

Oman, UAE deluge ‘most likely’ linked to climate change: Scientists

Muscat - Global warming caused by fossil fuel emissions ‘most likely’ exacerbated the intense rains that lashed Oman and the UAE earlier this month, causing deaths and widespread flooding, an expert group of 21 scientists said in a study released on Thursday.

Extreme rainfall in El Nino years has become 10%-40% heavier in the region affected, a study published by the World Weather Attribution (WWA) group found.

Climate change caused by fossil fuel emissions is the probable reason but cannot be pinpointed ‘with certainty’, added the study compiled by international researchers from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Sweden, United States of America, Canada, France and the United Kingdom.

Twenty-one people died in Oman and four in the UAE, which was battered by the heaviest rainfall since records began for the country 75 years ago.

‘Warming, caused by burning fossil fuels, is the most likely explanation for the increasing rainfall,’ WWA said in the study.

‘There are no other known explanations’ for the sharp rise in precipitation, added the international group of scientists that investigates the role of climate



OHRC to investigate tragic deaths in N Sharqiyah

Muscat - Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has set up a fact-finding team to investigate the recent tragic deaths, predominantly involving children, in North Sharqiyah following the recent severe weather conditions in the sultanate. The commission has announced that the team will deliver its findings within a month of its establishment.

This investigative initiative is in response to mandates set forth in OHRC’s framework based on Royal Decree No 57/2022. The decree underlines the commission’s role in safeguarding human rights and freedom in line with the Basic Law of the State, prevailing legislation and international treaties rat-

ified by the sultanate.

OHRC’s responsibilities include monitoring human rights violations, resolving such issues, handling complaints, advising state authorities on human rights matters, and drafting reports that address these crucial topics.

OHRC has urged relevant authorities to adopt all necessary measures to prevent the recurrence of such tragic events and adhere to established laws and international agreements.

Furthermore, the commission has emphasised the importance of exercising utmost caution to protect the best interests of children, ensuring their fundamental right to life, which forms the cornerstone of all human rights.

Oman and the UAE,” said Mariam Zachariah, a WWA member and researcher at London’s Imperial College.

“This finding... agrees with the basic physics that a warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture.”

The storm first landed in Oman on April 14, killing at least 21 people in flash floods and other incidents. It hit the UAE on April 16, dumping nearly two years’ worth of rain that flooded homes, roads, malls and offices and left four people dead.

Dubai faced severe disruption for days with major roads blocked by floods, power outages and some residents trapped in their homes.

Dubai airport, the world’s busiest by international travellers, cancelled 2,155 flights, diverted 115 and did not return to full capacity until Tuesday.

Reports of cloud seeding, the practice of spraying clouds with chemicals to increase rainfall, were denied by UAE officials last week.

The WWA said it did not investigate ‘the possible influence of cloud seeding’ but added, ‘Given the huge size of the storm system, massive rainfall would have fallen regardless of whether (cloud seeding) operations had been carried out’.

Agencies

Sayyid Theyazin heads to Riyadh for WEF meet

Muscat - H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, left for Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Saturday to participate in the Special Meeting on Global Collaboration, Growth and Energy for Development of World Economic Forum (WEF). To be held on April 28 and 29, the meeting has been organised on three themes - revitalising global collaboration; a compact for inclusive growth; and catalysing action on energy for development.

The meeting will bring together developed and developing markets across industries to find solutions to immediate crises while laying the groundwork to create a more sustainable, resilient world.

Over two days and 50 sessions, more than 1,000 leaders from around the world will meet in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding to address the most urgent challenges posed by an increasingly fragmented geopolitical and economic environment.



02
Omani girls win top honours in global research contest supervised by NASA

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RECOGNISING OMANI TALENT

Two Omani girls win top honours in global research competition supervised by NASA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Two Omani students claimed first place in the prestigious Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) programme's research competition for the Middle East and North Africa region. Supervised by National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), this year's competition centred on the theme 'Understanding the Earth as a system', with specific focus on climate studies.

The winning research - titled 'The Effect of Soil Type on the Growth of Roses' - was conducted by Teimaa bint Abdullah al Ansariyah and Mahra bint



Teimaa bint Abdullah al Ansariyah

Suleiman al Mazrouiyah from Al Shifa bint Abdullah School in North Batinah. The students used GLOBE programme protocols and specialised devices to measure the impact of soil properties on rose growth, concluding that the nutrient richness and low salt

content of sandy clay soil provide an optimal environment for cultivating roses.

This finding offers practical insights for local farmers on selecting the best soil type for rose cultivation and contributes to agricultural best practices in

This success underlines Oman's commitment to enhancing scientific understanding and addressing environmental challenges

AHMED AL BALUSHI

Oman's diverse environments. The competition, engaging students from GLOBE's 127 member countries, provides a significant platform for young researchers to present their findings to an international audience, with their research evaluated by



Mahra bint Suleiman al Mazrouiyah

a panel of scientists from the participating countries. According to Ahmed al Balushi, Director of Department of Science Sector at Oman National Commission of Education, Culture and Science, Omani students winning first place globally

reflects the serious efforts made by the Ministry of Education and the programme's officials in promoting scientific research and developing research skills among students by studying various environmental issues. He emphasised the fact that

this success underlines Oman's commitment to enhancing scientific understanding and addressing environmental challenges, which are critical for sustainable development. "This accomplishment not only showcases the capabilities of our students but also aligns with Oman Vision 2040 to enhance environmental awareness and drive sustainable development, boosting global innovation and competitiveness indicators for Oman."

This recognition highlights the strategic importance of investing in environmental scientific research and education, fostering a generation of students who are both knowledgeable and capable of addressing global environmental challenges.



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Bait al Zubair exhibits historic moments of Italian football

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A photo exhibition dedicated to historical moments of Italian football was inaugurated at Bait al Zubair museum on Wednesday.

Titled 'Welcome to Azzurri: An Italian Football Journey,' the exhibition features 34 pictures that captured spectacular moments of the Italian national football team.

The exhibition, organised by the Embassy of Italy in collaboration with Bait al Zubair, will continue till May 15. The opening was attended by football players, coaches and football fans from the Omani and Italian communities.

Addressing the opening ceremony, H E Pierluigi D'Ella, Ambassador of Italy to Oman, said, "This exhibition is born from the passion for football in both Italy and Oman. The sport has always reflected the core of our nations, summed up in unity and discipline."

He added, "Italy and Oman share solid ties in various sectors, and this exhibition is testimony of the importance of sports in bringing people closer and sharing unique moments in history. Italian Legend Beppe Dossena will make a special appearance



Football is more than just a game; it's a bridge that connects people from different corners of the world

FAHAD AL HASNI

and enrich us and a number of Omani coaches with his winning strategy."

The event was graced by H E Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Undersecretary for Sports and Youth in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, as guest of honour, and Dossena - a member of the Azzurri that won the 1982 FIFA World Cup in Spain.

Fahad al Hasni, Curator of Exhibitions at Bait al Zubair, said, "As a cultural institution, we are delighted to partner with the Em-

bassy of Italy in Muscat to present this captivating exhibition. It is a testament to the power of sports in fostering cultural exchange and understanding. Football is more than just a game; it's a bridge that connects people from different corners of the world. Through this exhibition, we hope to strengthen bonds between Italy and Oman and inspire future collaborations."

Following the photo exhibition, Dossena will conduct a workshop for a group of Omani

professional football coaches on 'Strategy and Winning' organised by the embassy with the support of Oman Football Association.

Karthik Prabhakara, Managing Consultant and CEO of Grism Consulting, a guest at the event, described the exhibition was enthralling. "Being a fan of Italian football, I truly enjoyed it. I saw all my childhood heroes on display".

He added that Italian coaches are some of the best and this exhibition also forges a strong partnership between Oman and Italy. "Going forward, I would like to see top Italian coaches teach their football philosophies to Omani football teams which will boost the level of football in the sultanate."

RAM celebrates graduation of 24 certified trainers

Muscat - Royal Academy of Management (RAM) held a graduation ceremony on Thursday for 24 trainers who completed the Train the Trainer Programme, a collaborative effort with Ministry of Finance under the guidance of Eiler Executive Education Center at the University of Arizona.

The event was presided over by Mahmood bin Abdullah al Aweini, Secretary-General of Ministry of Finance, and graced by Dr Ali bin Qasim al Lawati, President of RAM.

The two-year programme was designed to enhance the training capabilities of participants from both government units and the private sector, aligning these with international best practices in the delivery of education. Participants were equipped with a range of educational modules. They engaged in discussions aimed at sharpening their training skills.

Lawati highlighted the programme's critical role in support-



ing the academy's strategic goals and its alignment with Oman Vision 2040, particularly in its focus on human capital development. "Investing in our trainers equates to investing in our greatest asset: our human capital," Lawati noted, emphasising the programme's contribution to building a robust knowledge economy in Oman.

Aweini discussed the broader objectives of the collaboration with the University of Arizona, which aims to bolster functional and institutional performance across sectors. "This programme

builds a skilled community of trainers who are equipped to transfer administrative expertise and leadership skills to our national workforce, enhancing our institutional capacities."

Dr Yasmin bint Shannan al Bulushi, Director of the Train the Trainer Programme, outlined the specific focus of the training, which includes leadership development, application of effective training methodologies, and fostering collaborative networks among trainers. The programme also utilised psychometric testing to tailor development efforts to individual trainers' needs, ensuring a personalised and impactful learning experience.

Abdullah bin Mohammed al Abri, Director-General of the Partnership and Privatisation Unit in Ministry of Finance, said, "The training not only supports leadership development but also modernises management practices across Oman's state administrations," he commented.

CPA intensifies inspections across Muscat

Muscat - Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has launched a comprehensive inspection campaign across various sectors in Muscat governorate, as part of its ongoing efforts to enforce consumer protection laws and regulations.

This rigorous campaign, spanning several weeks, includes unannounced visits to a wide array of businesses, including vehicle repair workshops, spare parts dealers, and retailers of vehicle oils, tyres, air filters, aluminum products, blacksmithing and carpentry services, kitchen equipment, and sellers of electrical and electronic appliances. The building materials sector, restaurants, cafes and meat shops are also being scrutinised.

The primary objective of this extensive campaign is to ensure commercial centres and shops adhere to the Consumer Protection Law and its executive regulations.



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ROP decision mandates setting up motorbike driving schools

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In an effort to enhance road safety and discipline among motorcyclists, Royal Oman Police has issued a decision to set up specialised driving schools for motorbikes across the sultanate. The decision - No 2024/56 - issued by Lt Gen Hassan Mohsin al Shuraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, amends certain provisions of the executive regulations of the Traffic Law, specifically targeting the training and licensing of motorcyclists. The amendments stipulate stringent requirements for setting up motorbike driving schools, including Omani nationality of the applicant with a good reputation and no criminal convictions. Schools must have premises spread over no less than 2,500sqm and provide licensed bikes (150cc to 250cc) for training and testing purposes, adhering to technical specifications of ROP. Additionally, these schools are required to have appropriate classrooms for driving instructions and deliver a curriculum approved by Traffic Safety Insti-



It will encourage parents to enrol their children in these schools, which will teach them proper traffic rules and spread traffic discipline among the youth

RASHID FAQIR AL BALUSHI

tute. The training bikes must be used solely for instructional purposes, fitted with a driving instruction plate. Schools must be equipped with helmets featuring Bluetooth headsets to facilitate

communication between instructors and trainees. The curriculum must cover traffic law provisions and first aid principles, delivered by Omani lecturers certified in first aid from

accredited institutes. A comprehensive electronic register must be maintained, detailing information about trainees, instructors, motorbikes and equipment used in training.

The decision also sets clear prohibitions, including restrictions on teaching individuals under 18, those without a learner's licence, or using unlicensed or outdated bikes. Instructions are not permitted between 10pm and 6am, nor in congested and densely populated areas. The initiative was lauded by security and safety experts. Sultan al Rawahi, a security and safety expert, told *Muscat Daily*, "This decision is a significant step towards reducing accidents and traffic violations, especially among young people. It will also alleviate traffic congestion on roads." He added that establishment of similar schools in European countries proved effective. "This initiative will promote greater discipline in traffic movement in Oman." Rashid Faqir al Balushi, a safety officer for FIA World Rally, expressed optimism about the timing and impact of the decision. "It will encourage parents to enrol their children in these schools, which will teach them proper traffic rules and spread traffic culture among the youth," he remarked.

MHUP launches 'Exchange Your Land' initiative for citizen well-being

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) has launched a new initiative called 'Exchange Your Land'. A statement released by MHUP said the primary objective of the initiative is to enhance services and streamline real estate procedures to align with its vision of sustainable urban development for prosperous communities. The initiative aims to leverage the benefits of digital transformation across all services, including the government land grant system. Under the Exchange Your Land initiative, citizens who have been granted government residential land and wish to exchange it for housing options in their current place of work or residence will have the opportunity to do so, provided they are the original owners of the land. Since Royal Decree No 42/2021 regarding granting gov-

ernment land was issued, MHUP has been committed to providing various housing options to eligible citizens, prioritising families, in accordance with Oman Vision 2040's focus on well-being and social protection. The ministry earlier introduced an initiative called 'Choose Your Land', which enabled eligible citizens to select suitable plots of land from interactive geographical maps displaying available residential plans. This initiative benefited over 25,000 individuals in 2023. It was followed by MHUP introducing a programme called 'Own Your Land', offering beneficiaries the opportunity to acquire government-subsidised land in designated plans and locations with integrated services. Another initiative - 'Plan Your Land' - allows beneficiaries to choose suitable land in areas not covered by existing housing plans, provided it is within their permanent residence village/area.



Dhofar Municipality invites bids for Shuwaymiya waterfront development

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dhofar Municipality is taking steps to boost tourism and domestic travel, and inviting bids for the development of the

Shuwaymiya waterfront. A spokesperson for Dhofar Municipality announced a tender for comprehensive development of the Shuwaymiya waterfront. The project covers an area of 19,867sqm, stretching 767.5m,

and aims to offer a range of amenities, including event spaces, recreational areas for children, and a picturesque sports walkway. The official informed that the project will feature a dedicated bicycle path, ample parking, a

prayer hall and toilet facilities. To enhance the area's aesthetic appeal and ecological sustainability, approximately 268 trees will be planted. Last Wednesday, H E Azzan bin Qassim al Busaidi, Undersec-

retary for Tourism in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, met officials from the Directorate General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar to discuss recent developments in the tourism sector. H E Busaidi also conducted fe-

ld visits to several tourism projects in the governorate and assessed readiness of hotel facilities for the upcoming khareef. According to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information, Dhofar received

962,000 visitors during 2023 khareef that lasts from June 21 to September 21. The year saw a significant increase in visitors across all segments, including citizens, GCC visitors, and tourists of other nationalities.



Japan Embassy facilitates Dr Suad al Mudhaffar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Embassy of Japan held a commendation ceremony for Dr Suad al Mudhaffar at Crowne Plaza Muscat on Wednesday. Saud contributed to the promotion of education in Oman as founder and former principal of Azan bin Qais International School. She also contributed to Oman-Japan relations through several cultural activities. In addition, she played a significant role in the success of the Oman-Japan Economic Collaboration Forum for SMEs held in February 2018 on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the establishment of Oman-Japan diplomatic relations. Speaking at the ceremony,

Suad said, "Being recognised by the embassy fills me with immense pride, validating years of hard work. I am committed to continuing my efforts in fostering people-to-people connections between Oman and Japan. From Japan, I impart valuable lessons in discipline and self-reliance to my students, instilling important values for their future. Conversely, I aim to bring back the warmth of Omani hospitality and the strong family bonds it embodies." Ambassador H E Jota Yamamoto added that with her courage, perseverance and dedication, Suad made an incredible mark in the country. "We are happy to build on the Japan-Oman relations Dr Suad nurtured in the field of education in Oman."

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FDO showcases investment opportunities at Global Seafood Expo in Spain

Barcelona, Spain - Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), the investment arm of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) in the fisheries sector, successfully showcased its sustainable operations and investment opportunities in Oman's fisheries sector to European and global companies at the Global Seafood Expo which took place in Barcelona, Spain during last week.

Drawing widespread acclaim for its commitment to sustainability and excellence in Oman's fisheries sector, FDO stood out among over 2,000 European and global participants and welcomed more than 35,000 visitors.

Fisheries Development Oman attracted a diverse array of attendees eager to explore partnerships with an organisation dedicated to responsible practices. The Expo served as a platform for fostering relationships with conscientious consumers and businesses seeking ethically sourced seafood products.

At the Expo, FDO's booth prominently highlighted its diverse product range, including world-class pelagic fish operations, aquaculture products, and one of the largest canning and processing facilities in the Middle East. Visitors were impressed by FDO's efforts to deliver premium-quality seafood while minimising environmental impact.

With a focus on responsible sourcing and production, FDO



seized the opportunity to explore new markets and segments at the Expo. The event provided a platform for showcasing FDO's commitment to sustainability to a global audience, paving the way for growth and expansion.

Collaboration and investment in Oman's thriving fisheries sector were a cornerstone of FDO's participation as the company actively sought out like-minded organisations and stakeholders to invest in Oman. The positive reaction from visitors underscores the potential for impactful partnerships driving positive change in the seafood industry.

FDO and its subsidiaries proudly mentioned their certifications and accreditations, earning admiration from attendees for their commitment to quality

and sustainability. European and global players expressed interest in partnering with FDO, recognising the value of aligning with a reputable organisation upholding the highest standards of excellence.

In a press release, Salim al Mamari, Group Investment Director of Fisheries Development Oman, expressed gratitude for the positive reception at the Expo, stating, "We are thrilled by the interest shown by European and global players in our wide range of products and services including our sustainable operations. The Expo provided an invaluable platform for showcasing our commitment to responsible seafood production fostering meaningful partnerships and attracting investment

to Oman."

FDO's subsidiaries Oman Pelagic and SIMAK showcased a wide range of products and services, including sustainable aquaculture products, premium seafood offerings, and innovative processing solutions. Their participation further bolstered FDO's success at the Expo, reinforcing the company's reputation as a leader in sustainable fisheries practices.

Seafood Expo Barcelona, co-located with Seafood Processing Barcelona, is the world's largest seafood trade event, attracting buyers, suppliers, media, and other seafood professionals from 150 countries. The Expo is renowned for facilitating global networking and business opportunities in the seafood industry.



Oman, Saudi Arabia sign MoU to fund infra projects in Oman

Muscat - H E Sultan Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, on Thursday received Sultan Abdulrahman al Murshid, CEO of the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), to discuss mechanisms of cooperation between Oman and the SFD, in addition to updates on ongoing joint development projects.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to finance the infrastructure of some industrial zones in Oman.

The MoU seeks to develop industrial and logistic sectors and encourage the private sector to contribute to economic

development in Oman within the context of Oman Vision 2040.

The MoU also covers cooperation in other sectors, including higher education, vocational training, water, industry, mining, transport, communications and energy.

ONA

IMF opens regional office in Riyadh

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has opened a regional office in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, becoming the Fund's first office in the Middle East and North Africa region.

The office was launched during the Joint Regional Conference on Industrial Policy for Diversification, jointly organised by the IMF and Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Finance.

The new office aims to strengthen capacity building, regional surveillance, and outreach



and regional institutions, governments, and other stakeholders.

The IMF expressed its appreciation to Saudi Arabia for its financial contribution aimed at enhancing capacity development in IMF member countries, including fragile states.

Abdoul Aziz Wane, a seasoned IMF director with an extensive understanding of the institution and a broad network of policymakers and academics worldwide, will serve as the first director of the Riyadh office.

SPA

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Tender Notice

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tenders:

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCIT/100/2024	CONSULTANCY SERVICES OF STUDY OF REHABILITATION THE EXISTING ROAD OF WADI AL-AQ	25-4-2024	9-5-2024	4-6-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FIRST& SECOND CLASS)	SIXTY-TWO OMANI RIYALS AND FIVE HUNDRED BAISA (LOCAL, REGIONAL) (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL FOR SME NON-REFUNDABLE
MTCIT/101/2024	EMPANELMENT OF COMPANIES FOR PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL IT AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION CALL-OFF SERVICES	25-4-2024	9-5-2024	4-6-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (All CLASSES)	(100/-)-ONE HUNDRED OMANI RIYALS (LOCAL, REGIONAL) (20/-) TWENTY OMANI RIAL FOR SME NON-REFUNDABLE
MTCIT/102/2024	SUPPORT RENEWAL OF HP HARDWARE FOR G CLOUD 2024/2025	25-4-2024	9-5-2024	4-6-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (All CLASSES)	(25/-)-TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIYALS (LOCAL, REGIONAL) (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL FOR SME NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website

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Tender

Oman chamber of commerce and industry would like to announce the following public tenders:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Tender Fees (irrevocable)	Specialized companies	Deadline for Obtaining Documents	Deadline for Tender submission
4/2024	Appointing a consultant to evaluate the Artificial intelligence project	100 /-R.O for all companies. 25/-R.O for companied holding Riyada	Companies specialized in information technology and artificial intelligence consulting	12 May 2024	Before 12 pm 19 May 2024

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- Interested companies should enclose their bids a 1% Bank guarantee/ certified cheque of proposal value issued by one of the banks operating in Oman valid for 120 days from the deadline of submitting the bids addressed in the name of **Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry**. The bids without this temporary guarantee will not be considered.
- The Omanisation percentage in the company is considered one of the technical evaluation criteria and preference is given to companies that have higher Omanisation percentages.
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- Offers should be deposited in the tender box kept at the Administration Department in the Second floor of OCCI Head office.
- OCCI is not bound to accept the lowest or any other bids. It has the right to accept or reject any bids without showing reasons.
- Interested companies should submit the Tenders before 12 pm on 19 May 2024

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US economic growth surprisingly slowed to 1.6% in first quarter

Diccon Hyatt

The US economy as measured by the inflation-adjusted Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at an annualized rate of 1.6% in the first quarter, down from 3.4% in the fourth quarter of last year and the slowest since mid-2022, the Bureau of Economic Analysis said Thursday. That was below the median forecast of 2.2% according to a survey of economists by Dow Jones Newswires and the Wall Street Journal.

And in a setback in the fight against inflation, the report showed consumer prices accelerated, rising to a 3.4% annual rate from 1.8% in the fourth quarter.

"This report was the worst of both worlds: economic growth is slowing and inflationary pressures are persisting," Chris Zaccarelli, chief investment officer for Independent Advisor Alliance, a financial company in North Carolina, wrote in a commentary.

The growth downturn is a departure from the recent trend of economic figures showing people spending more, and the economy growing faster than forecasters have expected. Economists have anticipated the Federal Reserve's campaign of anti-inflation interest rate hikes would significantly slow the economy or even send it into a



High interest rates are dragging the high-flying US economy back toward earth, and still haven't pushed down inflation to the Fed's 2% target

recession, but it's proved surprisingly resilient.

The Fed has held its key interest rate at its highest since 2001, pushing up borrowing costs on mortgages, credit cards, and other loans in an attempt to quell inflation that flared up as the economy recovered from the pandemic in 2021. Thursday's report showed the economy suf-

fering the downside of this strategy—slower economic growth—while inflation, which had been falling last year, reaccelerates.

Cracks starting to show

Much of the slowdown in GDP came from a decrease in inventory investment, which economists point out, is a volatile

statistic prone to rapid swings up and down. Thursday's figures are also an advance estimate and will be revised twice more by the BEA as more data comes in over the next two months.

Still, there were signs of deeper cracks in the economy, possibly pointing to a year of slower growth ahead. Consumer spending, the main engine of the US economy, decelerated in the first quarter according to the GDP report, slowing to a 2.5% annual growth rate from 3.3% in the fourth quarter.

The slowdown, driven by a

decrease in spending on material goods, was "a possible sign that elevated rates took a toll on big-ticket spending" by driving up borrowing costs, Oren Klachkin, senior markets economist at insurance company Nationwide, wrote in a commentary.

Decelerating state and local government spending and exports also contributed to the slowdown.

What does this mean for rate cuts?

The hot inflation shown in the report quashed expectations in fi-

nancial markets that the Fed will cut the fed funds rate in June. Fed officials have said they are waiting for data to give them confidence that inflation is firmly on the path down to 2%, and Thursday's data cut the wrong direction.

Markets were pricing in a 9.5% chance of a rate cut in June after the report, down from 16.5% the day before according to the CME Group's FedWatch tool, which forecasts rate movements based on fed funds futures trading data.

(Source: Investopedia.com)

Russia's gas production to rise 4.6% in 2024: Minister

Moscow, Russia - In 2024, natural gas production in Russia is expected to add 4.6% and climb to 666.7bn cubic meters in the base case scenario, the Russian Ministry of Economic Development said in its socio-economic development forecast for the country.

According to the forecast, which carried by Russian news agency, TASS, pipeline gas exports are forecast to edge up by 7% to 108bn cubic meters. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports are predicted to grow by 14% to 38mn metric tonnes in 2024.

Gas production is expected to continue growing to 695.4bn cubic meters in 2025, 707.5bn cubic meters in 2026, and 727.3bn cubic meters in 2027.

Pipeline gas exports will grow to 120bn cubic meters in 2025, 126bn cubic meters in 2026, and then drop to 122bn cubic meters in 2027.

LNG exports are forecast to be 40mn metric tonnes in 2025, 44mn metric tons in 2026, and 56.6mn metric tonnes in 2027.

Non-CIS gas prices are expected to be at the level of \$297.3 per 1,000 cubic meters in 2024.

WAM

More than 300 startups to participate in 2024 AIM Congress in Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Over 300 startups across diverse fields and sectors have officially confirmed their participation in the 13th edition of the AIM Congress. The event is set to take place from May 7 to 9, 2024, at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Center. The event aims to delve into innovative solutions, uncover investment prospects, foster partnerships, and facilitate knowledge exchange among entrepreneurs globally.

The startups constitute one of the primary pillars of the 2024 AIM Congress, organized under the theme "Adapting to a Shifting Investment Landscape: Harnessing New Potentials for Global Economic Development." The event is supported by the UAE Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology, and the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development is the lead partner.

The 2024 AIM Startup agenda also features a diverse array of panel discussions and keynote speeches, highlighting the multifaceted landscape of trends and challenges facing startups. Key topics revolve



around the emergence of startups in biotechnology, integrating technology into enterprises for financial resilience, and strategies for acquiring and retaining customers amidst financial disruptions. Additionally, discussions cover themes such as women's leadership, talent acquisition, and sustainable practices.

Additionally, the AIM Congress annually hosts the AIM Startup Pitch Competition alongside its events. The aim is to provide a competitive environment and an ideal platform for these startups to engage with investors, government officials,

and key stakeholders, fostering relationships and securing funding for the winning entrepreneurial projects.

Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) from Malaysia is sponsoring 10 startups, showcasing innovation. Maharashtra State Innovation Society and Kerala Startup Mission are each supporting 10 startups from India. Andhra Pradesh Medtech Zone is backing 10 Indian startups driving healthcare innovation. Additionally, the UN International Trade Centre is empowering 3 Ugandan startups to participate in the AIM Startup Pitch Competition.

AI theme remains on track as Big Tech profits rise in first quarter of 2024

Vahid Karaahmetovic

In the latest Daily Market Notes report to investors, analysts at Navellier & Associates said strong earnings reports from Microsoft and Alphabet have reinvigorated the AI sector outlook and the current earnings season.

"Stocks are having the best week of the year, bouncing back from the first major pullback since the strong rally that started in late October. Once again, big tech is leading the way, with the Magnificent 7 up 3.3% on the day this morning, and up 4.4% on the week," the analysts highlighted.

Despite cautious remarks from Taiwan Semiconductor (TSM) impacting Nvidia's stock earlier, reassurances from major tech firms about significant investments in AI infrastructure led to Nvidia's rebound to \$873.

The return of optimism was helped by a strong print from Alphabet, which not only surpassed earnings expectations but also announced a significant share buyback and a new dividend, pushing its shares to record highs with a 10% increase today.

"It was very important for big tech earnings to come in strong,



as they not only have a major weight in the indexes, they have an even bigger portion of the overall earnings," the analysts said.

However, not all tech companies fared well, they continued.

Intel reported disappointing top-line results and lower-than-expected margins, lacking significant exposure to AI. Its stock fell by 11.2%.

In the broader market, fears of

high Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) inflation numbers eased as both headline and core PCE for March aligned with forecasts, providing relief to the bond market.

Meanwhile, the US 10-year Treasury note and the 2-year note saw slight decreases in yields, reflecting a market adjustment to a prolonged inflation reduction path.

On the consumer front, the

latest University of Michigan survey indicated stable inflation expectations but a slight dip in consumer sentiment, remaining near a three-year high.

Sector-specific performance varied, with Exxon and Chevron experiencing declines after missing earnings expectations, contrasting with the minimal impact of energy stocks on broader indices.

(Source: Investing.com)

Full gas storage in Europe expected to put downward pressure on prices

Ankara, Turkey - The high natural gas storage level in Europe, along with a forecast of a warm winter that is set to lower demand, is expected to place downward pressure on gas spot prices, according to the latest report published by the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF).

Europe started the 2023-2024 winter season with a natural gas storage capacity of 99%.

Europe's storage had 25bn cubic meters more gas than tar-



geted and only 42bn cubic meters of natural gas withdrawn over the winter, the second low-

est use in a decade.

According to the GECF report, this was due to low heating de-

mand caused by the warmest winter in 12 years.

Low gas withdrawals meant that 61bn cubic meters were left in storage by the end of the winter season, the highest level ever for the end of any winter season.

Looking to the winter season ahead, the GECF reports favorable conditions in the European market, with gas storage close to its maximum capacity requiring only 40bn cubic meters of net gas injection in the upcoming summer season.

Such low injection requirements are expected to contribute to increased stability in regional and global gas markets and put downward pressure on spot prices.

The report stressed the importance that gas storage plays in the supply-demand balance by offering supply flexibility during peak consumption periods.

Up to the winter season over the 2019-2020 period, gas storage levels rarely reached their maximum capacity, but by the

end of 2022, Europe's natural gas storage capacity reached a sizable 104bn cubic meters.

Factors such as domestic production and liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports have also affected the quantity of gas withdrawn during the winter season and have ensured that storage has been close to maximum capacity over four of the last five winters.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, LNG cargoes were mostly directed to Asia due to in-

creased demand, while Europe used more gas from storage facilities.

"As a result, gas withdrawn from storages in Europe was used intensively for consumption during that period, while spot and long-term contracted LNG purchases decreased. In milder-than-average winter seasons, such as 2019-2020 and 2022-2023, the amount of gas that needed to be taken from storage was much lower," the GECF said.

Anadolu Agency

Huge crowd gathers for Friday's races at AlUla Camel Cup 2024

The second edition of the AlUla Camel Cup to conclude on Saturday

The third and penultimate day of this year's AlUla Camel Cup saw packed crowds roar on the competitors at the Mughayra Heritage Sports Village racetrack during an incredible day of racing.

Two categories of races took place on Friday, the 6km Jidhaa and Thanaya 8km, with each category featuring two races. The total prize pool for the day amounted to SAR25.6mn.

The big winners of the day were the Qatari stable Hijin Alshahaneyah, with the first Jidhaa race seeing Aliyah claim victory with a time of 9:37.768 minutes. However, Hijin Alshahaneyah didn't stop there.

The second Jidhaa race was won by the stable's camel Ashaab thanks to a time of 9:44.772 minutes - but further joy ensued for Hijin Alshahaneyah as they also claimed



second and fourth place.

Friday's first Thanaya race was won by Al Shaheniyah from the Hijin Al Asifah stable from

the UAE with a time of 13:08.076 minutes.

Hijin Alshahaneya though were back to winning ways in the

second Thanaya race, as their camel Mashkoor earned glory in 13:10.480 minutes to complete a phenomenal Friday in AlUla.

First place in each of Friday's four races shared a SAR3.5mn prize pool. Second, meanwhile, shared a SAR1mn prize pool,

while the third placed finishers divided a SAR500,000 sum.

The AlUla Camel Cup 2024 concludes on Saturday with the

highly prestigious Hail and Zmoul races, both 8km in distance, which will see the winners claim the competition's main trophies - and SAR7.5mn each.

In addition to the racing action, Saturday will also feature the AlUla Design Awards AlAjlal Edition ceremony at the Heritage Village, a prestigious recognition of outstanding creations inspired by AlUla's cultural, natural and artistic heritage. The winning camel covers (AlAjlal) will be proudly showcased in the Heritage Village.

The AlUla Camel Cup, which celebrated its inaugural edition last year, provides a mix of sport, culture, heritage, tradition, and more, and evolves a beloved sporting tradition that has thrived in Saudi Arabia since the 7th century.

Sporting events such as the AlUla Camel Cup are instrumental in the Kingdom's transformation journey, in line with Saudi Vision 2030, and with AlUla's commitment to responsible and sustainable development.

The second edition of the AlUla Camel Cup is organised by the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) as part of the AlUla Moments calendar, in partnership with the Saudi Camel Racing Federation (SCRFF).



Bank Muscat offers unparalleled features, benefits under Asalah

A wide range of banking products and services are carefully crafted to suit customers of Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in Oman, and offer them a distinctive banking experience. Marking a long-standing and strong relationship with customers, Asalah provides a special banking experience based on understanding customers' dynamic needs.

Abdulnaser N al Raisi, General Manager - Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said, "The expansion of the Asalah network highlights our focus to remain the nation's bank of choice in all parts of the country. With the widest reach in serving customers across regions, we are committed to meeting customer expectations by offering dedi-

cated Relationship Managers and personalised products and services to fit their needs. We are also committed to catering to the complex financial needs of clients reflecting the customer-centric vision of Bank Muscat."

Bank Muscat opened a number of new Asalah centres within its branches in Madinat Sultan Qaboos, Al Hail and also in Izki and Adam under Dakhiliya governorate, bringing the total number of 47 Asalah centres to date distributed in various governorates of the Sultanate.

Asalah Priority Banking extends many services and facilities, including Asalah's special contact center operating around the clock all days of the week. The Asalah ENTERTAINER App brings customers great value

with thousands of 'Buy 1 and get 1 for free' offers in stores inside the sultanate and international destinations. Customers also get rewards and discounts in multiple places such as restaurants, entertainment, beauty and health. Further, the Asalah Signature Credit Card offers 1% cash back on all local and international transactions, a number of 12 complimentary visits to more than 1000 airport lounges worldwide, free travel insurance, and 24/7 concierge service.

Asalah Platinum Debit Cardholders have access to privileges encompassing lounge access, exciting offers at high-end merchants, restaurants and hotels, complimentary chauffeur service to and from Salalah and Muscat airports.

Sohar International introduces Samsung Wallet to elevate customer experience

Affirming its position as a leading digital bank in Oman, Sohar International, the fastest-growing bank in Oman partners up with Samsung to proudly introduce Samsung Wallet. This mobile payment solution empowers Sohar International and Sohar Islamic customers to perform secure and contactless payments using their Samsung phones or watches seamlessly via POS machines as well as use their Samsung Wallet account to conduct online payments with ease and convenience.

"As we unveil our partnership with Samsung Wallet with the launch of Samsung Wallet, we mark a significant milestone in the evolution of digital banking in Oman," stated Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International.

"This collaboration epitomises our commitment to harnessing cutting-edge technology, enhancing security, and providing innovative payment solutions to our customers. Introducing Samsung Wallet to our suite of digital solutions underscores our dedication to setting the standard for digital excellence in our nation."

The bank encourages customers to take full advantage of



linking their Sohar International and Sohar Islamic cards to Samsung Wallet for a streamlined payment process across multiple devices. To get started, customers can download the Samsung Wallet App from the Galaxy Store, log in with their Samsung account, and set up their PIN and fingerprint for security. After these steps, they simply select 'add card' to scan or manually input their Sohar International or Sohar Islamic

credit or debit card number.

Commenting on the partnership, Sajee Bashiruddin, Chief Digital Officer at Sohar International, said, "Today marks a pivotal moment in our commitment to enhancing customer experiences. With the introduction of Samsung Wallet, Sohar International is spearheading a new era of seamless and secure digital transactions, empowering individuals to navigate their financial journeys with confidence and

convenience.

"This strategic move underscores our dedication to delivering cutting-edge financial solutions that anticipate and meet the needs of our customers. By embracing our partnership with Samsung Wallet, we are not just adapting to change - we're shaping the future of banking experiences."

"Our partnership with Sohar International is a critical step for us as we continue expanding our next-generation payment solutions to consumers in the region," said Fadi Abu Shamat, Head of the Mobile eXperience Division at Samsung Gulf Electronics. "Samsung Wallet not only offers user-friendly features but also prioritises the security of customers' personal and financial information. With the help of Samsung Knox, consumers can have peace of mind through advanced security measures such as monitoring and preventing unauthorised access or tampering of the device. This collaboration demonstrates our unwavering commitment to innovation and customer-centric values, as we work towards creating a more vibrant digital landscape for all."

Six Senses Ziggy Bay extends special offers for GCC residents on Oman travel

As the warmth of summer approaches, Six Senses Ziggy Bay is inviting GCC residents to unwind amidst the beauty of the Oman Peninsula with its new GCC Local Residents Offer, taking care of breakfast and a three-course dinner as well as a 10% discount on the best available rate, available from May 1 to September 30.

A stay at Six Senses Ziggy Bay begins with a scenic 2.5-hour drive from Dubai, allowing guests to leave the rush of city life behind and ease into a care-free state of mind as the striking Al-Hajar Mountains reveal

themselves.

Once settled within the comforts of one of the 82 villas, residents are free to discover a

plethora of enriching experiences. From sunset cruises on the resort's very own Dhahab dhow, a memorable day of relax-

From May 1 to September 30, the hidden jewel of Oman is welcoming guests for an out-of-the-ordinary stay with a complimentary half-board upgrade and discounts on the best available rate



ation at Smugglers Bay, a private untouched beach only accessible by boat or via a short scenic hike, complete with a freshly prepared beachside barbecue, to rejuvenating visits at the award-winning spa where skilled therapists offer a variety of treatments and wellness experiences. Cool down with a diving exploration of Oman's gulf, home to turtles, rays and schools of colourful fish, or simply explore the resort by bike with stops at the organic garden or Earth Lab, where glass upcycling or candle and soap making await.

As the sun dips beyond the

horizon, sit down to a three-course dinner at Summer House or Spice Market serving contemporary international or Middle Eastern cuisine. The GCC Local Residents Offer also ensures guests begin each day with an elaborate breakfast buffet featuring the freshest ingredients sourced from the resort's own organic garden and Dibba farm and the region's producers.

Whether visiting with a loved one, friends, or the whole family, the resort's variety of Omani-style villas and suites ensure a cooling escape from the heat of day, the group stated.

OQ showcases innovations at OPES '24

OQ Group, the global integrated energy company, represented by its Exploration and Production arm 'OQEP' showcased its innovations, energy mix and plans to build a sustainable future. OQ participated in Oman Petroleum & Energy Show (OPES), the prestigious event that embraces the entire oil, gas, and energy industry, as a principal sponsor.

OPES 2024 had together more than 200 expert speakers to shed light on global initiatives that will impact the oil and gas industry. Participants from over 24 countries and more than 900 delegates attended the conference and exhibition. The event was held under the patronage of Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

After the inauguration, the OQ booth was visited by the Guest of Honour, H E Eng Salim bin Nasser al Auli, the Minister of Energy and Minerals, as well as by a number of delegates and visitors, where the group highlighted its outstanding achievements and its roadmap for a sustainable future which manifested in three clear pathways to reduce carbon footprint and to diversify revenue by promoting energy efficiency, clean energy, and low carbon molecules.

OQEP also demonstrated how its initiatives are designed to help Oman build a hydrogen-centric economy, in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the national agenda to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.



Ahmed al Azkawi, Chief Executive Upstream of OQEP, said, "As a meeting place for energy companies and expertise from around the globe, OPES presents us with an opportunity to project OQ as an integrated energy group focused on building a clean and sustainable future. In our participation, we have gone beyond production and revenues, highlighting the need to engage all stakeholders towards

building a sustainable future in line with Oman Vision 2040 and carbon neutrality 2050 objectives. OQ is leaving no stone unturned to apply best industry practices in order to reduce carbon emissions produced by its existing and future projects.

"We are pleased to report that we have been able to reduce these emissions to as low as 6kg CO₂e/boe in some of our facilities. Moreover, we recently made the final investment decision for MARSA LNG project

that will achieve less than 3kg of carbon dioxide for every oil equivalent barrel which is one of the lowest GHG intensity plants in the world."

"As part of our sustainability efforts, OQ introduced digital platforms to measure, monitor, and control our emissions. Through our OPES participation, OQ highlighted the importance of maximizing the value of current resources and oil and gas reserves as the company strives to build a cleaner and sustainable

future," CEU of OQEP concluded.

At the booth, OQ Exploration and Production featured some of its ongoing sustainable practices, including various decarbonization measures. The OQ booth also gave an overview of OQEP joint ventures portfolio powering its various projects, including gas development. The booth also put the spotlight on its global network of partners and investors.

OQEP, in line with OQ Group's efforts to promote ICV and support SMEs in the oil con-

cession areas, signed an agreement with one of the local community contractors for the maintenance and supply of equipment for oil and gas fields in Block 60 and Block 48. OQ Group also brought into focus its digitisation strategy which has enabled it to boost the quality, efficiency, and overall yield of oil and gas exploration and production operations across the value chain. The deployment of data collection and analysis has led to better margins. Digitalisation has

enabled OQ to deploy new and innovative upstream technology and optimise overall exploration and production efforts.

Various sessions at OPES featured top OQEP officials who shared ideas on the role of Oil and Gas in the evolving landscape of the future energy mix. Ahmed al Azkawi, CEU of OQEP, was a key participant in the Executive Plenary Session on 'Transforming the Energy Industry to Deliver Affordable, Sustainable, and Clean Energy'.

ABA Oman students break 7 records in MESAC event

Students of ABA Oman International School created history by breaking 7 records at the Middle East South Asia Conference (MESAC) Track and Field Championships held at the American School of Doha. ABA athletes took 8 gold, 4 silver and 4 bronze to break records previously unbeaten for 11 years!

In addition, the Junior Varsity (JV) Boys team secured the bronze medal overall.

Aqil Shameer and Magnus Gohring broke 3 MESAC records each. Aqil secured the top spot with the best timings in JV Boys 800m in 2:05.35, JV Boys 1500m in 4:21.27, and JV Boys 3000m in 9:39.40. Magnus made a historic record in the Varsity Boys 100m heats with a record time of 10.90, breaking a 14-year old record of under 11 seconds being witnessed for the first time ever.

He also broke the Varsity Boys 200m record in the heats with a time of 21:75. Magnus then went on to break his own Varsity Boys record from day 1 in the 100m final on day 3 in 10.72 seconds!



The ABA Varsity Boys team of Aqil Shameer, Magnus Gohring, Christian Sutton and Marat Lukmanov also broke the MESAC record for the 4 x 400m relay in a time of 1:33.08.

Sarah Harman, Athletics Director at ABA, commended the dedication and hard work of the students and coaches. "This achievement is a testament to the dedication, skill, and hard work of our students and coaches. We are immensely proud of their accomplishments and the mark they have left in MESAC history," she said.

"The tournament, featuring 350 athletes from around the re-

gion, was a truly memorable experience for both players and spectators," she added.

In addition to showcasing prowess in track and field this season, ABA students also exhibited remarkable skill and resilience in badminton, softball, and Speech and Debate competitions. In badminton, both Junior Varsity and Varsity teams displayed exceptional talent and determination securing two gold medals, two silver and three bronze medals from individuals and doubles teams. The JV team secured the silver medal, showcasing their dedication and teamwork.

Samsung booth at EuroCucina '24

Samsung Electronics recently showcased its new premium kitchen and lifestyle as part of a continued drive for a connected home life at EuroCucina 2024.

The event is one of the largest international kitchen events and took place from April 16 to 21 at Rho Fiera Milano in Milan. Samsung at the event displayed how connectivity among multiple appliances - as well as the innovative features of new built-in products - will change everyday home life. Samsung's booth at EuroCucina invited visitors to main zones which consisted of the Bespoke AI and Premium Built-in Kitchen.



Connectivity across appliances

The journey at Samsung's booth started with the Bespoke AI zone which demonstrated the expansion of the connectivity. It included the experience of connectivity existing not only in the kitchen, but also in the rest of the home, assisting users' life to be simple and intuitive, less user input required at home.

Samsung highlighted the experience enhanced and realized by multiple screens. The AI Family Hub and AI Home - a 7-inch

screen built into the Bespoke AI Laundry Combo and Anyplace Induction - were key components of this. Through the screens, users can get the useful information of the device itself or get a phone call directly on the Bespoke AI Laundry Combo while doing laundry. But the most important part is that the screens enable the appliances to connect with and control other devices, letting users enjoy heightened convenience through the SmartThings ecosystem.

For example, they feature SmartThings 3D Map View, a three-dimensional perspective of the home that locates connected

Samsung appliances throughout the house. It streamlines operations such as turning off connected devices and checking their energy usage.

Various scenarios to the real life are ready at the zone as well. In a specific mode like SmartThings Energy Away mode, SmartThings automatically powers off the chosen, specific appliances and devices when users are out of home.

Built-in products for diverse lifestyles

Samsung has further strengthened its brand position by launching built-in models includ-

ing refrigerators, dishwashers, induction cooktops and ovens, as well as by introducing innovative features such as AI Pro Cooking. At Premium Built-in Kitchen zone, Samsung showcases three new products that will assure its brand presence in built-in market. They feature AI-applied capabilities and upgraded functionality and provide consumers with great flexibility when configuring their built-in kitchens.

First, the Built-in Wide Bottom Mount Freezer (BRB6500D) is the first wide model to appear in the Samsung's built-in refrigerator lineup. Using its Wi-Fi compatibility, users can reduce their energy use by up to 10% through SmartThings AI Energy Mode. Users can also monitor their energy usage and estimate monthly energy bills. If these bills exceed their preset targets, the energy saving mode can help users save energy by changing the compressor speed and the frequency of the defrost cycle. As for keeping food fresh, the Twin Cooling™ system ensures that food stays fresher for longer by changing the temperature and humidity in the refrigerator and freezer using independent evaporators and fans.

University Library organises Ithra cultural event to enrich academic life

The University Library organised a cultural event titled 'Ithra' from April 22 to April 24.

This event coincided with the celebration of World Book Day and Copyright Day on April 23 each year. The aim of this event was to enhance culture and knowledge, and to provide a platform for exchanging experiences and promoting intellectual cooperation among members of the university and the local community.

The event hosted several authors from the university who talked about their experiences in writing and overcoming challenges, showcasing their literary



works. The event also included a used book fair to promote a culture of interest in books and encourage reading, and continuous learning.

Harith bin Saif al Kharousi, a researcher in Omani heritage and history, presented an exhibition of writings on metals, local materials, and rocks, focusing on the history of writing since ancient times. The event concluded with a workshop titled 'How to Start Your Writings' presented by Sheikha al Fajriya to encourage participants to innovate and think creatively in the world of writing.

This event resulted in a set of

important recommendations, highlighting the necessity of continuing to organise such events that promote writing and enhance interest in knowledge and books.

The event also called for adopting students' writings and publishing them in university publications. It is hoped that the university will allocate a special corner to display these valuable intellectual outputs in local and international book fairs. The event received great popularity among university affiliates and members of the external community, reflecting its success and positive impact.

US to rush Patriot missiles to Ukraine in \$6bn package

The aid will enable for procurement of weapons, including critical interceptors

Washington, D.C., US - United States has announced an additional aid of US\$6bn to Ukraine, which will enable for procurement of weapons, including critical interceptors Patriot and NASAMS (National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System) air defence systems, the US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Saturday.

The additional commitment of US\$6bn through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) will allow for the procurement of new capabilities for Ukraine from US industry, Austin said. "This is the largest security assistance package that we've committed to date," Austin told a news conference at the Pentagon, adding that the US would 'move immediately' to get the supplies to Ukraine.

The USAI aid package also includes counter-drone systems and support equipment, significant amounts of artillery ammunition and air-to-ground munitions, and maintenance and sustainment support.

The US\$6bn is part of a



US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin

US\$60bn aid package signed into law by US President Joe Biden on Wednesday, which also includes US\$1bn in more immediate aid, Austin said.

The Department of Defence (DoD) announced that the 'historic new security assistance package' will address Ukraine's ongoing battlefield needs and demonstrate unwavering US support for Ukraine.

Austin and Air Force General Charles Q Brown Jr, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, addressed the press conference following a virtual meeting of the 21st Ukraine Defence Contact Group which saw the participation of Ukrainian Minister of Defence

Umerov and General Syrskiy. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addressed the start of the virtual meeting and sought more air defence systems to be sent to Kyiv to help protest against Russian strikes.

Austin said that he had convened the Ukraine Defence Contact Group for the first time at Ramstein Air Base exactly two years ago. The group comprising some 50 members of allies and partners from around the world, marshals military assistance for Ukraine.

Contact group members have committed more than US\$95bn in security assistance to Ukraine, the US Defence Secretary said.

"Over the past two years, the members of this Contact Group have committed more than 70 mid- to long range air-defence systems, along with thousands of missiles. We've provided more than 3,000 armoured vehicles, including more than 800 main battle tanks. We've given Ukraine tens of thousands of anti-tank missiles. This year, more than a squadron of donated F-16s will start to arrive in Ukraine, along with pilots and maintainers trained by members of this Contact Group," Austin said as per a Pentagon readout of the remarks made by Austin at the opening of the 21st Ukraine Defence Contact Group.

The US Defence Secretary noted Czech Republic's 'extraordinary initiative' to procure thousands of artillery shells from third countries for Ukraine. "And the UK has announced its largest single package of equipment ever, worth approximately US\$620mn. Or consider Germany's bold announcement that it will donate another Patriot system to Ukraine," he said.

"Ukraine is in dire need of more air-defence systems. And it urgently needs more interceptors. That's going to be a huge priority for us all today. Ukraine also needs more artillery and armour to defend its citizens and reclaim its stolen territory," Austin said.

Responding to a reporter's query Austin said: "I would point out that it's not just Patriot, that you know, they need. They need other types of systems and interceptors, as well. And so I would caution us all in terms of making Patriot the silver bullet. I would say that it's going to be the integrated air and missile defence, as we've said so many times before, that really turns the tide. And so there are other capabilities that they need that - that we really pushed hard to get, and we may be able to the Ukrainians a bit faster."

Urging allies to deter Russia from further aggression, the US Defence Secretary said: "If Ukraine fell under Putin's boot, Europe would fall under Putin's shadow."

ANI



UN warns of escalating situation in North Darfur

Hamilton, Canada - The UN on Friday issued a stark warning on the escalating situation in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur in Sudan, saying the area is 'already on the brink of famine'.

"We are receiving increasingly alarming reports of a dramatic escalation of tensions between armed actors in El Fasher, North Darfur," UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.

Dujarric said the paramilitary 'Rapid Support Forces (RSF) are reportedly encircling El Fasher, suggesting a coordinated move to attack the city may be imminent', adding that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) are positioning themselves, raising concerns of a large-scale confrontation.

Noting that such an attack on the city would cause 'devastating consequences for the civilian population', the UN spokesperson also reminded that 'this escalation of tensions is in an area already on

the brink of famine'.

"The Secretary-General reiterates his call on all Parties to refrain from fighting in the El Fasher area," he added.

El Fasher serves as the administrative centre of the Darfur region comprising five states. It is the largest city in Darfur

El Fasher serves as the administrative centre of the Darfur region comprising five states. It is the largest city in Darfur and the only one among the capitals of the other states in the region that has not fallen into the hands of the paramilitary RSF.

The Sudanese army controls El Fasher.

Anadolu Agency

SET FOR LAUNCH



The combination of the Chang'e-6 lunar probe and the Long March-5 Y8 carrier rocket being transferred vertically to the launching area at the Wenchang Space Launch Centre in south China's Hainan Province. The Chang'e-6 lunar probe is scheduled for launch at an appropriate time at the beginning of May (Xinhua)

US warns China over its support for Russia

Washington, D.C., US - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken after concluding his three-day visit to China said that he used his meeting to raise the Joe Biden administration's concerns about Beijing's support for Russia's defence industrial base, reported CNN.

Blinken emphasised that the US will take further action on top of existing sanctions on more than 100 Chinese entities and individuals if such support continues.

"What we said to China is this - we're going to take actions we already have, and if it doesn't stop, we're going to have to take more action, and you can anticipate as well, that other countries will (too)," Blinken said in an interview with CNN, adding that he raised the issue to both China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and President Xi Jinping. "We're



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken

looking to them to act, and ... if they don't, we will," he said.

According to CNN, Blinken made the comments in an interview with CNN on Friday while concluding his visit to China, where the top American diplomat spent hours meeting with top Chinese officials, including Xi Jinping as the two countries navigated a raft of contentious is-

sues, from US tech controls to Beijing's support for Moscow.

According to US, Chinese support is enabling Russia to ramp up production of tanks, munitions and armoured vehicles and allowing it to sustain its military operations in Ukraine.

Additionally, he emphasised that Chinese counterparts had not acknowledged the role of

these goods in the war in Ukraine. Instead, they characterised this as trade with Russia and said Moscow's success didn't depend on China, Blinken added. Further, the US Secretary also highlighted during the interview that China is trying to influence the upcoming US elections, as per CNN.

Following this, he said US has seen evidence of Chinese attempts to 'influence and arguably interfere' with the upcoming US elections, despite Chinese President Xi Jinping's earlier commitment to not do so.

Blinken disclosed in the CNN interview that Xi Jinping reiterated President Joe Biden's message, which he gave to him during their summit in San Francisco last November, to not interfere in the 2024 US presidential elections.

ANI

Turkish president and Dutch prime minister discuss NATO chief candidacy

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday said the choice of new NATO chief 'will be made within the framework of the strategic wisdom and fairness'.

"Nobody should have any doubt that we will make our decision within the framework of strategic wisdom and fairness," Erdogan said at a joint news conference with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte at Vahdettin Palace in Istanbul.

Rutte recently announced his bid to become the next NATO secretary-general.

Erdogan said that the trade volume between the two countries reached US\$13.9bn last year and that Ankara hopes to initially increase it to US\$16bn and then to US\$21.4bn.

"With US\$6.4bn in invest-

ments, Turkish entrepreneurs provide employment for some 80,000 people in the Netherlands," Erdogan added.

Erdogan said that the Dutch prime minister's visit holds a special significance for the bilateral relations between the two nations.

He said that they reviewed the multifaceted cooperation between the two countries and reaffirmed their determination to take bilateral relations to further levels.

"We noted that our commercial and economic relations continue to deepen and strengthen. The Netherlands is the largest foreign investor in Turkey.

"New partnerships to be established in the defence industry, green and digital transformation, and energy sectors will con-



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte

tribute to achieving this goal," the Turkish president added.

Erdogan also underlined the

importance of starting work on the update of the Customs Union with the EU as soon as possible,

saying that Turkey once again drew attention to the importance they attach to this issue.

He expressed that Ankara expects the Netherlands' support in order for the EU to address the relations with Turkey from a 'just and strategic perspective'.

He noted that preparations for the NATO summit of heads of

security.

"Furthermore, it is essential for intense and strong efforts, similar to those of (incumbent NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg), to be made in removing sanctions, restrictions, and obstacles in the

Erdogan said that the trade volume between the two countries reached US\$ 13.9bn last year and that Ankara hopes to initially increase it to US\$16bn and then to US\$21.4bn

state and government, scheduled to take place in Washington in July, were also on the agenda of the meeting.

Erdogan underlined the importance of the future secretary-general prioritising the preservation of NATO's primary role in ensuring Euro-Atlantic

defence industry among allies.

"I shared these points with Romanian President (Klaus) Iohannis, who has announced his candidacy for the secretary-general position, in a phone call held upon his request last week," he added.

Anadolu Agency

Hamas says it received Israeli response on hostage swap and ceasefire proposal

Istanbul, Turkey - Palestinian resistance group Hamas announced on Saturday that it had received Israel's official response to a hostage swap and ceasefire proposal it sent to Egypt and Qatar on April 13.

"Hamas received Israel's official response to the movement's proposal delivered to mediators, Egypt and Qatar, on April 13," said Khalil al-Hayya, the group's deputy head in the Gaza Strip and head of its Arab and Islamic Relations Office.

"The movement will study this proposal, and upon completion, will submit its response to the mediators," added al-Hayya.

The Israeli response coincided with a visit by a top Egyptian security delegation to Tel Aviv on Friday to discuss a possible Gaza ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian group Hamas, according to Egyptian and Israeli media.

Private broadcaster Al Qahera news TV quoted an unnamed Egyptian source as saying that the delegation will discuss a comprehensive ceasefire framework, saying there was 'significant progress' narrowing differences between the Egyptian and Israeli delegations.



Injured Palestinians, including children are brought to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital after an Israeli attack on Al-Nuseirat refugee camp in Deir al-Balah, Gaza

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KHALIL AL-HAYYA

Meanwhile, the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation reported that security services 'believe that this is the last opportunity to return the hostages from Gaza'.

Israeli news website Ynet also confirmed the arrival of an Egyptian delegation in Israel to meet with officials in efforts to achieve

a deal. Hamas demands an end to Israel's deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territory.

Tel Aviv believes 134 Israelis are being held in Gaza, while Israel is holding some 9,000 Palestinians in its jails.

A previous deal in November saw the release of 81 Israelis and

24 foreigners in exchange for 240 Palestinians, including 71 women and 169 children. The US, Qatar and Egypt have tried to broker an agreement to release the remaining Israeli captives.

Attack on refugee camp

Meanwhile, eight Palestinians were killed and 30 wounded on Saturday in an Israeli attack on the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, according to the Palestinian news agency, WAFA.

It said airstrikes targeted a residential home in the camp that killed four Palestinians, including a baby.

In a separate strike on another house in the camp, four additional Palestinians were killed, with at least 30 injured.

More than 34,300 Palestinians have been killed since October 7, mostly women and children, and nearly 77,300 injured amid mass destruction and severe shortages of necessities.

The conflict has pushed 85 per cent of Gaza's population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water, and medicine, while 60 per cent of the enclave's infras-

tructure has been damaged or destroyed.

Global calls for a ceasefire have been growing as the war has entered its seventh month.

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

In the occupied West Bank on Saturday, the Israeli army detained 20 more Palestinians.

According to a joint statement issued by the Prisoners and Ex-Prisoners Affairs Authority and the Palestinian Prisoners Society, the new arrests brought the total number of Palestinians detained by the Israeli forces since October 7 to 8,480.

The latest arrests took place mostly in Ramallah, Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus, Tulkarm, and Jenin.

During the Israeli arrest campaigns, the Israeli forces physically assaulted and abused Palestinians, while damaging their homes and property, the statement added.

Anadolu Agency

Syria remains country hardest hit by landmines: UN official

Geneva, Switzerland - Landmines, explosive remnants of war, and improvised explosive devices continue to cause death and injury, especially around armed conflicts, with one person on average killed every hour, with Syria hit hardest, a UN official said on Friday.

Christelle Loupforest, who heads the UN Mine Action Service in Geneva (UNMAS), said that communities are suffering tremendously from the threats of such weapons and was asked about areas badly affected by the presence of landmines.

"People are not able to move freely, and, and also have to flee from their villages, because it's just too dangerous," she said at a press conference ahead of the April 29-May 1 International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and UN Advisers.

"Syria is a country that I would put on top of the list because if I look at the number of casualties, it still has a huge amount of casualties," she said.

"If you also look at the casu-



alty level, then you would go for Yemen; we need to do a lot more action in Yemen to reduce the casualties, as there is a massive level of contamination there.

Another area of grave concern is West Africa and the Sahel. Loupforest cited Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Mali, along with Niger, all of which deal with large quantities of improvised explosive devices.

Gaza debris

UNMAS official Pehr Lodhammar told the same press conference that in the Gaza conflict, there is an estimated 37mn tonnes of debris and that around 300kg (661 pounds) of debris

per square meter, or 65 per cent of the buildings destroyed are residential buildings

He said he was unable to say how long it would take to get rid of the unexploded ordnance, but 'we're talking about 14 years of work with 100 trucks to remove the rubble, with approximately 750,000 workdays to remove the debris'.

Stefano Toscano, director of Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, said: "Today, still, 60mn people are affected in their daily lives by the threat of explosive ordnance, landmines, cluster munition, and improvised explosive devices."

Anadolu Agency

Israeli chief of staff to resign: Report

Ramallah, Palestine - Israeli Chief of Staff Herzli Halevi is expected to 'resign in the coming period', local media reported on Saturday.

After the Monday resignation of the country's head of military intelligence Major General Aharon Haliva, it became clear that all officers responsible for failing to predict the October 7, 2023 attack by Palestinian group Hamas would 'go home, starting with the Chief of Staff', private broadcaster Channel 12 said.

It said many officers have sought legal representation 'in preparation for war investigations'. The report claimed that Haliva had written his resignation letter to the Chief of Staff after receiving legal advice 'assuming that all of his statements would also be presented to the investigation committee when it was formed'.

Haliva is the first in a series of commanders who 'will be forced to retire in the near future', it suggested, listing several other officers, including Head of the Shin Bet domestic security agency Ronen Bar.

Concerns are rising over what Halevi's replacement will mean



Israeli Chief of Staff Herzli Halevi

It has become clear that all officers responsible for failing to predict the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas would go home

for the security and political systems, the channel added.

It said that many commanders who were once seen as potential successors, including Major General Yaron Finkelman

and Major General Eliezer Toledano, are now 'seen as part of the failure'.

Political circles now expect Major General Eyal Zamir, the director general of the Defence Ministry, to succeed Halevi, according to the source.

Demand for early elections

Meanwhile, the Israelis protested on Friday against the government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and demanded early elections and a hostage swap deal with the

Palestinian resistance group, Hamas, according to the media reports.

Around 100 Israelis, including relatives of hostages held in the Gaza Strip, rallied outside the house of War Cabinet minister, Benny Gantz, in Ras al-Ayn (Rosh HaAyn) in northern Israel.

The daily Times of Israel reported that protesters are calling for the release of the more than 100 hostages held in Gaza since October 7 along with the replacement of Netanyahu's government.

"They are also calling on Gantz to resign from the emergency government," it added.

Police were deployed around Gantz's house to contain protesters. Two demonstrators were arrested for 'violating public order'.

The War Cabinet member and former defence chief said earlier this month that 'early elections should be held in September'.

Israel has been witnessing almost daily protests demanding Netanyahu expedite an agreement with Palestinian factions in Gaza and hold early elections.

Anadolu Agency

Islamophobia incidents rising in US as pro-Palestinian students protest

New York, US - Anti-Muslim incidents are on the rise in the US, according to a Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) report released in early April.

The report revealed a 56 per cent surge in anti-Muslim incidents in 2023, with 44 per cent occurring after October 7, suggesting heightened prejudice against Muslims.

Pro-Palestine demonstrations at Columbia University have expanded to US campuses, leading pro-Israel groups to denounce the protests as antisemitic.

Efforts by universities to quell the protests have sparked debates on free speech, with accusations of antisemitism raising concerns about rising Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian incidents in the US.

The Muslim rights advocacy

group's New Jersey Communications Director, Dina Sayedahmed, condemned the use of antisemitism allegations to silence Palestinian and Muslim students critical of Israel, calling it a violation of free speech.

"It's mainly due to public officials' unbalanced, disingenuous and dishonest statements on Palestine and on Muslims," said Sayedahmed, noting that CAIR witnessed a more than 200 per cent increase in anti-Muslim incidents from 2023 to 2024.

"The state is unable to actually investigate true antisemitic events because they're being flooded with false accusations of anti-Semitism," she said.

Kaiser Aslam, from the Islamic Life Centre at Rutgers University (ILC), stressed that campus protests targeted Israeli



policies, not Jewish people, highlighting growing Islamophobia and harassment faced by Muslim students.

Referring to an attack on the centre earlier this month, he said:

"We became the target of not just smear campaigns but actual violence."

Aslam said the university has witnessed a notable rise in anti-Muslim incidents, with its ILC

becoming a sanctuary for Palestinian students. "Muslim students sometimes are targeted by being spat on, called certain names or someone just driving down into the car and yelling

something at them," he said,

Stating that antisemitism is a reality in the US, Aslam said: "However calling advocacy for Palestine anti-Semitism is actually cheapening the term itself."

Auzan Amjad from the Muslim Students Association at Rutgers acknowledged long-standing tensions on campus, even before October 7.

"Unfortunately, Islamophobia has become the nature of our campus," he said.

Sumayya, a Palestinian-origin student, cited increasing Islamophobia, noting that Muslims were increasingly targeted and harassed on campuses.

Stating they have not received any sort of response from the administration, she said: "People just walking on campus with their friends are shouted out or

cursed out. Those are all instances that have been building up."

Pro-Palestine demonstrations have spread to prestigious US universities like New York University (NYU), Yale University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Tufts University, the New School and the University of North Carolina.

Meanwhile, pro-Israel groups called for National Guard intervention to disperse student protests, alleging antisemitism.

The attack on Rutgers University's Islamic Life Centre during Eid-al-Fitr - marking the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, raised alarms, underscoring the rise in Islamophobic incidents alongside accusations of antisemitism.

Anadolu Agency

Indian Air Force, Navy aircraft fleets get Rampage missile boost

New Delhi, India - In a major boost for firepower of its fighter aircraft fleet, the Indian Air Force has inducted the Rampage long-range supersonic air-to-ground missiles which can hit targets at around 250km.

The missile known as the High-Speed Low Drag-Mark 2 missile in the Indian Air Force was reportedly used in a big way by the Israeli Air Force during its recent attacks on Iranian targets.

The Indian Air Force has inducted the Rampage in its Russian-origin aircraft fleet including the Su-30 MKI and MiG-29

fighters along with the Jaguar fighter jets, defence sources told ANI.

The Indian Navy has also inducted the missile in its fleet for the MiG-29K naval fighter jets, they said.

The stand-off weapon will give Indian fighter pilots the option of engaging and taking out targets like communication centres or radar stations, the sources said.

The procurement was part of the emergency powers given by the Defence Ministry to the armed forces to equip them-



selves with critical weapons and equipment after the standoff with China started in 2020.

The missiles have a longer range than the Spice-2000s used in the Balakot air strikes in 2019.

The Indian Air Force has gone in for multiple weapon systems including the long-range systems from both aboard and Indian vendors.

Indian Air Force recently tested the ROCKS or the Crystal Maze-2 missile in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands territory.

The air-launched ballistic mis-

sile had hit its target successfully in the trials done around a fortnight ago.

Induction of the Rampage and integration with the Russian Su-30 has given a big boost to the Russian aircraft fleet which can now fire multiple long-range air-to-ground missiles including the over 400km strike range BrahMos supersonic missiles.

The Indian Air Force is now also mulling if the Rampage can be produced under the Make in India programme and be inducted in large numbers.

ANI



Bangladesh hit by longest heatwave in 76 years

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Bangladesh experienced its longest heatwave in recorded history this April with forecasts showing no improvement for the rest of the month, according to meteorologists.

Md. Bazlur Rashid, a meteorologist at the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, told Anadolu that heat waves swept across the entire country for 27 days straight until Saturday.

“According to the data available since 1948, this month (April) has already seen records of heat wave days in a single year,” he added.

This year, for the first time, nearly 75 per cent of the country has experienced continuous heatwaves.

The closest example of such extreme heat was recorded in

The extreme weather conditions have disrupted people’s lives and livelihoods, especially for low-income groups

2014 when the country saw 25 days of heatwave, Rashid added.

The Met Office weather forecast said on Saturday that a very severe heatwave was sweeping over mid-west, west, and central Bangladesh, while the rest of the country was seeing severe to mild heatwaves.

“Climate change is among the major causes of the extreme weather,” said Rashid, adding that the Bangladeshi capital

Dhaka has become a tough place to live in during summer, due to declining greenery and water bodies. Meanwhile, a season-high temperature of 42.7C (108.9F) was recorded in Chuadanga on Friday.

A recent study by the Met Office showed that both the minimum and maximum temperatures in the country are increasing, with the maximum temperature increasing rapidly.

The extreme weather conditions have disrupted people’s lives and livelihoods, especially for low-income groups, in the South Asian nation of 170mn.

In the second week of April, the country was forced to shut schools and educational institutions for a week due to the scorching heat wave.

Anadolu Agency

With Rwanda plan, UK trying to securitise migration: Expert

The Rwanda bill became law after it received royal assent

London, UK - The UK’s controversial plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda is an attempt to politicise, securitise and externalise the issue of migration, according to a British expert.

A bill authorising the government scheme became law on Thursday after it received royal assent, despite raging criticism and persistent concerns over its human rights implications.

Amelia Hadfield, head of the politics department at the University of Surrey, also believes the government has tried to ‘circumvent a whole host of laws’.

“I think the most important criticism is simply that the bill requires the courts to ignore key sections of the Human Rights Act,” she told Anadolu in an interview. She pointed out that the Supreme Court initially blocked the scheme, terming it unlawful, after which the government found a way to ‘get around the courts’ by introducing a bill deeming Rwanda a ‘safe country’.

“It also compels the courts to disregard other British laws, Britain’s own laws, and international rules, including the very important International Refugee Convention, which would block deportations to Rwanda,” she added.

The UK first tried to ship off asylum seekers to Rwanda in June 2022, but the first deportation flight was blocked by the European Court of Human Rights at



the very last minute.

The British government has since signed a new treaty with Rwanda to address concerns raised by courts. Hadfield, however, said much of the persisting criticism is because the new law ‘has produced a whole range of legal challenges’.

She said the government ‘has attempted to push back and externalise migration instead of dealing with it domestically’.

“Worse than that, actually, it’s politicised it. It’s made it a political football at a time when migration is an incredibly divisive topic here in the UK,” she said.

“Even worse, I think it has securitised it. I think it has rendered migration as a whole an aspect of the safety and the security of the UK, and I think that is absolutely a step too far.”

Hadfield reiterated that the government is essentially forcing ‘courts to ignore key sections of British law, the Human Rights Act, (and) the International Refugee Convention’.

More importantly, she added, the new law also circumvents the European Convention on Human Rights, which specifically prohibits the inhuman treatment of migrants and asylum seekers.

She pointed out that the UK government itself had criticised Rwanda over ‘its poor human rights track record, its extrajudicial killings, deaths in custody, enforced disappearances and torture’.

“So, why is a country which was unsafe in 2021, magically safe? Why do we have to see Britain uncoupling and decoupling itself from the range of highly regarded ... international

laws which are the very foundation of the rules-based system,” she said.

Tracing the origins of the issue, Hadfield said Britain has been looking for alternative solutions to migration, particularly from across the English Channel, since Brexit, specifically as the Common European Asylum System stopped applying to the UK from January 2021.

There were a series of attempts by various governments, including partnerships with France, but the crossings continue to increase, she said.

“These are patchwork solutions. These are band-aid solutions. They do not get to the heart of the problem, which is that there is no functioning post-Brexit migration structure.”

Anadolu Agency

A MARTIAL ART FROM INDIA



A Nihang Sikh performs Gatka, a form of martial art during a religious procession taken out to mark the birth anniversary of the Guru Tegh Bahadur, in Amritsar, India, on Saturday (ANI)

Expo attracts green fingers worldwide to Chengdu

Chengdu, China - The International Horticultural Exhibition 2024 Chengdu opened in Chengdu, capital of southwest China’s Sichuan Province, on Friday.

With a kaleidoscope of horticultural technologies and garden arts from home and abroad showcased during the event, it offers a comprehensive and on-site ‘101 handbook’ for gardening devotees worldwide.

According to Zhou Jun, deputy head of the municipal garden city construction management bureau, this year’s edition has built 39 international gardens, covering the world’s major styles of British, French, Japanese, Italian, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian garden design. The number of gardens on display, foreign gardens, and those undertaken by industrial associations and companies have all surpassed previous records of the world horticultural expo.

Zhou added that the expo’s major underlying value will be the exchanges and mutual learning as it presents new plant varieties, gardening products and



A boat sailing in a river at the venue of the International Horticultural Exhibition 2024 in Chengdu (Xinhua)

technologies, and novel garden design ideas. Chengdu has a rich history that spans over two millennia. Its unique natural geography provides the lush urban environment with greenery all year round and diverse blooming flowers in each season, which has long been hailed by poets and writers since ancient times.

The expo’s gardens will be on display from April 26 to October 28, highlighting the captivating cultural essence of Sichuan, the

Oriental philosophy of residential living, as well as diverse international gardening aesthetics.

Apart from foreign exhibitors, the event also invites multiple Chinese cities to demonstrate their own architectural and gardening features.

The Beijing Garden follows the layout of its ancient imperial gardens, while the Shanghai Garden showcases the city’s fragrant flora. Visitors can be immersed in a verdant canvas of

trees and grass, experiencing the century-old beauty of the Chinese seashore stack bridges, the northwest landscapes along the Yellow River, and the delicate elegance of southern residential houses all at once.

The burgeoning urban gardening heat in China has inspired growing communication and co-operation between different Chinese regions and attracted worldwide gardeners.

Qiu Yamin, a promotion am-

bassador of the 2024 Chengdu International Horticultural Expo, has her own botanical garden of more than 3,000 square meters, with more than 2,000 kinds of plants inside.

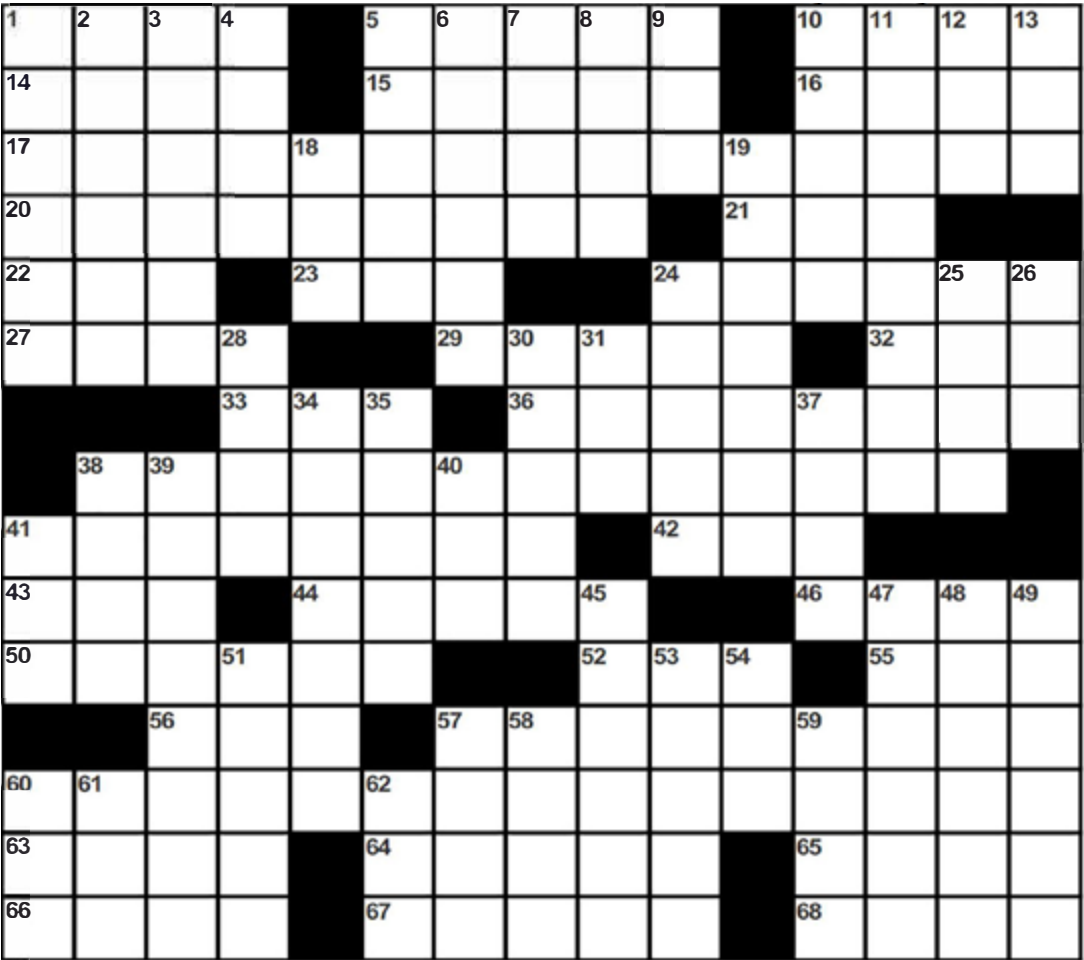
“I hope to further promote home gardening via the expo by visiting ordinary households and doing live-streaming shows to tell the stories of flower growers,” Qiu said. “At the same time, I will also take this opportunity to learn and exchange with international counterparts and spread our Chinese horticultural concepts to the whole world.”

The 46-year-old Canadian garden lover Chad Sinclair has been studying Sichuan’s characteristic ‘Penjing’, the ancient Chinese art of shaping trees and depicting landscapes in miniature, in Chongzhou City for about two decades.

He has learned about traditional Chinese paintings, tea culture and the like to enrich his Penjing content. Currently, Sinclair has made over 500 pieces of Penjing art, each pictured and shared with global netizens via social media platforms.

Xinhua

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Weakens, as support
5) Naval Academy new-comer
10) Yemen's Gulf of_
14) Group of shops
15) Sans_ (print font)
16) "I never_ man I didn't like" (Will Rogers)
17) Introduced
20) Begged
21) U.N. body dealing with worker's rights
22) What some people are stuck in
23) Barnyard parent
24) Thin lung membrane
27) Urban pollution problem
29) Honey badger
32) Underwater vessel, for short
33) Cleopatra's biter
36) Rose Bowl Parade site
38) Bad thing to give to a child
41) Makeup component
42) Baden twice
43) It " suits" Santa
44) It brings out the child in you
46) Mascara site

DOWN

- 1) Barbecue leftovers
2) He said, "There's a sucker born every minute"
3) Drunk, in slang
4) Utter unclearly
5) "Don't give me that!"
6) Envelope contents
7) Lake near Niagara Falls
8) Tough thing to be in
9) Small salamander
10) Abundant
11) Frees of lice
12) Airport info, initially
13) Negative vote
18) "Aw" follower
19) Wick holder

- 24) Mexican coins
25) Ancient inscription
26) Atty.'s organization
28) Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading..."
30) Informal British abbreviation of assent
31)_ Heel (North Carolinian)
34) Adept
35) Kind of colony or code
37) "_ M For Murder"
38) Tournament passes
39) Giant conifers
40) Bird's beak
41) Stat for a pitcher
45) Spoiler or destroyer
47)_theHun
48) Oklahoma football player
49) Did a sheepdog's job
51) Clean the chalkboard
53) Down and out
54) Shoo-_ (certain winners)
57) "Green Gables" girl
58) A rich supply
59) Baby's nurse, in China
60) Baseball club
61) "Messenger" compound
62) Aquatic shocker

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Align yourself with an intellectual person today. Even if their wisdom or education intimidates you, their insight will inspire you to new levels of greatness. They can help you prevail in any challenges you might face and give you confidence in an area that has always mystified you. Of course, it could be a pretty tough to find someone who is smarter than you, but if you keep an open mind about what it means to be intelligent, you'll find them soon.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Your career is slowly but surely evolving into a better thing, but the real question is do you have the patience to wait for it? Or do you need to move on now? Take a long look at your finances to find the answer. If things look tight, you might need to find some patience somewhere and stay on longer. Of course, you always have the option of asking for more money. Compile the proof you need to show the boss that you are worth more than you're getting.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Authority will be difficult for you to deal with today. People in power are saying things you don't like. Coming around to their perspective will be tough, but all you can do is stop talking and listen more attentively. What you are being told to do might not be your idea of a great time, but it is necessary if you want to maintain goodwill and stay on the good side of people. Unless you have a moral objection, just carry out orders today.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Tsvetana Pironkova is involved in which sport?

- A. Cycling
B. Soccer
C. Tennis
D. Gymnastics

02. Through its CEO, Pete Dcter, Pixar has won the Oscar for Best Animated Feature for several films which he directed.

Which was NOT one?

- A. Inside Out (2015)
B. Up (2009)
C. Monsters Inc (2001)
D. Soul (2020)

03. Which of these is a percussion instrument?

- A. Sanshin
B. Biwa
C. Tsuzumi
D. Shakuhachi

Answers: 1. C 2. C 3. C



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Positive possibilities are all around you right now, which means that it's a good time to initiate any projects or relationships that you've been considering. If you find yourself in the right place at the right time, make your move and start that conversation. Sign on the dotted line or volunteer at that next meeting. It's important to kick things into high gear right now. Your brain is hungry for a bigger challenge. You are ready.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your mind is entering a strong phase of clarity, and you'll find plenty of rewards in devising your own way of organizing the chaos you're uncovering. Therefore, it's a great day to tackle your most methodical tasks, such as planning an event, organizing group travel, or putting together complicated reports. This is a creative task for you, one that will offer you lots of flexibility and inspire you to invent new ways of doing some old things.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

It's all about comfort today. Coziness is easy to achieve and more rewarding than you could ever imagine. You're feeling more grounded in the world around you right now and at ease with what is going on. All your tasks are moving ahead nicely, all your people are doing well, and you're getting lots achieved without exerting too much energy. This is the perfect day to fit in a nap. Your deadlines are all far off in the distance and you're feeling fine.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Take things more slowly in one of your newer relationships. Any impatience you show will only create stress between you two, so just let things unfold at their own pace and don't try to push your views onto them. You need to stay with this person and show them you are committed. While you wait for them, run some errands and keep yourself busy with other things. Soon enough, they'll be ready to take things to the next level. Your future is bright with them.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

The romantic rejections you've suffered in your life have been painful, but they have taught you valuable lessons. You're a much stronger person because of what you've been through, and you have a better idea of what you're looking for. Now more than ever you know what you want, what you need, and most importantly, what you will not tolerate. Trust yourself and know that you will be able to recognize a good opportunity when it comes along.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

There won't be much movement in any direction today, backward, forward, sideways, or any other way. The energy of the day may be mellow, but it is nevertheless powerful. So just because you're not running around with a million things to do does not mean that you won't be active and productive in some way. There is lots of positive energy just under the surface, and once you tap into it, you'll be able to see the bright side of the darkest events.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You will get tantalizingly close to perfection today, right before you hit a humbling snag that leaves you a little disappointed yet satisfied. Perfection is impossible and you know it. That's why you'll still get a kick out of today and still feel proud of yourself. It's a good day to complete plans, it's a good day to make plans, and it's a good day to stick to your plans! Your organizational skills have never let you down before, and they never will. Rely on them.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

If someone is direct and brutally honest with you today, don't be insulted. Be flattered. They want to be honest with you, and they respect you enough to take that risk. This person will be doing you a favor by not turning things into a big drama. Just take what they say at face value, move forward with the information you've been given, and do not turn a mature conversation into a battle of cheap shots and defensive posturing.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Positive possibilities are all around you right now, making today a very good time to initiate a major project or start a relationship. It's a great day for a first date. You're feeling confident about what you can offer to any situation and at ease with any kind of person. Formal relationships and contractual obligations should go the distance if you begin them today, so make sure you have the time available in your schedule to pursue them fully.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	E	D	I
G	A	D	A
B	N	M	N
O	Y	O	D

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.

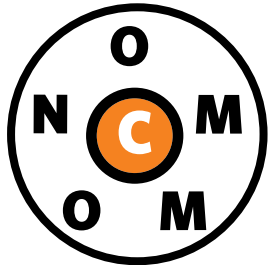
Solution 20-25 words:
Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

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

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

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

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

YOUNG TURK TO THE FORE

Arda Gueler scores the winner as Real beat Sociedad to move closer to title

San Sebastian, Spain - Arda Gueler scored to earn a second-string Real Madrid side a 1-0 win at Real Sociedad on Friday, moving the LaLiga leaders a step closer to a record-extending 36th Spanish title.

With five games remaining, Real climbed to 84 points and extended their lead to 14 points over second-placed Barcelona, who have a game in hand and host Valencia on Monday.

Real manager Carlo Ancelotti made nine changes to the team who beat Barca 3-2 on Sunday, resting key players like Jude Bellingham and Toni Kroos ahead of their Champions League semi-final against Bayern Munich and his side did just enough to secure the three points.

"It was clear that everyone thought we were coming here for a walk," Ancelotti told reporters. "The only ones who didn't think so were the players. They had commitment and attitude. They had the desire and enthusiasm to keep winning."

Six-placed Real Sociedad, fighting for a Europa League spot, dominated possession under pouring rain in northern Spain and had a few good chances saved by Real keeper Kepa Arrizabalaga.

The visitors made the most of the only chance they had in the



Real Madrid's Arda Gueler celebrates after scoring against Real Sociedad on Friday

first half, when 19-year-old Turkish midfielder Gueler, making his first start for Real after signing from Fenerbahce, turned home Dani Carvajal's cross in the 29th minute.

Three minutes later Takefusa Kubo thought he had scored the equaliser with a tidy finish from close range, but the referee ruled the goal out after spotting a foul in the build-up following a VAR check. The hosts pushed for an equaliser after the break but had another goal ruled out, a strike from Mikel Merino who was off-side, and a shot from the edge of the box by Benat Turrientes was saved by the inspired Arrizabalaga. Real Madrid almost ended up extending their lead later on, with Alex Remiro making a brilliant reflex save to deny Eduardo Camavinga's strike from close range.

"We have a spectacular squad. They have this attitude that they feel like they have to win every game. There are four points left to clinch the LaLiga title and we are very close," said Ancelotti, who ruled out Arda leaving the club on loan next season.

"Arda will be a very important player for us in the future," Ancelotti said, when asked about the Turkey international. "There's no doubt that he stays here next year."



West Ham United's Michail Antonio celebrates with Mohammed Kudus after scoring against Liverpool on Saturday

Liverpool's title hopes suffer Hammers blow

London, England - Liverpool's slim Premier League title hopes faded further on Saturday when Michail Antonio's late header earned West Ham United a deserved point with a 2-2 draw.

Liverpool, reeling from a 2-0 loss at Everton in the Merseyside derby on Wednesday, were marginally the better side in a flat first half. The visitors had a penalty denied for an offside in the build-up before Luis Diaz hit the post.

They again conceded first, however, when Jarrod Bowen nodded home shortly before halftime, his 20th goal of the season in his 200th game for the Hammers.

The Reds levelled three minutes after the restart through Andy Robertson when his shot wriggled past Alphonse Areola at the goalkeeper's near post. Liverpool then took the lead in the 65th minute through the ugliest of own goals, with Cody Gakpo's sliced effort bouncing off Angelo Ogbonna before Tomas Soucek's attempted clearance hit the unfortunate Areola and crossed the line. Antonio dragged the hosts back on terms when he met Bowen's

cross with a powerful header in the 77th minute before a frantic finish saw Harvey Elliott hit the bar as Liverpool tried in vain to find a dramatic winner.

Liverpool remain third on 75 points, one behind second-placed Manchester City, who have played two games fewer, and two behind first-placed

A very, very difficult position. It is going to be difficult, not impossible, but very, very difficult

CODY GAKPO

Arteta leans on Wenger for title run-in guidance

London, England - Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta has been seeking counsel from former manager Arsene Wenger as the club aims to end their 20-year wait for the Premier League title this season, Arteta said ahead of Sunday's trip to Tottenham Hotspur.

A win over their north London rivals could galvanise Arsenal's hopes of lifting the title. The Gunners lead in the standings by one point over Manchester City, who face Nottingham Forest later on Sunday with a game in hand.

Wenger during his 22-year tenure led Arsenal to three league titles, in 1997-98, 2001-02



Arsene Wenger led Arsenal to three league titles, in 1997-98, 2001-02 during his 22-year tenure

02, and the remarkable "Invincibles" season in 2003-04.

Arsenal remained unbeaten throughout the entire 2003-04 league campaign and clinched the title with a 2-2 draw in the north London derby at Spurs' White Hart Lane stadium.

"I have spoken to him a few times," Arteta told reporters.

"There were certain topics (we discussed) about how they won it and the later stages.

"(Wenger) used to talk about that when I was a player. For this time of the season, at the end, it is about finding a way to win the game. You can do it in various

ways when you look at how they won the titles.

"And how they won certain games with very, very, close margins. He always talked about that, about the fine margins and who is going to step up on the occasion to make it happen."

Arteta said he was not concerned by his players' hectic schedule in the build-up to Sunday's vital north London derby.

"I love the fact that we played four games. We had some great experiences," said Arteta whose side will have three more games left after the clash against Tottenham.

Esperance to take on Al Ahly in African Champions League final

Cairo, Egypt - Defending champions Al Ahly of Egypt will take on perennial rivals Esperance of Tunisia in this year's African Champions League final after winning their semifinals on Friday.

Al Ahly, who have won five of the last seven editions and a record 11 in total, overcame TP Mazembe of the Democratic Republic of Congo in Cairo and Esperance pulled off a surprise 1-0 win over South African champions Mamelodi Sundowns in Pretoria. Al Ahly won 3-0 after a goalless draw in the first leg in Lubumbashi for a comfortable aggregate triumph while Esperance's Raed Bouchniba hammered home a clinical shot in the 57th minute to earn the Tunisians a 1-0 away win and 2-0 aggregate victory.

The match was delayed by 70 minutes after a lightning strike in South Africa's capital knocked out some of the floodlights amid a heavy thunderstorm.

Sundowns won the new



Al Ahly's Wessam Abou Ali celebrates after scoring against TP Mazembe

African Football League this season and were one of the favourites for the Champions League but fell short of the final for an eighth season in a row.

Esperance's 20-year-old goal-

keeper Amanallah Memmich produced fine saves as the South African forwards fluffed their lines and the win also ensured a place for Esperance in next year's Club World Cup in the U.S.

Can't imagine national team without Messi, says World Cup winner Palacios

Leverkusen, Germany - Argentina midfielder Exequiel Palacios wants Lionel Messi to be an eternal part of the national team and cannot bear the thought of playing for his country without the inspirational forward.

Palacios, 25, who won the Copa America with his country in 2021 and the World Cup in 2022, admitted he found it hard to picture an Argentina side without the 36-year-old Messi, a record eight-times Ballon D'Or winner.

"For now, let's not talk about Messi not continuing. You can never imagine the national team without Messi. We all want him to be eternal and always play with us," he told Reuters.

Palacios also praised midfielder Angel Di Maria, who has said this year's Copa will be his last international tournament.

"We don't want Di Maria to retire," he said. "He is a unique, different and historic player for the country. If he retires, we have to make the most of every training session, every camp and



Exequiel Palacios with Lionel Messi

every game because we're privileged to have his quality."

The 25-year-old Palacios helped Bayer Leverkusen win the Bundesliga title this season, ending Bayern Munich's 11-year

stranglehold on the German top flight.

"My head is in Leverkusen, doing well for the club and earning a place in the national team. I'm looking forward to the Copa

America, but I have to earn my place," he said.

Palacios also has a chance of a place in Argentina's Under-23 squad for this year's Olympic Games in Paris.

"I haven't had the chance to talk to (coach) Javier (Mascherano). Obviously, I want to represent my country and be at the Olympics. I'm desperate to be in the national team in any competition," he said.

Palacios spoke of his joy at helping Leverkusen win their first Bundesliga title. "I am very happy to go down in history and be the only Argentine to win something like this with this club," he said.

"It's something that will mark me for the rest of my life when I'm no longer at the club and see what we've achieved," said the Argentine, who signed for the German club in 2020 and has scored 13 goals and contributed 10 assists in 116 appearances.

He acknowledged that much of the success was down to Xavi Alonso's work as coach.

A FATHER'S DREAM

Nadal wants to play long enough for his son to remember him on court

Madrid, Spain - Rafael Nadal said he would love to keep playing long enough for his son to remember him on court, though the 22-time Grand Slam champion concedes time is not on his side.

The 37-year-old Spaniard, who has said he expects to retire after the 2024 season, returned to competition in Brisbane in January after almost a year sidelined with a hip flexor injury.

He was then out for another stretch due to a thigh issue and while he returned in Barcelona last week he says he is far from being in top form and does not know if he will play in next month's French Open.

Nadal beat wild card Darwin Blanch 6-1 6-0 in the first round of the Madrid Open on Thursday, with his wife and one-year-old son Rafael Jr watching on.

"Well, I would love to play a little bit longer and give him a memory of myself playing tennis," Nadal said of playing in front of his son.

"That's what will be the ideal thing for me and for my wife and family.

"Probably I will not be able to make that happen. But at least I'm happy to have a great team and family and friends around me during all my life that helped me in every single way of being happy."

"Carlos doesn't have to ask" Nadal said it would be exciting to partner fellow Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz at the Paris Olympics this year and the 22-times singles Grand Slam champion hoped they can enter some doubles tournaments in the build-up to the Games.

Singles world number three Alcaraz said previously he would like to play at the Olympics alongside his 37-year-old idol, who expects to bring the curtains down on his glittering but injury-plagued career this year.

At the Madrid Open where the duo are competing this week, the 20-year-old admitted to being somewhat nervous about initiating the discussion but Nadal put him at ease.

"Carlos doesn't have to ask me anything, all things being well, we'll play," Nadal said dur-



Rafael Nadal

ing the IGUALES podcast. "It's also hugely exciting for me. If I'm not mistaken, I've heard it is for him too."

"So it would be great to play the odd tournament before the Olympics to prepare ourselves and to get some rapport on court."

While twice Grand Slam champion Alcaraz is set to make his Olympic debut in the July 26-Aug. 11 Games, Nadal will be eyeing his third gold medal after triumphing in singles in the 2008 Beijing Games and doubles eight years later in Rio.

But Nadal has had a torrid time with injury in recent years, missing nearly all of 2023 with a hip issue that needed surgery.

He returned to competition in Brisbane in January but was out for another stretch due to a thigh issue, only coming back in Barcelona last week before casting doubts over his French Open participation next month.

The tennis competition at the Paris Games will take place on clay at Roland Garros, where Nadal has won 14 major titles.

"I think if we're both fit enough, why not? We could have the chance to form a great team and aspire to great things," Nadal said of the partnership.

"It would be good for both of us. It would also be good for the Spanish team, so we'll see how things progress."

Tunisia's Echargui all set to realise Olympic dream

London, England - As a tennis-mad teenager growing up near Tunis it was always Moez Echargui's dream to play at Roland Garros but having entered the professional ranks relatively late it looked as though it might never be realised.

In July, however, the 31-year-old will step on to the hallowed red clay courts after sealing a place at the Paris Olympics following his title run at the African Games.

His victory over Zimbabwe's Benjamin Lock in the final in Ghana all but guaranteed Echargui a place in the draw for the Olympic tennis event courtesy of the International Tennis Federation handing spots to continental champions.

The former University of Nevada student must still make sure his world ranking remains inside the top 400 by the cut-off but with his current position just outside the top 300 that looks virtually assured.

Echargui, who will be the only male player from Africa to compete in the Olympic tennis event, admits it took a while for the enormity of his achievement to sink in.

Speaking by phone to Reuters during an ATP Challenger Tour event in South Korea, Echargui recalled the double joy of becoming African champion and qualifying for Paris.

"People were coming to congratulate me and I had a multitude of feelings like of joy and



Moez Echargui

excitement and time stood still for that moment," Echargui, who trains at the MXP Academy in Milan, said. "I was in the sky, not really realising what was going on."

"But I remember after when I

I believe in myself and that's what kept me going. I had many difficulties throughout my career and I'm still standing and ready to go a step forward.

MOEZ ECHARGUI

got back and called my parents and everyone was in tears at that moment. It's such a big accomplishment."

Echargui has never set foot on

Roland Garros so the fact the Olympic tournament is being staged at a venue he used to watch on television will make his Olympic appearance even more special.

"The last two Olympics were very far away, in Japan and Brazil," he said.

"France is just a couple hours away from Tunisia and there is a big community of Tunisians over there."

Echargui was close to being a top-100 junior player but injuries meant he opted for a U.S. college education, earning a degree in mechanical engineering before deciding to give the Tour a go in 2017. A wrist injury slowed his progress but he believes a top-100 ranking and a Grand Slam

debut are realistic targets.

"I believe in myself and that's what kept me going," said Echargui, who was awarded a Grand Slam Player Development Grant by the ITF in 2019.

"I had many difficulties throughout my career and I'm still standing and ready to go a step forward."

Echargui said Ons Jabeur - Tunisia's most high-profile athlete after reaching three Grand Slam finals - was one of the first to congratulate him on his African title.

"We know each other since we are young," he said. "What she's been doing these last years, it's unbelievable, especially for a country like Tunisia. We don't have a history of tennis."

Guys are not that far off: Coleman feels Bolt's record could fall soon

Shanghai, China - American sprinter Christian Coleman believes that Usain Bolt's 100-metres record of 9.58 seconds that has stood for 15 years is within reach and said there are several athletes fast enough to break it.

"It seems like the times being run, 9.58 is obviously an extraordinary time but honestly I feel like it's a lot of guys who are competing today who are not that far off, if the track gods see fit for it to happen," Coleman told reporters on Friday ahead of Saturday's Shanghai Diamond League meet.

"But it has to be perfect conditions, on the right day, the right competition and the right venue ... if you're focusing on running properly, like executing a good race, I feel like those type of magical moments happen."

"I feel like it's in my wheelhouse, but I don't try to put too much emphasis or thought on it. I try to just focus on the next practice, the next rep, the next meet and just trying to improve and get better and better and the times will come."

Jamaica's Bolt set his 100m



Christian Coleman

I try to just focus on the next practice, the next rep, the next meet and just trying to improve and get better and better

CHRISTIAN COLEMAN

record in Berlin in 2009. American Tyson Gay is the second quickest after Bolt with a time of 9.69 set in Shanghai the same year. Christian Miller, a 17-year-

old from the U.S., ran 9.93 - the fastest time in the world this year - at a high school meet in Florida last weekend. Coleman, a five-time world champion who has a 100m personal best of 9.76 set in 2019, takes on U.S. rival Fred Kerley, silver medalist in the 100m at the Tokyo Olympics, for the first time this outdoor season.

"I'm the fittest I've ever been," said Kerley, who clocked his quickest 100m of 9.76 in 2022. "I'm learning how to run the 100 still, me and my coaches are working on the phases of the races instead of just running the race like I always have."



Marc Marquez celebrates after securing pole for Spanish GP

Marquez takes pole at Spanish GP

Jerez, Spain - Six-time MotoGP champion Marc Marquez claimed pole position for his home Spanish Grand Prix after edging Marco Bezzecchi of VR46 Racing and championship leader Jorge Martin in a wet qualifying session on Saturday.

This is the 31-year-old's first pole with the satellite Ducati team Gresini Racing, having switched from Honda ahead of this season. It also takes his overall career pole haul to 93, with the previous pole coming at the Portuguese GP in March last year.

"Super happy especially because it's the first pole position with Gresini," said Marquez.



Formula E cars before a race

New Formula E car faster than Formula One from 0-60mph

London, England - The all-electric Formula E championship presented a new Gen3 Evo car for 2025 on Thursday with a boast that the new car would out accelerate Formula One from 0-60 mph.

Formula E said ahead of the weekend's Monaco ePrix that the net zero car would be capable of hitting 60 in 1.82 seconds (0-100kph in 1.86 seconds), 30 per cent faster than a current F1 car, and reach a top speed of 200mph when introduced in season 11.

It will also be the most efficient formula car, with an electric motor providing more than 90 per cent efficiency compared to the 40 per cent typical of internal combustion engines.

"The GEN3 Evo heralds a ground-breaking chapter in the evolution of Formula E, embodying our dedication to innovation and high performance achieved sustainably," series CEO Jeff Dadds said in a statement.

Mohammed Ben Sulayem, president of the governing FIA, said the car represented another significant leap forward in electric racing technology.

The car will also be Formula E's first with four-wheel drive, active for qualifying and race starts, and boasts stronger and more robust bodywork.



JAKE ATTACK!

Fraser-McGurk and Rasikh Salam shine to lift Capitals to fifth place

New Delhi, India - In another run fest in IPL 2024, Jake Fraser-McGurk's 84 off 27 balls proved to be the difference as Delhi Capitals (DC) beat Mumbai Indians (MI) by ten runs in Delhi.

Apart from Fraser-McGurk, Shai Hope and Tristan Stubbs also played crucial knocks for DC as they posted 257 for 4 after being sent in. In reply, MI lost three wickets in the powerplay - the big ones of Rohit Sharma, Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav - but Tilak Varma and Hardik Pandya kept their hopes alive.

Rasikh Salam, however, turned the game by dismissing Hardik and Nehal Wadhwa in the same over. While Tilak and Tim David fought till the end, MI eventually fell short.

The win took DC to fifth place on the points table with ten points from as many games. MI stay rooted to ninth with six points from nine matches.



Jake Fraser-McGurk scored 84 off 27 balls to give Delhi Capitals a stunning start

After taking 19 from the first over, he greeted Jasprit Bumrah in the same manner. Bumrah started his over with a slower ball only to be launched over long-on for a six. To make things worse, Bumrah had overstepped, and Fraser-McGurk drilled the free-hit past long-on for four. Fraser-McGurk ended the over with another boundary, making it

Bumrah's most expensive over (18 runs) of the season.

DC reached 50 in just 2.4 overs, the joint-fastest for a team in the IPL. In the next over, Fraser-McGurk got to his own fifty. Coming off just 15 balls, it was the joint-fourth fastest in the tournament's history.

Hardik brought himself on for the fifth over but there was no

stopping Fraser-McGurk, who hammered the MI captain for two fours and two sixes to take DC to 89 for no loss after five overs.

For a moment, it looked like Fraser-McGurk might break the record for the fastest T20 hundred - he already has the fastest List A hundred to his name - but he holed out to deep midwicket against Piyush Chawla for a 27-

ball 84.

Walking in at 114 for 1 in 7.3 overs, Hope ensured there was no dip in the momentum. Over the last one year or so, he has worked on his six-hitting skills and has demonstrated the same in ODIs but was unable to do so in T20s. On Saturday, though, he smashed five sixes in a 17-ball 41 to keep DC going in the middle overs.

After Hope fell, Stubbs took over and raced to 48 not out off 25 balls. In the 18th over, he used scoops, reverse scoops and pulls to hit five fours and a six off Wood. Despite Bumrah dismissing Rishabh Pant in the 19th and conceding only six, DC had no trouble in crossing 250.

MI had a brisk start to their chase with Ishan Kishan hitting three successive fours off Khaleel Ahmed in the second over. But Khaleel made a good comeback and had Rohit Sharma caught at mid-off in his next over. From the other end, Mukesh Kumar had Kishan miscuing one to make it 45 for 2.

Suryakumar Yadav started with a flurry of boundaries, including two scooped sixes. But in the last over of the powerplay, he failed to pick a slower ball from Khaleel and fell for 26 off 13 balls.

MI had slowed down a bit after the powerplay but Hardik put them back on track. He hit Axar Patel for a six on the last ball of the eighth over and then smacked three fours and a six off Kuldeep Yadav in the ninth. Tilak, who was batting on a run-a-ball eight till then, also got into the act with a six and a four in Axar's next over.

Bairstow's blazing ton helps Punjab beat Kolkata in run fest

Kolkata, India - Punjab Kings achieved the highest successful run chase in IPL history on Friday, chasing down the target of 262 set by Kolkata Knight Riders, as they clinched an eight-wicket win to break the previous record of 226-6 set by Rajasthan Royals in 2020.

Opener Jonny Bairstow's unbeaten 108 off 48 balls, with eight fours and nine sixes, saw Punjab secure the win with eight balls to spare at the Eden Gardens after impact player Prabhsimran Singh (54 off 20 balls) got them off to a quick start.

Punjab's 262-2, the franchise's biggest innings, is the joint highest score in IPL history for a team batting second, equalling Royal Challengers Bangalore's 262-7 in response to Sunriser Hyderabad's 287-3 in the league's highest scoring game earlier this month.

Punjab rose to eighth place in the table after their first win in five matches, with six points from nine games.

Bairstow reminder

Bairstow sent England selectors a timely reminder of his big-hitting abilities before they pick a squad for the Twenty20 World Cup in June by scoring an explosive unbeaten century.

Having returned to the Punjab Kings side after missing their last two matches due to patchy form, Bairstow struck an unbeaten 108 off 48



Jonny Bairstow

balls. "We knew we had to go ballistic after how they batted," said Bairstow, who smashed eight fours and nine sixes to be named man of the match.

"We had to take risks and thankfully they came off. I've never been faced with a target like that before. So we knew the powerplay would be important and if anything is close to being in your area you've got to make the most of it."

Bairstow and Shashank - who hit an unbeaten 68 off 28 balls - stitched together an unbroken 84-run third-wicket partnership as Punjab posted the joint-highest score in the IPL for a team batting second.

The 34-year-old heaped praise on his Indian team mate who produced some late fireworks himself.

"Shashank's done it all season, a lovely guy and special player," Bairstow said.

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Few movements in art history have had as lasting a legacy as Surrealism, which utterly transformed our manner of thinking and seeing. In its time, it garnered a remarkable degree of public recognition, and its influence on artists continues to be felt today.

This year marks the centennial of the birth of Surrealism with the publication of the Surrealist Manifesto in October 1924. Actually, make that manifestos, plural, as two tracts appearing within weeks of each other vied for the title.

The first was written by Yvan Goll (1891-1950), a French-German poet with close ties to the German Expressionists; the other, more famous treatise was penned by André Breton (1896-1966), a French poet and critic whose talent for tireless self-promotion contributed to his ascension as Surrealism's de facto leader and ideological enforcer.

Neither Goll nor Breton mentioned art in their respective statements. Moreover, neither actually coined the term Surrealism. That distinction belongs to Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), a poet and prime proponent of the Parisian avant-garde, who used it in a 1917 letter to the Belgian critic Paul Dermée to describe the experimental ballet Parade (1917).

What was Surrealism?

Breton defined Surrealism as a way to resolve the previously contradictory conditions of dream and reality into an absolute reality, a super-reality. He recast it as an artistic enterprise with his 1928 publication Surrealism and Painting. By then, artists such as Jean Arp, Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, Paul Klee, René Magritte, Joan Miró, and Yves Tanguy had been drawn into his orbit.

Stylistically, Surrealism ranged from the quasi-abstract of Miró to Magritte's deadpan realism. Originally centred in Paris, it became global in scope, spilling over to the Americas and Asia. Reacting to the carnage of World War I, the movement attacked rationalism and social decorum, upending longstanding artistic precepts and subverting conventional sexual mores with misogynistic élan. Even so, Surrealism attracted a significant cohort of female artists, among them Meret Oppenheim, Dorothea Tanning, Claude Cahun, and Leonora Carrington.

The Surrealists reveled in a discontinuity best summarised by a line from the 1868 novel Les Chants de Maldoror, which described a 'chance juxtaposition of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table.' This idea became

SURREALISM

ART LEGACY AS SURREALISM TURNS 100, HERE'S A LOOK AT ITS ENDURING LEGACY



(Above) John Henry Fuseli, The Nightmare, 1781. (below left) Circle of Giuseppe Arcimboldo (b. ca. 1527-1593), Anthropomorphic Still Life with Pots, Pans, Cutlery



The Anxiety of Waiting, 1914.

Surrealism's credo, codified by the collaborative genre known as the cadavre exquis (exquisite corpse).

Resembling a game of telephone, but played with drawings, cadavre exquis involved passing a piece of paper around a group of artists. Each would render part of a figure, then hide it by folding the sheet over. Other participants would follow suit, and the result when revealed was predictably disjointed.

Surrealism, Freud, and Automatism

Surrealism was deeply indebted to Sigmund Freud. His belief that the mind could be unlocked through psychoanalytical methods such as the interpretation of dreams made a huge im-

pact on Breton, who'd attended medical school and developed an interest in mental illness before he became a writer.

Serving in the French army's medical corps on the Western Front in World War I, Breton was stationed at a ward in Nantes that treated soldiers for shell shock (what we would today call PTSD), where he applied Freud's theories while caring for patients.

Breton believed the subconscious could unshackle art from its conventions through automatism, a process that surrendered deliberation to an unimpeded flow of imagination. He described it as 'a pure state by which one proposes to express... the actual functioning of thought... in the absence of any control exercised by reason'. Here again he was indebted to Freud, who pioneered free association, which encouraged patients to relay feelings, memories, and reveries in an unregulated rush of words.

André Masson (1896-1987) developed the artistic application of this method with a series of drawings begun in 1924, characterised by agglomerations of lines produced in a fugue state. Automatism would eventually become foundational to Abstract Expressionism in the post-World War II era.

Proto-Surrealism

While we think of Surrealism as a 20th-century phenomenon, its roots in art reach much farther back. For much of European art history, depictions of heaven and hell were a constant theme, and in this respect, portrayals of otherworldly planes intersecting our own were an accepted fact of pictorial organisation.

Surrealism could be considered a backlash to large historical forces—the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution - that developed in Europe between the 17th and 19th centuries. The former held that religion and faith must relinquish themselves to the power of reason, effectively severing a connection between the physical and metaphysical that Surrealism would later try to repair.

Surrealism rejected Enlightenment beliefs, but it wasn't the first movement to do so. In the early 19th century, Romanticism swept across the Continent, its proponents arguing that relying on reason alone shortchanged individual agency by ignoring sensation, both good and bad. Among the artists within its ranks were three—William Blake, Henry Fuseli, and Francisco Goya—whose work could be considered proto-Surrealistic.

(Courtesy: artnews.com)



Paul Gauguin, Self-Portrait 1889 (below) Andre Masson, Automatic Drawing, 1925





business buzz

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Brand value is a brand’s superpower

Think of brand value as a superhero’s reputation. Just like people trust and admire superheroes, consumers trust and prefer brands with a strong reputation. This trust translates into higher sales, customer loyalty, and the ability to charge premium prices. Brand value is a brand’s superpower!

Suppose you want to purchase a mobile phone and have two companies available, Company A and Company B. Both offer similar features, specifications, and prices for their phones. However, company B is relatively new in the market and lacks the same brand recognition and reputation as Company A. Consumers are unsure about the quality and reliability of Company B’s phones and may hesitate to purchase them.

On the other side, when consumers

see the logo of Company A, they immediately associate it with quality, reliability, and innovation. Company A has a higher brand value than Company B.

As a result, they are more likely to choose Company A’s phones over Company B’s, even if the differences in the actual product are minimal.

In this example, the BV becomes crucial in consumers’ decision-making process. The perceived value and trust associated with Company A’s brand give it a competitive advantage over Company B, allowing it to command higher prices, attract more customers, and ultimately achieve greater success in the market.

Why is brand value important?

BV is paramount for businesses due to its wide-ranging impact on the company’s performance and success. Con-



sider the following:

Differentiation

It helps differentiate a company from its competitors in a competitive market. It creates a unique identity and sets the brand apart in the minds of consumers, making it easier for them to recognise, remember, and choose the brand over others.

Customer loyalty

Building a strong brand value fosters customer loyalty. When customers have a positive experience with a brand and develop trust in its products or services, they are more likely to remain loyal over time. This loyalty translates into repeat purchases, increased customer retention, and reduced reliance on costly customer acquisition strategies.

Trust and credibility

It establishes trust and credibility among consumers. Brands with high value are associated with reliability, quality, and consistency. Consumers feel more confident in choosing these brands, knowing they will likely deliver the promised benefits and meet their expectations.

Premium pricing

A strong brand value allows companies to command premium prices for their products or services. Consumers are often willing to pay a higher price for brands they perceive as more valuable, trustworthy, and desirable. This premium pricing strategy leads to increased profit margins and improved financial performance.

Financial performance

Brand value directly impacts a company’s financial performance. Brands with high value tend to attract more investors and stakeholders, resulting in increased funding, higher market capitalisation, and better resource access. A strong brand value contributes to the company’s overall financial health and stability.

Resilience

High-value brands are more resilient during challenging times like economic downturns or market fluctuations. They tend to weather storms better than their competitors, as their strong brand equity and customer loyalty provide a buffer against negative impacts. This resilience helps the brand maintain market share and bounce back more quickly when conditions improve.

Market expansion

Brands with established value have an advantage when expanding into new markets or introducing new products. The positive reputation and recognition associated with the brand make it easier to penetrate new customer segments and gain market acceptance for new offerings.



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