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ELECT NEW
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IN IRAN



H M to visit Jordan

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq will go on a state visit on Wednesday to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

A statement from the Diwan of Royal Court says, in affirmation of the fraternal ties and the historical relations binding Oman and Jordan, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq will go on a state visit to Jordan with effect from Wednesday, in response to an invitation by King Abdullah II Ibn al Hussein.

'The visit reflects the two leaderships' keenness on promoting bilateral relations and pushing them forward to meet the desired objectives of the two countries.

'His Majesty the Sultan and the Jordanian King will explore areas of cooperation and means of promoting them in various spheres to serve their interests and aspirations. The two leaders

will also exchange views on a set of regional and international issues and developments. They will further touch on topics of concern to the Arab joint action.

'During the visit, His Majesty the Sultan will be accompanied by a high-ranking delegation comprising Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs; Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Nuamani, Minister of the Royal Office; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister; Dr Hamad bin Said al Auli, Head of the Private Office; Abdussalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority and Sheikh Fahd bin Abdulrahman al Ojaili, Ambassador of Oman to Jordan.'

‘A great loss for Iran’

Tehran, Iran - Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, seen as a potential successor to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed after his helicopter crashed in poor weather in mountains near the Azerbaijan border, officials and state media said on Monday.

The charred wreckage of the helicopter, which crashed on Sunday carrying Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and six other passengers and crew, was found early on Monday after an overnight search in stormy conditions.

The body of Raisi and the other victims of Sunday's helicopter crash will be transferred on Tuesday from Tabriz to the northeastern city of Mashhad, where Raisi was born, according to Fars news.

Supreme Leader Khamenei said First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber, would take over as interim president, the official IRNA news agency reported.

H M condoles Iran's Supreme Leader

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has sent a cable of condolences to Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the demise of President Dr Ebrahim Raisi and the delegation that accompanied him in a helicopter crash in East Azerbaijan Province of Iran.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the Supreme Leader and the families of the deceased, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest their souls in peace in paradise, grant their families fortitude and protect Khamenei and the people of Iran against all harm.

"I announce five days of public mourning and offer my condolences to the dear people of Iran," Khamenei said in a statement.

Under the Islamic Republic's constitution, a new presidential election must be held within 50 days. Any candidate must first be vetted by the Guardian Council.

Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani was appointed as acting foreign minister following the death of Amirabdollahian, IRNA said.

The spokesperson for Iran's Guardian Council - a powerful 12-member council in charge of overseeing elections and legislation - has called the death of President Raisi "a great loss for the Iranian nation".

"Just as the leader of the Islamic Republic stated, the affairs of the country will not be disrupted," spokesman Hadi Tahan told Iranian state news agency Press TV.

Messages of condolences poured in

from Iran's regional neighbours and allies, including the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Jordan, Iraq and Pakistan.

President Xi Jinping called the "tragic death" of Raisi "a great loss to the Iranian people and the Chinese people have lost a good friend".

Russian President Vladimir Putin called Raisi "a true friend of Russia". The Kremlin said he had spoken to Mokhber by phone and both stressed "mutual intention to further strengthen Russian-Iranian interaction".

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "deeply shocked and saddened".

There was less reaction from Western capitals, though the European Union and Japan expressed condolences.

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SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES HUNGARIAN AMBASSADOR



H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received Barnabas Fodor, Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary to the Sultanate of Oman, in his office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison on Monday. The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and exchanged viewpoints during the meeting. They also discussed several matters of mutual interest.

National Museum showcases art collection from Louvre Abu Dhabi

Our Correspondent Muscat

The National Museum, in partnership with the Louvre Abu Dhabi, is currently exhibiting two remarkable art pieces as part of a year-long cultural exchange. The featured items are a 'Bowl with a Two-colour Inscription' from the 10th-11th century Samanid dynasty and Josef Albers' 'Homage to the Square', a prime example of contemporary abstract art.

The ancient bowl, displayed in the Splendours of Islam gallery at the National Museum, originates from the regions of Khorasan and Transoxiana, known for their historical significance on the Silk Roads. It is adorned with Arabic proverbs attributed to Imam Ali and showcases the exquisite craftsmanship of Islamic calligraphy with its starkly contrasting slip decorations.



This piece reflects Albers' significant contributions to abstract art, particularly noted in his influential book *Interaction of Colour*. This collaboration between the National Museum and the Louvre Abu Dhabi began in 2017 and has included several exchanges and exhibitions. Notably, the 'Gardens of Paradise: The Language of Flowers in Iznik Ceramics' showcased in December 2021 at the National Museum highlighted art pieces loaned from the Louvre Abu Dhabi, enhancing the cross-cultural dialogue between the two institutions.



This collaboration between the National Museum and the Louvre Abu Dhabi began in 2017 and has included several exchanges and exhibitions in their institutions

Omani artefacts, such as an intricately designed copper inkwell from 1905 and a rare incense burner from the 12th-14th centuries, further cementing this partnership. This ongoing exchange not only enriches the cultural landscapes of both nations, but also fosters a deeper understanding of their artistic legacies.

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Khoula Hospital uses extendable magnetic rods to correct scoliosis

Our Correspondent Muscat

In a groundbreaking medical advancement, a team at Khoula Hospital successfully performed the first surgery in Oman using extendable magnetic rods to correct scoliosis in a young Omani girl. The four-hour long procedure represents a significant step forward in paediatric orthopaedics within the sultanate. Scoliosis is a sideways curvature of the spine that most often is diagnosed in adolescents. Dr Sultan bin Saif bin Ali al Kalbani, head of the spine unit and the lead surgeon, explained that the magnetic rods can be adjusted every three months using a remote, avoiding the need for further invasive surgery and allowing the spine to grow normally. This method not only prevents the worsening of scoliosis but also protects vital organs like the lungs from being affected by the spinal curvature. The introduction of this sophisticated treatment domestically marks a departure from the previous necessity of seeking such solutions abroad. Dr Kalbani pointed out that due to the complexity of the surgery, its significance in enhancing the local medical capabilities is profound. Moreover, the medical team at Khoula Hospital also pioneered another first by removing cartilage from the nerve canal using a minimally invasive laparoscopic technique, which does not require fusing the vertebrae - a common practice in traditional methods. Dr Rashid bin Mohammed al Alawi, Director General of Khoula Hospital, expressed pride in achieving such advancements locally, emphasising the hospital's ongoing commitment to reducing dependency on overseas medical treatments and enhancing the quality of healthcare in Oman. Dr Alawi stressed that these developments are indicative of significant investment in medical infrastructure and the high level of expertise available at the hospital.



It seeks to acknowledge contributions that significantly impact the economy and society, including efforts in cybersecurity awareness, academic research, and effective cybersecurity practices among businesses. The Individual category awards initiatives that have social and economic impact, including efforts in cybersecurity awareness, academic research, and independent cybersecurity projects. The Enterprise category honours institutions that have improved their cybersecurity measures and contributed to social responsibility by aligning with the cybersecurity industry programme, while the SMEs category covers projects yielding economic advantages. The Hadatha Cybersecurity Award not only celebrates advancements but also stimulates the growth of Oman's cybersecurity capabilities.

Oman launches cybersecurity award to encourage innovation

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MTCIT) has launched a special award to recognise and promote local expertise and innovations in the cybersecurity sector. The Hadatha Cybersecurity Award - a national initiative proposes to evaluate the achievements and performance of individuals, as well as government and private entities for the coveted recognition, which in turn can raise the sultanate's position in the global cybersecurity landscape. The award, part of the National Programme for the Cybersecurity Industry, includes categories for Individuals, Enterprises, and Emerging Small and Medium Enterprises. It seeks to acknowledge

contributions that significantly impact the economy and society, including efforts in cybersecurity awareness, academic research, and effective cybersecurity practices among businesses. The Individual category awards initiatives that have social and economic impact, including efforts in cybersecurity awareness, academic research, and independent cybersecurity projects. The Enterprise category honours institutions that have improved their cybersecurity measures and contributed to social responsibility by aligning with the cybersecurity industry programme, while the SMEs category covers projects yielding economic advantages. The Hadatha Cybersecurity Award not only celebrates advancements but also stimulates the growth of Oman's cybersecurity capabilities.

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Madinat al Nahada residents demand essential services, infrastructure

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Citizens of Madinat al Nahada - Phase Three, in the wilayat of Amerat, are calling on the authorities to address their demands for basic services, such as water connections to their homes and lighting in internal streets to prevent accidents.

The traffic intersection on Al Juffainah Street has become an accident-prone zone, with local people dubbing it as 'intersection of death'.

Muscat Daily spoke to the residents of the area to find out more on this particular issue, and ended up knowing about many other challenges that the local residents are facing for many years now.

Mahmoud al Daghishi, a resident of the area, highlighted the plight of residents, as he rued that despite years of appeals, basic services remain elusive.

In 2011, the residents appealed to the Authority for Public Services Regulation for water supply to every households in the area.

After several appeals since



Due to the lack of regular water supply, the residents are forced to engage water tankers to meet their daily needs

MAHMOUD AL DAGHISHI



We are calling for measures such as installation of speed breakers, water lines and improvement of telecommunications

MOHAMMED AL FARSI

then, the residents received assurance only in 2017 that the matter would be studied by specialists.

Progress has still been slow, with only promises of a tender announcement for water network in 2025.

Daghishi explained that due to the lack of regular water supply, the residents are forced to engage water tankers to meet their daily needs. This costly affair is impacting the daily lives and livelihoods of the people in Madinat al Nahada.

Additionally, poor mobile network coverage further exacerbates communication woes.

Daghishi emphasised the urgent need to address the hazards posed by the Al Juffainah Street intersection, where accidents are common. "Proposed solutions include installation of speed breakers to mitigate risks."

Mohammed al Farsi, another resident, highlighted additional challenges such as inadequate lighting on internal streets, increasing the risk of accidents, particularly with stray animals present.

Moreover, poor Internet connectivity, and absence of fibre optic infrastructure, further hampers communications. "We are calling for an immediate action to address these pressing issues, including measures such as installation of speed breakers, establishment of water lines, and improvement of communication infrastructure," said Farsi.

Another resident spoke on various other essential services eluding the region. Acknowledging that while some progress has been made, Sinan al Barwani asserted that many challenges still persist. He highlighted the pressing need for infrastructure improvements, particularly the

construction of a dual carriageway stretching approximately 5km from the Amerat police station roundabout to the area.

The current single road experiences significant congestion during peak hours, causing delays and pile of traffic up to one kilometre or more.

Barwani also stressed the urgency of addressing the Al Juffainah Street intersection, advocating for the construction of a roundabout to minimise the risk of accidents. He underscored the necessity of a government water delivery service in the region. "Currently, the residents rely on water tankers for their water supply, which is both costly and unsustainable."

He revealed that while there are plans to commence water supply by the end of 2025, full pumping operations may not begin until the end of 2029.

"Given the area's growing population and high demand for water, this delay poses significant challenges. The financial burden on residents is substantial, with the average cost of a single tanker of water exceeding RO5," Barwani pointed out.

TRA provides free device to measure quality of home Internet service

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) launched a system for measuring fixed broadband home Internet services on Monday.

In a statement, TRA said, "The authority is providing a free device to check the quality of home Internet service by measuring a number of indicators and comparing it with the package subscribed from the telecommunications service operator."

The device evaluates the beneficiary's experience with various fixed broadband packages and technologies. It connects to the user's home network to verify the companies' commitment to the level of service provided accurately over a specific period of time. The device measures several indicators, such as download and upload speeds, network response time, network outages and other metrics.

The authority added that the device can be ordered by contacting through its various communication channels, including the website, email, its communications centre and WhatsApp.

MoE launches programme to identify, nurture talented students in N Batinah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education (MoE) on Sunday launched a special programme for North Batinah to identify and nurture talented students within the governorate.

The 'Tharwa' programme is targeting students from 23 schools to be selected over four days, an official informed.

"The third edition of the programme targets 731 male and female students from the governorate's schools, chosen to achieve various goals, including keeping pace with the global trend of nurturing gifted students and harnessing their abilities and potentials," said Zamzam bint Amer al Amriya, Head of the Special Education Department in North Batinah Educational Centre.



Zamzam added that the nurturing of talented students follows clear scientific foundations that evaluate their abilities across scientific, skill, and creative aspects.

The programme was designed to form a national team and train its members to identify gifted students.

The national team would recognise students with high mental abilities related to creativity and innovation, by determining their intelligence and creativity levels.

This assessment helps in understanding the needs of gifted students and creating specialised enrichment programmes to support

them both inside and outside school based on their degree of creative intelligence in various fields.

In its second edition last year, the programme identified 483 students from 12 schools.

This year, it has expanded to include more schools and a greater number of students.

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*Rates as on May 20
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

UK set for slower inflation than Eurozone, US

The United Kingdom is set to have slower inflation than both the Eurozone and the US for the first time in over two years as falling energy prices for consumers cut Britain's rate of headline price growth.

The Financial Times said that the annual growth in consumer prices for April is predicted to drop to 2.1%, which is close to the Bank of England's target of 2%. This would be sharply below March's 3.2% figure.

The newspaper added that the decline is largely the result of a 12% fall in the regulatory cap on household energy bills last month, following a decline in wholesale gas prices.

With the falling prices for consumers, April would be the second straight month in which UK inflation was lower than consumer price inflation in the US, and the first time since March 2022 that it was below both the US and Eurozone rate.

6 firms shortlisted for Oman Business Gateway project



An artist impression of the Oman Business Gateway project

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Finance announced on Monday the results of the Request for Qualification (RFQ) tender for the Oman Business Gateway project. Six companies have been shortlisted to compete for the real estate development of this dynamic commercial hub in Muscat.

The Oman Business Gateway project will be developed under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) agreement. The aim of the project is to create a vibrant, commercially-focused hub with a variety of mixed-use assets. These will transform the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) land located at Airport Heights into a center for commercial activity and economic growth.

The six shortlisted companies

A key feature of the Oman Business Gateway project is the construction of the new MoCIIP headquarters, which will occupy approximately 30,000 sqm

for the real estate development of the project are: Alghanim International General Trading & Contracting Company, Galfar Engineering & Contracting Company, Plenary Middle East Limited, Amjaad Group, Bouygues Batiment International, and Muscat National Development & Investment Company (ASAAS).

The Oman Business Gateway project began with a feasibility study, followed by the issuance of the RFQ tender in February. Out of 68 interested companies, eight submitted their documents for the RFQ tender, and six have now been shortlisted.

These shortlisted companies will be invited to submit their proposals, after which the real estate development contract will be awarded to the winning bidder.

The successful bidder, acting as the master developer, will be responsible for the overall design, financing, development, and operation of the Oman Business Gateway. The purpose of the project is to create an inclusive and connected environment where private businesses and government can thrive together.

The Ministry of Finance, in

collaboration with the MoCIIP, is leading the PPP project to attract private sector investment in public infrastructure and services. The project aims to build a new mixed-use precinct featuring commercial assets such as office spaces, residential units, retail outlets, and a hotel.

A key feature of the Oman Business Gateway is the construction of the new MoCIIP headquarters, which will occupy approximately 30,000 sqm and house all ministry and departmental staff. The new headquarters will replace the current offices of MoCIIP.

With the MoCIIP headquarters at its foundation complemented by a mix of retail, commercial and accommodation, this flagship project is poised to significantly enhance the economic landscape of Muscat Governorate.



CBO issues RO39mn worth of treasury bills

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on Monday announced the issuance of two tenders of the government treasury bills worth RO39.03mn.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO10.03mn, for a maturity period of 91 days.

The average accepted price reached RO98.750 for every RO100 bill, while the minimum accepted price arrived at RO98.730. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.0136% and 5.0771%, respectively.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO29mn, for a maturity period of 182 days.

For this tender, the average accepted price reached RO97.446 for every RO100 bill, while the minimum accepted price arrived at RO97.440. The average discount rate and the

average yield reached 5.1212% and 5.2554%, respectively.

In contrast, the interest rate on the repo operations with the CBO is 6.00%, while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with the central bank is currently at 6.50%.

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

Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. The government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures.

ITHCA Group and Qatar's MEEZA sign agreement to propel ICT collaboration

Doha, Qatar - MEEZA, a pioneering Qatari managed IT services and solutions provider, announced a cooperation agreement with Oman's information and communication technology company ITHCA Group.

This strategic collaboration focuses on enhancing mutual capabilities and access to innovative technologies in alignment with Qatar and Oman's ongoing efforts in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector.

The cooperation agreement, signed by representatives from both MEEZA and ITHCA, sets the foundation for a cooperative relationship that will benefit both nations.

The partnership delineates several key areas of collaboration, including the potential for increased opportunities for knowledge sharing and professional development, enhanced access to cutting-edge technologies and research initiatives, identification of joint projects and initiatives, and much more.



Together, we aim to explore and implement solutions that support our strategic goals and respond to the dynamic needs of the market

SAID AL-MANDHARI

In a press release, Said bin Abdullah al-Mandhari, CEO of ITHCA Group, said, "Partnering with MEEZA allows us to expand our strategic investments and initiatives in the ICT domain. To-

gether, we aim to explore and implement solutions that support our strategic goals and respond to the dynamic needs of the market."

Mohsin Nasser al-Marri, Acting CEO of MEEZA, said, "This cooperation agreement marks a significant step forward in our commitment to enhancing the ICT landscape across the region. By combining our resources and expertise with ITHCA Group, we look forward to unlocking new opportunities and innovations."

ITHCA, which has a key role in the development of information technology in Oman and acts as strategic investor within Oman's ICT investment environment, collaborates with various entities to enhance the national ICT infrastructure and capabilities.

This collaborative endeavour aligns with Qatar Digital Agenda 2030, and marks a commitment to a shared vision of cooperation and strategic growth in the ICT sector that benefits both organizations and supports broader economic diversification efforts.

Oman Business Forum discusses latest developments in energy and industries

Muscat - In collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, the Business Year media group organised the Oman Business Forum on Monday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center.

The forum focused on discussing the latest developments in the future of energies and industries across all sectors, addressing issues relevant to companies and investors.

H E Qais bin Mohammed al Youssef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, and other officials and business leaders attended the event.

During his keynote speech, H E Youssef emphasised the increasing importance of renewable energy and sustainability, highlighting their role in enhancing the wellbeing of life and shaping Oman's economic future. He noted that with the annual target production of no less than one million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2030, Oman is expected to become the largest source of green hydrogen in the Middle East and the sixth-largest globally.



H E Qais bin Mohammed al Youssef speaks at the Oman Business Forum on Monday

H E Youssef also pointed out that Oman is witnessing investments from major manufacturing companies keen on leveraging green hydrogen production and export opportunities.

Ammar bin Sulaiman al Kharousi, Director General of the Investment Services Center, de-

livered a visual presentation highlighting the strategic role played by the Invest Oman platform. The platform aimed to attract significant quality investments to Oman in priority sectors, contributing to promoting foreign investment rates.

Kharousi also discussed initiatives to facilitate the investor

journey, improve the business environment, and achieve high-impact projects in collaboration with various government entities.

The forum included two working sessions: The first discussed empowering technology-based businesses in Oman and the key enablers for digital transformation in the Omani business environment. The second session focused on navigating sustainability, highlighting initiatives related to environmental preservation, social care, and business practices.

The forum brought together Omani business leaders from various trade and local economic sectors to explore the investment landscape, digital transformation, energy transition, and the role of new technologies in banking services and logistics.

Through such business forums the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion aims to enhance cooperation with international media institutions to market Oman as an attractive investment destination.

Moody's affirms Kuwait's A1 rating, maintains stable outlook

New York, US - Moody's Ratings has affirmed the Government of Kuwait's long-term local and foreign currency issuer ratings at A1. The outlook remains stable.

The rating affirmation reflects Moody's assessment that Kuwait's balance sheet and fiscal buffers will remain extremely strong for the foreseeable future and preserve macroeconomic and external stability, according

to a press release.

'Balanced against this key credit strength is the lack of progress in reforms that would reduce the vulnerability of the economy and government finances to oil market volatility and long-term carbon transition risks, which reveals underlying and persistent institutional constraints,' Moody's said.

While the government aims to address the institutional im-



pediments, how effective it will be is highly uncertain at this stage, it added.

The stable outlook reflects balanced risks to the ratings. Progress in economic and fiscal diversification away from hydrocarbons not currently factored into Moody's baseline assumptions may reduce Kuwait's exposure to oil price fluctuations and long-term carbon transition.

Moody's said that the recent

dissolution of parliament and temporary suspension of related constitutional articles aimed at overcoming institutional constraints has the potential to accelerate reforms.

By contrast, increasing global momentum towards carbon transition that significantly lowers the demand for and price of oil would likely weigh on Kuwait's credit metrics and weaken the credit profile in the

absence of fiscal and economic reforms.

Moody's baseline scenario assumes that there is no significant escalation of the geopolitical conflict in the Middle East region into a full-scale multifront conflict that involves Iran, which could have significant negative implications for sovereigns in the region depending on transmission channels, exposures and buffers.

Biden touts cooling US inflation, but prices up 20% since 2021

Megan Henney

Inflation has emerged as one of the most stubborn political problems for President Biden in his re-election campaign, and price growth hit a grim new milestone this week in a blow to the White House.

The consumer price index, a broad measure of the price of everyday goods including gasoline, groceries and rent, rose 3.4% in April, down slightly from March. But the report – released last week – also showed that prices are up more than 19.4% since Biden took office in 2021.

In a statement released after the data came out, Biden noted that “inflation has fallen more than 60% from its peak, and core inflation fell to its lowest level in three years.” But he acknowledged that “prices are still too high” and reiterated that fighting inflation is his “top economic priority.”

While inflation has fallen considerably from a peak of 9.1% notched during June 2022, it remains well above the Federal Reserve’s 2% goal. On top of that, progress in reducing overall costs for Americans has mostly stalled.

High inflation has created severe financial pressures for most US households, which are forced to pay more for everyday necessities like food and rent. Grocery prices are up more than 21% from the start of 2021, while shelter costs are up 18.37%, according to Fox Business calculations. Energy prices, meanwhile, are up 38.4%.

Price hikes are particularly



US inflation has fallen more than 60% from its peak, and core inflation fell to its lowest level in three years. But prices are still too high and fighting inflation is our top economic priority

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

devastating for lower-income Americans because they tend to spend more of their already-stretched paycheck on necessities and therefore have less flexibility to save money.

The typical US household needed to pay \$227 more a month in March to purchase the same goods and services it did

one year ago because of still-high inflation. Americans are paying on average \$784 more each month compared with the same time two years ago and \$1,069 more compared with three years ago.

The latest findings come amid growing pessimism among US households about their financial

situation under Biden.

A recent poll published by Gallup found that just 38% of voters have confidence in President Biden to recommend or do the right thing for the economy.

A recent poll published by Gallup found that Americans are less optimistic about the state of the US economy than they have been in recent months, and that just 38% of voters have confidence in Biden to recommend or do the right thing for the economy.

By comparison, in 2020, about 47% of respondents said they trusted former President Donald Trump to do the right thing for the economy.

“Biden’s subpar rating could have significant electoral implications as not only does he have the lowest economic rating of any president seeking reelection since Gallup began tracking this in 2001, but independents trust his opponent more than him,” Gallup said.

(Source: Fox Business)

Oil prices increase following Iranian president’s death

Muscat – Oil prices spiked on Monday after Tehran confirmed the deaths of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and other officials in a helicopter crash in the country’s northwestern province.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$84.24 per barrel in morning trade in London, a rise of 0.31% from the closing price of \$83.98 per barrel in the previous trading session.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$79.81 per barrel at the same time, a 0.29% increase from the previous session that closed at \$79.58 per barrel.

The helicopter carrying the Iranian president, the country’s foreign minister, and their entourage crashed in the East Azerbaijan region of northwest Iran on Sunday afternoon.

Supply fears in favor of higher oil prices were stoked by worries about the political fallout in the oil-producing country and how it

might affect decisions to be made at the June 1 meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, known as OPEC+.

According to the latest OPEC report, over 3mn barrels of oil are produced daily in Iran.

Meanwhile, hope of the US Federal Reserve’s starting interest rate cuts this year continues to influence oil prices.

With a current 65% probability rating for a Fed interest rate decrease in September, financial markets are beginning to reflect this forecast in pricing, while bolstering trade and prices as a weak US dollar rate makes oil trade cheaper for other currency holders.

Furthermore, robust economic data from China, signaling high oil demand, is supporting price increases. The world’s second-largest oil consumer and largest importer announced plans to start issuing subsidized bonds worth 1 trillion yuan last week.

Agencies



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Audited Financial Statements Consolidated for 31stMarch 2024

Chairman's Report

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the unaudited results on the company's performance for the three-month period ended on 31st March 2024.

Financial Performance

Parent Company

The revenue for the period stood at RO 9.5 million, reflecting a notable increase of 13.5% compared to RO 8.37 million compared to corresponding period of last year 2023. Similarly, our gross profit margin significantly improved, reaching 21% compared to 8% in 2023. This substantial increase in gross profit can be attributed to an increase in volume.

The company's net profit after tax reported RO 0.24 million compared to a loss of RO 0.697 million for the same period last year.

Group Company

The revenue for the period stood at RO 22.2 million, reflecting a notable increase of 123.7% compared to RO 9.92 million compared to corresponding period of last year 2023. Similarly, our gross profit margin improved, reaching 16% compared to 12% in 2023. Omani Gulf Food Co contributed to this substantial increase in revenue.

The group's net loss is reported to be RO 6,000 compared to a loss of RO 0.512 million for the same period last year.

Corporate Governance & Internal Control

The Company and its Board of Directors believe that to succeed on a sustainable basis, it must maintain high standards of corporate governance towards its shareholders, employees, consumers, and community. To this end, the Board has constituted the Audit Committee and the Executive, Nomination and Remuneration Committee. The Company has always and will remain focused on good corporate governance.

Your company has adhered to all the regulations covering corporate governance in Oman and your Board is fully committed to ensure compliance of all the applicable rules and regulations. The Board has taken all possible measures to ensure full compliance with the rules and regulations. To improve the internal audit process, the board has outsourced the internal audit functions to an external audit firm.

Human Resources

Your company is supporting the national recruitment policy of the government. In line with this, local nationals are currently working at various levels of management and constitute 42% of the work force. Graduate trainees' programs are in place to train the qualified young candidates. We continue to develop our staff to lay a solid foundation for our future growth with great emphasis being initiated to develop national talent.

Future Outlook

"Oman vision 2040" strategy emphasis on diversification into non-oil segment, logistics

and services and increase importance on food security initiatives. Your company is well placed in this segment and will be able to grow in line with government initiatives. The domestic market is highly price sensitive and controlled by government price control authorities.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my fellow board members and our shareholders, customers, lender, suppliers and employees for their continued support and commitment. I would also like to thank the CMA & MSX for their support and cooperation. We wish further development, stability, progress, and prosperity for our beloved country under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq, and we wish him good health and longevity.

Said Ahmed Safran
Chairman

Separate and consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ending 31 March 2024

	Group		Parent	
	31.03.24	31.03.23	31.03.24	31.03.23
Net Sales	22,198	9,921	9,496	8,367
Less:- Cost of Sales	18,540	8,734	7,465	7,738
Gross Profit	3,657	1,187	2,031	629
GP Ratio %	16%	12%	21%	8%
Administrative Expense	1,362	600	521	367
Selling & Marketing Expenses	2,097	1,328	1,213	1,055
Director's remuneration	47	36	28	24
Total operating expenses	3,506	1,965	1,762	1,446
Profit / (loss) from operations	152	(778)	269	(817)
Dividend income	107	196	107	196
Other Operating Income / (loss)	320	279	245	252
Share of results of the associate - OGF	-	210	-	-
Share of results of the associate - DBFC	49	25	-	-
Finance cost	633	444	383	328
Net Profit before taxation (PBT)	(6)	(512)	238	(697)
Taxation	-	-	-	-
Net profit / (loss) for the year	(6)	(512)	238	(697)
Movement in Fair value reserve	(700)	(185)	(700)	(185)
Total comprehensive loss for the year	(706)	(697)	(462)	(882)
Shareholders of parent company	3	(507)	-	-
Non - controlling interest	(9)	(5)	-	-
Net profit or loss attributable to :	(6)	(512)	-	-
Shareholders of parent company	(697)	(692)	-	-
Non - controlling interest	(9)	(5)	-	-
Total comprehensive income attributable to:	(706)	(697)	(462)	(882)
Earning Per Share	(0.000)	(.006)	0.001	(.009)

Separate and consolidated statement of financial position as at 31 December 2023

	Group		Parent		Group		Parent	
	31.03.24	31.03.23	31.03.24	31.03.23	FY 2023	FY 2023	FY 2023	FY 2023
Assets Employed								
Cash in hand & Bank	4,454	531	517	221	5,025	344		
Debtors	8,609	3,934	5,208	4,531	11,339	4,551		
Inventories and biological assets	18,014	10,472	9,187	7,429	15,688	8,249		
Advance, Prepayments	4,896	1,762	4,265	1,436	3,073	2,582		
Other current assets	-	-	-	-	-	-		
[A] Current Assets	35,973	16,699	19,177	13,617	35,125	15,726		
Accrued expenses and other payables	8,413	8,440	8,463	7,821	18,000	10,611		
Current portion of lease liabilities	412	427	388	413	373	345		
Current portion of term loans	1,395	1,306	2,288	673	1,661	1,236		
Bank borrowings	20,830	16,003	8,031	11,228	19,352	10,042		
Income Tax Payables	190	119	-	-	186	-		
[B] Current Liabilities	31,240	26,295	19,169	20,136	39,572	22,234		
[C] Net Current Assets [A-B]	4,732	(9,596)	8	(6,519)	(4,447)	(6,508)		
Property, plant and equipment	35,899	12,949	18,285	6,963	36,613	18,678		
Right-of-use assets	1,541	1,056	834	941	1,403	685		
Intangible assets	63	66	10	23	69	14		
Investments in subsidiaries	-	-	17,582	1,991	-	5,541		
Investments in associates	922	4,146	12	2,812	873	812		
Fair value through OCI	10,188	11,611	10,188	11,611	10,889	10,889		
Investment properties	2,090	2,090	2,090	2,090	2,090	2,090		
Biological assets	4,245	4,154	4,245	4,154	4,156	4,156		
Deferred tax asset	102	97	97	97	101	96		
Other Non-current assets	78	-	-	-	70	-		
[D] Non-current Assets	55,128	36,168	54,144	30,682	56,264	52,961		
[E] Capital Employed [C+D]	59,860	26,571	54,152	24,163	51,817	46,453		
Deferred Tax Liability	2,812	14	1,795	-	2,851	1,818		
Employees' end of service benefit	1,317	951	62	629	1,346	639		
Non-current portion of lease liabilities	1,266	688	487	574	1,163	380		
Non-current portion of term loans	13,576	5,265	11,000	4,267	4,872	2,969		
[F] Total Non-Current Liability	18,970	6,917	13,944	5,470	10,232	5,806		
[G] Net Worth [E-F]	40,890	19,654	40,208	18,693	41,585	40,647		
Equity								
Represented By								
Share capital	17,431	8,085	17,431	8,085	17,431	17,431		
Legal reserve	2,875	2,599	2,875	2,599	2,875	2,875		
Voluntary reserve	3,712	3,712	3,712	3,712	3,712	3,712		
Revaluation reserve	14,172	525	10,171	-	14,380	10,300		
Fair value reserve	2,151	3,574	2,151	3,574	2,851	2,851		
Retained earnings	635	1,144	3,868	723	413	3,478		
Net Worth	40,976	19,639	40,208	18,693	41,662	40,647		
Non-controlling interest	(86)	15	-	-	(77)	-		
Total equity and non-controlling interest	40,890	19,654	40,208	18,693	41,585	40,647		

Note : The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any share- holder who request the company in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request .

Geely introduces state of the art showroom

Towell Auto Centre TAC), the official distributor of Geely vehicles in Oman, introduces the launch of its latest masterpiece, the new Preface, along with the inauguration of its newest showroom in Oman.

This event marks a significant milestone in Geely's commitment to delivering excellence and redefining the automotive landscape in the sultanate. As the leading sedan model, the new Preface embodies a seamless blend of technology, design, intelligence, driving control, and safety—ushering in a new era of 'perfected presence' on Oman's roads, a press release said.

Engineered on the advanced Compact Modular Architecture (CMA) platform, the new Preface redefines automotive excellence by prioritising safety, performance, quality, and intelligence. With class-leading torsional rigidity (29,000 Nm/deg) and the shortest braking distance in its class (35.9m for a speed of 100km/h), the new Preface excels in handling and driving manipulation.

Leveraging CMA's Super Matrix, it embodies technological advancement through six core competitive edges - unparalleled flexibility and scalability, diverse power options, a world-class chassis, leading power capabilities,



ties, advanced electrical architecture, and global market adaptability. This solid foundation ensures that the new Preface offers a driving experience tailored to local preferences, seamlessly blending design, technology, and performance.

Crafted to command the road with unparalleled stability and space, the Geely Preface stands out with its largest car size, widest body, and longest wheelbase in its class. Its streamlined exterior design merges safety with elegance, offering a perfect blend of style and functionality.

The event kicked off with a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the inauguration of our state-of-the-art showroom. The new showroom promises an immersive journey for customers. Boasting a modern and spacious facility, it offers a plethora of benefits.

With an expanded product range, dedicated service areas, interactive displays, and expert staff at hand, the new facility offers more opportunities to customers to explore the diverse lineup of vehicles with ease.

The grand unveiling ceremony of two variants of the Preface commenced with a warm welcome speech and a brief introduction to the new models.



Dhofar Islamic unveils vertical card design

Dhofar Islamic, the Islamic Banking Window of BankDhofar, announces the launch of contemporary vertical card designs for debit and credit cardholders. These new cards seamlessly integrate Islamic banking principles with a sleek, modern aesthetic.

The vertical design fosters a more convenient user experience with a contemporary design, aligning perfectly with today's mobile wallet and contactless payment preferences. It is easier to hold, making it ideal for one-handed use. As an additional robust security feature to safeguard against fraud, the card number and other sensitive information are hidden from view when the card is used for payments, a press release said.

The colour scheme of the cards was chosen carefully to reflect the specific segment colours along with a wave pattern of silver to reflect the movement and endless possibilities.

"We are delighted to introduce our innovative vertical card designs. They embody both practicality and security, while adhering to Islamic banking principles. We're confident our customers will appreciate this exceptional banking experience," said Bilal Faiz al Raiisi - AGM Cards and Bancassurance.

Dhofar Islamic offers a variety of debit and credit cards to meet the needs of its customers, including Visa Signature and Classic debit cards and MasterCard Gold and Titanium credit cards.

In addition to convenient banking solutions, including mobile and internet banking. The credit cards are embedded with a host of benefits, ranging from special offers to airport lounge access, as well as reward points on local and international purchases.

ITHCA Group announces SCALE Awards

In partnership between the Rising Omani Startups Programme, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), and several companies in relevant sectors, ITHCA Group announced the Scale Award for Emerging Technology Startups.

This initiative is set to debut at the 33rd edition of COMEX 2024, taking place from May 27 to 30 at the Oman Exhibition and Convention Centre.

This partnership between the various companies participating in the award is designed to add real value, foster diverse ideas, and support the growth of startup companies.

The Scale Award is designed to foster innovation and promote investment opportunities for startups both, locally and internationally, with more than 100 startups expected to showcase their solutions. This year's the award focuses on addressing the pressing challenges identified across various sectors including banking, manufacturing, electricity, tourism, oil and gas, communications, information technology, logistics, and others.

Registration for the award is open from May 16 to 22. Startups specialising in technology are invited to review all details and register via <https://ithca.om/scale-competition>



Tahir Salim Abdullah al Amri



Halima bint Rashid al Zaria



Said bin Abdullah al Mandhari

cited to collaborate with ITHCA Group and the Rising Omani Startups Programme on this innovative challenge. We believe that it will have a significant positive impact on banking."

Eng Halima bint Rashid al Zaria, CEO of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, added that the Rising Omani Startups Programme aims to stimulate the ecosystem of startups based on advanced technology and innovation in the sultanate of Oman by empowering innovators, supporting the launch of startups companies, while Eng Said bin Abdullah al Mandhari, CEO of ITHCA Group, emphasised the collaborative nature of the Scale Award.

ahlibank bags corporate Bank of the Year award

Ahlibank has recently received recognition at the MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2024, winning the Corporate Bank of the Year Award.

The prestigious award was received by Zaliya al Balushi, GM - Head of Corporate Banking at Ahlibank, at a ceremony held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, a press release said.

Organised by MEED, the awards celebrate the best-in-class banking and financial services institutions and individuals for their innovative offerings and commitment to customer excellence.

Expecting fierce competition with over 200 award entries from over 50 leading bank organisations eager to showcase their innovations in the banking sector, the event carries a global impact on participants who have showcased transformative solutions as exceptional industry icons. In turn, Ahlibank was recognised for its outstanding contributions to corporate banking, receiving the award as a testament to its innovative role in the Sultanate of Oman.

Zaliya said, "We are honoured to have received such a prestigious award, an award that underscores our dedication to serving our corporate customers with excellence. At Ahlibank, our innate zeal drives us to go beyond the norm, as we display our portfolio of innovative and personalised solutions. This is one of the many accolades we have received that stand as a testament to the diligent efforts and commitment of our dutiful corporate banking team at Ahlibank. Rest assured we will remain committed to driving growth and success for our corporate customers, empowering them to thrive in the dynamic business landscape."



"As we move forward, we pride ourselves in remaining committed to our mission to be the best and preferred choice for our financial partners in the corporate sphere, enabling them to achieve their strategic objectives and maintaining success in the long run," she added.

Ahlibank offers its corporate customers a comprehensive portfolio of products/services.

Oman Olympic Committee holds its second meeting of the year

The Executive Office of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) held its second meeting of the year on Sunday, chaired by Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair.

The meeting discussed several important topics, notably the review and discussion of OOC proposal to establish GCC sports federations as the optimal framework for addressing the organisational and technical challenges of sports competitions in the GCC, a press release said.

This proposal represents one of the mechanisms and executive tools that will effectively implement the approved strategic plan for developing joint work in the sports field among the GCC countries. The attendees agreed to present the proposal at the meeting of GCC NOCs Executive Office, scheduled for May 28 in the state of Qatar.



Ministerial Resolution No 88/2024 concerning the guidelines for allocating and disbursing government support to OOC were reviewed, along with the financial status of OOC until May

of this year.

The attendees also reviewed the invitation from the General Secretariat of the GCC for participation in the GCC 36th meeting of NOCs Presidents, scheduled to be held in the Qatari capital, Doha, from May 27 to May 29. OOC will participate in the meeting with a delegation headed by Khalid al Zubair, OOC president, in addition to H H Sayyid Azan al Said, OOC vice president, Taha al Kashri, OOC secretary-general, Lujaina al Zaabiya and Dr Mansour al Touqi, board members.



MARH backs talent development in line with Oman Vision 2040

In an era marked by rapid innovation advancements and industry transitions, Moosa Abdul Rahman Hassan and Co (MARH) stands out as a beacon of innovation and progress in Oman's automotive industry.

As the country propels towards the ambitious benchmarks set by Oman Vision 2040, this esteemed organisation leads the charge in integrating local talent into its workforce, promoting sustainable development and community empowerment, a press release said.

Over the past year, MARH has not only expanded its operational scope but has also made remarkable strides in fostering a local workforce capable of driving the nation towards its strategic goals. This journey of transformation and empower-

ment reflects the company's commitment to the socio-economic fabric of Oman, making it a critical player in the national vision of progressive autonomy and economic diversification.

Central to the company's strategy is Omanisation — the policy aimed at increasing employment opportunities for Omani nationals in the private sector. MARH has embraced this initiative with vigour, implementing comprehensive training programmes that aim to equip Omani youth with essential skills and knowledge. In collaboration with the Ministry of Manpower, the company has launched innovative employment training programmes that serve as a cornerstone for career development in the automotive sector.

"Our vision at MARH is

Our vision is deeply entwined with Oman's progressive ambitions. We are steadfast in our dedication to empower young Omani talents, equipping them with world-class skills

SAID DARWISH AL BALUSHI

deeply entwined with Oman's progressive ambitions. We are steadfast in our dedication to empower young Omani talents, equipping them with world-class skills to drive our nation towards unprecedented growth," said Said Darwish al Balushi, CEO, MARH, reflecting the company's dedication towards national progress. "Aligning with the Oman 2040 Vision, our objective transcends beyond achieving business excellence; we aim to make substantial contribu-

tions to our society and economy."

The company's strategy involves a dual approach. On one hand, it focuses on internal training programmes aimed at enhancing the professional capabilities of its Omani staff. On the other, it actively participates in nationwide initiatives that aim to bolster the overall skill set of the Omani workforce. Through rigorous training modules and subsequent competency assessments, Moosa ensures that its

employees are not only prepared to meet the demands of the job but are also equipped to contribute to the industry's innovation and growth.

Furthermore, the representation of renowned automotive brands such as GMC and Suzuki has not only positioned the company as a leader in the automotive sector but has also showcased its commitment to quality and excellence. These partnerships have enabled MARH to introduce cutting-edge automotive technologies and practices into the local market, thereby setting new standards in the industry.

Majid Hamad al Yaqoubi stated, from human resources and Omanisation prospective, within just twelve months, the company has not only witnessed

significant progress but has also laid the foundation for a future characterised by resilience, adaptability, and a steadfast commitment to excellence. As MARH embarks on a new chapter of growth and empowerment, it remains unwavering in its dedication to driving positive change, fostering inclusivity, and shaping a brighter future for all stakeholders involved.

As part of its future strategy, MARH is committed to expanding its reach and influence further. The company plans to increase its investment in local talent by introducing more advanced training facilities and expanding its collaboration with educational institutions. This will not only enhance the technical skills of Omani workers but also provide them with the necessary

exposure to lead and innovate in their respective fields.

Looking forward, MARH's roadmap includes the development of more robust frameworks for talent acquisition and management, ensuring that the most capable and motivated Omani professionals are brought into the fold. This strategy is expected to boost not only the company's growth but also contribute significantly to the national goal of economic diversification.

"The path we are on requires resilience, adaptability, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. As we embark on a new chapter of growth and empowerment, we remain steadfast in our dedication to driving positive change for all stakeholders involved," the CEO concluded.



OABC and Dentons host session on data protection

The Oman American Business Council (OABC), Oman's largest and most active business networking group and the official affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce in Oman, in partnership with OABC premium member Dentons, the region's leading law firm, hosted a session on the new regulations of Personal Data Protection Law in Oman.

The event took place on May 15 at the Intercontinental Hotel Muscat and brought together over 100 esteemed legal professionals, executives, and business leaders to discuss the significant changes introduced by the new data protection law.

The Dentons' team delivered a comprehensive presentation that left no stone unturned, addressing all aspects of the law and ensuring clarity for attendees. Their expert panel adeptly fielded questions, clarifying doubts and providing additional

Some companies do not realise that they need to quickly comply within the next year with new regulations, like the requirement to appoint a data protection officer (DPO)

REBECCA OLSON

insights to the audience.

The event included a presentation by Dentons, providing a comprehensive overview of the new personal data protection law and its implications for businesses and employees in Oman, a Q&A session providing participants with the opportunity to

seek clarification on specific aspects of the law, and networking breaks.

Jamie Gibson, managing partner and head of Corporate at Dentons Oman, said, "The Dentons team of data protection experts were very pleased to present this session on the Oman Data Protection Law to a room full of very engaged OABC members."

"Some companies do not realise that they need to quickly comply within the next year with these new regulations, for example, the requirement to appoint a data protection officer (DPO), whether your company is large or small," said Rebecca Olson, CEO of the OABC. "We were astonished at the amount of questions raised to the Dentons' team and, of course, not surprised by their skills in answering each one. We would like to thank Dentons for sponsoring the event."

Training workshop on governance held

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Private Schools, on Monday conducted a training workshop on 'Governance and impact of its application in the work environment', under the patronage of Mahmoud al Hussein, assistant director-general for Administrative and Financial Affairs, in the presence of employees of the Directorate-General of Private Schools.

The training workshop took place at Khasab Hall in the Ministry's General Diwan, a press release said. Ahmed al Balushi, director of the Government Of-



fice at the Ministry, Nidal al Shizawi, and Maryam al Shukairi, presented the training workshop.

The workshop aimed to intro-

duce employees to the concept of governance, its objectives and principles, governance processes and requirements, in addition to

clarifying the inputs to governance and identifying the modern trends in the governance of educational institutions.

Performance Management Programme held

The Ministry of Education (MoE), represented by the Individual Performance System Management Office, organised a performance management programme according to the Proficiency System to measure the adequacy of job performance.

The five-day programme is taking place at the Muscat Hall in the Ministry's General Diwan, a press release said.

The programme targets about 40 participants from the employees of the Directorate-General of Curriculum Development, employees of the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision, and the Center for Vocational Guidance and Student Counseling. It is also at-



tended by members of the Individual Performance System Management Team (Ejada) at the Ministry of Social Development.

The programme aims to provide participants with knowledge in formulating objectives and key results according to the OKRs methodology, the mechanism for

selecting the correct indicators to measure objectives and key results, and the mechanism for evaluating the actual performance result at the end.

Indian expatriate makes history, becomes first Indian space tourist

Washington, D.C., US - Indian expatriate Gopi Thotakura made history as he became the first Indian space tourist and the second Indian to venture into space as part of the crew for Amazon founder Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin's NS-25 mission.

The Blue Origin successfully completed its seventh human spaceflight and the 25th flight for the New Shepard programme on Sunday.

Andhra-born Gopi Thotakura was a part of the crew among five other crew members.

Besides Gopi Thotakura, the astronaut crew included Mason Angel, Sylvain Chiron, Kenneth L Hess, Carol Schaller, and former Air Force Captain Ed Dwight, who was selected by President John F Kennedy in 1961 as the nation's first black astronaut candidate but never had the opportunity to fly, the official website of Blue Origin stated.

Moreover, New Shepard has now flown 37 people into space, including today's crew. Phil Joyce, Senior Vice President, New Shepard, said: "A big thank you to our astronaut customers for the opportunity to provide this life-changing experience."

"Each of you are pioneers



Gopi Thotakura was part of the crew for Blue Origin's NS-25 mission

helping to advance our mission to build a road to space for the benefit of Earth," Joyce added.

Last month, in an exclusive interview to ANI, Thotakura spoke about his dream and passion for flying and how the mission is working towards protecting Mother Earth. He further spoke about space tourism and how it can open avenues and make it affordable and accessible for civilians.

Elucidating his feelings, he had said: "I can't express my feelings right now because it is something that is not in the urban dictionary. It is something

I take with me. I always tell people that right from when you are born till the time you leave, you wake up and want to see the sky, want to take a breath, but I want to have this opportunity to do the reverse, to go up there and see down here. Movies do a fantastic job but (to see) what the naked eye can see, you have to do that yourself. The whole excitement is about to look back and see what's going on, without being documented or without someone else's eye."

He further emphasised Blue Origin's tagline, 'For the benefit of Earth' and added that he also

feels that protecting Mother Earth is important. "It is for them to protect Mother Earth that they are seeking life and adventure outside the planet," he said.

Moreover, each astronaut carried a postcard to space on behalf of Blue Origin's foundation, Club for the Future. The club's mission is to inspire and mobilise future generations to pursue careers in STEAM for the benefit of Earth.

Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma, a former Indian Air Force pilot, was the first Indian citizen to fly to space in 1984.

ANI

Spain recalls ambassador to Argentina over Milei's insult

Milei called the wife of Spanish PM Pedro Sanchez 'a corrupt woman'

Oviedo, Spain - Spain's foreign minister announced on Sunday that he was indefinitely recalling his country's ambassador to Argentina over an insult by its president, Javier Milei.

Jose Manuel Albares demanded a full public apology from Milei.

Speaking at a meeting in Madrid of global far-right leaders hosted by Spain's Vox party, Milei called Begona Gomez, the wife of Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, 'a corrupt woman'.

The comment received a standing ovation in an arena packed with around 11,000 people. Other speakers at the event included French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Israeli Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli.

The Argentine leader also attacked socialism as 'cancerous', alluded to Sanchez as 'dirty' and suggested that people wouldn't believe the levels of abuse of power in the government.

In an urgent declaration to the press later in the day, Albares called on Milei to apologise, adding: "If there is no public apology, we will take all measures that we view appropriate to defend our sovereignty and our dignity." He said Milei has taken bilateral



Argentina President Javier Milei

relations between Spain and Argentina to their 'lowest point in recent history'.

"We welcomed Javier Milei in Madrid in good faith to participate in a far-right political act. We treated him with respect and offered him public resources of the Spanish state during his stay in our country. But despite this hos-

pitality, he responded with a frontal attack on our democracy, our institutions and Spain," he added. Albares said his declaration in response to Milei was backed by a 'large majority' of Spain's political parties, but not the far-right Vox and conservative Popular Party.

Albares added that the Euro-

pean Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told him that 'an attack of this calibre on a member state is an attack towards all of the EU'. "Attacks against family members of political leaders have no place in our culture; we condemn and reject them, especially when coming from partners," Borrell later posted on X.

Attacks against family members of political leaders have no place in our culture; we condemn and reject them, especially when coming from partners

JOSEP BORRELL

The Spanish foreign minister said Milei's comments were 'unprecedented in the history of international relations and even more in the history of two countries' and called on him to follow decorum and avoid commenting on Spain's 'internal affairs'.

Earlier this month, Sanchez threatened to resign after a court opened an initial inquiry into his wife over corruption claims.

He denounced the situation as harassment from the far-right group that brought the claim to court and right-wing media, which made the accusations.

After taking a five-day break to decide, Sanchez announced that he would stay on as the country's leader.

Anadolu Agency

Nepal PM Pushpa Dahal secures vote of confidence

Kathmandu, Nepal - Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal secured a vote of confidence on Monday amid protest by Opposition Nepali Congress.

The vote of confidence by Dahal in the House of Representatives, marked the fourth such vote since he assumed power in December 2022.

Dahal received 157 votes in the 275-member House of Representatives while one member abstained while none voted against the motion.

A total of 158 lawmakers took part in the voting. The prime minister required at least 138 votes to prove majority in favour of the trust motion.

Members of the main opposition Nepali Congress, which is the largest party in the lower house, did not participate in the voting as they were staging protests in the House.

Soon after Speaker Devraj Ghimire announced commencement of the House proceedings, Congress lawmakers gathered around the well and chanted slogans demanding a probe against Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane for his alleged involvement in co-operative scam.

The prime minister had sought the vote of confidence as per Article 100 (2) of the constitution after the Janata Samajbadi Party, Nepal withdrew its sup-



Nepal PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal

port to the government following a split on May 5.

Dahal had gone for the floor test for the first time on January 10, 2023. He had received 268 votes then.

The prime minister won the trust motion for the second time only three months later as he broke ties with the CPN-UML and forged an alliance with the Nepali Congress. He secured the support of 172 lawmakers at the time.

He had to seek the vote of confidence for a third time after Congress withdrew its support to the government after Dahal again broke the alliance with Congress and joined hands with the CPN-UML and other parties on March 4.

He had received 157 votes then. The next meeting of the House of Representatives is scheduled for 11 am tomorrow.

ANI

TURNING HILLS INTO FARMLANDS



An aerial drone shot shows the terrace fields in Yangdong Village of Liping County, southwest China's Guizhou Province, on Sunday (Xinhua)

US to withdraw military forces from Niger by September 15

Niamey, Niger - The US has reached an agreement with Niger to withdraw its military forces from the African nation by September 15, according to the US Defence Department and the Nigerien Ministry of National Defence, CNN reported.

The newly agreed deadline gives the US four months to drawdown fewer than 1,000 troops who remain in the country, as well as their equipment, which includes MQ-9 Reaper drones and other assets.

Niger's military government announced in March that it had ended an accord with the US that allowed military personnel and civilian staff from the Department of Defence to operate in the country.

The US delegation met with Niger's ruling military junta last week to try to reach an agreement that would allow for the secure withdrawal of US forces and for clearances for military flights. The flight clearances had been a sticking point in the sensitive negotiations needed to withdraw US forces.

Until now, US troops who have left Niger took commercial



flights, including as recently as last week, according to US officials. The remaining troops on the ground are tasked with drawing down US personnel and equipment still in Niger.

The US delegation was led by Chris Meier, the assistant secretary of defence for special operations and low-intensity conflict. The Nigerien delegation was led by Col.-Maj. Mamane Sani Kiaou, the chief of staff of the Nigerian army, CNN reported.

"Both delegations confirmed the guarantees of protection and

security to the American forces during their withdrawal. The delegations also established procedures to facilitate the entry and exit of US personnel, including overflight and landing clearances for military flights," the joint statement said.

A deepening divide between the US and the ruling military junta following the coup last July ultimately led to the withdrawal, as the Biden administration called for a path back to free and fair elections.

ANI

IRAN IN SHOCK

Mokhber appointed as interim president

Mohammad Mokhber will take over as interim president for a 50-day period

Tehran, Iran - Iran's influential decision-making body, the Guardian Council, has confirmed that Mohammad Mokhber will take over as interim president for a 50-day period after the Supreme Leader's approval.

Mokhber, who served as the first vice president under Ebrahim Raisi, will carry out the presidential responsibilities until the next elections are held, in line with the country's constitution. Tahaz Nazif, a spokesperson for the Guardian Council, a 12-member constitutionally-mandated vetting body, said the first vice president takes over when the president in office dies with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's consent.

Referring to Khamenei's remarks on Sunday that 'no disruption' will happen in the functioning of the country in the wake of the helicopter crash that killed Raisi and his accompanying delegation in north-western Iran, Nazif said all



Mohammad Mokhber, who served as the first vice president under Ebrahim Raisi, will carry out presidential responsibilities until next elections are held

matters in such situations are enshrined in the country's law.

"It is true that we lost the president and other servants in this accident, but as the Leader said, there will be no disruption in the level of service to our noble people, and the constitution has provisions for such situations," he added.

As per Article 131 of the Iranian Constitution, the first vice president - in this case Moham-

mad Mokhber - will assume the charge as the new president for the next 50 days. During this time, a council comprising the first vice president himself, the speaker of the parliament, and the chief of the judiciary will make arrangements for holding new presidential elections.

Nazif said in such situations, 'the administration of the country is entrusted to the first vice president with the approval of

the Supreme Leader, and the first vice president practically assumes the powers of the president'. He said the new president has been informed about the necessary matters and his interim presidency began yesterday (Sunday) and will last 50 days.

On the tenure of the new government, considering the fact that the Raisi government's tenure would have ended next

year, the Guardian Council spokesman said the issue will be discussed by the body.

Mokhber, who was chosen by Raisi as his first deputy in the 2021 presidential election, previously headed the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order (EIKO), a high-profile body administered by the Supreme Leader's office.

His high-profile position at the EIKO between 2007 and 2021 was the highlight of his ca-

reer that made him popular in the political circles of the country. Before that, he also served as the chairman of the board at Sina Bank, a private banking institution, as well as the deputy governor of southern Khuzestan province.

Mokhber was also active during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, when he served as a volunteer with the medical corps of the Iranian armed forces.

In July 2010, he was put on the sanctions list by the European Union as the president of EIKO over alleged involvement in 'nuclear and ballistic missile activities'. He was removed from the list two years later.

Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani has been appointed as acting top diplomat following the death of Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

Government spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi said Kani will be heading the foreign ministry on an interim basis.

He said the decision was taken in an extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet on Monday.

Kani, who has served as the deputy foreign minister for political affairs since 2021 and the lead nuclear negotiator, will hold the position until new elections are held in 50 days, as per the country's law.

Kani is a low-profile figure

It is true that we lost the president and other servants in this accident, but as the Leader said, there will be no disruption in the level of service to our noble people

TAHAZ NAZIF

A jurist and religious figure who rapidly climbed ranks

Istanbul, Turkey - Known as a jurist and religious figure, the late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi was born on December 14, 1960, in Mashhad. Following the 1979 revolution, he began his career as a prosecutor in 1981.

Rising swiftly in his position, Raisi became Deputy Prosecutor General of Tehran at the young age of 25. Raisi was part of a four-member committee that, under the instruction of Iran's revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, issued the death sentences for regime opponents imprisoned in 1988.

After Khomeini's death and during Ali Khamenei's tenure, Raisi rapidly climbed the ranks in state offices. He served as Tehran's prosecutor general from 1989 to 1994.

In 1994, Raisi was appointed as the head of the State Inspectorate Organization, a position he held for 10 years.

In 2004, Raisi was appointed



Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and Ebrahim Raisi

as the first deputy chief of the judiciary. He later became Iran's attorney general in 2014 and was appointed as the head of the Imam Reza Shrine and Foundation in Mashhad by Khamenei in 2016. Raisi also ran as a candidate in the presidential elections held on May 19, 2017, but lost to the then-incumbent President Hassan Rouhani.

Following the dismissal of Ayatollah Amoli Larijani from the judiciary chief position and his appointment as the head of the Expediency Discernment Council by Khamenei, Raisi assumed the vacant position of judiciary chief in March 2019.

In the presidential elections held on June 18, 2021, Raisi won by a large margin, securing 62

per cent of the votes, thus becoming Iran's 8th president.

Who was late Iranian FM?

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, noted for his conservative position, became Iran's foreign minister in August 2021, after Mohammad Javad Zarif, whom he had previously served as deputy for three years.

The former foreign minister was born in 1964 and graduated from Tehran University with a degree in international relations in 1991. Besides his native Persian language, he was also fluent in Arabic, and English. He served as ambassador to Bahrain during the tenure of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Amir-Abdollahian later served as the deputy foreign minister for Arab and African Affairs during the terms of both Ahmadinejad and Hassan Rouhani.

Anadolu Agency



'An outstanding politician': World leaders extend condolences

Leaders from across the world expressed condolences over the death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and other officials in a helicopter crash on Sunday.

"The EU expresses its sincere condolences for the death of President Raisi and Foreign Minister Abdollahian, as well as other members of their delegation and crew in a helicopter ac-

cident. Our thoughts go to the families," European Council President Charles Michel wrote on X. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni expressed solidarity with the Iranian government and people, according to the Italian news agency ANSA.

"Ebrahim Raisi was an outstanding politician whose entire life was devoted to serving the

motherland. He rightfully enjoyed high respect from his compatriots and significant authority abroad," Russian President Vladimir Putin said in a telegram message.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in a post on X said Ankara will stand by Iran 'in these difficult and sad times'.

Anadolu Agency

Many world leaders lost their lives in aviation accidents since 1936

Istanbul, Turkey - The crash of a helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on Sunday brought many similar incidents under the spotlight in which heads of state or government lost their lives.

On December 9, 1936, then-Swedish Prime Minister Arvid Lindman died when the Douglas DC-2 plane he was in crashed into houses near Croydon Airport in dense fog just after take-off.

On September 7, 1940, Paraguayan President Marshal Jose Felix Estigarribia died in a plane crash.

On June 16, 1958, the then Interim President of Brazil, Nereu Ramos, died when a

plane belonging to Cruzeiro Airlines crashed.

On March 29, 1959, Barthelmy Boganda, president of the Central African Republic and a hero of independence, passed away after his plane crashed.

On April 13, 1966, Iraqi President Abdul Salam Arif died in a helicopter crash. Arif came to power through a coup in February 1963.

On April 27, 1969, Bolivian President Rene Barrientos died when his helicopter crashed in the city of Cochabamba.

On January 18, 1977, Yugoslavian Prime Minister Dzemal Bijedic's Learjet 25 plane crashed into Inac Mountain



near the city of Kresovo in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bijedic, his wife and six other people died in the accident.

On May 27, 1979, a plane carrying Mauritanian Prime Minister Ahmed Ould Bouceif, who was going to attend an

African summit, crashed off the coast of Dakar. Bouceif died in the accident.

On December 4, 1980, Por-

tuguese Prime Minister Francisco Sa Carneiro and Defence Minister Adelino Amaro da Costa died when their plane crashed in the capital Lisbon just after takeoff.

On May 24, 1981, Ecuadorian President Jaime Roldos Aguilera and Defence Minister Major General Marco Subia Martinez lost their lives when the plane they were on crashed near the Peruvian border.

On July 31, 1981, Panamanian President Omar Torrijos died when the small plane he was flying crashed into a forest.

On October 19, 1986, a twin-engine plane carrying Mozambican President Samora Machel and several Mozambican min-

isters crashed near the Mozambique-South African border. Thirty-three people died in the accident including Machel.

On June 1, 1987, Lebanese Prime Minister Rashid Karami lost his life when a bomb exploded in the helicopter he was on board to go to Beirut.

On August 17, 1988, a C-130 military aircraft carrying Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq, his five generals and US Ambassador Arnold Lewis Raphael crashed near Bahawalpur, approximately 530km south of the capital Islamabad. In the accident in which there were no survivors, investigators focused on the possibility of sabotage.

Anadolu Agency

Over 810,000 have fled Rafah: UN

Israeli forces detained 26 more Palestinians overnight in raids across the occupied West Bank

Gaza City, Palestine - Israel's military offensive in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip has forcibly displaced more than 810,000 Palestinians, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said on Monday.

"The exodus continues in #Gaza. @UNRWA estimates over 810,000 people have fled #Rafah in the past two weeks," the agency said on X.

"Every time families are displaced, their lives are at serious risk. People are forced to leave everything behind looking for safety. But there's no safe zone," it added, and called for a cease-fire in the enclave.

Israel has killed more than 35,400 Palestinians in Gaza since an October 7 cross-border incursion by Hamas that claimed



On May 6, Israeli forces started the onslaught on Rafah, ignoring all regional and international warnings about its consequences for civilians who had taken refuge in the city

Every time families are displaced, their lives are at serious risk. People are forced to leave everything behind

UNRWA

1,200 lives. The air and ground attacks have reduced the Palestinian enclave to rubble, led to

mass internal displacement and shortage of basic necessities. It also triggered a trial at the

International Court of Justice, which in January ordered Tel Aviv to ensure its forces do not commit acts of genocide, and take measures to guarantee humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

On May 6, Israeli forces started the onslaught on Rafah, ignoring all regional and international warnings about its conse-

quences for civilians who had taken refuge in the city.

26 more held in West Bank raids

Israeli forces detained 26 more Palestinians overnight in raids across the occupied West Bank, prisoners' rights groups said on Monday. Israeli soldiers made incursions into the cities of Hebron

and Ramallah, the Commission of Detainee Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoners Society said in a joint statement.

The new arrests bring the total number of Palestinians detained by the Israeli army in the West Bank to 8,800 since last October, according to Palestinian figures.

Earlier on Monday morning,

the Israeli army raided several cities and towns across the occupied West Bank, arresting over a dozen Palestinians, with clashes reported in some localities during which soldiers fired live bullets and tear gas shells at residents, according to eyewitnesses.

Israeli forces stormed the cities of Ramallah, Al-Bireh, and Qalqilya, as well as towns in Hebron and Bethlehem, eyewitnesses told Anadolu.

Scores of Palestinians clashed with the Israeli army, which used live fire and tear gas at residents, eyewitnesses said, adding that Palestinian gunmen also traded fire with Israeli soldiers in the city of Qalqilya. In Ramallah, the Israeli army raided several neighbourhoods and arrested at least one Palestinian.

According to eyewitnesses, the Israeli army carried out large-scale arrests in Hebron, detaining at least 14 Palestinians.

Tensions have been running high across the West Bank since Israel launched a deadly military offensive against the Gaza Strip.

More than 500 Palestinians have since been killed and around 5,000 others injured by Israeli army fire in the occupied territory, according to the Health Ministry.

Anadolu Agency

Israelis demand Knesset members to press for prisoner exchange deal with Hamas

Jerusalem - Families of Israeli hostages held in the Gaza Strip made a plea on Monday for a prisoner exchange deal with Hamas during a meeting of the Knesset (Israel's parliament).

According to Israeli estimates, some 128 Israelis are currently held captive in Gaza, while Israel detains approximately 9,500 Palestinians.

During a Knesset committee meeting, families of hostages expressed their frustration at lawmakers for their failure to secure a prisoner exchange deal with Hamas, The Times of Israel newspaper reported.

"Did you eat? Did you drink? Did you relax? Did you put your kids to sleep? Did you bring your kids to school?" Mor Shoham, whose brother Tal is among Israeli hostages in Gaza, addressed Knesset members.

"These are very basic activities that my brother hasn't been able to do for eight months. And I don't know how to speak calmly and I don't know how to speak quietly. I'm fed up," he said.

Shoham vowed to 'pursue' Israeli lawmakers if his brother was harmed in captivity.

"If something happens to my brother I will pursue, day by day,



Families of hostages have staged several protests in recent weeks to demand a swap deal with Hamas

each and every one of you. And I'm not afraid to say that," he warned. "My brother is suffering... every day."

Families of hostages have staged several protests in recent weeks to demand a swap deal with Hamas, which demands an end to Israel's war on Gaza in return for any hostage exchange with Tel Aviv.

Meanwhile, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court

(ICC) has applied for arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and three Hamas leaders, including Ismail Haniyeh.

In a statement, Karim Khan said that he has reasonable ground to believe that Netanyahu and Gallant bear criminal responsibility for 'war crimes and crimes against humanity' committed on the territory of

Palestine, in the Gaza Strip, from at least October 8.

The crimes included 'starvation of civilians as a method of warfare as a war crime', 'wilfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health', 'wilful killing', 'intentionally directing attacks against a civilian population as a war crime', and 'extermination and/or murder', the statement added.

'Persecution as a crime

against humanity' and 'other inhumane acts as crimes against humanity' were also mentioned by the prosecutor, based on evidence, collected and examined by his office.

"We submit that crimes against humanity charged committed as part of widespread, systematic attack against Palestinian civilian population pursuant to state policy," Khan said.

Anadolu Agency

Lai Ching-te sworn in as Taiwan President

Taipei, Taiwan - The newly-elected president of Taiwan, Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was sworn in as the fifth popularly elected president of Taiwan on Monday, reported Focus Taiwan.

The DPP will be the first ruling party to govern for a third consecutive four-year term, with Lai, 64, and Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim taking office since Taiwan held its first direct presidential election in 1996. The inauguration ceremony was held at the Presidential Office, and the great seal of the nation was handed over to Lai by Legislative Speaker Han Kuo-yu of the Kuomintang (KMT), symbolising Lai's assumption of office as head of state.

The celebrations to mark the inauguration of Lai Ching-te as president included street performances and a military display in Taipei on Monday morning.

Moreover, the swearing-in ceremony was also attended by outgoing President Tsai Ing-wen, according to Focus Taiwan.

Lai, a four-term legislator and two-term mayor of Tainan, was Taiwan's premier from 2017 to 2019 under the Tsai administration and later became Tsai's deputy in 2020 when she began her second term.



Lai Ching-te

Meanwhile, Lai is also the first vice president to become president since presidents in the country have been popularly elected.

Lai and Hsiao won the election on January 13 after winning about 40 per cent of the votes in the 2024 presidential elections, keeping the DPP in power for another four years, as reported by Focus Taiwan.

The candidates of the opposition parties, including the KMT and Taiwan People's Party, who tried but failed to form a unified presidential ticket, split the remaining 60 per cent.

The DPP, however, lost its majority in the Legislature after losing seats in legislative elections that were held the same day.

ANI

Assange wins bid to appeal against extradition

London, UK - WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange on Monday won a legal bid to appeal against his extradition to the US.

Assange, who was to be extradited to the US on espionage charges, will now take his case to a new appeal hearing.

The WikiLeaks co-founder has been facing 17 espionage charges on which he may receive up to 175 years in prison.

Anadolu Agency

Russia takes 'control of settlement' in Ukraine's Luhansk region

Moscow, Russia- Russian troops have taken control of a rural settlement in Ukraine's easternmost Luhansk region, the Russian Defence Ministry said on Monday.

In a statement, the ministry said that its troops captured the settlement of Bilohorivka, located about 61km (38 miles) from the city of Sloviansk and 74km (46 miles) from the city of Kramatorsk in the eastern Donetsk region.

The statement further said that Russian troops have also taken control of 'more advantageous lines and positions'.

It claimed that Russian forces defeated Ukrainian troops near the settlement of Hlyboke in the northeastern Kharkiv region, as well as repelled two counterat-



Russian Defence Ministry said that its troops captured the settlement of Bilohorivka, located about 61km (38 miles) from the city of Sloviansk

tacks near the city of Vovchansk and the village of Startysya in the same region.

Ukrainian authorities have not yet commented on the claims, and independent verification is difficult due to the ongoing war.

On May 10, Ukraine's De-

fence Ministry said Russian forces attempted to breach the country's defences in the Kharkiv region, opening a new front in the over two-year-long conflict that is concentrated in the country's east and south.

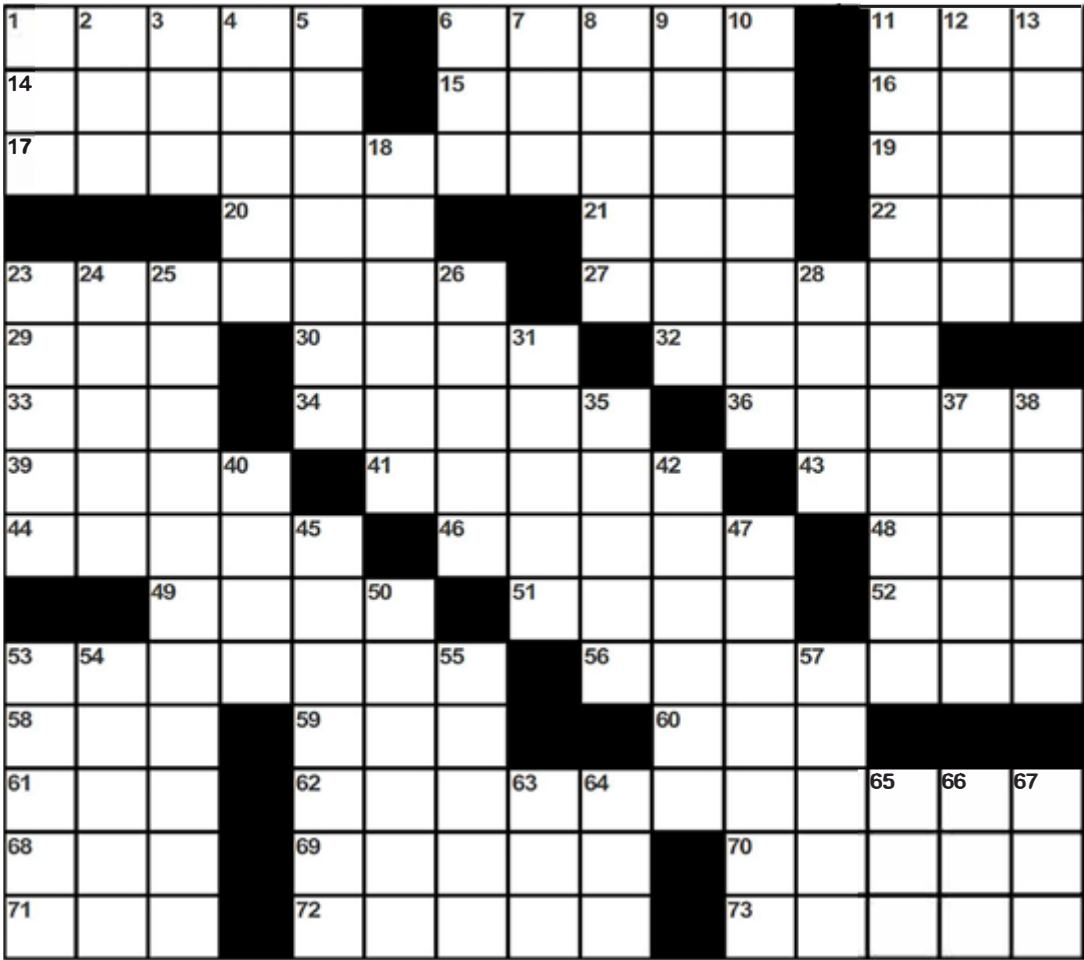
Clashes in the region have intensified since then, particularly near Vovchansk, located about 74km (45 miles) from Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city.

Russia claims to have seized control of multiple border settlements since the start of its offensive on the Kharkiv front.

More than 10,500 people from the region's Bohodukhiv, Chuhuiv, and Kharkiv districts have been evacuated due to the ongoing clashes.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Flubbed one
- 6) Taco condiment
- 11) Stage success
- 14) This puzzle has one
- 15) Campaign poster plea
- 16) First lady McKinley
- 17) Emulate a stereotypical hobo
- 19) Infant fare
- 20) Roth acct.
- 21) Amaze
- 22) _ Beta Kappa
- 23) Low-grade merchandise
- 27) Satirize
- 29) Luau garland
- 30) Balkan War participant
- 32) _ & Span (household cleanser)
- 33) Matterhorn, e.g.
- 34) Takes shots?
- 36) Hardly windy
- 39) Retained
- 41) Hardly taut
- 43) Stair-climbing aid
- 44) Digital novel
- 46) Shocking
- 48) Danson of "Becker"
- 49) Soprano Lily
- 51) Japanese wrestling

- 52) " _ got my eyes on you"
- 53) Electromagnetic energy units
- 56) One handling night-club security
- 58) Permit
- 59)" is me!"
- 60) Lakers' org.
- 61) Word before "mode"
- 62) Played a child's game
- 68) Takeaway game
- 69) Weasel kin
- 70) Sister of Clio
- 71) Popular show fish
- 72) OK Corral first name
- 73) French Impressionist
- DOWN**
- 1) Suffix of most ordinal numbers
- 2) Letter after pi
- 3) Actor's agt.
- 4) Letter through a filter
- 5) Thaw
- 6) "We're off to _ the wizard"
- 7) "Rumble in the Jungle" fighter
- 8) Juridical
- 9) Unstressed vowel sounds
- 10) Tackle
- 11) Doctor's oath

- 12) "Famous Potatoes" state
- 13) Follow-up shot, in basketball
- 18) Superfast drivers
- 23) Allay
- 24) Short star?
- 25) Tough-skinned mammals
- 26) Food for whales
- 28) It's on the waterfront
- 31) Boyfriends
- 35) Clean with elbow grease
- 37) Spaghetti drainer
- 38) Church official
- 40) Tugboat sound
- 42) Teahouse cinch
- 45) Ability
- 4 7) Had qualms
- 50) Putting on airs
- 53) Dangerous board on a pirate ship
- 54) Prefix meaning "sun"
- 55) Nasal dividers
- 57) Mother-of-pearl
- 63) Collector's pride
- 64) Old TV screen
- 65) Broomstick rider
- 66) LAX info
- 67) Advisable tactics

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Talking to a family member may stir up uncomfortable emotions in your heart, but it's always better to get things out in the open than to keep them deep inside, so focus on the positive outcomes. The people you're related to might not have much in common with you philosophically, but they will always think the best of you, always support you, and always celebrate your hard-won successes.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Puttering around the house will seem like paradise to you today and you'll get great satisfaction out of dealing with issues at home. It will be much more tantalizing for you to paint the kitchen than paint the town red, but not for long, so make the most of this mood and get some stuff done right now. It's not that you are feeling shy or socially intimidated, it's just that you are full of much more modest and quiet energy today. You want simple things.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Your daily routine is going to be disrupted by someone who unfortunately does not know the first thing about being flexible. They can't see things from any other perspective but their own, which could make things difficult when it comes to your schedule. Luckily, it won't take long for you to come up with a backup plan that will help you work around them. Celebrate the fact that you are smarter than those who can't be flexible or open-minded about the lives of others.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Your selflessness has gotten you further in your life than you might realize. While all the attention-grabbing go-getters make headlines with their successes, your quiet determination and honest efforts haven't earned you as much of the spotlight, but does that really matter? Being angry or resentful of the acclaim that someone else may be getting isn't going to help you at all. Keep focused on what really matters and be content with having substance over style.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Constantly changing up the members of your social circle is not an effective way to balance your life, so stop moving from person to person in search of the perfect relationship. And stop doing what you think others want you to do. If you truly strive for harmony in your life right now, you need to put things on pause and try to center yourself. Step back from the hectic social scene and let your own inner voice be heard.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

If you were a superhero, what would your superpower be? It might be a silly question to ponder, but give it some serious thought. This is a great day to realize your talents and desires. Okay, so maybe you won't ever be able to fly or be invisible, but you are definitely capable of things you never imagined. Start pushing yourself to reach higher heights and wake up your ambition. Let it push you to be a more aggressive person.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Are you feeling insecure about a friendship just because you haven't seen someone in a while? Call them today and see what's up. And if they already have dinner or weekend plans, don't worry. If you get too possessive about your relationship, you only send a message that you are needy and too reliant on this person. They'll start to feel as if you're clinging too much and it will do more harm to the relationship than good.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You have something to do today and you need to do it! So do whatever you can to avoid distractions. Who cares if a coworker has juicy gossip about another coworker or a friend has an exciting update about their romantic life? These tidbits of fun are not going to help you finish the task at hand, so push them to the back burner. Keep your head down and do not get sucked into any drama that erupts around you. Get through the work before you have fun.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Don't get too frazzled if your carefully planned routine gets disrupted today. Just try to roll with it and stay upbeat. And if things start veering off track, don't be in such a hurry to push them back the way you want them to go. Maybe they went off the track for good reason. And besides, what's done is done, so the best approach is to take a deep breath and see any last-minute changes as a challenge and an invitation for adventure.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Don't you think it's time for some bright, new beginnings in your life? Start by making a fresh start in an old, stale relationship. It's not about moving on; it's about reminding yourself why they are in your life in the first place. Revisit archived emails, photos, and other mementos of the two of you; then call them up for a walk down memory lane. If new energy is what you want, new energy is what you need to create.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You have lots of drive right now, but are you letting it steer you into stressful places? It's all well and good to be aggressive, but you have to be mindful of the fact that failure is always possible. It's not that you should think negatively; it's just that you need to practice balanced optimism, so have a backup plan. Just because you want something does not mean you are going to get it. Big lessons come from even bigger losses.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

It is natural to want to compare yourself to other people, but there really is no comparison. You have your own unique personality, and inherent in that is the fact that not every person you meet will connect with it. So what if you're not every person's cup of tea? All that matters is that the people who get you are the people you want to be around. So stop wasting your energy trying to impress someone who just isn't worth it. Watch out for others who try to change you!



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What 1973 film starring Al Pacino, John Randolph and Tony Roberts is based on the true story of New York City policeman who went undercover to expose the corruption of his fellow officers?

- A. Rain Man
- B. Serpico
- C. The French Connection
- D. The Third Man

2. Where did Mulligatawny enter the world cuisine from?

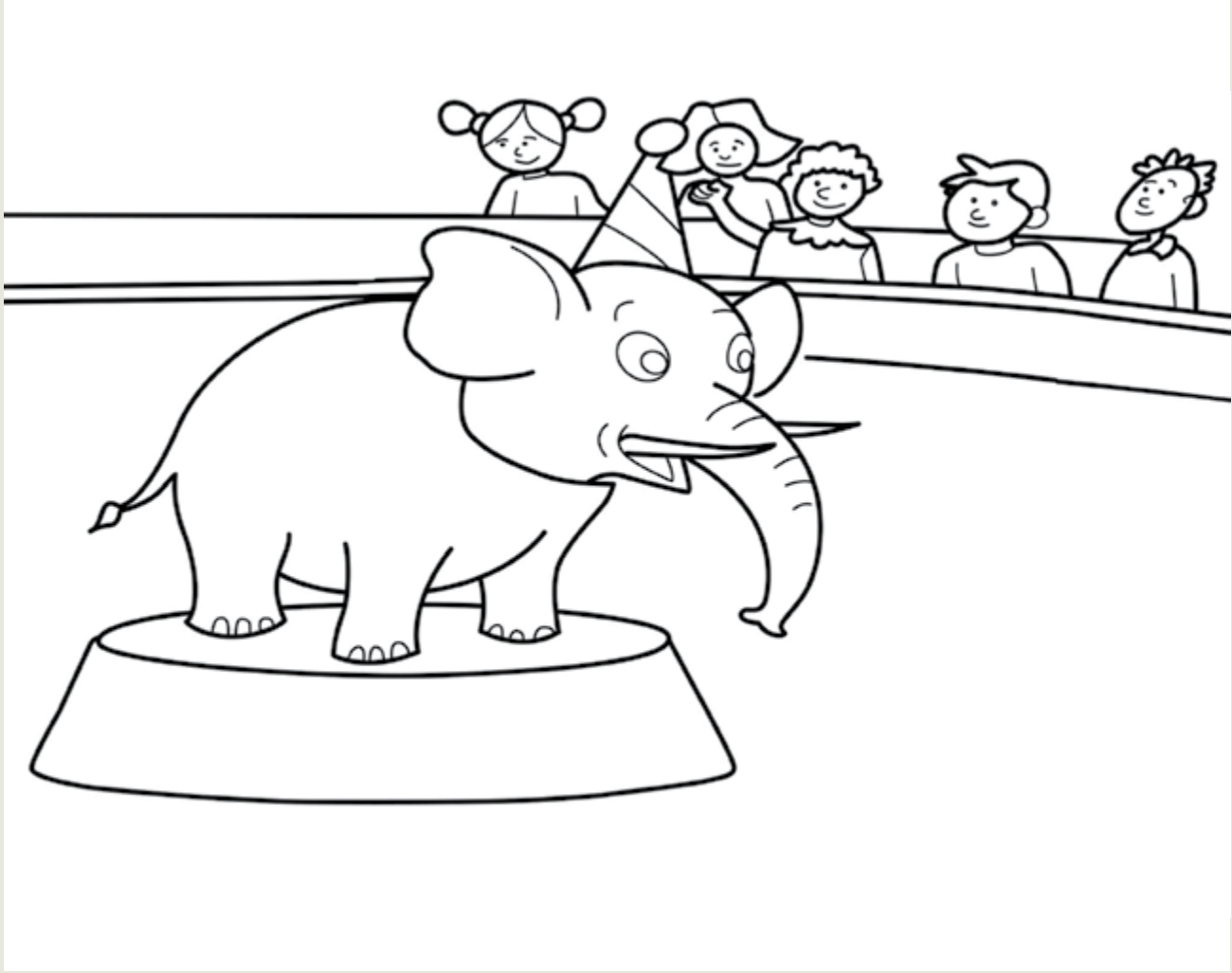
- A. Northern Ireland
- B. Sri Lanka
- C. Scotland
- D. Pakistan

3. One of the cratons, or relatively stable areas, in the South American tectonic plate is known as the what Shield?

- A. Atacama
- B. Brazilian
- C. Guiana
- D. Altiplano

Answers: 1. B 2. B 3. C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

C	V	E	T
R	G	O	R
K	S	A	E
O	G	A	H

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

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

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

PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

Premier League champions Man City’s dominance fuelled by Pep Guardiola’s uncompromising vision

Manchester, England - Manchester City’s insatiable appetite for trophies spells bad news for any club hoping to break the stranglehold Pep Guardiola’s side continue to have on English football.

Admirably, Arsenal pushed them very close this season but once again the sight of Guardiola’s players cavorting with the Premier League trophy was the abiding image of the final day. Manchester City’s 3-1 victory over West Ham United on Sunday took them to a place not even the great Liverpool side of the 1980s and Manchester United team of the late 1990s and

blistering run of 19 wins and four draws since their last league defeat by Aston Villa on Dec. 6.

No one was really surprised because in 53-year-old Guardiola City have a manager obsessed with perfection.

“It’s a bit demanding at times. It’s tough, but look what he’s done. He demands a lot every single day,” City’s Norwegian goal machine Erling Haaland said of playing for Guardiola. “If you don’t live up to what he expects you have a big problem.”

The Spaniard has now won the Premier League title six times in his eight seasons at The Etihad

The manager sets the tone but this team we enjoy playing with each other. It is not a team with big egos. We play around with each other we run like crazy and we just enjoy it.

KEVIN DE BRUYNE

2000s inhabited.

A fourth successive English league title is unprecedented and the big question is who will stop the City march.

They have averaged 89.7 points in their last four title-winning seasons and, while Guardiola’s side again failed to threaten the 100 they amassed in 2017-2018, City proved that when the pressure is really on they are almost impregnable.

Arsenal and Liverpool both headed City in the standings in the final months of the campaign, but the champions put together a

Stadium and perhaps the only glimmer of hope is that he might decide to follow Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp and step away.

“The reality is I am closer to leaving than staying. We have talked with the club -- my feeling is that I want to stay now. I will stay next season and during the season we will talk,” the ex-Barcelona boss said.

“But eight or nine years - we’ll see,” he added.

Incredibly, in the 152 Premier League matches City have played across the last four seasons, they have recorded 112 victories with



Manchester City players celebrate with the trophy

just 17 defeats, racking up 372 goals.

That is in a league regarded as the toughest in Europe, where the huge broadcasting deals mean all 20 clubs have the spending power to sign some of the world’s best talent.

“Pep Guardiola has designed a style of football that is being copied not just around this country, but all around Europe,” former Manchester United and England defender Gary Neville told Sky Sports.

“Most of all he is a winning

machine that instils that in everybody who works with him.”

City’s Belgian midfielder Kevin de Bruyne, who along with 23-year-old Phil Foden now has six Premier League titles to his name with City, explained that the secret was quite simple.

“The manager sets the tone but this team we enjoy playing with each other. It is not a team with big egos,” he said.

“We play around with each other we run like crazy and we just enjoy it. The enjoyment is lasting so that’s it.”

It could yet get better for City, with next Saturday’s FA Cup final against Manchester United still to come, and there will be no slackening off until another trophy is in the bag and a double secured, hot on the heels of last year’s treble.



Jurgen Klopp greets the fans after the match

Change is good: Jurgen Klopp exits Liverpool a legend

Liverpool, England - Moments after the final whistle blew on Jurgen Klopp’s managerial career at Liverpool, the much-loved German encouraged the Anfield faithful to celebrate the moment, but embrace the future.

Klopp flashed his huge smile throughout a long address to fans after Liverpool’s 2-0 victory over Wolverhampton Wanderers in Sunday’s emotional Premier League season finale, and even led the crowd in a song for incoming manager Arne Slot, who has enormous shoes to fill.

“Change is good,” the 56-year-old Klopp told the crowd. “And you never know exactly what to expect, but if you go with the right attitude into that, then everything will be fine.

“What I want you to sing, I have an idea,” he added, then launched loudly into: “Arne Slot! Na, na, na, na, na!” The crowd sang along.

On a day Liverpool fans had been dreading since Klopp announced in late-January he would leave at season’s end, the manager sounded genuinely happy rather than heartbroken.

“It doesn’t feel like an end. It just feels like the start, because I saw today a football team playing full of talent, youth, creativity, desire, greed,” he said.

“In these few weeks where I have had too much attention, I realised a lot of things. People say I turned them from doubters into believers. That’s not true.

“I just said we have to. You did it. Nobody tells you to stop believing.

“This club is in a better moment than a long time. We have this wonderful stadium, training centre and you - the superpower of world football. Wow.”

Guardiola ‘closer to leaving than staying’

Manchester, England - Pep Guardiola raised the prospect of leaving Manchester City on Sunday minutes after steering them to an unprecedented fourth successive Premier League title.

“The reality is I am closer to leaving than staying,” the Spaniard told Sky News, before clarifying that there would be no immediate departure from the club he has managed since 2016.

“We have talked with the club - my feeling is that I want to stay now. I will stay next season and during the season we will talk. But eight or nine years - we will see.”

At a news conference, Guardiola did not elaborate beyond saying he was naturally tired after another mammoth effort that



Pep Guardiola

We competed incredibly well again and at the end, for a little margin, we won it, we did it. We have done something incredible.

PEP GUARDIOLA

ended in a remarkable sixth title in seven years for City.

And he was full of praise for this season’s rivals, Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta and Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp, who pushed him throughout. “We competed incredibly well again

and at the end, for a little margin, we won it, we did it ... We have done something incredible,” he said.

Guardiola paid emotional tribute to Klopp.

“I will miss him a lot. He has been very important in my life,” he said. “I just want to say thank you so much for his work. He helped me with his team. He has been a huge competitor in my life. With him, it has been so difficult.”

Arteta, his former assistant at Manchester City, was another formidable rival who was there to stay, Guardiola said.

Arsenal finished just two points behind Manchester City after pushing them to the final day of the season.



Jean-Philippe Mateta of Crystal Palace scored a hat-trick against Aston Villa on the final day while Eberechi Eze was also on target

Premier League sets new scoring record after last-day goal spree

London, England - Thirty seven goals hit the back of Premier League nets in Sunday’s finale making it officially the highest-scoring season since the competition started in 1992.

The 380 matches produced 1,246 goals at more than three per game - eclipsing the previous best of 1,222 in the inaugural Premier League season when there were two extra clubs.

Manchester City topped the

scoring charts with 96 goals as they won an unprecedented fourth title in succession.

Runners-up Arsenal managed 91 with Liverpool 86 and Newcastle United their best-ever Premier League haul of 85.

Bottom club Sheffield United concluded the season with a 3-0 home defeat by Tottenham Hotspur, meaning they conceded 104 in the campaign - a Premier League record.

Arsenal on right trajectory and ‘will keep knocking’, says Arteta

London, England - Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said his side should not be satisfied with second place in the Premier League and vowed that the Gunners would keep pushing until they win the title.

Arsenal chased Manchester City all the way to the finishing line but for the second straight season had to make do with the runners-up spot despite a 2-1 home win over Everton on Sunday.

“They (Arsenal’s players) have done an incredible job and they have pushed every limit, every margin that we could find to try to win this Premier League,” the Spaniard told reporters.

“Unfortunately it was a bit short and we could not deliver the big prize that we wanted because you can feel it that they are desperate for it.”

Speaking to the crowd after



Mikel Arteta

the Everton game at The Emirates, Arteta vowed that they would keep pushing and win the title.

“We are on the right trajectory now so we need really to put the teeth and bite into it because we really want more.”

Arteta said his team should also be proud because they were battling with City, who he de-

scribed as “the best team in the history of the Premier League by far”.

To come out on top next season Arteta said his key players would need to be available in all the crucial moments and that performance levels would have to ratchet even higher.

This year’s push had been one of extremely fine margins too.



Alexander Zverev celebrates after defeating Nicolas Jarry in the Italian Open final on Sunday

Zverev wins Italian Open for sixth Masters title

Rome, Italy - Alexander Zverev warmed up for the French Open by winning his sixth Masters title when he beat first-time finalist Nicolas Jarry 6-4 7-5 in the Italian Open showpiece on Sunday.

It was a second title in Rome for Zverev, having won his first in 2017 when he was 20, and his first trophy since he broke his ankle in the French Open semi-finals in 2022.

The 27-year-old will also climb to fourth in the rankings as he slowly returns to his best ahead of Roland Garros.

“Obviously winning my first ever (Masters title) here in Rome and winning my first after my injury also in Rome, so Rome is a very special place for me. It is a very, very special week,” third seed Zverev said.

Chilean Jarry, who had beaten Stefanos Tsitsipas and

Tommy Paul to reach the final, could not break Zverev after the German won 95% of his first-serve points.

The aggressive number 21 seed Jarry had relied on his big serve to go all the way to the final but Zverev was up to the task, absorbing the pressure and committing few unforced errors.

However, Jarry managed to save three match points before Zverev finally clinched victory in Rome, where he dropped only one set in the tournament.

“He is playing huge and you can see by the players he has beaten here this week, (he is) playing incredible tennis,” Zverev said of Jarry.

“I told him if he continues to play like that he will have many chances at this level. Today I am extremely happy to be the winner.”



Zamalek players celebrate after winning the African Confederation Cup on Sunday

REIGN OF ZAMALEK

Egyptian giants win African Confederation Cup on away goals

Cairo, Egypt - Zamalek claimed the African Confederation Cup on away goals after a 1-0 win over Renaissance Berkane in the second leg thanks to Ahmed Hamdy's first-half strike on Sunday.

The final ended 2-2 on aggregate following the return in Cairo with the Egyptian giants taking the trophy after scoring an away goal in last Sunday's 2-1 first leg defeat in Morocco.

Hamdy swept the ball home after 23 minutes when Berkane failed to clear a corner but there

The final ended 2-2 on aggregate following the return in Cairo with Egyptian giants Zamalek taking the trophy after scoring an away goal in last Sunday's 2-1 first leg defeat in Morocco.

were chances for both clubs to add more goals.

It was a historic triumph for Zamalek boss Jose Gomes, who became the first Portuguese

placing Nigeria-born fellow winger Samson Akinyoola.

Berkane were unchanged with Burkina Faso center-back Is-soufou Dayo captaining the team and Senegalese Paul Bassene leading the attack.

A sell-out crowd in the 75,000-capacity Cairo International Stadium cheered, chanted and waved large flags as Zamalek attacked relentlessly in the early stages.

The Moroccan side finished down to 10 men when defender

Hamza El Moussaoui was sent off in added time.

Sunday's victory ensured Zamalek's second success in the Confederation Cup. They beat Berkane on penalties after drawing the 2019 final 1-1 on aggregate. Egypt can complete a double in the African club competitions on Saturday when Zamalek's arch domestic rivals Al Ahly host Esperance of Tunisia in the Champions League final second leg. The first leg in Tunis on Saturday ended goalless.

Sorloth scores four goals as Villarreal hold Real in eight-goal thriller

Villarreal, Spain - Villarreal forward Alexander Sorloth struck four times in 17 minutes to help his side fight back and snatch a 4-4 home draw against champions Real Madrid on Sunday as the Norway international became LaLiga's top scorer.

Carlo Ancelotti's side, crowned champions a fortnight ago, could have reached 99 points for the season, one shy of their 2011-12 record but will now fall short, as they sit on 94 ahead of their final league game against Real Betis.

“The target was not the points because we don't need them, the target was to play a good game with rhythm, intensity, avoiding injuries. Everything went perfectly,” Ancelotti, whose side face Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League final on June 1, told a news conference.

“I'm not worried ahead of the Champions League final, this was an open game. Maybe we conceded more goals than necessary but that's okay, it doesn't change anything about what the final has to be. In attack we played well.”

Real opened the scoring in the 14th minute when Turkish



Villarreal's Alexander Sorloth celebrates after scoring against Real Madrid on Sunday

youngster Arda Guler slotted home a low strike off a Brahim Diaz pass before Joselu doubled the lead with a close-range header on the half-hour mark.

Sorloth pulled one back for Villarreal with a towering header in the 39th minute, but Lucas Vazquez restored Real's two-goal

advantage only a minute later before Guler made it 4-1 in the final seconds of the first half.

But the hosts rallied after the break, with Sorloth scoring three goals in eight minutes, between the 48th and 56th, as he reached 23 league goals this season.

Despite salvaging a point, Vil-

larreal will miss out on European football as they sit eighth on 52 points, four adrift of Betis in the Europa Conference League spot.

Meanwhile, Barcelona beat Rayo Vallecano 3-0 in their final home game of the season on Sunday to secure second place thanks to an early goal from Robert Lewandowski and a quick-fire double from Pedri. The result moved Barcelona to 82 points, four points above Girona, who won 3-1 away at Valencia.

Barcelona took the lead in the third minute when Lamine Yamal cut in from the right wing and chipped the ball to Lewandowski, who expertly controlled the pass with his chest and volleyed home. Barcelona doubled their lead with some magical footwork from Joao Felix who saw his shot saved but Pedri managed to score from the rebound to give the home side a two-goal cushion.

Barely three minutes later, Pedri spotted a gap in Rayo's high defensive line and he was put through on goal with a long ball from centre back Ronald Araujo, allowing the 21-year-old to fire home.

Schauffele bags first major title in dramatic PGA finish

Louisville, US - American Xander Schauffele birdied the final hole to win the PGA Championship by one shot over LIV Golf's Bryson DeChambeau at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, Kentucky, on Sunday to claim a long-awaited first major title.

Schauffele, playing his 28th career major, put the finishing touches on a wire-to-wire victory at Valhalla with a six-under-par 65 that left him at 21 under on the week. The win also moved Schauffele to a career-best second in the world rankings.

Needing a closing birdie for the win, Schauffele's tee shot at the 18th perched up on the edge of a fairway bunker and forced him to take a compromised stance inside the hazard for his second shot, which he left just in front of the green.

A stone-cold Schauffele then displayed nerves of steel as he chipped to six feet from where he slammed the door by draining the biggest birdie of his career for the lowest winning score to par at a major championship.

“I really didn't want to go into a playoff against Bryson,” Olympic champion Schauffele



Xander Schauffele celebrates after winning the PGA Championship

said. “I'm assuming we probably would have played 18. It would have been a lot of work. I just told myself, this is my opportunity, and just capture it.”

DeChambeau carded a bogey-free seven-under-par 64 to finish two shots ahead of Viktor Hovland (66), whose spirited effort to become the first Norwegian to win a major came undone at the final hole.

DeChambeau and Hovland were playing in the third-to-last pairing and set up pressure-packed 10-foot birdie putts on the final hole. DeChambeau drained his but Hovland's effort curled away and he went on to make bogey and finish third.



Lewis Hamilton

We are in no man's land, says Hamilton

Imola, Italy - Mercedes are in 'no-man's land', seven times world champion Lewis Hamilton said after finishing Sunday's Emilia Romagna Grand Prix sixth

There wasn't much more for us to get today. It is where we are and we have to do the best we can and that is the best we could do today.

LEWIS HAMILTON

and 35 seconds behind Red Bull's race winner Max Verstappen.

Teammate George Russell came seventh and Mercedes have fallen further behind in the Formula One constructors' standings - fourth overall on 79 points while third-placed McLaren, who also use Mercedes engines, have 154.

“We are in no-man's land. There wasn't much more for us to get today,” said Hamilton, the

sport's most successful driver of all time who is moving to Ferrari at the end of the season and was racing in Italy for the first time since that was announced.

“It is where we are and we have to do the best we can and that is the best we could do today.”

Russell also referred to 'no-man's land' but said the once-dominant team were still “super-motivated”.

“We have got to just keep pushing. The car was capable of P6 and P7 and that is where we finished.”

Team boss Toto Wolff felt Mercedes had taken a small step forward. “Our closest competitors have also done so recently, but we have closed the gap to the front a little. We still have a lot of work to do and, of course, we are all frustrated finishing P6 and P7,” said the Austrian.



POWERPLAY!

Kolkata to meet Hyderabad in the first qualifier

Ahmedabad, India - Two of the quickest-scoring teams in this IPL could produce another run-fest in the first qualifier in Ahmedabad, especially if it serves up a bouncy, red-soil track. Phil Salt has left the IPL but Kolkata Knight Riders still have enough power in the form of Sunil Narine, Andre Russell and Rinku Singh.

Travis Head, Abhishek Sharma and Heinrich Klaasen can certainly match up to that power or even overpower KKR.

Sunrisers Hyderabad have also figured out an aggressive No.3 option in Rahul Tripathi to strengthen their top order.

But can they dial down their aggression and still find a way, if Ahmedabad throws up a slow, black-soil turner? In March, which seems ages ago, SRH managed only 162 for 8 on a black-soil surface that suited Gujarat Titans' spinners.

Regardless of the colour and nature of the surface, Narine and Varun Chakravarthy have the pedigree to take wickets or restrict the opposition.

But KKR will have to rock up cold on Tuesday, having endured washouts in their last two league matches, including one in Ahmedabad. Especially, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Salt's like-for-like replacement, who has not featured in IPL 2024 and last played cricket in mid-March.

It was back on May 11 that KKR had confirmed their place in the playoffs after beating Mumbai Indians in a truncated game at home. They haven't been in action since and it might not be easy to hit the ground running after a ten-day break, table-toppers or otherwise.

Head didn't even play the last time these two sides met, with SRH picking Marco Jansen ahead of him. Harshit Rana stopped Klaasen and SRH in the last over, earning a four-run victory for KKR at Eden Gardens. In the early half



Kolkata Knight Riders captain Shreyas Iyer (R) with Sunrisers Hyderabad skipper Pat Cummins

of the season, chasing was a concern for KKR, but they've remedied that heading into the playoffs.

Nitish Rana is fit again and could stay in the team as an Im-

pect Player option, in place of one of the specialist bowlers, having scored 33 off 23 balls against MI in Kolkata. KKR, though, might have to choose between left-arm fingerspinner Anukul Roy and

right-arm seamer Vaibhav Arora.

SRH have been fairly consistent with their Impact Player strategy with one of the batters slotting in for T Natarajan. Vijayakanth Vijayakanth, the young

TODAYS MATCH

QUALIFIER 1

5 PM



KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS
VS
SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

legspinner from Jaffna, has done fairly well in his two IPL outings and could keep his place unless SRH want to bring back Aiden Markram for his steady batting and offspin against a potentially left-hander heavy KKR middle order. Jaydav Unadkat for his change-ups is another option.

Rinku, Natarajan in spotlight

After torching IPL 2023 with his finishing skills, Rinku Singh hasn't had many opportunities to do that in IPL 2024. He also could not find a place in India's main squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup. He has faced only 113 balls in 11 innings this season at a healthy strike rate of 148.67. That might pale in comparison to some of the heavy hitters that will be on display on Tuesday, but count Rinku out at your own peril.

T Natarajan was taken to the cleaners by Ayush Badoni, but he bounced back against Punjab Kings, coming away with 2 for 33 in his four overs, in a 215 vs 214 game.

His bowling isn't just about the yorker anymore - he has also developed a deceptive slower bouncer to handcuff batters in the middle and death overs. Natarajan, though, will have to be wary of Russell, who has taken him for 43 off 26 balls for just one wicket at a strike rate of 165.38 in the IPL.

ESPNCricinfo



Rajasthan will take on Bengaluru on Wednesday

Rajasthan consigned to eliminator after washout in Guwahati

Guwahati, India - Rain in Guwahati denied hosts Rajasthan Royals a shot at a top-two finish in the final league fixture of IPL 2024. The game was abandoned, without a ball being bowled, at around 10.50pm local time, meaning RR ended the league phase with four losses in a row, followed by this washout, to finish third with 17 points.

Sunrisers Hyderabad also had 17 points, having successfully chased down 215 against a severely depleted Punjab Kings side earlier in the day, but they stayed second, thanks to a superior net rate. Pat Cummins' SRH will now face table-toppers Kolkata Knight Riders in the first qualifier in Ahmedabad on May 21. As for Royals, they will run into a red-hot Royal Challengers Bengaluru side, which is on a six-match winning streak, in the Eliminator the next day at the same venue.

KKR's players might have to rock up cold in the playoffs, with their last two league games having been abandoned without a ball being bowled. Especially Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Phil Salt's potential replacement, who is yet to

play his first game this IPL. His last outing with the bat was for Afghanistan in mid-March.

Royals have similar concerns around their overseas players. Their finisher Shimron Hetmyer was originally deemed fit for Monday's fixture, but eventually didn't make it to the XI or the Impact subs bench, with RR captain Sanju Samson suggesting that they had to make some last-minute changes to their team. Hetmyer hasn't played since failing to finish a tense chase against SRH along with Rovman Powell on May 2. Tom Kohler-Cadmore, who is somewhat of a like-for-like replacement for Jos Buttler, had a fairly rough initiation into the IPL, managing 18 off 23 balls against Punjab Kings in much drier conditions in Guwahati on May 15.

The Guwahati surface was under covers for the most of Monday evening before the rain briefly relented to allow the toss for a seven-over shootout, which was scheduled to restart at 10.45pm local time. However, soon after KKR won the toss and chose to bowl, the rain returned to force a damp end to the league phase.

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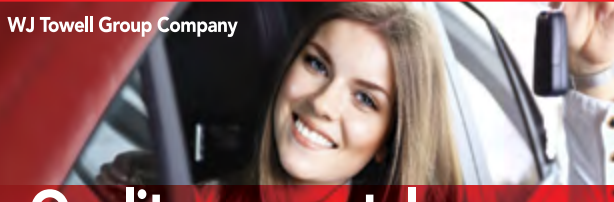
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Lifestyle changes and psychological intervention is the first step of trying to reduce the impact of PCOS related symptoms

DR BEENA KARUNAKARAN

Doctors in Oman say women's reproductive health is often neglected and very rarely talked about, thereby often giving rise to certain disorders that need long-term management.

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), a common yet often undetected or ignored disorder has been found to be an immense psychological burden on those who have been diagnosed with it.

Research studies conducted on women in Oman in past years show that prevalence of body image issues depression, anxiety and stress are more among women with PCOS rather than the women without it. It is an endocrinal disorder which makes eggs prone to become cysts and disrupts a woman's hormones causing hair fall, excessive facial hair growth, weight gain, acne, and infertility.

Dr Beena Karunakaran, a successful gynecologist at Badr Al Samaa Hospital and a long-time resident of Oman shared some insights about PCOS saying, "Not all PCOS identified on ultrasound is actually PCOS, unless you have two of the three symptoms. The clinical symptoms include irregular cycles, hyperandrogenism (happens when you have an excess amount of androgens) while the ultrasound sonography readings indicate the presence of 12 or more follicles in the ovary and a diameter greater than 2-9 mm or abnormal biochemical values like high testosterone hormone level."

While it is considered a chronic condition, she states that it is necessary to maintain weight, follow a good diet, and induce bleeding once in two months in case of delayed men-



CERVICAL CANCER AND PCOS

Endocrinal encounters

strual cycles. Lifestyle changes and psychological intervention is the first step of trying to reduce the impact of PCOS related symptoms, she said.

A report published in Oman Medical Journal in 2022 indicates that cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer in Oman and knowledge regarding the same is minimal. A pap smear test is required to diagnose cervical cancer and it is free for nationals, funded by the

Ministry of Health (MoH) in Oman who also play a crucial role in providing high quality healthcare.

It is necessary to be aware and educated about the causes, risks, solutions and myths associated with this cancer in order to ensure that it is prevented at all costs.

HPV (Human Papillomavirus) 16 and 18 is an infection that is one of the main causes of cervical cancer. However, cervical cancer is often

misunderstood. It defies age boundaries, and sexual activity affecting women across all age groups.

While HPV transmission through sexual activity is a significant risk factor, it's not the only cause. Dr Veronica Saldanha, gynecologist at Hatat Polyclinic with 28 years of experience, says, "After every childbirth, women should have a pap smear test on the 40th day and women between the ages of 25-65 should ei-



Maintaining a healthy diet, exercising for 30 minutes daily, practising good hygiene and safe sex makes a massive difference

DR VERONICA SALDANHA

ther get a pap test every three years or an HPV test every five years."

She also addresses myths associated with this cancer, such as HPV is harmless, uncommon, and often hereditary, or an annual pap test is sufficient to prevent this. Dr Saldanha says that it is, in fact, very harmful and not hereditary. Pap testing is only a screening method, and in a few cases, HPV could clear out on its own.

Other factors, including smoking, weakened immune system, and genetic predispositions, contribute to its development. Lifestyle factors may further contribute to cervical cancer development, hence an approach to prevention and treatment is necessary.

Dr Saldanha adds that maintaining a healthy diet, exercising for 30 minutes daily, practicing good hygiene and safe sex makes a massive difference. Fortunately, there is also a vaccine available that helps the prevention of this life-threatening disease.

The symptoms of this cancer may often present itself in simple ways, perhaps in the form of abnormal vaginal bleeding, spotting and change in menstrual patterns, unusual discharge, pelvic pain and pain during intercourse.

As Oman moves toward achieving a healthier future for its women, education and awareness is essential for preventive healthcare. By dispelling myths, discovering causes, and advocating for measures such as vaccination and lifestyle adjustments, Oman's healthcare authorities can further pave the way for improved results in cervical cancer prevention and PCOS management.

(Contributed by: Sneha Lijoos)



VANDANA CHAWLA



NUTRITION & YOU

An obese or an overweight adult can go for a weight-loss programme. But is it the same for kids, too?

A weight loss programme is typically recommended for children over 7 years of age. The reason is that children are still in their growing phase and making any drastic changes in their diet can have a detrimental effect on their growth.

For children 1-6 years old who have no other health concerns, the goal of treatment is weight maintenance rather than weight loss. This allows the child to add inches, and not pounds, and is as difficult as losing weight for

an older person.

Strategies to prevent or treat childhood obesity:

New mothers should breastfeed as long as possible. Research has shown that babies who are breastfed lean out sooner and are less likely to become obese later in childhood. Babies naturally learn healthy lessons at the mother's breast, like self-regulation, a feeling that comfort does not equal food, or having the freedom to decide when he is full.

Cut back on processed and fast foods. It's not just the weight but the child's brain development and cognitive development, both of which get affected. Instead, prepare the same foods at home with healthy ingredients.

Eating out should be minimised and kept for certain occasions. Inculcate healthy eating habits, right from the beginning. Make breakfast compulsory and make sure kids eat with the family at least once a day.



Foods served should provide enough of each essential nutrient, carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals. Do not remove any nutrient, not even fat. Instead, include

healthy fats for the development of vital organs and smarter brains. This comes from vegetable oil, (olive oil, fish, avocados, nuts, and seeds.

Healthy carbs should be the major

source of energy. Healthy carb foods are also packed with fibre and/or protein. If your child is at risk of obesity or is one who loves to overeat, fill his tummy with high-fibre foods, like whole grains, multigrain, veggies and fruits.

Stock up your kitchen shelves and refrigerator with fresh fruits, veggies, lentils beans, dairy, eggs, nuts, and seeds. Keeping some homemade snacks handy is a way of offering healthy snacks in between meals.

Offer children's serving size. Do not insist that your little one eats every bit of food on her plate. Your job is to serve good, healthy food, and your child's job is to eat as much as his/her body needs. The 'clean plate' concept may lessen a child's trust in her hunger cues.

Encourage children to drink water when thirsty and do not offer aerated beverages, fruit drinks or juices when thirsty. Plain water, infused water, coconut water, fresh yoghurt drink or

lemon-mint mix with salt and herbs are some of the good choices.

Beware of children's cereals available in the market as they are loaded with sugar. Read labels carefully before you buy. Face the fast-food challenge by going for healthier choices. Teach the child to share if the serving is too big, insist on vegetables as a side dish and look beyond the kid's menu.

Lastly, reduce screen time and replace it with some activity which can help both, in children's physical and mental development.

To conclude, as a parent, be a role model, eat and preach a healthy lifestyle. Bringing drastic changes in your family's diet all at once can leave your child upset or confused. Start with small changes at first, and start teaching your children about the importance of healthy eating.

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

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THE 75 HARD CHALLENGE IS A TRANSFORMATIONAL FITNESS PROGRAMME THAT BRINGS ABOUT A TOTAL CHANGE IN MINDSET AND APPEARANCE FOR AN INDIVIDUAL OVER A PERIOD OF 75 DAYS. IT ALL BEGINS WITH A WILL TO CHANGE

PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION

HARD CHALLENGE

The 75 Hard Challenge was created in 2019 by entrepreneur Andy Frisella, a podcaster and CEO of the supplement company 1st Phorm. It is not a fitness challenge, but a transformative mental toughness programme.

Frisella created 75 Hard after interviewing James Lawrence, who's known as the Iron Cowboy for completing 50 Ironman races in 50 consecutive days across all 50 states. After Lawrence told Frisella that you must intentionally put yourself in places that are uncomfortable in order to develop mental fortitude, Frisella was inspired to create 75 Hard.

RULES OF THE 75 HARD PROGRAMME

The 75 Hard Challenge is designed to push you to improve in the areas of physical fitness, emotional resilience and mental insight - all within the context that you should press on when faced with indecision, pain or discomfort.

The programme's five critical tasks, or core values, are meant to be completed daily for 75 days. And each of the following areas have varying benefits and risks associated with them. For 75 consecutive days, 75 Hard participants must do the following every day:

Follow a diet

While it can be a diet of your choice, the diet must be a structured eating plan with the goal of physical improvement. No alcohol or meals outside your chosen diet are allowed. Complete two 45-minute workouts, one of which must be outdoors. Remember to take a progress picture, drink 1 gallon of water, and read 10 pages of a book.

No alterations to the programme are allowed. If you miss any of your daily goals, your progress resets to day one. "You will be tempted to try to change things a little to suit your 'special lifestyle'," writes Frisella. "But right there is the root of every problem in your life," he claims.

Potential health benefits

The 75 Hard programme claims to improve your confidence, self-esteem, perseverance, self-worth, self-belief, fortitude and grittiness.

By completing the programme successfully, you'll read at least 750 pages, find yourself in a dietary routine, remain well-hydrated and be able to see any physical

results through a catalog of daily progress photos.

Noah Quezada, a registered dietitian nutritionist based in Colorado, says, "One of the major benefits of this programme is that it promotes consistency. Consistency is key when it comes to seeing results from any type of health and fitness plan."

Mindset coach Carrie Veatch, who recently completed the programme, believes participating in 75 Hard can help people eliminate negativity from their lives while appreciating what their minds and bodies are truly capable of when they commit and follow through.

Personal trainer and kettlebell coach Sophie Banyard also completed 75 Hard, and found the programme tough but doable. "It taught me a lot about what you can actually fit into a day if you put your mind to it," she says. Banyard credits the challenge as the catalyst for her giving up alcohol entirely, which she regards as one of the best decisions she's ever made.

Drawbacks of 75 Hard

There are some potential drawbacks to the 75 Hard programme as well, according to experts. While Quezada likes the consistency of the program, he says he has concerns about its rigidity. "It's very restrictive in terms of diet and doesn't allow for any 'cheat meals.' This [rigidity] can make it difficult to stick to [in the] long term and may even lead to an unhealthy relationship with food," he says.

Because it's an all-or-nothing programme, 75 Hard doesn't allow for uncertainty. "It doesn't teach you any skills to help deal with slip-ups or teach you sustainable behaviours," says Saara Haapanen, a performance coach, motivation expert and certified personal trainer in Colorado. "It doesn't allow for giving yourself any grace."

75 Hard doesn't provide guidance around specific fitness or nutrition plans, either. While this flexibility allows individuals to eat and exercise in a way that makes sense for them - one person might be a vegan weightlifter while another prefers yoga and a low-carb meal plan - it can leave those without a lot of nutrition or fitness knowledge

75 SOFT CHALLENGE

The 75 Soft Challenge is the kinder, gentler alternative to the 75 Hard Challenge. Since the 75 Hard Challenge hands out a list of extreme lifestyle changes, the 75 Soft Challenge was born.

Like the hard version, the 75 Soft Challenge, too, has a series of rules and guidelines that must be followed for 75 days to complete the challenge. But the rules are designed to help you build healthy habits without extremes or restrictions. Hence, restrictions are not etched in stone and there's room for 'cheat moments' if not cheat days.

struggling to come up with an effective routine that helps them progress toward their goals, according to Jackie Kaminski, registered dietitian nutritionist and nutritionist.

Also, though the benefits of physical activity are well documented, 75 days with no chance to rest could put participants at risk for overtraining injuries, depending on what they choose for their workouts and what their current fitness level is. The programme's built-in emphasis on perfection might also negatively affect some people, according to Dr Haapanen.



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