

Oman's first EV to be ready by year-end

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's first electric vehicle (EV) - an SUV named Mays Alive - is set to hit the roads by the end of 2024, according to Haider bin Adnan al Zaabi, co-founder of Mays Motors.

Being manufactured in Duqm, a prototype of Alive was unveiled earlier this month in Muscat and North Batinah.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Zaabi said, "Our first e-SUV Alive will be ready for customers by the end of this year, priced around RO15,000."

He informed that his team visited several car factories in Italy, Germany, China, USA and India to finalise specifications and the design of Alive.

"We are extremely proud to showcase Mays Alive. We have climbed mountains to reach here, and the journey of challenges has been beautiful and rewarding. It's a miracle achieving this with limited resources and time," he posted on LinkedIn.

Alive boasts a large dashboard with displays and controls, including door functions. Offering a driving range of around 510km, its battery can be charged at home.

According to Zaabi, cars manufactured abroad with similar features cost over RO18,000.

"We have also introduced new



(L) Mohamed al Kindi, Governor of North Batinah, at an inspection of Mays Alive (Supplied photo)



It's a big responsibility for us, but what motivates us is the fact that we are the first and a beacon and inspiration for many future generations

HAIDER AL ZAABI

ideas and inventions that change the way we drive. The car is called Alive because it is just that and for the first time, you can have a conversation with your car; a friend with you at all times."

Zaabi described Alive's carbon fibre body as "loaded with technology similar to international brands" and highlighted the company's focus on using locally

available parts and reducing manufacturing costs to expedite market entry.

"It's a big responsibility for us, but what motivates us is the fact that we are the first and a beacon and inspiration for many future generations," he added.

The Mays Motors has set a target of 500 cars in the first phase but is considering scaling

up production due to exceeding order expectations.

H E Khamis bin Mohammed al Shamakhi, Undersecretary for Transport in the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, visited the Mays Motors manufacturing facility to review production plans earlier this month.

Zaabi expressed optimism that manufacturing the car will catalyse an integrated automotive industry in Oman, utilising local resources and creating job opportunities. Currently employing over 50 Omanis in various departments, Mays Motors aims to contribute significantly to Oman's automotive sector.

The name 'Mays' was derived from the name of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said horse Maysore.

Oman, Cuba discuss economic, commercial cooperation

Havana, Cuba - President Miguel Díaz-Canel of the Republic of Cuba, received Abdulsalam al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority, in Havana on Saturday.

Murshidi conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and his good wishes to the president and to the friendly Cuban people for continued progress and prosperity.

On his part, President Miguel expressed his good wishes to His Majesty the Sultan, the Omani people and the relations of the two friendly countries for further progress and development.

During the meeting, President Miguel stated that Murshidi's visit will find new areas to expand commercial and economic col-



(R) Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel receives Oman Investment Authority's Abdulsalam al Murshidi in Havana on Saturday (Supplied photo)

laboration between the two countries.

May 2024 will mark the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between

Oman and Cuba.

The meeting was attended by Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai, Ambassador at Large in the Foreign Ministry.

'90% of expats are low-skilled professionals'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

At a Ramadan evening organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry themed 'Dialogue Between the Three Production Parties to Regulate the Labour Market', panelists, including economists and labour market specialists, addressed the labour challenges faced by private sector institutions.

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) highlighted the pivotal role of collaboration among government entities, employers

and workers in maintaining stability within the country.

During a panel discussion, H E Sheikh Nasr bin Amer al Hosani, Undersecretary for Labour in MoL, revealed that approximately 90% of non-Omani workers are engaged in low-skill professions, according to recent statistics. He emphasised the government's role as a mediator to ensure fair regulations through laws, while actively seeking inputs from both employers and workers.

H E Sheikh Nasr also spoke about the significant presence of Omani women in part-time

sales jobs of large commercial centres and malls. Recent data shows an increasing number of small and medium enterprises successfully employing Omani nationals, partly due to MoL initiatives focused on job replacement through training programmes.

One of the concerns raised was regarding competition between entities adhering to Omanisation rates and those that don't. To address this, an inspection unit was set up with the aim of safeguarding Omani business owners from labour law violations.

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Qarraqasho: A joyous celebration of tradition and community

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Qarraqasho, a celebration of the halfway mark of Ramadan, will be held on Monday.

The celebration is primarily focused on children and is highlighted by house visits. Children, dressed in traditional clothes, go from house to house singing special songs and receive sweets, nuts and small gifts in return.

The occasion provides an excellent opportunity for families and friends to come together, strengthen bonds and have fun.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Salim al Balushi, a resident of Muttrah, said, "We celebrate



this special occasion on the 14th night of the holy month. We gather with our children in one house and distribute gifts, sweets and toys among the

children who wear traditional Omani clothes."

Hisham Ahmed, a teacher in a private school, added, "We will celebrate the occasion with

our students on Monday. We will give students gifts and hold a special celebration."

Other activities on the occasion include children being treated to face painting, balloon art, cartoon characters and games. On this day, households also prepare rice dishes with meat, fish or chicken, as well as harees and sweets, and distribute these among the poor.

Homes are decorated with colourful lights for Qarraqasho, and Omani halwa is prepared for the occasion. Parents purchase traditional clothes for children.

Qarraqasho is also celebrated in shopping malls and hotels.



GIFT OF LIFE

Blood donation is a critical humanitarian activity which keeps the hopes alive of thousands of those needing surgery as well as accident victims. Central Blood Bank constantly urges the public to come forward for this noble cause. However, in Ramadan the call becomes more urgent as donations typically decline. What proactive steps should the concerned authorities take to ensure enough blood stocks? Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers said -

Salim Ahmed
Businessman

It is indeed a very serious matter. I believe that collaborating with local organisations and religious leaders to promote blood donation can help raise awareness and increase participation. Hosting blood drives at workplaces, schools and mosques with the support of religious leaders can encourage more people to donate.

Suleiman Balushi
Private sector employee

I feel that offering incentives such as discounts at local businesses or entry into prize draws for blood donors can motivate people to donate during Ramadan. People must be recognised and appreciated publicly, even if it means some social media promotions or on websites.

Salman Khan
Businessman

Social organisations can hold donation drives in the same way as public iftars are held. However, such drives need to be at least three hours after prayers and iftars. Authorities should organise mobile blood donation drives in communities across Oman, making it convenient for people to donate without having to travel far.

Salim al Amri
Taxi driver

People often have no idea where or when donation drives are being conducted. Holding awareness campaigns through social media, television and radio can educate the public about the importance of blood donation during Ramadan.

Hanifa Khan
Private sector employee

Donation drives can be organised at convenient times and locations in coordination with mosques, community centres and offices during non-fasting hours. Community leaders must be engaged in such efforts. The support of religious leaders and community influencers must be sought to endorse blood donation drives and en-

courage their followers to participate. Mobile apps or online platforms must be developed to schedule appointments, track donation drives, and provide information about eligibility criteria and donation centres.

Vaibhavi Gandhi
Student

Blood donation camps should be promoted daily, and every NGO and government organisation, along with private sector entities, should be involved in these efforts. More awareness should be created as to why donating blood is important. There can be open blood donation camps as well in public places.

Kathleen Lane
Traveller

Promote donating blood after breaking the fast. Set up mobile blood donation units in mosques after Taraweeh prayers. Do a blood donation drive the month before Ramadan.

Sarojini Parasuram
Private sector employee

Blood requirements are routine, so adequate collections must happen throughout the year to tide through this phase of Ramadan. Blood banks do send regular reminders to donors, but the restriction clause to donate applicable on those who were away from the country makes most of us unfit to donate. Reminders to those with particular blood groups would help tide the need. Also, a personal call to a donor will make them oblige.

Sayed Murthala Mohamed Muheez
Accountant

Increase awareness campaigns about the importance of blood donation during Ramadan. Organise mobile blood donation drives at mosques and community centres. Offer incentives such as vouchers or discounts to encourage donation. Collaborate with businesses to sponsor blood donation events. Implement flexible donation hours to accommodate fasting individuals.

? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Do you believe the implementation of flexible working hours during Ramadan contributes to a reduction in traffic congestion in the capital. Should the authorities consider extending flexible working hours beyond Ramadan?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om You can also log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue.

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Share your comments in not more than 50 words along with your full name and profession before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp, Facebook or Instagram

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*Rates as on March 24
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

US crude oil inventories declines in March

US commercial crude oil inventories fell 0.4% during the week ending March 15, according to data released by the Energy Information Administration (EIA).

Inventories declined by around 2mn barrels to 445mn barrels, compared to the market prediction of a decrease of around 900,000 barrels.

Strategic petroleum reserves, which are excluded from commercial crude stocks, increased by about 800,000 barrels to 362.3mn barrels last week, the data revealed.

Gasoline inventories decreased by approximately 3.3mn barrels to 230.8mn barrels over the same period.

EIA data showed that US crude oil production increased by 9,000 barrels per day (bpd) to around 13.54mn bpd during the week ending March 15.

US crude oil imports rose by 787,000 bpd to about 6.28mn bpd, and crude oil exports increased by 1.73mn bpd to approximately 4.88mn bpd over the same period. The EIA predicted that crude oil output in the country would reach an average of 13.19mn bpd this year.

Oman's oil output drops in February, exports rise

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's oil exports rose 5.5% during the first two months of 2024 despite a 4.3% decline in total production due to the sultanate's commitment to the OPEC+ agreement.

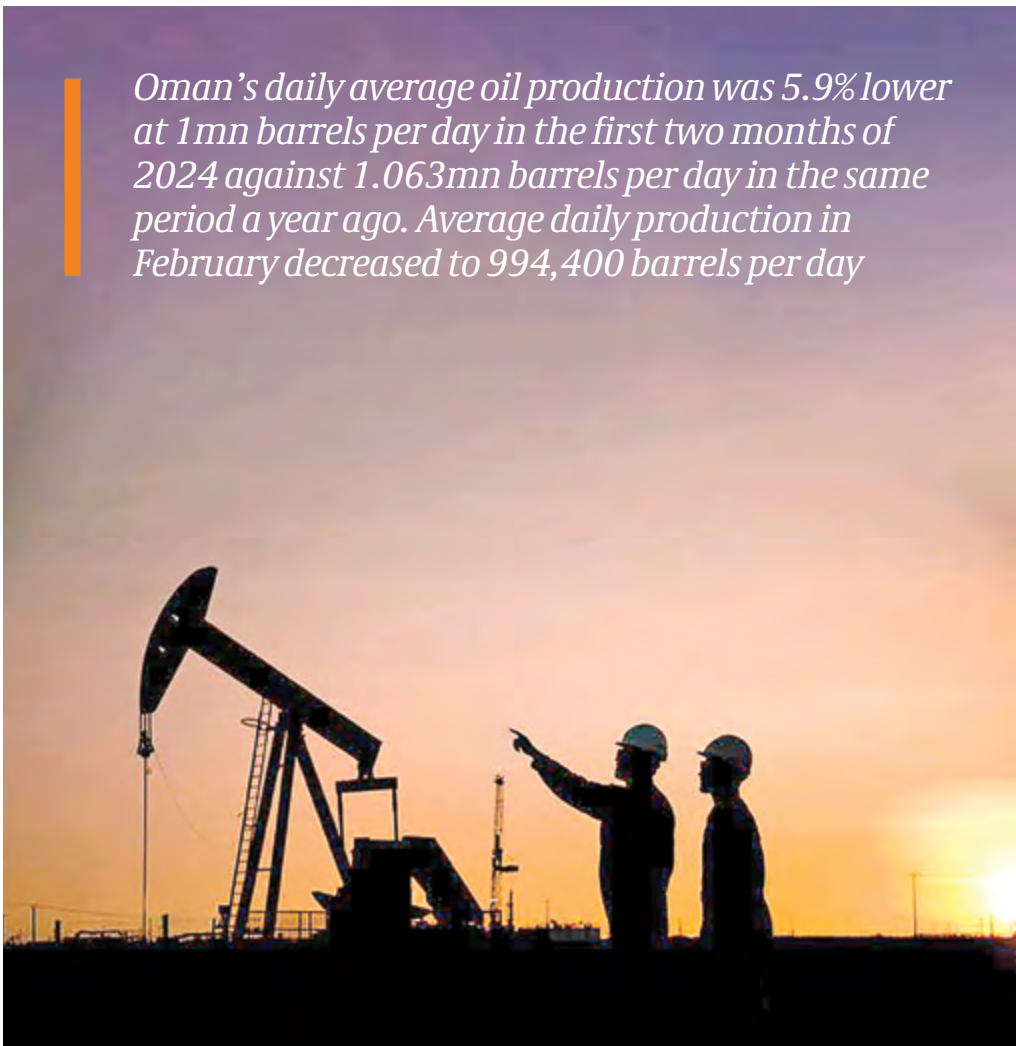
The sultanate's total oil exports increased to 52.430mn barrels during the January-February period of this year against 49.713mn barrels in the same period of 2023, according to the data released by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Oman's total oil production decreased 4.3% to 60.073mn barrels during the first two months of 2024 from 62.750mn barrels recorded in the same period of last year. Crude oil production dropped 6.8% to 46.025mn barrels this year from 49.391mn barrels in 2023, while condensate production rose 5.2% to 14.047mn barrels, the NCSI data showed.

The sultanate's daily average output was 5.9% lower at 1mn barrels per day (bpd) in the first two months of 2024 against 1.063mn bpd in the same period a year ago. The average daily production in February stood at 994,400 bpd, falling below 1mn mark after more than a year.

Earlier this month, Oman and other OPEC+ member nations agreed to extend their voluntary cuts to oil production through the second quarter of 2024. The move is part of the OPEC+ group's strategy to stabilise the oil market and prices by reducing supply.

Oman extended its additional voluntary cut of 42,000 bpd of



Oman's daily average oil production was 5.9% lower at 1mn barrels per day in the first two months of 2024 against 1.063mn barrels per day in the same period a year ago. Average daily production in February decreased to 994,400 barrels per day

crude oil until the end of June 2024, in coordination with some OPEC+ participating countries, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals had announced. This voluntary cut is in addition to the voluntary cut of 40,000 bpd previously announced by Oman in April 2023, which extends until the end of December 2024.

The decline in Oman's total oil production could have been much more significant if the sultanate had not substantially increased its condensate output, which is exempted from the obli-

gations of the OPEC+ agreement.

Oman substantially increased its condensate output during the past three years, reaching a new annual record in 2023. Total condensates production during 2023 jumped by 8.3% to 85.47mn barrels compared to 78.96mn barrels recorded in 2022, according to NCSI data.

Oman sold its crude at an average price of \$80.2 per barrel during the January-February period of this year, a decrease of two per cent from the \$81.8 per barrel average price achieved in

the corresponding period of 2023.

Oil exports to China, the biggest buyer of Oman crude, rose by 15.6% to 51.429mn barrels in the first two months of 2024. However, Oman did not export oil to India during the same period.

While crude exports to Japan fell more than 21% to just 1mn barrels during the first two months of 2024 from 1.267mn barrels a year ago, exports to South Korea remained zero during this period.



GCC businesses expect robust export growth in 2024: Survey

Dubai, UAE - Despite simmering geopolitical tensions, senior business executives in the Gulf region, particularly the GCC countries, are brimming with optimism, predicting 'double-digit exports growth' in 2024. To achieve this ambitious target, they are leveraging innovation and technology to navigate the complexities of global supply chains.

This forward-looking perspective emerged from a research programme led by Economist Impact and supported by DP World. Titled 'Trade in Transition', the study delves into the insights of trade experts and senior executives across the globe, providing a valuable snapshot of the current and future state of international commerce.

The study finds that as the UAE and Saudi Arabia undergo radical transformations to move away from fossil fuels, companies are focussed on diversifying networks and growing exports in new markets in 2024. They want to make their networks more varied, selling more products in new markets.

As many as 33% of surveyed GCC business leaders believe

that expanding operations in new markets will be the primary growth driver of exports for both economies. This, indicates the study, helps companies deal with problems, lower risks and make it faster to start selling in a new place.

About 57% of companies believe they will sell 10% more or even higher in 2024. Also, 40% of companies think they will buy 10% more or even higher.

Abdulla bin Damithan, CEO and Managing Director at DP World GCC, said, "As we navigate the evolving geopolitical and economic landscape in 2024, companies are aligning their strategies with initiatives like Dubai's D33 and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 to tap into new markets and boost opportunities in trade.

"Our research underscores the critical role of technology in strengthening supply chains and anticipating disruptions. Embracing emerging technologies is not only about overcoming challenges; it's about resilience, adaptability and a firm commitment to a future where innovation drives success."

WAM

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FORESIGHT

SYED ADIL ABBAS

Abbas, an MBA graduate from Cardiff Metropolitan University (UK), is currently based in Muscat, and has over 20 years of international experience working with the public and private sectors in the Middle East, Far East, Africa and India.

In today's technology-driven era, the increasing impact of smartphones and social media on our daily lives raises concerns about digital well-being. These devices and platforms, initially embraced for their connectivity and convenience, are now being scrutinised for their role in diminishing our ability to concentrate, undermining family interactions, and creating a dependency akin to addiction.

The gradual emergence of these issues has caught many by surprise, but the rapid progress of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has heightened the urgency to address them. Leading this effort is the European Union (EU), which is spearheading the development of the AI Act. This legislation, adopted by the European Parliament's Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection on February 13, 2024, is expected to be implemented in April 2024.

Upon ratification, the EU AI Act will become the world's first comprehensive law governing the use and advancement of AI. Meanwhile, other major economies such as the UK, the US, and China are pursuing diverse approaches to regulating AI.

We are now recognising the depth of influence algorithms have on our privacy, emotions, and even our grasp of reality. They can shape political outcomes, foster surveillance societies, and contribute to an economy where our attention, a finite resource, is the primary commodity. This realisation has sparked a consensus on the need to protect vulnerable groups, particularly children, from the pervasive effects

of screen addiction and exposure to harmful content.

Moreover, there is a broader conversation about fundamentally changing our approach to data ownership and control. The concept of decentralised systems, where individuals have control over their data and a 'kill switch' to disable monitoring or usage, is gaining traction. This approach promises to safeguard personal data from unauthorised access by hackers. However, developing such systems requires substantial investment and commitment from governments, companies, and consumers alike.

Observing these global trends and regulatory efforts are crucial for Oman. We can learn from these developments and proactively adopt measures to safeguard our citizens' digital well-being. Enacting laws concerning AI and establishing an oversight agency for monitoring tech industry practices, along with investing in public awareness campaigns about the risks of excessive tech use, and encouraging ethical design practices among local tech companies could enhance digital well-being.

Some quick measures could include restricting infinite scrolls on social media feeds, auto-play functions, and unsolicited notifications.

Additionally, exploring partnerships with international bodies can help Oman to stay abreast of global regulatory trends and technological advancements, ensuring that its citizens derive benefits from technology while remaining shielded from its potential harms.

DIGITAL WELL-BEING

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Press & Publishing

Air traffic surpasses pre-pandemic levels: ICAO

Montreal, Canada – In the first quarter of 2024, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) projected that global passenger air traffic levels will be around 2% higher than the pre-pandemic level in 2019, with airlines expected to sustain their operating profitability seen in 2023.

Demand this year is forecast to be around 3% above 2019 levels and could reach 4% if the pace of recovery strengthens in the routes that have not yet reached pre-pandemic levels. This translates to a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 0.5% over the 2019-2024 period.

“The commitment of ICAO’s member states to aligning their pandemic responses with the guidance developed by the ICAO Council has been crucial to the recovery of their air services,” remarked ICAO Council President Salvatore Sciacchitano. “The implementation of ICAO’s post-pandemic guidance is now equally crucial to ensuring the resilience and sustainability of this recovery.”

Global demand expressed in Freight Tonne-Kilometres (FTK) is forecast to be around 2% below 2019 levels for the full year 2024. This decline is mainly reflective of anticipated reductions in demand due to overall economic weakness worldwide.



Airlines’ 2023 total operating profits are estimated at \$39bn, in line with the 2019 levels

“The aspirational goals agreed upon by governments towards the decarbonisation of air transport by 2050 are supporting the environmental sustainability of the recovery and future development of the global air transport network,” remarked ICAO Secretary General Juan Carlos Salazar. “This is further driven by initiatives led by ICAO to accelerate

the development and implementation of the technologies, operational improvements, and cleaner aviation energies that decarbonisation requires.” He added that ICAO’s latest air traffic forecasts are promising for global development and a reminder that the global community must accelerate its sustainability efforts, particularly

to assure the production and deployment of sustainable aviation fuels in sufficient quantities. These forecasts come with the caveat that risks affecting international air transport do not escalate from current levels. ICAO’s latest analysis also reveals new insights into aviation for the previous year 2023, revealing that air traffic on most

Demand this year is forecast to be around 3% above 2019 levels and could reach 4% if the pace of recovery strengthens in the routes that have not yet reached pre-pandemic levels

routes had already reached or surpassed pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year. This is aligned with ICAO’s earlier prediction of an almost complete recovery of passenger air traffic, namely around 95% of 2019 pre-pandemic levels globally by the end of 2023.

The major regional routes which surpassed the 2019 levels by the end of 2023 are Intra-Europe; Europe to/from North America, Middle East, South West Asia and Africa; North America to/from Latin America and the Caribbean, South West Asia, South East Asia, and Pa-

cific; and Middle East to/from South West Asia and Africa. Most international Asian routes, except for those serving South West Asia, continue to have substantially lowered traffic levels in 2023 compared to pre-pandemic levels. Cargo traffic expressed as FTK in 2023 is estimated to be 3% below 2019 pre-pandemic levels reflecting the world economy. Despite high fuel prices and economic uncertainties, airlines’ 2023 total operating profits are estimated at \$39bn, in line with the 2019 levels. This profit is mainly due to increased passenger yields and productivity gains achieved by the industry. Similarly, compared to previous years, airlines in North America and Europe captured the majority of the industry’s profits. ICAO produces a Monthly Monitor that provides aviation stakeholders with access to comprehensive snapshots and in-depth analysis of economic and aviation indicators, empowering them with actionable insights to navigate the complexities of the aviation landscape. Through monthly updates and customisable features, the Monthly Monitor allows stakeholders to stay up-to-date on data that facilitates informed decision-making and strategic planning. WAM

UAE’s Masdar to acquire 50% stake in US renewable energy giant Terra-Gen

Abu Dhabi, UAE – Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (Masdar), the UAE’s clean energy powerhouse, announced that it has signed a definitive agreement to acquire a 50% stake in Terra-Gen Power Holdings II (Terra-Gen), one of the largest independent renewable energy power producers in the United States, from Energy Capital Partners (ECP).

ECP, a leading investor across energy transition, electrification and decarbonisation infrastructure assets, will fully exit its position in Terra-Gen in connection with the transaction. Igneo Infrastructure Partners (Igneo), a global infrastructure investment manager, will retain its existing 50% stake in the company. Igneo made its initial investment in Terra-Gen in December 2020.

Established in 2007, Terra-Gen is a leading independent provider of end-to-end renewable project development, financing and operating capabilities. Terra-Gen has a proven track record of developing, owning and operating assets across a large and diverse set of renewable technologies in the most attractive markets for renewables and storage. In the US Terra-Gen cur-



rently operates approximately 2.4GW of wind and solar, and 5.1GWh of energy storage facilities across 32 renewable power sites throughout the US, predominantly in California and Texas. This transaction will position Terra-Gen to continue building on the significant growth and transformation realised under ECP’s ownership and achieve accelerated long-term success as part of Masdar’s and Igneo’s portfolios. Masdar’s 18-year history of funding, developing, owning and operating clean energy projects around the world will support Terra-Gen’s ambitions to grow its

renewable capacity and portfolio in the US. One of the world’s fastest-growing clean energy companies, UAE-based Masdar first invested in the US energy market in 2019. Its US portfolio of utility-scale wind, solar and storage assets has a generating capacity of more than 1.4GW. The US market will play an important role as Masdar executes its plan to build a global renewable energy portfolio of at least 100GW capacity by 2030, and this proposed transaction represents another significant milestone towards that goal. Mohamed Jameel al Ramahi, Chief Executive Officer of Mas-

dar, said, “Our investment in Terra-Gen’s impressive energy portfolio expands our existing US footprint and reinforces Masdar’s long-term commitment across our US portfolio. This transaction unites one of the largest independent renewable energy producers in the US with Masdar – one of the fastest growing clean energy companies in the world. We look forward to working alongside Igneo as our valued partner to accelerate Terra-Gen’s growth and deliver world-class innovation at utility scale in support of the global energy transition.” Jim Pagano, CEO of Terra-Gen, said, “Terra-Gen is committed to developing responsible energy projects that benefit local communities and future generations. We have enjoyed a tremendous partnership with ECP, which allowed us to build a strong and resilient business positioned for long-term growth. As we look to build on our tangible pipeline of projects, we are excited to work with Masdar, a like-minded partner with a track record of commitment to decarbonisation and clean energy projects in the US and around the world.” WAM

Iran’s currency hits record low

Tehran, Iran – Iran’s currency fell to a record low on Sunday, plunging to 613,500 to the dollar, as its people celebrated the Persian New Year, according to an AP report. On Sunday, people were trying to exchange rials for foreign currency at Tehran’s main hub of exchange shops in Ferdowsi Street, but most were closed due to the Nowruz holidays, which are run from March 20 to April 2. The two-week holiday is an opportunity to travel abroad, driving demand for US dollars and Euros. The exchange rate strongly affects other markets, including housing and rentals. The price was 590,000 to the dollar on March 18, the last workday before the holiday. Many Iranians have seen their life savings evaporate as the local currency has depreciated. Today, it’s worth about one-twentieth as much as it was in 2015, when Iran signed a nuclear accord with world powers. Since then, it’s fallen from 32,000 rials to the dollar to the hundreds of thousands. In February 2023, it briefly reached a nadir of 600,000 rials to the dollar, and since then has not risen above 439,000. The government’s Statistics Center put the country’s inflation



rate for February 2024 at 42.5%, while Central Bank of Iran said it was more than 46%. There is no explanation for the discrepancy. Iran’s relations with the west have been at exceptional lows since then-US President Donald Trump abandoned a deal that called for the country to end its nuclear program in return for access to frozen funds and other benefits. President Joe Biden said he was willing to re-enter a nuclear deal with Iran, but formal talks to try to find a roadmap to restart the deal collapsed in August 2022. In the meantime, tensions in

the Middle East have increased significantly, making nuclear diplomacy with Iran more complicated. Iran has further angered Western countries by supplying armed drones to Russia that have been used in its invasion of Ukraine. Dire economic conditions have contributed to widespread anger at the government in the past, but have also forced many Iranians to focus on putting food on the table rather than engaging in high-risk political activism amid a fierce crackdown on dissent. [Source: Yahoo Finance]

Saudi Arabia approves new IMF regional headquarters in Riyadh

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – The Saudi Cabinet last week gave the International Monetary Fund (IMF) the green-light to set up a regional office in the capital Riyadh, the state-run Saudi Press Agency reported. The Saudi government and the International Monetary Fund signed an initial agreement for the office in 2022. The office aims to enhance the presence and collaborative efforts of the fund with Arab institutions, according to IMF Governor Kristalina Georgieva.



Mohammed Aljadaan, the Saudi finance minister, had also said that the office will develop a strong collaboration. Anadolu Agency

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SUMMARY OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023					
ASSETS	31.12.2023	31.12.2022	LIABILITIES	31.12.2023	31.12.2022
	(RO' 000)	(RO' 000)		(RO' 000)	(RO' 000)
1.CASH IN HAND	2,448	2,372	1.CAPITAL AND RESERVE	3,997	4,074
2.DEPOSITED WITH CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN	130	130	2.BORROWING FROM BANKS	-	987
3.PRECIOUS METALS	-	-	3.BALANCES DUE TO BRANCHES	-	-
4.BALANCES DUE FROM BANKS	1,597	3,539	4.BALANCES DUE TO MONEY-CHANGER	92	391
5.BALANCES DUE FROM BRANCHES	-	-	5.LOANS AND ADVANCES PAYABLE	-	-
6.BALANCES DUE FROM MONEY-CHANGER	14	14	6.CHEQUES AND DRAFTS ISSUED AND OUTSTANDING	-	-
7.CHEQUES AND DRAFTS PURCHASED-	-	-	7.OTHER LIABILITIES	1,232	1,877
8.LOANS AND ADVANCES	-	-			
9.INVESTMENTS	-	-			
10.FIXED AND INTANGIBLE ASSETS	588	485			
11.OTHER ASSETS	544	789			
TOTAL	5,321	7,329	TOTAL	5,321	7,329
WE CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE BALANCES ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH THE BOOKS AND RECORDS OF THE COMPANY AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023					
AL JADEED EXCHANGE LLC MGI VISION CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS					

Knowledge Oman and Techno sign collaboration MoU

Following the recent announcement of the community knowledge-sharing platform's founder return, and as part of its commitment to further strengthen the community engagement through strategic partnerships, Knowledge Oman has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Techno Plastic Industry, specialising in the manufacturing of plastic piping solutions, to collaborate on community engagement and social responsibility.

The signing ceremony was held on Tuesday the 19th of March 2024 at the Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC. The agreement was signed by Eng. Omar Ahmed Salim Qatan, CEO of Techno along with Tariq Hilal al Barwani, Knowledge Oman Founder, in the presence of its senior management and executives of both organisation, a press release said.

"Supporting community development and education as a whole is rooted in our Techno's core values. Knowledge Oman's commitment to enhancing learning opportunities and empowering individuals resonates deeply with our company's goals. It is indeed our honour to collaborate with Knowledge Oman on com-



munity engagements. This collaboration is a step towards achieving sustainability and social development for the country and what the company's leadership aspires to in conjunction with achieving the vision 2040," said Omar bin Sulaiman al Bahri, general manager of Commercial Affairs at Techno Plastic Industry.

"Quality community service

today without the presence of strategic partners may not be complete. Therefore, one of the aims of Knowledge Oman's new strategic direction is to form and work closely with like-minded organisations for the benefit of society. We are proud to partner and work closely with Techno to fulfill the mission," said Balqees al Hassani, president, Knowledge Oman.

The signing of the MoU marks an important milestone in the collaborative efforts of Knowledge Oman and Techno to leverage their combined resources and expertise for the betterment of the communities and the society as a whole. Building upon their shared values and objectives, the MoU solidifies their commitment to working together on a variety of commu-

nity-focused initiatives, and a dedication towards making a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and families.

As part the recent changes and development within the community knowledge-sharing platform, Knowledge Oman will be announcing new initiatives in April specifically aimed at enriching society with positive values.



So! Radio, 91.4FM nominated for New York Radio Awards

So! Radio, Oman - 91.4FM, the only dedicated classic rock station in Oman and the Middle East, has just been nominated for a New York Radio Award, making a monumental splash on the international broadcasting scene in less than a year.

Considered the 'Oscars' of the global radio industry, the New York Radio Awards recognise excellence in radio broadcasting across the globe. So! Radio's nomination places not only the station itself, but also Oman firmly on the world broadcasting stage, a press release said.

"Our mission was, and still is to bring the best classic rock music to Oman and the Middle East," said Eihab al Saleh, vice

chairman of Entertainment Network. "To be recognised by such a globally respected organisation alongside the world's best in a short time is truly humbling."

So! Radio 91.4FM fills a niche in the Omani radio landscape, offering listeners a soundtrack of legendary rock anthems. Since its launch, the station has quickly amassed a loyal following of listeners who crave the timeless energy of classic rock.

This nomination is a significant moment for Oman's media scene. It demonstrates the country's commitment to offering diverse programming that resonates with a global audience.

So! Radio, shares nominations alongside global stalwarts



Ooredoo organises Qaranqasho

Marking the 14th night of the holy month of Ramadan, Ooredoo recently organised a fun-filled, family-friendly Qaranqasho event for kids.

The event held at the Mall of Muscat proved hugely popular with families in Oman. With lots of entertainment, activities, gifts, and sweets, it drew a huge crowd to share in this special celebra-

tion during Ramadan, a press release said.

"As the Omani people observe the holy month of Ramadan, Ooredoo embraces the spirit of fasting, prayer, generosity, and community engagement. Our annual Qaranqasho event is one of our many programmes and events across Oman; and one which we know embraces

the spirit of the holy month and brings families together," said Feras al Shaikh, director of Branding and Communications at Ooredoo.

Celebrating two decades of giving back to local communities, Ooredoo has always put the community at the heart of everything it does and aims to give back in a meaningful way.

OOC General Assembly meets tomorrow

The General Assembly of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) will convene its regular meeting for this year on Tuesday, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel - Al Irfan, under the chairmanship of Sheikh Khaled Mohammed al Zubair, OOC president.

During the meeting, the minutes of the previous meeting of OOC General Assembly, held on March 28, 2023, will be ratified. The annual report will also be reviewed, which includes a report on the administrative situation and the committee's activities for the year 2023. Several events were organised domestically, notably hosting GCC NOCs presidents in Muscat in October last year, and organising the 'Step Forward' programme for female sports leaders, and the programme on the importance of physical activity and proper nutrition in Buraimi, Saham, and Salalah.

The Athletes' Forum, held in Salalah, Sur, and the Olympic Committee headquarters in Muscat, as well as the Sohar Walk event, and the Physical Activity Day event organised in Musandam Governorate, were also



highlighted.

Additionally, the report includes the major administrative actions and decisions taken by the Board of Directors, the Executive Office, and internal committees during their meetings throughout the year. It also includes reports and technical results of the committee's external participations, represented by the 15th Arab Sports Games held in Algeria from July 5 to July 15, 2023, and the 19th Asian Games held in China from September 23 to October 8 of the same year.

Furthermore, OOC activities and events for the current year

2024 will be discussed, including external participations such as the 7th Arab Women's Clubs Games held in the United Arab Emirates in February last year, and the 1st GCC Youth Games, which will also be held in the United Arab Emirates in April.

Additionally, the 33rd Summer Olympic Games (Paris 2024), the 1st Gulf Indoor Sports and Martial Arts Games, to be held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the 6th Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games, to be held in Thailand in November, will be discussed.

Also, an overview of the inter-

nal events and programmes approved by the Board of Directors to be held this year, such as Olympic Day, the approved programmes of Oman Olympic Academy for this year, and a range of sports, awareness, and social events included in the activity of the assisting committees of the Board of Directors, among others, will be discussed.

During the meeting, the financial statements for the fiscal year ending in 2023, the auditor's report for the previous year, and the proposed budget for the current fiscal year 2024 will be presented.



Special Iftar unites ahlibank employees, strengthens social bonds

Ahlibank recently held its Iftar staff gathering for the holy month of Ramadan, in the presence of Said Abdullah al Hatmi, CEO of Ahlibank.

With the aim of enhancing relationships and creating an at-

mosphere of intimacy and communication between team members outside of the official work environment, the Iftar was held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) and witnessed the presence of the

Bank's executive management and key personnel, a press release said.

This Iftar comes as an affirmation of the importance of strengthening social relations between employees away from

the daily work routine, and deepening the ties that bind them to work more efficiently. Having Iftar in the blessed month of Ramadan has become a valuable religious practice that enhances the belonging of individuals and

allows them to have a deeper spiritual connection during the holy month.

The annual gathering began with a welcome speech followed by a speech from Ahlibank's CEO, Said Abdullah al Hatmi. At

the event there was a raffle draw and fun, light-hearted contests that set the right mood for those in attendance, sharing in the spirit of joyous camaraderie.

Ahlibank believes in establishing strong and enduring relation-

ships with its most important capital - the human cadres. By engaging with the staff in an environment that promotes efficiency and creativity, the bank has invested greatly in an avenue of success.

MoE celebrates Down Syndrome International Day on March 21



The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Special Education and Continuous Learning and the School of Intellectual Education, celebrated Down Syndrome International Day, which this year comes with the slogan 'Ending

the Stereotype', under the patronage of artist Alia al Farsi, and in the presence of Dr Thuraiya al Rashidi, director-general of the Directorate-General of Special Education and Continuous Learning.

The celebration took place at

the School of Intellectual Education, coinciding with the celebration of the Down Syndrome International Day, which falls on March 21 every year in accordance with United Nations General Assembly Resolution, a press release said.

The ceremony included the inauguration of the logo of the School of Intellectual Education, which includes symbolic connotations of the mentally disabled students who need care until they gradually acquire skills with their own care. During the ceremony,



mony, the winning videos were shown in a competition to produce a video carrying a message for people with Down Syndrome, which was announced by the School of Intellectual Education. After that, the patronage of the ceremony, artist Alia Al Farsi, honoured the winners of the competition.

The celebration was accompanied by an exhibition aimed at highlighting the artistic works of students with Down Syndrome, and the presentation of the

Banan Student Company, which is concerned with printing students' drawings on fabric, in addition to the presentation of the 'With Us, Your Lesson is More Enjoyable' initiative, which is an initiative targeting students with mental disabilities, based on the principles of designing interactive electronic content, that begins with the analysis phase and ends with the production phase of interactive lessons in which the student is the focus of the learning process.

IKEA to host Qaranqasho

As the halfway mark of Ramadan approaches, Al-Futtaim IKEA, the leading Swedish home furnishing retailer in the region is inviting families and children to join a vibrant celebration of Qaranqasho, a cherished tradition amongst Omani and Gulf communities on March 25 from 7pm onwards.

Qaranqasho is a cultural celebration observed on the night before the 15th day of Ramadan, symbolising the midpoint of the holy month. Children wear traditional attire and visit their neighbourhoods, singing songs and collecting sweets and halwa from door to door. The name 'Qaranqasho' is derived from the sound of clashing shells, a tradition that has been followed for years, a press release said.

IKEA is transforming its store into a delightful village, where children aged 3 to 10 can immerse themselves in the joy of Qaranqasho. To enhance the experience, each child will also be provided with a bag for collecting candies and a map to guide them through.

Holy Qur'an contest concludes



Adam's Sons Holy Qur'an Competition held its twentieth edition under the patronage of H E Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari - Minister of Endow-

ments and Religious Affairs, along with other dignitaries, at Sharia Sciences College in Al Khuwair, on March 21. Registered participants reac-

hed 300 at various levels, a press release said.

The winners: Full Quran Hifz - Adham Hussain Mohamed, Quran Hifz 15 Juz' - Musa al Is-

maili, Tilawa (above 15) - Al-Tahir Ali Syed, and Tilawa (5 - 14) - Muhammad Shahryar.

The ceremony began with recitation of Holy Qur'an verses.



Health minister receives Iranian ambassador to Oman

Within the framework of the bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and enhancing cooperation in the health sector, H E Dr Hilal bin Ali bin Hilal al Sabti, Minister of Health, re-

ceived in his office at the Ministry's headquarters, H E Mousa Farhang, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman, on Sunday. During the meeting, friendly

conversations were exchanged, matters of mutual interest were discussed, besides ways to enhance cooperation between the two countries in the field of health.

MoE issues poetic anthems booklet

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Curriculum Development, issued a 'Afaneen' booklet of poetic chants, (Poetry chants from the Memory of the Omani Curricula), through which the Ministry aims to achieve a number of educational objectives, including providing various sources for reading for first-year students.

The booklet is also intended to be employed in classroom activities, as well as documenting the poetic texts included in the educational curricula in the Sultanate of Oman throughout the developmental stages that the Omani curricula went through for grades (1-4) to enrich students linguistically and culturally, a press release said.

The anthem booklet was classified according to school grades, and the presentation included the poetic text as stated in the schoolbook - without editing - documented by the school grade in which the anthem appeared, along with the date of publication



of the book.

The first-grade section included 48 hymns, the second-grade section included 36 hymns, the third-grade section included 30 hymns, and the fourth-grade section included 26 hymns. The chant booklet also provides meanings for some ambiguous vocabulary. The booklet was supported by a barcode of chant clips for some songs, and was included on the educational technology website.

OAB champions future workforce development

Oman Arab Bank, a leading financial institution in the sultanate, takes a significant step towards realising Oman's Vision 2040 by sponsoring the Dawam App, an integrated solution for employment and freelance opportunities.

This pioneering digital platform is designed to bridge the gap between talent and career opportunities, thereby catalysing the growth of Oman's economy, a press release said.

The Dawam platform, with over 150,000 users and 3,000 registered companies, plays a critical role in shaping a vibrant labour market. It offers a wide range of services, from connecting job seekers to potential employers to providing self-employment portals and training programmes. Dawam's effectiveness is evident in its 6,000 success stories and collaborations with over six educational institutions.

Suliaman al Harthi, CEO of Oman Arab Bank, said, "Dawam App is more than just a corporate initiative to us, it's a testa-



ment to our dedication to Oman's future. By supporting this platform, we are empowering the Omani workforce, especially the youth, to explore

diverse career paths and excel in their chosen fields. This aligns perfectly with our ongoing commitment to community development, as seen in our Ruwad al

Arabi internship programme and Launchpad initiative."

The collaboration between OAB and the Dawam App underscores a shared vision of eco-

nommic progress and workforce empowerment. It reflects OAB's broader strategy to invest in initiatives that nurture talent and promote digital innovation.

RISING OCEAN TEMPERATURES

Intense hurricanes, extreme weather expected in coming months

Istanbul, Turkey - As ocean temperatures hit new dangerous peaks, experts are warning the unprecedented levels of accumulated heat will trigger intense chain reactions, including deadly hurricanes and cyclones, over the coming months.

Recent reports have shown that oceans worldwide are now at their warmest ever.

The EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service found that sea surface temperatures were exceptionally high through most of 2023 and the beginning of 2024. At the end of February 2024, the daily average sea surface temperature reached a new absolute high of 21.09 degrees Celsius (69.962 degrees Fahrenheit).

Climate researcher Leon Simons told Anadolu that the emergence of an El Nino over the Pacific Ocean last year led to increased warming of oceans and the atmosphere, triggering changes in weather patterns.

"With the whole of the Atlantic Ocean record warm, that will increase temperatures, especially this year in the coming months ... With these higher temperatures, hurricanes can get stronger ... (and) you can have very heavy flooding like we saw in Libya, Greece and in many parts of the world last year," he said. The flooding, he explained, is because of increased rainfall, which happens when warm air cools down as it moves over land or especially elevated areas such as mountains.

Another climate researcher Joel Hirschi said temperatures in the Atlantic are 'exceptionally high'. "If these temperatures persist later into the year, past May-June into July into the hurricane season, that could favour a very active hurricane season, especially in conjunction with the El Nino that is waning," he said.

Why oceans getting warmer?



At the end of February 2024, the daily average sea surface temperature reached a new absolute high of 21.09 degrees Celsius

The unprecedented warming of oceans is a combination of greenhouse emissions, as well as a strong El Nino event that started last year and is still ongoing, said Hirschi, associate head of marine systems modelling at the UK's National Oceanography Centre.

The anomalously warm temperatures also have to do with atmospheric circulation, which is conducive to the development of 'marine heat waves', he said.

For Simons, a key factor apart from greenhouse emissions is the reduction in sulphur emissions, especially from shipping and coal-fired power plants.

"When we reduce air pollution, more sunlight can reach the oceans. The oceans are warming much faster, especially where this air pollution has been reduced in areas where a lot of shipping was happening," said

Simons, a climate researcher at the Club of Rome Netherlands.

He said the International Maritime Organization introduced in 2020 new regulation to reduce by 80 per cent the amount of sulphur in fuels used for shipping.

"Because there's now much less sulphur being emitted, much less sunlight is being reflected by this air pollution to space," he said, adding that this change has been visibly proven with NASA satellite data.

El Nino-La Nina transition

About the projections for coming months, Hirschi said the weakening El Nino will very likely switch to a La Nina.

El Nino and La Nina are both climate phenomena that originate in the Pacific Ocean but can affect weather worldwide.

We should prepare ourselves for a lot of unpredictable extreme weather because we are now in a situation where our planet hasn't been for millions of years

LEON SIMONS

An El Nino is when warm water builds up and pushes sea surface temperatures above average, while La Nina is the complete opposite, when cool water increases and drags down temperatures to below the average level.

They are two distinct phases of what is known as the El Nino-

Southern Oscillation, or ENSO, and can never occur at the same time.

"It is known that La Nina additionally favours conditions that are conducive for the formation of tropical cyclones over the North Atlantic," said Hirschi.

The areas likely to be impacted are Central American countries such as Belize, Honduras, and Mexico, along with the US, including southern areas like Florida, but also much of the East Coast, he said.

It could also go all the way to Canada and sometimes even curve back toward Europe, he added.

Hirschi said precursor signs of a La Nina event are building up in the Pacific.

"La Nina anomaly phases are when you tend to have droughts over South America and it gets wetter over Australia. So, La

Nina years are favourable for torrential rainfall over Australia and in the regions in the Western Pacific," he said.

A sort of positive effect of La Nina could be that ocean temperatures are expected to fall back a bit below the levels of 2023, he added.

Apart from hurricanes and cyclones, both scientists warned there will be more extreme weather events in the coming months.

One of them will be heat waves, which Hirschi pointed out are now more frequent and intense, with heat records being regularly shattered and not by 'a few tenths of a degree but sometimes 3, 4 or even 5 degrees'.

Simons called for steps to 'prepare ourselves for a lot of extreme weather in the months ahead'.

"We should prepare our-

selves for a lot of unpredictable extreme weather because we are now in a situation where our planet hasn't been for millions of years, with greenhouse gas concentration now higher than it has (ever) been," he said.

Eyes on the Mediterranean

Both Hirschi and Simons pointed out that the Mediterranean is another region that is warmer than usual at the moment. The Mediterranean had massive heat waves last year, said Hirschi, adding that there have also been 'severe marine heat waves' recorded in the region 'for more than 10 years in a row'.

There are higher chances of 'medicanes', he said, referring to a destructive weather phenomenon that scientists have previously warned will increase due to global warming.

The term is a combination of the words Mediterranean and hurricane.

"They're tropical cyclones, like a hurricane, like storms, that develop over the Mediterranean and ... can pick moisture and the heat of these warm ocean temperatures," Hirschi explained.

An example was Storm Daniel last year, which severely affected countries like Bulgaria, Greece and especially Libya with tragic consequences, he said.

The reason for the warmer Mediterranean over the past few years is the 'excursion of very warm air from Africa, pushing towards Europe, engulfing the Mediterranean' and forming so-called heat domes that then stayed for a long time, he explained.

Simons said the Mediterranean is also seeing the effects of rules enforced to control sulphur emissions.

By May 2025, they will further reduce these sulphur emissions which will cause even more warming, he said.

Anadolu Agency

US: Trump, Biden win primaries in Louisiana

Washington D.C., US - Former US president Donald Trump, continuing his winning streak in the race to the White House, registered victory in the Republican primaries in the state of Louisiana and Illinois on Saturday (local time), The Hill reported, citing Decision Desk HQ projections.

President Joe Biden won the Louisiana Democratic presidential primary, according to the projection from Decision Desk HQ.

As per the latest projections, both Trump and Biden are expected to win with over 88 per cent of votes.

There are a total of 47 delegates in the state of Louisiana.

Trump carried Louisiana in the 2020 election, bringing in 58 per cent of the vote, over Biden's 40 per cent. He also won the state in 2016 against former secretary of state Hillary Clinton. Earlier this week, Trump also won the Illinois Republican primary.

Notably, Trump has already achieved the required delegate threshold he needs to secure the Republican nominations, and his wins only add to his winning streak on the GOP side. Trump clinched the Republican nomination



US President Joe Biden and former president Donald Trump

tion for president on March 13, while Biden secured the Democratic nomination a day before.

The long-anticipated rematch of Trump and Biden is expected to mirror the 2020 campaign, though Trump will run this time under the spectre of 91 felony charges related to allegations that he plotted to overturn his 2020 election defeat, CNN reported. The charges included that he played a lead role in the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol, illegally took classified documents from the White House and covered up hush money payments to an adult film star ahead of the 2016 election.

Another looming concern for Trump is the approaching deadline to secure a half-billion-dollar bond to appeal his civil fraud case in New York, CNN reported, citing multiple sources. Trump's lawyers acknowledged on Monday that he was struggling to find an insurance company willing to underwrite his US\$454mn bond. Earlier this week, the New York attorney general's office has filed judgements in Westchester County, which is being considered the first indication that the state is preparing to seize Trump's golf course and private estate north of Manhattan.

ANI

Nearly 300 abducted children released in Nigeria

Kuriga, Nigeria - Nearly 300 schoolchildren kidnapped in Nigeria earlier this month have been released 'unharmd', CNN reported, citing the governor of the country's Kaduna state, Uba Sani, on Sunday. "The abducted Kuriga school children are released unharmd," Uba Sani said, without providing further details. Sani also thanked Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, who 'worked round the clock with us to ensure the safe return of the children'.

On March 7, more than 300 students were abducted by armed bandits on motorcycles who stormed the LEA Primary and Secondary School in Kuriga village, in Kaduna's Chikun district, the state's police spokesman Mansur Hassan said at the time of the incident, CNN reported.

ANI



Croatia reiterates support for Bosnia's EU membership

Belgrade, Serbia - Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan Grlic Radman said on Saturday that Bosnia and Herzegovina can count on his country's support towards European Union (EU) membership.

"The Government of the Republic of Croatia and Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic were the strongest proponents of Bosnia's European path, but such a thing would have been difficult to achieve if Bosnia had not implemented a series of important reforms on its own," said Radman on X after meeting with his Bosnian counterpart Elmedin

EU Council President Charles Michel announced on March 21 that it was decided to start negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina

Konakovic in the capital Zagreb. According to Radman, Bosnia's goal is now clearly a full membership in the EU. "The goal is now clearly visible

on the horizon, which is full membership in the EU. The path to it is complex, but it can ensure that the results of the reforms are sustainable and permanent and ultimately benefit BiH (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and its citizens," said Radman.

EU Council President Charles Michel announced on March 21 that it was decided to start accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina made its membership application on February 15, 2016, and received candidate country status on December 15, 2022.

Anadolu Agency

WAR ON GAZA

Israeli army storms Nasser, Al-Amal hospitals in Khan Younis, says PRCs

Gaza City, Palestine - The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) reported on Sunday that Israeli forces stormed the Nasser Medical Complex and Al-Amal Hospital in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip amid heavy gunfire.

"Israeli occupation vehicles are besieging both Al-Amal Hospital and Al-Nasser Hospital amidst very intense shelling and heavy gunfire," the society said in a statement.

"Occupation vehicles are currently surrounding Al-Amal Hospital and conducting extensive excavation work around the hospital," it added.

"All of our teams are in extreme danger at the moment and are completely immobilised," it also said, noting that its crews were unable to bury the body of their colleague Amir Abu Aisha in the hospital's backyard.

Earlier on Sunday, Israeli military vehicles suddenly entered near the Nasser Medical Complex, coinciding with a series of



Earlier on Sunday, Israeli military vehicles entered near Nasser Medical Complex, coinciding with a series of raids in various areas of Gaza City

Israeli raids in various areas of the city causing deaths and injuries, according to eyewitnesses. "Amir Abu Aisha, a member of the emergency op-

erations room of the Palestinian Red Crescent, was killed by Israeli gunfire while working inside Al-Amal Hospital," medical sources told Anadolu.

Thousands of displaced people took refuge in the Nasser Medical Complex escaping the Israeli military operations.

On February 15, Israeli forces

raided the hospital in a military operation that lasted 10 days, during which they killed dozens of displaced people, medical staff, and patients inside the

hospital, and arrested hundreds more, according to the Health Ministry in the enclave.

Israel has waged a deadly military offensive on the Gaza Strip since an October 7 cross-border attack led by Hamas in which some 1,200 people were killed.

More than 32,200 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have since been killed in Gaza, and over 74,500 others injured amid mass destruction and shortages of necessities.

Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice. An interim ruling in January ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

16 more detained in West Bank

At least 16 more Palestinians were detained in fresh Israeli raids in the occupied West Bank on Sunday, according to prisoners' affairs groups.

A child and former prisoners were among the detainees, the Commission of Detainees' Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoners Society said in a joint statement.

The arrests took place in the cities of Hebron, Bethlehem, Ramallah, East Jerusalem, and Tulkarm. "The arrests were marked by acts of sabotage and destruction of citizens' homes, in addition to severe beatings of detainees and their families," the statement said.

The new arrests brought to 7,755 Palestinians detained by the Israeli army in the West Bank since October 7, 2023.

Tensions have been running high across the West Bank since Israel launched a deadly military offensive against the Gaza Strip after a cross-border attack by Hamas on October 7.

At least 450 Palestinians have since been killed and 4,750 others injured by Israeli army fire in the occupied territory, according to the Health Ministry.

Anadolu Agency

Pro-Palestine demonstrations held across European cities

Istanbul, Turkey - Israel's attacks on Gaza were again protested in marches on Saturday in Vienna, Berlin and Dublin.

A solidarity march for Palestine was held in the Austrian capital to protest Israel's attacks on Gaza.

Demonstrators gathered on Mariahilfer, one of the major streets, and carried Palestinian flags along with banners that read: 'Urgent ceasefire', 'No to genocide' and 'Free Palestine'.

Speeches were brief due to heavy rain. Demonstrators demanded a ceasefire and unimpeded delivery of aid to Gaza, where a humanitarian crisis has reached alarming levels.

In Berlin, a rally was held as many gathered at Hermann Square to protest Israel's attacks on Gaza and show solidarity with Palestine.

Demonstrators then marched from Kottbusserdamm and Adalbert streets to Oranien Square. They had banners that read: 'Freedom for Palestine', 'Everyone has the right to life, freedom, and secu-



A pro-Palestine demonstration being held in Berlin on Saturday

urity - Palestinian lives matter', 'Stop the genocide and occupation' and 'Peace and justice for Palestinians', as protesters criticised the government for supplying weapons to Israel.

"Everyone with common sense should participate in this demonstration. We cannot remain silent in the face of such blatant genocide. People don't even have the opportunity to flee. That's why being here is my civic duty," Ellenora, who preferred not to give her last name, told Anadolu.

A protest was held at the Garden of Remembrance Park

in Dublin that was organised by the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign. It attracted a large number of participants.

Carrying Palestinian flags, demonstrators marched to St Stephen's Green Park.

They carried banners that read: 'Stop the genocide in Gaza', 'Ceasefire now' and 'Freedom for Palestine'.

Niall Greenan from the Mothers Against Genocide Association told Anadolu that '71 per cent of the Irish people want a ceasefire and an end to the ongoing situation.

Anadolu Agency

Qatar, UN explore ways to facilitate humanitarian aid access into Gaza

Istanbul, Turkey - Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman held talks in Doha on Sunday with UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths to discuss ways of facilitating the entry of humanitarian aid into the besieged Gaza Strip.

The talks dwell on ways to bolster regional and international efforts to reach an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and to facilitate an obstacle-free humanitarian aid access to Gaza, the state news agency QNA reported. Bin Abdulrahman, who is also a foreign minister, underlined the importance of the UN role in supporting efforts 'to battle the worsening humanitarian catastrophe and put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian brothers trapped in the Gaza Strip'.

Qatar, along with Egypt and the US, is mediating between Israel and Hamas to reach an agreement on a Gaza truce and hostage-prisoner swap.

Hamas, which is believed to be holding nearly 130 Israeli hostages, demands an end to Is-



rael's ongoing offensive on the Gaza Strip in return for any hostage deal with Israel.

Gaps in talks, says Israeli official

An Israeli official said on Saturday that there are 'gaps' in negotiations in Qatar on a prisoner exchange deal between Israel and Hamas. He said the US has offered a compromise accepted by Tel Aviv but is awaiting a response from Hamas.

The Israeli broadcasting authority quoted the unidentified 'senior' official who said the American proposal includes 'Israel's commitment not to assassinate senior Hamas leaders if they are expelled from the Gaza Strip, in exchange for an agreement that includes disarming the strip and the release of all prisoners held in Gaza'.

The proposal added the withdrawal of Israeli army forces from the enclave.

The official said the proposal 'is being promoted by the

United States as part of the stage following the deal to release 40 hostages in Gaza in exchange for a six-week ceasefire'.

He said negotiations are continuing on Saturday evening in Qatar. On Friday, an Israeli delegation led by Mossad chief David Barnea left for the Qatari capital of Doha, to participate in indirect negotiations with the Palestinian resistance group for a prisoner exchange deal, mediated by the US, Qatar and Egypt.

Anadolu Agency

'Intensive efforts' to reach ceasefire: Egypt

Cairo, Egypt - Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres discussed on Sunday efforts to reach an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

Sisi reviewed Egypt's 'intensive efforts' to reach an immediate cease-fire, exchange prisoners and allow access to sufficient humanitarian aid to Gaza, the Egyptian presidency said in a statement.

The Egyptian leader praised efforts exerted by Guterres to urge the international community to contribute to stopping the Israeli war on Gaza and his keen-

ness to adhere to international law and international cooperation law, the statement said.

"It's important for the UN Security Council to assume its responsibility related to the war in Gaza," he added.

He also warned of the grave consequences of halting funding to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA). "This is considered collective punishment of innocent Palestinians," the statement quoted Sisi.

The UN chief, for his part, hailed Egypt's regional role as a pivotal pillar of stability, according to the statement.

Anadolu Agency

Israeli opposition leader opposes draft conscription law

Jerusalem - Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid attacked on Sunday the draft conscription law that will be introduced later this week considering it a reflection of 'the most terrible government in the country's history'.

"The exemption bill that will be introduced this week is the face of the most terrible government in the country's history: lies, evasion of responsibility, discrimination between blood and blood," said Lapid on X.

"No shame," he added, noting that 'after six months of a painful war, the IDF (Israeli forces) is short of soldiers, and the government is offering an exemption from conscription for tens of thousands of young men'.

"This is a disgrace and any-



Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid

one who continues to sit in this government is a participant in this disgrace," he said.

Meanwhile, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant on Sunday disowned the exemption bill planned to be presented to the Israeli government on

Tuesday.

"I will not stand behind this bill and I will not support it," he said.

"There is still time to sit down together and draft a joint proposal," said Gallant, calling on Netanyahu and War Council

The exemption bill that will be introduced this week is the face of the most terrible government in the country's history

YAIR LAPID

Minister Benny Gantz 'to use the remaining time to form a consensus on the conscription law for the benefit of the Israeli army and the State of Israel'.

Recently in Israel, the conscription controversy returned to the forefront after the right-wing government led by Benjamin Netanyahu sought to approve a draft law excluding

ultra-Orthodox Jews from military service and increasing the period of compulsory service from 32 to 36 months.

The decision was met with widespread rejection from the opposition led by Lapid, who called for ultra-Orthodox Jews to perform military service like others.

The issue of recruiting ultra-Orthodox Jews who evade military service under the pretext of devoting themselves to studying the Torah has always been a thorny issue in Israeli society.

Israel's Chief Sephardic Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef has threatened earlier in March that ultra-Orthodox Jews will leave the country if they are forced to serve in the army.

Anadolu Agency

US vice president says Ukraine not involved in Moscow attack

Washington D.C., US - US Vice President Kamala Harris on Saturday rejected Russian President Vladimir Putin's insinuation that Ukraine could be involved in Friday's attack on a concert hall in the Moscow region that killed at least 133 people.

In an interview with ABC News Senior Congressional Correspondent Rachel Scott, Harris answered 'no' when questioned if Washington had evidence to back Putin's accusation.

"And first, let me start by saying what has happened is an act of terrorism and the number of people who've been killed is obviously a tragedy and we should all send our condolences to those families." "No, there is no, whatsoever, any evidence and, in fact, what we know to be the case is that ISIS-K is actually, by all accounts, responsible for what happened," she added.

At least 133 people were killed and 145 others were injured after gunmen opened fire as the rock band Picnic was about to perform at the Crocus City Hall, just west of Moscow. Authorities have arrested 11 people in connection with the attack, including four directly involved, according to the Federal Security Service.

Putin said all four people directly involved in committing the attack were arrested on their way to Ukraine, where 'a window' was prepared for their escape.



People lay flowers to commemorate victims of Moscow terrorist attack in St Petersburg, Russia on Saturday (Xinhua)

He did not directly blame Ukraine but also did not refer to the assessment by American officials that a branch of the Daesh/ISIS terror group was behind it. Meanwhile, officials in Ukraine, where Russia started a 'special military operation' two years ago, have denied any involvement in the attack.

The US, on Saturday, also 'strongly' condemned Friday's 'heinous' terrorist attack in

Moscow, as well as 'terrorism in all its forms.'

"The United States strongly condemns yesterday's deadly terrorist attack in Moscow," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

"We send our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those killed and all affected by this heinous crime," he said, adding: "We condemn terrorism in all its forms and stand in

solidarity with the people of Russia in grieving the loss of life from this horrific event."

'Purposeful massacre'

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday slammed Friday's shooting at the Crocus City Concert Hall in Moscow region as a 'purposeful massacre' aimed at sowing discord in society.

"The criminals, purposefully and in cold blood killed, shot our

citizens and our children at point-blank range," Putin said in a televised address to the nation on Saturday. "Like the Nazis, who once carried out massacres in the occupied territories, they planned to arrange a demonstrative execution, a bloody act of intimidation." In the wake of the attack, the president declared Sunday, as the day of national mourning. "I express my deep, sincere condolences to all those who lost their

loved ones. The whole country and our entire people are grieving with you," he said.

Putin said all four people directly involved in committing the attack were arrested on their way to Ukraine, where 'a window' was prepared for their escape.

"All four direct perpetrators of the terrorist attack, all those who were shooting and killing people, were found and detained. They tried to hide and moved towards Ukraine, where, according to preliminary data, a window was prepared for them from the Ukrainian side to cross the state border. A total of 11 people were detained," he said.

Russian special services are working to identify accomplices of assailants, he added.

Gunmen opened fire as rock band Picnic was about to perform at the concert venue just west of Moscow. The terrorists also used flammable liquid to set the hall on fire, which quickly spread at a huge area of almost 13,000 square meters.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak, meanwhile, said that his country has 'no slightest connection' with Friday's terrorist attack in Moscow. "Any attempts to connect Ukraine to the terrorist attack are absolutely untenable. Ukraine has not the slightest connection to this incident," Podolyak wrote on X.

Anadolu Agency

Slovakia headed for runoff in presidential election

Belgrade, Serbia - Slovakia will proceed to a runoff for presidential elections on April 6 as no candidate succeeded in getting more than 50 per cent of the vote in Saturday's elections.

Peter Pellegrini, a favourite of Prime Minister Robert Fico, will face off against pro-EU former Foreign Minister Ivan Korcok who scored a surprise victory in the first round of the election.

The results of the elections may influence the country's policy toward Ukraine as Fico's view received criticism.

Opposition parties want to balance the policies with Korcok.

Korcok, 59, seemed to be leading with more than 40 per cent of the vote.

He won 42.5 per cent of the vote, Pellegrini receiving 27.1 per cent, with 99.9 per cent of districts counted.

The presidential post in Slovakia is widely seen as ceremonial.

Nine candidates were competing for Slovakia's sixth head of state since independence in 1993.

Anadolu Agency



Over 40 Russian drones and missiles downed: Ukraine

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine claimed on Sunday that it downed over 40 Russian missiles and drones over multiple regions of the country during an overnight airstrike.

Mykola Oleshchuk, the commander of Ukraine's Air Force, said in a statement on Telegram that air defences shot down 18 Kh-101/Kh-555 cruise missiles and 25 attack drones overnight. The drones and missiles were downed over Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Sumy, Kyiv, Volyn and Lviv regions, Oleshchuk added. Serhiy Popko, the head of the Kyiv City Military Administration, described the attacks as the third massive missile attack on Ukraine in the last four days, and the second over Kyiv itself. Popko said the air alert in the capital lasted for more than two hours, and about a dozen missiles were downed as they entered Kyiv in groups

The drones and missiles were downed over Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, Odesa, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Kyiv, Volyn and Lviv regions

from the north.

In the Dnipropetrovsk region, Governor Serhii Lysak said heating networks and power lines were damaged due to falling debris in the city of Kryvyi Rih. Meanwhile, Lviv Governor Maksym Kozlytskyi said on Telegram that Russian drones and missiles attacked critical infrastructure in the region, resulting in a fire being put out by firefighters working on the spot.

Anadolu Agency

Somali security forces arrest 16 linked to deadly hotel attack

Mogadishu, Somalia - The Somali government announced on Saturday that security forces arrested 16 suspects in connection with the SYL hotel attack in Mogadishu.

The attack, which began with bombings followed by gunfire on Thursday, targeted the SYL hotel which is frequented by high-profile government officials and business people located near the presidential palace.

Information Minister Daud Aweis said in a statement on X that the suspects arrested include mastermind Abdinasir Dahir Nur and four others linked to vehicles used in the attack.

"Following extensive investi-



gation, security forces successfully captured the network responsible for the SYL Hotel terrorist attack," the National Intelligence and Security Agency

(NISA) said in a statement. "Justice will be served in court for all involved." The al-Qaeda-affiliated terror group, Al-Shabaab, claimed responsibility for the at-

Following extensive investigation, security forces successfully captured the network responsible for the SYL Hotel terrorist attack. Justice will be served in court for all involved

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE & SECURITY AGENCY

tack and said its terrorists stormed the hotel following bomb explosions and gunfire.

Security forces ended the siege after nearly 13 hours by killing the gunmen. Three soldiers were killed in the attack and 27 people were injured, including three MPs, according to police.

Somalia has been plagued by insecurity for years, with the

main threats emanating from Al-Shabaab and the Daesh/ISIS terror groups.

Since 2007, Al-Shabaab has been fighting the Somali government and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) - a mission authorised by the AU and mandated by the UN Security Council.

Anadolu Agency

Rising trafficking in persons, child recruitment in Sudan

Geneva, Switzerland - UN experts have expressed alarm about increasing reports of trafficking in persons, particularly women and girls, for purposes of sexual exploitation, as well as child recruitment in hostilities in Sudan.

As the humanitarian crisis already caused the mass displacement of over nine million people, the experts said in a statement that access to support for victims and survivors has reportedly deteriorated since December, eight months after the conflict between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces began in April.

"We are appalled by reports of women and girls being sold at slave markets in areas controlled by RSF forces and other armed groups, including in North Darfur," they said.

They also expressed concern about the increase in early and



forced child marriage, reportedly resulting from the separation of families, as well as gender-based violence, including rape and unwanted pregnancies.

About the recruitment of children by armed groups for any form of exploitation, including in combat roles, they said: "Despite previous warnings to both

Sudanese authorities and RSF representatives, we continue to receive reports of recruitment of children to actively participate in hostilities, including from a

neighbouring country."

The experts described such recruitments as 'a gross violation of human rights, a serious crime and a violation of international humanitarian law'.

"We call for accountability and effective investigation of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, as required by international law," they said.

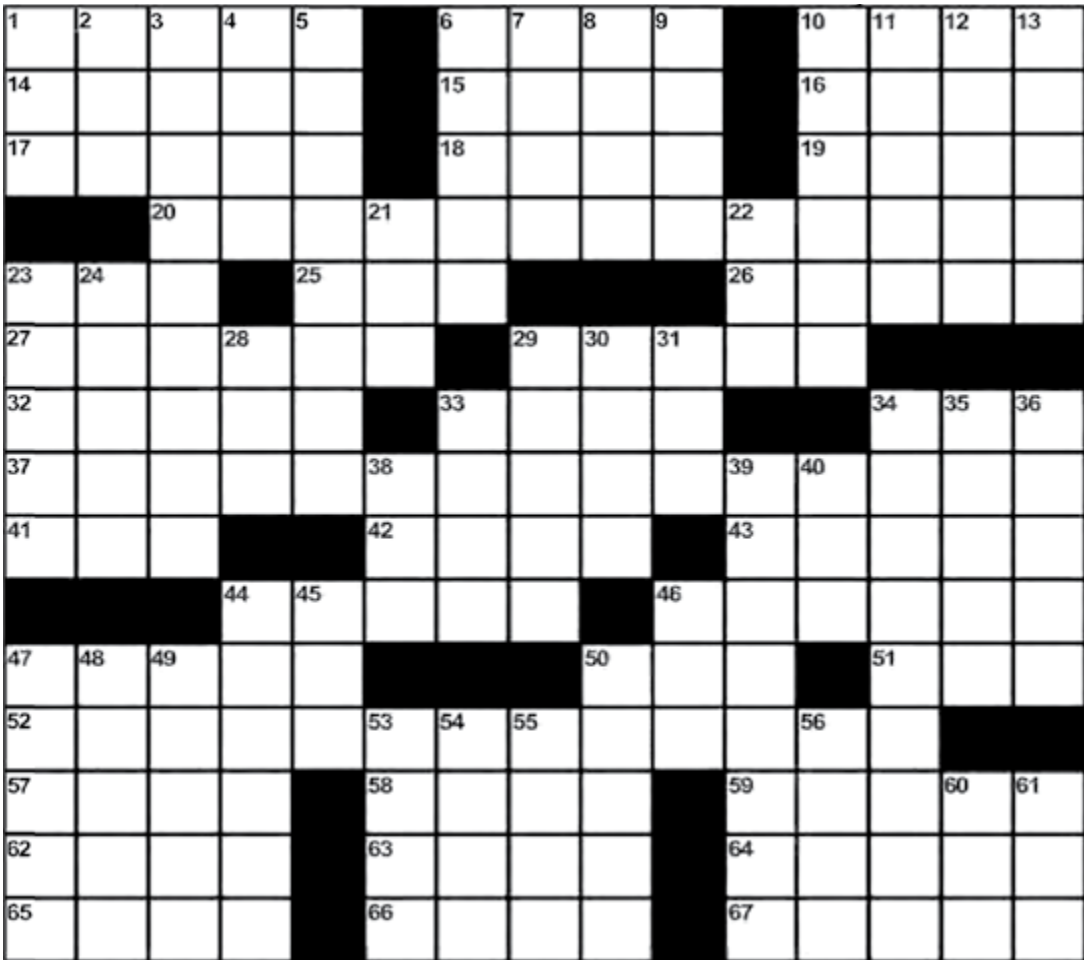
Sudan has been mired in fighting between the army, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who is the head of the ruling Sovereign Council, and the RSF.

At least 13,900 people have been killed and more than eight million displaced in the conflict that started in April 2023, according to UN figures.

Several cease-fire agreements brokered by Saudi Arabia and US mediators have failed to end the violence.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Ziti or cannelloni
- 6) Laborer
- 10) Many Monopoly props.
- 14) Have a home-cooked meal
- 15) Pro_ (in proportion)
- 16) Landlocked African country
- 17) Sweater letter
- 18) Cow-headed Egyptian goddess
- 19) Everyman
- 20) Required course for fathers-to-be?
- 23) Lawyers' org.
- 25) That fella
- 26) Aquamarine or emerald
- 27) Filmed a scene again
- 29) Waking up
- 32) More apt to deceive
- 33) "Wheel of Fortune" option
- 34) Words from the sponsors
- 37) Hemingway book, with "The"
- 41) Born as, for women
- 42) On the sheltered side
- 43) Character set for computers
- 44) Largest ray
- 46) Most fitting
- 47) Time's partner
- 50) European mountain
- 51) Degree in mathematics?

DOWN

- 1) Animal kept for companionship
- 2) "That feels g-O-O-d!"
- 3) Get out of the way
- 4) Michael Jackson backer, once
- 5) Poet's repetition for effect
- 6) Light reflector
- 7) Far from hard
- 8) "Narc" ending
- 9) Old Rambler manufacturer
- 10) Comparatively plenty
- 11) Courage under fire
- 12) Nostalgic work
- 13) Greek and Roman female oracle
- 21) "The_ and the Pendulum"
- 22) _Wan Kenobi
- 23) Fire-setting crime

- 24) The beauty of "Beauty and the Beast"
- 28) Clothes line?
- 29) Certain sleep problem
- 30) "Them" or "us"
- 31) Dynamite stuff
- 33) Shaker's contents
- 34) A movement upward
- 35) Certain worshipper
- 36) Doth speak
- 38) A Bobbsey twin
- 39) Came to pass
- 40) "To the max" suffix
- 44) Word with East or Ages
- 45) "... ideas?"
- 46) Nothing's opposite
- 47) Learn to fit in
- 48) Dungeons & Dragons player
- 49) Bye, in France
- 50) Spiny-leaved plant
- 53) Dundee miss
- 54) Nobel Institute city
- 55) Word with miss or catastrophe
- 56) "The Wizard of Oz" family name
- 60) Hairy copier
- 61) Society-page new-comer

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Boost your mood with some nice conversation today. Seek out a friend who's always good for a laugh and try to see them for lunch or dinner. Relaxing with one of your favorite people over some delicious food is just about the best way to make yourself feel happier and more content. Nothing heavy should go on today, so avoid making big decisions, signing any paperwork, or dealing with any legal documents. Keep the tone of your day easy and breezy.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

When you get yet another message from that overeager friend, it might be time to set some boundaries. This person has been getting a bit too greedy about your time, and if it's starting to bother you it's time to stop it. There's no reason you can't say no to their next invitation. If they ask why, you don't have to mince words, but do tell them that you need a break in a diplomatic and sensitive way. You need time to yourself and they need to understand that.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You know when someone is just telling you something you want to hear instead of being square with you, and today it's going to be quite obvious to you that someone who is all talk and no action is simply stalling for time. But if you can afford to give them more time, why don't you? They'll appreciate your compassion and owe you a favor in the future. You don't have to let on that you have this person's number. Leaving them in the dark will help you stay in control.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Let go of some power today. You don't have to be the one in charge in order to shape the way things evolve. Focusing on who is sitting behind the steering wheel is a huge waste of your time. What you should be focusing on is where the vehicle is headed. Give another person the platform to push their agenda, and you will quickly see that they were thinking about things in a more effective way. You aren't wrong. You're just learning that you're not right all of the time.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Nothing is for certain today, even the things you take for granted. And while this uncertainty could be uncomfortable, you could choose to see it as an opportunity. Today can be a good day or a bad day depending on what you choose to make of it. Missed that killer parking spot near the building? Wonderful! You get to enjoy a little more fresh air and exercise as you walk from the spot that's farther away. Your creativity enables you to make lemonade out of any lemons.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You've been attracting some flighty people who are looking to you to make the tough choices that they in fact need to be making for themselves. Today, their dependency on you is going to get on your nerves. It's tough to shove someone out of the nest, but it's time for some tough love. Let them know that while you care about them and support them, you cannot have this much responsibility in their life. They might not like what they hear, but you have to say it before they get too dependent.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Watch where you step this morning. If you maneuver yourself into the middle of a heated discussion, you might get burned. The argument between these people is going to be confusing for you. They don't seem to be trying very hard to come to an agreement. That's probably because there's something about the drama and friction that they love, and they don't want to stop. Your peacemaking skills are strong, but they are wasted on this duo. Move away.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You could encounter someone whose original way of seeing the world surprises you today. Whenever you experience new things like this, you know enough to slow down and take them in one detail at a time. Ask questions whenever you need clarity about what they're saying. Make no assumptions. This person has a different perspective on life, and while it might not be one that you agree with, it should be one that you respect and learn more about.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You can be everyone's hero today by solving all sorts of problems. All you need to do is use your own special brand of creativity to get the job done. From something as minor as a broken zipper to something as major as a missed deadline, you can easily master every little unpleasant surprise that comes your way. And the fact that you are so calm and confident will go a long way toward helping people trust you and give you the power you need.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You've been running around so frenetically that you have cheated yourself out of one or two special experiences. So slow down today or you'll miss the point of the life you are living. And your multitasking needs to come to a stop too. You've got to fully experience everything you are doing one hundred percent, whatever it may be. When you divide your attention, you devalue the experience. Focus.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Memories of someone you used to be in a relationship with are keeping you from moving forward in your life. Are you stuck in the past? While it's important to understand how old relationships can affect your new relationships, you run the risk of getting bogged down in nostalgia. Not much can get done when all you do is compare your current life to the life you used to have. Put away the photos and memorabilia and focus on moving on. Your future awaits!



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Someone's commentary will start to get on your nerves today. You're sick and tired of them beating around the bush trying not to offend anyone. You want them to choose a side, say their true feelings, and face up to the consequences. You can't control another person's behavior, but you can show them how you want them to behave. Demonstrate the type of direct communication you crave. They might be surprised by your boldness at first, but they will get the message.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. The archipelago of Indonesia was colonised for about 4 centuries as a major trade prize. When did it finally gain fully recognised independence?

- A. 1920
- B. 1949
- C. 1965
- D. 1812

02. If you do not have an instrument to measure angles, what are the most useful tools with which to draw a right angle?

- A. Slide rule and abacus
- B. Divider and protractor
- C. Opisometer and straight edge
- D. Compasses and straight edge

03. What is the main ingredient of hummus?

- A. Sesame seeds
- B. Rice
- C. Chickpeas
- D. Olive oil

Answers: 1.B 2.D 3.C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	L	T	I
T	B	I	S
H	E	S	R
E	E	D	B

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 Boggler 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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

LIGHTNING STRIKES

Wirtz scores in seventh second to help Germany beat France

Lyon, France - Florian Wirtz scored Germany's fastest international goal after seven seconds as the Euro 2024 hosts earned a confidence-boosting 2-0 friendly victory over France on Saturday to bag their first win in their last four games.

Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann was desperate for a good start to the year ahead of the tournament on home soil in June and that is exactly what he got.

Wirtz surprised the French with his long-range effort for his first international goal after a well-practised move and pass from Toni Kroos, back from a three-year international retirement.

The goal was a few hundredths of a second faster than the previous German best, Lukas Podolski's seventh-second goal against Ecuador in 2013.

The hosts gradually took control and Kylian Mbappe forced a fine save from Germany's Marc Andre ter Stegen to protect their lead in the 26th minute.

"We had a very good start and the kickoff was planned exactly that way," Germany's Nagelsmann said.



Germany's Florian Wirtz celebrates after scoring against France in their friendly match on Saturday

"It was important to protect the lead and after the break we improved further and carved out more chances.

"I am very satisfied with the way we fought. It is what we wish, to give it all every time.

"We got a confidence boost from this game. We are on a good path and played a very good game today."

France pushed for an equaliser with Ousmane Dembele and Adrien Rabiot but it was the Germans, under pressure to improve after only two wins in their last 10 matches before Saturday, who scored again.

Germany doubled their lead early in the second half with Wirtz picking out Bayern star Jamal Musiala with a cross and he cut back for Kai Havertz to finish the move.

France ran out of ideas in the second half and had to wait until late in the game for substitute Olivier Giroud to miss two chances before Germany defender Antonio Ruediger hit his own post as he tried to clear a ball.

"We weren't there, that's obvious," said France coach Didier Deschamps after his 150th game in charge. "The Germans played a high level match today. When we see our start to the match, with this goal, we are standing still.

"The Germans did things better than us. In terms of commitment and aggression, we were below. The first person to blame is me," he added.

Germany play the Netherlands on Tuesday when France face Chile.



Christoph Baumgartner

Austria's Baumgartner scores fastest goal in international football

Tehelne pole, Slovakia - Austria's Christoph Baumgartner scored six seconds after kickoff in a friendly against Slovakia on Saturday, the fastest recorded goal in international football.

The 24-year-old sprinted from the centre circle and skipped past three challenges before firing a low shot from outside the box past Martin Dubravka into the bottom corner. As Slovakia's home fans looked on in disbelief, Austrians in the away section at the Tehelne pole stadium in Bratislava celebrated as the RB Leipzig midfielder was mobbed by his teammates.

"We've done this variation before, sprinting from kickoff

It's really cool, I'm very happy. The fact that I hit it like that... it's sensational

CHRISTOPH BAUMGARTNER

at full risk.

"The sequence of steps somehow worked out so that I made the run," Baumgartner told Austrian public broadcaster ORF after the game which his team won 2-0.

"Of course, it's really cool, I'm very happy. The fact that I hit it like that... it's of course sensational."

This is just the start of our work, says Brazil coach Dorival after win

London, England - Brazil coach Dorival Junior said a 1-0 victory over England at Wembley on Saturday in his first match in charge represented only an initial step towards turning around the dip in form of the five-times World Cup winners.

Brazil are sixth in their South American qualifying group for the 2026 World Cup after a slump in form that cost Fernando Diniz his job as manager this year.

"It's a really special moment, for sure," Dorival told reporters. "On only a few occasions has a Brazil side won in England which must say something about us. But we must not lose sight of the fact that this is just the start of our work."

Former Sao Paulo coach Dorival, who replaced Diniz, has had to grapple with a spate of injuries to key players and he handed debuts to five members of his starting 11 against England.

"I have a lot of trust in these boys," he said. "I am hoping for a lot more from this team, but I think this shows what we are ca-



Dorival Junior

It's a really special moment, for sure. I have a lot of trust in these boys. I am hoping for a lot more from this team, but I think this shows what we are capable of going forward

DORIVAL JUNIOR

pable of going forward."

Brazil secured the victory courtesy of an 80th-minute winner by 17-year-old substitute Endrick who became the youngest male player to score in a senior international match at Wembley.

"If he keeps up the attitude he has shown up to now, he will be a very important name in Brazilian football and world football," Dorival said when asked about the teenage prodigy who is due to join Real Madrid from Palmeiras in July.

Teenage prodigy Endrick on target as Brazil edge past England in friendly

London, England - Seventeen-year-old prodigy Endrick scored his first goal for Brazil to give the struggling South Americans a 1-0 win over England at Wembley in coach Dorival Junior's first match in charge.

Substitute Endrick, who is due to join Real Madrid from Palmeiras, struck in the 80th minute when he tapped into an empty net after England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford could only parry a shot from Vinicius Jr.

The goal meant he became the youngest male player - at 17 years and 246 days - to score an international goal at Wembley.

"It's a unique feeling. I'm still processing it," Endrick told Brazil's Globo television. "I'm not much of a crier, I'm holding back, but it's something unique and I'm very happy."

The South Americans, who have struggled in their World Cup qualifiers and gave debuts to five players in their starting 11 due to injuries to key players, created most of the best chances



Brazil's Endrick celebrates after scoring against England

including Lucas Paqueta hitting the post in the 35th minute.

England, themselves missing captain Harry Kane and other regulars, barely tested Bento who was making his first appearance for Brazil in goal, despite coach Gareth Southgate opting

for an attacking line-up as he prepared for Euro 2024.

Aston Villa forward Ollie Watkins, leading the attack in Kane's absence, struggled to make an impact and England's best opportunities fell to Anthony Gordon of Newcastle

United.

The match appeared to be heading for a stalemate until Endrick's breakthrough. The teenager came close to scoring again in the dying seconds when he was through on goal but Pickford saved with his feet.

Tunisia lose to Croatia on penalties in friendly

Cairo, Egypt - World Cup semi-finalists Croatia needed a penalty shootout to beat Tunisia following a 0-0 draw in a friendly on Saturday.

Keeper Ivica Ivusic, who replaced Dominik Livakovic in the second half, came to Croatia's rescue with three penalty saves as his side prevailed 5-4 after the game went to a shootout.

Seifeddine Jaziri had a chance to win it for Tunisia in sudden death but Ivusic blocked his tame effort. The Cypriot-based keeper saved the decisive penalty from Oussama Haddadi. Croatia will face Egypt in the final of the four-

team tournament on Tuesday after the hosts defeated New Zealand 1-0 on Friday. The tournament is part of FIFA's new series of friendly games introduced to allow teams from different confederations to play each other.

Tunisia's defence restricted a star-studded Croatia side featuring the likes of Luka Modric and Mateo Kovacic to few chances.

Although Croatia had territorial dominance, it was Tunisia who created the game's best chances on the break in an otherwise drab affair.

Hamza Jelassi had a goal disallowed for a marginal offside

and Ali Abdi fired over the crossbar from a good position in the first half. The best opportunity fell to Tunisia substitute Sayfallah Ltaief, who headed over the bar with the goal at his mercy in the 77th minute.

Ivory Coast held

Oumar Diakite scored a second-half equaliser to spare the blushes of newly-crowned African champions Ivory Coast who were held to a 2-2 draw by Benin in a friendly in Amiens, France on Saturday.

It was a first game for coach Emerse Fae since his side lifted

the Cup of Nations title on home soil last month, but they had to come behind twice to draw after a lacklustre performance.

Benin midfielder Junior Olaitan opened the scoring before winger Max Gradel equalised just before the half-hour mark. Olaitan's second goal put Benin on course for victory before Diakite equalised again after 69 minutes.

Ivory Coast play Uruguay in a friendly in Lens on Tuesday, another opportunity to build towards the resumption of 2026 African World Cup qualifiers in June.



Croatia's Bruno Petkovi battles for the ball with Tunisia's Hamza Jelasi (L) and Dylan Bronn



MIGHTY SAMSON

Captain makes unbeaten 82 while Boult stars with the ball as Royals overpower LSG

Jaipur, India - Sanju Samson led from the front with an unbeaten 82 from 52 balls as Rajasthan Royals opened their IPL campaign with a hard-earned 20-run victory over Lucknow Super Giants in Jaipur.

After winning the toss for his team, Samson's knock was the mainstay of Royals' imposing 193 for 4, and a tight contest hadn't seemed remotely likely when Trent Boult and Nandre Burger reduced LSG to 11 for 3 in the first four overs of their reply.

However, KL Rahul - on his return from injury - teamed up with Nicholas Pooran to take the chase deep in a fifth-wicket stand of 85 from 52 balls that ended from the first ball of the 17th over, as Sandeep Sharma popped up with a priceless spell of death bowling that left LSG with too much to do.

With 38 still needed from 12 balls, Sandeep's penultimate over was arguably even more important, as he limited the hard-swinging Pooran to just a brace of boundaries in an 11-run over, al-



Sanju Samson of Rajasthan Royals celebrates his 50 against Lucknow Super Giants on Sunday

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lowing Avesh Khan to close out the contest with ease. Pooran finished unbeaten on 64 from 41 balls.

Samson certainly knows how to launch an IPL campaign in style. For the fifth consecutive IPL campaign, dating back to 2020, he opened Royals' account with a half-century, this time in an innings featuring three fours and six sixes, the best of which - from the penultimate ball of the innings - was a formidable inside-out drill over extra cover from Mohsin Khan.

The bulk of Samson's work was done in the course of a 93-run stand with Riyan Parag, that spanned 62 balls and bridged a potentially tricky period at the end of the powerplay.



Andre Russell

Russell trumps Klaasen as KKR hold on for win

Kolkata, India - Heinrich Klaasen of Sunrisers Hyderabad very nearly stole victory away from Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens on Saturday, but the 22-year-old Harshit Rana successfully defended 12 off the final over to take KKR over the line in a last-ball thriller.

With momentum on their side, Sunrisers had a dream start to the 20th over when Klaasen pulled Harshit for six over square leg. But the seamer followed it up with two singles, two wickets and one dot in the next five balls to seal the deal.

Earlier, it was Sunil Narine's 1 for 19 in four overs on a batting-friendly surface - the spell included zero boundaries - which kept Sunrisers quiet through the middle overs. His economy of 4.75 was a complete outlier on a surface where bowlers, whether experienced or not, went for a lot. That had given KKR the upper hand with three overs to go, with Sunrisers needing 60 in 18 balls. But Klaasen's 29-ball 63, laced with eight sixes, dragged Sunrisers back into the contest.

KKR also had Andre Russell, Phil Salt and Ramandeep Singh to thank for their first-innings score of 208. From 51 for 4, the hosts rebuilt courtesy Salt's 40-ball 54 on KKR debut and a 17-ball 35 from Ramandeep. Russell put the finishing touches to the KKR innings by smacking seven sixes in his 25-ball, unbeaten 64.

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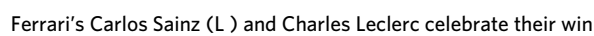
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"We are all one team and that DNF hurts everybody in the same way," Red Bull boss Christian Horner told reporters. "It's a mat-



pen. The driver said his car had felt fine during the formation lap but the right rear brake was stuck from the start of the race.

the tyres, manage everything, and it wasn't the toughest race of all. "But very happy, very proud of



Norris now has the most podiums (14) without a win in F1.
Leclerc recorded the fastest

Red Bull's Sergio Perez, who finished fifth, is one point further

Verstappen started on pole

The 26-year-old said he was basically driving with the handbrake on from the start.

Ukrainian players have been refusing to shake hands with



With the win Kalinina moves into the round of 16, where she will face Kazakhstan's Yulia

"I just believe that I have abilities to play on any surface, especially here where it's a little bit slower usually."

SIMPLE | SECURE | SWIFT



Sinner shrugged off the loss saying Miami would be a fresh start, which began with a breezy 6-3, 6-4 workmanlike win over fellow Italian Andrea Vavassori.



Carlos Araujo fixes a landscape sound recorder in a forest



The recorders captured one minute of landscape sound every 10 minutes and generated about 3,000 days' worth of recordings. "A lot of data to sift through"

Carlos Araujo

The purple-winged ground dove hasn't been seen in 38 years. Researchers are hoping its song may help track it down

The last sighting of the purple-winged ground dove (*Paraclaravis geoffroyi*) — a small, bamboo-loving dove native to the South American Atlantic Forest in Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay — was in 1985. But, researchers wondered, was it possible to capture the elusive bird's sound in the wild to find out if any of the species are left?

It's not an unheard-of idea. Scientists have used bioacoustics — a subfield of ecology that relies on sound to make environmental analyses — for everything from recording dolphins' communication patterns to studying bats from afar to avoid virus spillover from humans.

With artificial intelligence, it is now possible to use large audio datasets to train algorithms to spot different animal sounds within the cacophony of a natural background. But the problem is that recordings of the purple-winged ground dove singing are as rare as the bird itself.

"I came across [the bird's song] watching a 1985 interview with Carlos Keller, a former bird breeder in Sao Paulo state, who had a few individuals of the dove," says Carlos Araujo, an ecologist at the Instituto de Biología Subtropical at the Universidad Nacional de Misiones in Argentina. "And they sang while he spoke."

With Keller's help, Araujo and colleagues accessed the decades-old recording and isolated the bird's song.

The next challenge was to see if it was even possible to identify individual bird songs amidst the sounds of other birds chirping, leaves rustling, rain falling, in-

sects whirring and gnawing and larger animals moving through the forest.

"We took a step back and did some analyses with other birds that are critically endangered but there are known individuals," Araújo says. The team focused on three species found in Foz do Iguaçu, a national park that straddles the border of Brazil and Argentina — the cherry-throated tanager (*Nemosia rourei*), the Alagoas antwren (*Myrmotherula snowi*) and the blue-eyed ground-dove (*Columbina cyanopis*). These birds live in the same environments as the purple-winged ground dove. And the blue-eyed ground dove's story inspires hope — The species went missing in 1941 and was rediscovered in 2016.

The researchers installed 30 recorders in strategic spots along green areas in the Brazilian part of Foz do Iguaçu and recorded from July 2021 to April 2022. They also used data from another 100 recorders on the Argentinian side of Foz.

"We went looking for the *Guadua trinii* bamboo to place the recorders," says Benjamin Phalan, Head of Conservation at Parque das Aves, a private institution in Foz do Iguaçu focused on the conservation of Atlantic Forest birds. Like the purple-winged ground dove, three bird species follow the flowering season of the *G. trinii* bamboo, which happens about once every 30 years.

The team pushed through thickets of bamboo, braved ticks and biting flies, and watched out for venomous snakes such as jacaracas pit vipers. "Bumping into these snakes is rare but can happen. So we use galoshes or gaiters to protect us in case anyone steps on a snake or near it," Phalan says.

The recorders captured one minute of landscape sound every 10 minutes and generated about 3,000 days' worth of recordings. "A lot of data to sift through," says Araujo.

Readily available analysis software wouldn't work. These software, Araujo says, "need a lot of data input. With such rare species, we just don't have that much data to train the identification algorithm."

So, the team started from scratch, working with the little data they had for the three endangered birds. First, Araujo created a signal template — exactly like the birds' singing — based on just a few recordings. The algorithm then compares that template with the soundscape recordings, separating signal from noise. If it spots a sound that is similar to the template, chances are that it is the bird that the researchers are looking for.

The method relies on a statistical model "that is not new, but was used in a very clever and unusual way," says David Donoso, an ecosystem ecology researcher at the Technische Universität Darmstadt in Germany. Donoso and colleagues recently used bioacoustics to investigate the recovery of Choco, a biodiversity hot spot in Ecuador that had been transformed in an agricultural area.

There are different approaches to bioacoustics depending on what you're looking for, Donoso says. "You can either use fewer recordings to map a whole animal soundscape to tell what species are there, like we did, or you can use lots of recordings to look for a single sound pattern," he says. The study at Foz do Iguaçu "shows that you can use a relatively simple model to answer a complex question — and it works."

The tool worked reasonably well to identify the cherry-throated tanager and blue-eyed ground-dove singing, but not so much for the Alagoas antwren, Araujo's team reports October 23 in *Bioacoustics*. "We're trying to understand what happened, but we know that the algorithm works," he says.

The next step, Araujo says, is to refine the algorithm's precision to find the Alagoas antwren and train it to look for the purple-winged ground dove. And they will do so at the same time. "We're aiming at both goals at once because we're running against the clock to find these birds," Araujo says. "In the end, we are looking for a ghost." But not a silent one, he hopes.

(Courtesy: sciencenews.org)

IN SEARCH OF A...

Winged ghost



GETAWAY TO VIENNA



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A city of cultural wonders, culinary thrills, and open-air delights, Vienna is a must-visit destination whether travelling with friends or family, or embarking on a solo trip.

Just a six-hour flight from Dubai, Vienna, the Austrian capital, is within easy reach of the GCC, and considered perfect for a quick Eid Al Fitr getaway.

Dining options

On Thursday evenings, Vienna's cultural and culinary riches combine when the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna hosts its weekly Dinner at the Museum. This unforgettable experience includes a five-course menu served in the grand domed hall, followed by a tour of the museum. Throughout the week, you can also get your culture and culinary fix at the chic cafe-restaurants in the Naturhistorisches Museum Vienna and the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.

Take a seat at some of Vienna's prime tables to enjoy postcard-perfect views with your meal. On the sixth floor of the Do & Co Hotel, nab a window-side table at ONYX Restaurant, where the colourful tiles and lofty spire of St Stephen's Cathedral provide a striking backdrop to your contemporary Asian dinner. To take in all of the city's major sights, from the Giant Ferris Wheel to the Karlskirche (Church of St Charles), hightail it to DAS Loft, a restaurant on the 18th floor of SO/ Vienna. Indulge in classic Viennese cuisine with inspiration from across the world and sip on drinks with a twist as you marvel at the spectacular views of Vienna.



Explore, enjoy

Pedal through Prater - Vienna's iconic Prater park is the perfect starting point to embrace the city's idyllic Spring weather. Hire a bicycle to explore the sights, riding along shady, car-free paths. From the Praterstern, pedal along a four-kilometre route to the turnaround point at the Lusthaus, with an array of places to branch off along the way. Explore waterways, nature reserves, the Jesuitenwiese playground, Ernst Happel Stadium (Austria's biggest stadium), the architecturally striking

Vienna University of Economics and Business, and the Stadionbad swimming pool, perfect for cooling off on a hot day.

Open-air adventure - A destination in its own right, the Wurstelprater amusement park is home to 250 stands and attractions, from the iconic 65m Giant Ferris Wheel and traditional merry-go-round to ultra-modern highlights such as the Ejection Seat, which propels you to dizzying heights of 90m. Fun-filled events include Family Sundays, Vacation Games and

Prater Fairs throughout the season. For a behind-the-scenes tour, take a Prater Adventure Tours, then refuel at the 60-plus cafés, restaurants, and ice cream and snack stands dotted throughout the park.

Memorable stays

Boutique appeal - In the heart of the city, opposite the lush expanse of Stadtpark, Almanac Palais Vienna is a boutique 5-star hotel with 31 chic rooms and 80 beautiful suites. Set within a pair of historic buildings, this

thoughtfully designed retreat is rich with Viennese charm and refined luxury. The hotel's Donnersmarkt Restaurant offers an inventive take on Austrian Alpine cuisine, with a plant-forward menu inspired by Vienna's traditional weekly markets. The Almanac's serene spa is the perfect place to unwind after a day spent wandering Vienna's vibrant streets and museums.

Just a few steps from St. Stephen's Cathedral, The Leo Grand is an exercise in Baroque opulence, with 76 elegant

rooms and suites in a heritage-listed building. A celebration of individuality and contemporary indulgence, this lavish space pays homage to the eccentric, larger-than-life and art-loving Emperor Leopold I (1640-1705), who is a constant presence in the art-filled hotel. The Leo Grand's character also extends to DOTS, its dynamic day-to-night café in the central courtyard.

Easy transport

To unlock all that this vibrant city has to offer, purchase a Vienna City Card. Available for 24, 48, or 72 hours, this card is your key to using the Vienna public transport system, and it also gives you discounts of up to 50% on more than 310 attractions, including guided tours, gallery tickets, concerts, events and more. Prices start at €17 for 24 hours, and one child under the age of 14 can travel for free with each VCC.

The good life

Austria's capital of Vienna is consistently ranked as the city with the highest quality of life for the 10th consecutive year by the Mercer Study, providing its residents, expatriates and visitors with high security, seamless public transportation, a wide variety of cultural and arts institutions, and a staggering 53% of the city serving as public green space.

The Vienna Tourist Board, founded in 1955, is the official destination marketing service provider for the tourism sector of the city. It promotes the city worldwide and provides many services, tips, resources and information for Viennese businesses, residents and visitors.

(For further information, visit www.b2b.vienna.info)



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