

Remote learning announced today



(Supplied photo)

Sur most affected in last two days, records 92mm rain

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Effects of the tropical depression impacting Oman's weather will continue on Wednesday, albeit with reduced intensity and lighter rain. However, remote learning has been activated in public and private schools and higher education institutions across Muscat, North Sharqiyah, South Sharqiyah, Dakhliyah, North Batinah, South Batinah and the mountainous areas of Buraimi and Dhahirah on Wednesday.

The wilayat of Sur was the most affected on Monday and Tuesday, recording 92mm of rain. Elsewhere, Jalan bani Bu Ali received 82mm, Qalhat 57mm and Ras al Hadd 52mm.

No accidents related to adverse weather conditions were reported by authorities, except

for a few cases of vehicles getting caught in flowing wadis.

According to Civil Aviation Authority, analyses from the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre indicate that while the tropical condition will continue to affect several governorates, the amount of rain is expected to decrease. In North Batinah, South Batinah, Dakhliyah, Muscat, Dhahirah and Buraimi, rainfall is projected to range between 20mm to 50mm on Wednesday. Dhofar will receive between 10mm to 30mm.

Effects of the tropical depression are expected to linger on Thursday although its intensity will diminish. Rainfall in Dhofar, particularly in the mountainous regions, is anticipated to be between 10mm and 30mm, similar to levels in Al Hajar mountains.

H M issues Royal Decree

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal Decree No 45/2024 on Tuesday promulgating the Law on Regulating Trade in Wildlife after presenting the same before the Council of Oman.

Article 1 states that the provisions of the law attached to this decree will be enforced.

Article 2 states, 'The Chairman of Environment Authority will issue the Executive Regulation of the attached law, as well as necessary measures and decisions to implement its provisions. Till such time, the existing regulations and decisions will continue to be implemented without prejudice to the provisions of the attached law.'

Article 3 stipulates, 'Those subject to the provisions of this law must adjust their status in accordance with its provisions within six months from the date of its enforcement.'

Article 4 cancels all that contradicts the law attached to this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article 5 states that this Royal Decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced the day following its publication.

Historic EU-GCC summit to mark new era of cooperation

Brussels, Belgium - Oman will participate in the first EU-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit set to take place in Brussels on Wednesday. The sultanate's delegation will be led by H H Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Special Representative of His Majesty the Sultan.

The summit will bring together heads of state from both the EU and GCC. Discussions will focus on enhancing cooperation in various areas, including trade, investment, energy and climate change, as well as addressing geopolitical challenges such as

the conflict in Ukraine and tensions in the Middle East. It is the first time that leaders from both blocs will meet on one platform.

The summit comes amid heightened global tensions, with the Israeli army's ongoing assault on Gaza, the conflict spreading to Lebanon and the Russian-Ukrainian war continuing for more than two years. These developments have made Gulf-European cooperation crucial for diplomacy, stability and potential solutions to these crises.

GCC Secretary-General Jasem Mohamed al Budaiwi emphasised the historical partnership between the two blocs. "This



THIS SUMMIT IS THE CULMINATION OF A STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP THAT BEGAN OVER THREE DECADES AGO

JASEM MOHAMED AL BUDAIWI

summit is the culmination of a strategic relationship that began over three decades ago," he said. He added that discussions would cover a wide range of topics, including the waiver of Schengen



visa for Gulf citizens, which the EU recognises as key to expanding cooperation.

Europe is a major trading partner for the Gulf, with oil and gas exports playing a significant role

in meeting Europe's energy needs. In return, Gulf countries benefit from European technology and expertise in infrastructure, education and advanced industries. Trade between the two reached US\$204.3bn in 2022, with Gulf exports to EU accounting for US\$106.3bn and imports from Europe at US\$98bn. Foreign direct investment between the EU and GCC has also grown in the last decade with the EU investing US\$233.6bn in the GCC by 2022 and US\$177.8bn the other way around.

H E Rawa bint Issa al Zadjali, Oman's Ambassador to Belgium and Head of Mission to the EU,

described the summit as a "milestone in the strategic partnership between the GCC and EU".

The EU and GCC are also negotiating a free trade agreement, which could further boost cooperation. The summit is expected to advance talks on renewable energy, with particular focus on clean energy and green hydrogen, an area where Oman has signed agreements with several European countries.

Luigi Di Maio, EU Special Representative for the Gulf region, praised Oman for hosting EU-GCC Ministerial Council meetings last year paving the way for this summit.



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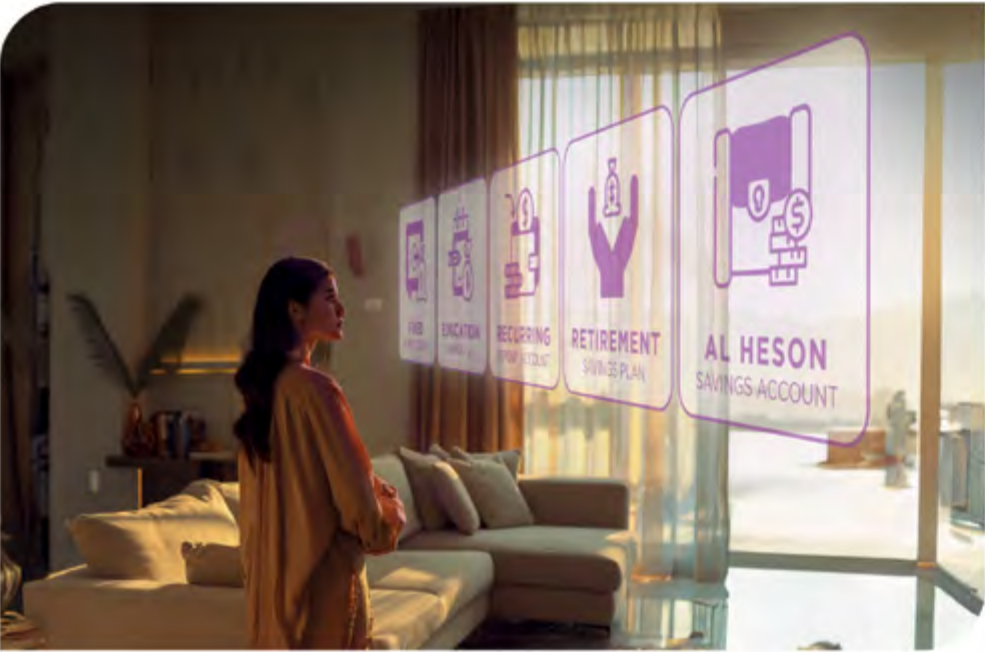
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National committee mobilises emergency resources amid heavy rainfall in sultanate

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Several governorates in Oman experienced rains of varying intensity on Tuesday, with South Sharqiyah governorate reporting heavy to moderate rainfalls.

Southern parts of Muscat and coastal areas along the Arabian Sea and the Sea of Oman also received heavy to moderate rain, influenced by the ‘Al Sayal’ depression affecting the atmosphere of Oman. The weather system also led to a rise in sea levels in the region.

The wilayat of Sur remained the most affected area, with 92mm of rain recorded on Monday and Tuesday, followed by Jalan bani Bu Ali with 82mm, Qalhat with 57mm and Ras al Hadd at 52mm.

Emergency shelters

The National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM) confirmed its preparedness for any impact from the tropical condition. The committee established 113 relief shelters in five governorates - North Sharqiyah, South Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, Dhofar and Muscat.

“All centres are ready to receive people at any time depending on the development of the tropical situation,” said Mishaal al Farsi, Deputy Coordinator of the Relief and Shelter Sector at NCEM. Farsi noted that 40 of the 113 school shelters have been prepared to serve the public immediately.

Military full ready

The Main Military Committee for Emergency Management of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF) also confirmed its full readiness to address the tropical situation impacting Oman.

During a meeting on Tuesday, chaired by Brigadier General Hamed bin Abdullah al Balushi, the committee reviewed the latest



est developments related to the tropical situation.

The SAF is committed to harnessing all capabilities and resources to manage the tropical emergency and provide support to government agencies and other sectors, in line with the National Committee for Emergency Management’s plan.

The committee assessed all preparations and measures implemented since the announce-

ment of the tropical situation, activating military sub-committees in the governorates expected to be affected. This includes ensuring the readiness of all formations, bases, and units within the SAF and the Ministry of Defence to assist citizens and residents as needed.

The Main Military Committee emphasised its ongoing monitoring of the tropical situation and affirmed the readiness of all

deployed units to respond according to the evolving circumstances, following the guidelines of the NCEM.

Four rescued

Rescue teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in South Sharqiyah governorate successfully rescued four individuals whose vehicle got stuck in a wadi in the wilayat of Sur. Fortunately, all in-

dividuals were in good health.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) is also actively monitoring and coordinating preparations across its departments and teams in anticipation of weather-related incidents. The initiative, led by the chairman of the authority, focuses on ensuring that all units are equipped and ready to respond effectively to reports of emergencies from the governorates likely to be impacted by the adverse weather conditions.

Public transport

Mwasalat on Tuesday cancelled its ferry services between Shanah and Masirah. Other routes were not affected. The national transport company added that it will evaluate its city and intercity bus services as per the development of weather condition.

Authorities continue to urge citizens and residents to exercise caution, avoid hazardous areas such as electrical facilities, water lines, and sewage systems, and to follow official updates.



Remote work or another holiday?

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM) announced a remote work and study day for Muscat, South Sharqiyah, and North Sharqiyah on Tuesday due to the forecast of heavy rains. While the decision was taken to prioritise safety, many took the work-from-home (WFH) directive as an unexpected holiday - much to the frustration of managers and business owners.

For some, the shift to WFH was anything but smooth. Pooja Verma, an online vlogger, shared her exasperation: “My videographer, who lives in Amerat, was supposed to work from home and capture videos of the rains. However, his phone was off till noon, and he later told me he overslept. By the time he was available, the rain had stopped, and we missed crucial content.”

The misinterpretation of the work-from-home directive highlights the need for better communication and clearer guidelines during such transitions from offices.

Osman Balushi, a senior official from a courier service,

echoed this sentiment. “We receive online enquiries throughout the day, but today, many staff members failed to respond because they assumed it was a holiday. Companies should provide clear instructions to avoid confusion. There must be proper emails from the concerned people.”

The misinterpretation of the work-from-home directive highlights the need for better communication

Not everyone is a fan of remote work, though. Sadiq Khan, a reservation desk manager at a travel agency, admitted that WFH wasn’t his cup of tea. “I understand that it’s not a holiday, and I’ve been attending to customers online from all over the world. But I find WFH distracting, and I prefer the office environment.”

Let’s hope the next rain doesn’t wash away another productive workday.

North Batinah inaugurates Oman’s first health walkway for visually impaired

Our Correspondent
Muscat

North Batinah governorate inaugurated the sultanate’s first health walkway dedicated to the visually impaired at Al Hambar Park in the wilayat of Suhar on Tuesday.

The event was held under the patronage of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of North Batinah, coinciding with the International White Cane Day celebrations organised in collaboration with Al Noor Association for the Blind.

During the launch, Governor Kindi emphasised the impor-

The new health walkway exemplifies a successful collaboration between government agencies and the association

MOHAMMED AL BALUSHI

tance of empowering the blind and providing opportunities for active participation in various aspects of life. He highlighted the need for continuous development of public facilities to better accommodate individuals with



disabilities, ensuring an inclusive environment for all.

Mohammed bin Ismail al Balushi, Chairman of Al Noor Association for the Blind in North Batinah, noted that the new health walkway exemplifies a successful collaboration between government agencies and the association.

“This initiative underscores their shared commitment to enhancing the lives of the blind.”

Balushi described the walkway as a model for future projects that prioritise the needs of visually impaired individuals. He expressed hope for more initiatives that promote the independence of the

blind and support their ability to navigate life with ease.

The walkway - of an approximate length of 1km - has been designed to facilitate movement for individuals with visual disabilities. It features an explanatory map in Braille to help users identify available services and facilities in the area.

The walkway also includes thoughtfully constructed with slopes to ensure accessibility for all visitors.

This project is part of North Batinah governorate’s broader efforts to support the blind and provide public facilities that cater to their needs.

OMANI WOMEN'S DAY

Celebrating women's role in development

The theme this year - ‘Women are Partners in Development’ - highlights their contribution across sectors

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate will celebrate Omani Women's Day on October 17, recognising the essential role women play in building the nation. This year's theme - 'Women are Partners in Development' - highlights their contributions across political, economic, cultural and educational fields, underscoring their importance in driving sustainable development.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has consistently advocated for Omani women's rights, emphasising their role as equal partners in shaping the country's present and future. His Majesty the Sultan has called for their empowerment across sectors, including senior positions in government, reflecting their critical role in the nation's progress.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, as of June 2024, over 100,450 Omani women were employed in the government sector and 119,593 in the private.

Women make up 57% of the workforce in craft industries, showcasing their significant contribution to the economy.

In education, there are 366,532 female Omani students in government schools and



(Supplied photos)



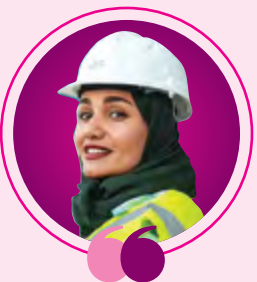
Omani women have proved themselves as true partners in sustainable development

NASRA BINT SULAYEM AL HARTHI



Omani women are key partners in the nation's renaissance, contributing to Oman Vision 2040

AMIRA BINT SALEEM AL SHUAIBI



Oman Vision 2040 places women's empowerment at the forefront of societal development

NASRA BINT SALEEM AL MAJRIFI

Amira bint Saleem al Shuaibi, the first woman from Oman and the Gulf states to hold the title of Ship Traffic Officer and trained in commanding warships and nuclear submarines, reflected on the determination of Omani women in overcoming challenges. "Women raise the sail of pride for all, navigating the waves of challenges with determination," she said. She highlighted the fact that Omani women are key partners in the nation's renaissance, contributing to Oman Vision 2040 through creativity and perseverance. "Determination and persistence know no boundaries, and a woman's self-confidence is the key to overcoming difficulties," she added.

Nasra bint Saleem al Majrifi, an

electrical engineer and the first Omani woman to work in the crane department at Asyad Container Terminal, echoed these sentiments noting that Oman Vision 2040 places women's empowerment at the forefront of societal development. "Omani women have demonstrated their worth in various fields," she said, while also acknowledging the challenges they face in the workplace. Nasra stressed the importance of confronting stereotypes and balancing the multiple roles women play. "Success is not defined by gender but by hard work and passion," she said, adding that the support Omani women receive motivates them to excel and contribute to society.

Nasra bint Sulayem al Harthi,

an aircraft maintenance engineer at Oman Air, highlighted the crucial role women play in sectors traditionally dominated by men pointing to their accomplishments in aviation and other challenging fields. "Omani women have proved themselves as true partners in sustainable development."

As the sultanate celebrates Omani Women's Day, the achievements of these women are a testament to their vital role in the nation's development. Their contributions, spanning various fields, continue to shape the country's progress and align with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, ensuring that women remain a driving force in Oman's future.

Oman sees promising future in wedding tourism sector

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has identified wedding tourism as a promising sector offering an opportunity to showcase Oman's rich culture and natural diversity. The ministry aims to promote the sultanate as a prime destination for foreign weddings by organising tours for guests to explore Oman's unique tourist attractions.

This push for Oman as a wedding destination is seen as a way to strengthen the local economy and position the sultanate as a top destination for various forms of tourism, including recreational, cultural and business travel.

MHT is also offering incentives to attract major companies specialising in organising destination weddings in a bid to generate significant economic returns.

In 2023, Oman hosted six destination weddings from India, while the first half of 2024 saw four. By the end of the year, three more are expected to take place. Each event typically attracts between 400 and 800 guests from different countries, helping to



boost tourism and other related sectors.

Omar bin Saleem al Jabri, Head of Specialised Tourism at MHT, emphasised the appeal of Oman's natural beauty and cultural heritage, making it an ideal destination for weddings. "Oman's landscapes and rich culture provide a unique experience for couples who hold their wedding here," he said.

Oman offers several luxury venues for such events, including the five-star hotels Al Bustan Palace, Shangri-La Barr al Jissah and Anantara al Jabal al Akhdar, as well as more affordable op-

tions like the Sifawi Hotel. Wedding planning services in the sultanate cover everything from venue decoration, hospitality, photography to arranging visas and transportation.

Jabri highlighted the fact that the wedding tourism sector has already contributed millions of rials to the economy through various services like accommodation, transportation, photography and event management. He noted that the size of returns depend on several factors, including the number of weddings and guests.

The ministry is working

closely with Oman Airports, Royal Oman Police, hotels and tourism companies to provide the necessary facilities for international weddings. "We are keen to attract major international companies to organise these events and to promote Oman as a wedding destination through global platforms and specialised workshops," Jabri said.

Promotion of the sultanate as a wedding destination aligns with Vision 2040 goals to diversify the economy and boost the tourism sector by promoting Oman's cultural and environmental diversity.

Two-month kingfish ban lifted from today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has announced the lifting of a two-month fishing ban on kingfish, allowing fishing and trading in the species starting Wednesday, October 16.

In a statement, the ministry expressed gratitude to the nation's fishermen for their cooperation and adherence to the ban, which was implemented to protect sustainability of kingfish populations.

MAFWR also urged all fisher-



men to continue practising sustainable fishing methods, emphasising that the minimum permissible length for catching kingfish remains 65cm to ensure

the long-term conservation of this vital resource.

The two-month ban has been in place since 2014. Various studies in Oman and the GCC have

shown that the stock of kingfish is under heavy pressure in the region, particularly in the central part of the Gulf of Oman, where large quantities of immature and small sized fish constituted the catch before the 2014 decision, which put curbs on minimum size and type of nets used.

Annual kingfish catch had plummeted in 1990s after a high of 27,762mt in 1988 to 2,088mt in 2002. The catch went up to a high of 5,620mt in 2012 but went below the 4,000mt mark to 3,992mt in 2015. The catch increased in 2023 to 12,000mt from 5,000mt in 2022.

MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,802.43
Sensex	81,820.12

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
India	218.31
Pakistan	721.49
Bangladesh	310.48
Philippines	149.84
Sri Lanka	761.78

*Rates as on October 15
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Oil prices drop over 1% on OPEC demand forecast

Oil prices fell by more than 1% on Tuesday, driven by concerns over demand following recent data from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and assurances from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that his forces would not target Iranian oil facilities.

Brent crude dropped 1.2% to \$74.55 per barrel at 0657 GMT, down from the previous session's close of \$75.43. The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) also declined by 1.2% to \$70.69 per barrel, compared to \$71.56 at the prior session's close.

Looking ahead to 2025, OPEC also cut its demand growth forecast by 100,000 bpd, anticipating a growth of 1.64mn bpd that year. Analysts expressed concern that weakening demand in China could further impact global oil consumption and pressure prices.



Saudi delegation visits SEZAD to explore project opportunities

Duqm – A delegation from the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) visited the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), where they met on Monday with H E Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), in the presence of Eng Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, CEO of SEZAD, and several officials from the Authority.

During the meeting, the aspects of cooperation and the strengthening of the partnership between the SFD and OPAZ were discussed. The mutual interests between OPAZ and SFD in investment fields and opportunities within SEZAD and other areas under the authority's supervision were also reviewed. The efforts made by OPAZ to

implement several infrastructure projects aimed at enabling local and foreign investment in the region were highlighted, showcasing their contribution to attracting numerous local and foreign projects and increasing interest in investment in Duqm.

Saudi delegation explores SEZAD's plans for future projects and how to integrate various elements to ensure economic sustainability and contribute to achieving Oman Vision 2040

For its part, the SFD delegation praised the growth seen in Duqm over the past years since their last visit and expressed their interest in enhancing cooperation with the authority.

Spanning three days, the visit offers an opportunity to review the progress of projects financed by the SFD in SEZAD, with a

strong focus on the area's recent developments. The delegation will also explore the region's plans for future projects and how to integrate various elements to ensure economic sustainability and contribute to achieving Oman Vision 2040.

The delegation visited several projects, both ongoing and completed, including the Ras Markaz project and the Fisheries and Food Industries Complex, which are currently flagship projects in Duqm.

Abdulmajeed bin Abdullah al Ansari, General Manager of the Support Services Sector at

OPAZ, said, "OPAZ and SFD are striving to enhance cooperation in all fields by exploring financing opportunities for several promising projects in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. This visit by the delegation from the Saudi Fund for Development aims to

strengthen this partnership and review the progress of the funded projects."

Ansari noted that the SFD has made pioneering contributions to financing several major projects in the Sultanate of Oman, including funding for the construction of key roads and the infrastructure of the fishing port in

the region.

OPAZ, through the relevant entities, continues to develop a strategic relationship with the SFD, exploring opportunities that will enhance benefits for companies in both countries from the infrastructure projects implemented by the Authority in SEZAD.

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm is an extraordinary industrial hub, a center of innovation, and a gateway to global trade. With a well-established track record of success, SEZAD is already playing a leading role in Oman's new Renaissance as it brings to life the rich possibilities of Oman Vision 2040 by opening up the vast potential of the green economy and accelerating industry towards the opportunities of a tech-driven future.

CBO issues RO19.4mn treasury bills

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) announced the issuance of two tenders of government treasury bills worth RO19.4mn.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO2mn, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price and minimum accepted price both reached RO99.660 for every RO100 bill. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.4321% and 4.4472%, respectively.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO17.4mn, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached RO98.842 for every RO100 bill, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO98.835. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.6449% and 4.6993%, respectively.

The interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 5.50% while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with the central bank is 6.00%.

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



Oman, Belarus sign pact to enhance integrity of securities market

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman and Belarus signed three memorandums of understanding (MoUs) aimed at protecting competition, preventing monopolies, safeguarding consumers, and facilitating the exchange of information on securities and insurance markets.

The agreements were signed during the official visit of Roman Golovchenko, Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus, to Oman on Monday night.

Under the information exchange and joint cooperation in

securities markets, one MoU was signed between the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Belarus and the Financial Services Authority of Oman.

This MoU encourages both parties to cooperate in enhancing investor protection, ensuring the integrity of securities and insurance markets, exchanging best practices in green finance and sustainable economies, sharing regulatory expertise and research publications, promoting supervision and oversight of investment products, and exchanging experiences in trading, clearing, and

settlement operations.

This MoU was signed by H E Abdullah Salim al-Salmi, CEO of the Financial Services Authority, and Sergei Terentiev, Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus to Oman.

The second MoU was signed between the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion of Oman and the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade of the Republic of Belarus. It aims to enhance bilateral cooperation and the exchange of information in the fields of competition protection and monopoly prevention.

OPEC cuts oil demand outlook again

Vienna, Austria – The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has reduced its global oil demand outlook for 2024 and 2025, citing data received so far this year.

The coalition of oil-producing nations stated in its October Oil Market Outlook Report that world oil demand is set to rise by 1.93mn barrels per day (bpd) in 2024 and 1.64mn bpd in 2025, down from projections last month of growth of 2.03mn bpd and 1.74mn bpd, respectively.

This is the third consecutive month that the group has revised its forecast for oil demand growth downward. OPEC noted, however, that global oil demand growth remains well above the historical average of 1.4mn bpd seen before the COVID-19 pandemic.

OPEC has revised world oil demand growth for 2024 down by 106,000 bpd from last month's assessment, expecting it to grow by about 1.9mn bpd year-on-year.

According to the organisation's October report, total world oil demand is anticipated to reach 105.6mn bpd in the fourth quarter of 2024 and to average 104.1mn bpd for the year, bolstered by strong air travel de-



mand and road mobility, including trucking, as well as healthy industrial, construction, and agricultural activities, primarily in non-OECD countries.

According to the monthly publication, oil demand in the Middle East is expected to expand by an average of 265,000 bpd in the fourth quarter of this year.

For 2024, the Middle East oil demand is forecast to grow by 200,000 bpd, averaging 8.8mn bpd. Regional economic activity is expected to remain healthy in Q1 2025, as GDP growth rates for 2025 are forecast to surpass

those of 2024. Additionally, air travel is expected to fully recover and surpass pre-pandemic levels.

'Gasoline, transportation diesel, and jet/kerosene are expected to lead oil demand growth, projected to stand at 249,000 bpd year-on-year in Q1 2025. Overall, in 2025, the Middle East is expected to see year-on-year growth of 249,000 bpd, averaging 9.1mn bpd,' the OPEC report said.

Refinery capacity additions in non-OECD countries - mostly in China and the Middle East - are also expected to contribute to oil

OPEC has revised world oil demand growth for 2024 down by 106,000 barrels per day from last month's assessment, expecting it to grow by about 1.9mn barrels per day year-on-year

demand growth. The global growth forecast is subject to uncertainties, including global economic developments, the monthly report noted.

For 2025, global oil demand growth is revised down by 102,000 bpd in some sub-regions of the non-OECD. Accordingly, oil demand is forecast to grow by about 1.6mn bpd year-on-year to average 105.8mn bpd.

Within the regions, OECD oil demand is forecast to grow by 0.1mn bpd, while the non-OECD region is projected to drive growth by 1.5mn bpd year-on-year.

UAE set to exceed its renewable capacity ambitions for 2030, IEA confirms

Abu Dhabi, UAE – The UAE is expected to exceed its renewable energy capacity ambitions for 2030, the International Energy Agency (IEA) confirmed.

According to the IEA's Renewables 2024 report, MENA countries' combined ambition is to reach 201 GW of renewable capacity by 2030. While the main-case forecast falls 26% short of this ambition, not all countries will miss their announced ambitions. Saudi Ara-

bia, Egypt and Algeria are responsible for nearly 60% of the region's total ambition, and although the outlook is more optimistic than last year in these markets, the IEA forecast indicated that installed capacity still falls short of their 2030 ambitions.

Growth in the region could be 60% (152 GW) higher than in the main case - nearing the realisation of the 2030 ambition - if countries meet three



key challenges. The first is faster auction implementation. Opening tenders, selecting winners and signing power purchase agreements often takes more than one year, so hastening the process would get more projects online sooner.

The second challenge is to improve the regulatory and policy environment for distributed solar PV by implementing reforms to allow self-consumption and introduce

remuneration for excess electricity generation, the report went on to say.

While a number of countries have established legal frameworks for self-consumption and net metering, there is no public data available indicating significant deployment in the commercial and residential sectors except for the United Arab Emirates, implying that implementation remains a challenge. In addition, ensuring that electric-

ity tariffs are cost-reflective through reforms would make renewable energy more economically attractive, especially for large industry.

"Finally, more growth occurs with greater industrial electrification and with the removal of barriers to new market entrants to allow for more widespread use of corporate power purchase agreements," IEA said.

WAM

Global public debt to exceed \$100tn in 2024

IMF suggests that countries should confront debt risks now with carefully designed fiscal policies that protect growth and vulnerable households, while taking advantage of monetary policy easing cycle

Washington, US – Global public debt is very high. It is expected to exceed \$100tn, or about 93% of global gross domestic product (GDP) by the end of this year and will approach 100% of GDP by 2030, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday. This is 10 percentage points of GDP above 2019 level, that is, before the pandemic.

While the picture is not homogeneous – public debt is expected to stabilise or decline for two thirds of countries – the October 2024 Fiscal Monitor report of the IMF shows that future debt levels could be even higher than projected, and much larger fiscal adjustments than currently projected are required to stabilise or reduce it with a high probability.

The report argues that countries should confront debt risks now with carefully designed fiscal policies that protect growth and vulnerable households, while taking advantage of the monetary policy easing cycle.

Worse than expected

The fiscal outlook of many countries might be worse than expected for three reasons: large spending pressures, optimism bias of debt projections, and sizable unidentified debt, the IMF said.

Previous IMF research has



shown that fiscal discourse across the political spectrum has increasingly tilted toward higher spending. And countries will need to increasingly spend more to cope with aging and health-care; with the green transition and climate adaptation; and with defense and energy security, due to growing geopolitical tensions.

On the other side, past experience suggests that debt projec-

tions tend to underestimate actual outcomes by a sizable margin. Realised debt-to-GDP ratios five-years ahead can be 10 percentage points of GDP higher than projected on average.

The Fiscal Monitor presents a novel “debt-at-risk” framework linking current macro-financial and political conditions to the entire spectrum of possible future debt outcomes. This approach

goes beyond the typical focus on the point estimates of debt forecasts and helps policymakers quantify risks to the debt outlook and identify their sources.

This framework shows that in a severely adverse scenario global public debt could reach 115% of GDP in three years – nearly 20 percentage points higher than currently projected. This could be due to several rea-

sons: weaker growth, tighter financing conditions, fiscal slippages, and greater economic and policy uncertainty. Importantly, countries are increasingly vulnerable to global factors affecting their borrowing costs, including spillovers from greater policy uncertainty in systematically important countries, such as the United States.

Sizable unidentified debt is

another reason for public debt to end up being significantly higher than projected. An analysis of more than 30 countries finds that 40% of unidentified debt stems from contingent liabilities and fiscal risks governments face, of which most are related to losses in state-owned enterprises. Historically, unidentified debt has been large, ranging from 1 to 1.5% of GDP on average, and it increases sharply during periods of financial stress.

Larger fiscal consolidation

If public debt is higher than it looks, current fiscal efforts are likely smaller than needed, the IMF suggested.

Fiscal adjustment plays a crucial role in containing debt risks. With inflation moderating and central banks lowering policy rates, economies are better positioned now to absorb the economic effects of fiscal tightening. Delaying would be both costly and risky, as the required correction grows as time goes by; and experience shows that high debt and lack of credible fiscal plans can trigger adverse market reaction, constraining room to maneuver in the face of turbulence.

The IMF’s analysis, accounting for country-specific risks surrounding the debt outlook,

suggests that current fiscal adjustments – on average, of 1% of GDP over six years by 2029 – even if implemented in full, are not enough to significantly reduce or stabilize debt with a high probability. A cumulative tightening of about 3.8% of GDP over the same period would be needed for an average economy to ensure a high likelihood of debt stabilisation. In countries where debt is not projected to stabilise, such as China and the United States, the required effort is substantially greater. But these two largest economies have a much richer set of policy choices than other countries.

Such large fiscal adjustments, if not well calibrated, will entail large output losses as aggregate demand falls and can harm vulnerable groups and lead to higher inequality. A careful design is thus needed to mitigate the costs of the adjustment and to garner public support for needed fiscal adjustment.

According to the IMF, the choice of fiscal measures matters because the impacts are not alike and involve trade-offs. For example, cuts in public investment have the largest output losses and hurt long-term growth prospects, while reducing social transfers hurts vulnerable households and raises inequality.

Indian conglomerates poised for \$800bn investment push: S&P

New Delhi, India – Indian conglomerates are gearing up for a massive investment wave, with capital commitments projected to reach approximately \$800bn over the next decade, according to a S&P Global Ratings report.

This investment plan is nearly three times the amount spent by these large business groups in the previous ten years, signaling a strong push toward growth and diversification.

Around 40% of this planned spending will be directed toward new and emerging sectors such as green hydrogen, clean energy, aviation, semiconductors, electric vehicles (EVs), and data centers.

The Vedanta, Tata, Adani, Reliance, and JSW groups are leading this charge, collectively preparing to invest about \$350bn in these growth areas over the next decade.



Neel Gopalakrishnan, S&P Global Ratings credit analyst said, “About 40% of Indian conglomerates’ spending over the coming decade will be on new businesses, such as green hydrogen, clean energy, aviation, semiconductors, electric vehicles (EVs) and data centers. The Vedanta, Tata, Adani, Reliance and JSW groups alone are prepping about \$350bn of investment in these sectors over the

next decade.”

While some of India’s largest conglomerates are focusing on new business sectors, many others are expected to continue investing primarily in their established business areas, aiming to expand scale and enhance profitability.

The report suggests that companies like the Birla, Mahindra, Hinduja, Hero, ITC, Bajaj, and Murugappa groups, known for

their conservative growth strategies, will maintain this approach.

S&P Global Ratings projects that investments in existing businesses could reach between \$400bn and \$500bn over the next ten years, assuming these companies continue their investment pace from the past two years. This focus on strengthening core operations will be crucial for conglomerates as they navigate the risks associated with the large-scale investment push.

As debt levels are likely to rise to support these growth plans, companies will need to bolster their core businesses continuously to sustain credit profiles. Any underperformance during the investment phase could negatively impact credit metrics, making it essential for these conglomerates to execute their growth strategies effectively.

ANI

Ratan Tata: Remembered by business fraternity as visionary leader with a heart of gold

New Delhi, India – India’s business fraternity is mourning the passing away of Ratan Tata, legendary industrialist who has left behind an extraordinary legacy of business ethics and personal integrity, contributing immensely to the national development. Under his leadership, the Tata Group became synonymous with excellence, quality, trust, and authenticity.

Tata’s legacy extends far beyond the business world, having personally led philanthropic efforts through Tata Trusts and other initiatives. An institution in himself, humble businessman and noble philanthropist, he was someone who taught the world to keep societal progress ahead of business profits. His commitment to make this world a better place through empowering communities will be remembered by generations to come.

Rizwan Sajjan, Founder and Chairman, Danube Group expresses his condolences saying, “Admired not only in India but across the globe, Ratan Tata was truly an industry stalwart. He always prioritised the well-being of others and his dedication to humanity and unwavering commitment to the greater good set him apart. Above all, he possessed a heart full of compassion. He will be remembered not only for transforming Indian businesses, but also for touching countless lives along the way.”

Manoj Gupta, Managing Director, Fortune Marketing added, “An unforgettable titan of Indian industry, Ratan Tata has shaped the path for countless entrepreneurs through his vision that transcended the boundaries of business.”

“His unwavering focus on uplifting the society alongside



building a globally respected business empire has been truly inspirational for the entire industry. He redefined what it means to lead with care and concern for all. His ability to transform industries while maintaining an unwavering commitment to business ethics will always serve as a model,”

Ratan Tata’s legacy extends far beyond business world, having personally led philanthropic efforts through Tata Trusts and other initiatives

Aman Chaudhary, Executive Director of Marketing at Anmol Industries, said,

Kushal Patel, Managing Director, Axita Cotton remembers him for his work ethics and says, “The unparalleled leadership of Ratan Tata will continue to inspire all of us. He has left a significant gap that is hard to be filled in the corporate world. However, his values and work ethics will continue to inspire all

of us at Axita Cotton to strive for greatness with a conscience.”

Dr Gautam Kanodia, Managing Director, Kanodia Group expresses that “Ratan Tata’s legacy as a visionary industrialist, and a compassionate individual will be remembered for generations. He believed in inclusive growth ensuring the development of all strata of society through investment in different segments of industries, which has uplifted not just business sectors but the lives of millions of people.”

“An industrialist par excellence Ratan Tata’s visionary leadership reshaped India’s business landscape. Despite his commitment to national development, his greatest achievements were those rooted in his compassion for people and his tireless work to improve lives,”

Ajay Chaudhary, CMD of Ace Group said.

Binny Gupta, Managing Director of Renny said, “Ratan Tata’s legacy in the steel industry is one of unmatched innovation and excellence. His dedication to societal impact will continue to inspire us as we strive to uphold the same values.”

ANI

Mubadala’s KELIX Bio acquires four GlobalOne assets

Abu Dhabi, UAE – Following the closing of the acquisition of KELIX Bio, Abu Dhabi’s Mubadala Investment Company has empowered its new specialty pharmaceutical business to acquire a 100% stake in four of GlobalOne Healthcare Holding’s (GHH) pharma assets which include Bioventure, Bioventure Healthcare, Gulf Inject and Well-pharma.

This strategic move consolidates Mubadala’s presence in the life sciences ecosystem, advances the UAE’s life sciences sector, and positions the nation as a global industry leader while supporting economic diversification.

In March 2024, Mubadala entered into a definitive agreement to acquire KELIX Bio, a specialty pharmaceutical business focused on delivering complex generics across emerging markets. The acquisition was suc-



cessfully closed last September.

GHH’s pharma assets include cutting-edge biopharma and IV solutions manufacturing. Integrating these assets into KELIX Bio’s ecosystem significantly advances their expanded capabilities. Each asset brings unique strengths to the portfolio.

Dr Bakheet al Katheeri, Chief Executive Officer of UAE Investments Platform at Mubadala, stated, “The rapid completion of the KELIX bio acquisition and this subsequent transaction demonstrate our commitment to building a thriving life sciences sector

in the UAE and supporting our nation’s ambition for a knowledge-based economy.

We continue to seek partnerships and investments that align with our strategic goals, as we aim to generate value for our stakeholders while strengthening the UAE’s position in this critical global industry. KELIX bio and its assets are well positioned for accelerated growth and will enable us to deliver on our ambition of creating a regional life sciences champion.”

Ismail Ali Abdulla, Head of UAE Clusters, at Mubadala’s UAE Investments Platform, said, “This acquisition reinforces our strategic intent to position the UAE at the forefront of the life sciences ecosystem on a global scale. It contributes to our nation’s economic diversification, creates valuable socio-economic returns, and reaffirms Mubadala’s ambitions within the

sector.”

He added, “Being a responsible investor we continue to nurture future-centric solutions that boost our nation’s GDP, increase job creation, foster innovation, and strengthen medical security, shaping the future of our communities with lasting impact.”

Hocine Sidi Said, CEO of KELIX Bio, said, “The acquisition of GHH assets considerably strengthens our presence in the UAE and provides us access to a greater pipeline of products and technologies. Bringing these businesses and their colleagues into the KELIX bio network is exciting as it accelerates our path to becoming a global life science leader.”

The acquisition of four GHH assets by KELIX Bio significantly enhances the UAE’s local life sciences capabilities through strategic investments.

WAM

Oman takes part in 71st session of WHO's regional committee

The 71st session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (RC71) started on Monday in Doha, Qatar, and will run until October 17.

Oman is participating in the meetings with an official delegation led by H E Dr Saeed Harib al Lamki, Ministry of Health's Undersecretary for Health Affairs, along with several ministry senior officials.

The meetings will discuss many strategic issues, including health technical papers and reports related to Eastern Mediterranean countries. Topics include the latest updates on emergency situations in the region, the health and humanitarian situation in Palestine, polio eradication, the launch of the regional framework for immunisation agenda 2030, addressing the increasing burden of trauma in humanitarian settings in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the regional action plan for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies 2024-30, enhancing collaborative efforts



to accelerate the response to antimicrobial resistance in the region, and enhancement and digitalisation of health information systems in EMR countries: A regional strategy 2024-28. The meetings will also touch upon update on implementation

of the WHO Transformation Agenda in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, as well addressing various administrative and financial topics related to the World Health Assembly and Executive Board. Additionally, regional initiatives and a panel discussion on artificial intelligence for achieving universal health coverage and health security will be part of the agenda. Furthermore, the Annual Report of the Regional Director 2023 and the Vision of the Regional Director (Regional strategic operational plan and flagship initiatives) will be presented. On another note, a side-event session was held on Tuesday on innovative approaches in dengue and vector control in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Oman participated in this event with a working paper on Oman's experience in using the WHO Early Warning and Response System (EWARS), supported by effective monitoring of vectors and epidemics integrated with climate and population data.

Oman Plast exhibition opens at OCEC

Oman Plast 2024, the 8th international exhibition of various industrial products by Silver Star, began at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC), in Muscat on Tuesday. Silver Star is one of the leading organisers of large-scale exhibitions in Oman and has organised quite a lot of exhibitions across the country and outside. The exhibition opened to showcase the latest technology and machineries used in manufacturing of international plastics, rubber, petrochemicals, chemicals, fertilisers, plastic recycling, printing and packaging industry products during the coming two days. It will be an ideal platform for Oman and its neighbouring countries to source new technology and products through this knowledge forum. The participating countries are Belgium, Germany, Greece, India, US, Iran, Italy, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Turkey and UAE.

Alizz Islamic partners with ITFC to support private sector

Reinforcing its position as one of Oman's most dynamic Islamic Wholesale Banking institutions, Alizz Islamic Bank has recently signed an agreement with the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC). This partnership is set to provide sharia'a compliant financing solutions, further enhancing the bank's commitment to offering innovative and ethical financial services in alignment with Islamic principles. The agreement was officially signed by Ali al Mani, CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank and Hani Salem Sonbol, CEO of ITFC in the presence of a number of senior officials from both organisations. Speaking about the agreement, Ali al Mani, CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank, said, "We are delighted to be the first bank in Oman to partner with the ITFC. Partnering with innovative and leading organisations in their respective fields is an important part of our strategy and we are proud to be pioneers in providing innovative trade financing solutions. "Our customers are at the forefront of everything we do and



aligning with strategic partners enables Alizz Islamic Bank to enhance our trade solutions and correspondent network which in turn can enable us to offer competitive working capital financing pricing." Commenting on the agreement, Hani Salem Sonbol, CEO of ITFC and Acting CEO of ICD, stated, "We are pleased with our partnership and strategic relationship with Alizz Islamic Bank. This is our first collaboration in Oman and is poised to play a pivotal role in advancing sharia'a compliant financial services in the country. Through this agreement, we aim to strengthen the private sector role in the economy, particularly by enhancing access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Supporting SMEs is a core pillar of the ITFC mission, and we are confident that this partnership will help drive economic growth,

create job opportunities, and foster sustainable development in Oman". Alizz Islamic Bank is one of the first Islamic banks in Oman that provide innovative financial solutions and banking products that are fully sharia'a compliant. The Bank was established in September 2013 with the aim of offering customers an enriching banking experience to serve corporate, commercial, and government institutions as well as retail customers across Oman through innovative Islamic products and services. The bank's highly experienced team helps organisations achieve optimum efficiency, reliability, and above all, dynamic customer experience. The bank has developed a variety of sharia'a compliant banking products and services that fosters growth and efficiency of the business and commerce environment of Oman. Alizz Islamic Bank has always prioritised transparency, ethical dealings and giving back to the community and its main focus is personalising every financial experience through innovative and smart solutions.



Forum on citizenship begins at UTAS in Mussanah

A forum on 'Citizenship and Digital Citizenship in Higher Education Curricula: Sustainable Horizons' got started at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Mussanah under the patronage of Major General Khalifa Ali al Siyabi, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Administrative and Financial Affairs. The launch event, held in the presence of Dr Saeed Hamad al Rubaie, Vice Chancellor of the University, began with a speech by Dr Nasser Salem al Baimani, Assistant President Vice Chancellor at the branch, who called this forum a platform "to promote and foster the values of citizenship and digital citizenship among the people of Oman in general, and university students in particular". "This will be achieved by integrating these values into the educational curricula through well-structured plans that can be implemented through clear mechanisms and policies. The goal is to enhance citizenship, support national education, and make it a fundamental element in the strategies of higher education institutions." The forum contained a workshop titled 'Enhancing Citizenship in the Digital Age: The Strategic Role of Higher Education Institutions', presented by Dr Moza al Saadi. It also included a panel discussion moderated by Dr Hanan Abdulaziz al Kindi with participation from academics and specialists. The discussion focused on several key topics including, the Educational Role of Mosques in Instilling Citizenship Values by Professor Dr Muslim Salem al Wahibi and the Role of Islamic Culture in Enhancing National Identity and Digital Citizenship by Dr Ahmed al Haddad.

Sohar Aluminium announces new batch of FES beneficiaries

Sohar Aluminium (SA) has selected the new batch of its employees for the Further Education Support (FES) programme for 2024. Through this Programme, SA supports its employees to pursue their undergraduate or postgraduate studies in different colleges and universities in the Sultanate of Oman, a release stated. The programme is one of the many initiatives which reflect the company's continuous efforts to support its employees' personal development and career growth. The Further Education Support Programme, introduced in 2012, showcases SA's strategic vision of retaining employees, fostering their development, and making targeted investments in their future. By prioritising continuous learning and development, the company builds a



highly skilled and engaged workforce capable of driving its success in a dynamic global market. Commenting on the FES programme, Ahmed bin Mohammed al Kharusi, GM of HR and Corporate Affairs at SA, pointed out, "Since its inception, the number of employees supported is increasing every year and until now we have awarded 109 scholarships comprising of 28 Postgraduate and 81 Undergraduate courses, among of which are 86% are male while 14% are female employees." The scholarships granted by the FES programme cover different disciplines including engineering, health and safety and business management. It is worth noting that around 24 employees have been promoted to higher positions within the organisation.



Ministry of Health celebrates World Mental Health Day

The Ministry of Health (MoH), represented by Al-Masarah Hospital at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, organised the World Mental Health Day Conference, which is celebrated on October 10 each year.

The conference, which came this year under the theme 'Mental Health at Work', held under the auspices of H E Dr Ahmed Salim al Mandhari, Undersecretary for Health, Planning and Regulation in MoH, in the presence of Dr Thamra Said al Ghafri, Director General of Health Services in Muscat Governorate; Dr Bader Ali al Habsi, Director of Al-Masarah Hospital, along with several officials and staff from the hospital and other participating governmental and private institutions.

Dr Bader Ali al Habsi, Director of Al-Masarah Hospital, delivered a speech in which he stated that mental health in the workplace is not an option but a necessity, as it is the foundation for productivity, creativity, and professional harmony.

Habsi added that in a balanced work environment, there are greater opportunities for the development of both the individual and society. This underscores the importance of raising awareness about supporting the mental health of employees and providing the care and resources needed to ensure a safe and healthy work environment.

The conference included scientific lectures, research workshops, discussions, and special activities, presented by several members of the medical team from Al-Masarah and Royal Hospitals, as well as Sultan Qaboos University. The aim was to enhance awareness and understanding of mental health.

The conference was accompanied by an awareness exhibition featuring valuable research papers and information on mental health. Prior to the conference, awareness workshops were held on Wednesday, in which a group of specialists in the field of psychology participated.

Rolls-Royce Black Badge Ghost comes with daring expression

Rolls-Royce has unveiled a daring and powerful new expression of Black Badge Ghost - the most agile, driver-focused and technical Black Badge Rolls-Royce ever to hit the road.

Uncompromising 6.75-litre twin-turbocharged V12 presented in high-power configuration comes with all-wheel-drive option, a release stated.

"Our Black Badge series of motor cars is a space that we have created within our brand for them to make the most daring and self-confident statements. Black Badge Ghost responds to a very specific demand among these individuals - those who wish to enjoy the potency of this motor car's uncompromising engine and inherent agility almost exclusively from the driver's seat," said Chris Brownridge, Chief Executive, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars.

"For Black Badge Ghost Series II, we have enhanced its owner-driver appeal by incorporating a high-power expression of our legendary engine along with an even more assertive and technical design treatment and textile palette. This motor car, which is the most powerful and driver-focused V12 Rolls-Royce ever, signals our ongoing commitment to the world's boldest and most dynamic super-luxury consumers," Brownridge added.

"With Black Badge Ghost Series II we have introduced subtle but impactful design impulses that clearly signal this motor car's incredible agility and power, while upholding the purity and presence of our overarching design approach," added Juliane



This motor car, which is the most powerful and driver-focused V12 Rolls-Royce ever, signals the maker's ongoing commitment to the world's boldest and most dynamic super-luxury consumers

Blasi, Head of Exterior Design, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars.

"These restrained but disruptive styling details, reserved exclusively for Black Badge Ghost Series II, reflect our clients' desire to command attention with their Bespoke commissions, and experience every journey with a bold sense of purpose."

The most powerful, agile and technical expression of Black Badge, Rolls-Royce's disruptive alter ego, is embodied by Ghost. Today, the marque presents a daring evolution of this unapologetic and uniquely driver-focused motor car with Black Badge Ghost Series II, meticulously redesigned to provide this

rebellious group of clients with a dramatic canvas for their bold Bespoke commissions.

Black Badge Ghost Series II's daring is in its subtle yet impactful exterior design. The most significant styling statement is the lower grille, marking the first time Black Badge Ghost has received a unique styling treatment. The lower brake air intake now features a new geometry, with two darkened chrome strips running longitudinally to functional air ducts, surrounded by technical black chrome frames. These pieces emphasise the verticality and solidity of the motor car's Pantheon Grille, behind which lies the centrepiece of this motor car - the uncompromising and potent V12 engine.

Black Badge Ghost Series II retains the Black Badge-defining black chrome treatment, where Rolls-Royce hallmarks such as the Spirit of Ecstasy, Pantheon Grille and side-mounted 'Badge of Honour' are darkened.

To create the effect, a specific chrome electrolyte is introduced to the traditional chrome plating process that is co-deposited on the stainless-steel substrate, darkening the finish. Each darkened component is precision-polished by hand to achieve a mirror-black finish.



Future Leaders programme of Muscat governorate ends

The five-day 'Future Leaders' programme of Muscat governorate, which targeted heads of various administrative departments of the governorate, same to end, a release stated.

The leadership programme was held to enable second-line leaders to form ambitious national efficiencies able to deal with future challenges and use available opportunities in order to achieve effective organisational performance.

Dr Mohammed bin Fayel al Arimi, a trainer specialised in the higher thinking skills' development for leaders presented this programme.

This programme included training participants to develop their skills in the fields of administrative leadership and institutional change, strategic planning, administrative management, effective communication, emotional intelligence, and innovation in decision-making. Thus, it contributes to qualify them to deal with the current and future stage's requirements.

Saeed bin Hamdan al Shukri,

head of Salaries and Leave Section, said that his participation in the Future Leaders programme has had a great influence on enhancing his leadership and management skills. "The programme provided me with the most important scientific foundations and practical models that helped me build self-confidence and develop my abilities to achieve success and excellence in the fields of work," Shukri further said.

He stressed that the knowledge and experiences he gained from the programme will reflect positively on his personal and professional performance, and will effectively contribute to develop the Human Resources Department and its performance.

Mohammed bin Humaid al Wahshi, the Planning and Development Department's head in Muscat Governorate, stressed that Oman Vision 2040 and the changes in the government's administrative system make it necessary to implement modern management methods and strategies related to the vision.

"The Future Leaders pro-

gramme provides employees in leadership positions with the practical skills required by the current stage, with a focus on offering unique scientific content and active participation from the participants" he added.

Sheikha bint al Khalil al Kharousi, the Reception and Registration Department's head, praised the programme content, describing it as rich in valuable information. She explained that the programme provided participants with the opportunity to learn strategic planning and efficient team management, as well as how to make the right decisions at the right time and deal with administrative issues to enhance productivity.

Through this programme, Muscat governorate seeks to develop national efficiencies and prepare leaders able to face future challenges and achieve sustainable development efficiently.

Oman Vision 2040 aims to create a sustainable society that depends on innovative and qualified national competencies to achieve progress in various fields.

National Museum organises event with Chechen State Pedagogical University

The National Museum, represented by the Learning Centre in collaboration with Chechen State Pedagogical University in the Russian Federation, has organised a cultural event celebrating the Russian artist and writer Alexander Pushkin from October 9-10.

This event was held keeping in mind school, college, and university students, with the support of BP Oman.

The inauguration of the event was attended by Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, the Secretary General of the National Museum, and H E Ilya Morgunov, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Sultanate of Oman, and a group of students and academics.

This event was part of the cultural cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Russian Federation, aiming to enhance students' understanding of global cultures and enrich their knowledge of the history of world literature, which therefore broadens their academic and cultural horizons.

It also provided a unique opportunity for cultural exchange with Russian students, contributing to building bridges of communication and understanding between Omani and Russian cultures.

The event included live performances of poetic readings and a play inspired by the works of Alexander Pushkin, in which a group of students from Chechen State Pedagogical University participate.

It also featured a poetic reading from the poem *Eugene*



This event was part of the cultural cooperation between Oman and Russia to enhance students' understanding of global cultures and enrich their knowledge of the history of world literature

Onegin, which is considered a literary masterpiece combining narrative poetry and prose storytelling, regarded as one of the greatest classic Russian literature. Additionally, a play of one of Pushkin's minor tragedies *Mozart and Salieri* was staged, demonstrating a harmonious

blend of powerful dialogue and live classical music. The performance featured pieces from Mozart's works that reflect the peak of his musical genius, along with brief readings of poems in several languages (English, Arabic, and Russian).

The event also presented an exciting narration of the prominent tales of the Russian writer Alexander Pushkin in Arabic and English, such as *The Fisherman and the Fish* and *The Tsar Sultan*. These tales are notable for their elements of fantasy and mythology, including magical transformations, legendary heroes, and kings, showcasing the traditions of Russian folklore splendidly.

In addition, the event also includes a presentation of a book titled *The Unique Genius*, written by Alexander Pushkin. It will

also include a craft art exhibition titled *Pushkin and the Caucasus*, displaying artworks and crafts by university students in various artistic styles, including painting, graphics, and engraving on different materials such as linoleum (linocuts), batik (the art of fabric painting), and a display of enamel jewellery. Furthermore, an art workshop titled *The Creative Artist* for painting on plaster statues will be conducted, along with a digital art workshop inspired by the works of Alexander Pushkin.

Chechen State Pedagogical University is one of the oldest higher education institutions in Grozny, Russian Federation, established in 1980.

The university has around 30 departments and currently includes five colleges and four institutes.

South Korea fires warning shots after North blows up roads

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea's military said it fired warning shots near its heavily fortified border on Tuesday after North Korean forces reportedly destroyed roads along the border.

It comes days after the North vowed to permanently seal off its southern border.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said Pyongyang 'conducted an explosive operation aimed at blocking the connection roads' on Tuesday.

As a response, the South Korean military said it 'conducted counter-fire in areas south of the

military demarcation line'.

South Korea's military provided a video that showed a cloud of white and grey smoke emerging from an explosion at a road near the border town of Kaesong. Another video showed smoke emerging from a coastal road near the eastern border.

Although the roads and railways connecting the two countries have long been shut down, North Korean state media reported that the new measures were aimed at safeguarding national security and preventing war.

Earlier this year, North Ko-



rean leader Kim Jong Un declared the South his country's 'principal enemy' and since then, the regime has laid fresh mines, erected anti-tank barriers, and deployed missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads along the already heavily fortified border.

Kim convenes meetings

On Saturday, North Korea accused Seoul of using drones to drop anti-regime propaganda leaflets on the capital Pyongyang. South Korea's military initially denied deploying the

drones but has not commented on the matter since.

The North Korean leader's influential sister, Kim Yo Jong, warned on Sunday of a 'horrible disaster' if more drones are detected. In response, Kim held a security meeting on Monday in order to be briefed on 'the case of (the) enemy's serious provocation that violated the sovereignty' of North Korea.

The briefing was intended to 'set forth the direction of immediate military action', North Korea's state-controlled KCNA news agency reported.

DW

SCO meet in Pakistan: 10,000 police and paramilitary personnel deployed

Islamabad, Pakistan - The 23rd Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government (CHG) is all set to kick off on Wednesday in Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, with top-notch security measures in place.

With the arrival of foreign top officials, the security agencies are determined to prevent any disruptions and have amped up security in Islamabad, according to a report by Dawn.

To ensure the safety and security of the 23rd SCO summit in Islamabad, the Pakistan Army has been deployed to safeguard the event, key government buildings, and the Red Zone area.

Additionally, rangers have been stationed throughout the capital. As a precautionary measure, numerous businesses have been temporarily shut down to minimise security risks in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Key routes have also been closed.

Notably, the government has deployed over 10,000 police and paramilitary personnel for the security of about 900 delegates who are set to arrive for the event.

The delegates will stay at different places in the capital located inside the 'Red Zone' or in the vicinity, as 14 locations in the capital have been arranged for their accommodation, Dawn reported. A motorcade of 124



With the arrival of foreign top officials, the security agencies are determined to prevent any disruptions and have amped up security in Pakistan's capital city of Islamabad

vehicles has been arranged to ensure transportation for guests. This fleet will be divided into two groups: 84 vehicles will escort the heads of states, while 40 vehicles will cater to other delegates.

With all delegations set to arrive today, a packed schedule awaits on Wednesday.

According to the programme, the participants will arrive on Wednesday morning at the Jinnah Convention Centre, where

they will be received by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. After group photos, PM Shehbaz will give his opening remarks, which are set to be followed by statements from other member states. A notable agenda of the

day is 'documents signing' before the PM offers the concluding remarks, Dawn reported.

On Wednesday afternoon, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and SCO Secretary General Zhang Ming will address the

media. Following their press briefing, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will host 'official luncheons' for the guests.

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will lead the Indian delegation at the 23rd

Meeting of the SCO.

The Prime Minister of China Li Qiang, Prime Minister of Russia Mikhail Mishustin, Prime Minister of Belarus Roman Golovchenko, Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Olzhas Bektenov, Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan Akybek Zhaparov, Prime Minister of Tajikistan Aylbek Zharov, and Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Nigmatovich Aripov, as well as the first Vice President of Iran Mohammad Mokhber will be representing the SCO member states during the summit, ARY News had reported.

The summit will also feature participation from Foreign Ministers and Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Turkmenistan as special guests, as well as the Prime Minister of Mongolia Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsrai as an observer state.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation established on June 15, 2001 in Shanghai, China.

Key goals of the SCO include strengthening mutual trust between the Member States, encouraging cooperation in areas like trade, economy, science and technology, and jointly ensuring and maintaining peace, security and stability in the region.

ANI

No result yet: Mozambican elections hit by allegations of electoral fraud

Maputo, Mozambique - There is no official result yet, but it is becoming clear that Frelimo (Liberation Front of Mozambique), the party in power since Mozambique's independence almost 50 years ago, and its candidate, Daniel Chapo, will win.

In the presidential race, Venâncio Mondlane, one of three opposition candidates who recently left Renamo to run as an independent candidate against Renamo chairman Ossufo Momade, came in second place.

But Mondlane claims victory in this election, saying he is the victim of massive electoral fraud: "What we are seeing here is election rigging of the highest order," Mondlane told DW, adding: "This is nothing new, we have seen this in past elections."

Official numbers indicate victory for Frelimo, which has ruled Mozambique since independence in 1975. In the capital Maputo, 53.68% of the votes are said to have gone to Daniel Chapo, while Venâncio Mondlane received 33.84%, followed by Renamo's Ossufo Momade,



with about 9%, and Lutero Simango of the MDM (Democratic Movement of Mozambique) party, with around 3%.

Representatives of the ruling party are pleased: "These are fair results that reflect the will of the people. These elections were very transparent," Frelimo's secretary in Maputo, António Niquice, told DW. In the restive northeastern region of Cabo Delgado, which has endured a bloody militant

war since 2017, Daniel Chapo also officially won, with about 66% of the votes, followed by Venâncio Mondlane (22.64%). Ossufo Momade took third place with 7.56%, and Lutero Simango finished last with just under 4%.

The results are particularly concerning for Renamo: its status as Mozambique's main opposition is at risk.

"Podemos, a party not yet represented in parliament that sup-

ported Venâncio Mondlane's presidential candidacy, will take Renamo's place," Mozambican analyst Jaime Guiliche told DW.

Mondlane, who only left Renamo shortly before the elections, has shaken up the political landscape, the analyst added: "I think we will see a situation where Renamo is no longer the second-largest political force and will fall to third place."

DW

Monkeys die in Hong Kong zoo

Hong Kong - Hong Kong's oldest zoo sealed off part of its grounds on Tuesday as it brought in experts to seek answers for the death of nine monkeys in just two days.

Three of the nine monkeys were of endangered species.

Authorities of the Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens are now keeping a close watch on a monkey which is displaying unusual movement and appetite. The sealed parts of the zoo are being cleaned and disinfected.

In his weekly press briefing on Tuesday, Hong Kong leader John Lee said that experts had been called in to conduct necropsies and toxicological tests.

"Government departments will speed up autopsy and toxicological testing," the government said in a statement.

DW



China sends two giant pandas to Washington

Beijing, China - China has reignited its 'panda diplomacy' by sending two giant pandas to the Smithsonian's National Zoo in Washington, marking a new phase in Sino-US wildlife conservation cooperation.

The China Wildlife Conservation Association announced on Monday that Baoli, a male panda born in August 2021, and Qingbao, a female born in September 2021, have embarked on a 10-year stay in the US capital as part of a Cooperative Research Agreement signed in April. The

agreement continues a decades-long partnership between the two nations focused on panda conservation.

In preparation for the pandas' journey, both countries worked meticulously to ensure a smooth transition. China conducted health checks on the pandas and provided technical guidance for the US team.

Meanwhile, the National Zoo upgraded its facilities and secured a steady bamboo supply to meet the pandas' dietary needs.

Anadolu Agency

Lebanon: UN Security Council urges to respect safety of UN peacekeepers

New York/Beirut - The UN Security Council on Monday urged all parties to respect the safety and security of UN peacekeepers in Lebanon.

Amid ongoing hostilities along the Blue Line, the de facto border between Israel and Lebanon, 'the members of the Security Council expressed their strong concerns after several (UN Interim Force in Lebanon) UNIFIL positions came under fire in the past days,' Pascale Baeriswyl, Switzerland's UN ambassador, said after a meeting on Lebanon.

Reading the statement, Baeriswyl said the council members reiterated their support to UNIFIL, underscoring its role in supporting regional stability.

"They expressed as well their deep concern for civilian casualties and sufferings, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and the rising number of internally displaced people. They called on all parties to abide by international humanitarian law," she added.

The members emphasised the need for diplomatic endeavours that would bring a durable end to the conflict and allow civilians on both sides of the Blue Line to return safely to their homes, she stressed.

Last week, four UNIFIL peacekeepers were injured by Israeli



UNIFIL was established as interim force decades ago, in 1978, to help restore peace in the region and as a confirmation of Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon

army shelling on their posts in southern Lebanon.

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Israel has mounted massive

The members emphasised the need for diplomatic endeavours that would bring a durable end to the conflict and allow civilians on both sides of the Blue Line to return safely to their homes

airstrikes across Lebanon against what it claims are Hezbollah targets since September 23, killing at least 1,500 people, injuring over 4,500 others, and displacing more than 1.34mn people.

The aerial campaign is an escalation from a year of cross-

border warfare between Israel and Hezbollah since the start of its offensive on the Gaza Strip.

Despite international warnings that the Mideast was on the brink of a regional war amid Israel's relentless attacks on Gaza and Lebanon, it expanded the

conflict on October 1 by launching a ground incursion into southern Lebanon.

Meanwhile, rescuers recovered the bodies of three paramedics from under the rubble on Tuesday following an Israeli airstrike in eastern Lebanon.

Israeli warplanes hit a facility of the Islamic Health Authority in Qilya on Monday night, destroying the building and killing three paramedics inside.

The state news agency NNA said the bodies of the three paramedics were removed from under the debris of the building early on Tuesday.

The Hezbollah-affiliated Islamic Health Authority was regularly targeted by the Israeli army in the course of its air campaign on Lebanon.

Hezbollah Deputy Secretary-General Naim Qassem said on Tuesday that his group has imposed a 'new equation' on Israel, saying a Gaza ceasefire is the key to ending the current conflict.

"We impose on Israel a new equation of 'harming the enemy' as rockets reached Haifa, Tel Aviv last few days", Qassem said in a televised speech.

"We have the right to target any point in Israel after its violations in Lebanon," he said. "Rocket fire will continue."

Anadolu Agency

Olaf Scholz, Ursula von der Leyen talk up EU expansion

Berlin, Germany - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Monday said he hoped Western Balkan states could inch closer to becoming members of the European Union as he hosted leaders from the region in Berlin.

"I hope it won't take another 10 years before all six states finally become EU members," Scholz said at the summit known as the Berlin Process.

The six nations Scholz was referring to were Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Albania.

"The European Union is only complete with the Western Balkans as part of it," Scholz said.

The German chancellor made the comments alongside European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at a news conference on the sidelines of the Berlin Process summit, which saw leaders sign a plan of action on a common market in the region. A new mobility agreement on access to higher education was also on



the table in the German capital.

The Berlin Process has been held annually since 2014, with Scholz adding: "We have managed to create something that I would call the spirit of Berlin."

Russian influence in the Balkans

Von der Leyen also described the summit as a success, saying that EU enlargement is once again a priority for the 27-member bloc.

The EU has not admitted a new member since Croatia joined in 2013. Von der Leyen admitted that there had been a long period in which 'en-

largement... was excluded as a possibility'.

"This has completely changed in the last years," she added.

The EU chief also warned against rising Russian influence in the West Balkans.

"Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine has brought clarity - you have to choose to be on the right side of history and on the side of international law," she said.

The meeting in Berlin comes days after German mediation helped to resolve a long dispute over free trade in the region. DW

29 Palestinians killed in latest Israeli airstrikes across Gaza

Gaza City, Palestine - At least 29 Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes across the Gaza Strip on Tuesday morning.

Local sources reported that Israeli forces targeted several areas including Khan Younis, Nuseirat camp, and Jabalia camp.

The Israeli assault on Gaza has compounded an already dire humanitarian crisis, with severe shortages of food, clean water, and medical supplies due to a prolonged blockade.

Efforts led by the United States, Egypt, and Qatar to mediate a ceasefire and secure a prisoner exchange between Israel and Hamas have failed due to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's refusal to agree to a cessation of hostilities.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry in the enclave said on Tuesday that Israeli attacks killed at least 55 more Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, bringing the overall death toll since last year to 42,344.

A ministry statement added that some 99,013 others were injured in the ongoing assault.

"Israeli forces killed 55 people and injured 329 others in four



massacres of families in the last 24 hours," the ministry said.

Besides, a young Palestinian man, Salah Jabarin, died on Tuesday from injuries he sustained during an Israeli military raid in Jenin in July, according to local medical sources.

Jabarin had been in the intensive care unit at Ibn Sina Hospital in Jenin until he was pronounced dead early on Tuesday, the hospital confirmed.

According to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa, Jabarin was critically injured on

July 5 during an Israeli army raid in Jenin. His father, Mohammad Jabarin, 54, was fatally shot in the same incident.

Israeli military operations in the West Bank have intensified in recent years, with raids escalating further following the onset of conflict in Gaza on October 7, 2023. Palestinian residents have also faced increasing violence from illegal Israeli settlers.

At least 755 Palestinians have since been killed and over 6,250 others injured by Israeli army fire in the occupied territory, accord-

ing to the Health Ministry.

Israeli police officer killed

An Israeli police officer was killed and four people were injured in a shooting attack near Ashdod in southern Israel on Tuesday, according to local media.

The Israeli public broadcaster KAN said a gunman opened fire in two separate locations along Route 4 near Ashdod.

The gunman was shot dead by an armed Israeli

Anadolu Agency

Situation for children in Gaza getting 'worse' each day, warns UNICEF

Geneva, Switzerland - The situation for children in Gaza is 'worsening' with each passing day, with growing food, water, and medicine shortages compounded by ongoing Israeli attacks and severe restrictions on aid, a UNICEF spokesperson warned on Tuesday.

James Elder told a UN press briefing in Geneva that many Gaza children have been displaced multiple times since the outbreak of war over a year ago.

"Every single day, those deprivations increase," Elder said,

emphasising the dire conditions faced by families in the region as '85% of the Gaza Strip' is under some form of evacuation order and 'unlivable' conditions.

He highlighted the sharp decline in humanitarian aid delivery, particularly in August, which saw the 'lowest amount of aid' entering Gaza since the conflict began. He also noted that in recent days, no commercial trucks were allowed to enter Gaza, further exacerbating the situation.

Elder issued a stark warning that unless restrictions on aid



are lifted and bombardments are ceased, the already dire situation for children will only worsen.

"Day after day, the situation for children becomes worse than the day before, and that's going to continue so long as we see ongoing strikes and so long as we see now what is probably the worst restrictions we've seen on humanitarian aid," he said. "As hard as it is to imagine, tomorrow will be worse for children than today."

Save the Children International also described the Occu-

pied Palestinian Territories (OPT) as 'now the deadliest place in the world for children'.

"At least 3,100 children under 5 have been killed in Gaza and thousands are at risk of severe malnutrition as famine looms," it said Tuesday on X.

Meanwhile, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) called on Tuesday to respect humanitarian pauses in the war-torn Gaza Strip to allow the vaccination of Palestinian children against polio.

Anadolu Agency

INDIA

India-Canada ties hit new low after expulsion of diplomats

New Delhi - India and Canada have been dealing with an unprecedented diplomatic crisis after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged that Indian government agents were involved in the killing of Nijjar in Canada.

India has rejected Canada's allegations, terming it 'absurd' and 'politically motivated'.

On Monday, Canada expelled six Indian diplomats and consular officials in connection with a probe of the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia in 2023.

India has also announced its decision to expel six Canadian diplomats, which include Canada's Acting High Commissioner in India, Stewart Ross Wheeler, Deputy High Commissioner in India Patrick Hebert and First Secretary Marie Catherine Joly.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Commissioner, Mike Duheme on Monday claimed that they have information on certain criminal activity carried out by agents of the Indian government.

He said: "In the past few years and more recently, law enforcement agencies in Canada have successfully investigated and charged a significant number of individuals for their direct involvement in homicides, extortions & other criminal acts of violence. In addition, there have been well over a dozen credible imminent threats to life which have led to the conduct of duty to warn, by law enforcement with members of South Asian community and specifically, members of the pro-Khalistan movement."

In a statement on Monday, India 'strongly' rejected a diplo-



Canadian Chargé d'Affaires Stewart Wheeler leaves from Ministry of External Affairs, in New Delhi on Monday (ANI)

matic communication from Canada suggesting that the Indian High Commissioner and other diplomats were 'persons of interest' in an investigation and termed it as 'preposterous imputations' and part of the po-

litical agenda of the Justin Trudeau government.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's hostility to India has long been in evidence and his government

has consciously provided space to violent extremists and terrorists 'to harass, threaten and intimidate Indian diplomats and community leaders in Canada'. Although the India-Canada relations reached a new low

after Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing in 2023, the history of strained ties between India and Canada extends beyond current events. On September 18 last year, Trudeau made the stunning revelation in the House of Commons that there was credible intelligence linking India's government to the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar outside Gurdwara.

In the aftermath, India swiftly retaliated by issuing a statement that denied any involvement in the issue, terming them 'absurd and politically motivated'. The MEA said that Canada has consistently given space to anti-India extremists.

According to the MEA, Canada has not been able to present any evidence to back its claims over Nijjar's killing.

India also suspended its visa services in Canada after Trudeau alleged the Indian government's involvement in the killing of a Khalistani terrorist in June.

Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly has said that the decision to expel Indian diplomats was based on evidence gathered by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in India-designated terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar killing case and urged the Indian government to support the ongoing probe for the benefit of two nations.

In a post on X, Joly stated: "Keeping Canadians safe is our government's top priority. The decision to expel individuals was based on clear evidence gathered by the RCMP in the Nijjar case. We urge the Indian government to support our ongoing investigation for the benefit of both countries."

ANI



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar arrives for the Meeting of SCO Council of Heads of Government, in Pakistan on Tuesday (ANI)

Indian FM makes visit to Pakistan for SCO summit

Islamabad, Pakistan - India's foreign minister travelled to Pakistan on Tuesday, marking the first visit by New Delhi's top envoy to its neighbour in nearly a decade.

Subrahmanyam Jaishankar is in Islamabad for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit. Both sides have said no bilateral talks are planned, and Jaishankar's visit would strictly follow the SCO schedule.

"India remains actively engaged in the SCO format," India's Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday morning. It added that Jaishankar will travel to the summit to 'represent India at the meeting'.

The SCO comprises China, India, Russia, Pakistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Belarus. A further 16 countries are affiliated as observers or 'dialogue partners'.

With the SCO sometimes viewed as an alternative to the Western-dominated NATO military alliance, it has a mandate to discuss security. However, the Islamabad summit is due to focus on trade, humanitarian and cul-

tural issues.

Souring of ties

The last time an Indian foreign minister visited Pakistan was in 2015 when Sushma Swaraj attended a conference on Afghanistan.

Later that year, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a surprise visit to Lahore to meet his then-counterpart Nawaz Sharif, sparking hopes of a warming in relations with Pakistan.

Relations plummeted in 2019 when Modi's government revoked the limited autonomy of Indian-administered Kashmir, leading Pakistan to suspend bilateral trade and downgrade diplomatic ties with New Delhi.

Kashmir, home to a long-running and deadly insurgency against Indian rule, is divided between the two countries and claimed by both in full.

Pakistan's former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was in the Indian state of Goa in 2023 for an SCO meeting.

DW

India, US sign Rs 32,000 crore deal for buying Predator drones

New Delhi - India and the US on Tuesday signed deals worth Rs 32,000 crore for buying 31 Predator drones for the three services and setting up a Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul facility for them in the country.

The deal between India and the US was signed in the presence of senior officials, according to defence officials.

Last week, the Cabinet Com-

mittee on Security (CCS) approved the acquisition of 31 Predator drones. Of these 31 Predator drones, 15 will go to the Indian Navy, while the rest will be divided equally between the Air Force and the Army.

Speaking to ANI on Monday, defence officials said that the foreign military sales contract with the US government for 31 Predator drones and the MRO



Cabinet Committee had approved acquisition of 31 Predator drones, of which 15 will go to Indian Navy, while the rest for the Air Force and the Army

was scheduled to be signed on Tuesday. The American team of military and corporate officials are in town for signing these contracts, the officials said.

India has been discussing the deal with the US for many years but the final hurdles were cleared a few weeks ago at the Defence Acquisition Council meeting, as it had to be cleared before October 31, the deadline

for the American proposal.

India would be basing the drones at four possible locations including INS Rajali near Chennai, Porbandar in Gujarat, Sarsawa and Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh. The Indian military has acquired the drones from the US in a tri-services deal with the numbers decided by the forces after a scientific study.

ANI

Jharkhand, Maharashtra assembly polls to be held in November, announces CEC

New Delhi - The assembly elections in Jharkhand will be held in two phases on November 13 and November 20 and votes will be counted on November 23, Chief Election Commissioner, Rajiv Kumar announced on Tuesday.

Addressing the press conference here, the Chief Election Commissioner said that polling in Maharashtra will be held in a single phase on November 20.

Votes in Maharashtra will also be counted on November 23.

A total of 2.60 crore voters are eligible to cast votes in Jharkhand and there are 1.31 crore male and 1.29 crore female voters. The state has 11.84 lakh are first-time voters and there are 66.84 lakh young voters.

Kumar said the date of Gazette notification for the two



CEC Rajiv Kumar addresses a press conference in New Delhi on Tuesday

phases will be issued on October 18 and 22 respectively. The last date of making nominations for the two phases is October 25 and 29, the date for scrutiny of nominations is October 28 and 30 and last date for withdrawal of candidatures is October 30 and November 1 respectively.

Senior citizens above 85 years in age can vote from home. "They are entitled to their privacy as well during the vote at home. Videography will be done for proof," Kumar said.

The term of the Jharkhand assembly will end on January 5, 2025, with elections scheduled

in 81 constituencies (44 General, 9 SC, 28 ST) in the state.

A delegation from the ECI, led by the CEC had on September 24 conducted a thorough review of poll preparedness for the assembly elections in Jharkhand at Ranchi.

Assembly polls were held in five phases in Jharkhand in 2019.

The poll panel also announced dates for bypolls in 48 assembly seats and two parliamentary constituencies.

In Maharashtra, the date of issue of Gazette notification is October 22, last date of filing nominations is October 29, the date for scrutiny of nominations will be October 30 and the last date for withdrawal of candidatures is November 4.

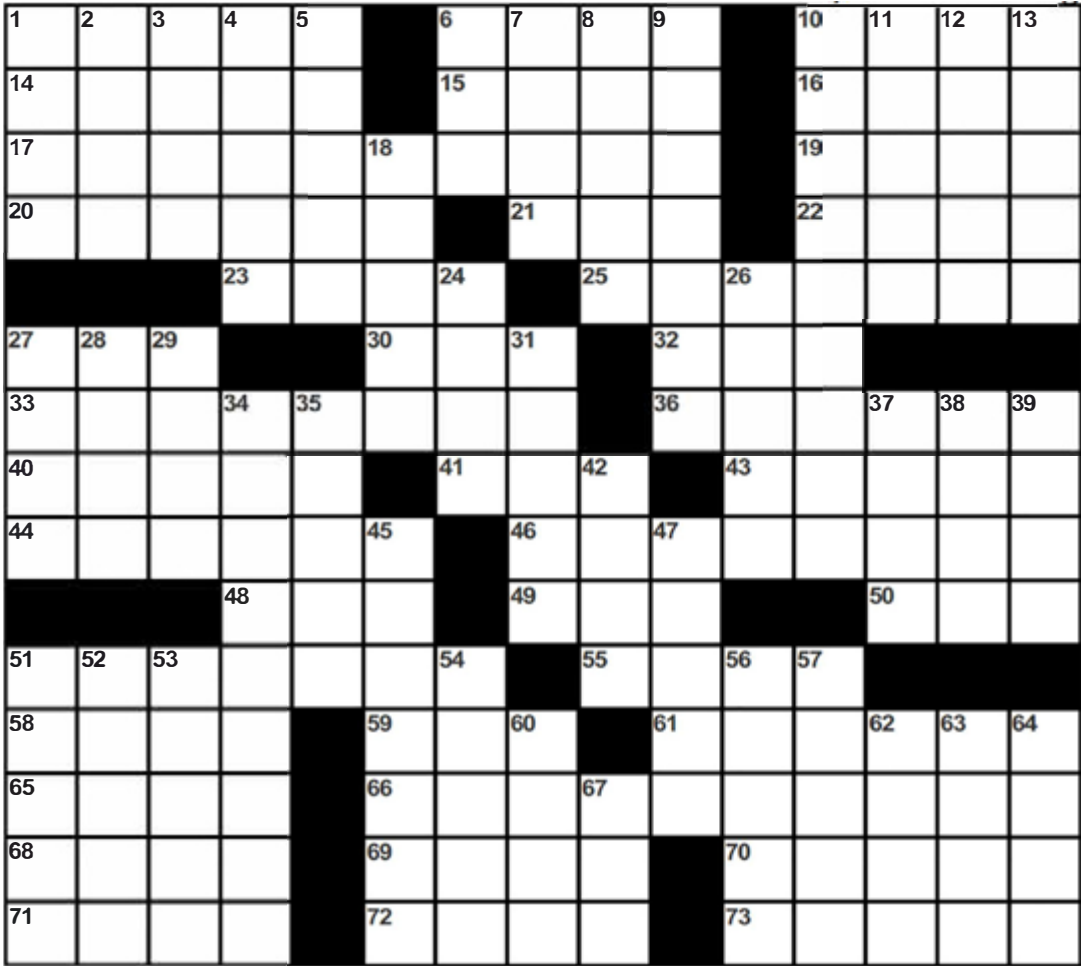
ANI

REMEMBERING THE PREDECESSOR



President Droupadi Murmu pays floral tributes to former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam on his birth anniversary, in Algiers, Algeria on Tuesday (ANI)

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1) Plant used as a ground cover
6) Genealogist's map
10) Small pooches, briefly
14) Significant_
15) Redundant exclamation
16) Rapper on "Law & Order: SVU"
17) Solo at a recital
19) Worst possible score
20) "Cross my heart!"
21) Match, as a bet
22) Director Snyder
23) Chicago paper, familiarly
25) Vast area
27) Plastic pipe material
30) Catch, in a way
32) Tyrolean peak
33) Basketball player, informally
36) Horse that hasn't won
40) Set of morals
41) Tour transportation
43) "Wow!"
44) Entered
46) Texas flag symbol
48) Money-managing exec
49) Former NBA star
Ming
50) Arboreal street name

51) Greet casually
55) Ready to pluck
58) Support, with "up"
59) Air quality org.
61) Discriminatory, in a way
65) Mischief-making Norse god
66) "Well, aren't you the perfectionist!"
68) "You asleep?" response
69) Year, on monuments
70) Not fancy at all
71) Like a broken bronc
72) Like one end of many pools
73) "Fiddler on the Roof" matchmaker
DOWN
1) Arizona tribe
2) Redding ofR&B
3) Irwin or George Bernard
4) Religious principle
5) Loud, like a crowd
6) "More than I want to hear!"
7) Some deli loaves
8) Show host
9) Driver's license requirement
10) Domino's deliveries
11) Neptune's realm
12) Cougars or Bobcats, to auto buffs
13) Feed, as a furnace
18) Computer command under "File"
24) Telly watchers' network, with "the"
26) Cessna or Lear product
27) "That was close!"
28) Say "yea," say
29) Red Scare lawyer Roy
31) Word in a letter sign-off
34) A choirmaster may toot one
35) "Star Trek" genre
37) Go out with
38) "And others," briefly
39) Expected outcome
42) Do some parasailing
45) Place to jot things down
47) See 5-Down
51) Banana concoction
52) Enticing emanation
53) Li'l Abner's surname
54) State one's views
56) Full of vim and vigor
57) Napoleon on Elba
60) Oily skin can cause it
62) Self-confident words
63) Burlesque bit
64) Daly of "Cagney & Lacey"
67) Keystone lawman

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Instead of pretending they don't exist, you should foster your opportunistic tendencies without any guilt today. If you are smart enough to see an opportunity when it comes your way, why shouldn't you jump right on it? Wise people make the most of the circumstances they are in. If you're hearing negative input about the way you choose to move forward in life, these comments are probably caused by jealousy. Ignore them and carry on your wise way.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Few people fully appreciate the power of suggestion. Do you? Today, if you need to sell a product, idea, or yourself, use a heavy dose of enthusiasm to make your point (and make the sale). People want to be a part of something positive and exciting, and if you can lend those qualities to what you're advocating, you can convert anyone! This is a great opportunity to push your agenda and get things pointed in the direction you want.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
When you are faced with a challenge today, your original mind and unique sense of self-expression will put you at center stage, and don't be surprised if your performance earns you several curtain calls. This is a new chance to shine and put old disappointments behind you. Get ready for a renewed sense of self, as well as a chance to finally make your mark on the world. It might not happen overnight, but it is going to happen sooner than you think.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
People from different backgrounds or cultures will play an important role in your life today. Their charm and friendliness will provide you with the positive reinforcement you need, and they will make you feel much more comfortable in an awkward situation. Not everyone is as open-minded as you, so be prepared to create a place where new people can meet and mingle. A social event can help cultures meld instead of collide.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Your critical eye has 20/20 vision right now, but it isn't the only tool you can use to see what's really going on. Remember that your creativity and intuition can help you sense things on another level. You can sense the subconscious urges and wishes of other people quickly, perhaps even before they do. Like a keystone in an arch, you are holding things together in your group of friends. Make suggestions for the changes you think need to happen to retain a harmonious structure

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Your business or career plans are finally starting to turn into something real. This is a day of great momentum, when a little nudge of effort in one direction can cause a giant avalanche of good will, positive feedback, and success. Keep talking all day long. The more you can connect people to what you're doing the better. You will soak up a lot of energy from the enthusiasm that other people are showing you.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Is there something you've been meaning to talk to someone about? Today is the right time to sit down with that person and let it out. If they aren't receptive, don't worry. You need to at least attempt to get things out in the open, but keeping the conversation going isn't solely your responsibility. All you have to do is respect that nagging feeling inside of you and tell the truth to the people who need to hear it. Once it's out there in the world, you've done all you have to do.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Despite all the advice you've been given, focusing on your limits today is not going to help you get past them. You need to forget about whatever is holding you back now. The more you think about it, the more power you're giving it. It's time to fake it till you make it! Stride forward with all your energy, and don't even think about failure. If you can convince yourself of your value, then other people will soon be convinced too and doors will start opening.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Recent fires have left scorch marks on a lot of reputations. Is yours included in that burned bunch? Double-check where you stand with the people who matter today. Your reputation is something you've worked very hard to build, and it should be your top concern. Chances are you're still looking rosy, but the act of touching base will keep you in the pink. Making the extra effort just in case is what put you in the high-integrity category to begin with.

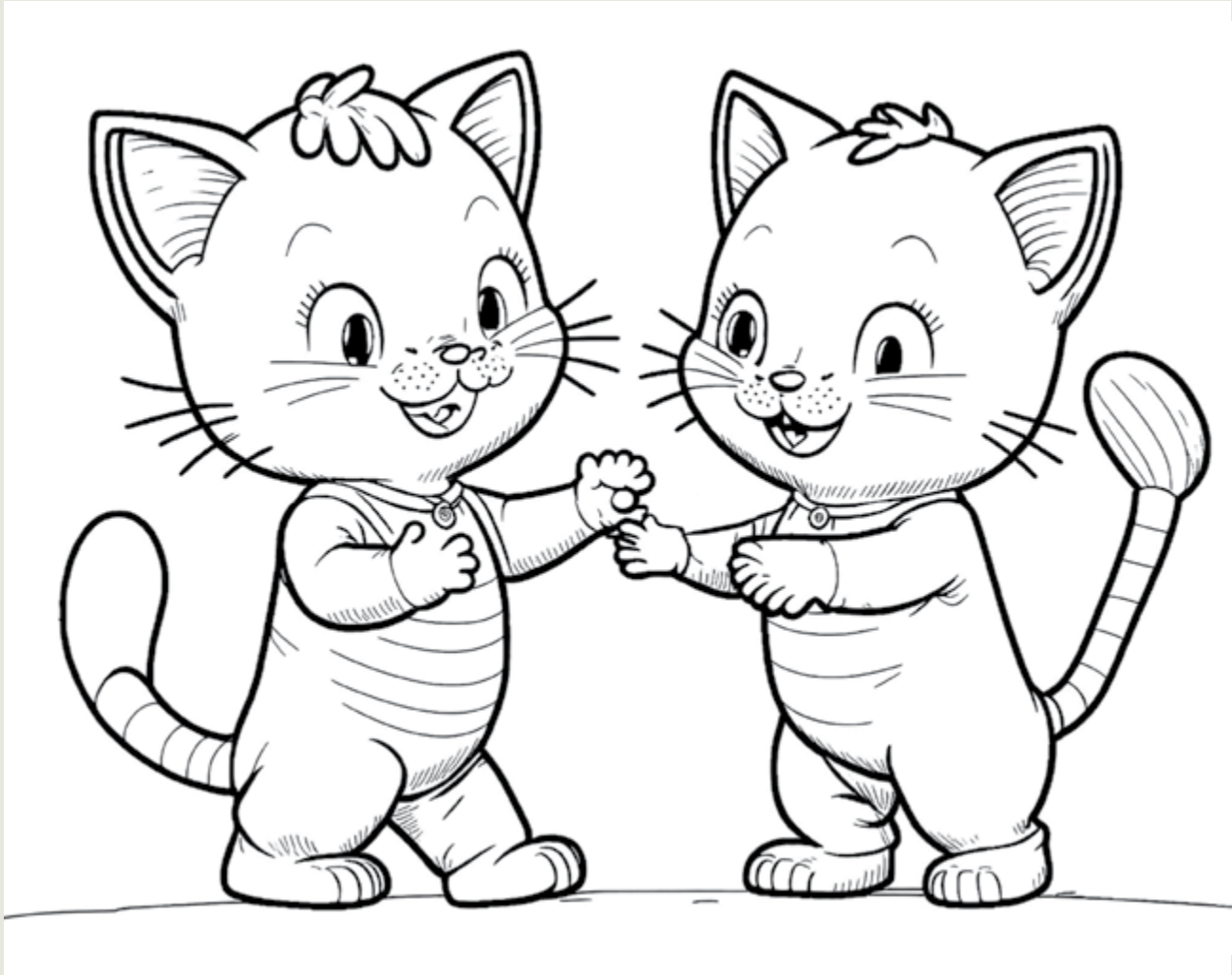
CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
There's a disconnect in your social group right now. Either everyone else wants to whoop it up and you don't feel like going out, or you're in a mood to paint the town red and you can't find anyone to go with you. Whatever the problem is, you're just going to have to go with what the majority rules and make the best of it. If you're the one who doesn't feel like going out, remember that sometimes forced socialization can end up being the very thing you need.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Self-discipline is not an easy thing to achieve, especially now, when so many different ideas and opportunities are tempting you. But if you think of these temptations as tests of your willpower, you can see a direct connection between refusing something that isn't good and welcoming something that is good. You know the things to avoid, so avoid them. This may require a last-minute revision to your social plans.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
Keep in mind that your friends in high places are primarily your friends. It would be a shame to forget this fact, especially if you're growing too interested in how they can get you where you need to be. The minute this focus eclipses your concern for their personal happiness, you run the risk of losing a friendship. These friends are valuable to you not for where they can take you, but for who they are. Forget what they do for a living and pay attention to what they teach you.

Answers: 1.B 2.C 3.C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

L	L	O	E
E	C	A	S
R	L	T	A
A	R	E	C

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

Deschamps admits France 'were shaken for the first 20 to 25 minutes'

Brussels, Belgium - France coach Didier Deschamps praised match-winner Randal Kolo Muani after the striker's double led his side to a 2-1 victory away to Belgium in their Nations League A Group 2 clash on Monday as they put one foot in the quarter-finals.

Kolo Muani netted a penalty and second-half header as France held off the lively home side and finished the match with 10 men following a second booking for captain Aurelien Tchouameni.

Kolo Muani has been a rare starter for Paris Saint-Germain this season but has four goals in as many games for France.

"He's interesting, he's radiant," Deschamps told TF1. "He is confident and has a very specific profile where in his runs with the ball there is presence. He is a good header and with us he is very often successful."

Belgium dominated the opening exchanges and would have opened the scoring if Youri Tielemans had not missed a penalty.

"We were shaken for the first 20 to 25 minutes where they (Belgium) put in a lot of intensity, while we made a lot

of technical errors," Deschamps added. "When we were able to find solutions going forward, it was better for us."

"We had to shake them (the players) up. In relation to what we said, and what the players had said, it's mostly the mistakes, we had to calm down."

"We had to go forward and press well. Of course, they had chances, but so did we in the second half. We're happy to win this match, especially with 10 men."

France were without talisman Kylian Mbappe, who chose to skip their latest Nations league matches, and had several less experienced players in the lineup, which made the win all the more pleasing for Deschamps.

"It's a young team that doesn't have a lot of experience," he said. "There was seriousness and enthusiasm (for this match). It's better to win these kind of games."

Italy lead the group with 10 points from four games ahead of France on nine while Belgium have four. The top two qualify for the quarter-finals that will be played in March next year.



Didier Deschamps

DREAM DEBUT

Germany enter Nations League quarterfinals as Leweling scores winner against Dutch

Munich, Germany - Germany booked a place in the Nations League quarter-finals on Monday after midfielder Jamie Leweling enjoyed a dream international debut by scoring the winner in a hard-fought 1-0 home success over the Netherlands in Group A3.

The 23-year-old Leweling, one of two Germany debutants, had the ball in the net in the second minute but his effort was ruled offside. He did score in the 64th though, firing into the top corner after the Dutch failed to properly clear a corner.

Germany are top on 10 points from four matches and guaranteed a place in the last eight, with the Dutch five points behind in second ahead of Hungary on goal difference. Bosnia are bottom with one point after losing 2-0 to the Hungarians.

"The first half was exceptionally good," said Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann. "After the break they switched things around and we did not defend as well."

"But we fully deserved the win. We now want to win the remaining matches. We want to have continuity when it comes to the results."

The Germans had the visitors on the back foot from the start and apart from Leweling's goal they had more chances to score through Tim Kleindienst and Maximilian Mittelstaedt as Ronald Koeman's team struggled to find a way into the game.

The hosts kept the pressure up after the break and again



Germany's Jamie Leweling celebrates after scoring against Netherlands on Monday

came close through Serge Gnabry in the 54th before Leweling drilled in the winner.

The Dutch were anonymous for most of the game but almost scored with their first chance when Xavi Simons' shot bounced off the bar in the 77th just minutes before Mittelstaedt saw his own deflected effort sail narrowly wide of the post.

"I am not satisfied by our performance," Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman said. "The Germans were the better, faster and physically stronger. They created

The first half was exceptionally good. After the break they switched things around and we did not defend as well. But we fully deserved the win.

JULIAN NAGELSMANN

more chances.

"We lost too many balls in the midfield. We went too far back, that was not the plan. The plan was to put pressure forward on the right side. But it did not happen," he added.

Like Leweling, it was another Germany newcomer, 34-year-old keeper Oliver Baumann, who made an impact when he preserved their lead in the 90th minute, superbly punching a powerful Doneyll Malen shot wide.

Kolo Muani double secures France win against Belgium

Brussels, Belgium - Striker Randal Kolo Muani scored a brace as France took a giant step towards the Nations League quarter-finals with a 2-1 victory over hosts Belgium in a League A Group 2 clash in Brussels on Monday.

Kolo Muani netted his opener from the penalty spot after a Wout Faes handball, but Lois Openda equalised in first half stoppage time after Belgium captain Youri Tielemans had earlier missed a spot-kick.

Kolo Muani headed in a second just past the hour-mark and France were able to hold on for the victory despite losing midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni to a second yellow card with 14 minutes remaining.

Italy head the group with 10 points from their four games, followed by France on nine. Belgium have four points and Israel zero. The top two teams qualify for the quarter-finals that will be played in March next year.

"It was a great evening, not an easy match because we knew the Belgians would cause us problems," France goalkeeper Mike Maignan told TF1. "My six saves? It's good for me, it's positive and



France's Randal Kolo Muani celebrates his goal against Belgium

it reflects my form at the moment. It's good for me and for the team, the most important thing is to have won."

Belgium had hoped to end a 43-year wait for a competitive victory over France and created enough chances to have earned more from the game, but were wasteful in front a goal, an all too familiar theme for the side.

They were without playmaker Kevin De Bruyne and striker

My six saves? It's good for me, it's positive and it reflects my form at the moment. It's good for me and for the team, the most important thing is to have won.

MIKE MAIGNAN

Romelu Lukaku, who both asked to be excused from duty, while France were missing their talisman Kylian Mbappe as he also made himself unavailable for selection in this international window.

Openda won a penalty when he raced clear and his clever change of direction meant he was fouled in the box by a slipping

William Saliba. However, Tielemans put his spot-kick over the crossbar.

France then earned a penalty of their own as Faes used his arm to knock the ball as he fell to the ground in the box and this time Kolo Muani converted easily.

Openda turned Belgium's late first half pressure into a goal as he headed Timothy Castagne's cross into the net, a well-constructed move having timed his



Daniel Maldini

Maldini's son makes debut as Italy outclass Israel

Udine, Italy - taly great Paolo Maldini's son Daniel made his debut for the Azzurri in Monday's 4-1 win over Israel, marking the first time three generations of a family have played for the country's national team.

Former AC Milan defender Paolo Maldini earned 126 caps while Cesare Maldini, Daniel's grandfather, played his last game for Italy 61 years ago.

Paolo Maldini attended the Nations League match in Udine and saw his son come on as a 74th-minute substitute.

"I'm happy that my parents came here, we'll talk when I get home," 23-year-old Monza forward Daniel Maldini said after the match. "It was a strong, positive emotion, I am very happy to have played and that the match went well ... I hope to bring some

quality, even if there is already too much, I try to help as much as I can."

Defender Giovanni Di Lorenzo scored twice as Luciano Spalletti's side put one foot in the quarter-finals. The win kept Italy top of the League A Group Two with 10 points.

Wales win

Wales forward Harry Wilson was rewarded for a fine all-round performance when he converted a penalty to secure a 1-0 victory over Montenegro in the Nations League on Monday as the hosts' new manager Craig Bellamy extended his unbeaten start.

Bellamy's side are second in Group B4 with eight points after four matches, trailing Turkey by two points after their 4-2 win away to Iceland.

Australia end Japan's winning run with draw at Saitama

Saitama, Japan - Australia halted Japan's rampant start to the third phase of Asia's World Cup qualifiers but were denied a shock win over the group leaders when a Cameron Burgess own goal saw the teams share a 1-1 draw at Saitama Stadium on Tuesday.

Burgess put the ball in his own net 14 minutes from time after Shogo Taniguchi had scored an earlier own goal to give the Australians hope of a second consecutive World Cup qualifying win since Tony Popovic took



Japan's Takefusa Kubo (R) battles with Australia's Jordan Bos for the ball

over as coach. The Australians eked out the draw despite having their preparations for the game affected by their late arrival due to traffic congestion on the roads around Saitama.

"My experience as part of this team is that in the most difficult moments that's when the boys stand up, no excuses," said Australia captain Jackson Irvine.

"To put in a performance like that tonight, I'm very proud of everybody. The calmness and composure we had to show, hav-

ing to defend in hard moments right to the very last ball, it's a top foundation for us to move forward with."

The result ends Japan's run of consecutive wins in World Cup qualifying at nine, during which time Hajime Moriyasu's side had not conceded a goal.

The Samurai Blue remain top of Group C, moving to 10 points from four games while second-placed Australia have five points, with four of those claimed since Popovic replaced Graham Arnold.

ALGERIA, CAMEROON IN CUP OF NATIONS FINALS

Zimbabwe in strong position to qualify after their victory against Namibia

Cape Town, South Africa - Five-time winners Cameroon and 2019 champions Algeria both booked their places at next year's Africa Cup of Nations finals in Morocco after victories in qualifying on Monday, bringing the number of qualified teams to four.

Cameroon defeated Kenya 1-0 when Boris Enow scored the only goal of the game in neutral Kampala, while Ramy Bensebaini netted a first-half spot-kick winner for Algeria against Togo in Lome.

Enow drilled a low free kick into the goal from just outside the box as Cameroon dominated the contest and did enough to win in the absence of their federation president Samuel Eto'o, who is serving a six-month stadium ban by world governing body FIFA.

The victory takes Cameroon to 10 points from four games in the pool and ensured they cannot finish outside of the top two, which is enough to secure a place at the 24-team finals.

Algeria have a full haul of 12 points from four games after Bensebaini converted a penalty on 18 minutes to give them lead, but they had to weather heavy pressure from their hosts, who created enough chances to get something from the game. Cameroon and Algeria join the hosts and Burkina Faso as the four teams so far confirmed



Algeria's Rami Bensebaini converts a penalty against Togo

for the finals.

Zimbabwe moved into a strong position in their pool with a 3-1 win over Namibia in neutral Johannesburg that leaves them on eight points, four ahead of third-placed Kenya with two rounds to play. One of those fixtures

is at home to Kenya next month. Walter Musona scored a brace, one a penalty, to go with a strike from Prince Dube.

Equatorial Guinea are five points clear in second place in their pool after a 2-1 win over

Liberia in Monrovia.

Luis Asue had them in front early, but William Gibson equalised for the hosts. Just as it appeared the game would end in a draw, Dorian Hanza netted a 94th minute winner.

Musa Barrow scored the decisive goal for Gambia in their 1-0 victory over Madagascar, making up for a penalty miss earlier in the game.

Gambia move into second place in their pool, ahead of Comoros on head-to-head record, but having played a game more.

Mozambique moved to the top of their pool with a 3-0 win over Eswatini in Nelspruit, their first goal scored by 40-year-old winger Domingues.

They are five points clear of third-placed Guinea Bissau, who host Mali on Tuesday.



David Terrier

Players closer to going on strike, says FIFPRO Europe head

Brussels, Belgium - Players have never been closer to going on strike amid growing discontent towards soccer's governing bodies, notably FIFA and its revamped Club World Cup that is being compared to a 'Super League', the head of players' union FIFPRO Europe said on Monday.

David Terrier was speaking to Reuters after FIFPRO Europe, the European Leagues association and Spain's LaLiga accused FIFA of "abuse" as they filed a joint complaint about the global governing body's international match schedule to European Union antitrust regulators.

Terrier said only 'social dialogue' between the sport's stakeholders could save its ecosystem.

"Obviously as a union leader I should be dreaming of a strike because it gives you more power but I'm very attached to the concept of social dialogue," Terrier said.

"It would be a serious failure to get to that extreme but this extreme is getting closer every day.

"The European Union must remind everyone and tell them they have to go through social dialogue," he said.

In a joint press conference on Monday, FIFPRO Europe, European Leagues and LaLiga lashed out at FIFA's packed match calendar, airing videos of players, including France captain Kylian Mbappe, saying they had too many matches on their plate.

Libya blame Nigeria for qualifier postponement

Tripoli, Libya - The Libyan Football Federation (LFF) said Nigeria were to blame for the postponement of Tuesday's scheduled Africa Cup of Nations qualifier in Benghazi after the visitors refused to play the match citing mistreatment on arrival in the country.

Nigerian players and officials were kept in a locked airport for over 16 hours almost 250km away from their intended destination after their charter flight

was redirected while on approach to Benghazi and instead landed in Bayda.

They said they had no access to food or water, or contact from Libyan officials during the episode, and decided to fly back to Nigeria on Monday rather than fulfil the fixture.

The LFF had said on Monday that the incident was not deliberate and urged Nigeria to be understanding, adding that their players had also faced travel difficulties last week.

The Libyan Football Federation had said on Monday that the incident was not deliberate and urged Nigeria to be understanding, adding that their players had also faced travel difficulties last week

difficulties last week.

The Confederation of African Football has said it has referred the matter to its disciplinary

board.

The LFF said in a statement it deplored the actions taken by the Nigeria Football Federation

and that it would take all legal measures to protect the interests of the national team.

"The Libyan Football Federation apologises to the Libyan football fans everywhere and the parties concerned with the arrangements of the match due to the state of confusion caused by the Nigerian Football Federation, which led to the failure to hold the match on time," it added.

The LFF had earlier complained about the treatment of their players and officials on arrival in Nigeria for a qualifier in Uyo last week, which saw their flight land hours away from the match venue and the players endured long travel delays.

Nigeria won that match 1-0 and are in pole position to qualify for the Cup of Nations finals that will be staged in Morocco late next year. The top two teams in each qualification pool advance to the finals.

Fight against racism my number one goal, says Nico Williams

Madrid, Spain - Spain forward Nico Williams said fighting racism was his life goal following multiple incidents of racist abuse against Black players in the country, including himself, and Real Madrid's Vinicius Jr.

The Athletic Bilbao forward suffered racist abuse at Atletico Madrid last season, leading the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) to order a partial closure of Atletico's south stand for two matches.

Clubs and players alike have been outspoken about the issue with Brazilian Vinicius saying in September that Spain should be stripped of its 2030 World Cup hosting duties unless significant progress is made in addressing the issue of racism in the country.

"My brother (Bilbao and Ghana forward Inaki Williams) and I, as black people, have an important task in this life, which is the fight against racism," Williams said in an interview with Spanish daily El Mundo.

"It's my number one goal. As a public figure, in order to contribute to that fight, I cannot be



Nico Williams

sidetracked or become a freak and not have my feet on the ground."

The rise in racist abuse has sparked numerous anti-racism efforts by the RFEF and LaLiga. In June, the Magistrate's Court of Valencia made history by issuing

the first conviction for racist insults in a soccer stadium in Spain.

Last month, a Mallorca fan was issued a 12-month suspended prison sentence for racially insulting Vinicius and Villarreal's Samuel Chukwueze. A

minor who racially insulted Real Madrid's Aurelien Tchouameni was banned from stadiums for one year and made to pay a fine.

In April, Spanish TV station Movistar Plus+ fired analyst German Burgos after his comments about Barcelona's Lamine Yamal, which was interpreted as racist.

"I think that Spain is moving forward on the right path and we must continue like this. I am very happy to see that progress is being made," the 22-year-old added.

"There are always people who try to sell another image of immigrants, but they are a minority." Williams, who played a pivotal role in Spain's victory at this year's European Championship, said he embodies a multicultural Spain, having been born in the country to Ghanaian parents.

"It is important to make everyone aware that many people come to Spain to earn their bread, to try to achieve a future that they do not have in their countries and to give a better life to their children," he added.

European leagues, players' union accuse FIFA of calendar 'abuse'

Brussels, Belgium - A players' union, the European leagues' group and Spain's LaLiga accused FIFA of "abuse" on Monday as they filed a joint complaint about the governing body's international match schedule to European Union antitrust regulators.

Elite leagues are concerned at the impact of an expanding football calendar on wellbeing, with some players struggling from fatigue, injuries and the mental toll even though they are often compensated with enormous salaries.

"The complaint explains how FIFA's imposition of decisions on the international calendar is an abuse of dominance and violates European Union law," complainants FIFPRO Europe, European Leagues and LaLiga said in a statement.

European Leagues is an association that includes the Premier League, the Bundesliga, Serie A and Ligue 1 but not LaLiga.

A particular bone of contention is the Club World Cup, which has been revamped for next year, with an increase from seven to 32 clubs, and is to take place in the U.S. for almost a



Star players including Kylian Mbappe have voiced their concerns about the packed calendar

month. As well as adding matches, that could delay clubs' pre-season tours designed to expand global fan bases.

"It is getting to a tipping point.

The feedback we have from players is that there is too much football being played and there is constant expansion," Premier League CEO Richard Masters said in the complainants' statement.

LaLiga president Javier Tebas accused FIFA of "acting solely in its own interest, without considering the damage to the entire football ecosystem."

French captain Kylian Mbappe, in a video aired at the three bodies' news conference, said: "When it's too much, it's too much."

FIFA, however, argues that the international calendar was approved by representatives of all continents including Europe after consultation with FIFPRO and leagues.

As well as a much larger Club World Cup, the next World Cup itself will also be expanded to 48 nations from 32.

European governing body UEFA has also increased its schedule, notably with the new Champions League format, but not been targeted in the complaint to regulators.

'IF YOU PLAY ONLY ONE WAY, YOU DON'T GROW'

Coach Gambhir wants India to 'get the results in whatever situation we are in'

Bengaluru, India - Test cricket isn't what it used to be, and India have kept pace with the times - think of the Kanpur Test against Bangladesh just recently. But while run rates have soared and batters are looking for more boundary-scoring opportunities, India head coach Gautam Gambhir believes adaptability is still the most crucial element.

"We want to be that team which can score 400 in a day and bat for two days to salvage a draw," Gambhir said ahead of India's first Test against New Zealand in Bengaluru. "And you call that growth, you call that adaptability, you call that Test cricket. If you play only one way, then there is no growth.

"I can't talk about world cricket. Every team has their ideologies, their methods to play Test cricket. I can only talk about my team. If we are ever in such a situation where we have to bat for two days to draw a Test, we have players in the dressing room who

can bat for two days. Ultimately, our first motive is to win a match and then if there is a situation where the team has to play for a draw, we have to keep those options open as well. That is the kind of Test cricket that we want to play."

As for the "high-risk, high-reward" approach, Gambhir was on board, and even doesn't mind India getting bundled for 100 in the process as long as the batters play their natural games and take the game head-on.

"We want people to be aggressive, we want people to go out there and play their natural game, if they can play the natural game, if they can get 400-500 runs in a day, why not? We will play that way - high-risk, high-reward; high-risk, high-failure. "There will be days when we'll get bundled up for 100 but we'll continue to back our players.

"That's how we want to play and that's how we want to entertain the people of this country

and, even in Test cricket, we want to keep the game going forward and get the results in whatever situation we are in."

India head into the three-match series against New Zealand high on confidence. They are on a six-game winning streak at home that dates back to February this year and are perched at the top of the World Test Championship (WTC) table.

With 74.24% points, India are well placed for a third consecutive WTC final appearance, and while a series win here will not guarantee them a spot in the final, it will make things easier for them especially considering that they next take on Australia in a five-match series in Australia.

"See, the first thing is that the World Test Championship is in June [2025]. And the second thing is that the Test match in Australia is on November 22. Right now, only New Zealand is on our mind and nothing else," Gambhir said. "When you play in-



Gautam Gambhir

We want people to be aggressive, we want people to go out there and play their natural game. If they can play the natural game, if they can get 400-500 runs in a day, why not?

GAUTAM GAMBHIR

ternational cricket, you don't think about how to prepare for the five Test matches in the Australia series or how to prepare for the World Test Championship final. Right now, the most important thing is how to be ready on October 16 at 9.30am. That is more important because you don't see

ahead that far.

"Whatever match you play, you try to win it irrespective of who is the opposition and where that series will take place. Whether it is New Zealand or Australia, we will try to win our country in every match."

ESPNcricinfo

India look to continue their home dominance in New Zealand Tests

Bengaluru, India - India will look to continue an unprecedented run of test success on home soil when they face an injury-hit New Zealand in the opener of a three-match series beginning on Wednesday.

Since losing 2-1 to a touring England side in 2012, India have won 18 consecutive series at home, with only four defeats and seven draws in 53 tests.

Rohit Sharma's side head into the series on the back of a 2-0 sweep against Bangladesh but coach Gautam Gambhir believes their next opponents represent a completely different challenge.

"We know that they're a very good team. They've got some really high-quality players. They've got players who can hurt us. They've got players who can do the job for them as well," Gambhir said.



India captain Rohit Sharma bats during a training session

"They keep fighting and we expect them to fight as well. We respect them, but we don't fear anyone."

The Bengaluru game, which is followed by matches in Pune and Mumbai, faces the prospect of frustrating weather interruptions with rain predicted throughout

the week.

The Black Caps, who began their Asian tour with a washout against Afghanistan in Greater Noida, face India on the back of a 2-0 defeat in Sri Lanka, with Tim Southee handing over the captaincy to Tom Latham after the embarrassing loss.

Simmons new Bangladesh coach

Bangladesh have appointed former West Indies batter Phil Simmons as coach of men's national team, the country's cricket board (BCB) said on Tuesday.

Simmons has been handed a short-term contract until next year's Champions Trophy, the BCB added. The 61-year-old replaces Chandika Hathurusingha, who was suspended on disciplinary grounds.

"Hathurusingha has two counts of misconduct," the website quoted BCB president Faruque Ahmed as saying. "First is about an assault on a player. Secondly, he took too many leaves, more than what was in his contract."

The BCB did not confirm that Hathurusingha had been sacked, but said Simmons would arrive in Dhaka on Wednesday.

Ghulam century helps Pakistan reach 259 for 5 in second Test

Multan, Pakistan - Kamran Ghulam smashed a fluent hundred in a memorable Test debut to guide Pakistan to 259 for five on day one of the second Test against England on Tuesday.

With Pakistan resting an out-of-form Babar Azam after their innings defeat in the series opener, Kamran was drafted in and the 29-year-old impressed immediately with a stellar 118 that included 11 fours and a six.

Pakistan were reeling at 19-2 when Kamran walked in and the right-hander forged a 149-run stand with opener Saim Ayub (77) to steady the innings. He also raised 65 runs with Mohammad Rizwan, who was batting on 37 at stumps with Salman Agha on five at the other end.

Earlier, Pakistan captain Shan Masood won the toss but was soon ruing his decision to bat first. After five overs of seam bowling, England captain Ben Stokes opted for spin from both



Pakistan's Kamran Ghulam scored a stylish century on his Test debut

ends and the decision paid off immediately. Jack Leach beat Abdullah Shafique's tentative prod and uprooted the off-stump to dismiss the opener for seven.

In his next over the left-arm spinner dismissed Shan for three, getting the Pakistan skipper to flick a delivery from outside the off-stump into the hand of Zak Crawley at short mid-wicket.

Kamran showed no nerves though as he stepped out against Leach hitting the spinner over his

head for a big six.

He and Saim returned after the lunch break to consolidate Pakistan's position and Kamran took a single off Shoaib Bashir to bring up his maiden Test fifty.

Keen to break the stand, Stokes brought himself on and proved quite a handful with his swing and awkward bounce though a wicket eluded the seamer.

Stokes maintained an attacking field, however, and Saim eventually fell into the trap, pushing a ball from Matthew Potts straight into the hand of the England captain at short mid-off.

Kamran got a lifeline on 79 when Ben Duckett spilled a catch at mid-on and the batter went on to bring up his hundred with a four off Joe Root.

Off-spinner Bashir ended Kamran's fine knock when the off-spinner lured out the batter, beat him with turn and knocked back the leg stump.

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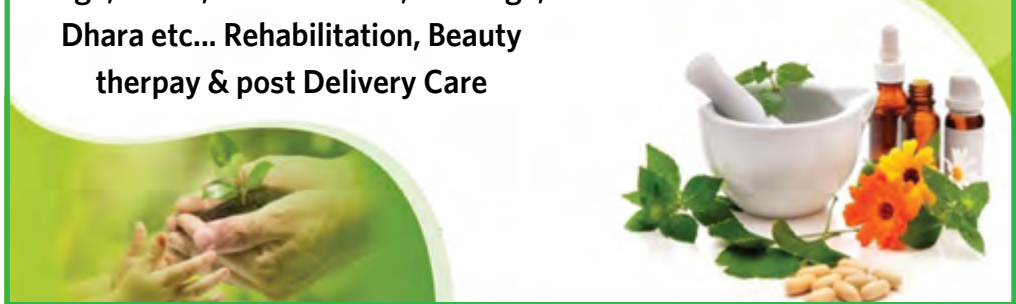


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DIWALI BALL IN NEW YORK



‘Being Indian in America’

Pearls, jewels, and a parade of gowns shone exquisitely off the candlelight at the 2024 edition of the ‘All That Glitters’ Diwali Ball’.

A commemoration of the annual festival of lights, the event brought together industry leaders, international stars in South Asian entertainment, and supporters for a night of dance, fine cuisine, and revelry.

One of the most coveted invites in Indian fashion, the night saw top design talent in attendance at the Pierre Hotel to ring in the holiday and represent their brands (displayed on assorted guests).

Designers Sabyasachi Mukherjee, along with Falguni and Shane of Falguni Shane Peacock, shared the host committee with entertainers including Simone Ashley, Avantika Vandapanu, Tan France, Hasan Minhaj, Jay Sean, and Jessel Taank.

“Being Indian in America, somewhat rarely do we have moments like this where you’re truly with your community and peers in the arts as well. It just feels like an amalgamation of all the things I love,” Vandapanu shared.

The event’s founder, entrepreneur, and philanthropist, Anjula Acharia, held court as new arrivals glided down the grand stairs into the party. Champagne towers and proprietary cocktails sourced with contemporary South Asian flavours like tamarind and coconut were sipped as the global cadre of accomplished guests mingled.

After a dinner of regional specialties (think warm, fresh naan, and creamy saag paneer), the gathered attendees took in speeches from the hosts.

“I’m so happy to see faces, new and old, here tonight – your dreams, ambitions, hard work, and dedication make this community as strong as it is today. I’m so glad to honour you all,” Anjula said.

After a warm series of commendations, the energy of the evening shifted into an infectiously energetic performance from Canadian-Indian dancer Norah Fatehi with Amit Shah’s AATMA Performing Arts dancers, who pulled assorted guests onto the dance floor to join the fun.

While the troupe shepherded the group into a night of festive joy, New York’s own Kolkata Chai Co poured milky-sweet chai amidst platters of Indian confections, a sweet repose to cap off an evening of ecstatic celebration that raised funds for World Central Kitchen.

(Courtesy: vogue.com)



The annual ‘*All That Glitters Diwali Ball*’ held at the Pierre Hotel in New York City saw an ‘invite-only’ guest list of celebrities recognised as members of the South Asian community in the US

Hasan Minhaj



Jessel Taank

Samantha Barry

Jay Sean and Thara Prashad



MESSAGE ON WHEELS

Climate CHAMPION

Mohammed Taha

Egyptian adventurer Ali Abdo, 39, has launched an impressive initiative to raise awareness about climate change and sustainability.

Travelling on his electric bike, he undertakes long trips with friends to promote the importance of critical issues, particularly in a run-up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties.

Recently, H E Khalid Mohammed Radi, the Arab Republic of Egypt's ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, welcomed Ali Abdo during his visit to Oman on his way to Baku, in Azerbaijan, for the upcoming COP29 to be held in mid-November.

Abdo's journey began in the United Arab Emirates and continues through Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Turkey, and Georgia, the final destination being Baku, where he will participate in COP29. His goal is to raise awareness about climate change and promote sustainability.

Abdo began his biking adventures in 2013 with a desire to explore regions uniquely and learn about local customs, traditions, and histories. Since 2020, he has shifted to using an electric bike for awareness campaigns focused on Sustainable Development Goals, collaborating with the United Nations Development Programme.

Reflecting on his previous travels, Abdo said, "I've undertaken many journeys, but in the last four years, my focus has been on supporting Sustainable Development Goals."

One of his notable trips was to the COP27 Climate Summit, where he visited numerous Egyptian governors to raise awareness about climate change, document challenges and opportunities in climate action, and highlight successful initiatives. On his return, he was honoured by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el



Egyptian adventurer Ali Abdo champions 'climate change awareness' through ambitious journeys across the Middle East before the annual climate change conferences



Ali Abdo (3rd from left) with H E Khalid Mohammed Radi, Ambassador of Egypt (centre)



Ali (red jacket) with his foursome support team



Ali in Egypt, near the famed Pyramids

Sisi who recognised his as one of the prominent initiatives combating climate change at COP28.

Last year, Abdo had travelled from Egypt to the UAE for COP28, passing through various Arab countries to educate young people about climate issues. That trip was supported by the Presidency of COP27, the League of Arab States, and several government agencies.

Abdo's initiative aims to change individual behaviours and enhance awareness of environmental and climate change issues. Over the past three years, he has set four Guinness World Records - for the longest distance travelled on an electric bike in 24 hours, the longest journey on an electric bike globally, the longest journey within a single country, and the most cities visited continuously on an electric bike.

His team of four supports and documents the journey, capturing stories and conducting interviews to promote their mission. Speaking about his journey to COP29 in Azerbaijan, Abdo expressed his commitment to continue these efforts until 2030, aiming to visit as many countries as possible to raise widespread awareness about climate change and

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ALI ABDO

encourage public participation.

He plans to travel through the UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Turkey, and Georgia, visiting schools and universities to foster collective action on climate change.

Abdo acknowledged the challenges of his ground-breaking journeys, emphasising the need for extensive preparation and coordination with various stakeholders in each country. He faces difficulties related to funding, as securing sponsorships for new initiatives can be challenging.

Additionally, navigating visa requirements and differing regulations across countries complicates many efforts. However, to address these issues, Abdo strives to establish local partnerships to facilitate their activities.

Looking ahead, he remains dedicated to organising both, local and international, trips to support environmental initiatives and cultivate a culture of environmental awareness among young people all over the world.



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