

Mercury nears 50°C in Sunaynah

Muscat - Oman is experiencing a severe heatwave with temperatures approaching the 50°C mark. On Monday, Oman Meteorology recorded a significant high of 49.8°C in Sunaynah, Buraimi marking the highest temperature so far this summer.

In mid-June, temperatures soared above 49°C for three consecutive days in places like Hamra ad Duru in Dakhliyah, Fahud in Dhahirah and Liwa in North Batinah.

Large parts of Oman continue to witness temperatures in the high 40s. On Monday, Hamra ad Duru recorded a high of 49.3°C, Fahud experienced 48.7°C, followed by Ibri with 48.6°C, and Zamaim, Haima and Maqshin each recorded 48.1°C. The lowest temperature recorded on Tuesday was 22.7°C in Dalkhut.

PUBLIC REVENUES DECLINE 7%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's public revenues fell slightly by the end of May this year, totalling RO5.075bn - a 7% decrease from RO5.463bn during the same period in 2023. The dip is attributed mainly to reductions in both oil and non-oil revenues.

The monthly performance bulletin compiled by Ministry of Finance (MoF) reported a 2% decrease in net oil revenues, which amounted to RO2.74bn compared to RO2.81bn at the end of May 2023. Average oil price during this period was US\$82 per barrel, with an average daily production of 1.6mn barrels.

Net gas revenues saw a significant drop of 24%, falling to RO763mn from RO1.03bn in the same period in 2023. This decline is attributed to a change in the methodology for collecting gas revenues, MoF stated.

Total current revenues collected until the end of May this year decreased by RO82mn, amounting to RO1.562bn, com-



pared to RO1.644bn during the same period in 2023.

Public spending till May 2024 totalled approximately RO4.724bn, down RO158mn - or 3% - from RO4.882bn in the same period in 2023. Current expenditures of civil ministries amounted to RO3.34bn, a drop of RO25mn compared to RO3.365bn by May 2023.

Development expenditures by ministries and civil units amounted to RO430mn, representing 48% of the total development budget of RO900mn allocated for the year.

Total contributions and other expenditures increased 11% to RO754mn, up from RO678mn in the same period in 2023. Support for the social protection system, petroleum products and the transportation sector amounted to approximately RO233mn, RO137mn and RO30mn, respectively, till May this year.

Additionally, transfers allocated for debt repayment amounted to RO166mn during this period.

15

Beckhams recreate their wedding day photos in purple

State Audit Institution addressed 951 complaints in 2023

Our Correspondent
Muscat

State Audit Institution (SAI) handled 951 complaints and reports related to financial and administrative violations, tender process irregularities and abuse of authority, according to its 2023 Annual Report. An extensive review of 87% of these complaints and

reports has been completed.

The report was submitted by Sheikh Ghosn Hilal al Alawi, Chairman of SAI, to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Copies of the report have been forwarded to Council of Ministers, State Council and Majlis A'Shura in line with Article 66 of the Basic Law of the State, and Article 29 of the State's Audit In-

The 2023 Annual Report underscored the cooperation between SAI and state institutions, which bolstered the culture of accountability

stitution Law.

The annual report includes significant findings from its inspection of various units within the State's Administrative Apparatus, public authorities, establishments, and companies and their branches under its purview.

Highlights of the report include 187 inspection visits conducted by SAI, resulting in 185

oversight reports. These reports were presented to respective authorities, who cooperated by implementing corrective measures and recommendations. Instances of suspected criminal violations were referred to Public Prosecution for necessary action.

The report examined topics in government units, including the state's final account for 2023, tax

assessment and collection procedures, financial and administrative operations, and performance evaluation of directorates of public entities.

It underscored the cooperation between SAI and state institutions, which bolstered the culture of accountability in safeguarding public funds and preserving the nation's assets.

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Fifty engineers graduate from Emkan Programme



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Secretariat General of Tender Board celebrated the graduation of the inaugural batch of the Emkan programme on Tuesday. Fifty engineers from different government agencies enrolled for the first batch of the programme designed to develop personnel engaged in government projects and contracts.

The six-month programme aimed to enhance engineers' efficiency in managing and improving government projects and contracts, establish a highly effective professional work system, foster local value creation, and set clear technical evaluation standards for contract and project management divisions.

The graduation ceremony was held under the patronage of H E Said bin Hamood bin Said al

The six-month programme aimed to enhance engineers' efficiency in managing and improving government projects and contracts

Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

On the occasion, Badr bin Salem al Mamari, Secretary-General of Tender Board, said, "The programme has effectively achieved several goals, notably empowering engineers from diverse organisations to oversee government projects and contracts. I am confident that participating engineers will share their successful experiences with colleagues across sectors to ad-

vance the programme's objectives."

He announced the imminent launch of the programme's second phase this year, encompassing 120 engineers from 13 government agencies. This phase aims to integrate the programme with updated project management standards and procedures.

Abdullah al Hosni, Advisor at Secretariat General of Tender Board, said, "Emkan is a pivotal initiative aimed at advancing professional development of personnel involved in contract, project and tender management in government agencies. Its goal is to develop competitive national expertise that meets global standards."

He informed that the programme curriculum includes challenges affecting contracts and projects, such as project delays, change orders and implementation period extensions.

Omani, Russian children's libraries ink pact for joint events, sharing expertise



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Children's Public Library in Muscat and Russian State Children's Library have signed an agreement to collaborate on joint exhibitions, conferences and events, as well as exchange expertise and conducting children's research. Signed in Moscow on Tuesday, it marks the first international cooperation for the Children's Public Library in Qurum.

The agreement was signed by H H Dr Mona bint Fahad al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at Sultan Qaboos University and Chairperson of Board of Directors of Public Children's Library, and Maria Vedenyapina, Director of the

Russian State Children's Library.

The signing ceremony was attended by Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary-General of National Museum of Oman, H E Hamood Salim al Towaiya, Am-

ferences and events to raise awareness about the importance of reading for children, and includes the exchange of expertise among staff, collaboration on children's research, and training

in areas of mutual interest.

Set up in 1969 in Moscow, Russian State Children's Library is one of the largest children's libraries in Russia with a collection of approximately 560,000 books. It also offers a wide range of magazines and multimedia for children and young people.

Additionally, the library organises events and workshops to foster a love of reading and learning, supports teachers and parents with educational resources, and includes an information and research centre specialising in children's literature and development. It receives 45,000 visitors annually and aims to promote culture and education among young Russians.

The agreement, signed in Moscow on Tuesday, is part of Children's Public Library's efforts to enhance international cooperation and exploring collaboration in areas of mutual interest



TENDER NOTICE

The Internal Tender Committee of Port of Duqm Company SAOC, hereby announces the following Tender:

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of receiving Specifications	Date of Bid Submission	Suppliers	Tender Fee OMR (Include of VAT 5%)	Place of Submission
ITC/T/014/2024	Providing Travel Management Service	18 th July 2024	29 th July 2024	Only Specialized Companies	75/- Non-Refundable	Port of Duqm Company 3rd floor, Al Mushreeq Building, Azaila
PODC/SCM/002/2024	Leadership Assessment & Technical Gap Analysis	16 th July 2024	23 th July 2024	Only Specialized Companies	25/- Non-Refundable	Via Email
PODC/SCM/005/2024	Appointing Insurance Broker for Port of Duqm	16 th July 2024	24 th July 2024	Only Specialized Companies	25/- Non-Refundable	Via Email
PODC/SCM/006/2024	Hire of Small Boat (Call of Contract)	16 th July 2024	24 th July 2024	Only Specialized Companies	25/- Non-Refundable	Via Email

Taking into consideration the following:

All specialized companies that wish to participate in the tender must deposit the tender amount into the bank account of the Company (details of the bank account is set out hereunder) and send the payment receipt of the tender along with a copy of the Commercial Registration Certificate and the contact details of the authorized individual (business card) to the following e-mail address procurement@portofduqm.om

From 07:00 – 15:00 (Sunday – Thursday).

Payment Information:

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Account Number	0423047518510013
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Bank ID Code	BMUSOMRXXXX

Complete Tender documents should be submitted in sealed envelope with red wax with tender number and title and addressed to the "Chairman of Internal Tender Committee". The envelope should not make any reference to the bidder's details. All applicants are required to submit the Tender in the Tender box in the main office of Port of Duqm Company at or before 15:00 PM on the assigned date for submission of the Tender. Tenders submitted after the above-mentioned date and time shall not be considered.

* All participating SME's holding Riyada card are exempted from tender fees.
* The company is not obliged to accept the lowest offer or any other offer without any justifiable reasons.
* The company reserves the right to issue the order either in part or full for the quoted items without any justifiable reasons.
* The company reserves the right to reject the tenders not complying with the tender documentation requirement. For any clarification, please contact us through procurement@portofduqm.om

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RO1.5mn pact inked to set up Ibri Innovation and Science Centre

Our Correspondent
Muscat

OQ Refineries and Petroleum Industries, an OQ Group Company, and Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), signed an agreement with Dhahirah Governor's Office on Tuesday to design, establish and manage the Ibri Innovation and Science Centre.

The strategic partnership will contribute to development of Dhahirah through sustainable projects.

The RO1.5mn centre reflects commitment of the two compa-

nies to social responsibility, community service and supporting local collaboration. It is poised to create new growth opportunities and partnerships through the planning and execution of social projects, and supporting the social and economic development goals of the sultanate, a press release stated.

PDO will oversee Ibri Innovation and Science Centre's construction and management until completion. Once operational, the centre will seamlessly transition to Dhahirah Governor's Office for day-to-day management.



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Al Rifaa



‘Summer al Wusta 2024’ to start from July 17

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Al Wusta announced on Tuesday that this year the ‘Summer al Wusta’ festival will be held from July 17 to August 5.

Highlighting the importance of showcasing the governorate’s tourism attractions at a press conference, Sheikh Ahmed bin Muslim Jaddad al Kathiri, Governor of Al Wusta, said the festival aims to cater to the increasing

number of visitors arriving via the land route from Khareef Dhofar.

Summer al Wusta 2024 will be hosted at Haima Entertainment Station and will feature various themed corners, including government institutions, children’s activities, games and entertainment, and theatre. Visitors can also explore the Fine Arts Exhibition Corner, the Badia Tent, a vibrant food court, and experience the Arabian Oryx Reserve.

MoCIIP warns against online promotion of infant formula

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) cautioned all online stores about advertising and marketing infant formula and foods intended for children aged three years and under on Tuesday.

In a statement, the ministry noted that several online businesses and social media marketers have been promoting these products, violating Omani standards that regulate the marketing of infant and young children’s products.

MoCIIP informed that advertising these products can only be authorised by the Ministry of Health, failing which such activi-



(Image for illustrative purpose)

ties are in breach of regulations governing electronic commerce, as outlined in Ministerial Decision No 619/2022. It prohibits promotion or sale of any product or service requiring prior approval

from relevant authorities. MoCIIP emphasised the importance of compliance with the law and announced its intention to pursue legal action against violators.

The decision defines advertis-

Promotion and marketing activities of infant formula and foods can only be authorised by Ministry of Health

ing and promotion activities as ‘marketing and promoting any good or service by displaying or publishing in writing, drawing, image, symbol, sound or by any other means on websites or social media’. The regulation specifies penalties for violators, including warnings, administrative fines not exceeding RO1,000, suspension of licence for up to one year, and complete licence revocation.

EA launches air quality index platform for public use

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Environment Authority (EA) has activated an air quality index platform called ‘Naqi’, offering updated and precise information on air quality across various regions of the sultanate.

In a statement, EA said the innovative platform - now open for public use - aims to enhance environmental awareness and empower individuals to safeguard their health and that of their families.

The authority encouraged netizens to explore the Naqi platform at <https://www.naqi.ea.gov.om/> and use the available data to make informed lifestyle choices.

New initiative launched to support healthcare of elderly in Dhahirah

Our Correspondent
Ibri

Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has introduced an initiative named ‘Waqar’ in Ibri, Dhahirah, in collaboration with Ministry of Health, in an effort to raise awareness on the significance of respecting and assisting the elderly

The initiative involves connecting all 18 health centres across Dhahirah to coordinate programmes of various social development departments. Its goal is to deliver comprehensive services to the elderly residing in villages of the governorate.

Badriya bint Humaid al

Mahramiya, in charge of elderly care and community health at MoSD, highlighted the rehabilitation of the elderly as a critical challenge for modern societies.

She also underscored the importance of the elderly as integral to the social fabric, particularly as life expectancy has notably risen in developing nations.

She reiterated Oman’s substantial efforts in caring for the elderly, focused on enhancing their quality of life within familial and community settings, citing Oman Vision 2040 which prioritises elderly care through national competency development aligned with local and global trends and strategies.

Dr Ali al Hadrami, supervisor of psychological guidance at MoSD, informed that the initiative aims to enhance the quality of life of the elderly by fostering collaborations between health and social institutions to deliver essential services.

“Its objective is to promote social awareness about respecting and supporting the elderly, educating the public on their issues, and creating an environment that honours their contributions.”

Waqar reflects Oman’s commitment to elevating the welfare of its elderly population and aligns with global standards for comprehensive elderly care programmes.



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THE COMPANY REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Musandam Power Company SAOG (the “Company”), it’s a pleasure to present the Company’s Report for the three months ended on 31 March 2024.

Operational Results

The plant delivered 63.5 GWH to the Musandam grid compared to 64.5 GWH delivered by the end of the same period of the previous year, demand is lower by about 1.6%. The plant achieved 99.99% reliability during the period.

Regarding the blackout incidents on 27th August 2023, short-term remedial measures have already been implemented and long-term recommendations to avoid future recurrence of the same are in progress.

There were no Lost Time Incidents (LTI) during the period, resulting in 893 days of free Lost Time Incidents since the last incident, demonstrating our continued focus on Health, Safety, Environment, and Quality Management.

Financial Results



	Revenue	Direct Cost	Profit/(Loss) before Interest & Tax	Finance Cost	Profit/(Loss) for the period
31 March 2024 RO '000 Unaudited	2,580	(2,408)	(164)	(732)	(761)
31 March 2023 RO '000 Unaudited	2,435	(2,381)	(179)	(792)	(823)

For the quarter ending 31st March 2024, there was an increase in revenue on account of Capacity Charge compared to the same period of last year because of the increase in tariff resulting from price indexation.

The company’s loss before interest and tax was reduced by 9% in comparison to March 2023, attributable in part to additional consultancy costs incurred in the period ending March 2023.

Overall, the net loss for the period ending March 2024 decreased by 8% as compared to March 2023. This is primarily driven by an 8% reduction in finance costs, in addition to the reasons mentioned earlier. This decline in finance costs was mainly due to decreased interest costs on working capital facility withdrawal and a reduction in the Senior Facility Interest cost as per the Facility agreement.

The share price was Baizas 288 at the end of March 2024 (Baizas 318 at the end of March 2023).

Corporate Social Responsibility

Economic development is no longer possible without environmental and social progress. We at Musandam Power believe that we have a lead role to play in helping to build more inclusive development models and enabling the emergence of new drivers of sustainable growth in the region of the Musandam area.

MPC will contribute RO 4,000 to the Oman Charity Organization (OCO) as per the directives from the Capital Market Authority regarding obligating joint-stock companies to deduct 20% from its CSR budget to OCO.

In the forthcoming months, MPC company is committed to actively engaging in community service initiatives within the Musandam governorate. Through CSR endeavors, MPC is dedicated to making a meaningful impact by addressing pertinent societal needs and promoting sustainable development in the region.

Outlook

In 2024, the company is optimistic about the challenges related to natural gas availability, a significant contrast from the issues faced up until 2022. Collaborative efforts with the government, which have proven effective, contributed to a more stable situation. Significantly, in November 2022, MEM through OQ arranged Dolphin Gas to counteract the gas shortage from MGP. This strategic initiative not only addressed the immediate challenge but also resulted in a notable reduction in diesel dependency. The company expects the plant to predominantly operate on gas fuel, despite occasional reliance on diesel prompted by inconsistent gas supply. The company maintains a high level of confidence in the plant’s reliability.

All reasonable and prudent measures will be taken by the Company to ensure high standards of health, safety, environmental compliance reliability, and availability are maintained over 2024.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend our deep appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Al Said and His Government for their continued support and encouragement to the private sector by creating an environment that allows us to participate effectively in the growth of the Sultanate’s economy and to dedicate our achievements to the building of a strong nation.

Statement of financial position as of 31 March 2024

	31 March 2024 RO '000	Audited 31 December 2023 RO '000
ASSETS		
Non-current assets:		
Property, plant and equipment	65,607	66,102
Current assets:		
Inventories	3,085	3,204
Trade and other receivables	1,130	1,390
Cash and bank balances	1,222	508
Total current assets	5,437	5,012
Total assets	71,044	71,114
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity:		
Share capital	7,039	7,039
Legal reserve	1,709	1,709
Retained earnings	1,209	2,941
Total equity	9,957	11,689
Non-current liabilities:		
Senior facility loan	49,247	49,232
Provision for asset retirement obligation	194	192
Lease liability	99	97
Deferred tax liability	3,872	4,007
Employees’ end of service benefits	10	10
Total non-current liabilities	53,422	53,538
Current liabilities:		
Senior facility loan	3,458	3,458
Lease liability	3	3
Trade and other payables	2,204	926
Short term loan facility	2,000	1,500
Total current liabilities	7,665	5,887
Total liabilities	61,087	59,425
Total equity and liabilities	71,044	71,114
Net assets per share	0.141	0.166

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the three months period ended 31 March 2024

	31 March 2024 RO '000	31 March 2023 RO '000
Revenue	2,559	2,435
Operating costs	(2,498)	(2,381)
Gross profit	61	54
General and administrative expenses	(223)	(233)
Finance costs	(732)	(792)
Loss before tax	(896)	(971)
Tax expense	135	148
Loss and total comprehensive income for the period	(761)	(823)
Basic and diluted loss per share for the period	(0.011)	(0.012)

International forum on sustainable development kicks off in New York

UN network coordinator urges ‘migration governance’ for all

New York, US - The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) kicked off on Monday in New York.

The two-week UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) is the central United Nations platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level.

The two-week HLPF is the central United Nations platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level. It is the apex of the architecture for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda established by the 2030 Agenda and General Assembly resolu-

tion 70/299.

Speaking at the opening session of the forum, UN deputy secretary-general Amina Mohammed said, “I believe this is also a moment of great opportunity to turn things around. Last year’s SDG Summit generated new momentum and a commitment to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.”

She also called for transformative action and bold policies to ensure a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future.

“Poverty remains the defining challenge of our time. Food insecurity has reached alarmingly high levels. Humanitarian crises and displacement are growing, fuelled by rising levels of conflict. Women and girls continue to face discrimination and disadvantage. The impacts of climate change are intensifying, and action and financing for mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage are not keeping pace,” the deputy secretary-general warned.

Also addressing the forum, President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Paula Narváez highlighted the chal-



lenges faced by developing countries, particularly conflict-affected areas, stressing the need for peace and stability.

She emphasised that the agenda includes local and regional actions, insights from regional forums, key intergovernmental discussions and 37 countries presenting their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). The forum’s general debate will bridge last year’s SDG Summit to this September’s Summit of the Future.

“It will be a space to present transformative actions and initiatives related to monitoring the Summit on SDGs in 2023, while also sharing priorities and expectations [for the upcoming summit],” Narváez added.

She also stressed the importance of inclusive participation, particularly of youth and marginalised groups, and the cross-cutting nature of gender perspective for achieving sustainable development.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM’s) director general - in her capacity as Coordinator of the UN Network on Migration - called for stronger recognition of the crucial role migration plays in benefiting all communities.

“The world is experiencing an unprecedented set of complex and converging challenges - conflict, climate change, demographic change and economic downturn, to name just a few,” said Amy Pope, IOM director general, addressing Member States as Coordinator of the UN Network on Migration, on the opening day of the political forum.

“It is important to recognise that migration - and migrants - are at the centre of these challenges, and that they provide a key to resilient communities, stronger economies and durable solutions.”

The 2024 High-Level Political Forum will draw from the experience of the 37 countries conducting VNRs. It will also hear from other countries and participants about experiences, best practices and lessons learned in implementing the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

Agencies



Belgium's net debt exceeds €500bn by end of June

Brussels, Belgium - The net debt of the Belgian government at the end of June 2024 amounted to €501.394bn.

The Belgian Debt Agency stated in a report that, in net terms (after deducting placements and securities held in the portfolio), the federal government’s debt increased by €4.02bn compared to last May. The net balance to be financed amounted to €4.012bn.

It is noteworthy that the Belgian government’s debt exceeded the €500bn threshold for the first time in March, before dropping below it again in April.

The agency clarified that, in gross terms, Belgian debt remains at €521.609bn, which represents a decrease of €11.50bn since last May.

Oil prices down following ceasefire talks, uncertainty over Fed interest rate cut

Ankara, Türkiye - Oil prices decreased on Tuesday with ongoing diplomatic efforts to achieve a ceasefire agreement in Gaza and uncertainty over the timing of the US Federal Reserve’s (Fed) interest rate cut, while further price decline was limited amid worries over the potential impact of Hurricane Beryl on oil production in the Gulf of Mexico.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at US\$85.57 per barrel at 10.17am, a decrease of 0.20% from the closing price of US\$85.75 per barrel in the previous trading session.

The American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at US\$82.12 per barrel at the same time, a 0.25% fall from the previous session that closed at US\$82.33 per barrel.

Ceasefire talks in the Middle East, which is home to a vast majority of global oil reserves, relieve some supply concerns among market players and put downward pressure on prices.

The US State Department announced on Monday that Bar-



Potential impact of Hurricane Beryl on oil production in Gulf of Mexico limits further price declines

bara Leaf, the US assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, is visiting the Middle East on July 8-14 to discuss a ceasefire deal in Gaza.

“The Assistant Secretary will meet with government officials on continued diplomatic efforts to achieve a cease-fire agreement, secure the release of all hostages, and ensure humanitarian assistance is distributed throughout Gaza,” according to the State Department.

Meanwhile, Ronen Bar, the head of Israel’s Shin Bet internal security services, and CIA Director William Burns arrived in Egypt on Monday for talks on a Gaza ceasefire and prisoner swap deal between Israel and the

Palestinian group Hamas.

Also, ongoing uncertainties over the timing of the Fed interest rate cut continue to influence prices by raising demand concerns. Analysts noted that although macroeconomic data continue to indicate a slowdown in the US economy, Fed officials still maintain their cautious stance on rate cuts.

The probability of the Fed’s first rate cut in September is 81% and 78% for November. The possibility of the bank cutting interest rates for the second time in December is 98%.

The upward trend in the US dollar against other currencies also dulled oil demand and supported price declines. A strong dollar is expected to reduce demand by making oil more expensive for foreign currency users. The US dollar index rose by 0.02% to 105.02 at 10.38am.

However, the potential impact of Hurricane Beryl on oil production in the Gulf of Mexico limited further price declines.

Anadolu News



Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly (right/front)

Egypt’s Madbouly seeks 4.2% economic growth in three years

Cairo, Egypt - Egypt’s Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly outlined on Monday his new Cabinet’s programme for the coming three years during a special session at the country’s House of Representatives.

Madbouly said the new government will be tasked with handling the country’s pressing challenges, including those related to economic, and security pillars. The Prime Minister said the programme is tailored to address three main challenges: Completing the infrastructure and services projects nationwide, mitigating the repercussions of

the global economic conditions, and addressing the challenges resulting from regional conflicts.

According to the Ahram Online, Madbouly vowed to end the power outage problem within six months, reduce rising prices and inflation, and control markets.

The 2024-27 programme focuses on four key pillars and they are - protecting national security and bolstering foreign policy; building the Egyptian person and enhancing his well-being; building a competitive economy that attracts investments; and achieving political stability and national cohesion.

Sri Lankan embassy holds roadshow in Muscat to promote trade, tourism

Muscat - The Embassy of Sri Lanka together with Sri Lanka Business Council Initiative (SLBCI) in the Sultanate of Oman hosted the Sri Lankan Roadshow - 2024 for the first time on a magnificent scale, at the Oasis Mall, Muscat, on July 5.

Held under the theme of ‘Serendib the Golden Island’, the event was arranged with the aim of showcasing Sri Lanka as a premier travel destination to attract tourists during the summer vacation in Oman as well as to portray Sri Lankan vibrant culture and trade opportunities.

With the active participation of Sri Lankan expatriates in Oman, the event created a lasting impression of the island na-

tion among the Omanis and expatriates alike, fostering cultural exchange and strengthening bilateral economic ties.

The event commenced with H E Sabarullah Khan, the Sri Lankan Ambassador, welcoming the chief guest with a procession of Sri Lankan children representing the multiethnic groups of the island nation.

An introductory video was played showcasing Sri Lankan culture, trade and tourism followed by the opening remarks by the Counsellor/Head of Chancery Anodya Chirasrie.

The Inauguration ceremony was concluded with a video-message from Chalaka Gajabahu, chairman of the Sri Lanka



Tourism Promotion Bureau.

In a walking interview, the Sri Lankan ambassador explained the importance of organising

such an event in a grand scale after ceasing of COVID-19 restrictions.

“Since the country has opened



up, it will be an added advantage to promote Sri Lankan trade and tourism abroad,” he said.

H E Khan is of the opinion that

this event offered a good opportunity to showcase what Sri Lanka has to offer to the Omani and Expatriate communities.

On the trade relations between Oman and Sri Lanka, the ambassador mentioned the current trade balance is in favour of Oman and Sri Lanka can balance it by increasing exports to Oman. In this regard, he added that the Sri Lanka Business Council Initiative had been established with the aim of creating platforms to strengthen economic relationship between the two countries.

The event witnessed the presence of officials from the Foreign and Heritage & Tourism ministries of Oman along with the members of the diplomatic corps

and the sponsors.

There was a raffle draw to end the roadshow. The grand prize - all-inclusive vacation of six nights/seven days in Sri Lanka for two persons offered by the Green Holiday - was won by Yousuf al Busaidi, while other prizes were won by Vasanthakumar K L, Wessam Moustafa, Arif and Lulu al Sarji.

Over 500 Sri Lankan expatriates and more than 500 Omanis and other nationals witnessed the event at the Oasis Mall in Al Khuwair, a release stated.

The Sri Lanka Embassy conveyed gratitude to the venue partner - Oasis Mall in Al-Khuwair, and other sponsors, and diligent volunteers.

Saudi Arabia records highest 'Venture Capital' funding in H1

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia has maintained its first rank across MENA in terms of the amount of Venture Capital (VC) funding in the first half of 2024, which witnessed a total VC deployment of SAR1.5bn (US\$412mn approx).

This was revealed by the Saudi Venture Capital Company (SVC) in a press release issued on Tuesday on the '2024-H1 Saudi Arabia Venture Capital Report'.

According to the report, published by the venture data platform MAGNiTT and sponsored by SVC, Saudi Arabia captured the highest share of total VC funding in the MENA region in the first half of 2024, which accounted for 54% of the total capital deployed in the region, up from 38% in the first half of 2023.

E-commerce/retail was the highest sector in the kingdom in terms of VC funding, accounting for 52% of total funding, amounting to SAR806mn (US\$215mn approx).

FinTech continued to lead the kingdom's total number of deals, capturing 14% of deals in the first half of 2024.

"We are proud that SVC's strategy contributed to the development of the kingdom's Venture Capital ecosystem,"



E-commerce/retail was the highest sector in the kingdom in terms of VC funding, accounting for 52% of total funding, amounting to SAR806mn

said SVC CEO and Board Member Dr Nabeel Koshak.

Through unwavering efforts, he said, the kingdom maintained its leading position in the region, which comes as a result of the economic development "with the support of the Custodian of the

Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince, through the launch of many governmental initiatives to stimulate the VC and startups ecosystem within the Saudi Vision 2030 programmes".

The CEO of MAGNiTT also commented that Saudi Arabia continues to make significant strides in fostering innovation and supporting a robust startup ecosystem.

He added that this progress is evident in the Kingdom's deal flow, which accounted for 30% of H1 MENA deal activity, up from 24% in H1 2023.

MAGNiTT's data shows that KSA led H1 VC funding in MENA, while non-mega funding (deals less than \$100 Million) saw an impressive 84% YoY growth.

This positive trend underscores the growth of investment in the foundational ecosystem, building a strong pipeline for future late-stage investments.

SVC is an investment company established in 2018. It is a subsidiary of the SME Bank, part of the National Development Fund (NDF). Through investments in funds and direct investments in startups and SMEs, it aims to stimulate and sustain financing for startups and SMEs from pre-Seed to pre-IPO.

SPA



Dubai Chambers signs VFS Global for expansion

Dubai, UAE - Dubai Chambers signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with VFS Global, the world's largest visa outsourcing and technology service specialist for governments and their diplomatic missions. Under the terms of the agreement, VFS Global will provide strategic services to accelerate trade and investment development for Dubai-based companies across the company's global network.

The MoU is aimed at accelerating the global expansion of Dubai-based companies by reducing market entry friction and speeding up their ability to capitalise on commercial opportunities. Dubai-based businesses will benefit from the support of VFS Global's international network of offices and resources, which offer a range of services and solutions including the evaluation of potential partners in international markets through due diligence services.

The agreement comes as part of the 'Global Partnership Programme', a new initiative launched by Dubai International Chamber, one of the three chambers operating under Dubai Chambers, that aims to accelerate the chamber's attraction and expansion efforts by collaborating with world-class service providers across eight trade categories. The programme will offer services designed to expedite processes, simplify operations, reduce costs, and minimise risks for Dubai-based companies.

The Global Partnership Programme complements Dubai Global Initiative which aims to attract foreign direct investment and support Dubai-based companies in their expansion plans

across 30 priority markets.

Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah, President and CEO of Dubai Chambers, commented, "We are dedicated to driving economic growth by attracting companies and investors from across the globe to the emirate and supporting the international expansion of local businesses. Our cooperation with VFS Global will enhance the competitiveness of Dubai's private sector by facilitating smoother entry into global markets. We remain committed to supporting the business community as we continue to consolidate Dubai's position as an unrivalled global gateway for opportunities and growth."

Zubin Karkaria, Founder and CEO of VFS Global, said, "We are pleased to partner with Dubai Chambers to launch our 'Trade-Bridge Global' trade and investment services for Dubai-based organisations. This initiative highlights our long-standing commitment to supporting the development of Dubai as a pre-eminent global business hub. Our association with the UAE began in 2002 when we launched Dubai Visa services with Emirates Airline, and in 2013, we moved our global headquarters to Dubai. Last year, we appointed our first Head of Empowerment and Inclusion for the UAE to further the government's vision to attract, develop and retain local talent. This new partnership with Dubai Chambers is just another step in our support of our commitment to Dubai and the UAE."

The agreement with VFS Global will support the Global Partnership Programme across the chamber's 31 international representative offices around the world.

WAM

UK retail sales fall in June: British Retail Consortium



London, UK - Retail sales declined in June in the United Kingdom (UK) as the cold weather in the first half of the year weighed on consumer spending, the British Retail Consortium (BRC) said on Tuesday. Total retail sales fell 0.2% in June from the previous year (2023).

BRC Chief Executive Helen Dickinson said the sales of weather sensitive categories such as clothing and footwear, and DIY and gardening were hit particularly hard.

Electronics sales increased as football fans upgraded their home entertainment systems.

Summer may finally have arrived, but it did little to persuade consumers to hit the shops, said

KPMG Head of Consumer, Retail and Leisure Linda Ellett.

Despite the warmer weather and the football providing opportunities for people to gather at home, food and drink sales were disappointing in June, said Ellett.

"The stimulus of good weather, Wimbledon and Euro 2024, which was hoped would drive consumer spending, has so far failed to materialise and financial concerns remain with many households," Ellett added.

Sarah Bradbury, the chief executive of the data provider IGD said the election campaign has not impacted shopper confidence in June. But it might see a boost following the election.

ONA

Japan's current account surplus for May record high at \$17.7bn



Tokyo, Japan - Japan's Finance Ministry said that the country's current account surplus for May hit a record high for that month.

The surplus stood at 2.85tn yen (US\$17.7bn approx). That's up more than 41% on year and the highest for May since 1985

when comparable data became available.

Japan has now logged a surplus for 16 straight months, according to according to Japan's broadcaster NHK World.

The gain comes as higher interest rates overseas and the

weak yen pushed up the income companies earn from foreign bond holdings.

The primary income surplus came in at US\$26bn, a record high for any month.

This figure includes dividends Japanese businesses receive

from overseas subsidiaries, as well as interest income on bonds.

The trade deficit shrunk to US\$6.9bn, thanks to strong exports of automobiles and semiconductor manufacturing equipment.

ONA

Volkswagen ordered to pay \$194.2mn to Russia's GAZ

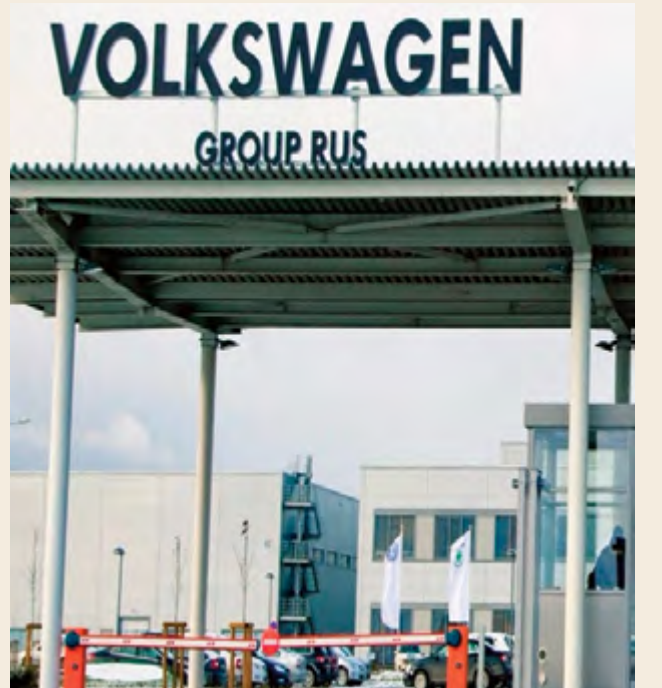
Moscow, Russia - A Russian court has fined German automotive firm Volkswagen 16.9bn rubles (US\$194.2mn approx) in a lawsuit brought by Russian firm GAZ, which had sued the German automaker over lost profits after Volkswagen exited the Russian market.

A court in the Nizhny Novgorod province ruled on Tuesday that Volkswagen had caused material damage to GAZ.

GAZ accused Volkswagen of failing to fulfill its obligations for production and parts deliveries under ongoing contracts and unilaterally terminating some others.

Amid Western countries' sanctions on Russia and discouraging doing business with Moscow over the ongoing war on Ukraine, Volkswagen announced its withdrawal from the country in May 2023 and selling its assets in Russia to a local firm.

Russian Trade Minister



Anton Alihanov announced on Monday that mass car production had started at Volkswagen's former plant in Kaluga.

Volkswagen was one of many Western companies to leave Russia following

Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Many foreign carmakers sold assets at cut prices in their haste to exit, leaving a gap that has been plugged mainly by Chinese competitors.

Agencies

MG One, MG Whale redefine luxury and performance

MG Motor, a distinguished name in the automotive industry, presents its premium models, the MG One and MG Whale, designed to revolutionise the driving experience with a blend of cutting-edge technology, performance, and luxury.

The MG One is crafted for the modern urban adventurer, combining a striking exterior with a spacious, tech-savvy interior and robust performance. Built on the SAIC Motor Intelligent Global Architecture (SIGMA) platform, it offers a dynamic and refined driving experience, a press release said.

The key features of the MG One include a turbocharged 1.5ltr engine, which delivers 181 horsepower, 285Nm of torque, 0-100 km/h in 8.8 seconds. Interior features include cruise control, push-button ignition, keyless entry, and a rear-view camera. Full-option models offer a 360-degree parking view camera.

Designed with the urban driver in mind, the MG One combines sporty aesthetics with advanced technology to provide a smooth and enjoyable driving experience. Whether navigating city streets or cruising on the highway, the MG One ensures safety and comfort for all occupants.

The MG Whale blends futuristic design with a daring coupe-like silhouette, reflecting the vibrant and progressive spirit of urban life. Inspired by the majestic blue whale, this SUV Coupe features distinctive elements such as a signature front grille, Baalen daytime running lamps,



and whale-fin door mirrors, exuding playfulness, intelligence, and grace.

Key features of the MG Whale include a powerful 2ltr turbocharged engine which delivers 231 horsepower and 370Nm of torque, paired with an 8-speed automatic gearbox for smooth and efficient performance.

The striking exterior includes two-tone glossy black roof, matte gold bumper accents, chrome dual exhaust pipes, silver decoration, and 19-inch alloy wheels enhance its visual appeal. Electric seat adjustments with memory seats, dual-zone air



conditioning, and a power-operated panoramic sunroof ensure a comfortable and hassle-free journey.

The MG Whale is designed to offer a premium driving experience, combining elegance with powerful performance. Its advanced features and luxurious touches make it an ideal choice for those seeking both style and substance in their vehicle.

Mohsin Hani Bahrani, CEO, MHD ACERE, said, "Our goal is to surpass the ordinary by offering unparalleled driving experiences. The MG One and MG Whale exemplify this commitment."

Huawei FreeBuds 6i ideal for noise cancelling

The Huawei FreeBuds 6i, Huawei's latest i-series earbuds, set a new benchmark for earbuds, thanks to its enhanced noise cancellation and a slew of upgraded features.

These trendy and versatile earbuds boast advanced Intelligent Dynamic ANC 3.0, punchy bass, and long-lasting battery life. The FreeBuds 6i have the best noise cancellation in this price range. Available in a celestial-inspired colour palette of white, purple, and black, the Huawei FreeBuds 6i allow users to immerse themselves in an auditory world where style meets substance, where every beat is crystal clear, and distractions fade away effortlessly.

The Huawei FreeBuds 6i are equipped with Huawei's most advanced noise cancellation technology yet: Intelligent Dynamic ANC 3.0. It represents the pinnacle of Huawei's noise-cancelling technology and was featured in the Pro series earbuds. The Intelligent Dynamic ANC 3.0 blocks adapts to the world around you. It constantly analyses the surroundings and adjust the noise-cancelling parameters to give you the best listening experience.

To deliver powerful noise cancellation across a wide frequency range, the FreeBuds 6i have increased computing power.



BankDhofar credit card enhances summer travel

BankDhofar is pleased to share the credit cards rewards programme that enhances the customers' travel experience. The Bank's credit cards are crafted to meet diverse customer needs, providing a seamless blend of convenience, security, and exclusive perks.

Whatever the need, you will find a BankDhofar credit card that perfectly fits the lifestyle – and even earn you rewards post each purchase. Customers can choose the ultra-premium Visa Infinite and World MasterCard, the exclusivity of Platinum MasterCard, the special benefits of Visa Gold and Gold MasterCard, the utility of Visa Classic and Standard MasterCard or simply opt for the functionality of the E-Com MasterCard credit card for online shopping, a press release said.

BankDhofar credit cards offers tiered benefits based on the card type, such as travel rewards where customers can earn points for every purchase and redeem for travel, hotel stays or exclusive experiences, besides complimentary access to airport lounges worldwide, global ac-

ceptance, as the cards are recognised and accepted worldwide and up to 47 days interest-free credit period. Cash advance facility at millions of ATMs worldwide. Seamless and secure internet shopping via secure OTP authentication.

BankDhofar's credit cards are perfect for any trip. With 24/7 concierge service, purchase protection, and special deals on dining and shopping, the credit cards make travel simple and luxurious.

The Rewards points programme provides a seamless and user-friendly experience, making it easy for cardholders to track their points, browse the rewards, and redeem their points through BankDhofar's mobile app or website. With a diverse range of redemption options and an ever-expanding catalog of high-quality products and experiences, customers enjoy endless opportunities to indulge, explore, and save. These points can then be redeemed, allowing customers to choose from more than 900 different airlines and destinations worldwide.

OETC welcomes 34 Summer Training Programme trainees for 2024 session

In line with its commitment to community service and providing platforms and opportunities for knowledge and experiences exchange, and in recognition of the OETC's pivotal role in empowering youth, building national capacities, and developing competencies through various educational practices and support initiatives, the Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) recently welcomed a new batch involving 34 students from higher education institutions from different governorates in the Sultanate of Oman. This comes as part of the 2024 Summer Internship Programme, which spans over two months continuing until 15th August 2024.

The students will undergo an intensive training and gain practical and applied experiences across various technical and non-technical fields. This training aims to develop the students'



skills, abilities, and knowledge, providing them with the optimal educational and developmental experience in a professional and work-oriented environment. Additionally, it seeks to enhance their awareness of professional ethics, policies, and procedures, alongside how to operate in a real work environment.

Regarding the importance

that OETC places on supporting youth through various initiatives, programmes, and activities, Mubarak al Jahwari, general manager of Human Resources at OETC, emphasised the company's efforts and commitment to providing suitable opportunities for young people and offering the necessary support to enhance their competencies,

knowledge, and skills. He also highlighted the OETC's ongoing endeavors to increase the added value for the community.

Jahwari added, "At OETC, we place utmost importance on the younger generation as they are the builders of Oman's future. We have high hopes for them to contribute significantly to our beloved nation. This importance

is reflected through the various programmes, activities, and initiatives we diligently implement on a regular basis. These include training programmes, field visits, lectures, and workshops to name a few. Additionally, we consistently engage with different educational institutions to improve the quality of education and share our expertise."

Global Laboratory Leadership Programme begins

The Regional Workshop on the Global Laboratory Leadership Programme (GLLP) began on Monday at the Mövenpick Hotel.

The workshop is organised by the World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health represented by the Centre of Disease Surveillance and Control (Public Health Laboratories Department), along with several UN and international organisations, a press release said.

The opening of the workshop



Dr John Jabbour

was patronised by Dr Khalid al Harthi, MOH's acting director general the center, and attended by Dr John Jabbour, WHO Representative in Oman.

The four-day workshop targets specialists and experts from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources, Sultan Qaboos University, in addition to experts and specialists from the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international organisations in the same field.

In his opening remarks, Dr Harthi pointed out that the GLLP offers a comprehensive and competency-based One Health learning programme that focuses on laboratory leadership and management. The programme aims to foster and mentor laboratory leaders, empowering them to build, strengthen, and sustain national laboratory systems. He added that the programme equips them with the essential competencies needed to lead and direct sustainable

laboratory systems at an expert level.

The workshop will summarise the key concepts and tools related to implementing the programme and developing country-level plans, focusing on collaboration among various health sectors through the concept of One Health. Additionally, it addresses biological safety and security, surveillance, epidemiological investigation, preparedness, and response to public health emergencies.

BYD celebrates Thailand factory opening, roll-off of 8 millionth vehicle

BYD recently celebrated the inauguration of its Thailand plant and the production of its 8 millionth new energy vehicle in Rayong, Thailand, marking two milestones in the company's global expansion.

The ceremony was attended by Pimphattra Wichaikul, Thailand's Minister of Industry, as well as Wang Chuanfu, Chairman and President of BYD, among other senior executives of BYD Group.

BYD completed its Thailand plant within a span of 16 months, with an annual capacity of 150,000 vehicles. The facility encompasses processes of stamping, painting, welding, final assembly, and producing car components. BYD marked a historic moment by unveiling the Dolphin model as the 8 millionth new energy vehicle.

Wichaikul expressed high praise for BYD's outstanding contributions to the new energy vehicle sector. "BYD is a world-leading automobile manufacturer and a pioneer in China's new energy vehicle industry. BYD's investment in Thailand, along with its advanced production technology, will drive the development of the new energy vehicle industry in Thailand and across ASEAN."

At the event, Wang Chuanfu expressed gratitude to both governments, Thai customers, and partners for their strong support. He emphasised BYD's success in the Thai market, becoming the



pure electric vehicle sales champion for eighteen months over the past two years.

Currently, one in every three electric vehicles sold in Thailand is a BYD. Going forward, BYD aims to launch more pure electric and plug-in hybrid models in Thailand.

As the global leader in new energy vehicles, BYD has significantly expanded its overseas presence in recent years.

In 2023, it achieved a 337%

year-on-year increase in exports, reaching 243,000 vehicles. In the first half of this year, BYD sold 1.607mn new energy vehicles globally, a 28% year-on-year increase, securing its position as the largest in the industry. Of these, over 203,000 were exported, showing 173.8% year-on-year growth.

As of now, BYD's new energy vehicles are present in 88 countries and regions worldwide, with passenger car production bases

established in Thailand, Brazil, Hungary, and Uzbekistan.

Since achieving the roll-off of its 1 millionth new energy vehicle in May 2021, BYD has reached the impressive milestone of 8 million vehicles in just over three years. Looking forward, BYD will continue to expand its global market presence, leveraging its advanced technology and innovative products to meet the diverse needs of consumers worldwide.

As more overseas factories come into operation, BYD's global production capacity will progressively strengthen, further solidifying its leading position in the global new energy vehicle market.

Founded in 2003, BYD Auto is the automotive subsidiary of BYD, a multinational high-tech company devoted to leveraging technological innovations for a better life. Aiming to accelerate the green transition of the global

transportation sector, BYD Auto focuses on developing pure electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles.

The company has mastered the core technologies of the entire industrial chain of new energy vehicles, such as batteries, electric motors, and electronic controllers. In the recent years, it has witnessed significant technological advancements, including the Blade Battery, DM-i Super Hybrid Technology, ePlatform 3.0, CTB Technology, e

Platform, BYD DiSus Intelligent Body Control System, and DMO super hybrid system.

The company is the world's first carmaker to stop the production of fossil-fueled vehicles and shift to EV production while remaining at the top of new energy passenger vehicle sales in China for 11 years in a row.

In Oman, the BYD range of 'electrifying vehicles' will soon be distributed by Saud Bahwan Group.

Bank Muscat inaugurates branch at Sahalnoot in wilayat of Salalah

In line with its strategy to enhance its branch network across the country, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in Oman, inaugurated its new branch in Sahalnoot in the wilayat of Salalah.

The branch was inaugurated in the presence of Mohammed Hassan al Ansi, a member of the Shura Council, representative of the wilayat of Salalah, senior officials from the bank, besides a number of invitees.

Sahalnoot, where the new branch came up, is witnessing a significant urban growth and is now characterised by a variety of commercial activities. The branch has a modern design and distinctive space that provides customers comfort while completing their banking transactions. It provides a wide range of



financial services including personal, Sayyarati and Baituna financing, numerous types of cards, and a dedicated center for Asalah customers. Also, as part of the bank's focus on improving access to persons with disabilities, the branch has installed access ramps, teller counters and disabled-friendly ATMs.

Speaking on the occasion, Abd

dulnasir N al Raisi, general manager - Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, expressed happiness in seeing "the ongoing expansion of the bank's branch network across Oman and the implementation of cutting-edge technologies to meet global standards".

The branch, the general manager said is a significant addition to the bank's efforts to provide

the best banking services possible, as well as an extension of its current branches in the wilayat of Salalah and Dhofar Governorate in general.

"We believe that by enhancing accessibility, we will be able to provide a seamless banking experience while also meeting customers' expectations," he underlined.

Salalah Grand Mall Khareef events

Salalah Grand Mall has announced the launch of its highly anticipated 'Salalah Grand Mall Shopping Events' from July 19 to August 18. The unveiling took place during a press conference hosted by the mall management.

Hakan Altin, CEO of Tilal Development Company, expressed his enthusiasm for this year's diverse and inclusive Salalah Grand Mall Shopping Festival and Events. The activities are thoughtfully curated to cater to families and children while introducing fresh and engaging experiences to the public.

Kicking off with a bazaar offering discounts on a wide range of brands, the Khareef events are strategically timed to welcome visitors seeking a unique shopping and entertainment experience in one convenient location.

Reem Abdul Moneim, Head of Marketing at Tilal Development Company, shared insights into the upcoming shopping activities,



promising thrilling offers and events for families and children in the mall's upper courtyard. The festivities will commence on July 19 with an evening of laughter as the Egyptian group 'Comedy Set' takes the stage for a comedy show at 8pm, marking their debut in Salalah.

Additionally, weekends (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday) will feature children & family entertainment activities like the PlayStation Championship and Thai Week, Coffee and Chocolate Festival, and a photography workshop conducted by renowned Lebanese director and

photographer Ahmed Nana over two days.

Reem Abdul Moneim highlighted that loyal patrons of Salalah Grand Mall can anticipate weekly surprises and prizes, including cash vouchers for shopping at the mall.

Internationally acclaimed Omani chef Issa al Lamki announced the community food competition, an integral part of the mall's shopping activities. The event aims to foster cultural exchange through culinary delights while providing a platform for cooking enthusiasts to showcase their talents.

Khimji Ramdas celebrates business partners in AC, appliances division

Khimji Ramdas, a leading business conglomerate in Oman, organised a special event to felicitate 55 esteemed business partners of the Khimji Ramdas Air Conditioning and Appliances Division (KR-ACAD).

This event highlighted the significant contributions of these partners, who have been instrumental in expanding KR-ACAD's reach and fostering strong relationships within local communities across Oman.

These partners have not only helped expand KR-ACAD's market presence but have also played a pivotal role in building strong connections with local communities. Their extensive reach and influence have been vital in making KR-ACAD products and services accessible to a



wide customer base, the company stated.

These partners contribute approximately 40% to the division's overall business, underscoring their importance in KR-ACAD's operations. Many of

these partners have been associated with the division for decades, with some partnerships spanning an impressive 40 years. This long-standing collaboration has been key to KR-ACAD's sustained growth and

market leadership.

"As we gathered to celebrate the achievements of our esteemed partners, we recognise their profound impact on our journey. Beyond business transactions, these relationships em

body a shared commitment to excellence and innovation," said Hitesh Akarte, COO of Khimji Ramdas Infrastructure Cluster, adding, "together, we have navigated challenges, seized opportunities, and forged enduring

bonds that transcend mere commerce".

"Today's recognition underscores not just their contributions to our division's growth but also our collective resilience and vision for the future," he further

stated. "We remain steadfast in our pursuit of excellence, guided by the principles of trust, collaboration, and unwavering dedication to serving Oman's communities. Here's to our partners, whose dedication and partnership continue to inspire and propel us forward."

Sunil Vishnu, general manager of the division, expressed his heartfelt gratitude, stating, "Our business partners are the backbone of our success in the air conditioning and home appliances division. Their unwavering support and dedication have enabled us to establish a strong foothold in every nook and corner of Oman. We value these relationships deeply and look forward to many more years of successful collaboration."

Deadly Tropical Storm Beryl cuts power to millions in Houston

Texas, US - Tropical Storm Beryl hit the southern US state of Texas on Monday, killing at least four people and causing major flooding.

The storm was downgraded from hurricane status by the US National Hurricane Centre (NHC) after it made landfall near the coastal Texas town of Matagorda. It was later downgraded to a tropical depression, and expected to weaken further.

Despite the downgrade, the NHC said that conditions caused by Beryl could create tornadoes in Texas, as well as in the neighbouring states of Louisiana and Arkansas.

A tornado in Jasper County, on the border with the state of Louisiana, destroyed about thirty houses.

Four people dead

A 53-year-old man and a 74-year-old woman were killed in separate incidents after trees fell on their homes in the Houston area.

A third person, a civilian employee of the Houston Police Department, drowned after being trapped by floodwaters



under a highway overpass, according to local officials. Another person died in a fire possibly sparked by lightning.

The storm caused power to be cut for 2.7mn homes and businesses in the area around Houston, which is Texas' most populous city.

According to monitor Power-Outage.us, power returned to around 300,000 of those houses on Monday night after a peak earlier in the day.

Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick said that it could take multiple days for power to be restored.

Patrick said that the Center-Point Energy company had brought in thousands of additional workers to restore power.

Highways were flooded and over 1,000 flights were cancelled. Oil refining activity slowed and some production sites were evacuated. Texas is the US biggest oil producer.

The storm made landfall earlier on Monday in Texas as a Category 1 hurricane and weakened to a tropical storm hours later.

Anadolu Agency

US: Biden on the defensive ahead of NATO summit

Biden said he was getting 'frustrated' by calls for him to pull out of presidential race in favour of a different Democratic candidate

Washington, D.C., US - US President Joe Biden was defiant against suggestions he is in cognitive decline ahead of a major NATO summit on Tuesday.

In a surprise call-in to the cable news show 'Morning Joe' on Monday, Biden said he was getting 'frustrated' by calls for him to pull out of the presidential race in favour of a different Democratic candidate.

He added that anyone was welcome to challenge him for the nomination at the party convention in August if they thought voters would support them.

In a letter to fellow party members, Biden wrote: "I wouldn't be running again if I did not absolutely believe I was the best



US President Joe Biden said anyone was welcome to challenge him for the nomination

Biden was expected to use the NATO summit in Washington to press his case after a television debate against Republican nominee Trump in June left voters questioning if age was taking its toll on the president

person to beat Donald Trump in 2024...We had a Democratic nomination process and the voters have spoken clearly and decisively."

Parkinson's disease claims

The New York Times has reported that Biden had repeatedly been visited by a neurologist specialising in Parkinson's disease.

But White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre refused to confirm the report during a news briefing on Monday.

"Has the President been treated for Parkinson's? No. Is he being treated for Parkinson's? No, he's not. Is he taking medication for Parkinson's? No," she said.

Biden's personal physician, Kevin O'Connor, said in a letter that Biden 'has not seen a neurologist outside of his annual physical'.

Biden was expected to use the NATO summit in Washington to press his case after a television debate against Republican nominee Trump in June left voters questioning if age was taking its toll on the president.

NATO summit

On top of celebrating the alliance's 75th anniversary, the 3-day meeting will focus on the war in Ukraine as well as countering growing Chinese influence on the world stage.

The leaders of non-member states New Zealand, Japan and South Korea will attend the summit for the third year in a row amidst increasing Chinese military presence in the Pacific.

Ahead of the meeting, outgoing Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg announced a US\$43bn aid package to Ukraine, a reduction from previous packages that is expected to decrease further the following year.

However, the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) programme, which was approved in June, is set to cement assistance for Kyiv in the future in the case of a Trump presidency. Trump has suggested that he will be less generous to Ukraine than Biden if elected in November.

DW



Extreme heat, new wildfires sweep across US

Washington, D.C., US - Over 146mn Americans are under extreme heat alerts as dangerous weather sparks new wildfires, according to media reports.

A severe heat wave has shattered temperature records across the western US and is linked to four deaths in Oregon, The Guardian newspaper reported.

Salem hit 103F (39.4C) on Sunday, breaking the previous record of 99F (37.2C) set in 1960.

Authorities in Multnomah County are investigating four suspected heat-related deaths, according to The Guardian.

Excessive heat warnings from the National Weather Service cover parts of California, Nevada, Arizona, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, while heat advisories extend to the east coast, including Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.

Firefighters are battling numerous new blazes ignited by the extreme heat. As of Monday, 73 large active fires were burning across the country, covering nearly half a million acres.

Fire conditions are expected to persist throughout the week.

A wildfire in Santa Barbara County, California, has consumed over 20,000 acres of land and is eight per cent contained, NBC News reported, adding that evacuation orders have been issued for the area.

The fire ignited near Lake Zaca just before 4pm on Friday and expanded over the weekend, according to NBC News.

Despite the deployment of helicopters and air tankers to fight the flames, the fire has continued to grow.

Officials expect the fire to keep moving south and southeast due to rising heat, wind, and dry grass.

California and Nevada are forecasted to experience additional daily record high temperatures in the coming week, CNN reported.

The National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Centre warned that by Thursday, the heat in the Pacific Northwest will move to the Intermountain West and northern High Plains.

In recent days, many locations in the West and Pacific Northwest have tied or broken previous heat records, with over 165 daily high temperature records potentially being set or matched this week, according to CNN.

The most intense heat is anticipated in Central and Southern California in the coming days, but unusually high temperatures will also impact Washington state, Idaho, and Utah, The Washington Post reported.

Although the heat might temporarily subside by Sunday across the West, there is little indication of any significant change to the overall weather pattern, the newspaper added.

Anadolu Agency

United Airlines Boeing loses wheel shortly after takeoff

Los Angeles, US - A Boeing aircraft operated by United Airlines lost a main landing gear wheel on Monday after taking off from Los Angeles.

United Airlines said the Boeing 757-200 lost the wheel after leaving Los Angeles International Airport but landed safely at its intended destination in Denver. "The wheel has been recovered in Los Angeles, and we are investigating what caused this event," the airline said in statement.

No injuries reported

United said there were no reported injuries on the ground or onboard Flight 1001, which had been carrying 174 passengers and 7 crew.

This is the second time this year that a Boeing aircraft operated by United Airlines has lost a wheel after takeoff.

In March a Boeing 777 destined for Japan lost a tire shortly after leaving San Francisco, resulting in the pilot having to make an emergency landing.

The incident comes at a time when the US aviation giant Boeing has experienced a series of safety issues, with its CEO Dave Calhoun stepping down by the end of the year.

The company has been plagued by safety issues involving its 737 Max-9 aircraft. In January, a door plug ripped off an Alaska Airlines 737 Max-9 flight about 16,000 feet above the ground.

DW

France's left-wing alliance in search of best candidate for prime minister

Paris, France - France's left-wing alliance the New Popular Front (NPF) has begun searching for a candidate for prime minister after announcing its victory in the country's snap parliamentary elections.

None of the three main blocs - the far right, centre and left - secured an outright majority to govern the country in the second round on July 7. The NPF's parties started to discuss internally which candidate should be proposed as the next prime minister to President Emmanuel Macron, who will designate them to form the government.

Macron on Monday rejected outgoing Prime Minister Gabriel Attal's resignation and asked him to keep his functions 'for now' until stability is ensured in the country, according to media reports.

Manuel Bompard from the La France Insoumise (France Unbowed, LFI) party told broadcaster BFMTV earlier on Monday that it is impossible that keeping Attal in his post could erase French citizens' votes.

"Today we are gearing up for governing, for implementing the programme that is ours," Bompard said, adding that President Macron has the duty to call the NPF to govern the country.

It is a stance backed by Green Party (EELV) National Secretary Marine Tondelier, who told broadcaster RTL that Macron should 'officially call' today for the



NPF to designate a name.

But the name to propose is dividing the parties.

One of the leading figures of the NPF, former presidential candidate and LFI founder Jean-Luc Melenchon, is a much-debated name.

Tondelier stressed in this context that 'a good prime minister must soothe the country, unite in their own bloc'. "He (Melenchon) said he does not want to impose himself, and a great part of the NPF has said that they particularly do not want him," she added, implying that Melenchon is not a suitable candidate.

But the LFI's parliamentary group leader Mathilde Panot told RTL that the Melenchon option 'is not excluded'.

"He is the one who taught the left that it could win again," she said, adding that discussions continue.

Socialist Party leader Olivier Faure said the alliance must propose a candidate this week, according to the Le Figaro daily.

The New Popular Front could win over 180 seats in the National Assembly, according to the latest projections based on data from the Interior Ministry.

The centrist alliance Together for the Republic, backed by Macron, finished second with over 160 seats, while Marine Le Pen's far-right National Front (RN) party got over 140 seats.

Anadolu Agency

WHO highlights medical crisis in Gaza amid new evacuation orders

The WHO has called for a ceasefire to ensure that medical aid can reach those in dire need and that the wounded can receive proper care

London/Geneva - The World Health Organization (WHO) on Tuesday raised alarms over the escalating healthcare crisis in Gaza following new evacuation orders.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO director-general, underscored the severe impact these orders are having on the already limited medical services in the region.

"There's really no safe corner in Gaza," said Ghebreyesus in a statement. "The latest reports on evacuation orders in Gaza City will further impede delivery of very limited life-saving care."

The WHO has reported that key hospitals such as Al-Ahli



and Patient Friendly hospitals are out of service.

Patients from these hospitals have been forced to either self-evacuate, were given early discharges, or referred to other hospitals.

Kamal Adwan and Indonesian hospitals, which are now responsible for these patients, are

grappling with severe shortages of fuel, beds, and trauma medical supplies.

The Indonesian Hospital is currently operating at triple its capacity, struggling to cope with the influx of patients.

Al-Helou Hospital, located within the blocks affected by the evacuation order, continues to

operate but only partially.

Meanwhile, As-Sahaba and Al-Shifa hospitals, which are near the evacuation zones, remain functional for now, though their status is precarious given the proximity to conflict areas.

Additionally, six medical points and two primary healthcare centres fall within the evac-

uation zones, further straining the healthcare infrastructure.

Ghebreyesus warned that these critical medical facilities could quickly become non-functional due to hostilities in their vicinity or obstructions to access.

The WHO has called for a ceasefire to ensure that medical

aid can reach those in dire need and that the wounded can receive proper care.

WHO spokesperson Tarik Jasarevic told a UN press briefing in Geneva that of 36 hospitals in Gaza, only 13 are partially functioning.

Jasarevic stressed that patients and medical staff evacu-

ated three hospitals in one week in southern Gaza in fear of intensified military activities that could render the health facilities non-functional or inaccessible.

While the cumulative bed capacity at the six partially functional hospitals in southern Gaza, including three in Deir al Balah and three in Khan Younis, now stands at 1,334 beds, he said that there are a total of 11 field hospitals in the strip - three had to temporarily shut down, and four are partially functioning, due to the Rafah hostilities and reduced access.

Most of the field hospitals in Rafah are relocating to the central area, he added.

The spokesperson, citing the Palestinian Health Ministry, said that 34 people have died of malnutrition and dehydration.

Anadolu Agency

As-Sahaba and Al-Shifa hospitals, which are near the evacuation zones, remain functional for now, though their status is precarious given the proximity to conflict areas

Australian PM Albanese skips NATO summit in US

Canberra, Australia - Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has skipped an invite to attend the NATO summit in Washington, while several leaders from the Asia-Pacific region are set to attend the military bloc's event which also marks its 75th anniversary.

The summit is scheduled to commence on Tuesday in Washington and Canberra will be represented by Defence Minister Richard Marles. Experts and media have been busy discussing Albanese abandoning the NATO summit, which invited leaders from the Asia-Pacific region to its summits in Spain and Lithuania over the past two years.

Albanese opting out of the summit comes amid a political crisis marred by the ruling Labour Party which saw one of its lawmakers resigning over a policy issue on Palestine.

Senator Fatima Payman resigned after supporting a motion,



brought by the opposition Greens Party to recognise an independent Palestinian state, leading to her exclusion from party meetings. The ruling party has been accused of abandoning its commitments to Palestine.

Opposition Liberal Party, however, criticised the prime minister's absence from the NATO summit, calling it a 'dereliction of duty'.

Peter Dutton, the opposition

leader, said Albanese's move to abandon NATO summit was a signal that the ruling party may call snap elections.

He accused Albanese of 'putting domestic politics ahead of national security'.

Albanese, however, has defended his decision by pointing out that Australia was not a member of NATO.

Recalling how Dutton had moved a motion in the parliament last year urging the prime minister not to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in the US, Albanese said Australia is a founding member of the bloc 'and needed to participate in that forum, as opposed to NATO, where for a lot of the NATO Summit, as an observer country, we're not there'.

"We're not in the room with the NATO members when that takes place," Albanese said in an interview.

Anadolu Agency

Famine has spread across Gaza Strip, say UN experts

Geneva, Switzerland - The recent deaths of more Palestinian children due to hunger and malnutrition shows that famine has spread across the entire Gaza strip, a group of independent experts backed by the UN said on Tuesday.

The experts said that 34 Palestinians had died from malnutrition since last October 7 - when Israel's offensive on Gaza began - most of them children.

The death of a child from malnutrition and dehydration indicates that health and social structures have been attacked and are critically weakened, the experts said in a statement.

"When the first child dies from malnutrition and dehydration, it becomes irrefutable that famine has taken hold," they said.

They cited Fayeze Ataya, who was barely 6 months old, who died on May 30, and 13-year-old



Abdulqader Al-Serhi, who died on June 1 at the Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah.

There was also 9-year-old Ahmad Abu Reida, who died in June in a tent sheltering his displaced family in Al-Mawasi, Khan Younis, in southern Gaza.

All three children died from

malnutrition and lack of access to adequate healthcare, said the experts.

"With the death of these children from starvation despite medical treatment in central Gaza, there is no doubt that famine has spread from northern Gaza into central and south-

ern Gaza," said the experts.

"We declare that Israel's intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people is a form of genocidal violence and has resulted in famine across all of Gaza," said the experts.

Anadolu Agency

Israeli army detains 16 Palestinians from areas in occupied West Bank

Ramallah, Palestine - The Israeli army on Tuesday detained 16 more Palestinians in military raids across the occupied West Bank, according to prisoners' affairs groups.

The arrests took place in the cities of Qalqilya, Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem Hebron, and Jericho, the Commission of Detainees' Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoner Society said in a joint statement.

The Israeli forces assaulted and threatened the detainees and their family members, as well as vandalised their homes, the statement added.

The new arrests brought the total number of Palestinians de-

tained by the Israeli army in the West Bank since October last year to 9,600, including those who were released after being arrested, according to Palestinian figures.

Over the past few years, the Israeli military has conducted regular raids in the West Bank, which have escalated with the beginning of the war on Gaza on October 7, 2023. Palestinians have also been violently attacked by illegal Israeli settlers.

At least 571 Palestinians, including at least 133 children, have since been killed and nearly 5,350 others injured by Israeli army fire in the occupied territory, according to the



Health Ministry.

Israel stands accused of 'genocide' at the International Court of Justice, which, in its lat-

est ruling, has ordered Tel Aviv to immediately halt its military operation in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, where over a

million Palestinians had sought refuge from the war before it was invaded on May 6.

Meanwhile, several fires

broke out in towns and areas in southern Lebanon as a result of Israeli overnight heavy shelling, local media reported on Tuesday.

The Lebanese official news agency NNA said the Israeli army continued its shelling across southern Lebanon, causing fires in some towns, where the civil defence firefighting teams worked to extinguish them.

The agency said that over 15 Israeli artillery shells were fired in early hours of Tuesday on the outskirts of the Aaichiyeh town and others on the Jezzine town.

More fires also erupted from the Israeli shelling on the towns

of Maroun al-Ras, Ayta al-Shaab, Hanine, and Rmeish as the firefighting teams rushed to contain the fires.

No casualties were reported from the Israeli shelling.

Tensions have soared along Lebanon's border with Israel amid cross-border attacks between Hezbollah and Israeli forces as Tel Aviv presses ahead with its deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, in Cairo, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi and CIA Director William Burns held talks on Tuesday to discuss ways to advance ceasefire talks in the Gaza Strip.

Anadolu Agency

Ukraine crisis: Putin thanks Indian PM

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin thanked Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday for his efforts in seeking a peaceful resolution to the Ukraine crisis.

"I am grateful to you for the attention you are paying to the most pressing problems, including trying to find some ways to resolve the Ukrainian crisis," Putin said, during his meeting with Modi in Moscow.

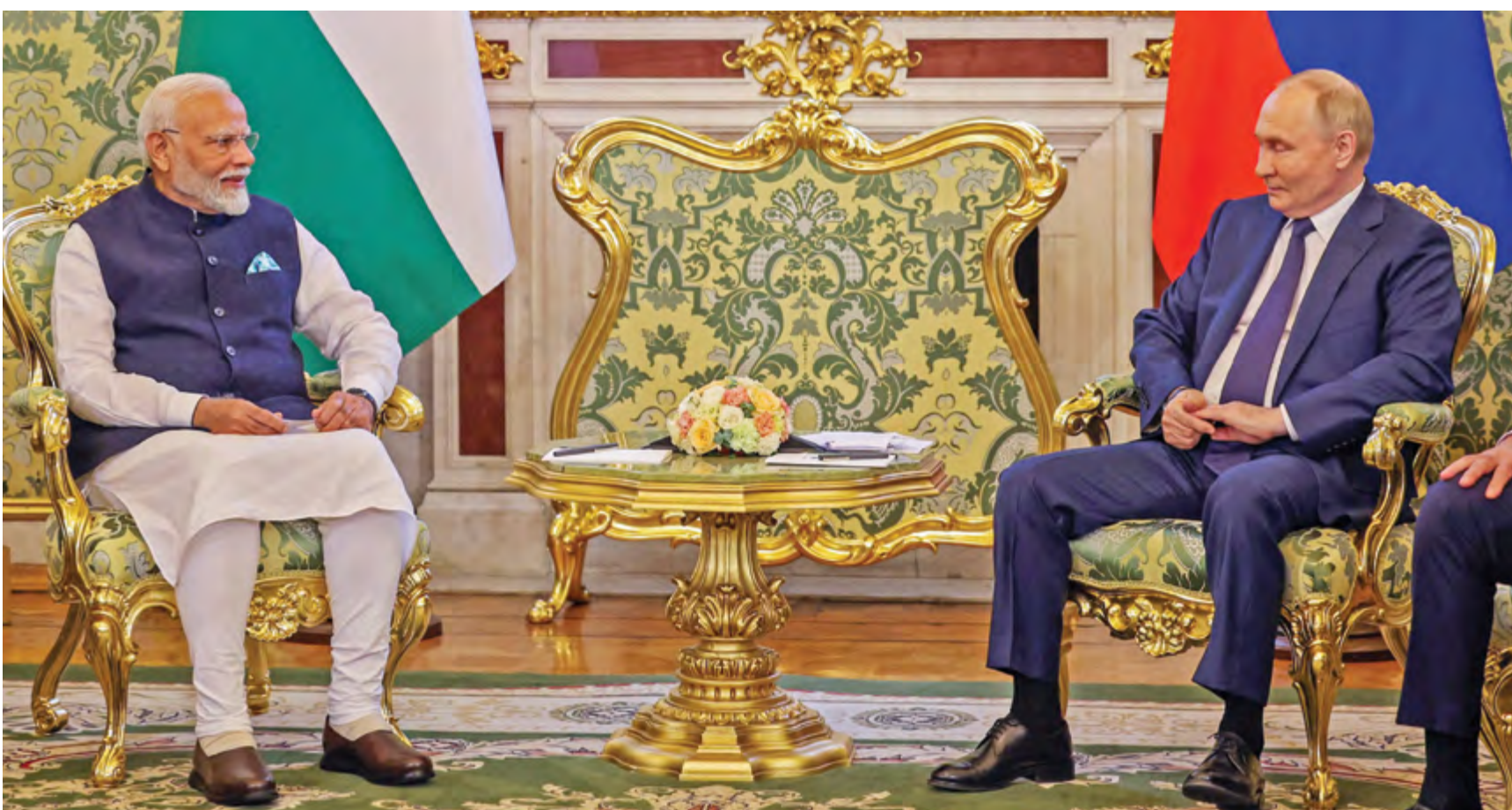
Putin congratulated Modi on his third reelection and highlighted Modi's choice of Russia for his first official trip abroad.

The Russian president praised the development of Russia-India relations, noting that this year marks the 77th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two nations.

"Today, our relations have the character of a particularly privileged strategic partnership. We are in constant contact with you and pay special attention to the development of trade and economic ties, the development of which, of course, corresponds to the interests of both the people of India and the peoples of the Russian Federation," he said.

Putin pointed out the rapid growth of bilateral trade between Russia and India, noting that in 2023, the trade turnover increased by 66 per cent, and in the first quarter of 2024, added another 20 per cent.

He also thanked Modi for the 'close cooperation' at interna-



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi holds a bilateral meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, in Moscow on Tuesday (ANI)

The Russian president praised the development of Russia-India relations, noting that this year marks the 77th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between two nations

tional platforms, including the UN and Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and invited him to attend the BRICS summit scheduled for Oct. 22-24 in Kazan, Russia.

Modi, in turn, expressed confidence that only a peaceful path

and dialogue are suitable for resolving global conflicts.

"Over the past five years, the world has had to face numerous challenges, first because of COVID-19 (pandemic), and then because of various conflicts. Missiles and projectiles are not suitable for solving problems. We are sure that only a peaceful way of dialogue is needed," he stressed.

The Indian prime minister

praised the energy cooperation between Russia and India, saying it has 'ensured energy stability in the world'.

"The whole world should recognise that thanks to the Indian-Russian cooperation in the field of energy, stability in the global market has been ensured. The whole world was facing a crisis in the fuel sector, but thanks to our cooperation, we were able to avoid any difficulties for ordinary citizens of India," he said.

Modi also expressed condolences over recent terrorist attacks in Russia and condemned all forms of terrorism.

Meanwhile, the US State Department on Monday urged Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a US ally, to make clear that any resolution to the Ukraine conflict needs to respect Ukraine's sovereignty as

he met in Russia with President Vladimir Putin.

"We would urge India, as we do any country when it engages with Russia, to make clear that any resolution to the conflict in Ukraine needs to be one that respects the UN Charter, that respects Ukraine's territory, Ukraine's sovereignty," said spokesman Matthew Miller during a press briefing.

"India is a strategic partner with whom we engage in a full and frank dialogue, and that includes on our concerns about the relationship with Russia," Miller added.

Earlier in the day, Modi arrived in Russia for a two-day official visit, marking his first trip abroad after being re-elected prime minister for the third time.

The Kremlin said that Putin and Modi 'will focus on the future development of the traditionally friendly relations between Russia and India, as well as on key international and regional issues'.

The meeting coincides with an upcoming NATO summit in Washington, D.C., where India is considered an ally. Modi said on X that after Russia, he would travel to Austria. "These visits will be a wonderful opportunity to deepen ties with these nations, with whom India has time tested friendship. I also look forward to interacting with the Indian community living in these countries," he said.

Anadolu Agency

Charges against Japan PM in political funds scandal dropped

Tokyo, Japan - Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has found himself rescued after prosecutors dropped charges against him in the political funds scandal.

Prosecutors cited 'lack of evidence' in the matter, Tokyo-based Kyodo News reported on Tuesday. Besides Kishida, charges against several other current and former lawmakers from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which has ruled Japan since 1955 except for six years, have been dropped in the case.

In recent months, Japanese prosecutors have raided, questioned, and arrested members of the ruling party amid a probe into a criminal complaint accusing five factions of underreporting revenue generated through political fundraising events over five years until 2022.

Several former LDP members



Besides Kishida, charges against several other current and former lawmakers from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which has ruled Japan since 1955, have been dropped

have been indicted in the scandal, which has resulted in the loss of public support to the party.

The party is also facing accusations of links with controversial Unification Church. Amid a record drop in public approval, LDP-backed Yuriko Koike won the Tokyo gubernatorial election on Sunday for a record third time.

However, observers noted that Koike's win was unlikely to take pressure off Kishida who will face a party leadership contest in the next few months.

Kishida-led LDP has formed a task force to lead political reform and whether there was a need for intra-party factions.

Anadolu Agency

Around 4.3mn Ukrainians under temporary protection in EU

Kyiv, Ukraine - Approximately 4.3mn Ukrainians are under temporary protection in the EU member countries, according to official data released on Tuesday.

As of May 31, 2024, approximately 4.3mn non-EU citizens who fled Ukraine due to war held temporary protection status in the EU, the Eurostat said.

Germany hosts the most beneficiaries, with '1,332,515 people or 31.3 per cent of the EU total,' followed by Poland with '953,255 people or 22.4 per cent', and the Czech Republic with '356,405 people or 8.4 per cent', the data showed.

Compared to April 2024, the largest increases were in Germany, which saw an additional '14,250 beneficiaries or a 1.1 per cent increase', the Czech Republic with an increase of '11,000 beneficiaries or 3.2 per cent', and



Romania with an increase of '3,715 beneficiaries or 2.4 per cent'.

The number of beneficiaries decreased in France, which saw a reduction of '1,005 beneficiaries or 1.6 per cent', Poland with a reduction of '675 beneficiaries or 0.1 per cent', and Latvia with a reduction of '15 beneficiaries or 0.03 per cent'.

The Czech Republic had the highest number of beneficiaries per thousand people at '32.9', followed by Lithuania at '27.2', and Poland at '25.9', with an EU

average of '9.5 per thousand', the Eurostat stated.

Ukrainian citizens made up over '98 per cent of the beneficiaries', with adult women comprising almost half at '45.6 per cent', children accounting for almost one-third at '32.5 per cent', and adult men comprising slightly more than a fifth at '21.9 per cent'.

These numbers reflect the attribution of temporary protection status based on the Council Implementing Decision 2022/382, which was established on March 4, 2022, in response to the mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine.

On June 25, 2024, the European Council agreed to extend the temporary protection for these individuals from March 4, 2025 to March 4, 2026.

Anadolu Agency

Pakistan: Spy agency to 'trace, intercept' calls

Karachi, Pakistan - The Pakistani government has allowed the country's premier spy agency to intercept and trace calls and messages through any telecommunication system in the 'interest of national security', said an official notification.

According to the notification issued by the Ministry of Information Technology on Monday, the authorisation was granted to the Inter Services Intelligence or the ISI under Section 54 of the Pakistan Telecommunication Act, 1996. It comes months after the Islamabad High Court (IHC) was informed during the hearing of a case related to audio leaks that the government had not permitted any intelligence agency to tap audio conversations.

In December, Bushra Bibi, the spouse of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan, had filed a petition seeking action against a leaked conversation purportedly



featuring her and her lawyer.

Earlier this month, an order by the IHC in a case related to the surveillance of citizens revealed that telecom companies in the country are running a mass surveillance system which 'enables interception of data and records of telecom customers' without any regulatory mechanism or legal procedures, on the

orders of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA).

According to the judgment, the court was told that telecom companies have been asked to 'finance, import, and install' the Lawful Intercept Management System (LIMS) at a designated place (referred to as 'surveillance centre') for the use of 'designated' agencies. The name of

these agencies, however, was not revealed to the court.

The judgment observed that two per cent or over four million of the total telecom consumers in Pakistan can be surveilled simultaneously under a mass surveillance system. A series of several audio clips, including that of Khan and his wife, were leaked on social media, in the lead up to February 8 elections.

In a written response submitted to the Sindh High Court last month, the Interior Ministry dubbed the social media platform X as a 'threat to national security', justifying a months-long ban on the social media platform in the country.

The government banned the social media platform on February 17, days after widespread protests against alleged rigging in the general elections, drawing widespread public outcry.

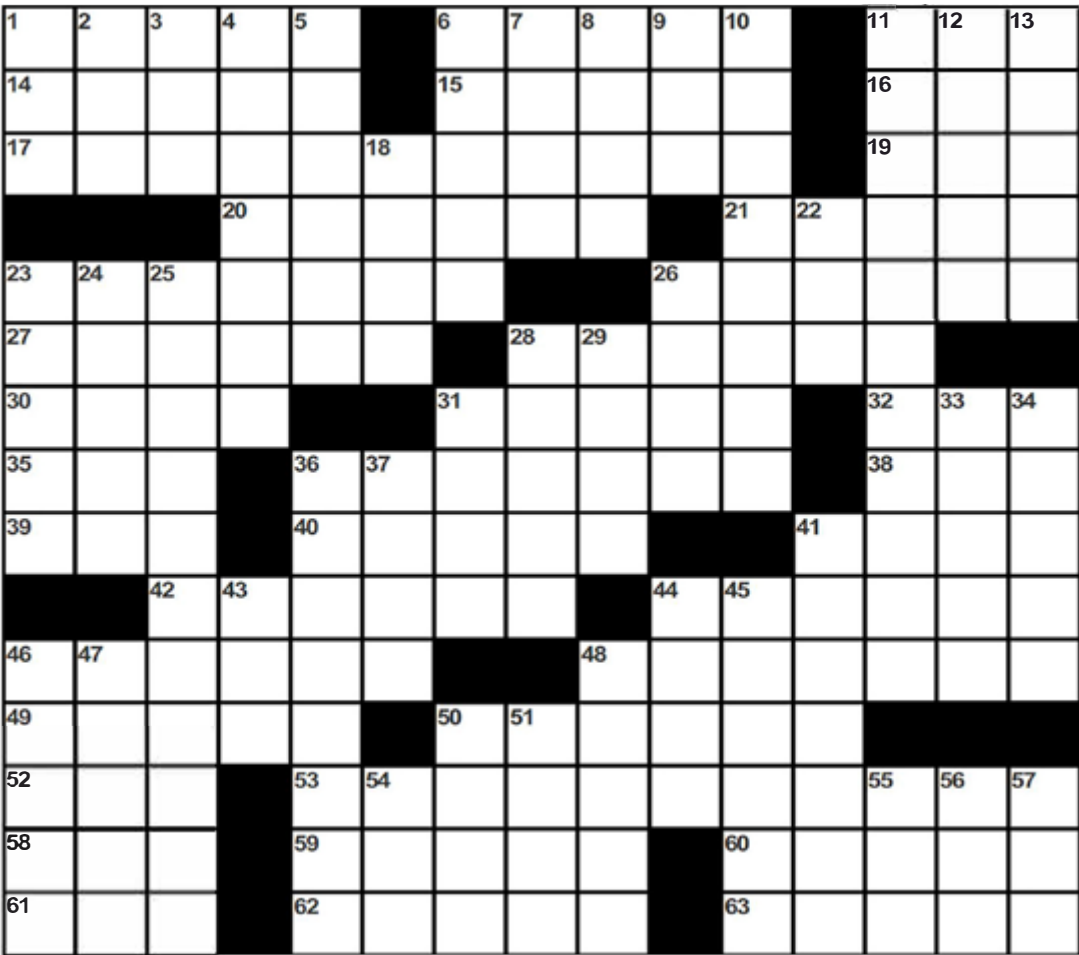
Anadolu Agency

ANTI-POLIO CAMPAIGN IN AFGHANISTAN



A child is given a dose of anti-polio vaccine in Kabul, Afghanistan on Tuesday. A four-day house-to-house anti-polio campaign kicked off in 23 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces on Monday (Xinhua)

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Flat-topped hills
 - 6) Lavished affection (on)
 - 11) "El_" (Heston film)
 - 14) Type of coffee or whiskey
 - 15) 1960s boxer Griffith
 - 16) Type of poem
 - 17) Strolls in the wilderness
 - 19) Mai_ (cocktail variety)
 - 20) Making no sounds
 - 21) Trails
 - 23) Appallingly
 - 26) Additionally
 - 27) Stretches of shallow water
 - 28) Himalayan kingdom
 - 30) "Herzog" author Bel-low
 - 31) Excuse for the police
 - 32) Cranberry locale
 - 35) "That's_, folks!"
 - 36) Chopper to the ER
 - 38) Belt piercer
 - 39) Archery wood
 - 40) Tsar's edict
 - 41) Earthenware crock
 - 42) Cafeteria customers
 - 44) Syrup sources
 - 46) Arts and_
 - 48) People who revel in cruelty
 - 49) Coffee, the milky way
 - 50) Spring or winter, e.g.
 - 52) Ordinal nwnber ending, sometimes
 - 53) Nightmares for land-lords
 - 58) "Fee_ foe furn"
 - 59) "Dynasty" actress Linda
 - 60) Western "necktie"
 - 61) High, rocky hill
 - 62) Satisfy, as a debt
 - 63) Attack from a concealed place
 - DOWN**
 - 1) 1160th of an hr.
 - 2) Stat for pitchers
 - 3) Create a lap
 - 4) "Just like always ..."
 - 5) Piercing, as a sound
 - 6) Decimal system deviser
 - 7) Arab League member
 - 8) Arcade failure
 - 9) Yellowstone beast
 - 10) Tyrannical
 - 11) Nurse's office supply
 - 12) 43rd U.S. state
 - 13) Thomas Jefferson, reli-giously
 - 18) Angled annexes
 - 22) Litigator's org.
 - 23) Test, as ore
 - 24) Moby Dick, for one
 - 25) Cold and sideways rain, e.g.
 - 26) "Oompah" instrument
 - 28) "God __ America"
 - 29) Bee's home
 - 31) Jewish month
 - 33) Apprentice night-stalker
 - 34) Bottle material
 - 36) One who can hardly be made out
 - 37) _ out a living
 - 41) Feature of an editorial
 - 43) Back, on board
 - 44) Rigging support
 - 45) Embellishes
 - 46) Chin crease
 - 47) 3:1, e.g.
 - 48) Verbally disrespectful
 - 50) Fastener for pajamas
 - 51) Europe's tallest active volcano
 - 54) The day before
 - 55) Showy garden-pond fish
 - 56) Sixth sense
 - 57) Visualize

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

The future is always in motion, so don't stress if you can't quite make out your goal right now. Simply deal with events as they come along, and try not to control or predict the future too stringently. After all, life has many wonderful surprises to offer, but the trick is to be in a receptive state so you can appreciate those surprises. For now, put the past behind you and focus on the present. The future will be here before you know it.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Responsibility can seem an awful lot like a four-letter word, especially these days. Haven't you done enough? Isn't there someone else who can help pick up the slack? Those are very good questions. However, you might not be able to answer them until you grit your teeth and simply soldier through these next few tasks. Afterward, sit down and evaluate where you're putting time and energy in your life and how you can alleviate some of the weight.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Break off that big project into bite-size chunks and you'll suddenly find that it's a lot easier to swallow. It's funny the way deadlines seem to wear soft-soled shoes and then sneak up on you when you least expect them. In this case, if you're able to stay calm and take care of the small details that make up this situation and tackle them one by one, you'll be finished in no time. After it's all over, you'll be asked how you did it so easily. Just smile enigmatically, okay?



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Joule is the unit of

- A. temperature
- B. pressure
- C. energy
- D. heat

2. Kemal Ataturk was

- A. the first President of Independent Kenya
- B. the founder of modern Turkey
- C. revolutionary leader of Soviet Union
- D. None of the above

3. Milkha Singh Stood ____ in 1960 Olympics, in Athletics.

- A. fourth in 400m final
- B. second in 400m final
- C. eighth in 50km walk
- D. seventh in 800m final

Answers: 1. C 2. B 3. A

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Someone's in the mood for love. Is it you? Could be! And if it's not you, someone you're very close to is feeling just full of affection and mischief. So if your spirits aren't up there already, they'll soon reach new heights thanks to the celestial influences that call for lots of romance and fun in this moment. So make sure you have a snazzy outfit that's ready to go, because while the day is fun, you never know what the night could bring.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 23

There's nothing more poignant than an unfulfilled promise. Is there an area of your life you've been neglecting? Perhaps a hobby or a career ambition or just a promise to spend more time with someone who's fallen by the wayside in all the hustle and bustle of everyday life? It's easy to get pulled away from things that have deeper meaning, but if you make an effort you can get back on track with something (or someone) you once loved.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Your brain needs food too, so turn off the TV and do something stimulating and invigorating. Watch the neighborhood kids play softball. Go for a hike. Write a letter to someone you love but haven't talked to in far too long. Pick up those paints you haven't touched since college. Go to a poetry reading. The world is immense, fascinating, and rich. Life is far too short to not explore as much of it as you can.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

It's all too easy to get bogged down in shoulda-coulda-woulda as well as "I could never do that." Don't put limits on what you can achieve before you even get started. What's even more discouraging, however, is when you demand too much of yourself at once. So you want to sing like a diva but can't read a note of music? Start small. Look up a voice teacher. Maybe sign up for lessons, and so on and so on. After that, the possibilities are endless.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You know how a turtle has that hard shell and a soft tummy it has to protect from possible predators? Well, apply that analogy to someone in your life right now. They might look hardened and tough on the outside, but really they're just protecting themselves the best way they know how. So before you decide to dismiss them as unresponsive or unemotional, give them a second chance. They just might need time.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

As someone in Wonderland said to Alice, it's best to try to believe at least three impossible things before breakfast. The funny thing is once you let yourself believe them, they don't seem all that impossible to begin with. The first step is to let yourself believe that such benevolence is in store for you. So go ahead. What are three wonderful, lovely and no-way-that-could-happen-to-me things that you want in your life?

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You're a maestro at orchestrating swinging social situations, and this ability comes into play in some very particular ways right now. Whether it's planning a surprise party or some other kind of celebratory event, you're able to combine the elements in such a way that it will delight and astonish everyone who attends. Don't be afraid to call on others for some help in making sure your plans come to fruition. The more the merrier!

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Racing toward the finish line gets your blood and spirits pumping in just the way you need. You thrive under competitive circumstances and in contests of skill and endurance. But after this is over, you're still going to need an outlet for all your energy. Have you ever thought about running a marathon or starting a pick-up soccer game around your neighborhood? It would be a great way to stay in shape and meet people too.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Like a butterfly emerging from its chrysalis, you've taken some pretty tough circumstances and used them to grow. Now you're developing into something lovely and fantastic beyond your wildest imaginings. During times like these, it's good to remember how grateful you are, not only for the easy things in your life but also for the tough circumstances. They've shaped you into someone amazing. Take a moment to honor yourself.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

S	C	X	A
L	I	D	E
D	E	M	E
E	P	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

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

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

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



Declan Rice

'It's another game of football'

Blankenhain, Germany - Declan Rice is taking England's semifinal against the Netherlands in his stride and believes they have the momentum win their first-ever European Championship.

The Arsenal midfielder, the bedrock for England during what has been a lacklustre run to the last four, said he was in relaxed mood ahead of Wednesday's clash in Dortmund, while expecting a tough game.

"It's business as usual ... I don't put too much pressure on myself, I don't think about it too much," Rice told England's Lions' Den programme.

"It's another game of football, it's a semi-final and that's the only way I think about it."

"We're here for a reason, Holland are here for a reason and may the best team win. It's a game of football, we feel like we've got a really good bit of momentum on our side," he added.

The statistics underline Rice's contribution for England, covering more distance in the tournament than any other player at 63.9km (39.7 miles) over five matches, with the fourth most tackles and balls recovered.

Rice said it was all in a day's work. "This is our job, this is what we're conditioned for, 90-minute matches," he said.

"The bigger the games, the more driven I get and I just get extra spurts of energy ... they say I run too much but it's just a part of me, I love trying to help my teammates and I love winning the ball back."

Victory in Dortmund would send England into their second successive Euros final.

PERFORM OR PERISH

England and Netherlands look to find their groove in Euro semifinals

Dortmund, Germany - The route to the last four of Euro 2024 has been a rocky one for the Netherlands and England, and a few flashes of their best quality in the semi-final showdown might be enough for either side to make the final.

England's shootout win over Switzerland brought momentary euphoria, but it was more relief than redemption and Wednesday's date with the Dutch in Dortmund may require a transformation in attack for them to reach a third major tournament final, against France or Spain.

England have limped into the last four with tepid performances against opponents they should on paper have beaten easily, while the Netherlands have yo-yoed through and were 20 minutes from elimination before their quarter-final fightback against Turkey.

The Dutch dazzled in their last-eight rout of Romania but have had to scramble too, having fallen behind in three of their four scoring games. Their three wins were all in regulation time, however, compared to one for England, and the Dutch have scored nearly double their number of goals at the tournament.

The Netherlands have the edge in attack, their nine goals at



Cody Gakpo of the Netherlands and Harry Kane of England

Euro 2024 coming from 20 attempts on target against 15 by an England side spearheaded by the usually lethal but currently subdued Harry Kane, Phil Foden and Jude Bellingham.

England improved against the Swiss but their five expertly struck penalties rescued an attack that again looked frustrated,

with Bukayo Saka's 80th-minute equaliser their first shot on target.

Netherlands do not have that problem and will bank on the tournament's joint top scorer Cody Gakpo to and trouble an England defence that has been solid in contract with their jaded attack.

England manager Gareth

We're not able to score a load of goals at the moment. But again, we've played three teams that play back fives, very well organised defences

GARETH SOUTHGATE

Southgate declined to discuss the Dutch after his side's win over Switzerland, keeping media at



attention squarely on his players' resilience in handling the intensity of penalties.

England's troubles in front of goal were during matches he said were not normal, against crowded defences determined to stop them.

"These are national events with huge pressure, with really

young men in the middle of it. Our team has been under enormous pressure from the start. They're doing so well. So well," Southgate said.

"We're not able to score a load of goals at the moment. But again, we've played three teams that play back fives, very well organised defences."

Bellingham's past comments about Zwayer add to semifinal tension

Dortmund, Germany - German referee Felix Zwayer has been appointed to officiate the Euro 2024 semi-final between England and the Netherlands in Dortmund, and is an official which Jude Bellingham has previously clashed with at the same venue.

In 2021, when Bellingham was at Borussia Dortmund, the England midfielder received a fine of 40,000 euros (\$43,320) for comments he made regarding Zwayer following his side's 3-2 defeat by Bayern Munich.

Dortmund had appeals for a penalty waved away before Bundesliga leaders Bayern scored from the spot to take all three



Felix Zwayer

points against their nearest rivals, and Bellingham was furious when he spoke afterwards.

"You can look at a lot of the

Bellingham said at the time.

His comments referenced a period in Zwayer's career that he would have preferred to put be-

In 2005, referee Hoyzer was sentenced to two years and five months in prison for his role in a match-fixing scandal, and although Zwayer was one of those who reported his suspicions, he too was punished

decisions in the game. You give a referee, that has match-fixed before, the biggest game in Germany. What do you expect?"

hind him.

In 2005, referee Robert Hoyzer was sentenced to two years and five months in prison

for his role in a massive match-fixing scandal which rocked German football, and although Zwayer was one of those who reported his suspicions, he too was punished.

Zwayer was given a six-month ban by the German Football Federation (DFB) for accepting 300 euros from Hoyzer for agreeing to make incorrect decisions during a game while he was an assistant referee. He took a short break after Bellingham's comments, but since then has refereed the 2023 Nations League final and at Euro 2024 Zwayer has taken charge of three games before the semi-final.

Southgate is 'really good and exactly what we need', says England's Shaw

Blankenhain, Germany - Gareth Southgate is exactly what England need as a leader and he has instilled a sense of togetherness in a team who have grown stronger during Euro 2024 and have never been more motivated, defender Luke Shaw said on Monday.

Southgate is an outstanding man-manager who has the admiration of the players and was undeserving of criticism over England's stuttering run in Germany, Shaw said ahead of the semifinal against Netherlands on Wednesday.

"He really took us to the next level, no manager has really been as successful as him as what he's been doing recently," Shaw told a press conference.

"It's now another semifinal and for me and us as players we love him. I think he's really good, he's exactly what we need."

"He knows how to manage his players and what their needs are



Gareth Southgate with Luke Shaw

and it's clear as day for me ... the real togetherness that we have inside that squad is really around what Gareth created and is what helps us dig deep in these games."

Left back Shaw missed Eng-

land's first five games due to injury but is now fit, raring to go and keen to repay Southgate for standing by him.

He said he felt no pressure when he made his first appearance in the tournament with Eng-

land 12 minutes away from quarter-final elimination by the Swiss, and found it more nerve-wracking watching games from the bench.

Although England have underwhelmed with a string of mediocre performances in Germany, their recent record is remarkable, with Southgate taking his side to the semi-finals in three of the past four big tournaments.

Wednesday's match in Dortmund is a chance for England to reach their third major final and first on foreign soil, against Spain or France. Shaw said England's stuttering progress through the tournament had tested their resilience and the squad was as tight-knit as it had ever been.

"Whether you play good or bad football, the important thing is winning games," he said.

"Whether people like it or not, the way were playing, we're in the semi-final and that's all that matters."

Premier League pals ready for high-octane semifinal clash

Wolfsburg, Germany - A strong Premier League influence on both sides could ensure an exciting game when England take on the Netherlands in the European Championship semi-finals, Dutch defender Micky van de Ven said on Monday.

The vast majority of the English squad are home-based while the 26-man Dutch squad at the tournament includes seven players at Premier League clubs.

"If you see the quality of the players from both teams, I think you can expect that the level and the rhythm of the game will be really high," Van de Ven told a press conference. "Hopefully, it's us that will have more of the ball than England so that it is England who do the running, but I expect a high intensity game," said the Tottenham defender.

"We understand they have taken a lot of flak from the English media but they are in the semi-finals ... that says all it needs to about the English team. I think



Micky van de Ven

they play defensively but we will go and analysis them properly tonight, but what I can say is they have a lot of quality."

Cody Gakpo, who plays for Liverpool, said given the quality of players in the England setup he hoped for a really good game on Wednesday. Gakpo, 25, moved to the Premier League two seasons ago with mixed results, having been forced to play in a

variety of attacking roles, but at Euro 2024 has clearly shown he is best on the left wing. His three goals make him the tournament's joint top scorer.

"I was a left wing before (moving to Liverpool) and that's always been my preference but over the last one and a half years, the coach needed me to play somewhere else and I tried to do my best at it."

Goal rush or gridlock?

Attack-minded Colombia face resolute Uruguay in Copa America semifinal

Charlotte, US - Colombia coach Nestor Lorenzo says Los Cafeteros will not be satisfied unless they win the Copa America, with Uruguay next up for them in the semifinal.

Colombia are the in-form team at the tournament and are on a 27-match unbeaten run in after their dominant 5-0 victory over Panama in the last round.

They have won all but one of their games at the Copa America so far, drawing 1-1 with Brazil in the other to secure top spot in Group D.

James Rodriguez is undergoing a resurgence of form, and it might just yield a trophy for them.

Colombia have only won the Copa America once before, back in 2001, and despite their fine run of form, Lorenzo says their tournament run will only be a success if they end their 23-year wait for a second title.

"To have a good Copa America is to win it," Lorenzo said. "It is not an abstract concept. The objective is to win every game we play, and the boys know that."

"[We take it] game by game. The goal is to win the next game. The most important game is the next one."



James Rodriguez of Colombia and Federico Valverde of Uruguay



"We are confirming the importance of coming to the national team and wearing the shirt. They [the players] feel a great pride in being there and that is typical of players."

"In this team, they kill themselves for their teammates. We worked hard on that from the beginning. It's the way I feel about football from the technical direction."

Uruguay played out a goalless draw with Brazil before prevailing on penalties to book their place in the semi-finals.

Despite showing off their free-flowing play early in the group

In this team, they kill themselves for their teammates. We worked hard on that from the beginning.

NESTOR LORENZO

stage, with Federico Valverde playing a key role, their defensive solidity has pushed them forward in the competition as they have not conceded in any of their last three matches.

They now face off against the highest scorers in this year's Copa America, with head coach Marcelo Bielsa knowing they face a stern test.

"Colombia has many forwards, which is not common today," Bielsa said. "There is more than one option for each level without much difference."



Daniel Garnero

Paraguay sack coach Garnero

Asuncion, Paraguay - Argentine Daniel Garnero has been sacked as Paraguay coach following the team's dismal Copa America campaign, the Paraguayan Football Association (APF) announced on Monday.

"The APF announces the termination of the relationship with DT Daniel Garnero as head coach of the Paraguayan national team," the federation said in a statement on social media.

Paraguay were eliminated in the first round of the tournament after losing to Colombia 2-1, then 4-1 to Brazil and a 2-1 defeat by Costa Rica.

Garnero, 55, took over in September 2023, replacing compatriot Guillermo Barros Schelotto.

The team have also not performed well in the South American qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup, where they are seventh place in the 10-team standings, with five points from six games.

France name Olise in Olympic squad

Paris, France - Thierry Henry named Bayern Munich's new midfielder Michael Olise as well as former Arsenal forward Alexandre Lacazette in his final 18-man France squad for their home Olympics but Paris St Germain's Warren Zaire-Emery was left out.

The Olympic tournament features under 23 squads with teams allowed to include a maximum of three overage players. Henry has selected Lacazette, 33, Jean-Philippe Mateta, 27, and Loic Bade, 24, as his three overage squad members.

PSG's Zaire-Emery and Bradley Barcola had been included in the preliminary list but did appear on the final roster. Media reports in France said PSG



Michael Olise

were reluctant for their players to play in the competition, which falls outside the FIFA window.

France, who won gold at the 1984 Los Angeles Games, play their first Group A game against the U.S. on July 24, before facing Guinea and New Zealand.

France squad:

Goalkeepers: Obed Nkambadio, Guillaume Restes

Defenders: Loic Bade, Bradley Locko, Castello Lukeba, Soungoutou Magassa, Kiliann Sildillia, Adrien Truffert

Midfielders: Maghnes Akliouche, Joris Chotard, Desire Doue, Manu Kone, Enzo Millot.

Forwards: Rayan Cherki, Arnaud Kalimuendo, Alexandre Lacazette, Jean-Philippe Mateta, Michael Olise

Wolff explains Mercedes' return to top gear

London, England - Mercedes have won more races over the last two grand prix weekends than in the last two years and team boss Toto Wolff said the turnaround owed much to a moment when it all just clicked.

The former Formula One champions, winners of an unprecedented eight successive constructors' titles from 2014-2021, took only one win in 2022 and none in 2023 when Red Bull were rampant.

Then victory fell into the lap of George Russell in Austria, after Red Bull's triple champion Max Verstappen and McLaren's Lando Norris collided, and Lewis Hamilton won his home British GP last Sunday.

"Five races ago we weren't even contenders for the podium, which looked like the third year of non-performance, and then it clicked," Wolff told reporters after the race at Silverstone.

"Suddenly everything that didn't make sense, made sense and the results of the development di-



Lewis Hamilton celebrates his win at British GP

rection is like in the old days.

"We are finding performance, we are putting it on the car and it translates into lap time and that wasn't the case for the last two years."

Wolff attributed much of the

credit to technical director James Allison, who returned to a hands-on role last year as Mercedes grappled with a recalcitrant car that refused to perform as expected.

Allison said recently that the

team's performance breakthrough had left them wondering how they had been so 'dumb' in not understanding the car's problems earlier.

"There was a moment where, led by James, suddenly the data

made sense, and the gap," said Wolff. "Mainly the way we balance the car and how we could bring it in a better sweet spot. That was the main thing."

"It wasn't a miracle front wing, it is more the balance that we achieved."

Mercedes will have upgrades for the next two races in Hungary and Belgium.

Hamilton, 39, started on pole position at the Hungaroring last season.

Mercedes, fourth in the standings, and Ferrari, second behind Red Bull, are so far the only teams to have won with both their drivers in a season with six different winners already in 12 races.

"The car is starting to really, really come alive and feel great," said Hamilton, who is joining Ferrari next season, after his first win since 2021 and a record-extending 104th of his career.

"By no means is the car the quickest car on the grid right now," he said.

Oman's Al Harthy excited about maiden visit to Interlagos as FIA WEC resumes

Muscat - FIA World Endurance Championship racer Ahmad al Harthy will compete in South America for the first time in his motor racing career, as the Omani prepares to resume his 2024 campaign at the famous Interlagos circuit in Brazil - the Rolex 6 Hours of Sao Paulo.

Round five of the FIA WEC season this weekend brings a new challenge for the Omani who is determined to get his championship back on track with Team WRT teammates Maxime Martin and Valentino Rossi.

While there has been disappointment over the past couple of FIA WEC events, retirements

at both Spa-Francorchamps and in the 24 hours of Le Mans, Al Harthy's positivity and focus is perhaps greater than ever as he strives to mount a major challenge in the No.46 BMW M4 LMGT3.

Prior to the aforementioned frustrations in rounds three and four, Al Harthy, Martin and Rossi had celebrated their maiden LMGT3 podium finish at the 6 Hours of Imola in late April with a fantastic run to second position. In the season curtain-raiser in Qatar, the squad raced to fourth position.

Following the Imola event, the trio held fourth in the LMGT3



Ahmad al Harthy and teammates will be looking to mount a big challenge in the No.46 BMW M4 LMGT3 at the Rolex 6 Hours of Sao Paulo



It's a very exciting prospect to be visiting and racing in Brazil for the first time

AHMAD AL HARTHY

standings, underlining the strong start to the 2024 campaign which had been made.

Indeed, this showed the true level of performance and competitiveness of the squad and the chief aim is to return to that and deliver the same over the remaining four race meetings of the season - beginning this weekend in Brazil.

Practice gets underway on Friday and so there will be plenty to learn for the second-year FIA WEC racer as he tackles the 4.3km track - home, of course, to the Brazilian Grand Prix since the 1970s - for the first time.

Supported as always by pres-

tigious partners OQ, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omantel and BMW Oman, Al Harthy is looking forward to the challenge of Interlagos.

"It's a very exciting prospect to be visiting and racing in Brazil for the first time. Interlagos is a fantastic track with a lot of history, and it's going to be amazing to drive there for the first time. We're all determined to be back challenging for the podium, we've had two unfortunate weekends in FIA WEC over the last couple of events so we're all focused on turning that around," said Al Harthy.

Djokovic lashes out at fans for ‘disrespect’ after masterclass

London, England - Novak Djokovic angrily lashed out at Wimbledon fans on Monday following his three-set demolition job over young Dane Holger Rune in the fourth round.

After tentative performances in his two previous outings, seven-time champion Djokovic had appeared to be back to his best against Rune as he dished out a 6-3 6-4 6-2 masterclass to set up a quarter-final date with Australian Alex De Minaur.

But for the thousands of fans who had stuck around late into the night to watch the match under a closed Centre Court roof, it is unlikely their abiding memory from day eight of the championships will have anything to do with the dazzling backhands or forehands that were on show.

Instead, what they will remember is the astonishing words that flowed out of Djokovic's mouth during a bizarre post-match interview, in which he accused the crowd of disrespecting him.

Irritated by the fans who greeted Rune's occasional moments of brilliance with chants of "Ruuuune!", he ranted: "To all those people that have chosen to disrespect the player, in this case me, have a gooooooood night! Gooooooood night! Gooooooood night!"

When the interviewer suggested the fans had merely been chanting his rival's name, Djokovic disagreed.

"I don't accept that, no, no, no. I know there they were cheering



Listen, I've been on the tour for more than 20 years. So trust me, I know all the tricks. I know how it works. It's fine. It's fine

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

for Rune but that's an excuse to also boo. Listen, I've been on the tour for more than 20 years. So trust me, I know all the tricks. I know how it works. It's fine. It's fine," he added pointing to the stands.

Earlier world number four Alexander Zverev came unstuck against Taylor Fritz in a five-set thriller (4-6 6-7(4) 6-4 7-6(3) 6-3) despite being only two games away from securing a place in the last eight for the first time.

Experienced Croatian Donna Vekic ended Lula Sun's extraordinary Wimbledon journey on a damp Tuesday, battling past New Zealand's 123rd-ranked qualifier 5-7 6-4 6-1 to reach her maiden Grand Slam singles semi-final on her 43rd main draw appearance.

Svitolina: I feel honoured to be one of the faces of Ukraine

London, England - Sport, declared the Italian former football coach Arrigo Sacchi, is the most important of the least important things. Hence it tells barely a fraction of the story to say that Elina Svitolina is through to her second successive Wimbledon quarter-final, where she will face the 2022 champion Elena Rybakina. Context is all.

On Monday here the No.21 seed brushed aside Xinyu Wang 6-2, 6-1 in the fourth round, and as the No.2 Court crowd applauded her, she placed her palm over her heart in acknowledgment.

As she did so, her fingers brushed a black ribbon she wore upon her kit with the special permission of the All England Club.

Hours earlier, the 29-year-old Ukrainian had learned of the largest missile attack on her country in months. In an offensive targeting five cities, at least 31 people were killed and 125 injured, including many at the nation's largest medical centre for children, Okhmatdyt.

"It's a very difficult day for Ukrainian people," Svitolina said in the briefest of on-court post-match interviews. Overcome by emotion she had to pause, while the crowd applauded in warm empathy.

"It's very difficult to read the news and then just go on a court... extremely tough. So I'm happy I could play today and get a win."

Ever since she returned to the



Elina Svitolina

Tour from maternity leave in April last year, Svitolina's tennis has been fuelled by events in her homeland. Her Instagram bio at that time spelled it out: "Ukrainian in heart, in body, in blood."

That approach particularly informed her emotional, towering win over Victoria Azarenka here in last year's fourth round. Ultimately she would reach the semis, falling to eventual champion Marketa Vondrousova.

This year her progress through the draw has gone somewhat under the radar. After a tough first round three-setter against Magda Linette, she briskly dismissed 2022 quarter-finalist Jule Niemeier before seeing off the runner-up of the last two years Ons Jabeur with a tremendous third round display.

But Monday's fourth round was different, as Svitolina explained in an extraordinary and lengthy press conference here.

"Every Ukrainian is using their own way to raise awareness, to raise money, to help in every possible way they can," said Svitolina, an ambassador for United24, the official fundraising platform of Ukraine. "My way is through tennis."

"I try to focus on my job and what I can control. Just do what I can. At least my win today was a small light that brought a happy moment for Ukrainian people. I got so many messages. The people

are thankful for my performance."

"Normally you think all day about your match and how you will play. Since this morning I felt in a fog with my thoughts and my feelings inside... all those images in my head about the children, all those horrible things."

"I just wanted to be in my room. For us Ukrainians, it's very close to our heart and very sensitive emotions that we feel every single day."

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POWER COUPLE



Victoria and David Beckham recreate their wedding day photos...25 years later

EGGPLANT-HUED

ensembles

It was a wedding to remember. A 15th-century Irish castle outside Dublin decorated in the theme of Robin Hood. A verdant tiered wedding cake piled high with fondant leaves and apples — designed by British artist Damien Hirst — cut ceremoniously with a saber.

Two baroque thrones for the bride and groom. But perhaps the most memorable detail of all - the newlyweds dressed in matching purple Antonio Berardi outfits for their reception.

This was, of course, the holy union of Victoria and David Beckham. The British power couple got hitched in 1999,



It just seemed like a really good idea at the time, you know? I think it was a naïveté then. We didn't know about fashion. We were just having fun with it, which, to be honest with you, is kind of the way it should be

VICTORIA BECKHAM

fusing the worlds of fashion and football forever. While their marriage has endured 25 years later, the pair have come to regret some of the minor details of their big day. Specifically, their eggplant-hued ensembles.

"I even had a top hat in purple," David said during an interview with BBC Radio 4. "What was I thinking? I looked like the guys out of 'Dumb and Dumber.'"

Victoria agreed. "It just seemed like a really good idea at the time, you know?" She told Jimmy Fallon in 2021. "I think it was a naïveté then. We didn't know about fashion.



The Beckhams in 1999

We were just having fun with it, which, to be honest with you, is kind of the way it should be."

But time heals all wounds, as was demonstrated when the couple dug out their original reception looks in celebration of their silver wedding anniversary. In photos shared on Instagram, Victoria and David posed in their purple glad rags in front of their wedding day thrones. "Yep, still got it!" The pair wrote. "Can't believe it's been 25 years and they still fit!"

Fans fawned at the sartorial throwback. "When people say iconic this is what they should be referencing," one wrote. "Wearing purple on your wedding day. Only the Beckhams could get away with that," chimed another.

There was one other similarity too. Despite the passing of a quarter of a century, the pair are still gazing lovingly into each other's eyes, looking positively plum.

(Courtesy: cnn.com)

Casual wedding guest outfits

Casual wedding attire is more formal than jeans and sneakers but less formal than a full-suiting look," says NYC-based wardrobe stylist and fashion editor Lizzy Rosenberg. "It's something that you can see yourself wearing on more than one occasion, not just this specific event," adds Christina Wettstein, co-founder of the bridal market pop-up Melange de Blanc and Coterie White. "I think a lot of times formal attire requires tailoring, alterations and steaming, while casual attire should be more stress free," she says.

"Casual dress codes often apply to unconventional wedding

venues such as beaches, gardens or cafés," says Alisa Chen, fashion editor at AW Bridal.

Cocktail evening wedding guest outfits

"Cocktail wedding attire suggests a slightly more formal dress code, typically indicating semiformal attire," Uter says. "Women could wear a cocktail dress or a dressy skirt and top, while men might opt for a suit and tie or dress pants paired with a sport coat."

For Kimberly Marcoux, co-founder of Melange de Blanc and Coterie White, a cocktail attire dress code means that you can have a little more fun with your outfit. "Cocktail attire, to me, means short, playful and even colour," she says. "You're always safe with a little black dress, but who doesn't love a pink mini with feathers or some exaggerated details like a flower."

Similarly, celebrity stylist Micaela Erlanger says, "Wear a party dress, and dress it up with heels and fun jewellery. You can also opt for a fun jumpsuit or chic pantsuit."

WINNERS OF 'Fun with Fashion' quiz

G Mahalakshmi
Shakil Narmawala

(Answer: Glam by Maoosam boutique is located in Al Qurum)

Call 9981981 to collect your prize

The 77th Tony Awards held last month was also a showcase of some explicit styles for 2024 as the fashion icons showed up with designs that were wearable as well as scored high on ‘wow factor’

(Inputs: courtesy Vanity Fair, Instyle)

Three photographs of celebrities in formal gowns. On the left, a woman in a black dress with a large circular cutout pattern. In the center, a woman in a long, shimmering, off-the-shoulder gown with a long train and a small black clutch. On the right, a woman in a black and white floral patterned dress.

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Audra McDonald

Vivienne and Angelina Jolie

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