

H M's visit to bolster bilateral ties

Our Correspondent
Muscat

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's state visit to Kuwait today and his meeting with Sheikh Mishal al Ahmad al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, marks a significant step in strengthening the long-standing bilateral relations between Oman and Kuwait.

The visit underscores the shared goals between the two nations, known for their role-model status in handling regional and global issues with a similar diplomatic stance.

Jasem Mohamed al Budaiwi, Secretary-General of GCC, stated that His Majesty the Sultan's visit is pivotal for enhancing the bonds of brotherhood among GCC countries and advancing Gulf integration. "It is an important building block in the path of joint Gulf action."

Dr Saleh bin Amer al



Thriving economic cooperation is evident in growing partnerships across various sectors

FAISAL AL RAWAS

Kharousi, Oman's Ambassador to Kuwait, highlighted the visit's critical role in reinforcing the exceptional existing bilateral relations across various sectors. He pointed out a surge in Kuwaiti trade and investments in Oman, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing, real estate, hospitality, commerce and financial



services. "There is continuous coordination on several regional and international issues, as both countries share a similar foreign policy and are committed to fostering peace and rejecting violence," he added.

During the visit, several memorandums of understanding and executive programmes

in economic, cultural and artistic fields are expected to be signed, indicating deeper economic and cultural engagement. Additionally, the ambassador informed of an increase in Kuwaiti tourism to Oman, with the number of visitors rising from 32,000 in 2022 to 40,000 in 2023.

Kuwaiti journalist Ahmed al Jarallah considers the visit a momentous occasion to cement fraternal ties. "Kuwait is an important investor in Oman. The visit reflects the significant potential for further beneficial agreements."

National Centre for Statistics and Information data indicates



The state visit is an important building block in the path of joint Gulf action

JASEM AL BUDAIWI

a robust increase in trade and investment between the two nations. In 2023, the volume of trade surged 211% to approximately RO876.72mn from RO281.85mn in 2022. Direct investments from Kuwait amounted to RO830.9mn at the end of 2023. Omani exports grew 24.2% to RO133.39mn,

while imports from Kuwait saw a dramatic increase of 410% to RO669.46mn.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, commended the thriving economic cooperation, which transcends traditional friendship and is evident in the growing partnerships across various sectors, including industry, real estate, mining, livestock, fisheries, food industries and tourism. "The efforts of the private sector in both countries to capitalise on investment opportunities are strengthening economic ties and expanding areas of cooperation and mutual investment," he stated.

The state visit will not only reinforce the strong diplomatic ties between Oman and Kuwait but also set the stage for deeper economic integration and cooperative ventures that promise prosperity for both nations.

Agreement worth RO125mn signed for Ghubrah 3 desalination plant

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Nama Power and Water Procurement signed an agreement worth RO125mn with a consortium of three local and international companies for the Ghubrah 3 desalination plant. Phase 3 of the project will see implementation of the largest desalination plant and one of the most prominent developments in the sultanate's water sector.

The plant is expected to commence operations in the first quarter of 2027 and will represent a significant step towards enhancing Oman's water security, its capacity accounting for approximately 20% of the contracted capacity in the main water network.

The plant will operate with the latest water desalination technologies - utilising reverse osmosis technology - contributing to enhancing electricity consumption efficiency and increasing desalinated water production capacity to meet current and future population growth requirements.

Spread over more than 70,000sqm, the RO125mn plant will have production capacity of 300,000m³/day of desalinated water and a potable water tank of 45,000m³ capacity.

Capital Desalination Company



Production capacity 300,000m ³ /day	Project area 70,000sqm	Potable water tank 45,000m ³
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- a consortium of GS Inima, a Spanish company engaged in water purification projects for over 50 years, Saudi-based Jemaih Energy and Water Company and Oman's Sogex Company - will undertake construction of the plant.

Abdulaziz bin Saeed al

Shithani, Chairman of Board of Directors of Nama Power and Water Procurement, and Marta Verde, Chairperson of Board of Directors of Capital Desalination Company, signed the agreement under the patronage of H E Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and

Water Resources.

On the occasion, Ahmed bin Salem bin Mohammed al Abri, Acting CEO of Nama Power and Water Procurement, stated that the agreement confirms the company's commitment to meeting the growing demand for water and electricity, implementing

new projects to achieve energy security, and providing potable water by expanding the production of energy and desalinated water economically.

Marta expressed pleasure in being a partner in developing energy and water projects in Oman and valued Nama Power and Water Procurement's trust in the company to develop an important project like the Ghubrah 3 desalination plant.

She emphasised GS Inima's commitment to providing the most efficient solutions in the project with its extensive experience in water desalination using the latest and most sustainable technologies. The company has constructed over 30 plants worldwide in the last 50 years and provided its expertise in designing and construction for the Barka Phase 5 desalination project.

Nama Power and Water Procurement is the exclusive purchaser of all electricity and desalinated water production projects in the sultanate, currently contracting with 13 desalination plants and 15 power plants. The company is also developing a range of renewable energy projects using solar and wind energy to achieve the targets of Vision Oman 2040 and achieve the sultanate's net-zero emissions goal by 2050.

Egypt to join South Africa's ICJ genocide case against Israel

Cairo, Egypt - Egypt announced it will formally join the lawsuit filed by South Africa against Israel at International Court of Justice (ICJ) which accuses Israel of violating its obligations under the Genocide Convention in the Gaza Strip.

In a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt said the move follows escalating Israeli aggression against Palestinian civilians. 'It comes in light of the worsening severity and scope of Israeli attacks against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, and the continued perpetration of systematic practices against the Palestinian people, including direct targeting of civilians and destruction of infrastructure in the strip, and pushing Palestinians to flee,' the ministry stated.

Egypt said it is calling on Israel to comply with its obligations as the occupying power and to implement the provisional measures issued by ICJ, which require ensuring access to humanitarian and relief aid in a manner that meets the needs of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Guterres urges halt

On Sunday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged an immediate halt to the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, the return of hostages and a "surge" in hu-

At least 35,034 Palestinians have been killed and 78,755 wounded in Israel's military offensive in Gaza

manitarian aid to the besieged Palestinian territory.

"I repeat my call, the world's call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages and an immediate surge in humanitarian aid. But a ceasefire will only be the start. It will be a long road back from the devastation and trauma of this war," Guterres said in his address to an international donors' conference in Kuwait.

Israel sent tanks into eastern Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip early on Sunday, after a night of heavy aerial and ground bombardments, killing 19 people and wounding dozens of others, health officials said. At least 35,034 Palestinians have been killed and 78,755 wounded in Israel's military offensive in Gaza, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

See also [Page 09](#)

Daymaniyat Islands to get underwater military museum

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has embarked on a pioneering project of its first underwater military museum in Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve in South Batinah. The groundbreaking project is a collaboration between Environment Authority and Ministry of Defence.

An Environment Authority official informed that the project involves placing decommissioned military equipment, including seven Man Atlas trucks and a Skyvan aircraft, underwater near Daymaniyat Islands. The site was chosen due to its proximity to coral reefs, which is conducive to



accelerated reef growth and marine habitation.

The islands are recognised as one of Oman's crucial locations for coral reefs, scuba diving and artisanal fishing, benefiting local fishermen from Muscat and

South Batinah in particular.

The primary objective of this innovative initiative is to increase coral reef growth and encourage proliferation of marine life. It aims to rehabilitate and expand coral reef habitats, helping to offset the



environmental damage caused by both natural events and human activities. By creating a new ecosystem that mimics natural coral reefs, the initiative seeks to promote a sustainable environment that supports ma-

rine biodiversity.

Additionally, the project is designed to boost marine tourism by providing a unique attraction for tourists and diving enthusiasts. It is expected to relieve pressure on existing coral reef sites

within the nature reserve and attract a diverse range of marine species to the area.

The underwater museum will merge historical preservation with marine conservation, offering an educational and engaging experience for visitors.

Hamad al Ruzaiqi, Head of Coastal Areas Department at Environment Authority, said, "This initiative seeks to bolster eco-tourism by establishing a unique tourist attraction catered to diving enthusiasts, thereby enhancing Oman's tourism sector. The museum will open its doors to diving enthusiasts in July. We anticipate witnessing coral reefs flourish within the next six months."



03
Dakhliyah allocates RO5mn for development projects



15
Flamboyant feathers: Dressed to impressed

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Oman wins gold, silver at first MENA badminton Special Olympics

Our Correspondent

Muscat

Oman Special Olympics team clinched gold and silver medals at the inaugural Special Olympics MENA's Sub-Regional Gulf Badminton Competition held in Abu Dhabi, UAE, from May 9 to May 13.

Abdullah bin Mana al Noubi secured first place following a tough match against a Qatari competitor.

Fawaz bin Faraj Beit Medit defeated a Bahraini player to claimed a silver.

The competition brought together athletes from across the Gulf region, fostering camaraderie and sportsmanship.

Representatives of Special

Olympics programmes in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE, besides Oman, attended the opening ceremony held in Yas Island on May 9.

Commenting on the event's impact, Ayman Abdel Wahab, Special Olympics Regional President for MENA, said, "Bringing together more than 25 badminton athletes from across the Gulf to compete in Abu Dhabi is a significant addition to the Special Olympics movement."

He highlighted the positive influence of sports on athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities, emphasising that such activities promote inclusion, empowerment and equality, which he described as "fundamental rights for all".

ETHICS, ERADICATION, ENVIRONMENT...

Environment Authority has eliminated nearly 1mn invasive birds in a national campaign started in December 2022. Is it the right way to deal with the problem of invasive species? What other measures can be adopted to combat invasive birds? Here is what *Muscat Daily* said -

Mohammad Khalfan
Businessman

While the elimination of invasive birds may seem like a straightforward solution, it raises concerns about ecological balance and animal welfare. While necessary in some cases, it's crucial to consider alternative methods such as habitat modification or deterrents to discourage birds without resorting to culling.

Anwar Khan
Private sector employee

This is not the right method. Birds and animals own Earth as much as we do. By addressing the root causes of invasive bird populations, such as food availability and nesting sites, we can achieve a good outcome without killing.

Bijesh Mehta
HR consultant

Mass elimination of invasive birds raises ethical and environmental questions. Personally, I do not approve of it. While short-term solutions may provide immediate relief, long-term strategies should focus on a holistic approach. Collaborative efforts involving scientists, Environment Society of Oman, bird lovers and local communities are essential for developing effective and humane solutions.

Ruskeen S
Private sector employee

Birds are the most beautiful creatures on Earth. Each and every species is important to our environment.

Environment Authority's initiative against invasive birds is an achievement to safeguard our own birds and creatures. There is no other way to combat these once they create colonies of their own; that is a disaster for indigenous species. Environment Authority should



adopt measures to raise the eagle population which can combat invasive birds.

Sharifa al Badi
PR and communications adviser

I read a research paper on crops. Pests are a natural part of nature that tend to feed on these crops, and there are natural remedies to deal with these, like neem oil. When we spray pesticides, we kill these pests. However, nature creates even stronger pests, hence we create stronger or worse pesticides, and the situation doesn't get better. First, we must understand why and learn about the behaviour of these birds and how we can teach ourselves to deal with them in the right way, becoming their ally, not their enemy. Moreover, we need to learn about natural, noninvasive ways to deal with these birds. This could be through trapping and releasing them in a confined ecosystem that allows them to thrive without

harming other species. Many of these birds form communities that actually have a very interesting communication system. In addition, various ministries can meet to come up with creative, sustainable solutions to deal with the issue from the root cause.

Sundaramany Mani
Private sector employee

I remember hearing about culling overpopulated, unhealthy cows earlier in the Dhofar mountains. The line of thinking and policy doesn't seem to have changed.

Sheikh Arif
Private sector employee

It looks like the people making this decision don't have sufficient education in this area. They have never heard of ethics and other ways of dealing with these birds. They can learn more by at least Googling it.

Manas Ranjan Dasmohapatra
Finance executive

Eliminating 1mn invasive birds may address immediate threats, but the effectiveness and ethics of such mass eradication efforts warrant scrutiny. Sustainable solutions should prioritise prevention through stricter regulations on exotic species trade and public awareness campaigns. Habitat restoration and management strategies can make environments less hospitable to invasive species while preserving native biodiversity. Implementing biological control methods, such as introducing natural predators or utilising sterilisation techniques, could help manage populations without large-scale culling. Additionally, fostering international cooperation and research partnerships can enhance the understanding and management of invasive species on a global scale. Balancing eradication with conservation ethics, scientific rigour and long-term ecological considerations is essential to combating invasive birds effectively.



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NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Despite efforts of authorities for the safety of hikers, unfortunate accidents and even deaths continue to occur. What measures should be taken to enhance safety of hikers and reduce outdoor accidents in recreational areas?

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

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

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Dakhliyah allocates R05mn for development projects

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dakhliyah governorate has allocated tenders worth R05mn to initiate various development projects, among which is the establishment of the Nizwa Public Park.

According to a statement released by the Dakhliyah Governor's Office, the fifth meeting of the Internal Tenders Committee for the year 2024 was convened on Sunday under the committee's chairman Hilal bin Saeed al Hajri, the Governor of Dakhliyah.

The committee, along with its members, decided to award tenders for development projects in the municipal sector, exceeding a total value of R05mn. The initiative is part of the ongoing efforts by the Dakhliyah governorate to enhance and expand municipal services across all regions.

The scope of these projects involves diverse plans, including the establishment of the Nizwa Public Park, the design and implementation of internal roads in



select areas of the governorate, and the procurement of design consultancy services.

Additionally, the projects involve the installation of lighting poles along roads, with special attention given to illuminating the Adam-Sinaw Road.

The design of the Nizwa Public Park is tailored to cater to all age groups and draws inspiration from nature, integrating various

amenities such as children's playgrounds, sports facilities, picnic and fitness areas, as well as spaces for potential investment projects. Notably, the design features a fountain, ample seating arrangements, functional gardens for activities, a marketplace for local producers, and a simulated forest environment with tree houses, providing a serene and enjoyable atmosphere for recreational activities.

Moreover, an educational medicinal garden has been incorporated into the park, showcasing medicinal plants to promote learning and meditation, thus catering to the diverse cultural needs of the community. The design also includes a relaxation courtyard, a library, and other complementary components to enrich the park experience.

Rustaq Wildlife Reserve: A biodiversity hotspot and adventure tourism destination

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Rustaq Wildlife Reserve in South Batinah governorate is emerging as a key destination for adventure and nature tourism, for an impressive array of over 110 plant and tree species found within the region.

This was revealed by Ibrahim bin Abdullah al Saadi, an environmental systems specialist at the Environment Authority in South Batinah.

The terrain includes notable geographical features such as Wadi Bani Awf, Wadi al Sahtan, Wadi al Sin, Wadi Quta, Mount Dhawi, and the western mountain of Wadi Bani Kharous, with elevations surpassing 2,000m.

These locations not only offer stunning natural panoramas but also cater to those interested in hiking, mountain climbing, and experiencing the rugged beauty of Oman's landscape.

Adventure tourism is gaining momentum in the reserve with areas such as Wadi Bani Awf and the picturesque villages of



Balad Sayt, Hat and Birkat al Sharaf in the wilayat of Rustaq - overlooking Jebel Shams - serving as scenic routes that attract both domestic and international visitors. These paths connect South Batinah and Dakhliyah governorates.

The Rustaq Wildlife Reserve is also a sanctuary for wildlife, including six species of wild mammals such as Arabian ibex and mountain fox, Arabian lynx, white-tailed mongoose, hedgehog and 15 species of birds such as eagles and ospreys that thrive

in high altitudes. Additionally, the vegetation within the reserve includes several species listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's red list, reflecting both the ecological value and the conservation importance of the area. Covering 254sqkm, the reserve not only supports a diverse range of flora and fauna but also contributes significantly to the local economy through ecotourism, underlining its dual role in conservation and community development.

Sohar University students develop smart bracelet for detection of epileptic seizures

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Two students - Aisha al Omaria and Lamia al Saadiya - from Sohar University, have developed a smart bracelet for detection of epileptic seizures. The bracelet is designed to assist patients in receiving prompt medical aid during severe epileptic episodes.

Aisha Salim al Omaria explained that the bracelet utilises wearable IoT technology to detect epileptic seizures by monitoring two key indicators: Muscle electrical activity and heart rate.

Upon detecting a seizure, it promptly sends wireless alerts to caregivers via phone calls, text messages, and audible alerts. Additionally, an accompanying mobile application allows for the monitoring of vital signs and seizure occurrences.

The development of the smart bracelet involved thorough planning, research, and analysis of market needs and available technologies. This was followed by design and development phases, including the creation of electronic components, software, and applications necessary for seizure detection. It underwent rigorous testing on a selected group of patients to ensure its effectiveness and accuracy.

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Announcement (No. 3/2024)

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion aims to empower Omani industries towards the characteristics adoption of the Fourth Industrial Revolution by improving their production processes and adopting advanced technology.

Announcing the launch of phase one of the project 'To Empower Omani Factories: Fourth Industrial Revolution Technologies and Digital Maturity Assessment' (Smart Factory).

Companies interested in adopting AI applications and undergoing digital maturity assessment are requested to fill out the registration and self-assessment form by May 23, 2024.

A specific number of factories will be selected based on digital maturity indicators and the priority of targeted sectors. For further inquiries, please contact us via the following email:

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*Rates as on May 12 Source: xe.com	

BRIEFS

China's exports grow more than expected in April

Chinese exports increased more than the market forecast in April, shifting from a decline in March, according to data released by the government.

China's overseas shipments grew 1.5% year-on-year to \$292.4bn in April, above the market expectation of a 1% hike, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

Imports surged 8.4% from last year to \$220.1bn, reversing from March's 1.9% decrease.

China's trade surplus dropped to \$72.4bn from \$86.5bn in the same period last year.

In the first four months of the year, China saw a \$255.7bn surplus, with exports and imports rising by 1.5% and 3.2%, respectively.

Oman's project awards surge 260% to \$3.3bn in Q1: Report

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The total value of projects awarded in Oman during the first quarter of 2024 reached \$3.325bn, marking a significant surge of 260% compared to the \$922mn worth of projects awarded in Q1 2023, according to the GCC Projects Market Report released by Kuwait-based Kamco Investment.

The report noted that the Omani projects market recorded the fastest growth in the GCC in terms of the value of contract awards in the first quarter of this year. The growth in Oman's contract awards during the first quarter remained notably higher than the overall growth in the GCC's contract awards.

Robust growth in GCC project awards despite challenges

Defying regional and global geopolitical challenges, GCC project awards increased by 20.3% year-on-year during Q1 2024, reaching \$45bn compared to \$37.4bn during Q1 2023.

The trend also defies oil production cutbacks, which have all weighed on economic growth in the region, as seen from the



GCC project market index for upcoming contracts as of April 2024 reached \$1.4tn. Saudi Arabia comprised lion's share of upcoming GCC projects (50.2% or \$709bn), followed by UAE, which has \$316.1bn, and Oman with estimated upcoming projects at \$172.1bn

IMF's latest forecast that slashed GCC economic growth forecast for 2024 to 2.4% from its previous forecast of 3.7%.

'The consistently elevated trend in GCC contract awards

underlines the entrenched resolve of GCC governments to see through their diversification projects, as well as state funding support,' Kamco Investment said in its report.

Growth in GCC project awards was evenly distributed during Q1 2024, as three out of the six countries in the GCC recorded year-on-year growth in their project awards, including

two of the largest project markets in the region, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, while the remaining three countries witnessed declines.

Saudi Arabia alone comprised more than half of the contracts awarded in the GCC region during Q1 2024, with aggregate awards of \$23.5bn, against \$19.1bn in Q1 2023, shrugging off underwhelming GDP growth projections by the IMF and continuing its strong non-oil growth rate run.

Comparatively, total contracts awarded in the UAE witnessed a marginal dip of 1% year-on-year to reach \$11.5bn during Q1 2024, compared to \$11.6bn in Q1 2023. On the other hand, the aggregate value of contracts for Qatar jumped 68.5% year-on-year during Q1 2024 to reach \$6.1bn against \$3.6bn in Q1 2023, the report showed.

In terms of sectors, the first quarter witnessed a jump in the value of projects awarded in the oil and gas sectors. Total GCC gas sector contracts awarded during the quarter jumped more than 19 times to reach \$7.4bn, compared to \$382mn during Q1 2023.

On the other hand, the total value of contracts awarded in the GCC oil sector increased nearly seven times to reach \$9bn during the same period, making the sector the biggest contributor in terms of absolute growth in the value of contracts awarded in the GCC region during the quarter.

Projects market outlook

According to MEED Projects data cited by Kamco Investment in its report, the GCC project market index for upcoming contracts as of April 2024 reached \$1.4tn. Saudi Arabia comprised the lion's share of upcoming GCC projects (50.2% or \$709bn), followed by the UAE, which has \$316.1bn, and Oman with estimated upcoming projects at \$172.1bn.

In terms of sector representation, the construction sector comprised the largest sector, 33.5% or \$462.4bn, of upcoming projects in the GCC, followed by the transport sector, which comprised 20.5% or \$283bn of upcoming projects in the region.

Comparatively, the total value of GCC project market index for ongoing projects as of April 2024 stood at \$1.3tn, of which Saudi Arabia comprised 54.4% (\$683.3bn), followed by the UAE and Kuwait, each representing 30.9% and 5.9%, respectively.



Intaj Suhar signs partnership deals with manufacturing companies

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Aligned with the efforts of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) to support local industries and maximise local value addition, Intaj Suhar – affiliated to the Industrial Innovation Academy – signed cooperation agreements with Muna Noor Plastic Industries, Areej Vegetable Oils and Derivatives,

Techno Plastic Industry, and National Aluminum Products Company.

The agreements aim at enhancing cooperation between Intaj Suhar and the companies in the fields of mould manufacturing, precision components manufacturing and reverse engineering.

In a press statement, Eng Majid al Hinai, General Manager of Intaj Suhar for Advanced Man-

ufacturing, said, "The agreements are poised to play a key role in enabling and supporting the local factories and companies in manufacturing cost effective moulds for production processes, thereby reducing production costs incurred by importing such moulds from overseas markets."

The company currently comprises three main units, namely, plastic technology and moulds manufacturing centre, advanced

manufacturing centre, and a unit for reverse engineering and machinery. The objectives of Intaj Suhar include developing technological skills and capabilities; prototyping, product and tools designing and manufacturing; advanced training and HR development; enhancing ICV and promoting economic diversification; fostering job creation; and providing opportunities for the SMEs in the industrial sector.

Oman Post and Asyad Express showcase advanced logistics

Muscat – Oman Post and Asyad Express, part of Asyad Group, will showcase advanced logistics and postal capabilities at the Seamless Middle East 2024 Exhibition, which will be held in Dubai from May 14 to May 16.

This participation is in line with the ongoing efforts to expand the global footprint of Oman Post and Asyad Express and enhance the reach of the services across international markets.

Aiming to be one of the leaders in providing courier and postal services in the region, Oman Post and Asyad Express will showcase its state-of-the-art Fulfillment Center, cutting-edge warehousing solutions, efficient in-house customs clearances, other value added services and diverse postal services and innovative solutions for individuals and corporates.

Meeting with peers and like-minded professionals from the Middle East will provide the opportunities to enhance and strengthen the company's strategic partnerships, according to a press release.

The exhibition serves as a fruitful avenue for networking



Participation of Oman Post and Asyad Express in Seamless Middle East 2024 is in line with ongoing efforts to expand their global footprint and enhance reach across markets

with industry leaders and stakeholders, attracting a wide array of e-commerce providers and retailers. With over 800 speakers, the event will delve into the latest trends, market disruptions, and technologies shaping the payments, fintech, retail, e-commerce, and logistics landscapes. Exclusive sessions will be held on Global Digital Commerce, the Intelligent Market, CX & Engagement, and Conversational AI.

Qatar Economic Forum 2024 to witness 18 international MoUs

Doha, Qatar – The Chairperson of the Permanent Supreme Committee Organizing the Qatar Economic Forum 2024 (QEF), Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani, revealed that the fourth edition of the forum will witness the signing of 20 major memorandums of understanding (MoUs), including 18 international ones, compared to the 10 MoUs signed in the previous edition.

Qatar Economic Forum 2024 will take place from May 14th to

May 16th in Doha.

Addressing a press conference on Sunday, Thani stated that the forum has been experiencing a qualitative shift from one session to another, as reflected in the increased number of international agreements unveiled on the platform. He added that the forum is garnering significant interest from political and economic actors on the global stage.

He anticipates 2,300 participants at the forum, including



1,300 active leaders from international companies and organisations, alongside 200 media

outlets, most of which are foreign.

Describing the Qatar Eco-

nomic Forum as the fastest-growing in terms of regional and international participation, he noted that discussions over the three days will focus on geopolitics, globalisation, trade, energy transformation, technological innovation, business foresight, investment, sports, and entertainment.

Thani explained that attendance at the Qatar Economic Forum will be by personal invitation due to the overwhelming number of requests, with mea-

sures taken by the organising committee to accommodate as many participants as possible through digital platforms.

CEO of Media City Qatar and head of the media team in the Permanent Supreme Committee Organizing the Qatar Economic Forum, Jassim Mohammed al Khouri, commended the strategic partnership with Bloomberg Media Group, expecting over 100 representatives from global and international media outlets.

In turn, Executive Director of

the Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Head of the Logistics Team in the Supreme Permanent Committee Organizing the Qatar Economic Forum, Mubarak bin Aylan al Kuwari, announced that the registration process has been streamlined and facilitated through a unified system, with entry cards issued to all participants to ensure smooth and efficient entry to the forum.

QNA

Global debt hits record high at \$315tn

Eleanor Butler

Global debt rose by around \$1.3tn in the first three months of this year, reaching a new record high of \$315tn, according to a new report by The Institute of International Finance (IIF).

After three consecutive quarters of decline, the global debt-to-GDP ratio resumed its upward trajectory from January to March.

Emerging markets are driving the trend, claimed the IIF, with the biggest increases coming from China, India and Mexico.

Mature markets, whilst they recorded smaller increases, nonetheless have higher levels of indebtedness compared with emerging economies.

The IIF counts the US, the Euro Area, Japan, and the UK as mature markets.

Solely for developed economies, the largest increases in debt this quarter were recorded in the US and Japan, followed by Ireland and Canada. Declines were observed in Switzerland and Germany.

High interest rates strain state budgets
Looking at debt by sector, government spending drove up the totals in mature markets this



Countries can be pushed further into debt because of high interest rates but large piles of debt also increase interest fees, meaning that nations can find themselves stuck in a vicious circle

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quarter as interest rates remain historically high.

Elevated rates can increase state debt as the cost of borrowing increases for governments, running down state budgets.

A stronger performance in other sectors, however, miti-

gated state debt in several developed economies, according to the IIF.

"Total debt levels in mature markets remained broadly stable in Q1, as a reduction in debt by households and non-financial corporations offset the contin-

ued rise in government and financial sector indebtedness."

Trade tensions could fuel inflation

Looking forward, the group also warned that global debt could be further inflated because of "rising trade friction and geopolitical tensions".

It specifically noted that mass exports of green technology from China, which have been fuelling protectionist tendencies in Europe, could drive up debt.

If Europe decides to impose tariffs of Chinese products essential to the green transition, this will likely push up prices for imported and domestic goods.

This could in turn fuel wider inflation, also boosted by a global scramble for limited raw materials.

Another debt risk, according to the IIF, is that a change in EU monetary policy could strengthen the dollar. This means that it would be more expensive for countries to repay dollar-denominated debts.

"An abrupt policy shift ... could trigger a USD rally, drive further capital flight to U.S. assets, and exert additional pressure on the balance sheets of non-US borrowers with significant USD debt," said the IIF.

A call for fiscal prudence

Countries can be pushed further into debt because of high interest rates but large piles of debt also increase interest fees, meaning that nations can find themselves stuck in a vicious circle.

Last month, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), like the IIF, sounded the alarm bell over debt burdens.

"Countries need decisive efforts to safeguard sustainable public finances and rebuild fiscal buffers," the group warned.

"Governments should immediately phase out legacies of crisis-era fiscal policy, including energy subsidies, and pursue reforms to curb rising spending while protecting the most vulnerable. Advanced economies with ageing populations should contain spending pressures for health and pensions through entitlement reforms and other measures."

As more than 50 countries hold significant elections during 2024, governments are leaning towards tax-cutting, cash-splashing policies.

When trying to please voters, the IMF warns that policy makers shouldn't lose sight of long-term goals.
(Source: Euronews.com)

ECB signals 'plausible' June rate cut

Frankfurt, Germany - The latest minutes from the European Central Bank (ECB) meeting indicated a rising chance for easing monetary policy in June. While a majority support maintaining current rates, a few members already advocated for immediate cuts in April, Euronews.com reported.

The monetary policy accounts of the latest European Central Bank's meeting in April indicated that the Governing Council finds it "plausible" to begin easing monetary policy restrictions in the upcoming June meeting.

As per the Euronews.com report, the April meeting minutes highlighted that markets had effectively digested the ECB's communications, with a general preparedness for a potential rate cut in June, should incoming data support the current economic projections.

A broad consensus among the members underscored the prudence of waiting until the next monetary policy meeting. This would allow the Council to assess additional evidence and bolster confidence in a timely and sustained reversion of inflation to its target levels.

Voting patterns revealed a



strong majority in favour of Chief Economist Philip Lane's recommendation to keep the three principal ECB interest rates unchanged. This majority expressed a growing confidence in economic forecasts, reinforcing their belief that the disinflationary trend was ongoing.

However, a minority of members were ready to endorse a rate reduction even at the current meeting, as the extent of policy tightening further increased due to the decline in the expected inflation.

They argued that the risks of not meeting the inflation target—potentially necessitating a steep corrective action later.

Despite this minority view, the prevailing sentiment within the Governing Council emphasised the merits of deferring any rate adjustments until June. This approach would allow for a more informed decision based on fresh evidence or any emerging risks, including those stemming from possible escalations in geopolitical tensions.

Recent communications from

the ECB have solidified market expectations regarding the timing of the initial rate cut. Nonetheless, uncertainties about future policy directions remain significant.

ECB Vice-Chair of the Supervisory Board, Frank Elderson, commented on Friday that a June rate reduction is likely, provided the economic outlook remains stable. He also noted the absence of any firm commitments regarding subsequent rate adjustments beyond June.

US consumer sentiment shows biggest drop in nearly 3 years

Terry Lane

US consumer sentiment fell sharply in May, bringing the Michigan Consumer Sentiment Index to its lowest level in six months. The closely watched index dropped nearly 10 points from the last reading in April to 67.4, the lowest since November.

The drop comes after the survey of consumer optimism had moved within a three-point range over the previous four months.

It is the largest decline in the index in about three years, and fell far short of the 76.0 reading that economists surveyed by the Wall Street Journal and Dow Jones Newswires expected.

"While consumers had been reserving judgment for the past few months, they now perceive negative developments on a number of dimensions. They expressed worries that inflation, unemployment and interest rates may all be moving in an unfavorable direction in the year ahead," said survey director Joanne Hsu.

The survey showed similar declines when consumers were asked about their current economic conditions and on their expectations of future business conditions.

Consumers said they see inflation getting worse over the



next year, anticipating an inflation rate of 3.5%, up from 3.2% in last month's survey and above the average range seen prior to the pandemic.

The survey also showed that consumers' long-range inflation expectations of five years ahead ticked higher, remaining well above the pre-pandemic range. The worsening sentiment on price pressures come as inflation readings have continued to move higher in 2024.

Consumer inflation expectations are an important gauge for Federal Reserve officials, who closely watch survey results for indications if consumer behavior will lead to higher prices. Fed officials have said repeatedly that the central bank won't be in a position to consider cuts to the benchmark interest rate until inflation is under control.

Jeffrey Roach, chief economist at LPL Financial, said that uncertainty about inflation could affect consumer spending levels, which are a significant contributor to US economic growth. The most recent retail sales report showed that consumers continued to surprise with their spending levels, though some interest-rate-sensitive categories moved lower, including automobiles and furniture.

"Most consumers have pivoted away from big-ticket buying plans, confirming what we saw from the Conference Board earlier this month" Roach said. "As of this month, most consumers believe now is a poor time to buy a vehicle or a home. These changes in buying plans could have knock-on effects in other categories of spending."
(Source: Investopedia.com)

Uncertainty over election results will keep Indian stock market volatile: Experts

Mumbai, India - The Indian equity market indices Nifty-50 Index and Sensex both experienced losses of around 3% each over the past week, while the mid-cap index saw a decline of 3.9%. The Indian market has been consistently under pressure from selling by investors, leading to volatility in the past week.

In contrast, global markets have maintained their buoyancy, with Brazil, Germany, and the US emerging as the top-performing markets. Experts attribute this disparity to the apprehension surrounding the upcoming elections, which is making investors adopt a cautious stance.

According to Ajay Bagga, Banking and Market Expert, "Given an electorate of 980mn



plus, of which some 620-640mn will vote, and that more than 1bn are giving opinions every day, it is but logical that there will be a lot of uncertainty and confusion around the June 4th Election Results outcome."

Bagga further added, "India VIX which tries to signify the volatility in the Indian markets

has risen more than 67% in the last 12 days on the back of this. What a level of 19 means is, that over the next one year the Nifty can be in a +/- 19% range. This is still not so high, given India VIX was at 30 plus in both the 2014 and 2019 elections. We expect India VIX to go up further going into the June 4th vote counting."

During the last week, all sectoral indices, except auto and FMCG, witnessed losses on a week-on-week basis. Sectors such as capital goods, consumer durable, oil and gas, realty, power, and Bank Nifty suffered the most, with declines ranging between 2 to 4 per cent.

Conversely, auto and FMCG sectors experienced marginal gains during the same period. Moreover, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) were net sellers, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DII)s were net buyers.

"Major global indices, including Nifty 50, are trading around all-time highs and the shift in the interest rate scenario has led to some profit booking.

ANI

UK economy exits from recession with better-than-expected growth

London, UK - The UK economy has moved out from its recession, with gross domestic product (GDP) expanding by a robust 0.6% in the first quarter of this year.

This growth surpasses economists' expectations, who had estimated a more conservative 0.4% uptick.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak hailed the data as evidence that the nation is on a positive trajectory.

"We know things are still tough for many people, but the

plan is working, and we must stick to it," Sunak affirmed, referencing the government's economic strategy.

The GDP growth marks a significant turnaround for the UK, which had grappled with economic contraction in the preceding quarters.

"There was broad-based strength across the service industries with retail, public transport and haulage, and health all performing well," Office for National Statistics (ONS) Director of Economic Statistics Liz McK-

own said.

"Car manufacturers also had a good quarter. These were only a little offset by another weak quarter for construction," she added.

"In the month of March the economy grew robustly led, again, by services with wholesalers, the health sector, and hospitality all doing well," she noted. In February, a recession was officially declared, marking two consecutive quarters of economic contraction.

Anadolu Agency

Saud Bahwan opens new Chery showroom

With the expanding popularity of Chery Automobile in Oman, Saud Bahwan Group recently inaugurated the latest Chery Showroom in Al Hail, Muscat. The Guest of Honour at the function was Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali al Shehhi, wali of Seeb, with several guests from various public and private sectors gracing the occasion. The grand inauguration of the Chery Al Hail showroom offered an opportunity for automotive enthusiasts to experience the benefits of a strong partnership between Saud Bahwan Group and Chery Automobile.

Sharing his thoughts on the occasion, Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Managing Director - Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group said, "For us at Saud Bahwan Group, contributing to Oman's growing economy has always been a priority. Through the investment made on the new Chery showroom in Al Hail, the Group has emphasised on offering talented Omanis opportunities to be at the forefront and play a vital role in making the brand Chery among the top automotive brands in Oman. "Over the years, Saud Bahwan Group has built a strong reputation for giving talented Omanis several platforms to demonstrate their skills and contribute to the group's success. This milestone - Chery showroom in Al Hail - is another step by the



Interior of the Chery showroom at Al Hail

group to offer Omanis an opportunity to succeed and grow whilst also contributing to Oman economy's robust growth story." Speaking about the partnership between Saud Bahwan Group and Chery Automobile and the Chery Al Hail showroom, he said, "Chery Automobile is one of China's top automotive brands. Evolving with rapidly changing technologies and advanced engineering methods, Chery Automobile has seen accelerated international growth over the years." Chery Automobile was awarded the first place in the 2023 J D Power China Initial Quality Study among Chinese



Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali al Shehhi and Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan

brands and is listed by Kantar as one of the Top Chinese Brand Builders in 2023. "Through the introduction of the Chery Al Hail showroom, we look forward to welcoming our customers to experience some of the finest high quality automotive products with the support and assurance from Saud Bahwan group," the Managing Director added. The event showcased a range of Chery vehicles offering customers an opportunity to get close to their favourite Chery vehicle and learn more about its high-quality build and range of advanced features and technology. "As a resident of Al Khoud, I

am happy that Saud Bahwan Group has inaugurated this showroom in Al Hail as it offers me a wonderful opportunity experience the exciting range of Chery vehicles and make an informed buying decision," a customer at the event shared. Chery's car range in Oman consists of an impressive line-up of the TIGGO8 PRO MAX, TIGGO4 PRO, and ARRIZO6 PRO. The Tiggo8 Pro Max and TIGGO4 are power-packed high-impact SUVs with subtle ambient lighting and unmatched fuel efficiency. The sedan-styled Arizzo6 pro dons a sleek front and rear profile, impressive interiors and high-end modern technology offering enhanced safety and usability features. Redefine your lifestyle choices with Chery's commitment to providing an unparalleled driving experience for the driver and the passenger. The holistic design and the 360-degree usability features of the cars are meticulously engineered for an enthralling road journey. Customers can now visit the Al Hail showroom to get a hands-on experience with the Chery vehicles. The showroom hosts modern amenities, product displays and a dedicated sales and marketing team to cater to the customer's needs. Kantar and Google jointly released the 2023 Chinese Global Brand Builders.

MoCIIP launches project for Omani manufacturers

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has announced the first phase of a project under which the ministry aims to enable Omani manufacturers towards the applications of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In line with its endeavours to promote local industries in the latest phase of industrial revolution, the ministry seeks to develop the production operations of local industries based on advanced technologies. The ministry stated that under the project, ministry deployed experts will measure the digital maturity of factories (Smart Manufactory) that utilise artificial intelligence and advanced technologies to enhance productivity and efficiency, and the product's competitiveness and reduce waste. "The project aims to evaluate manufactories based on the Smart Industry Readiness Index (SIRI) and prepare technological transformation plans to transform local manufactories to knowledge-based and innovation-driven activities," explained Idris bin Hassan bin Abaas al Sinan, head of Knoweldge-based



Industries Departments at MoCIIP, while commenting on the launch of the first phase of the project. "This aims to enhance production processes to efficient time while cutting cost to the minimum by integrating various technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, smart sensors, and software in manufacturing." Sinan further clarified that the opportunity to adopt artificial Intelligence applications and undergo the evaluation for Digital Maturity is exclusive. Companies interested in this transformative journey must fill out the registration and self-assessment form no later than May 23, as only a limited number of manufactories will be selected based on the results of Digital Maturity indicators and the priority of target sectors.

Evaluation committee on narcotics visits Muttrah

The health committee in Muttrah wali's office hosted the Evaluation Committee members of the Antinarcotics and Psychotropic Substances' Competition, in the presence of Abdul Hamid bin Abdul Rahman al Kharousi, the wali's deputy. During the visit, the Anti-Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances' Competition Committee reviewed the most notable events and programmes that were organised to increase awareness of combating drugs and psychotropic substances' issue and the most important indicators and standards that were relied on to evaluate the activities and programmes, which the



competition included. For example, awareness campaigns and recovered people's participation in society. As well as, reviewing the programmes and workshops that are implemented by the health committee, which aimed to increase awareness of combating narcotics' importance. Evaluation committee and the health committee members, accompanied by the wali's

deputy, made field visits to several schools in the wilayat to attend some awareness exhibitions. They also viewed the components of the mobile awareness bus, which include vi-

sual elements and explanatory explanations and illustrations to increase awareness of narcotics and psychotropic substances' dangers and types, and how to combat them.

Minister receives British American School director

H E Dr Madiha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, received in her office on Sunday Craig Williamson, Director of the British American School, and his accompanying delegation, in the presence of a number of ministry officials. The meeting comes with the aim of discussing ways to enhance joint educational cooperation and took place at the Ministry's General Diwan. At the beginning of the meet-



ing, H E Dr Madiha welcomed the school principal, praising the good efforts made by the school in providing educational service to students, and striving to improve its educational work in order to achieve the desired educational goals. The meeting also discussed a number of topics related to granting professional licences to teachers, the equivalency of the international diploma certificate, besides other issues of educational process.

Liva Insurance CEO addresses District Toastmasters Annual Conference

Liva Insurance, the leading multi-line insurance company in the region, was honoured to be the gold sponsor of the esteemed District Toastmasters Annual Conference 2024 (DTAC), held in Muscat on Friday and Saturday. This collaboration reaffirmed Liva Insurance's dedication to fostering personal and professional development initiatives in the Sultanate of Oman. The two-day conference brought together Toastmasters from across the district to celebrate excellence in public speaking and leadership. Liva Insurance's CEO Hanaa al Hinaï participated in the event

as a keynote speaker, sharing insights from her remarkable life and career journey. With her inspiring words, she captivated the audience, emphasising the importance of women's empowerment and the importance of providing equal opportunities based on merit. Hanaa expressed her delight at being part of such a prestigious event. "It was a privilege to participate at DTAC 2024, where diverse talents converged in an atmosphere of growth and empowerment. My core message echoed Liva Insurance's commitment to equality. "At Liva, we go beyond pro-

viding growth opportunities, fostering an environment where every voice is valued. We believe in the power of effective communication and leadership, and Toastmasters provides an excellent platform for individuals to hone these skills. I extend my appreciation to the Toastmasters community for granting us this platform to share our vision and endeavors." Bringing over 400 influential and socially respected professionals and business leaders across the globe, DTAC 2024 serves as a platform for members to showcase their skills, learn from eminent speakers, and participate in various work-



shops and seminars. The conference aims to inspire and empower individuals to become effective communicators and leaders in their personal and professional lives. Through keynote speeches, presenta-

tions, and networking opportunities, attendees gain valuable insights to enhance their communication and leadership abilities. In her address, Hanaa underscored Liva Insurance's belief in empowering its team and supporting women's career advancement. From robust mentorship initiatives to comprehensive leadership training, the company is dedicated to shattering barriers and fostering an inclusive workplace culture. Hanaa expressed her heartfelt appreciation to the audience for the privilege of sharing her personal and professional journey, aiming to inspire growth and em-

powerment within the community. She emphasised the significance of supporting and encouraging each other to pursue personal growth. Hanaa is a front-runner in Oman's insurance sector, with a robust background of over 22 years in both domestic and international realms. She successfully managed the integration of NLGIC and Al Ahlia Insurance. Hanaa holds a master's in finance and a bachelor's in Financial Risk Management from the University of Victoria, Australia. She has received several prestigious awards, including 'Premium Insuretech CEO of the Year' and 'Insurance CEO of the

Year', and was named 'Woman of the Year 2022' by Oman Al Mara Excellence Awards. As a company committed to empowering individuals and communities, Liva Insurance recognizes the significance of initiatives like Toastmasters in fostering personal and professional growth. By actively supporting such events, Liva Insurance reaffirms its dedication to making a positive impact on society. Liva Insurance strives to be a trusted partner in safeguarding individuals and businesses against unforeseen risks with a focus on innovation, customer service, and community engagement.



Muscat Municipality plays key role in 2nd Gulf Municipal Week

Muscat Municipality played a significant role in the Second Gulf Municipal Week recently held in Qatar.

The event aimed to bolster cooperation among member countries, exchange experiences and knowledge, and foster innovative solutions.

This year's theme, 'A Common Vision for a Sustainable Future', underscored the importance of adopting a sustainable vision based on principles of environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

It aimed to identify opportuni-

ties and address common challenges facing the region, such as environmental protection and promoting a sustainable economy.

The event brought together experts and specialists in municipal affairs from Gulf Cooperation Council countries, who presented various research studies and working papers. The sultanate's delegation, led by the Ministry of Interior, presented four working papers on critical topics, including food safety, sustainable city planning, waste management and the conserva-

tion of energy, and building permit procedures and completion certificates.

Commenting on the Muscat Municipality's participation in the event, Dr Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Director of the Food and Laboratories Department at Muscat Municipality, said, "We are pleased with the positive results and are reflecting on the outcomes of the First Gulf Municipal Week in Salalah."

Giving some details about the event, the director said, "We observed fruitful discussions and in-depth debates among partici-

pants, which significantly contributed to enhancing municipal work and improving adopted practices in the field of food safety, enabling us to stay abreast of the world's environmental risks.

"Our commitment is to leverage modern technologies, enhance laboratory facilities, and adhere to the highest health standards essential for ensuring food safety. We are dedicated to addressing challenges in this field to enhance public health within the community," he added.

Muscat Municipality actively participates in local and regional events to exchange experiences and knowledge, aiming to enhance the quality of life and services for citizens.

The municipality focuses on improving infrastructure, local services, and public health to achieve its sustainable development goals.

Efforts are concentrated on raising awareness and implementing international best practices in food safety and trade to ensure the highest safety standards for consumers.

CMS marks ten years of success in sultanate

International law firm CMS is proud to be celebrating ten years in Oman, marking a decade since the firm opened its doors in Muscat.

CMS partner Charles Dolphin has also assumed the role of Managing Partner for CMS Oman, succeeding Ben Ewing.

Today, CMS is one of the largest law firms in Oman, with a growing presence across the Middle East including Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Istanbul, Riyadh, and Tel Aviv.

From its inception, CMS has experienced significant expansion in Oman, growing its team ten-fold over the past decade.

Recognised in Band 1 for Projects and Energy in Oman by Chambers and Partners, and with expertise covering Corporate, Banking and Finance, Dispute Resolution, Projects and Transactions, the firm advises some of the biggest entities in Oman including both public institutions and private companies.

Notably, Muscat-based partner Mary Allan has been consistently ranked Band 1 in Chambers Global for Oman



Charles Dolphin

Projects and Energy for 18 years, making her the longest-standing ranked individual in Oman and the sole female ranking in this category.

"We take pride in our achievements over the past decade in Oman. As a firm committed to the Middle East, we are dedicated to furthering our presence in Oman and supporting clients in navigating the opportunities within this evolving economy. As we celebrate this milestone, our commitment to delivering exceptional service remains unchanged and will continue to drive our growth across the region," Charles Dolphin commented.



Geely wins 'Top Brand of the Year'

Geely, the renowned global automobile brand brought to Oman by Towell Auto Centre LLC, announced its latest achievement of receiving the prestigious 'Top Brand of the Year' award at the esteemed Top Omani Brands Awards Ceremony, held at the Sheraton Oman Hotel.

This recognition received under the patronage of H H Sayyid Mohammed bin Thuwaini al Said, solidifies Geely's position as the premier automobile brand in the Sultanate of Oman.

The awards, given by Alam Al Iktissad Magazine in collabora-

tion with Arabian Research Bureau, aim to celebrate and honour the most influential and successful brands across various sectors in Oman.

Geely's victory in the automotive category highlights its commitment to delivering top-tier automobile solutions and providing a seamless customer experience.

Reflecting on this achievement, spokesperson from Towell Auto Centre, expressed gratitude, stating, "We are deeply grateful for this esteemed recognition, which reaffirms our dedi-

cation to building a trusted automotive brand known for excellence, innovation, and unmatched customer satisfaction."

He also emphasised the significance of the top brand accolade by further stating, "Receiving the 'Top Brand of the Year' award reflects our unwavering commitment to our customers and our relentless pursuit of automotive excellence. This recognition inspires us to continue setting new benchmarks in the automobile industry."

MoE holds training programme in performance management

The Ministry of Education (MoE), represented by the Directorate-General of Administrative Affairs, Individual Performance System Office, opened a training programme for the 60 chosen employees of the Directorate-General of Administrative and Financial Affairs, in Muscat on Sunday.

The two-day programme titled 'Performance Management According to the Proficiency System for Measuring Individual Performance' is being held at the Muscat Hall in the Ministry's General Diwan.

The programme is being conducted by a number of trainers from the Office of the Individual Performance System and the Specialised Institute for Professional Training of Teachers, which includes an introduction to performance measurement and the OKRs methodology, and its implementation strategy.

The sources of the basic em-



ployee plan, its elements, classifications, standards for its formulation, the main results, and its characteristics have also been included in the programme plan.

The training would have focus on various types of indicators, the conditions that must be considered when choosing the indica-

tor, and practical steps to help determine the indicator. It will delve into the final (annual) evaluation and its controls, the steps for approving its results, the definition of feedback, its stages, the possibilities for its success, and strategies for providing it, addressing and developing perfor-

mance, dividing the results, steps to address low performance, analysing it using a radical analysis method, proposed solutions in the event that the development plan is not successful, Ejada kit tools, and visual displays for the stage of evaluating the role of the direct official and the employee.

Student council investiture ceremony unveils leadership legacy at ISWK

The investiture ceremony for the student council and prefects of classes VI to XII for the academic year 2024-25 was held at Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir (ISWK) on May 4, a release stated.

The ceremony was a resounding success, marked by solemnity, dignity, and pride, the school release added.

The event aimed to instill leadership qualities and a sense of responsibility among the student leaders who have been empowered to lead by example.

The ceremony was graced by Captain Harish Srinivasan, Defence Advisor at the Indian Embassy. Capt Srinivasan's exemplary career and insightful speech inspired the student leaders, emphasising the importance of vision, responsibility, and respect in leadership.

Alkesh Joshi, assistant executive director; Sachin Toprani, honorary president of the SMC



at ISWK, and other esteemed members of the school management committees of ISWK-CBSE and ISWK-Cambridge, along with D N Rao, principal, vice principals and parents were present in the school multi-purpose hall

on this august occasion. The chief guest was ushered in with elaborate fanfare.

The ceremony commenced with the lighting of the lamp, symbolising the spread of knowledge, followed by a soulful

prayer song invoking divine blessings. The new house in-charges of the four houses, namely Ashoka, Akbar, Tagore and Vivekananda were introduced, along with the head council members, house office

bearers, and prefects of classes VI to XII.

The chief guest conferred the badge of office on the Head Council members of both senior as well as junior categories. The head boys for 2024-25, Master

Sajad Ahmed Sheikh (Senior) and Master Ayush Shetty (Junior) and Head Girls-Miss Harshini Tiruvottriyur (Senior) and Miss Fatima Sheikh (Junior) received the school flag with pride from the chief guest, sym-

bolising their acceptance of responsibility with dignity and honour.

The newly invested council members then took the oath of office, reaffirming their commitment to uphold the values of the institution.

Capt Srinivasan's address resonated with the audience, as he emphasised the transformative power of leadership grounded in empathy and responsibility. The inspirational song presented by the Hindustani choir uplifted spirits and underscored the importance of unity and perseverance in achieving collective goals.

The ISWK investiture ceremony for the academic year 2024-25 concluded on a note of optimism and determination. As the newly invested student leaders embark on their journey, they carry with them the torch of knowledge, integrity, and leadership.

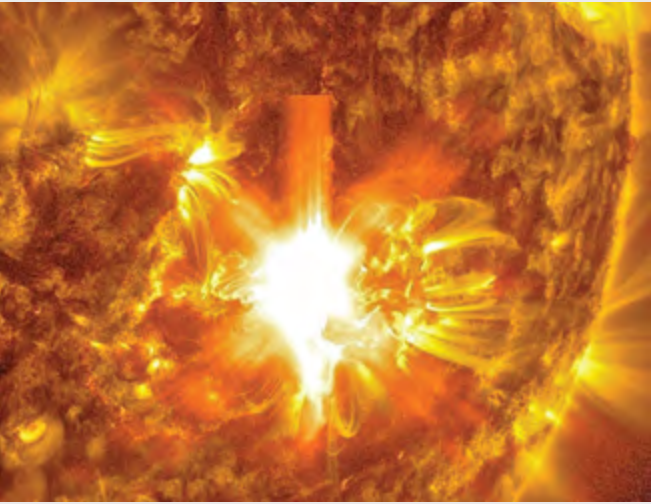
Solar storm puts on brilliant light show across the globe

Washington, D.C., US - A powerful solar storm put on an amazing skyward light show across the globe overnight but has caused what appeared to be only minor disruptions to the electric power grid, communications and satellite positioning systems.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said extreme geomagnetic storm conditions continued on Saturday, and there were preliminary reports of power grid irregularities, degradation of high-frequency communications

and global positioning systems.

But the Federal Emergency Management Agency said that, so far, no FEMA region had reported any significant impact from the storms. The US Department of Energy said on Saturday it is not aware of any impact from the storms on electric customers. NOAA predicted that strong flares will continue through at least on Sunday, and a spokeswoman said via email that the agency's Space Weather Prediction Centre had prepared well for the storm.



Brilliant purple, green, yellow and pink hues of the Northern Lights were reported worldwide, with sightings in Germany, Switzerland, China, England, Spain and elsewhere.

NOAA issued a rare severe geomagnetic storm warning when a solar outburst reached Earth on Friday afternoon, hours sooner than anticipated.

The agency alerted operators of power plants and orbiting spacecraft, as well as FEMA, to take precautions.

"For most people here on

planet Earth, they won't have to do anything," said Rob Steenburgh, a scientist with NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center, as quoted by AP.

"That's really the gift from space weather: the aurora," Steenburgh said. He and his colleagues said the best views may come from phone cameras, which are better at capturing light than the naked eye.

The most intense solar storm in recorded history, in 1859, prompted auroras in Central America and possibly even

Hawaii. This storm poses a risk for high-voltage transmission lines for power grids, not the electrical lines ordinarily found in people's homes, NOAA space weather forecaster Shawn Dahl said. Satellites also could be affected, which could disrupt navigation and communication services here on Earth.

An extreme geomagnetic storm in 2003, for example, took out power in Sweden and damaged power transformers in South Africa. ANI/WAM

US President Joe Biden calls Donald Trump 'unhinged'

Seattle, US - President Joe Biden on Saturday called Donald Trump 'clearly unhinged' and claimed that 'something snapped' in the former president after he lost the 2020 election, CNN reported.

"It's clear that ... when he lost in 2020, something snapped in him," Biden told supporters in Seattle at a private fundraiser on Saturday, according to reporters in the room. "He's not only obsessed with losing in 2020, he's clearly unhinged. Just listen to what he's telling people."

Even though Biden thinks the presumptive GOP presidential nominee is 'unhinged', he said he believes the November election will be 'close'. "We feel good about the state of the race, but we know the race is close," Biden said, pointing to recent polls.

Trump continues to hold an advantage over Biden, according to a CNN poll conducted by SSRS last month. Trump's support in the poll among registered voters held steady at 49 per cent in a head-to-head matchup against Biden, the same as in CNN's last national poll on the race in January, while Biden's stood at 43 per cent, not significantly different from January's 45 per cent.

As Trump has spent much of recent weeks in a Manhattan courtroom amid his hush money trial, Biden has kept a robust schedule of policy speeches and campaign events, finding plenty of ways to needle the former president, CNN reported.



US President Joe Biden and former president Donald Trump

It's clear that ... when he lost in 2020, something snapped in him. He's not only obsessed with losing in 2020, he's clearly unhinged. Just listen to what he's telling people

JOE BIDEN

"By the way, remember when he was trying to deal with COVID, he said just inject a little bleach in your veins?" Biden told a crowd of builders last month. "He missed. It all went to his hair." Saturday's Washington state fundraiser was held at the home of former Microsoft executive Jon Shirley, who introduced the president. As

Biden was concluding his remarks, he told donors: "I'll try my best not to disappoint you."

Trump's audit case

Meanwhile, the New York Times reported that Trump could owe more than US\$100mn in taxes if he loses years-long Internal Revenue Service (IRS) inquiry into his

claims of huge losses on his Chicago skyscraper.

According to an Internal Revenue Service inquiry uncovered by The New York Times and ProPublica, Trump used a 'dubious accounting manoeuvre' to claim improper tax breaks from his troubled Chicago tower.

The 92-storey, glass-sheathed skyscraper along the Chicago River is the tallest and, the last major construction project by Trump. But when Trump sought to reap tax benefits from his losses, the IRS has argued, he went too far and, in effect, wrote off the same losses twice.

The first write-off came on

Trump's tax return for 2008. With sales lagging far behind projections, he claimed that his investment in the condo-hotel tower met the tax code definition of 'worthless', because his debt on the project meant he would never see a profit.

That move resulted in Trump reporting losses as high as US\$651mn for the year, the report stated.

But in 2010, Trump and his tax advisers sought to extract further benefits from the Chicago project, executing a manoeuvre that would draw years of inquiry from the IRS.

ANI



A pair of elephants donated by Laos are seen at the Phnom Tamao zoological garden in Takeo province, Cambodia on Sunday (Xinhua)

Laos donates a pair of elephants to Cambodia

Takeo, Cambodia - Laos on Sunday handed over a pair of rare Asian elephants to Cambodia in order to further deepen the bond of friendship and solidarity between the two countries and peoples.

Linkham Douangsavanh, Lao minister of agriculture and forestry, delivered the mammals, a male and a female, to Dith Tina, Cambodian minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, at a ceremony held at the Phnom Tamao zoological, protected forest and botanical garden in southern Takeo province's Bati district.

Speaking at the event, Linkham said the elephants were a gift from Lao President Thongloun Sisoulith to Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni during Thongloun's state visit to Cambodia last month.

He said the male elephant is three years and seven months old, and the female one is three years and nine months old.

"The elephants are another

symbol of long-lasting traditional friendship and solidarity between the two countries and peoples," he said. For his part, Tina expressed his profound thanks to the government and people of Laos for donating the pair of elephants to Cambodia.

"This precious gift has opened a new chapter of history for our bilateral relations, especially in the conservation of the elephants," he said. The Lao side also sent two mahouts to take care of the elephants for six months at the Phnom Tamao zoological, protected forest and botanical garden.

Listed as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, Asian elephants (Elephas maximus) are some of the largest mammals on the planet.

Cambodia estimates that there are currently 400 to 600 wild elephants in its natural forests, mainly in the Cardamom Mountains.

Xinhua

FELINE BEAUTY



A British Shorthair cat is seen during the Sofisticat Spring International Cat show in Bucharest, Romania, on Saturday. About two hundred cats of around 50 breeds participated in the feline beauty contest (Xinhua)

World Bank provides \$125mn to Brazil

Brasilia, Brazil - The World Bank is providing emergency support to the state of Rio Grande do Sul, heavily impacted by recent rains and floods. Approximately US\$125mn (around RD 625mn) in resources from ongoing projects are already available for immediate reallocation.

The funds come from the projects 'Urban Resilience Programme in Southern Brazil', 'Revitalisation Programme for the Central Area of Porto Alegre' and 'Support Programme for the New Bolsa Familia'. In addition, teams from the institution are providing technical assistance in damage assessment, resource prioritisation, and funds deployment.

In addition, the institution is talking to the federal, state and municipal governments and the Regional Development Bank of the Far South (BRDE) about making new resources available on an accelerated basis. These resources will be used to finance recovery and provide technical assistance in structuring what is being called a 'Marshall Plan' for rebuilding the state, including developing urban resilience and flood mitigation structures.



The emergency support is being given to the state of Rio Grande do Sul, heavily impacted by recent rains and floods

"The World Bank stands in solidarity with the population of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, so affected by the recent disaster," said Sophie Naudeau, Acting Director and Operations Manager of the World Bank for Brazil. "We have extensive experience in crisis management and reconstruction linked to natural disasters in several countries around the world and we are bringing this knowledge to bear on the state's rapid recovery. We are also

ready to work together with the competent authorities to prevent future disasters like this from causing so much personal and material damage," added Naudeau.

Disasters like the one in Rio Grande do Sul are clear examples of the need for greater preparation for future climate-related events, which tend to be more frequent. Recently, the World Bank approved a new set of crisis response tools to allow

countries to quickly redirect unused resources in their portfolio to make emergency relief easier and faster.

Meanwhile, the death toll from floods caused by heavy rains in Brazil has risen to 137, authorities reported on Saturday.

Following heavy rains that have been affecting the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul since last week, the loss of life and property is steadily increasing. Agencies

Israeli mounts airstrikes on Jabalia camp

More than 100 airstrikes hit roads and residential areas in the camp in Gaza and its surroundings

Gaza City, Palestine - Israeli jets on Sunday pounded the Jabalia refugee camp causing mass displacement of Palestinians from the north to the west of Gaza City.

Local sources told Anadolu that more than 100 Israeli airstrikes hit roads and residential areas in the camp and its surroundings.

Intense overnight clashes took place between Palestinian fighters and Israeli forces east of the camp, the sources added.

Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of the Palestinian resistance group Hamas, said that its fighters were engaged in 'fierce clashes' with Israeli army forces in the eastern part of the camp.

Large groups of Palestinians were seen moving from Jabalia to the western part of Gaza City, eyewitnesses said.

Israeli airstrikes also caused casualties in the central Gaza Strip.

Medical sources at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah told Anadolu that several Palestinians, including two doctors, were killed, and several others were injured in a series of Israeli attacks on Saturday night.

Meanwhile, Gaza civil defence has said its teams are unable to access the Jabalia refugee camp and Gaza City where Israel on Sunday launched fresh bombings.

"The direct and deliberate Israeli targeting of civil defence crews prevents us from reaching some of the targeted places in



Israeli airstrikes also caused casualties in the central Gaza Strip

the Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood in Gaza City," spokesman Mahmoud Basal told Anadolu.

He said the teams were unable to reach 16 members of a family who were trapped under the rubble of a house in the Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood after the attack.

"The Israeli army is targeting

innocent civilians in the neighbourhoods of Gaza and the northern Gaza Strip, most of whom are women and children," he added.

Even rescue workers are not spared in the bombing, he said.

"All the hospitals in the northern Gaza Strip are out of service," he added.

Death toll rises to 35,034

The Palestinian death toll from Israel's ongoing offensive on the Gaza Strip has surged since last October to 35,034 people, the Health Ministry in the besieged enclave said on Sunday.

At least 78,755 other people have been injured in the on-

slaught, the ministry added in a statement.

"Israeli attacks killed 63 people and injured 114 others in the last 24 hours," the statement said.

"Many people are still trapped under rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them," it added.

Internet service cut off in southern Gaza

Besides, internet service has been cut off in the southern Gaza Strip, the Palestinian telecom company Paltel said on Sunday.

In a statement, the company said the service was disrupted by the ongoing Israeli offensive in the area. "Our crews are working

The Israeli army is targeting innocent civilians in the neighbourhoods of Gaza and the northern Gaza Strip, most of whom are women and children. All the hospitals in the northern Gaza are out of service

MAHMOUD BASAL

hard to restore the service as quickly as possible," it added.

The Gaza Strip has faced several communications and internet outages amid a brutal Israeli offensive on the enclave.

More than seven months into the conflict, vast swathes of Gaza lay in ruins amid a crippling blockade of food, clean water and medicine.

Israel is accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). An interim ruling in January said it is 'plausible' that Tel Aviv is committing genocide in Gaza, ordering it to stop such acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

South Africa on Friday asked the ICJ to order Israel to withdraw from the southern city of Rafah.

Anadolu Agency

UK rejects calls to halt arms sales to Israel

London, UK - The UK government on Sunday rebuffed calls to follow the US' lead in halting some arms sales to Israel if it proceeds with a major ground operation in Rafah, the southern Gaza city home to 1.4mn refugees.

Foreign Secretary David Cameron, in an interview with the BBC, expressed his opposition to Israel's plans of an invasion in Rafah but emphasised that ceasing arms sales would 'make Hamas stronger'. He claimed that the UK supplies a mere one per cent of Israel's weaponry, indicating limited leverage in influencing Israeli actions.

Cameron emphasised the need for a comprehensive plan to safeguard civilian lives in the event of any military action.

He underscored the UK's distinct position from the US, stressing the importance of maintaining diplomatic pressure while prioritising humanitarian aid to Gaza.

'Strategic choice'

Egypt, meanwhile, said on Sunday its peace treaty with Israel is a 'strategic choice' amid reports of tension between the two sides over Tel Aviv's offensive in Rafah



UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron

Cameron claimed that UK supplies are a mere 1% of Israel's weaponry, indicating limited leverage in influencing Israeli actions

in the southern Gaza Strip.

"The peace agreement with Israel has been Egypt's strategic choice for 40 years, and it represents a main pillar of peace in the region to achieve peace and stability," Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said during a press conference in Cairo with his Slovenian counterpart Tanja Vaillon.

He said there are 'set mechanisms' for dealing with any violations of the treaty. "We approach this agreement from this standpoint," Shoukry added.

Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty in 1979 under which Tel Aviv withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula and the two countries normalised their relations.

Media reports emerged about an Egyptian threat to suspend the agreement over Israel's offensive in Rafah on Egypt's border.

Egypt has condemned the Israeli attack in Rafah as a 'dangerous escalation', but stopped short of terming it a violation of its peace deal with Israel. Israel said last week that its capture of the Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing was not a violation of the peace agreement with Egypt.

'Disproportionate' intervention

Greek Foreign Minister George Gerapetritis on Sunday said Israeli intervention in Gaza is 'disproportionate'.

In an interview with *Vradini* daily, Gerapetritis said: "We made it clear from the beginning that Israel has a right to self-defence within the limits of international law and especially humanitarian law. We made it clear that Hamas should not be identified with the Palestinian people. We asked for immediate release of the hostages and additional protection of civilians and open humanitarian channels."

Anadolu Agency



One Palestinian killed in Israeli raid in West Bank

Ramallah, Palestine - At least one Palestinian was killed and another injured by Israeli army gunfire on Sunday during a raid into the Balata refugee camp in eastern city of Nablus, occupied West Bank.

In a statement, the Palestinian Health Ministry said Samer Nasser Rumana, 27, was shot dead by the Israeli forces during a raid into the camp and was moved to Rafidia Governmental Hospital.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian

Red Crescent Society said a 16-year-old was also injured by Israeli forces during the raid.

Confrontation between Palestinians and Israeli forces broke out in the camp, according to witnesses.

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

Nearly 500 Palestinians have since been killed and around 4,900 others injured by Israeli army fire in the occupied terri-

tory, according to the Health Ministry. The Israeli army also detained 28 more Palestinians in military raids in the occupied West Bank on Sunday, according to prisoners' affairs groups.

Several children were among the detainees in the raids that occurred in the cities of Jenin, Jericho, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron, and Qalqilya, the Commission of Detainees' Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoner Society said in a joint statement.

Anadolu Agency

Russia 'captures' five villages in northeast Ukraine in fresh ground assault

Moscow, Russia - The Russian forces captured five villages after launching fresh ground assault in north-eastern Ukraine, Al Jazeera reported, citing the Russian Ministry of Defence.

However, the Ukrainian officials did not confirm whether Russia had taken the villages, which lie in a contested 'grey zone' on the border of Ukraine's Kharkiv region and Russia.

Al Jazeera reported, citing several Ukrainian journalists who said that the villages of Borysivka, Ohirteve, Pylina and Strilecha were taken by Russian troops on Friday.



Fire breaks out in the aftermath of Russian shelling in Kharkiv

Russia claimed that the village of Pletenivka was also taken.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Saturday evening (local time) that fighting was continuing in Strilecha and Pletenivka, as well as Krasne, Morokhovets, Oliynykove, Lukyantsi and Hatyshche.

"Our troops are carrying out counterattacks there for a second day, protecting Ukrainian territory," he said. Earlier on Friday, the Institute for the Study of War said that geolocated footage confirms at least one of the villages was seized. The Washington-

based think tank described recent Russian gains as 'tactically significant'. The renewed assault on the region has forced more than 1,700 civilians residing in settlements near the fighting to flee, according to Ukrainian authorities. It comes after Russia stepped up attacks in March targeting energy infrastructure and settlements, which analysts predicted were a concerted effort by Moscow to shape conditions for an offensive.

On Saturday, Russia continued to pummel Vovchansk with air raids and rockets as police and volunteers raced to evacuate res-

idents. At least 20 people were evacuated to safety in a nearby village. Local police said that 900 people had been evacuated the previous day.

Russia's recent push in Kharkiv seeks to exploit the shortage of ammunition faced by Ukraine, before promised Western supplies can reach the front line and pin down Ukrainian forces in the northeast and keep them away from heavy battles underway in the Donetsk region, where Moscow's troops are gaining ground, Al Jazeera reported, citing several analysts.

ANI

INDIA

LS poll to be held in Srinagar today

Srinagar, India - A major election will be held in Kashmir for the first time since its special political status was abrogated by the Indian government on August 5, 2019.

Elections for the prestigious Srinagar parliamentary constituency, scheduled for Monday, will see a three-way contest between the National Conference (NC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP), which have ruled the region for the most part since 1947, and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which is led by India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

In 2019, the BJP-led Indian government scrapped Article 370 and Article 35(A) of the Constitution that granted Jammu and Kashmir powers to have its own Constitution and flag and barred outsiders from buying properties or taking government jobs.

The region was also downgraded from a state into two federally ruled territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.

Minus the one parliamentary seat of Ladakh, the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will now send five parliamentarians to the 543-seat Indian parliament - three from the Muslim-majority Kashmir province and two from the Hindu-majority Jammu province.



Security personnel leave after being deployed for their respective polling booths on the eve of Lok Sabha elections, in Srinagar on Sunday (ANI)

Polls for the two Jammu seats have already been completed in earlier phases of the multi-phase polls. In terms of numbers, the five seats from the region are not significant but in the backdrop of the August 5

decision, they have a comparatively greater symbolic value. This was evident from the campaigning, which centred around the scrapping and its larger political ramifications. Aga Ruhullah Mehdi, a

prominent Shia leader and the most vocal critic of the abrogation of autonomy, is the NC's candidate for Srinagar. His campaign has focused on Five Ds: 'Dignity, Dialogue, Democracy, Development and Diversity',

calling the loss of the special political status an 'assault on our identity' and 'the return of dignity and rights that were snatched from us' as his primary concern. "The constitutional status that

Jammu and Kashmir enjoyed was taken away unconstitutionally and undemocratically," he told reporters during a campaign in the Budgam district. "This abrogation happened while the entire population was put into an open-air prison."

'Referendum'

His main challenger, Waheed Parra of the PDP, urged voters to consider the elections a 'referendum', which prompted the Election Commission of India to seek a clarification on the use of the term.

During the past 34 years of the anti-India insurgency, pro-freedom parties have been calling for a referendum as enshrined in a UN resolution. In his reply, Parra said the reference 'only points towards the importance the present election holds and nothing else'.

PDP of 'misleading people for decades by showing them false dreams of autonomy and self-rule' and blamed them for killing, jailing and blinding hundreds of youth during their stint in power.

"They have only done things for their own benefit. No one has listened to the people and even today, people are yearning for electricity, water and roads. We will not do the politics of lies and deceit. We will do the politics of honesty," he told reporters after filing nomination papers.

The NC won all three Kashmir seats in the Indian general election in 2019, months before the abrogation, and BJP the two seats of Jammu and the lone Ladakh seat.

It has won Srinagar 10 times since 1947. About 1.75mn voters are expected to cast ballots at nearly 2,500 polling stations, some specially set up for women,

This would be a major election to be held in Kashmir for the first time since its special political status was abrogated by the BJP-led India government on August 5, 2019

AAP puts forward 10 'Kejriwal Guarantees'

New Delhi, India - The Aam Admi Party (AAP), on Sunday, put forth election promises which the party termed as 'Kejriwal Guarantees'.

The party leader and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, ahead of the sixth phase of elections in Delhi on May 25 presented '10 Kejriwal guarantees'.

Addressing the press conference here on Sunday, Kejriwal said: "Today, we are going to announce 10 guarantees of Kejriwal for the Lok Sabha elections. This was delayed due to my arrest but there are still many phases of elections left. I have not discussed it with the rest of the INDIA alliance but this is like a guarantee that no one will have any problems with."

The Delhi CM announced to provide up to 200 units of free electricity to all the poor in the



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal holds a roadshow in New Delhi on Saturday (ANI)

country if voted to power. He said: "We will provide 24-hour electricity in the country."

The second guarantee is of providing free education. Pre-

senting the figures, Kejriwal said: "About 18 crore students study in 10 lakh government schools who have no future. Today, the condition of our government

schools is not good. Our second guarantee is that we will arrange good and excellent free education for everyone, be it a kid belonging to a poor family or rich

family."

He added further: "Government schools will provide a better education than private schools. We have done it in Delhi and Punjab. This work should have been done at the time of independence only. Rs 5 lakh crores will be required for this. State governments will give Rs 2.5 lakh crores and central government will give Rs 2.5 crore."

The other guarantees included providing better healthcare and free treatment, a 'Nation First' policy (freeing all the land of the country occupied by China), closure of Agniveer scheme, MSP (minimum support price) for all crops, creation of two crore jobs, abolishing protection to the corrupt and end of the GST regime.

ANI

Canadian police arrest fourth suspect in killing of Sikh separatist leader

Ottawa, Canada - The Canadian police has arrested a fourth suspect over his alleged involvement in the killing of Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, Canada-based CBC News reported.

Nijjar was killed outside the Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia, on June 18.

The accused has been identified as Amandeep Singh (22).

According to Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT) in British Columbia, Singh was already in the custody of Peel Regional Police in Ontario for

unrelated firearms charges.

"IHIT pursued the evidence and gained sufficient information for the BC Prosecution Service to charge Amandeep Singh with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder," the police statement said.

The police said that Singh is an Indian national, splitting his time in Canada in Brampton, Ontario; Surrey, British Columbia, and Abbotsford, British Columbia, as reported by CBC News.

Investigators haven't given any further details of the arrest.

ANI

Nepal's Kami Rita summits Mt Everest for record 29th time

Kathmandu, Nepal - Nepal's Kami Rita Sherpa also known as 'Everest Man' on Sunday morning broke his record by climbing the world's highest peak, Mount Everest for the 29th time.

The 54-year-old Sherpa climber and guide in the last spring season had climbed the 8848.86 metres tall highest peak two times within a week setting a record for the 28th summit. But the climber has hinted at his plans to climb the peak twice this time again.

Before the summit, Kami Rita had stated that he 'has no plan of climbing Sagarmatha (Nepalese name for Mount Everest) for any specified number of times'. As per the officials from the Department of Tourism, the record-setting climber reached the summit of



Kami Rita Sherpa

Everest at 7:25am (NST) on Sunday while guiding an expedition organised by the 'Seven Summit Treks'.

"Congratulations to Kami

Rita Sherpa @kamirita sherpa a senior guide at Seven Summit Treks for the 29th successful ascent of Mt Everest this morning at 7:25am, 12 May 2024. This ascent earns Kami Rita the title of 'Most Successful Ascent of Mt. Everest by an Individual,' the Seven Summit Treks shared in an Instagram post on Sunday morning.

Sherpa at the end of May had begun his expedition from Kathmandu accompanying a mountaineering expedition team comprising about 28 climbers. Kami Rita has been climbing Sagarmatha as a guide for the climbers.

Kami Rita is a record-setter climber for the highest number of ascents on the world's tallest peak in the 71-year-long history of Sagarmatha climbing.

ANI

Wildfire: Thousands evacuated in Canada

Trenton, Canada - Wildfires in Western Canada prompted thousands to flee their homes, while 66,000 were on standby to evacuate as a fast-moving blaze threatened another community on Saturday.

A growing wildfire moved relentlessly toward Fort Nelson, British Columbia (B.C.), resulting in officials ordering more than 3,000 to leave their homes in Fort Nelson and nearby Fort Nelson First Nation.

Within five hours, the fire had grown to eight square kilometres (three square miles) from a modest half square kilometre.

Tinder dry conditions and flames fanned by powerful winds caused the wildfire to spread and prompted the evacuation order, which was issued at 7:30pm Pacific Time on Friday.

"We want them to leave the community," regional Mayor Rob Fraser told CBC News late on Friday. "We want them to be safe."

Meanwhile, in the neighbour-



ing province of Alberta, 66,000 residents of Fort McMurray were under an evacuation alert on Friday due to an out-of-control wildfire.

Wood Buffalo Regional Fire Chief Jody Butz, who issued the Fort McMurray alert, told reporters the area is prepared to handle any emergency, having

dealt with wildfires in previous years.

"From our experiences, we've continued to recognise that wildfires are the number one hazard in the region," said Butz. "And it's clear our community is prepared and more responsive to that reality."

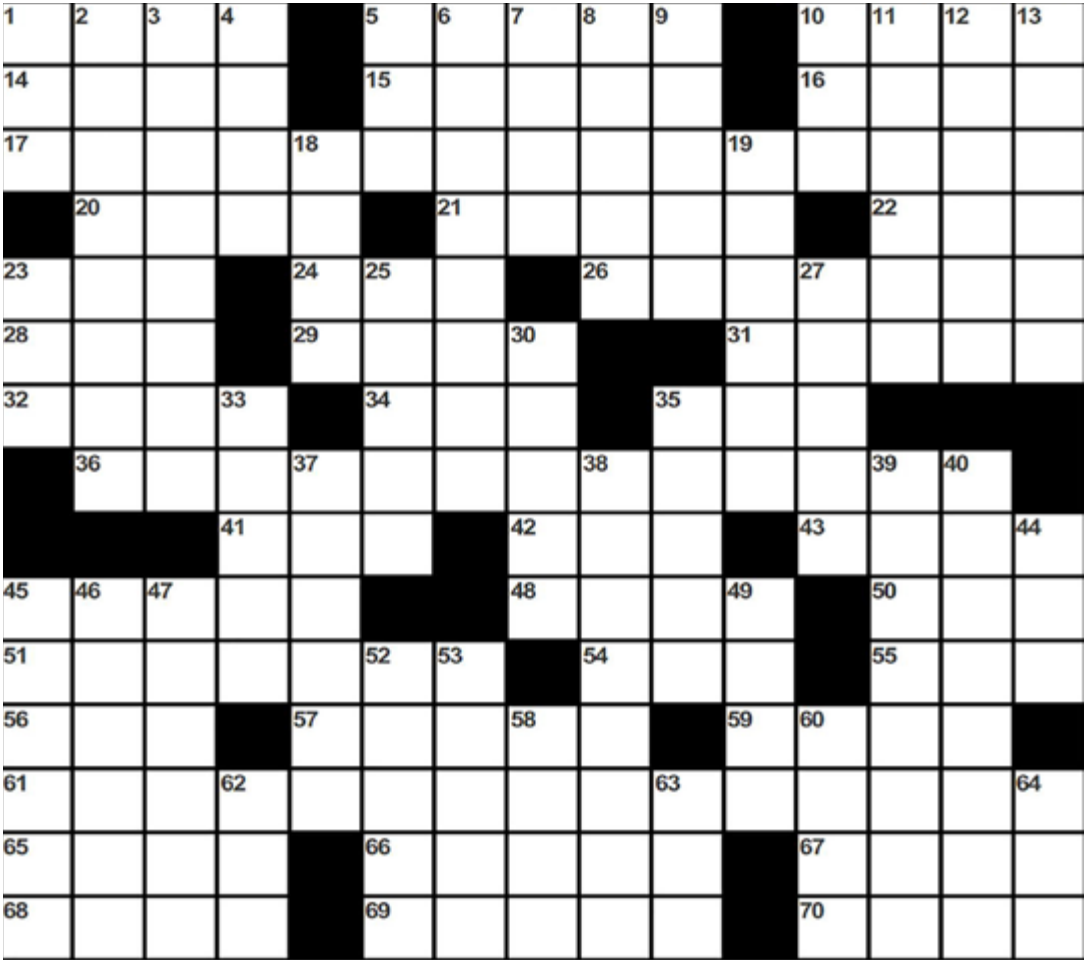
B.C. officials said above aver-

age temperatures that were more like in late summer could cause wildfires to ignite over the weekend.

There are currently 121 wildfires active in B.C., according to the provincial government, and 52 fires burning in Alberta, CBC News reported.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Certain term of respect
- 5) Caliph's faith
- 10) Dishonestly acquired booty
- 14) "The Princess Diaries" star Hathaway
- 15) Diving gear
- 16) Succulent plant
- 17) Picnic item, sometimes
- 20) Wound from a boxer?
- 21) Elbow conspiratorially
- 22) Short, straight punch
- 23) Homer's "Heck!"
- 24) "Caught in the act!"
- 26) Ophthalmologist's concern
- 28) Schooner's cargo, often
- 29) Shopping outlet
- 31) Little laugh
- 32) "Dog Barking at the Moon" painter Joan
- 34) "Christ the Redeemer" city
- 35) That lass
- 36) Picnic items, some-times
- 41) Sound of pleasure
- 42) Big Band or Victorian
- 43) "Listen!" old-style

- 45) Hollywood's Eastwood
 - 48) Lancelot and others
 - 50) Wing-tip tip
 - 51) Stumbling blocks
 - 54) Busy pro in Apr.
 - 55) Give a pink slip to
 - 56) Possessive pronoun
 - 57) Satisfy, as a debt
 - 59) Enjoy a mystery
 - 61) Picnic items, some-times
 - 65) Look_ (explore)
 - 66) Syllables sung while skipping
 - 67) City near Lake Tahoe
 - 68) Too inquisitive
 - 69) Sprinkle all about
 - 70) Former Soviet inits.
- DOWN**
- 1) "Gaping" gullet
 - 2) Like some steroids
 - 3) Unlikely protagonist
 - 4) High school sports event
 - 5) Suffix for "Marx" or "capital"
 - 6) Screenwriter's creation
 - 7) Humdinger
 - 8) Home
 - 9) Rundown and filthy
 - 10) Close friend
 - 11) Wood of Hollywood

- 12) Vicinity
- 13) Debilitated
- 18) Photocopier tray filler, perhaps
- 19) Be hot under the collar
- 23) Hoover construction
- 25) Draconian
- 27) Tree with edible nuts
- 30) Firms up, as muscles
- 33) Ape of Borneo
- 35) Mentally acute
- 37) Word with "second" or "laws of"
- 38) First wheels, for many
- 39) Scones
- 40) Widens
- 44) Baseball's Griffey
- 45) Pay one's share
- 46) Spanglish speaker, often
- 47) Map parts
- 49) Kolkata dress
- 52) Creatures with six or more legs, typically
- 53) Baseball or tennis
- 58) At some distance
- 60) Stocking shade
- 62) Flirtatious
- 63) Bit of hesitation?
- 64) Word in the Postal Service creed

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Stick to a solid pace throughout the day. Don't be active this morning and then suddenly shut down for a nap in the afternoon. Instead, go for a more moderate level of activity all day long. People won't react well to erratic mood swings, and unfortunately, you have to pay attention to what people like today. Your reputation is at a crossroads right now, so it's time to put on a good show and portray yourself as a level-headed person others can always count on.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You'll find that music, artwork, or any kind of creative expression is an excellent escape for you today, so keep your materials or instruments nearby. Whenever something or someone starts bugging you, turn to this to reduce your stress and get back to your happy place. Step outside of your everyday world and focus on something that is all about expression and honesty. It doesn't have to be a museum-quality or award-winning creation. It just has to be from your heart.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Are you losing your patience with someone who refuses to see things your way? Do not get angry with yourself. You have stated your case clearly, given them as much time as you could, and now you need to tell them that they need to either put up with your decision, stop complaining about it or come up with a better idea. Take a step back and let them make the next move. You're too tired to push your ideas when they don't seem to be listening.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The opening of the 2012 Summer Olympics had echoes of what event at the 1984 Olympic Games opening?

- A. The US Army Band formed the Olympic rings
- B. A flight over the stadium by someone in a one-man jetpack
- C. Children held balloons that burst simultaneously
- D. Balloons were released, to carry a set of Olympic rings and a camera up to the mid-stratosphere

2. What is the name for a mixture of clay, sand and silt?

- A. Peat
- B. Loam
- C. Gravel
- D. Sludge

3. Who wrote the poem "O Captain! My Captain!"?

- A. Alan Ginsberg
- B. Walt Whitman
- C. Robert Frost
- D. Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Answers: 1. B 2. B 3. B



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Popularity is incredibly overrated, so don't make any choices today based on achieving it. Pleasing the masses is no great feat in life. After all, appealing to the lowest common denominator just means you are expecting the least out of other people, and that's not your usual philosophy. Instead, stick to your own beliefs and desires, no matter how off the wall you might think they are. You're better off staying in a small crowd of like-minded folks.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You won't learn anything different by talking to the same people you usually talk to every day. It's time to expand your circle of conversational partners and try to connect with someone you normally would not even notice. Reach out to the shy person in the room and try to draw them out. In the process, you will learn lots about your expectations and how they might be too great for some people to fulfill. Understand that not everyone has the same opinions you do.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

A great deal of collaborative energy is humming around you now. It'd be wise to take advantage of it to get some of your least pleasant errands over with. Ask someone smart who you like on a personal level if they are available. Chances are they'll be only too glad to help you out. With their good cheer and innovative thinking, you two can achieve lots together. Combining forces is always a good way to get further faster.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

If you've been dreaming about making a change in your life, your dreams might not come true today. Whether it's acting on the jolt of electricity you feel between you and someone else, exploring that new opportunity the boss mentioned, or doing what you say you're going to do, the priority of the day is follow through. Show the Universe that you take things seriously in your life and it will send you a change.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Be careful not to put the needs of other people ahead of your own right now. Don't let your generous and selfless nature get the best of you. If you think that you are creating harmony between you and your friends by giving in to their every whim, you are mistaken. You deserve a relationship based on mutual respect and cooperation, not on dominance and submission. Start flexing your muscles and asking for what you know you need.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Put yourself first today, and don't you dare feel guilty about it! Sure, you could spend your time helping someone with a tough project, listening to a friend's latest drama, or helping a relative move, but so what? You can't be at the beck and call of other people all the time. If you made plans to treat yourself, then it's okay if that takes precedence. No one will feel abandoned or let down if you take care of yourself. They understand more than you think they do.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

One of the irons you have in the fire at work is getting too hot to handle. So before there's a total meltdown, get rid of it! Don't just toss it off to any coworker you can find. Take your time to find the right person. There is someone who is just dying for the opportunity to take this task on, so kill two birds with one stone by getting it off your plate while making someone else's day. You have to be patient. This is a good test for you today.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

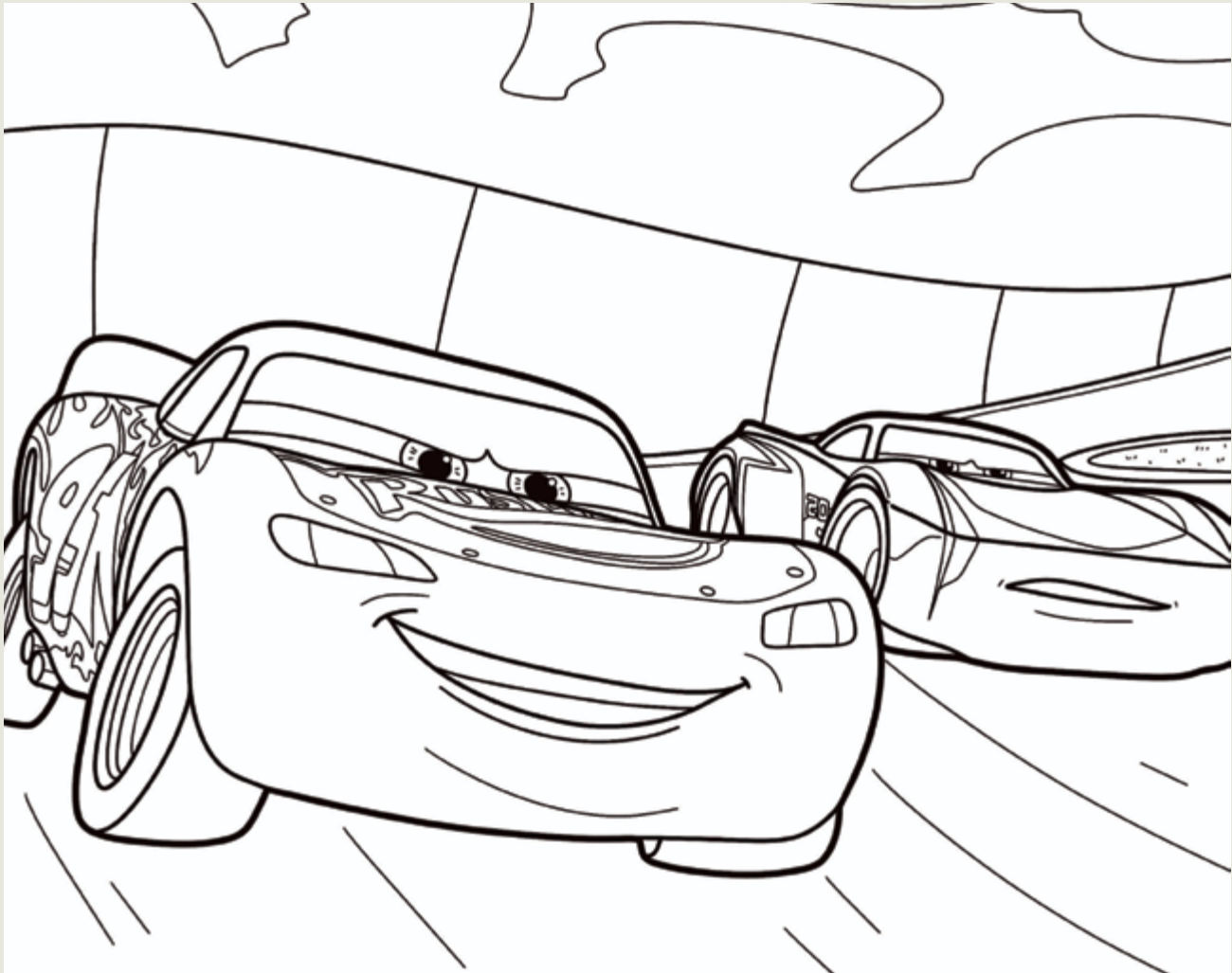
Your mystery is only a mystery as long as you let it be, and the time may be right to divulge the information that people are dying to know. How you do it is up to you. Whether you send a group email, gather everyone together over a meal, or just blurt it out as you're walking out the door. But no matter how your news is delivered, it's sure you create lots of buzz and excitement. You will love the powerful feeling of knowing something that no one else knows.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You need to take some time and really contemplate where you are and what you've accomplished of late before launching your next big project. Take some time and think about all the milestones you've reached until you fully appreciate the situation you're currently in. If someone tries to push you into starting before you're ready, firmly tell them that you'll move when you're ready to, no sooner and no later.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	O	S	A
A	G	I	R
C	U	S	T
N	T	I	P

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

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

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

E	S	L	L	6	4	9	8	Z
4	Z	6	9	8	E	L	5	L
L	8	9	Z	L	5	6	E	4
6	E	5	4	9	L	Z	L	8
Z	L	4	6	5	8	L	9	E
L	9	8	E	Z	L	4	6	5
5	4	L	L	E	6	8	Z	9
8	L	Z	5	L	9	E	4	6
9	6	E	8	4	Z	5	L	L

CROWNING GLORY

Real crush Granada to celebrate title win

Granada, Spain - Newly-crowned LaLiga champions Real Madrid earned an emphatic 4-0 win over relegated Granada on Saturday, extending their unbeaten league run to 28 games.

Carlo Ancelotti's side continued their superb form following their midweek Champions League semifinal win over Bayern Munich, reaching 90 points in the standings, 15 clear of second-placed Girona with three games remaining.

Fran Garcia broke the deadlock with an easy finish after a long series of passes in the 38th minute before he set up Arda Guler to slot home and extend the advantage just before half-time.

Brahim Diaz made it 3-0 in the 49th minute with a shot into the near post, and the Morocco international scored his second nine minutes later off a Luka Modric pass from the right.

"We all wanted to show that we want to get maximum points in the league. I'm very happy with the goals," Diaz told RMTV.

"I reached 12 goals and seven assists. It's very easy to play here, with these team mates. The most important thing is the titles. We already have the Super Cup, the league and we want the Champions League."



Real Madrid players celebrate with the trophy; (right) team captain Nacho kisses the trophy



It's very easy to play here, with these teammates. The most important thing is the titles. We already have the Super Cup, the league and we want the Champions League.

BRAHIM DIAZ

Granada remain in 19th place with 21 points, while 15th-placed Mallorca's victory over Las Palmas earlier in the day confirmed their relegation after just one season in the top flight.

"You could have expected it, of course, but when Mallorca wins it becomes mathematical and getting relegated, it's one of the most complicated games we've ever played," Granada defender Carlos Neva told DAZN.

"I told my teammates that we should finish fighting, with our heads held high. We should enjoy the top flight, because we don't know if we'll ever play in it again."

Real boss Ancelotti meanwhile had words of encouragement for the relegated side.

"In sport you have to look at defeat too, it has to be an opportunity to do better in the future," the Italian told reporters.

"Granada is an important club and they will try everything to get promoted next season and they have the chance to do it."



AC Milan's Ismael Bennacer (L) celebrates with Yunus Musah after scoring against Cagliari

Milan end winless run with Cagliari thrashing

Milan, Italy - AC Milan snapped a six-match winless run in all competitions with a crushing 5-1 Serie A victory over relegation-threatened Cagliari on Saturday.

The win moves Stefano Pioli's side closer to securing second place. They have 74 points and are seven ahead of third-placed Bologna, who beat Napoli earlier in the day, and eight clear of Juventus, who host Salernitana on Sunday.

"It was very important to return to winning ways, we were not used to being so long without victories. We suffered this situation, well done to the guys for their determination," coach Pioli told Sky Sport. "No team has managed to maintain the level of Inter and we were not able to have continuity to stick with them. Ours is a strong team, but one that failed to overcome decisive moments at a certain time during the season."

Ismael Bennacer opened the scoring after 35 minutes, pouncing on a loose ball in the centre of the box before Christian Pulisic extended their advantage after a fast break in the 59th minute.

Nahitan Nandez pulled a goal back in the 63rd for Cagliari, but Tijjani Reijnders scored Milan's third with a superb long-range effort in the 74th. Rafael Leao got on the scoresheet seven minutes from time before Pulisic sealed the rout three minutes later with his 12th league goal this season. Cagliari remain in 15th place with 33 points.

"It hurts to have conceded five goals, in the first half we did well defensively, but we were timid," Cagliari coach Claudio Ranieri said. "Coming here to San Siro against an angry Milan side after the last results was difficult ... the last two matches will determine whether it will be salvation or relegation."

Marinos coach Kewell guards against complacency after first-leg win against Al Ain

Yokohama, Japan - Coach Harry Kewell remains wary of the threat posed by Hernan Crespo's Al Ain side despite guiding his Yokohama F Marinos to a 2-1 first leg lead on home soil in the final of the Asian Champions League on Saturday.

Marinos fought back from going behind to Mohamed Abbas' 12th minute strike to secure victory through late goals from Asahi Uenaka and Kota Watanabe, making the Japanese slight favourites ahead of the second leg in the United Arab Emirates. The teams will meet again on May 25 with Kewell cautious ahead of the clash at the former champions' Hazza bin Zayed Stadium.

"We have to understand there's another 90 minutes to be played and it's going to be very difficult," Kewell told reporters at Yokohama International Stadium.

"This is the challenge I set my team, that we set ourselves and we look forward to that. We have to concentrate, we have to work hard and tidy up in a few areas."

"They can enjoy the moment, but there's still a long way to go in this tie."

Both coaches know from experience how matches can change dramatically, with the pair on opposite sides during their playing days when Liverpool fought back from 3-0 down to defeat AC Milan on penalties in the 2005 UEFA Champions League final. Kewell finished on the winning side that night in Istanbul and is refusing to allow his Marinos players to become complacent ahead of the second leg.



Yokohama F Marinos players celebrate their win against Al Ain



Al Hilal players celebrate their triumph

Unstoppable Al Hilal win Saudi Pro League title

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Undefeated Al Hilal won a record-extending 19th Saudi Pro League title on Saturday with a 4-1 victory over Al Hazem to reclaim the trophy from Al Ittihad who won it last season.

Jorge Jesus's side hold a 12-point advantage over Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr in second with three matches remaining.

Aleksandar Mitrovic gave Al-Hilal the lead from the penalty spot after 15 minutes but Faiz Selemanni netted the equaliser for Al Hazem in the 34th minute.

However, Jesus's side took the lead again with an own goal from Ahmed Al-Juwaid in the 39th minute.

Mitrovic scored again in first-half stoppage time and Sergej Milinkovic-Savic scored three minutes later to make it 4-1.

Al Hilal are chasing the treble having clinched the Saudi Super Cup title in April, and having reached the Saudi King's Cup final where they will play Al Nassr.

Terzic fuming after Dortmund's 'deserved defeat' against Mainz

Mainz, Germany - Champions League finalists Borussia Dortmund deserved their 3-0 defeat at Mainz 05 in the Bundesliga as they lack the drive to achieve consistency in their performance, manager Edin Terzic said.

Lee Jae-Sung scored a brace after Leandro Barreiro had opened the scoring to hammer Dortmund 3-0 on Saturday.

Terzic's side had the opportunity to sink Mainz into the relegation zone but Mainz climbed up to 15th place, two points clear of



Edin Terzic with the players after the match

the relegation play-off spot they previously occupied.

Terzic had said he wanted his team, in fifth place, to maintain their intensity levels after Tuesday's 2-0 aggregate win over Paris St Germain set them up for the June 1 final of Europe's top club competition against Real Madrid.

"Let's let Paris be Paris and talk about last week and this week," Terzic told reporters. "We were the team that were always late to the ball and always losing out in the tackles."

"That's why it was a deserved defeat. Mainz fought for every inch, didn't give us any peace in possession, whereas we did."

"We demonstrated that we could play really good and mature football, but we didn't prove it regardless of the opponent, competition, weekday and stadium and this is what makes me angry..."

"There's so much inside of us and we can't get it onto the pitch every time."



Vincent Kompany

Burnley will be in Premier League again, says coach Kompany

London, England - Burnley boss Vincent Kompany said he hopes his squad learns from their experience of a bitter Premier League campaign and keep trying to bridge the gap after their relegation to the second-tier Championship was confirmed on Saturday.

Kompany's Burnley lost 2-1 away at Tottenham Hotspur which left them five points from the safety zone with only one game remaining in the season.

Although Burnley dominated the 2022-23 Championship season when the second-tier champions gained promotion to the Premier League with 101 points, they struggled to make a mark in the top flight, winning only five games so far while suffering 23 defeats.

"We'll keep trying to bridge it. In my mind Burnley will be in the Premier League again," Kompany said.

"When it'll be we never know, you can't take anything for granted because the Championship is tough. It is an exciting league and you have to keep trying and trying until you bridge that gap."

Kompany tried to make Burnley play the same way as they did in the Championship despite being underdogs in the Premier League. But the Belgian stood by his philosophy even though it had been questioned and often criticised as a naive approach.

"It's way too early to answer if I'd have done things differently. I'm constantly thinking about what we could do better right now and before."

IN THE WRONG PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME

Oman's Al Harthy upbeat despite Spa retirement after contact

Muscat - FIA World Endurance Championship LMGT3 class racer Ahmad al Harthy remains upbeat despite an enforced early exit from the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps on Saturday, the result of contact from one of the Hypercar class entries 90 minutes into the race.

Carrying high hopes into the race after qualifying a season-best second on the LMGT3 grid in the No.46 BMW M4 GT3, the Omani stayed in the podium battle during the first hour of racing in Belgium on Saturday.

Holding fourth position after the first round of pit stops, Al Harthy settled into the race again and sought to look after the car and Goodyear tyres as much as possible ahead of the upcoming stints for team-mates Valentino Rossi and Maxime Martin.

Maintaining his focus on the strategy to minimise degradation of the tyres, the Omani firmly



Oman's Ahmad al Harthy was in the podium battle during the first hour of racing in Belgium before disaster struck

This is racing, things like this happen, and with our experience, we know how to get back and be stronger for the next round

AHMAD AL HARTHY

stuck to the plan while remaining competitive in the top four of LMGT3. Roughly halfway through the second hour of action, though, he was powerless to prevent his enforced retirement.

As he approached Fagnes, Al Harthy's involvement in the encounter ended prematurely after the BMW was hit by the No.38 Team JOTA Porsche 963 Hypercar - a consequence of contact

between the Porsche and another of the Hypercars.

"I'm obviously really disappointed not to be able to finish the race. We started the race in a very strong position, we knew we had to save the tyres for the two hours I was supposed to be in the car and we had a specific strategy for that - to reduce tyre degradation. We were holding our position in the top four or

five, and that was a good place to be with our strategy for the remainder of the race," said Al Harthy. "We were running our own race and unfortunately, when I had about nine laps to go before the second pit stop, two Hypercars made contact and that resulted in them ending our race - there was nothing I could do to avoid it. This is racing, things like this happen, and with

our experience, we know how to get back and be stronger for the next round."

Simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, Al Harthy was justifiably devastated to post the entry's first non-finish of the FIA WEC season. He does, though, remain very positive having exceeded expectations in qualifying and knowing a strong result was all but assured.

Oman Sail ready to welcome sailors to Mussanah Race Week

Muscat - Oman Sail's Mussanah Race Week will return for its 13th edition from October 1-8 as the event brings together sailors from across the globe in Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6 and ILCA 7 classes, as well as the para inclusive RS Venture Connect class. The event will be hosted by the Barceló Mussanah Resort and is open to male and female sailors of all nationalities.

Competition will be held over 12 races in each class. Racing will take place following three practice days, on October 4-7. Prizes will be awarded for the overall top three in each class, as well as



the Junior top three for sailors under the age of 12, and the girls top three, as well as the overall Team Racing competition.

Ahmed al Qasbi, Head of Sailing at Oman Sail, said, "Mussanah Race Week is one of the highlights in our sailing calendar

Mussanah Race Week is one of the highlights in our sailing calendar and we are delighted to bring the event back to the Barceló Mussanah Resort this year

AHMED AL QASBI

and we are delighted to bring the event back to the Barceló Mussanah Resort this year. During a career in sailing, it is very likely that the sailors will race together many times, so it is beneficial for the young athletes to meet, interact and learn from each other

at Mussanah Race Week. We look forward to welcoming a diverse fleet of sailors in all of the event classes."

Shaima al Asmi, Mussanah Race Week Project Manager, added, "The waters of Barceló Mussanah Resort offer excellent

sailing conditions and the chance to learn new skills, make new friends and compete in a world class environment. We are also very pleased to be able to support sailors of all abilities with Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7 and RS Venture Connect races all being held again this year."

Oman Sail's Mussanah Sailing School at the Barceló Mussanah Resort was recently named a Category A High Performance Centre by the Asian Sailing Federation. Visiting sailors, as well as Omani participants, will have the opportunity

to train and sail at the same venue where Asia's best sailors will hone their skills in preparation for some of the world's highest profile events.

Mussanah Race Week has always been about more than just racing and this year will be no exception. On the final practice day there will be a BBQ night for all competitors, staff and families to experience Omani hospitality and build a sense of camaraderie that will transcend the sport. More information about Mussanah Race Week, including the entry form, can be found on the Oman Sail website.

Sterling, Jackson strike as Chelsea beat Forest

Nottingham, England - Late goals from Raheem Sterling and Nicolas Jackson lifted Chelsea to a 3-2 victory at Nottingham Forest, who edged within a whisker of securing their Premier League survival on Saturday without being able to pop the Champagne corks.

Mykhailo Mudryk also scored for Mauricio Pochettino's Chelsea, who are seventh in the table with two games remaining, fuelling their hopes in the race for a European spot next season.

With a game remaining at already relegated Burnley, Forest are 17th and three points clear of 18th-placed Luton Town, but with a vastly-superior goal difference should ensure their top flight status.

"You never know in football," Forest midfielder Callum Hudson-Odoi told Premier League Productions.

"There's one game left but hopefully we're safe now and we can focus on Burnley next weekend."

Chelsea, who have won their last three Premier League games after an inconsistent campaign, head to Brighton & Hove Albion on Wednesday then host Bournemouth to close the season on May 19.



Chelsea's Nicolas Jackson scores against Nottingham Forest

"The best thing is the way that we always believe until the end, football is about fighting," Pochettino told Sky Sports. "It was important for the team to finish the season strong, with the hope to start next season really

well.

"If we are honest we were punished in our first 10 games," he added. "Our performance was good but we were not clinical and we wasted big chances... in the last 24 games we are in the

top four or five."

Chelsea got on the scoreboard in the sixth minute when Cole Palmer sent a through ball to Mudryk, who swept a shot into the far bottom corner. With the assist Palmer, joined Aston Villa's Ollie Watkins with the most goal involvements in the league this season with 31.

Strikes from Willy Boly in the 16th minute and Callum Hudson-Odoi in the 74th made for a carnival atmosphere at the City Ground, with Forest needing only a single point from the match to guarantee their survival after Luton's defeat to West Ham earlier on Saturday.

But Sterling scored the equaliser in the 80th minute and then Jackson silenced the Forest crowd two minutes later when he headed in a cross from skipper Reece James, who played his first game in five months after undergoing hamstring surgery. James ran onto a ball over the top before lifting a cross to Jackson, who headed home from five yards out.

"It's been a long wait for me so I'm happy to come back into the team," James told Sky Sports. "We're still young but we are improving and we're coming strong at the end of the season."



Reece James

Rejuvenated Chelsea looking for European berth, says James

London, England - A club as big as Chelsea can secure a place in the top five of the Premier League standings as they look to finish their season strongly with a rejuvenated form, captain Reece James said after their 3-2 victory at Nottingham Forest.

They battled back from a goal down to seal the three points at Forest on Saturday thanks to Raheem Sterling's 80th-minute equaliser and Nicolas Jackson's winner two minutes later.

James, who played his first

game in five months after hamstring surgery, made the assist for Jackson's winning goal.

Injuries and a young team's inconsistent form were blamed as the twice Champions League winners languished in the middle of the table, but Mauricio Pochettino's big-money squad has shown potential in recent weeks, quickly climbing up the standings. On 57 points with two games remaining, seventh-placed Chelsea are level on points with Newcastle United, in sixth place.

"We're finding a good level and staying consistent week in, week out. We are still young and during the season we've had a few off days," James told the club website. "But on the whole we've improved and we're coming strong towards the end of the season. Europe is one of the highest levels in club football and we are one of the biggest clubs in football, so we want to be pushing each season to be knocking on the door for the Champions League. That's our aim."



CHENNAI STAY ALIVE

Simarjeet and Gaikwad help Super Kings beat Royals

Chennai, India - Chennai Super Kings signed off their home league campaign with a win, giving themselves a decent chance of coming back to Chennai for the last two playoff games. Despite losing their 11th toss out of 13 and being asked to field in the afternoon heat 40 hours after finishing their last match in Ahmedabad, the CSK bowlers used a slow pitch expertly to keep Rajasthan Royals down to 141, which they chased down with relative ease.

The slow pitch was right up the home bowlers' alley, and they kept Royals quiet in a wicketless powerplay after which Simarjeet Singh kept getting wickets every time Royals tried to push back. Royals never really succeeded in mounting an attack, which CSK's New Zealand batters, Rachin Ravindra and Daryl Mitchell, successfully did to put their chase on course with a Shivam Dube putting them on top.

The win took CSK up to 14 points from 13 matches, level with Sunrisers Hyderabad who have a game in hand, and two points clear of the nearest challengers outside the top four. Royals suffered their third straight defeat, which will be a cause for concern for them going into the playoffs, especially with Jos Buttler not expected to be available for the final week.

These are the two slowest



Simarjeet Singh of Chennai Super Kings celebrates after taking a wicket in their match against Rajasthan Royals

teams in the first two overs of the IPL. They like to suss the pitch out before they start attacking. Royals stayed true to form, scoring just seven off the first two, but they couldn't kick on even after that with Tushar Deshpande, Maheesh Theekshana

and Shardul Thakur giving them nothing to drive. Their 42 for 0 was the slowest wicketless powerplay of IPL 2024, one run behind their 43 for 0 against Punjab Kings, but that came in a small chase.

Usually CSK go to Ravindra

Jadeja in the seventh over, but perhaps because of the right-left combination, which didn't let their orthodox spinners bowl in their last match against Gujarat Titans, they bowled Simarjeet in the seventh over. Playing only his third match this year, Simarjeet

TODAYS MATCH

MATCH 58

6 PM



GUJARAT TITANS

VS

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS



had ground to make up after going for 60 in that Titans match. On this slow pitch, he was immediately on target: hard lengths and no room. When Yashasvi Jaiswal tried to take him on, the ball got big on him and resulted in a skier to cover. In his next over, Simarjeet became the beneficiary of an odd shot from a frustrated Buttler: a ramp on a slow pitch with fine leg back on the fence.

With Royals' only left-hand top-order batter gone, Jadeja rattled through his four overs for just 24 runs to go with Theekshana's four overs for 28. Sanju Samson just kept looking for singles while Riyan Parag tried the odd boundary. It seemed as if Royals had decided they needed to get somewhere around 160 and not aim too high.

Even to get to 160, they would need two a ball for the last six overs after getting to 89 for 2 in 14 overs, which is when the spinners bowled out.

ESPNcricinfo



Varun Chakravarthy (L) with Sunil Narine

Kolkata in playoffs as Varun, Narine strangle Mumbai

Kolkata, India - On an evening that started with the ball swinging around like a boomerang following plenty of rain in Kolkata, Kolkata Knight Riders' spin twins - Varun Chakravarthy and Sunil Narine - stifled Mumbai Indians' chase to seal a playoffs berth for their side, with an almost-certain finish in the top two as well.

After MI were set 158 overs in 16 overs, Varun and Narine started the strangle that saw MI score just 22 runs in the five overs after the powerplay for two wickets that mounted the pressure on the visitors.

Suryakumar Yadav and Tim David had no choice but to go after the quicks and fell to Andre Russell's variations that saw MI stumble to 92 for 5 and there was no coming back from there, barring a late cameo from Tilak Varma. He reduced the equation to 22 required from the six balls, but his wicket early in the last over eventually handed MI their ninth loss in 13 matches.

After rain had delayed the

start of the game by an hour and 45 minutes, the match was reduced to 16 overs a side. Even though KKR lost their openers early, Venkatesh Iyer and some lower-order hitting powered them to 157, which may have seemed short early on but proved to be enough.

Rohit Sharma was struggling for runs and scored at under run a ball in the first six overs. So the onus of hitting was on Ishan Kishan who flat-batted his way to 37 off 17 in the powerplay (which was five overs for this game). He largely peppered the square boundaries, the highlight being a four with a reverse hit followed by a six with a pull at the end of the powerplay to take MI to 59. But Narine was ready with his riposte in his next over and had Kishan hole out for 40. With the spin on from both ends, Rohit's struggle ended on 19. Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak also hardly attacked the spinners and the equation soon became 77 required from 36.

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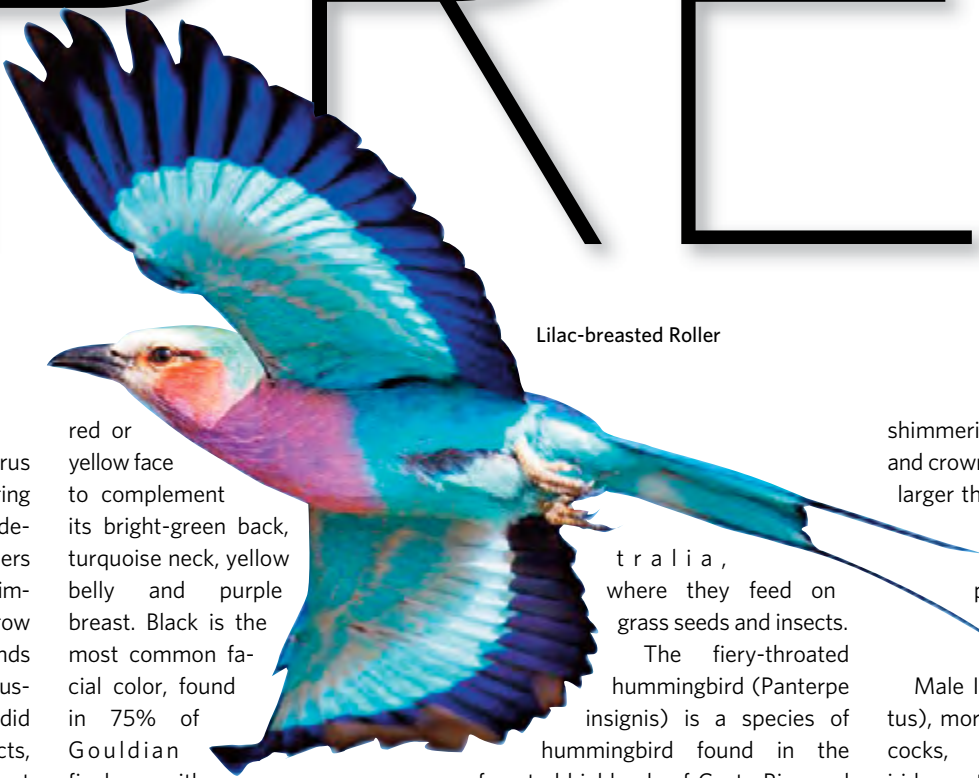
FLAMBOYANT FEATHERS

WITH A PALETTE OF RAINBOW TONES, HERE ARE SOME OF THE MOST COLOURFUL BIRDS ON EARTH



Splendid Fairy Wren

IMPRESS



Lilac-breasted Roller

Nature produces some truly extravagant costumes, and birds have evolved more than their fair share of dazzling outfits. Often, it's the male birds that steal the show with bold colours and unfurling feathers, which they need to impress choosy females. But sometimes, both males and females are dressed to impress.

One is familiar with the peacock, or peafowl, and its ornamental eyespots. But there are plenty of other birds with similarly over-the-top displays, including Wilson's bird of paradise, which unfurls an iridescent-green cape around its neck to woo the ladies, and the resplendent quetzal, which plunges toward potential mates while trailing its metallic-blue feathers.

The keel-billed toucan (Ramphastos sulfuratus), also known as the rainbow-billed toucan, is a tropical bird with a range extending from southern Mexico to northern Colombia and northwestern Venezuela. Its plumage is mostly black, with a yellow throat and cheeks, light-green eye patches and bright-red feathers peeking out from under its tail. But the keel-billed toucan's real show-stopping characteristic is its multicoloured bill, which makes up about one-third of the bird's length.

Despite being oversized, the bill is hollow and therefore quite light, according to the American Bird Conservancy. Keel-billed toucans use it to gather food — including fruit, insects, lizards, tree frogs and eggs — which they toss into the air before gulping down. The bill's green, orange, blue and red hues also attract potential mates, and research suggests the whole appendage is laced with fine blood vessels that enable keel-billed toucans to regulate their body

temperature.

The splendid fairy wren (Malurus splendens) lives up to its name during the breeding season, when males develop magnificent, cobalt-blue feathers and a sky-blue crown and cheeks to impress females. These birds, which grow to 13 cm long, live in dense shrublands or woodlands of acacia in parts of Australia. Like most fairy wrens, splendid fairy wrens feed mostly on insects, which they pick off the ground and out of shrubs.

Also known as the rainbow finch, the Gouldian finch (Chloebia gouldiae) is a species of grassfinch that comes in three colour combinations, with a black,

red or yellow face to complement its bright-green back, turquoise neck, yellow belly and purple breast. Black is the most common facial color, found in 75% of Gouldian finches, with red-faced birds making up most of the remaining 25% and yellow-faced birds occurring rarely. Gouldian finches inhabit the edges of mangrove forests, thickets and savannas in northern Aus-

tralia, where they feed on grass seeds and insects. The fiery-throated hummingbird (Panterpe insignis) is a species of hummingbird found in the forested highlands of Costa Rica and western Panama. Its 4-inch-long (10 cm) body is covered in iridescent feathers, which fade from dark orange at the base of the throat to yellow and bluish-green on the belly and back, and to a

shimmering royal blue on the breast and crown. Although males are slightly larger than females, both sexes look alike and sport a long, slender, black bill with a pink base that they use to feed on the nectar of small flowers, shrubs and trees.

Male Indian peafowl (Pavo cristatus), more commonly known as peacocks, are famous for their iridescent-blue feathers and eyespot-covered tails that they spread out to woo females. Females are less flamboyant than males, with mottled-brown plumage and a shorter tail lacking eyespots, although they sport iridescent-

green feathers on their throats. Indian peafowl are native to the Indian subcontinent, but they have been introduced to many other parts of the world — including North America, Europe, South Africa and Australia — as ornamental birds.

The lilac-breasted roller (Coracias caudatus) gets its name from its acrobatic courtship display, which involves males repeatedly rising and plunging down with their wings tucked in to perform rolls while simultaneously shouting raucous calls. Lilac-breasted rollers grow 37cm tall, with both males and females sporting a lilac throat and breast, a turquoise belly, a green head, a reddish-orange face and royal-blue tail tips. The species lives in grasslands and wooded areas across eastern and southern Africa, from Ethiopia and Angola to northern South Africa.

The red-necked tanager (Tangara cyanocephala) is a tropical bird found in lowland forests in eastern Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. Its plumage is mostly light green, with a distinctive scarlet nape and cheeks, a light-purple crown and a blue throat. Red-necked tanagers feed at the top of fruiting trees, but they occasionally drop to the forest floor to pluck berries off shrubs. They live up to five years.

As with many other birds, it's the male mandarin duck (Aix galericulata) with standout colours. Male mandarin ducks have distinctive orange cheeks and 'sails' on their backs, as well as a purple chest and royal-blue and green feathers in their crown and tail. Females have creamy-white and mottled-brown plumage and a gray head and cheek feathers that fluff up like the males'. Mandarin ducks are native to the Far East, including China, Japan, Korea and parts of Russia.

(Courtesy: livescience.com)



Red-necked Tanager



Indian Peacock



Mandarin Duck



Gouldian Finch

Cosmopolitan capital

Barcelona is a lively city that combines cutting-edge technology with a rich past. The city gains its magical touch from Antoni Gaudí's architecture, which includes the well-known Sagrada Família and Park Güell.

Walk Las Ramblas and take in the vibrant energy, street entertainers, and neighbourhood markets; or maybe you just want to chill by the beach which is easily accessible from anywhere in the city.

You can't come to Barcelona, the cosmopolitan capital of Spain, and not get lost in the centuries-old Gothic Quarter - it is an unmissable experience. There is so much to do for all age groups and group sizes you will be spoilt for choice; savour mouth-watering tapas, visit museums, or just take in Barcelona's special vibe.

When it comes to shopping, head to the bustling Las Ramblas, a tree-lined street filled with shops, restaurants, and street performers. For high-end brands, explore the elegant Passeig de Gràcia, known for its upscale boutiques and modernist buildings.

Looking for a one-stop shop? Head to El Corte Inglés - this is the largest department store in Europe, these guys are experts at packing a lot of amazing goods under one roof. High-end clothing brands, an airport terminal-sized cosmetics department, and multilingual staff. The monolithic flagship of Barcelona is the branch on Plaça de Catalunya.

El Raval is another interesting area worth a visit. Modern exhibits can be seen here, at the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art and the nearby Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona easily accessible by crossing Las Ramblas.

Stores and lures

Another one-stop-shop which can't be missed is the well-known shopping mall La Roca Village which is in the village of La Roca del Valles, some 40 minutes' drive from Barcelona. This upscale store offers a wide range of high-end and designer items at affordable pricing. Shopaholics will relish the experience because of the amazing deals on clothing, accessories, and home goods, especially top Spanish and international labels. Together with charming alleys, open-air cafes, and a relaxed atmosphere, La Roca Village is a great day out for the whole family.

The Gothic Quarter, as the lovely district is called, retains some traces of its illustrious past as a Roman village. These days, you will easily find an old building adjacent to a 90s-era one because of the ongoing remodelling. People travel to the Gothic Quarter from all over the world because of this fusion of the old and the new.

BARCELONA

BARCELONA HAS SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES TO CHILL AND RELAX IN DIFFERENT INTERESTING WAYS AND INDULGE IN ACTIVITIES THAT CELEBRATE THE OLD AS WELL AS THE NEW



It could take some time to find your bearings here because the little, meandering streets make for a real maze. You should always look up and around you to avoid missing some of the best parts. The enormous Cathedral, which sits in the centre of the neighbourhood, is one of the main draws - it has an amazing courtyard filled with flora and, strangely, geese.



Explore, indulge

Another great way to explore the city is by Segway, you will have a

choice of three or four different packages, ranging from one hour to four hours, depending on how much time you would like to spend on the tour and what you would like to see.

After touring the city, you now need to refuel. There is an enormous variety of cuisine available in Barcelona. Experience the famous food market; Barcelona has 39 food markets spread out around the city, each possessing its own personality. The biggest and most well-known is La Boqueria, a must-see for foodies.

You'll find La Boqueria just off La Rambla - the market is home to more than 200 sellers selling everything from freshly caught fish to regional products and cheeses as well as Spanish mainstays like olives, and olive oil. You'll find Tapas bars with market-fresh food tucked away among the vendors; try one of the coveted stools at the respected Pinotxo Bar for classic Catalan dishes like *capi pota* - a rich lamb stew.

Tapas is most definitely on the list, head to Bar Pimentel, it pays tribute to the classic tapas bars of the past while maintaining the atmosphere of a *'de toda la vida'*, or bar that has been there forever. It perfectly balances retro and cheesy with the exposed brickwork and marble countertop and the retro sign above the doorway.

Balmy beach town

After you've had your fill of the city, spend a day or two in Castelldefels - this Catalan coastal treasure provides a delightful haven whether you are interested in outdoor activities, nature, beach relaxation, or a taste of Catalan culture all within a short distance from Barcelona.

The summer season - June through September - is the ideal time to visit this little beach town because of the balmy Mediterranean weather, the sandy beaches and crystal-clear seas. Perched on a hill overlooking the town is the mediaeval Castle of Fels which offers sweeping views of the seaside for beachgoers to explore.

Outdoor lovers should not miss the Garraf Natural Park, which has bike and hiking paths amid stunning scenery of forests, vineyards, and mountains.

Foodies will adore the regional fare, which includes fresh fish and paella, served in beachside eateries. Savour the tastes of Catalan food while having a relaxing lunch overlooking the sea.

The town's cultural and historical landmarks, namely the Catalan Gothic Church of Santa Maria and the Anís del Mono plant, are worth a visit and walk-around.

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