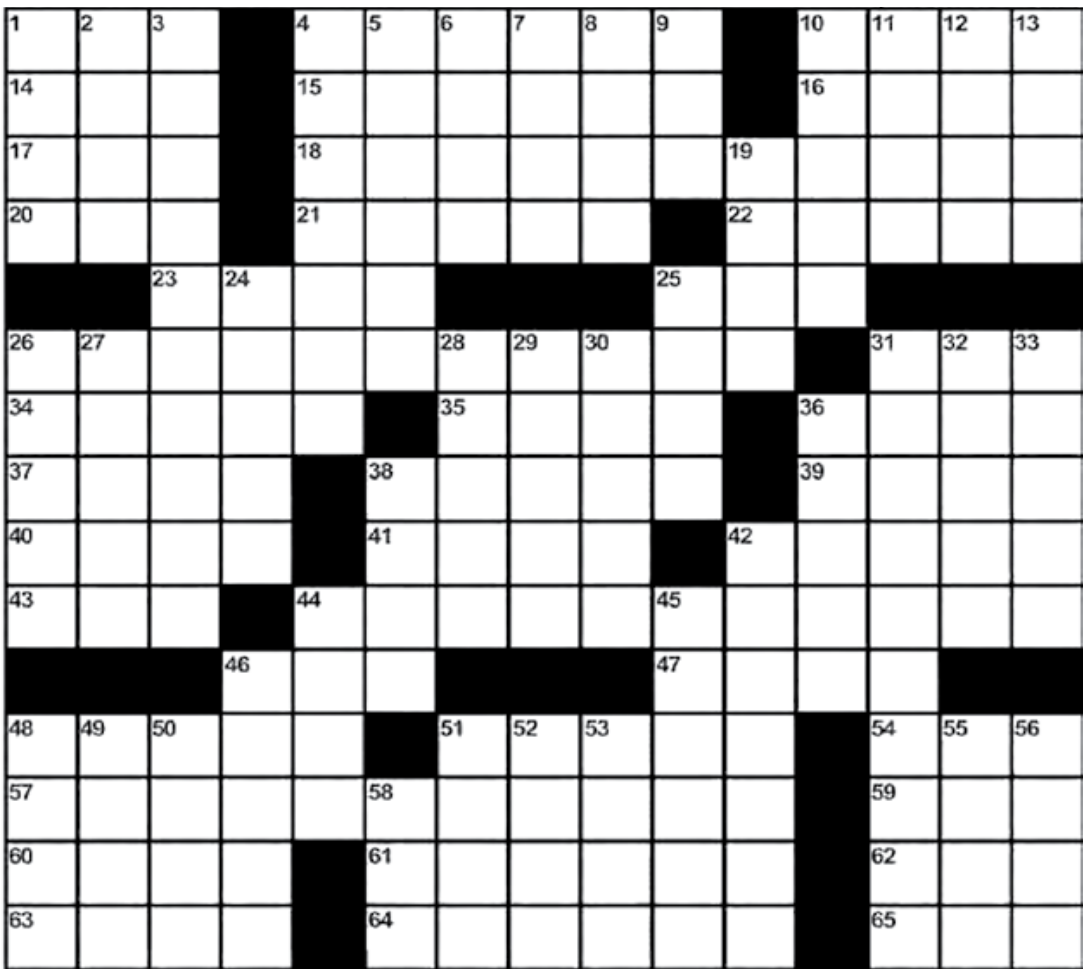
Non-profit ClimateAnalytics said rising temperatures may have contributed to Cyclone Mocha’s intensity.

“We can see sea surface temperatures in the Bay of Bengal in the last month have been significantly higher than they were even 20 years ago,” said the group’s Peter Pfleiderer.

“Warmer oceans allow storms to gather power, quickly, and this has devastating consequences for people.”

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Flightless bird
4) Lit
10) Edible root
14) Delivery vehicle
15) Lost-parcel probe
16) Hilo feast
17) Place for travelers
18) Some sharks
20) Grassland
21) Atlas enlargement
22) Acclaim
23) Artist Chagall
25) The max.
26) Display in a fancy restaurant, sometimes
31) Engine speed, for short
34) Comedic tribute
35) Dead-end jobs
36) Andean land
37) Pulpit of yore
38) Aquarium fish
39) John of "Roots"
40) Brown seaweed
41) Dry riverbed
42) Hackneyed
43) Buck chaser?
44) Amateur radio enthusiast

46)_de deux
47) Bringing up the rear
48) Razor sharpener
51) Arafat's successor
54) Mobile software, briefly
57) Loosely woven cotton fabric
59) 'easter starter
60) "Iliad" warrior god
61) Person who holds property in trust
62) Bill's partner in love
63) How some things are noted
64) Humans and other twofooters
65) Yuletide worker

DOWN

1) Depraved or wicked
2) Hair on a horse's neck
3) Too sacred to be uttered
4) _ for knowledge
5) 1998 World Cup host
6) Flees
7) The highest point of something
8) Convene
9) "To_ is human ..."

10) Bumper sticker word
11) Kind of income
12) Nursery call
13) Give the old heave-ho
19) In custody
24) Fable teller of note
25)_ Major (constellation)
26) Short-billed bird
27) Familiar and cozy
28) Bluegill fish
29) Best
30) Take_ (travel)
31) Mail-in payment
32) Prefix with "type" or "plasm"
33) Person deep in thought
36) Law finn assistants, for short
38) "Jabberwocky" opener
42) Bad-mouths
44) Chance occurrences
45) Flying high
46) Where "e'en" is seen
48) Bunch
49) By way of, briefly
50) Casting need
51) Exotic berry
52) Radar image
53) Tree trunk

55) Coordinate, as efforts, informally
56) University instructor, 58) Emulate a tide

NOTE PAD

M	A	C	R	O		R	E	C	T	O		D	A	M
O	G	L	E	D		E	A	R	E	D		O	N	C
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S	A	T	O	R	I		N	E	B		I	B	I	S
		R	O	M	S			L	A	N	G	L	E	Y
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E	I	S	T		A	R	E	T	E		S	L	O	O

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Starting a new project at work or at school? The best way to get the backup or support you need from other people right now is to appeal to their pioneering spirit. Let everyone know how much exploration you're doing, how much uncharted territory you will be covering. If that doesn't capture their imagination, then they aren't the right people to help you out anyway. You need to not be afraid of tossing out a sales pitch to people. You have to ask if you want their involvement.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Don't take on too many new things right now. As fun or exciting as a new project might sound, you need to get a grip and learn how to say no. You don't have all the bandwidth you need to tackle anything new with any real amount of focus. There are too many things waiting to be finished. So maintain your current plans and do things the right way no matter how long it takes. Then and only then can you pick out the next project or relationship to explore.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Your confidence could get you exactly where you need to be right now either in your career or in your romantic life or both! Seek out the people who make you feel like you're a rock star and reboot your ego. Once you're feeling more self-assured, dramatic results should show up right away. This could be the start of a very powerful phase for you. You're capable of achieving great things. You just need to believe it.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You have been intrigued by someone from a different culture for quite a while now, and today will give you a wonderful opportunity to get to know them better. You can charm them in a way that no one else can. Conversations often make the best education, so settle in for a long chat with this person. You will have a lot of questions for them, but they are likely to have just as many questions for you. Learning how different people live their lives can help improve how you live yours.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your social energy is dwindling a little bit right now, and being among a group of people you don't know very well could seem terribly daunting. Even so, you should try to stay in the loop of what's going on with people. Get in the swing of social things. Isolating yourself isn't the right thing to do now, as much as you might want to. You may need to actually force yourself to attend an event, but after about ten minutes of being there, you'll start to enjoy yourself.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

If you want to make a change in your life, that's a fine idea today, but take it slowly. Rushing toward what you think you want deprives you of the chance to think things through at each crossroads. Don't move at an unconscious speed. You have to be mindful of each step you take. If you swing from extreme to extreme, you'll spend so much energy trying to get back into balance that the progress you make will be pointless. In the end, slow and steady beats fast and frantic every time.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You could be asked to give someone some tough advice today, and you should be careful not to be too dogmatic about what you say. Preaching will get you nowhere with them. They will just shut their ears and regret that they ever asked you. Instead, take into consideration that this person, while they are specifically asking for your help, does not see life the same way you see it. Customize what you tell them with their lifestyle in mind. Speak in big, broad terms.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Your confidence is busting out all over today, and you know what you have to do in order to get what you want. Your clarity is better than ever, and your energy is high. People are going to be falling all over themselves to get out of your way! Throw all your patience right out the window because you won't need it. Waiting isn't something you'll have to do today. Your fast action will create a strong forward momentum that carries you into the direction you want to go.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

People watching has never been more amusing than it will be today. You'll be full of the kind of energy that lets you get a shockingly strong sense of what people are talking about, how they're feeling, and how to rally them together. So if you are taking part in any formal group activities, you should step up and take on a leadership role, either formally or spiritually. You have something to offer that no one else does, and this can ensure a big success.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

If you are trying to make a decision, give yourself the day to mull things over. The flow of mental energy is hard to grasp right away, and you might need the whole day to get a handle on the true pros and cons of your dilemma. There is no such thing as overthinking when it comes to this particular predicament, so unless there is a serious deadline looming, hold off making up your mind until tomorrow. And you could ask for advice, but it probably won't help much.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Getting caught up in the moment usually works out quite well in romantic movies, but in real life drama you need to act much more cautiously. If someone wants to take you away for the weekend, are you sure you two are ready to take that step? That beautiful new car in the showroom is calling to you. Are you sure you can truly afford it right now? Wait until you know this person is the right person or that car is worth the price. Neither is going anywhere.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Luck will definitely be on your side today! Review your budget carefully and you'll find that you have a lot more money to play around with than you thought you did. However, before you run right out to spend it all, think about that one big-ticket item that you've been saving up for. This extra money could go a long way toward getting said item in your hands. Think long term with this windfall. Hold off spending it until it can really be used in a powerful way.

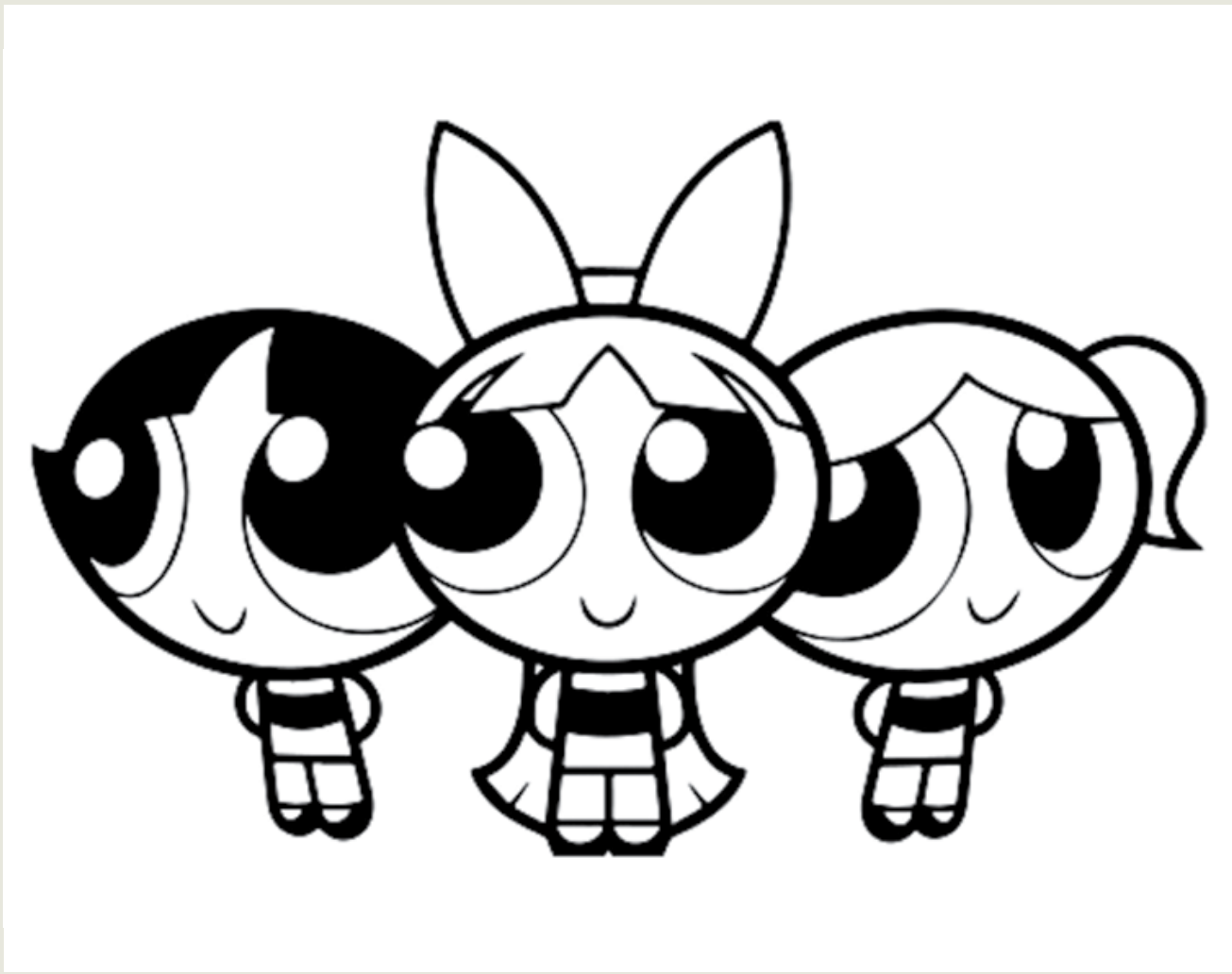


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- What 1973 film starring Al Pacino, John Randolph and Tony Roberts is based on the true story of New York City policeman who went undercover to expose the corruption of his fellow officers?
A. Rain Man
B. Serpico
C. The French Connection
D. The Third Man
- Where did Mulligatawny enter the world cuisine from?
A. Northern Ireland
B. Sri Lanka
C. Scotland
D. Pakistan
- One of the cratons, or relatively stable areas, in the South American tectonic plate is known as the what Shield?
A. Atacama
B. Brazilian
C. Guiana
D. Altiplano

Answers: 1. B 2. B 3. C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

P	L	P	Y
A	R	I	L
O	N	I	L
A	O	T	T

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

MASTERMIND

De Bruyne seeks Champions League vindication to sparkling Man City career

Manchester, United Kingdom - Real Madrid managed to blunt Manchester City's goalscoring phenom Erling Haaland in the first leg of their Champions League semi-final, but there was no stopping the brilliance of Kevin De Bruyne.

The Belgian's thunderbolt at the Bernabeu left the tie delicately balanced at 1-1 heading into Wednesday's second leg, but with City oozing confidence thanks to a 100 percent record in 14 home games in 2023.

Pep Guardiola's men are four matches away from becoming just the second side to ever win the treble of Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup in the same season.

A fifth league title in six seasons is as good as won with a maximum of three points needed from City's final three games.

Manchester United will have their chance to prevent the Red Devils' treble in 1998/99 being matched in the FA Cup final.

But with whoever emerges victorious at the Etihad big favourites to be crowned European champions against Inter Milan or AC Milan in Istanbul next month, Madrid are the biggest obstacle between City and immortality.

Real's own run to Champions League glory last season was fuelled by goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois' perceived slight at his

reputation in England.

"I don't think I get enough respect, especially in England," said the former Chelsea stopper after his man-of-the-match performance denied Liverpool in the final.

For his international teammate De Bruyne, it is the opposite.

Widely considered one of the Premier League's finest imports, the 31-year-old has twice been crowned players' player of the year by his peers alongside a growing haul of 10 major trophies under Guardiola.

But City's failure to get over the line in the Champions League and the Belgian golden genera-

I've come across a lot of players, played with a lot of players, saw a lot of players, played against some of the greatest. I think Kevin, his brain is the best I've ever seen

THIERRY HENRY

tion's lack of a major tournament victory means he has not always commanded the same level of respect on the continent.

De Bruyne's third-placed finish the Ballon d'Or voting last year is the highest of his career.

That could all change should he be the one to make the difference and put Madrid to the sword, as he did in the first leg.



Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne celebrates with teammates after scoring against Real Madrid last week (AFP)

off with Belgium. You love the man a bit more because I saw stuff he did in training and in games. He's unbelievable. His brain, I'm still thinking about some stuff I've seen, he's on a different planet."

Despite the attention on Haaland's half-century of goals in his first season in England, De Bruyne has continued to be cru-

cial to City's success.

He scored twice as the defending champions landed a telling blow on Arsenal in the Premier League title race last month. But creativity rather than goals is the currency in which De Bruyne's influence is best measured.

He has 27 assists in 43 appearances this season, becoming

the fastest player to 100 Premier League assists in the process.

"He's not comfortable to play with a pause, he needs to play with speed," said Guardiola. "It is so difficult to find a player that plays at this speed and has the ability to see the passes more than when is more calm or walking. "The normal players, when you walk, you see everything. But

when you run a high speed, you are not able to see what happened. He's completely the opposite. That's why he is an exceptional player."

Much like his manager, De Bruyne's achievements at City have always come with the caveat of never having won the Champions League.

AFP

Argentina's Bielsa named Uruguay coach

Montevideo, Uruguay - Marcelo Bielsa was named coach of Uruguay on Monday, the 67-year-old Argentine tasked with taking them to the 2026 World Cup.

Bielsa, who was sacked by Leeds United in February last year, takes over from Diego Alonso after he oversaw a disappointing World Cup campaign which ended in the group stage.

"The man from Rosario will take the reins of the squad after his tenure at Leeds, a club which he managed between June 2018 and February 2022," Uruguay's football association said in naming Bielsa to the post.

Bielsa will be presented to the media on Wednesday.

He has had a long career in football management, coaching a dozen teams including his native Argentina, Chile,



Marcelo Bielsa

Athletic Bilbao, Marseille, Lille and most recently Premier League Leeds.

He is still revered at Leeds for taking them back into England's top flight and engineering an exciting, attacking brand of football.

But his team were also shaky in defence and he was sacked under the threat of relegation.

AFP

Camavinga's growing impact clear as Real Madrid visit Manchester City

Barcelona, Spain - Real Madrid hearts were in mouths when Eduardo Camavinga limped off against Getafe in La Liga on Saturday, ahead of their Champions League showdown with Manchester City.

The 20-year-old French midfielder has become a key figure for Carlo Ancelotti's reigning European champion and an injury would have been a big setback for the semi-final second leg at the Etihad on Wednesday.

Ancelotti soothed Madrid fears in his post game news conference, saying Camavinga twisted his knee but it would heal quickly and was not a worry.

Spanish media reports since have reflected that Camavinga will be fit, with the tie on a knife edge after the first leg finished 1-1 last Tuesday.

Camavinga played a key role in Vinicius Junior's brilliant strike in that game, charging up the



Real Madrid's Eduardo Camavinga battles with Manchester City's Bernardo Silva for the ball

pitch from left-back to help Madrid take the lead in the first half.

The Frenchman exchanged passes with Luka Modric to break free of City's press and car-

ried the ball down to the other end, before feeding his Brazilian team-mate.

However Camavinga was also partly to blame for City's equaliser, with his pass intercepted before Kevin De Bruyne hammered home.

Playing on the left of the defence, instead of his natural centre-midfield position, means Camavinga does occasionally make mistakes, but is becoming more reliable game by game -- even if he would prefer to be deployed elsewhere.

"The most important thing is to help the team, and today I did that again, but no, it still isn't my position," he said, after helping Madrid see off Chelsea in the Champions League quarter-finals.

Ancelotti lately in big games has simply tried to get his best 11 players onto the pitch in his line-ups, which has resulted in Toni Kroos playing in holding midfield, and Camavinga used at left-back.

AFP



The mausoleum where the coffin of late Brazilian football legend Pele rests, at the Ecumenical Necropolis Memorial cemetery in Santos, Brazil (AFP)

Pele's gilded, turf-lined tomb opens to public in Brazil

Santos, Brazil - It is a final resting place fit for "The King": six months after the death of the man widely considered the greatest footballer of all time, Brazil opened Pele's gilded, football-turfed tomb to the public Monday.

Pele, who died on December 29 at age 82 after a battle with cancer, was laid to rest at the Ecumenical Memorial Cemetery in Santos, Brazil. It is a high-rise, 14-story mausoleum that holds the Guinness world record for the tallest cemetery on Earth.

Fans were greeted by two life-size golden statues of the player nicknamed "O Rei" -- The King -- whose remains rest inside a large golden vault displayed in

the middle of a 200-square-meter (more than 2,000-square-foot) room carpeted in artificial turf.

"It surpassed my expecta-

about Pele's story, what he represented for Santos, Brazil and the entire world."

Born Edson Arantes do Nascimento, Pele is the only player in

national team.

In tears, Pele's son Edinho told reporters who flocked to the southeastern port city that the family was still struggling to cope with their loss.

"But we're also very proud and happy at all the affection and reverence that's kept pouring in," he said. For now, entries to the tomb are limited to 60 people a day, via a sign-up form on the cemetery's website.

Topped with a cross, Pele's golden vault has black etchings on its sides depicting his 1,000th goal and his famous raised-fist goal celebration. The room is wallpapered with images of fans in a football stadium.

AFP

I hope lots of tourists will come visit and get to know a little about Pele's story, what he represented for Santos, Brazil and the entire world."

RONALDO RODRIGUES

tions. It's a really beautiful place," said Ronaldo Rodrigues, 44, a businessman who was first in line to visit the tomb, along with his wife.

"I hope lots of tourists will come visit and get to know a little

history to win three World Cups (1958, 1962 and 1970).

He scored a world record 1,281 goals during his more than two-decade career with Santos (1956-74), the New York Cosmos (1975-77) and the Brazilian

IN HOT PURSUIT

In-form Liverpool maintain top-four charge to push Leicester closer to relegation

Leicester, United Kingdom - Liverpool maintained their pursuit of Champions League football next season and pushed Leicester ever closer to the Championship as Curtis Jones scored twice in a 3-0 win at the King Power on Monday.

Trent Alexander-Arnold rounded off another fine performance in his new hybrid role between right-back and midfield with a stunning strike as Liverpool closed to within one point of the top four.

Jürgen Klopp's men still need a late-season collapse from Newcastle or Manchester United, but a seven-game winning streak from the Reds has upped the pressure on their rivals, who both have three games remaining to Liverpool's two.

"It's all we can do," said Klopp. "It would be a real shame if they slip and we're not there. So we have to do our job."

"I think we have qualified for European football which six weeks ago wasn't in sight."

Seven years on from shocking the world to win the title, Leicester's Premier League days look numbered as they remain two points from safety with two games remaining.

They face another daunting task when they travel to Newcastle next Monday in a match that could seal their fate should Everton or Leeds win over the weekend.

"It's pretty simple, we need to win our next game," said Leicester interim boss Dean Smith. "It will be tough at St James' Park. It would be nice to take the lead for once."

The Foxes' defensive frailties were again exposed as a bright start from the hosts was quickly forgotten when Jones struck twice in three minutes just after the half-hour mark.

Luis Díaz was allowed to race onto a long ball forward from Alisson Becker before it broke for Mohamed Salah to cross for the unmarked Jones to tap in the opener at the far post.

Salah was the provider again moments later as Jones produced a magnificent touch to control and finish past the helpless Daniel Iversen.

"I thought the second goal looked like we had frazzled minds from the kick-off," added Smith. "We have to have clearer minds and think clear under pressure."

The home crowd quickly turned on their own side and there were boos when Cody Gakpo fired straight at Iversen with a glorious chance to make it 3-0.

Scoring goals has not been Leicester's problem this season, but they even looked blunt in attack as belief drained from Smith's men.

Liverpool's upturn in form after a difficult season has coincided with Alexander-Arnold's new role as a deep-lying playmaker in midfield when in possession.

The England international displayed his quality on the ball with a sumptuous strike into the top corner 19 minutes from time after Salah tapped a free-kick into his path.

The Egyptian should have had his customary goal to add to a hat-trick of assists.

Salah was sent clean through on goal by Gakpo, but slotted wide with just Iversen to beat to the astonishment of most inside the stadium.

That miss could yet prove important with Liverpool four goals behind Newcastle on goal difference.

But the visitors got the main job done with another three points ensuring they will at least play Europa League football next season.

AFP



Liverpool's Cody Gakpo, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Curtis Jones celebrate after their victory against Leicester City on Monday (AFP)

It would be a real shame if they slip and we're not there. So we have to do our job. I think we have qualified for European football which six weeks ago wasn't in sight

JURGEN KLOPP



Barcelona team parade aboard an open-top bus as they celebrate their La Liga title triumph on Monday

Barca fans celebrate league titles with players in parade

Barcelona, Spain - Barcelona players from the men's and women's teams lapped up affection from thousands of supporters in the city's streets on Monday afternoon to celebrate their dual league titles.

Xavi Hernandez's side beat Espanyol on Sunday to win the club's 27th league title and first since 2019, while Barca's women's team earned their fourth consecutive Liga F win at the end of April.

The players rode in two open-top buses, heading from Camp Nou to the city's Arc de Triomf monument five miles away, the streets lined with jubilant supporters despite the threat of rain.

Defender Ronald Araujo was draped in a Uruguayan flag, while La Liga's top scorer Robert Lewandowski, wearing sunglasses and a Barcelona scarf, waved to fans.

Coach Xavi, whose name was chanted frequently, threw down a can of beer to delighted thirsty fans below.

Players from both sides wore t-shirts proclaiming "the league is ours, the future too".

Crowds increased as the buses headed along their route, to the main square, Plaza Catalunya, and then on towards the Arc.

"You can see the fans are very excited about it and obviously we are too," goalkeeper Marc-Andre Ter Stegen told club television.

"It's a pride to share this with them and have them closer than ever."

In front of the two players' buses, another bus pumping out pop songs to set the mood led the way, cutting through streets filled with blue and red smoke.

AFP

Injured Aussie star Kyrgios to miss French Open

Paris, France - Australia's unpredictable tennis star Nick Kyrgios will miss the French Open due to a knee injury, the Grand Slam event organisers the French Tennis Federation (FFT) said on Tuesday.

The 28-year-old has never flourished on the Roland-Garros clay reaching the third round on just two of the five times he has played there.

The 2022 Wimbledon finalist -- ranked 26 in the world -- has not played in the French Open since a second-round exit in 2017.

Kyrgios has had a troubled year after undergoing knee surgery in January to repair a torn left meniscus following his withdrawal from the Australian Open.

He also pleaded guilty in February to assaulting a former girlfriend, but avoided a conviction for what the magistrate called a "single act of stupidity".

Djokovic sees off Norrie to reach Italian Open quarter-finals

Rome, Italy - Novak Djokovic eased into the Italian Open quarter-finals on Tuesday after breezing past Cameron Norrie 6-3, 6-4, although there was tension with the Briton after the top seed was hit by a smash.

The Serb has reached the last eight in each of his previous 16 appearances in the Italian capital and he did again on Tuesday, getting past Norrie on centre court to set up a clash with Holger Rune.

It will be a rematch of last year's Paris Masters final, when the young Dane won his first Masters 1000 title by beating Djokovic in a thrilling match.

"Even though he's really young, I know his game quite well. He's been on the tour now for last few years playing some great tennis, particularly in the last I would say six to eight months," said Djokovic.

"He's in very good form and I look forward to a challenge. I think it's going to be a very physical match."

Djokovic is gunning for a seventh title on clay in Rome and his chances have been made a little bit easier by the shock elimination of Carlos Alcaraz on Monday.

Alcaraz, who won two consecutive tournaments at Barcelona and Madrid, will take world number one spot from Djokovic on May 22 but it is the 22-time Grand Slam champion



Serbia's Novak Djokovic acknowledges the crowd after defeating Britain's Cameron Norrie in their fourth-round match on Tuesday

He's been on the tour now for last few years playing some great tennis

NOVAK DJOKOVIC



who could go into Roland Garros with yet another title under his belt.

Djokovic won the first three games against Norrie and closed out the first set with little fuss, without needing to be at his best.

The 35-year-old then took the second set to 2-1 with a break, but in the next game Norrie broke back while angering Djokovic with a smash which hit him on the back of his left leg.

Norrie had the whole court to put the ball away as Djokovic had given up on the point and was walking back to the service line.

AFP

England paceman Jofra Archer ruled out of Ashes with stress fracture

London, United Kingdom - Fast bowler Jofra Archer was Tuesday ruled out of the Ashes with a stress fracture to his right elbow as England announced their Test squad to face Ireland next month.

The 28-year-old Sussex quick, who was recently in action in the Indian Premier League, will not play again "for the rest of the summer", the England and Wales Cricket Board said in a statement.

"Recent scans revealed he has sustained a recurrence of a stress fracture to his right elbow," the ECB said. "He will now spend time with the England and Sussex medical teams, who will work on his injury management."

England play Ireland in a four-day Test starting at Lord's on June 1, with a five-match Ashes series against Australia starting later in the month.

Yorkshire wicketkeeper-batter Jonny Bairstow is now fully fit, having recovered from breaking



Jofra Archer

his left leg and dislocating his ankle during a round of golf, and is back with England for the first time since last August, meaning there is no place for Ben Foakes.

Warwickshire seamer Chris Woakes returns while Durham fast bowler Mark Wood is back after taking a break from the tour of New Zealand.

Surrey batsman Ollie Pope has been officially confirmed as England's vice-captain with immediate effect.

"It has been a frustrating and upsetting period for Jofra Archer," said ECB managing director Rob Key. "He was making good progress until a recurrence of the elbow injury, which kept him out for an extended period previously. We wish him the best of luck with his recovery."

Key said it was a "seriously tough decision" to leave Foakes out of the squad. "He has been excellent for England in the last

year, but Jonny Bairstow is one of the best players in the world whose performances last summer epitomised what we are about," he added.

ENGLAND SQUAD

Ben Stokes (capt), James Anderson, Jonny Bairstow, Stuart Broad, Harry Brook, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Dan Lawrence, Jack Leach, Ollie Pope, Matthew Potts, Ollie Robinson, Joe Root, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood



STOINIS STUNNER HELPS LUCKNOW BEAT MUMBAI DESPITE DAVID'S LATE ASSAULT

MATCH 63



Marcus Stoinis plays a shot during his unbeaten 89 against Mumbai Indians on Tuesday. Stoinis' cracking innings helped Lucknow beat Mumbai by 5 runs despite Ishan Kishan giving them a cracking start with a 39 ball 59 and Tim David's late burst. Ravi Bishnoi and Naveen-ul-Haq shone with the ball to ensure two valuable points for Lucknow.

TODAYS MATCHES

MATCH 64

6 PM



PUNJAB KINGS



DELHI CAPITALS

Ben Stokes fitness doubt in latest England Ashes scare

New Delhi, India - England Test captain Ben Stokes is still unable to bowl and is only "batting cover", his coach at IPL side Chennai Super Kings says, in a fresh injury scare weeks before the Ashes.

Stokes has played only two matches after being bought by Chennai for \$1.96 million at the start of this season in early April, before being benched with a toe injury.

The 31-year-old all-rounder was troubled by his left knee before the IPL.

On April 21, Chennai coach Stephen Fleming said that Stokes had suffered "another little setback", without giving details.

On Sunday Fleming said that Stokes was still unable to bowl and reports suggest the player will return to Britain after Chennai's final group game at the weekend, even though the team looks set for the next round.



Ben Stokes

"Ben's ability to bowl overs at the moment is still a bit of a challenge, but he's there as that batting cover," Fleming said.

"But with Moeen (Ali) bowling well in good conditions - we go to Delhi (next), which has been turning - we think the balance of the side has been right."

The former New Zealand captain added: "And look, we're second on the table, so it's not our style to chop and change just because we've had a loss where things didn't go our way."

GUJARAT IN PLAY-OFFS

Gill ton help reigning champions beat Hyderabad

Ahmedabad, India - India opener Shubman Gill hit his maiden IPL century to help holders Gujarat Titans secure their play-off berth with a thumping 34-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad on Monday.

Gill, who smashed 101 off 58 balls, put on a 147-run stand with Sai Sudarshan, who made 47, to guide table-toppers Gujarat to 188-9 in Ahmedabad.

Mohammed Shami and Mohit Sharma both took four wickets to limit Hyderabad to 154-9 as Gujarat became the first team to secure one of the four play-off spots.

Gujarat, who had a fairytale debut season when they won the title last year, are also assured of a top-two finish in the group phase.

"Very proud of the boys. Two



Gujarat Titans captain Hardik Pandya celebrates with teammates after the fall of a Hyderabad wicket during their match on Monday (AFP)

in two. Last year was different, we knew there'd be a lot of challenges this year," skipper Hardik Pandya said.

"Boys have put their hands up in different situations. I think we've rightly earned the chance of making the play-offs."

Hyderabad, the 2016 champions, fell out of the play-off race, making it seven teams fighting for three remaining play-off places.

"Lots of pride still left in the upcoming games," said captain Aiden Markram.

"Maybe we'll give out a few opportunities and guys can finish well but sadly we haven't been good."

Gujarat lost Wriddhiman Saha, for a duck, on the third ball of the match but Gill hit Fazalhaq Farooqi for four straight bound-

aries to set the pace.

Gill, who jumped to second in the batting charts with 576 runs behind Bangalore skipper Faf du Plessis (631), smashed 13 fours and a six and Sudarshan was also punishing in his 36-ball stay.

The 23-year-old Gill, who has scored a ton each in all three international formats, was named man of the match.

Hyderabad hit back with wickets and despite Gill's century in 56 balls, Gujarat managed just 34 runs in the last five overs and lost seven wickets.

The Sunrisers bowlers did well to check Gujarat's total, which looked like going over 200, as seam bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar returned figures of 5-30 but the efforts were vain.

Hyderabad were never in the chase after they fell to 12-3 with Shami taking two and further slipped to 59-7.

South Africa's Heinrich Klaasen then smashed 64 and put on 68 runs with Kumar, who made 27, but the stand only reduced their margin of defeat.

AFP

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INTERVIEW

Sharing the past...and pasta

Anirban Ray

Oman and Italy have shared a long-standing relationship that is cordial, economically beneficial, culturally vibrant, and politically deep-rooted in mutual trust.

Taking over as the new ambassador of Italy to Oman, H E Pierluigi D'Elia has a series of cultural, business-related, and people-to-people contact events lined up. This in view of the fact that the two countries have a long-standing relationship based on mutual respect, cultural exchanges and economic ties, he said.

Both nations have a history of trade and co-operation dating back to centuries. In recent times, Italy and Oman have continued to strengthen their relationship through diplomatic dialogue and collaboration in various fields, such as energy, infrastructure and art. The appointment of a new ambassador signals a commitment to further strengthening these ties and exploring new avenues for collaboration. Excerpts from an exclusive interview with H E Pierluigi D'Elia:

As the new Italian ambassador, what are your top priorities?

I am looking forward to boosting the political, economic, cultural ties of both countries. We live in a world of global and regional challenges, and unprecedented change. So, it's important to strengthen the Omani-Italian friendship in order to tackle these challenges together. I'm also talking about climate change, the need to



boost trade and investment, and all the action that we do to promote stability and peace in the region. So, my top priority will be to have more exchanges between our people, our politicians, and our businesses.

Are you planning any specific cultural exchanges in fashion, food, films?

We share so many important commonalities including a very rich culture and history. And one proof of our co-operation in the culture sector. For example, our archaeological missions in Oman - we have like nine archaeological missions here. As far as design, filmmaking and fashion is concerned, there are many avenues for collaboration. March 9 was celebrated as Italian Design Day recently and it was a huge hit.

Could you elaborate on the nine archaeological missions in Oman?

It's about researching the rich history of Oman at archaeological sites. We have several universities doing research here to discover more about the rich history of Oman.

What about Omanis who have visited Italy - are the numbers significant?

We had a remarkable increase in visa issues in the beginning of the year. In the very first month of 2023, approximately 1,000 visas were issued for citizens from Oman. The main reason to visit Italy is tourism. But we also issued some for business purposes.

There are a lot of sectors which we are looking at in order to increase cooperation and increase mutual benefits. For example, manufacturing, food, transformation, renewable energy, and green hydrogen and the tourism sector. Italy is one of the biggest economies in the world and part of the European Union, which is the largest single market, trade bloc and investor. So, there are a lot of opportunities there as Italy is a leader in recycling, biotech, pharmaceuticals, machinery, automotive, food, design, films, and fashion.

Is the number of Italian tourists visiting Oman good enough?

In the first part of the year, we already had more than 20,000 Italians visiting Oman. This is very significant, compared to last year. So my impression is that more and more Italians are looking forward to visiting this beautiful country.

What is the strength of the Italian population in Oman?

After the pandemic, the numbers have gone down. Yet, we do have a very lively community of approximately 300 Italians living in Oman.

Any events lined up for 2023?

We have our National Day coming up in June, and in October we celebrate our language week where we propagate several courses of the Italian language. In November, we will have Italian Cuisine Week on the theme Wellness With Good Taste.

Italy and Oman have shared strong political and cultural bonds for centuries, says H E Pierluigi D'Elia, Ambassador of Italy to Oman

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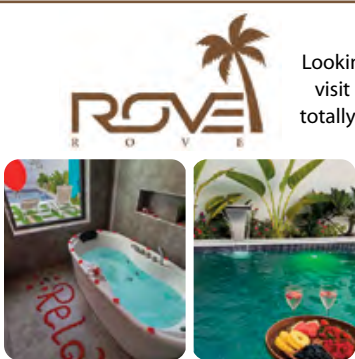
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Past Eurovision contestants perform during the final

Loreen makes history as Sweden claims seventh Eurovision victory

Sweden won the Eurovision Song Contest early Sunday, as singer Loreen beat out 25 competitors in the finale of the world's biggest live music event, hosted by Britain on behalf of war-torn Ukraine.

A previous victor in 2012, Loreen is the first woman to win the eccentric, much-loved competition twice and only the second person to do so after Johnny Logan for Ireland in the 1980s.

It is a record-equalling seventh Eurovision crown for Sweden, and means the Scandinavian nation will host next year's contest on the 50th anniversary of ABBA's win - the country's first - with breakthrough hit *Waterloo*.

Loreen - real name Lorine Talhaoui - told reporters that her victory with dance-pop track *Tattoo*, felt surreal and beautiful, and had left her seriously overwhelmed.

Born in Sweden to parents of Moroccan Berber origin, the 39-year-old's win for Sweden over 25 other countries competing in the final was celebrated in her homeland.

"There is only one queen and her name is Loreen," proclaimed the *Expressen* tabloid while the *Svenska Dagbladet* said the singer had 'written history'.

Loreen narrowly triumphed over Finland's Kaarija after the public and jury votes were combined following an evening of typically eclectic musical acts in Liverpool.

Third place went to Israel, with Noa Kirel's *Unicorn*, as more than 160 million estimated viewers watched on television around the world.

Feels like home
Last year's runner-up, Britain selected Liverpool - home of *The Beatles* - to stage the Euro pop music festival after organisers ruled it was imp-

ossible for 2022 victors Ukraine to do so amid Russia's ongoing invasion.

During the glittering spectacle in north-west England, reports emerged that Moscow was unleashing a fresh barrage of bombs on Ukraine. The attack included Ternopil, the hometown of Ukraine's entry this year.

Band Tvorchy were performing electro-pop offering *Heart of Steel*, which was inspired by the siege of the Azovstal plant in

It's an enormous and unbelievable feat. She's a strange combination of vague and ethereal
DAGENS NYHETE

Mariupol, as air raid sirens rang out across their city.

'Ternopil... was bombed by Russia while we sang on the Eurovision stage about our steel hearts, indomitability and will,' the band said on Instagram.

'Europe, unite against evil for the sake of peace!'

Throughout the contest, Britain

sought to keep Ukraine front and centre.

Central Liverpool was awash in the yellow and blue of the country's flag while displaced Ukrainians were among the 6,000 fans packed into the M&S Arena host venue.

"It feels like I'm home," Vasylyna Kindrat, who fled Lviv in December, told AFP as she headed into the waterfront arena. The 25-year-old added she was hoping for victory not in Eurovision 'but for the war'.

Earlier, British spectators echoed the sentiment. "We're supporting Ukraine, our heart is bleeding for them," said Jenny Birchett, 70, a theatre worker dressed in Ukrainian colours. We feel it's theirs, the Eurovision, more than ours."

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak lauded the 'fantastic celebration' shortly after Loreen's win. "Liverpool, you've done the United Kingdom and Ukraine proud," he said.

War and peace
Sweden and Finland had been the bookmakers' favourites heading into the contest beloved for its kitschy, quirky performances.

Sweden's biggest broadsheet *Dagens Nyheter* on Sunday hailed Loreen's victory an 'enormous, unbelievable feat', praising her ability to touch audiences like few others do. 'She's a strange combination of vague and ethereal,' it mused.

Rapper Kaarija, representing Finland, came a close second after a memorable performance of *Cha Cha Cha*, delivered in his distinctive green bolero-style jacket with spikes around the neck, which has become a craze in his homeland.

After coming in 16th place, France's contestant La Zarra gestured in disappointment while the home crowd went wildest for the UK's entry - Mae Muller.

Britain's Sam Ryder, runner-up in 2022, performed his latest song - with Queen's Roger Taylor on drums - during the voting for this year's spectacle.

AFP

Singer Loreen of Sweden celebrates with the trophy after winning the final



Singer Monika Linkyte performs on behalf of Lithuania



Band Vesna performs on behalf of the Czech Republic during the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2023



Singer and songwriter Mae Muller performs on behalf of the United Kingdom during the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2023

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