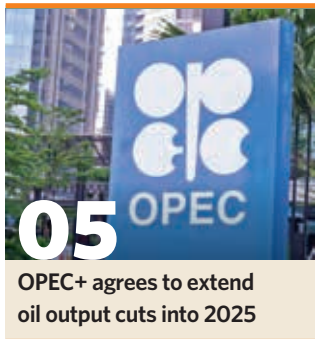


► NEWS BRIEF

H M CONGRATULATES KUWAIT CROWN PRINCE

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Sheikh Sabah Khalid al Hamad al Mubarak al Sabah on being appointed Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and wellbeing to Sheikh Sabah. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty to grant Sheikh Sabah success in achieving the Kuwaiti people's aspirations of further progress and prosperity.



RO936MN ACTUAL SURPLUS RECORDED IN 2023 BUDGET

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman's general budget recorded a significant turnaround in 2023, achieving an actual surplus of RO936mn for the year compared to an initially estimated deficit of RO1.3bn, according to the Final Accounts 2023 bulletin published by the Ministry of Finance on Sunday. This surplus was largely driven by higher-than-anticipated oil and gas revenues during 2023.

The Ministry of Finance stated that the government allocated this additional RO936mn revenue earned in 2023 towards a liability management exercise and reducing public debt, while also focusing on enhancing social spending and boosting economic growth. These strategic financial efforts improved Oman's overall financial and economic standing, positively impacting its credit ratings.

As a result of the repayment of debt last year, Oman's total public debt decreased by RO2.3bn, from RO17.6bn in 2022 to RO15.3bn at the end of 2023.

25% revenues growth

Oman's actual general revenues substantially increased - 25% - in 2023 to RO12.542bn compared to the budgeted RO10.05bn. This revenue surge was primarily attributed to a significant rise in hydrocarbon as well as non-hydrocarbon revenues, according to the Ministry of Finance.

Net oil revenue generated RO7.150bn in 2023, a sharp 34% increase compared to the RO5.320bn approved in the 2023 budget. Oil revenues accounted for 72% of the total public revenues in 2023.

'This growth is largely attributed to the rise in average oil prices in international markets, hitting US\$82 per barrel, significantly higher than the US\$55 per barrel price approved in the 2023 budget,' the ministry stated.

Gas revenue at the end of 2023 amounted to RO1.868bn, marking a 33% increase compared to the RO1.4bn budgeted estimate.

Meanwhile, non-oil revenue reached RO3.524bn at the end of 2023, showing a 6% growth compared to the approved figures in the 2023 budget. Non-oil revenue constituted 28% of the total public revenue in 2023, with a notable increase in companies' income-tax and Value-Added Tax (VAT) contributions.

On the other hand, current revenue in 2023 reached RO3.5bn, registering a 7% increase compared to the RO3.280bn budgeted for 2023.

Spending increases to RO11.6bn

Actual expenditures slightly increased - 2% - to RO11.606bn in 2023, compared to the budgeted amount of RO11.350bn. This increase, the Ministry of Finance stated, reflects the government's focus on augmenting social spending, supporting economic growth, increasing hydrocarbon product subsidies, and raising spending on development projects.

Current expenditures experienced a marginal decline of 1%, standing at RO8.554bn in final accounts, compared to the RO8.620bn budgeted.

Total expenditure on development projects undertaken by ministries and civil units witnessed a substantial increase of 24% in 2023 to RO1.363bn compared to the budgeted amount.



Temperatures nearing 50°C as heatwave grips Oman

Muscat - Oman is experiencing intense heatwaves with temperatures nearing record highs across the sultanate. On Saturday, the mercury soared to a scorching 49.4°C in Hamra ad Duru, approaching the critical 50°C mark. This trend underscores a significant increase in temperatures region-wide, consistent with global patterns of rising heat due to climate change.

Trailing Hamra ad Duru, Sunaynah was the second hottest experiencing 48.9°C, followed by Bidiyah and Ibri at 48.2°C, and Suhar 48.1°C.

The Met Office issued a warning that the heat will continue to rise, especially in the governorates of North Batinah, South Batinah, Dhahirah, North Sharqiyah and Al Wusta. It urged the public to avoid direct sunlight during peak afternoon hours to mitigate health risks.

In contrast, the coolest point recorded was in Saiq, where the temperature dipped to 22°C on Saturday. These extreme weather conditions are part of a broader trend affecting many parts of the globe, with scientists attributing the increase in frequency and intensity of heatwaves to ongoing climatic shifts.

In its forecast for Monday, the Met Office stated that it expects mainly clear skies over most governorates with chances of convective clouds developing, and isolated rain over parts of the Al Hajar mountains.

APSR reduces electricity bills for the summer months

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) has decided to reduce electricity charges for the residential category (basic account) during the summer months.

For the month of May, the reduction varies from 5% to 15%, while for June, July and August, it ranges from 10% to 20% depending on the segment of users.

APSR also announced fixing the price of electricity consumption per unit for 2024 as the same as last year. 'This is done with the aim of alleviating the severity of the rise in electricity bills during the summer months due to increase in temperatures, which leads to a rise in electricity consumption,' the authority



stated.

It directed electricity distribution companies to calculate the reduced rates starting from May to August. 'APSR will follow up with the companies to implement the reduced rates.'

For May, consumers in the first segment - from 0-4,000kW - will receive a 15% reduction in the value of bills, while consumers in the 4,001-6,000kW segment will see their bills slashed by 10% and those in 6,001kW and more segment will get a discount of 5% of the bill value.

During the months of June, July and August, users in first segment will get a discount of 20%, 15% in the second segment and 10% of invoice value in the third.

Oman and Arab Parliament denounce attempts to label UNRWA a terror group

Cairo , Egypt - Oman and the Arab Parliament condemned the Israeli occupation's attempts to label the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) a terrorist organisation.

These efforts seek to criminalise UNRWA's operations and strip its employees of immunity. Such actions are viewed as part of Israel's ongoing campaign to undermine the Palestinian cause and deny the right of return to Palestinian refugees.

Israel's parliament has advanced a bill to designate UNRWA a 'terrorist organisation', a move slammed by the agency and other aid groups as an unjustified assault on humanitarian aid.

The Foreign Ministry of Oman warned of the consequences to undermine the agency and its role in caring for Palestinians.

Oman backs US-led Gaza ceasefire effort

Muscat - The sultanate has officially welcomed the ceasefire initiative in the Gaza Strip proposed by US President Joe Biden, in collaboration with Qatar and Egypt.

In a statement, the Foreign Ministry affirmed Oman's support for all efforts aimed at halting the aggression and alleviating the hardships endured by the Palestinian people. It urged all parties involved to engage constructively with the proposed initiative to safeguard the rights and legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians.

Oman expressed hope that the ceasefire would lead to the end of Israeli hostilities and the full withdrawal of its forces from Gaza. 'This would pave the way for the reconstruction of the area and help restore normalcy for its residents.'

In a statement issued on Sunday, the Arab Parliament underscored the vital and significant role played by UNRWA. The agency provides crucial aid and assistance to approximately 6.4mn Palestinian refugees, with 1mn residing in the Gaza Strip. 'These refugees face relentless aggression, existential threats,

and severe deprivation at the hands of the occupying power.'

The parliament called upon the international community, as well as international and human rights organisations, to fulfil their obligations in halting these crimes and recurrent violations. 'There is an urgent need for international protection to be extended to the Palestinian people. Immediate and decisive action is required to compel the occupying forces to cease their persistent breaches of international law and humanitarian norms.'

Furthermore, the parliament demanded enhanced protection for humanitarian relief organisations and their personnel, with particular emphasis on UNRWA. 'The agency's humanitarian mission is indispensable, especially in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip.'

Omani firm develops eco-friendly drone capable of carrying 30kg payload

Our Correspondent Muscat

In a groundbreaking achievement, an Omani company has successfully developed the sultanate's first environmentally friendly drone.

At the recently concluded COMEX Global Technology Show, which showcased a plethora of new technologies and innovations, Ankaa Space and Technologies stood out as it unveiled its remarkable creation.

Co-founder Mohammed Salim al Riyami shared insights into the company's journey from its inception in 2021 to the culmination of its efforts with the launch of the pioneering drone this year.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Riyami said the drone - named Tariq - boasts several noteworthy features, including the innovative use of Omani seaweed in making certain parts.

Capable of flying at altitudes of up to 2,000m and carrying payloads of up to 30kg, Tariq is equipped with an AI-supported camera that enables sophisticated analysis and location determination.

He added, "With a control range of 20km and flight duration of up to 40 minutes without a payload and 20 minutes with one, Tariq offers versatility in aerial operations."

Riyami emphasised the drone's diverse functionalities, including photography, reconnaissance, spraying and aerial surveys. This versatility has garnered significant attention from various industries, particularly agriculture.

Acknowledging the support of Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Riyami informed that the company collaborated with government entities in initiatives such as combating the palm weevil by employing drones for pesticide spraying.

Addressing the challenges encountered during development of Tariq, Riyami noted the difficulty in sourcing certain parts, such as control panels, which had to be imported. Undeterred, Ankaa Space and Technologies is actively pursuing solutions to streamline production.

Having made three drones, the company is currently engaged in producing 13 more. The company is committed to enhancing the drone's capabilities, aiming an extended range of 500km. This development will open doors for diverse applications, including logistical operations in Omani airports and other related services.

Emphasising Ankaa Space and Technologies' overarching vision, Riyami reiterated its commitment to manufacturing a multi-use drone that addresses diverse social needs while minimising environmental impact.

He expressed gratitude to key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Civil Aviation Authority, for their invaluable support and assistance in facilitating the testing and development of Tariq.



Tariq in flight; (inset) Mohammed Salim al Riyami (Supplied photos)



Stop heat stress before it strikes

The temperature in May crossed 48°C in many places in the sultanate. Given the intense heat, do you think the outdoor workers' midday break should start from May instead of June? What other measures should be taken to protect these workers? Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers said -

Rahma al Jabri
Private sector employee

In my opinion, the outdoor workers' midday break should be from May to October. Work can also be conducted in the evening and night, instead of daytime, to prevent the effects of heat on outdoor workers. This would reduce risks of heat-related illnesses.

Sultan al Fazeri
Private sector employee

Providing protective clothing or cooling vests can significantly help in maintaining a safer and more comfortable working environment. These measures, combined with proper hydration, regular breaks and shaded rest areas, can improve workers health and productivity.

Ajin Raj S
Cinematographer

Providing access for outdoor workers to shade where they can rest and cool down; keeping them hydrated by providing enough water; changing their normal work clothes to protective clothes of light colours, which help to

reflect light; and providing adequate cool down period in between their work time - these measures can protect outdoor workers.

Allam Setty Padmavathi
Chartered accountant

Midday break for outdoor workers should be according to outdoor temperatures and not according to the month or date because the temperature varies from year to year. The other measures to protect outdoor workers could be changing their work hours and providing them headgear to protect from heat. Outdoor workers should be given proper orientation about how to protect themselves from heat stroke on a daily basis. Additionally, they should be familiarised with what to do in the event of suffering a heat stroke.

Sayed Murthala Muheez
Accountant

Considering the soaring temperatures, starting the midday break for outdoor workers in May is crucial. Additional measures such as providing shade, hydration stations and rotating schedules are essential for their



(Muscat Daily file photo)

safety. Prioritising worker well-being ensures productivity and prevents heat-related illnesses.

Sarojini Parasuram
Private sector employee

The managers of these workers can ensure that work starts early and finishes by 10am, and restarts in the evening after a break. Most importantly, workers should be provided adequate and cool restrooms, sufficient hydration supplies and a rota-

tion schedule if possible.

Ranjit Nair
Senior country manager - sales and marketing

Considering the extreme heat wave conditions the country is experiencing, I fully support the idea of starting the midday break for outdoor workers from the month of May. Apart from this, it has to be ensured that all necessary facilities are provided to them to keep them hydrated at all times

during these extreme-working conditions. One can look at reducing their shift hours, especially during the day hours, so that their exposure to heat is reduced. A separate rest area can be provided to them at their work site with necessary cooling facilities so that they can rest for some time to refresh themselves.

Zeenath Chowdhury
Student

Yes, it should have started in May. I

think they should let some trees grow and stay alive instead of cutting them all down to build houses. Otherwise, temperatures will reach 60°C without trees.

Namrah Farooq
Housewife

Yes, definitely, 100%. While going to pick up my children from school, it's always disturbing to see workers labouring in this hot temperature or taking shelter under some trees.

Anita Vibin
Teacher

Not only is working outside dangerous, but working inside school classrooms with 40-50 children is also deadly. Children are falling sick frequently. They are getting heat stroke when the AC stops working. Corridors and other areas are like an oven.

Riza Rafaelles
Health and hygiene specialist

Working outside for a prolonged period with temperatures between 40°C and 54°C can cause heat cramps and exhaustion; in the worst case, it may also lead to heat stroke. The best way to avoid health-related problems during the summer is to double your water intake and minimise the intake of coffee, tea and alcoholic beverages, as these can cause dehydration. Add more fruits and vegetables to your diet and do regular indoor exercise. Keep safe, everyone.

NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Royal Oman Police has introduced a new feature in its mobile app that allows motorists to view images of their traffic violations. What do you think about this decision and what other measures can be adopted to reduce traffic violations?

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

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

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MoSD unveils platform to offer services for disabled persons

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to support persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) launched a platform called Ta'heel - Arabic for 'rehabilitation' - at COMEX Global Technology Show, which concluded on Thursday.

An official at MoSD said, "The Ta'heel platform aims to facilitate the provision of services to persons with disabilities, their families and workers of government, private and civil rehabilitation centres."

The platform allows persons with disabilities and their families to submit requests for rehabilitation services at various centres, obtain evaluation dates, modify these dates if necessary, and track the status of their requests before and after evaluation.

Additionally, Ta'heel supports entities wishing to open rehabilitation centres for people with disabilities by enabling them to request new centre licences, open new branches, renew existing licences and add



new activities.

According to a statement released by MoSD, 107 rehabilitation centres have already benefited from the platform, including 40 government, 56 private and 11 civil centres.

Currently, there are 7,790 beneficiaries of the platform among people with disabilities, with 3,774 receiving services in government centres, 3,467 in private and 549 in civil centres.

Additionally, the platform supports 1,150 specialised staff members, including 367 specialists in government centres, 50 in private and 733 in civil centres.

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SMEs get RO25mn boost from Inma fund in H1 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund - Inma - allocated RO25mn to support SME projects across diverse sectors in the first six months of 2024, according to a statement released by fund's chief.

The sectors include transportation, logistics, infrastructure, oil and gas, trade, industry and tourism.

With Saleh Hilal al Maawali as CEO, the fund has been instrumental in implementing the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, particularly the Industrial Strategy 2040 and an incentive programme aimed at supporting SMEs.

Maawali emphasised the fund's commitment to providing comprehensive support to SME owners, creating an enabling environment for their growth and participation in the national economy. To achieve this, Inma focuses on four key pillars - developing entrepreneurship, financing projects, monitoring and guidance, and fostering a conducive business environment.

The fund has played a crucial role in fostering economic diversification and industrial innovation in the sultanate, with funding



The Inma fund is committed to providing comprehensive support to SME owners, creating an enabling environment for their growth and participation in the national economy

SALEH HILAL AL MAAWALI



totalling approximately RO161mn disbursed among 1,409 SMEs since its inception in 2014 till April 2024.

One significant initiative by the fund is extension of the loan repayment period to eight years for various financing products such as asset financing, project financing, bill discounting, and working capital financing. The fi-

nanancing ceiling ranges from RO50,000 to RO500,000, with larger projects eligible for up to RO3mn in financing. The extended repayment terms and flexible financing options aim to alleviate financial burdens on SMEs and facilitate their sustainable growth.

The impact of the fund extends beyond mere financial

support, as it has contributed to the success of numerous national projects, thereby bolstering the economy. Additionally, it has played a pivotal role in nurturing a culture of entrepreneurship among Omani youth, inspiring them to establish their own ventures and contribute to the country's economic development.



Oman to be guest of honour at Arab-German Business Forum

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate, represented by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), alongside various other public and private institutions, is set to participate in the 27th Arab-German Business Forum in Berlin as guest of honour starting Monday.

The three-day forum will focus on enhancing cooperation between the private sectors of Arab countries and Germany in key investment areas, including

energy, technology, innovation, trade, tourism, culture, education and training.

Hamoud bin Salem al Saadi, Second Deputy-Chairman of Board of Directors of OCCI, stated that Arab-German relations are based on shared visions.

The forum aims to strengthen trade relations by creating opportunities for direct communication, leading to new trade partnerships between Omani and German companies and other participating Arab nations.

Additionally, it will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences, enhancing understanding of economic and commercial legislation of participating countries.

Saadi highlighted the fact that Oman's participation as guest of honour offers a unique opportunity for various parties to present working papers on topics such as the future of smart cities, logistics projects with forward-looking perspectives, advanced artificial intelligence dynamics, and sustainable tourism growth.

Omani haj mission leaves for pilgrimage

Muscat - The Omani haj mission for Hijri year 1445 AH left Oman on Sunday for the Holy Lands in Saudi Arabia.

The mission was seen off at Muscat International Airport by H E Dr Mohammed Said al Ma'amari, Minister of Endowments

and Religious Affairs. The mission, led by Sultan Said al Hinai, will head straight to its headquarters in Mecca.

During the visit to Mecca and Medina, the Omani haj mission will serve the 14,000 pilgrims from the sultanate. It will also

look after the pilgrims' performance of haj rituals.

Of the 14,000 pilgrims, 13,500 are Omanis, 250 are Arab residents in Oman and 250 non-Arab residents. This is in addition to members of 31 licensed haj companies.

SalamAir appoints new CEO to steer growth

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's budget airline SalamAir has announced the appointment of Adrian Hamilton-Manns as its new chief executive officer.

With a career spanning over eight years as a CEO in the aviation sector, Hamilton-Manns is set to bring a wealth of experience and a fresh strategic vision to the airline.

Hamilton-Manns' appointment marks a significant phase for SalamAir, as the airline seeks to expand its horizons and enhance operational efficiencies. His career spans 28 years in aviation executive management, with a notable 14 years dedicated to the low-cost airline industry.

His previous roles at renowned airlines such as South African Airways, Virgin Australia and FlyArystan highlight his capability to drive significant growth in challenging market environments.

'We are confident that his



Adrian Hamilton-Manns

leadership will propel our company towards greater success and provide greater value to our customers and partners,' the airline stated.

The SalamAir Board expressed confidence in Hamilton-Manns' leadership, noting that his strategic insight and proven track record make him the ideal candidate to lead the airline into its next phase.

The board also extended gratitude to Capt Ahmed al Shidhani for his contributions during his tenure as acting CEO and ensuring a seamless transition.



H.E.Dr. Madeeha bint Ahmed Al Shibaniyah, the Minister of Education, graces Al Injaz Grade 12 Graduation Ceremony.

On the 20th of May, Al Injaz International Private School was the proud host of their Grade 12 Cambridge and GED cohorts graduation ceremony as a triumphant culmination of yet another academic year. The event was a multifaceted display of pride and accomplishment, but also a recognition of the challenges that lie ahead.

To further instill the importance of education, the Al Injaz graduates were honoured with the presence of H.E Dr. Madeeha bint Ahmed Al Shibaniyah, the esteemed Minister



of Education! Her contributions to education in Oman added motivation and encouragement.



As the event drew to a close, the graduates expressed their gratitude to their educators, serving as a per-

manent imprint of dedication and hard work that defines Al Injaz International Private School.

MARKET WATCH

MSX304,833.30

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

India	217.29
Pakistan	724.02
Bangladesh	305.43
Philippines	152.34
Sri Lanka	782.72

*Rates as on June 02

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

S&P lowers France's rating to AA-

S&P Global Ratings said it lowered France's long-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings to AA- from AA, adding the outlook on the long-term ratings is stable.

The global rating agency said it projects France's general government debt rising to around 112% of GDP by 2027, from approximately 109% in 2023.

"France's 2023 budget deficit was significantly higher than we previously forecast, reaching 5.5% of GDP," it said in a statement.

The stable outlook, on the other hand, reflects the agency's expectations that real economic growth will accelerate and support the government's budgetary consolidation, although this is not enough to bring down the already elevated general government debt-to-GDP ratio.

MSX remains top performer in GCC markets for second month in a row

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) emerged as the top-performing stock market in the GCC region for the second consecutive month. The Omani bourse was one of only two markets in the GCC that recorded gains during May, while four GCC markets reported declines.

The MSX 30 Index registered the biggest monthly gain in the GCC during May 2024, increasing by 1.3% to close the month at 4,845.7 points. The MSX also remained the best-performing equity market in the GCC for the first five months of this year, according to a research report released by Kuwait-based Kamco Investment.

'Oman was the best-performing market in the GCC with a year-to-date 2024 gain of 7.3%, followed by Kuwait and Bahrain with gains of 3.4% during the first five months of the year,' the report said.

The Financial Index was the primary driver of Oman's index growth during May 2024, recording a 3.2% increase during the month, the biggest gain among the indices. The growth was mainly driven by gains in shares of several companies in



Muscat Stock Exchange was also best-performing market in GCC with a year-to-date gain of 7.3%, followed by Kuwait and Bahrain with gains of 3.4% during first five months of 2024

the sector such as Oman Arab Bank and Bank Nizwa. In comparison, the Industrial Index registered a monthly gain of 1.0% during May, while the Services Index witnessed a monthly drop of 1.7%.

In terms of company performance, Oman Arab Bank topped the gainers list with a share price gain of 20.0% in May, followed

by Oman Cables Industry Company and Bank Nizwa with monthly share gains of 15.0% and 13.1%, respectively.

On the decliners' side, Al Hassan Engineering Company led the chart with a 20.0% share price fall, followed by Dhofar Beverages & Foodstuff Company and Dhofar Generating Company, which witnessed share

price drops of 10.8% and 10.0%, respectively.

Trading activity on the bourse witnessed a moderate decline during May. The total volume of shares traded on the exchange declined by 6.6% to 559mn shares compared to 696.3mn in April. Similarly, the total value of shares traded on the exchange decreased by 22.7% to RO89.8mn against RO116.2mn in April.

GCC markets slide

The GCC equity market index declined for the third straight month in May as geopolitical issues and lower crude oil prices worsened a sell-off in global emerging markets.

The MSCI GCC Index registered the biggest decline in 17 months, falling by 6.4% during May to close at 658.85 points, according to the Kamco Investment report.

'The decline reflected falls in

four out of seven regional indices, while three reported gains during the month. The decline also reflected bets favouring higher-for-longer interest rates since the start of the month and the resulting higher borrowing rates for regional corporates, although the latest data for personal consumption expenditure in the US reignited bets for a rate cut this year,' the report said.

Kuwait's index remained flat during the month after the marginal decline in the large-cap Premier Market index was fully offset by a gain in the Main Market index. Saudi Arabia reported the biggest decline during the month, with the TASI falling by 7.2%, the biggest monthly decline since September 2022, reaching the lowest level in more than five months. Dubai and Qatari benchmarks were next with declines of more than 4%.

In terms of year-to-date performance, the decline during the month pushed the MSCI GCC index further into the red, reaching an 8.2% loss by the end of May 2024. Qatar's main index registered the biggest decline since the start of the year at -14%, followed by Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia with declines of 7.5% and 3.9%, respectively.

CBO joins Gulf Payments System

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has announced its on-boarding to the Gulf Payments System, known as AFAQ, for cross-border payments in local GCC currencies. AFAQ is operated by the Gulf Payments Company (GPC) and owned by GCC central banks.

This initiative aligns with the CBO's efforts to develop cross-border payment systems and adopt the latest technologies in the industry, aiming to improve efficiency and speed while contributing to cost reduction.

In June 2023, the CBO launched the new local Real-Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS), which operates 24/7. This move is in line with its vision to enhance the operation of national payment systems around



the clock, facilitating better services for the banking and financial sector in particular and for society in the Sultanate of Oman in general.

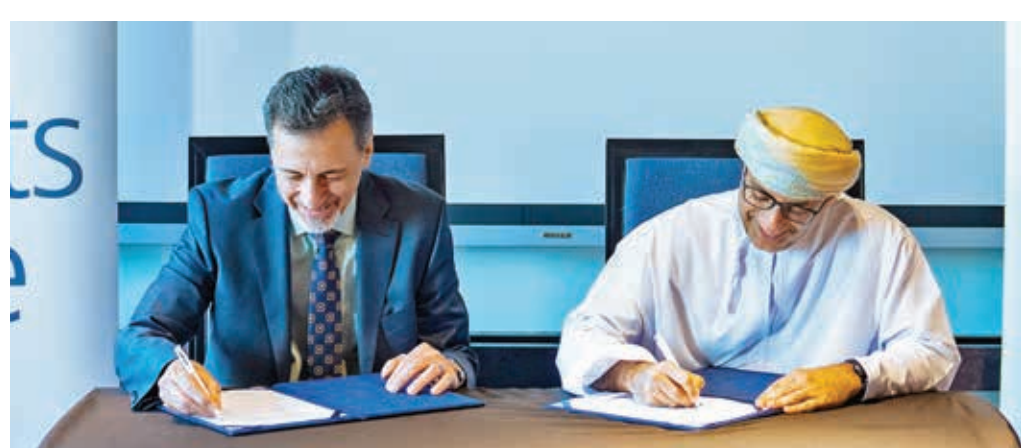
The Central Bank of Oman will continue its efforts to enhance the operation of national payment systems and integrate them with regional payment systems in conformity with global developments and market needs.

SOHAR signs agreement for two new projects

Sohar - SOHAR Port and Freezone has signed a land lease agreement with MAK Sohar Chemical Industries Company for two new projects. These new projects will cover 5.8 hectares of land in Sohar Freezone, representing \$11mn investment.

The first project involves establishing a production facility for engineering polymers, thermoplastic elastomers (TPE), thermoplastic olefins (TPO), special masterbatches, and compounds, with an advanced urea inhibition unit featuring specific coating and packaging capabilities.

The manufacturing facility will source raw materials locally (from OQ Ladayn Park), regionally and from Europe to produce TPE, TPO, and various compounds for domestic and international markets in North America, Europe, Africa and Asia, with an annual production capacity of 25,000 tonnes.



Additionally, the facility will produce advanced urea inhibition coatings tailored for European markets, packaged in 25, 50, and 1000 kg bags. The project will utilise feedstock such as granular urea, prilled urea, monoammonium phosphate (MAP), diammonium phosphate (DAP), and N-(n-butyl) thiophosphoric triamide (NBPT) from local and regional markets. The finished products, including granular urea with inhibitor and MAP/DAP will target markets in Europe and Africa.

These projects are set to utilise modern technology and enhance innovation, leveraging German expertise to enhance supply chain efficiency and meet growing market demand. This will create substantial added value in the global chemicals market for home appliances, automotive industry, medical

equipment and water supply infrastructure.

In a press release, Jens Frickel, Sales Manager at MAK Germany, said, "We are thrilled to embark on these projects with Sohar Freezone. MAK Sohar Chemical Industries has agreed with OQ Ladayn Park for the feedstock to convert raw and pure olefins into advanced engineering compounds and polymers. As an Omani entity in SOHAR Freezone, our aim is to become one of the key players in the global market for TPO and TPE polymers and downstream olefins industries.

Omar bin Mahmood al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Freezone and Deputy CEO of Sohar Port, said, "These projects mark a significant advancement in the chemicals sector at SOHAR Port and Freezone, enhancing our capabilities and contributing to the global market. Leveraging advanced technology and expertise, we aim to meet market demands, and explore transformative projects for economic diversification. We are committed to fostering a supportive environment for business and innovation, enhancing international cooperation and sustainable investments to strengthen our competitive edge and achieve sustainable growth in advanced polymer and chemical industries."

FORESIGHT

The recent downturn in the ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) market doesn't signify 'beginning of the end' for sustainable investing. Rather, it indicates a maturation of the market, marking the 'end of the beginning' of a shift towards more impact-oriented strategies.

ESG investing evaluates a company's impact on the environment, society, and governance. The term was introduced by the United Nations in 2005 through the report 'Who Cares Wins,' which argued that companies aligned with societal interests are more likely to thrive in the long run. This concept was quickly adopted worldwide and integrated into legislation, especially within the European Union.

According to Bloomberg, there is a notable decline in the ESG market, with more US ESG-rated funds closing in 2023 than in the previous three



SYED ADIL ABBAS

Abbas, an MBA graduate from Cardiff Metropolitan University (UK), is currently based in Muscat, and has over 20 years of international experience working with the public and private sectors in the Middle East, Far East, Africa and India.

years combined. Major investors like State Street have pulled back some of their funds from sustainable investments. BlackRock, for instance, reduced its support for ESG-related shareholder proposals from 47% in 2021 to just 7% in 2023. European markets also saw divestments from ESG funds in 2023.

The slowdown in the ESG market reflects a natural evolution rather than a collapse. The rapid expansion of ESG investments between 2020 and 2021 led to numerous greenwashing accusations, eroding trust among investors. Additionally, the ini-

tial strong performance of ESG funds during the COVID-19 pandemic was an outlier, and long-term studies show these funds often underperform compared to non-ESG funds.

ESG INVESTING: THE END OF THE BEGINNING

The average annual return of ESG funds was 0.2% lower than that of non-ESG funds over a ten-year period. Finally, new regulations, such as the EU's Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR), have created

uncertainty and a more conservative approach among investors, leading many to downplay their ESG credentials to avoid accusations of greenwashing. According to the Financial Times, 44 European funds removed 'sustainable' from their brand names in the first half of 2023.

As the ESG market evolves, the focus shifts from quantity to quality. Financial products must genuinely re-

flect a company's impact on people and the planet. Previously, funds relied on ESG ratings, which sometimes ranked tobacco giants like British American Tobacco and Philip Morris International higher than Tesla, highlighting flaws in the rating systems.

In the future, authentic ESG investments will demand thorough analysis of companies' business models and their real effects on ESG challenges. This approach, though requiring more resources, promises more reliable and impactful results.

Oman should leverage the evolving ESG market to enhance its sus-

tainable investment strategies. This involves creating robust ESG frameworks to prevent greenwashing and promote genuine sustainability practices. Additionally, investing in financial professionals' education and training will improve their analysis skills.

Prioritising transparency and accountability in ESG reporting will build investor confidence, while technology and public-private partnerships will provide deeper insights into companies' ESG performance and create innovative financial products aligned with Oman's sustainability goals, attracting international investors.

The ESG market's evolution signifies not an end but a new beginning. By adopting a more thoughtful and impact-focused approach, Oman can position itself as a leader in sustainable investing, driving both economic growth and environmental stewardship.

OPEC+ agrees to extend oil output cuts into 2025

Anna Cooban

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies — a group of leading oil producers known as OPEC+ — agreed Sunday to extend a voluntary production cut of 2.2mn barrels of crude oil a day into 2025.

The cuts, first agreed in December, were due to expire at the end of this month. They came on top of previously agreed reductions of 3.66mn barrels per day announced in 2022 and 2023 as the group — led by Saudi Arabia and Russia — tried to counter slowing demand and rising output from the United States.

The group also released its 2025 production requirements for member and non-member countries, which were essentially the same as this year's. The United Arab Emirates' production quota increased by 300,000 barrels per day. The uptick "will be phased in gradually" from January through September 2025, the group said.

Despite the OPEC+ cuts, equivalent to about 5.7% of global crude supply, and ongoing tensions in the Middle East, global oil prices have fallen by about 10% since hitting a five-month high in early April.

The price of Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded at \$82 a barrel on Friday, down from \$91 in early April when a suspected Israeli airstrike on



Iran's embassy in Syria sent jitters through oil markets.

The price of West Texas Intermediate crude, the US benchmark, has dropped from nearly \$87 per barrel to \$78.

Saudi Arabia needs Brent

crude to trade at around \$81 a barrel in order to balance its budget, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Subdued prices have partly been the result of record US oil output, which has bumped up

global supply, and concerns about sluggish demand in China — the world's biggest importer of oil — and other major economies.

In its most recent monthly report, the International Energy

Oil output cuts, first agreed in December, were due to expire at the end of this month. They came on top of previously agreed reductions of 3.66mn barrels per day announced in 2022 and 2023

Agency cut its forecast for the growth in global oil demand this year by 140,000 barrels per day to 1.1mn barrels per day, citing weak demand in developed economies, particularly in Europe.

Despite the weaker growth forecast, a supply crunch could develop. The IEA expects global supply to increase by just 580,000 barrels per day this year. In March, the Paris-based agency said it expected there to be a deficit in supply in 2024 if OPEC+ extended its output cuts through the rest of the year.

Sunday's OPEC+ decision coincides with Saudi Arabia selling some more shares in its oil company Aramco. The government is selling less than 1% of the Riyadh-listed company in a deal that could raise \$13 billion for economic diversification projects.

(Source: Oilprice.com)

IMF, World Bank deepen effort to bolster climate action

Washington, US – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group said they deepened joint efforts to bolster climate action.

The institutions said it is happening through an enhanced framework to help countries scale up action to confront the threat of climate change.

"The collaboration will provide critical support for countries' climate strategies – through an integrated, country-led approach to policy reforms and climate investments," they said in a statement.

"Within their respective mandates, the World Bank Group and the IMF will leverage their analytics, technical

assistance, financing, and policy expertise to enhance country-driven reform programs."

The World Bank Group will devote 45% of annual financing to climate change adaptation and mitigation by

2025, working to bring renewable energy to 250mn people in Africa by 2030, and expanding its crisis toolkit to support people on the front lines of the climate crisis.

The IMF, meanwhile, will help countries build resilience to climate change with support from its Resilience and Sustainability Trust, which is funded by contributions from 23 countries.

Anadolu Agency



EMBASSY OF PAKISTAN MUSCAT

NOTICE

Bids are invited for auction of Car Mazda-6 2.0, Model 2015, done 400,000 KM (Approx). Sealed bids may be posted to PO Box 1302, PC 112, Ruwi or submitted to Embassy of Pakistan before 06 June 2024. The vehicle may be seen at Embassy premises on any working day (Sunday to Thursday) from 1100 to 1500 hours.

Contact Numbers: Landline: +968-2469 3521
Mobile No: +968-9226 5728



Iran to launch \$4.6bn worth of oil projects

Charles Kennedy

Iran will soon launch 32 oil industry projects worth a total investment of \$4.6bn, Iranian Petroleum Minister Jawad Owji said on Wednesday.

Iran has also begun work on 50 new oil projects worth a total of over \$50bn, Iranian media quoted Owji as saying.

Since 2021, Iran has boosted its oil production by 60%, the oil minister said earlier in May.

In the latest Iranian calendar year to March 19, 2024, the Islamic Republic boosted its oil and gas production by 20% compared to the previous Iranian year, Owji added.

Iran has signed new contracts for the development of oil fields worth \$13bn, planning to add 350,000 barrels per day (bpd) to its production, state news agency Shana reported in March.

The deals are the biggest in the energy space for the past decade and they were all signed with local companies, according to minister Owji.

The production increase effort will focus on six fields, including

Since 2021, Iran has boosted its oil production by 60%, the oil minister said earlier in May

the biggest one that Iran shares with neighbor Iraq – Azadegan – and its oldest producing field, Masjed Soleyman. The latter is the oldest producing field in the Middle East, with a total output to date of over a billion barrels.

Iran plans to increase its crude oil output to 4mn bpd, the coun-

try's Tasnim news agency reported earlier last week, as cited by Reuters.

No specific sources for the plan were provided but the original report in Tasnim said that "An economic council headed by Iran's interim president Mohammad Mokhber has approved a plan to raise the country's oil output from 3.6mn barrels per day to 4mn barrels per day."

Iran has been eager to increase its oil production despite US sanctions that have significantly reduced the market for Iranian oil. Even so, Iran reported an increase in exports of crude recently, with the average daily for the first quarter hitting the highest in six years at 1.56mn bpd according to Vortexa data. Last year, the country exported 1.29mn bpd on average, which was 50% more than a year earlier.

(Source: Oilprice.com)



NATIONAL BISCUIT INDUSTRIES LTD. SAOG

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Revenue and Profits

The company recorded a Net Revenue of RO 17,210,901 in the financial year 2023-24 compared to RO 11,742,543 in the financial year 2022-23 (9 Months). The growth in Net revenue is 10% as compared to the extrapolated sales of the previous year.

The company has recorded a gross profit of RO 2,584,020/- for the financial year 2023-24 as against the previous year gross profit of RO 1,356,667/- (9 months). The growth over previous year extrapolated gross profit (RO 1,808,889/-) of 12 months is 43%.

The Company focuses to strengthen the snacks, wafers and confectionary portfolio along with maintaining the leadership position in the biscuits category in Oman. We intend to expand export markets with the endeavor of improving our global presence, revenue, margins and efficiencies in manufacturing and supply chain functions...

Company has added new products in the market and a few of them are well established across all regions and the feedback is encouraging.

Thus, the company has achieved a net profit of RO 723,033/- for the financial year 2023-24 as compared to RO 192,810/- in the financial year 2022-23 (9 Months). The growth over previous year extrapolated net profit (RO 257,080/-) of 12 months is 181%.

Dividend

The Board of Directors proposes a cash dividend of 25% on the paid up share capital of RO 1,000,000 amounting to 250,000/- . There are no other appropriations.

Compliance with CMA

Your Company has been constantly monitoring and upgrading its internal control procedures and systems in compliance with local laws and regulations. As a part of this process, the internal controls, procedure manuals and guidelines as recommended by the Capital Market Authority, have been implemented from 2003 onwards. The Board through a process of internal audits, audit committees' regular involvement in the review process, ensures that the internal controls and procedures adopted by your company are effective.

Corporate Governance

Your company confirms its compliance with the code of corporate governance for Public Listed Companies issued in July 2015, as updated in December 2016 and a separate note on Corporate Governance forms a part of this report.

Future Outlook

The company will continue to strengthen our share in Oman and endeavor to gain shares in export markets as well as enter new export markets. This will be done by identifying the right product mix in each market along with a dynamic pricing strategy to penetrate across the channels with the right channel partners to achieve a profitable growth.

The company will continue to make all efforts to improve margins by adopting cost efficiencies in the manufacturing and supply chain functions.

Company is exploring, evaluating and implementing the best solutions to reduce the cost by leveraging the technology and automation in all possible areas of manufacturing operations.

The Company is also expanding the distribution in GCC and other markets by appointing new channel partners as well as dedicated channel partners to target new sales channels like E-Com, HORECA .

Acknowledgement

The Board expresses its gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq, May Allah protect him and guide him for the benefit of Oman and its people.

Board sincerely thank and appreciate all the Ministries and Government Departments for their continued support to your Company.

Board also likes to convey sincere thanks to the shareholders of National Biscuit Industries Limited SAOG for the confidence they have reposed in the company and it's Board.

Finally, the Board thanks the Management and Staff members for their support in the financial year 2023-24 and looking forward to continued progress for your company.

NOOH BIN MOHAMMED AI- ZIDJALY
CHAIRMAN

Statement of financial position for the period ended

	31 Mar 2024 RO	31 Mar 2023 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	6,379,077	6,607,914
Intangible assets	156,456	137,665
Right-of-use assets	641,112	267,269
Total non-current assets	7,176,645	7,012,848
Current assets		
Inventories	2,894,246	2,537,542
Trade and other receivables	4,892,252	4,271,532
Bank balances and cash	138,673	408,960
Total current assets	7,925,171	7,218,034
Total assets	15,101,816	14,230,882
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Share capital	1,000,000	1,000,000
Legal reserve	333,333	333,333
Retained earnings	6,657,106	6,184,073
Total equity	7,990,439	7,517,406
Liabilities		
Non-current liabilities		
Non-current portion of lease liabilities	719,258	300,602
Employees' end of service benefits	516,794	443,090
Deferred tax liability	104,678	88,948
Total non-current liabilities	1,340,730	832,640
Current liabilities		
Current portion of lease liabilities	2,247	18,564
Trade and other payables	5,452,626	5,617,456
Bank borrowings	192,363	230,283
Taxation	123,411	14,533
Total current liabilities	5,770,647	5,880,836
Total liabilities	7,111,377	6,713,476
Total equity and liabilities	15,101,816	14,230,882
Net assets per share	7.990	7.517

Statement of comprehensive income

	31 Mar 2024 RO (12 months)	31 Mar 2023 RO (9 months)
INCOME		
Revenue from contracts with customers	17,210,901	11,742,543
Cost of sales	(14,626,881)	(10,385,876)
Gross profit	2,584,020	1,356,667
Other income	33,313	49,017
	2,617,333	1,405,684
EXPENSES		
General and administration	815,080	537,472
Selling and distribution	889,996	587,678
Finance charges	61,800	40,393
	1,766,876	1,165,543
Profit before tax	850,457	240,141
Tax charge	(127,424)	(47,331)
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the year / period	723,033	192,810
Basic earnings per share	0.723	0.193

MHD opens new Jetour showroom in Azaiba, launches Jetour T2 in Oman

MHD Automobiles LLC is proud to announce the grand opening of its new state-of-the-art Jetour showroom in Azaiba, Oman.

This milestone event will also mark the highly anticipated launch of the all-new Jetour T2, a rugged and stylish SUV designed to redefine adventure and performance on the road.

All-New Jetour T2

Built for the bold and those who seek adventure at every turn, the Jetour T2 is set to elevate your driving experience. This rugged SUV is equipped with a host of advanced features and cutting-edge technology, making it the perfect companion for any journey.

The 2.0T-4WD Jetour T2 boasts an impressive array of features designed to enhance safety, comfort, luxury, and performance. Safety and convenience are prioritized with ABS (Anti-lock Brake System), airbags, an anti-theft alarm, auto handbrake release function, blind spot warning, collision detection, EBD (Electronic Brakeforce Distribution), a fire extinguisher, hill assist, immobilizer, ISO Fix child



seat anchors, and lane departure warning. For comfort and luxury, the T2 offers leather seats, a front seat armrest, foldable rear seats, cupholders, adaptive headlights, auto headlamps, electric door mirrors, air conditioning, and chrome exhaust pipes. The technology and performance suite include a 360-degree camera, active steering, and various apps, ensuring a seamless and enjoyable driving experience. Under the hood, the Jetour T2

is powered by a 2.0-litre 4-cylinder petrol engine that generates an impressive 254 horsepower and 390 Nm of torque. This powerhouse ensures a thrilling and dynamic driving experience, whether navigating city streets or conquering off-road trails.

MHD Automobiles LLC, the exclusive distributor of Jetour in Oman, is excited to bring this exceptional vehicle to the Omani market. "Today marks a significant milestone for MHD Automobiles LLC as we open the doors to our new Jetour showroom in Azaiba and introduce the all-new Jetour T2 to the Omani market," said Mr. Mohsin Hani Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles LLC.

He also remarked, "The Jetour T2 embodies our commitment to bringing innovative, high-quality vehicles to our customers, offering a blend of advanced technology, unparalleled performance, and luxurious comfort. We are excited to invite adventure seekers and automotive enthusiasts to experience the exceptional capabilities of the Jetour T2 and join us in celebrating this momentous occasion."



ICAI Muscat elects office bearers

The Muscat Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) - under the Sponsorship of the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS) - conducted its 16th Annual General Meeting on May 30 at Oman Hall of CBFS.

The meeting was attended by a large number of members and other invitees.

The agenda included a session by eminent chartered accountant Ram Krishnamani who spoke on 'Connecting the dots - Bharatanatyam in Auditing, Finance and Accounting'.

Jim Joseph, outgoing chairperson, presented the annual report and highlighted various activities of the Chapter conducted during the past year and continuing the foundation laid by immediate past chairperson Sajeev Surendran.

The landmark achievements included Oman India Investor meet, CFO programme, International Conference, besides some unique photography and kids chess activities. The Chapter continued to organise various events for the professional and social development and wellbeing of the members and fellow Omani professionals.

As part of the AGM, the members elected Gaurav Kapoor, Unmesh Bhome, Sangeetha Sureshkumar, Badri Narayan Subudhi, Ashish Subhedar, Abhishek R Vaishya, Jay Duseja and Ajil James Kurian as management committee for the years 2024-2027.

Subsequently, the managing committee elected the following new office bearers for the year 2024-25: Gaurav Kapoor (chairperson), Unmesh Bhome (vice-chairperson), Sangeetha Sureshkumar (secretary) and Badri Narayan Subudhi (treasurer).

"The new team is fully committed to continue the rich legacy of past leaders of the Chapter and assure that the activities of

the Chapter will be more dynamic, unique, vibrant, content driven and towards the professional development and wellbeing of the members and the wider community," said Gaurav Kapoor, newly elected chairman.

ICAI-Muscat Chapter began in 2008 under a Memorandum of Understanding between the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), New Delhi and the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS), Oman. It has the primary objective of providing Continuing Professional Education (CPE) to the members of the ICAI and Omani finance professionals.

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) won the Best Institutional Investor Award for Excellence in Technology in COMEX 2024, in recognition of its participation and showcasing OMAP platform.

The authority received this recognition for the OMAP platform, which offers integrated visual maps incorporating data from the comprehensive plans of the industrial zones, free zones, and special economic zones affiliated with OPAZ. Using digital maps and other tools, the platform gives users access to comprehensive services and information for the zones, making it a valuable tool for electronically selecting lands.

The platform's objectives are to increase investment opportunities in all authority-supervised zones and to give investors access to information and spatial systems that aid in their decision-making. It also enables investors to take advantage of recent innovations for future growth, urban planning, and the ability to print maps.

This award is a culmination of the authority's excellence in serving investors and offering cutting-edge digital services in the investment sector. It also acknowledges the authority's efforts to transform the digital economy by implementing electronic programmes and applications that streamline processes and give investors quick, secure, and all-encompassing services.

The authority is currently developing a digital transformation strategy plan to align with its continued dedication to innovation, development, and the utilisation of contemporary technologies to enhance the quality of service it offers to investors and beneficiaries. Additionally, the authority is adhering to best practices to improve service delivery across all the zones.



Novikov Café opens at St Regis Al Mouj Muscat

Novikov Café, the talk of Dubai's culinary scene, is thrilled to announce its official opening at the stunning The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort on Saturday.

The launch of a premier dining destination in Oman's F&B market for the spring of 2024, in partnership with Pinskiy&Co, represents a strategic expansion for Novikov International, one of the leading restaurant chains in the world. Get ready to indulge in a culinary adventure like no other as Novikov Café brings its signature dishes and vibrant atmosphere to the heart of Muscat.

Novikov Café is a unique concept developed by Novikov Group, inspired by traditional Mediterranean cuisine as well as Asian culinary traditions, combining simplicity of dishes with high quality ingredients.



Embracing the essence of a French-style brasserie, the concept focuses on the animated and welcoming atmosphere of the brasserie while creating more intimate and sophisticated settings for guests. The innovative open kitchen concept further enhances the dining experience, allowing guests to savour the freshness and quality of ingredients from kitchen to table.

TAC opens Geely's new Preface showroom in Oman

Towell Auto Centre LLC (TAC), the official distributor of Geely vehicles in Oman, has proudly launched its latest masterpiece, the new Preface, along with the inauguration of its newest showroom in Oman.

This is a landmark event for Geely, redefining the automotive landscape in the sultanate while staying true to its commitment to excellence. Leading the sedan segment, the new Preface represents a fusion of intelligence, driving control, technology, design and safety - heralding a new era of 'perfected presence' on the roads of Oman.

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

Leveraging CMA's Super Matrix, it embodies technological advancement through six core competitive edges: unparalleled flexibility and scalability, diverse power options, a world-class chassis, leading power capabilities, advanced electrical architecture, and global market adaptability.

This strong base ensures that the new Preface effortlessly blends design, technology, and performance, delivering a driving experience that caters to local preferences.

Dominating its class with the most generous dimensions, the new Geely Preface boasts the largest car size, widest body, and longest wheelbase, resulting in



unparalleled stability and spaciousness. Its streamlined exterior design merges safety with elegance, offering a perfect blend of style and functionality. The flawless interiors showcase superior craftsmanship and cutting-edge technology, including a 13.2" 2K high-res infotainment display and a HarmanTM infinity deluxe headrest audio system.

With a Powertrain 2.0TD+7DCT, it achieves the fastest acceleration in its class (6.9s for 0-100km/h), setting a new benchmark for driving control. Equipped with an L2 ADAS intelligent driving assistance system and a Qualcomm Snapdragon 8155 chip, the Preface establishes perfection in every dimension. With such unmatched performance and unwavering reliability, the new Preface promises to elevate every journey.



Eint Automotive wins Petronas ME Grand Prix

In the ever-evolving automotive lubricant market of Oman, Eint Automotive LLC, a subsidiary of the venerable Towell Group, stands out as a pioneering force. As the official distributor of PETRONAS Lubricants in Oman, Eint Automotive has quickly become synonymous with quality and innovation.

The year 2023 marked a significant milestone in their journey as they celebrated their first anniversary of partnership with PETRONAS, achieving remarkable success. Eint Automotive's commitment to excellence was spectacularly recognised at the PETRONAS Middle East Grand Prix-2023, where they clinched the title. This achievement underscores the company's dedication to best practices and the effectiveness of their aggressive marketing strategies, including

the launch of a visually striking new website in Oman that significantly enhanced their online presence.

The grandeur of the awards ceremony, held at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel in Dubai, was matched by the thrilling activities that followed, including a drift sprint experience and karting at Yas Marina in Abu Dhabi. These events mirrored the dynamic and forward-thinking ethos of Eint Automotive. The accolades from PETRONAS during this event were a testament to the positive impact Eint Automotive has made within a short period. Shajahan Azeez, AGM of Eint Automotive LLC, attributed these successes to the "sincere teamwork" of their dedicated staff, whose efforts have resonated deeply across the business landscape in Oman.

In a reflection of his vision for the future, Mr. Shajahan Azeez shared, "Our ambition at Eint Automotive is not only to meet the needs of today's market but to set a benchmark for tomorrow. With PETRONAS, we aim to elevate our brand to become the number one lubricant brand in Oman in the coming years. Our strategy involves pioneering initiatives, enhanced customer engagements, and sustained excellence in our operations. This vision drives us forward, inspiring innovation and dedication across every aspect of our business."

Strategically positioned with a strong sales force across all major cities in Oman, Eint Automotive ensures that their high-quality lubricants are accessible to a wide array of customers, enhancing the operational efficiency and longevity of vehicles across

the region. This widespread network supports their vision of being the leading provider in the automotive sector, offering unmatched products and services.

As Eint Automotive looks to the future, they are poised to maintain the high standards that garnered them the prestigious awards at the PETRONAS Middle East Grand Prix. The company is determined to continue its trajectory of growth and innovation, perpetually striving to exceed expectations in the automotive industry.

Their ongoing success is not only a boon for Eint Automotive but also for the automotive sector in Oman. By aligning with global standards through their partnership with PETRONAS, Eint Automotive is well-equipped to contribute significantly to the industry's development.

Al Madina Takaful opens new kiosk at Mall of Oman

Al Madina Takaful, leading insurance company in Oman, has recently inaugurated its new kiosk at the Mall of Oman to expand its reach to the customers.

The event was graced by Usama al Barwani - Chief Executive Officer, Shakaib Mahmood - Deputy CEO and Aneesh Varghese - Head of Operations.

The new kiosk located at the Level 2 of the mall, represents a significant enhancement of Al Madina Takaful's service network and channels, underscoring the company's commitment to providing an exceptional customer service experience.

CEO Usama al Barwani commented on the new launch, saying, "Al Madina Takaful's expertise and steadfast dedication to providing industry-leading innovative insurance solutions are unwavering.

"To address the challenges of a large and segmented insurance market, we focus on providing an intuitive customer service experience. We continue our expansion through opening kiosks in more strategic locations to ensure easy access to our customers"

Deputy CEO Shakaib Mahmood added, "The opening of the new kiosk at the Mall of Oman is a testament to our ongoing efforts to enhance accessibility and convenience for our customers, further solidifying its position as a leading provider of innovative and customer-centric insurance solutions in Oman.

"Al Madina Takaful distinguishes itself by providing solu-



tions appropriate to the needs of policyholders, superior customer experience, and empathetic support to claimants in their times of need."

Head of Operations Aneesh Varghese highlighted the role of technology in shaping customer service, stating, "With advancements in technology, customer perceptions regarding service have changed dramatically. Today's customers seek fast, convenient, efficient, and customized services. An insurance kiosk is a highly feasible solution for insurance companies to market their products and extend their reach.

"At Al Madina, we are always finding ways to make insurance easy. With conveniently located branches and kiosks, an efficient call centre, and user friendly web-

based services, we ensure a seamless service to our customers."

Al Madina Takaful is renowned for its exceptional performance in various aspects of the insurance industry. The company offers a comprehensive range of sharia'a compliant insurance products, distinguished by professionalism, integrity, and exceptional service.

Its product portfolio includes individual, corporate, life (family) and health Takaful products, covering areas such as travel, domestic workers, fire, engineering, energy, aviation, motor, liability, general accident, marine cargo, and pleasure craft Insurance.

These services are delivered through its various distribution channels by its highly qualified and experienced professionals.

GREE unveils G-Boost compressor split AC

GREE Electric Appliances Inc., a global leader in air conditioning systems, has launched its latest innovation, the G-Boost inverter compressor split air conditioner, with GENETCO LLC, the distributor in Oman.

This cutting-edge technology promises to deliver superior energy efficiency, uniform cooling, enhanced comfort, and environmental sustainability, marking a significant shift from traditional reciprocating compressor models.

GREE has long been synonymous with quality and reliability in the air conditioning industry, holding the number one market share in Oman with its robust reciprocating compressor split air conditioners. The new G-Boost inverter technology is set to revolutionise the market by offering numerous advantages over conventional systems.

Key features and benefits of the G-Boost inverter include its energy efficiency, which adjusts the compressor speed to maintain the desired temperature, significantly reducing energy consumption and lowering electricity bills for consumers.

It provides consistent comfort with precise temperature control, unlike traditional compressors that operate at fixed speeds, ensuring comfort without fluctuations. The G-Boost inverter is also eco-friendly, with superior energy efficiency that reduces the carbon footprint, supporting our commitment to environmental sustainability.

Additionally, it offers smart control compatibility with smart home systems, allowing users to control their air conditioning remotely for added convenience.

During the launch, Dr

Muthanna, Acting CEO and Board Advisor, stated, "We are thrilled to introduce the G-Boost Inverter Compressor Split Air Conditioner to the Oman market. This innovation reflects our commitment to providing advanced, eco-friendly solutions that meet the evolving needs of our customers. With G-Boost, consumers can enjoy unmatched comfort, significant energy savings, and contribute to a greener environment."

GREE has long been synonymous with quality and reliability in the air conditioning industry, holding the number one market share in Oman

The G Boost inverter compressor from Gree offers extended compressor life and is designed to perform well in high-temperature conditions.

Early adopters of the G-Boost inverter have already reported substantial improvements in energy savings and overall comfort.

"Switching to GREE's G-Boost Inverter AC has been a game-changer for my family. We save on energy bills and enjoy consistent comfort year-round," said one satisfied.

With over 30 years of industry leadership and innovation, GREE continues to set the standard for air conditioning excellence. Trusted by millions worldwide, GREE's dedication to quality and sustainability ensures that the G-Boost inverter compressor split AC will exceed customer expectations.

Dhofar Islamic launches MasterCard world card

Dhofar Islamic has launched MasterCard World credit card - a premium card tailored to meet the unique needs of Al Riadah Priority Bank customers.

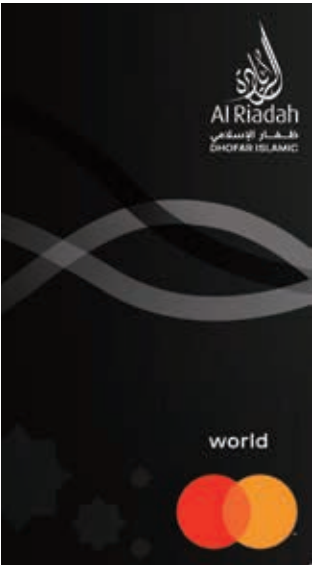
Designed to provide unparalleled benefits and rewards, the Al Riadah MasterCard World offers an array of exclusive features and offers. Customers can earn 1.87% value back on every international purchase and 1.25% on domestic purchases, ensuring maximum rewards on spends, the bank stated.

Unlimited, complimentary access to over 1000 airport lounges worldwide in more than

450 cities in over 135 countries worldwide has also been added to its exciting features.

A cardholder will get 15% discount on IHG Hotels & Resorts and 10% discount on worldwide staycations and up to 35% off your next car rental with Avis, while enjoying fee-free membership based on their annual spends. Lifestyle benefits - 20% discount on grocery or food orders twice per month on the Talabat app and a 25% off on your first subscription payment for Fiit.

Free membership with Bank Dhofar 'INTERAINER' (by one and get one free).



This unique power packed card is designed exclusively for Al Riadah Priority Banking customers with a minimum salary of RO3000 and comes with a competitive Membership Fees of RO50 for primary cards, with a supplementary fee of RO25.

Bilal Faiz al Raiisi, AGM and Head of Cards, "We are excited to introduce the Al Riadah MasterCard World as part of our ongoing commitment to provide innovative sharia'a compliant banking solutions that cater to the evolving needs of our customers."

Al Riadah Priority Banking

provides a unique range of banking products and services that are tailored to suit the unique lifestyle of priority customers, ranging from dedicated relationship manager, priority processing of transactions, preferential rates for deposits and finance products.

Dhofar Islamic is the Islamic bank arm of BankDhofar and has rebranded itself earlier this year to mark its 10th year. The new logo represents Dhofar Islamic's evolution from a single star to a galaxy of enhanced capabilities. It reflects the bank's commitment to it customers.

Indian School Sur hosts Grand Art & Craft Exhibition

The Indian School Sur celebrated its highly anticipated Art & Craft Exhibition 'Symphony of Colours' on Wednesday, at the prestigious Sur Royal Hall.

The event, which ran from 4.30pm to 9.30pm, was a resounding success, showcasing the artistic talents of students and fostering cultural exchange between Indian and Omani communities.

The event was graced by the distinguished presence of H E Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, who honoured the occasion as the Chief Guest and brought a remarkable sense of prestige and warmth to the gathering. He was accompanied by Pardeep Kumar, senior officer, and First Secretary for Community Welfare.

Other esteemed dignitaries included Mohammad Ameen, Managing Director of Sea Pride LLC; Ifthikar Ali Khan, Director of Operations at OMIFCO; Jami Srinivasa Rao, President of the School Management Committee (SMC); Dr Ramkumar Lakshminarayanan, Convenor SMC; Nishreen Basheer, Treasurer SMC; Pradeep Kumar A V member SMC; Adv Saeed T P, Mem-



ber SMC; Shabeeb Mohammed, Member SMC; Pramod V Nair, Member SMC, and other dignitaries.

In his address, H E Narang praised the school for its exemplary organisation of the exhibition and its collaboration with Omani and non-Omani schools. He emphasised that students are the pillars of tomorrow's India, highlighting India's ascent to becoming the world's 5th largest economy and its significant achievements in science and technology, including the Chandrayaan mission and the successful G20 summit in India.

He also underscored the importance of youth in a nation's success and urged students to embrace reading, practice yoga, and learn new skills or languages, emphasising that having these abilities would provide them with greater advantages in the future.

H E Narang's interaction with the students was a notable highlight, as he engaged with them and answered their queries, fostering a spirit of curiosity and learning. He officially inaugurated the Art & Craft Exhibition, marking the commencement of an evening filled with vibrant cultural displays.

The event began with a warm welcome address by Dr S Srinivasan, Principal of Indian School Sur, followed by a captivating invocation dance by the students. One of the highlights of the evening was the presentation of a school-level award for excellence in teaching to Rema Prasad, recognising her invaluable services to the community in education. This prestigious award is presented annually by the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman.

Academic excellence was celebrated with the honouring of Class XII topper Miss Abhinanda

R S and Class X topper Master Eshant Kumar, along with other subject toppers.

Certificates were also awarded to Omani schools that participated in the exhibition, showcasing their impressive exhibits.

In a generous gesture, the Embassy of India donated a collection of books to the library of Indian School Sur, with H E Narang presenting the books to Principal Dr S Srinivasan.

The evening continued with an enchanting musical programme featuring a diverse array of performances.

China’s Chang’e-6 lunar probe lands on far side of Moon

Beijing, China - China’s Chang’e-6 lunar probe has achieved a historic feat by landing on the far side of the Moon and embarking on a groundbreaking mission to collect samples from this rarely explored terrain, Chinese State media reported on Sunday.

The China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced this milestone, marking the first time in human history that samples will be gathered from this enigmatic region of the lunar surface. With the support of the Queqiao-2 relay satellite, the Chang’e-6 lander-ascender combination successfully touched down at the designated landing site within the South Pole-Aitken (SPA) Basin. This

region, nestled on the far side of the Moon, presents a unique and challenging landscape for scientific exploration, as reported by Xinhua.

Comprising an orbiter, a returner, a lander, and an ascender, Chang’e-6 has undergone a meticulously planned journey since its launch on May 3 of this year. From the stages of Earth-Moon transfer to near-Moon braking, lunar orbiting, and finally, the descent to the lunar surface, each step has been executed with precision by the CNSA.

The chosen landing site, the Apollo Basin, holds immense scientific potential for exploration. Huang Hao, a space ex-



pert from the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), explained that the decision to target the Apollo Basin was influenced by its sci-

entific significance and favourable landing conditions.

Despite the rugged terrain characteristic of the far side of the Moon, the relatively flat sur-

Comprising an orbiter, a returner, a lander, and an ascender, Chang’e-6 has undergone a meticulously planned journey since its launch on May 3 of this year

face of the Apollo Basin offers an ideal location for landing and subsequent sampling operations. Following the successful landing, Chang’e-6 is poised to

commence its sampling mission, scheduled to be completed within two days. Employing two distinct methods, the probe will collect samples both from the subsurface using a drill and from the lunar surface using a robotic arm.

Jin Shengyi, another esteemed space expert from the CASC, revealed the meticulous preparations undertaken by the Chang’e-6 development team to ensure the success of the sampling process.

A simulation lab was established in advance, replicating the lunar environment and conditions surrounding the landing site. Through this simulation, sampling strategies and equip-

ment control procedures were meticulously crafted and verified, ensuring the accuracy and efficiency of the mission.

Despite the challenges posed by the Moon’s obstruction, which results in a shorter Earth-Moon communication window on the far side, the Chang’e-6 mission is poised to optimise efficiency through autonomous operations.

Jin elaborated on the intelligent capabilities incorporated into Chang’e-6, allowing the probe to execute instructions and make judgments autonomously, thus reducing the need for constant Earth-based intervention.

ANI

China’s backing of Russia will prolong war, warns Zelensky

Zelensky also urged the Asia-Pacific nations to attend peace conference on Ukraine scheduled to take place on June 15-16

Singapore - In a surprise address at Asia’s premier security summit, which is taking place in Singapore, President Volodymyr Zelensky warned on Sunday that China’s backing of Russia will prolong the conflict in Ukraine.

He was also urging nations in the Asia-Pacific region to attend a peace conference that he said Russia was attempting to obstruct. The international peace conference on Ukraine is scheduled to take place in Switzerland on June 15-16.

“With China’s support to Russia, the war will last longer. That is bad for the whole world and the policy of China - who declares that it supports territorial integrity and sovereignty and declares it officially. For them it is not good,” Zelensky said during a press conference on the sidelines



With China’s support to Russia, the war will last longer. That is bad for the whole world and the policy of China - who declares that it supports territorial integrity and sovereignty

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

of Shangri La Dialogue, according to CNN.

Zelensky made the remarks in Singapore during an unexpected visit to a gathering of defence chiefs from the US and China, as well as other countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

In remarks made on Sunday, Zelensky made a hint about this support when he said that some

components of Russia’s armaments ‘come from China’, according to CNN. Zelensky also issued a warning, claiming that China was aiding Russia in its attempt to persuade nations not to attend the next international peace conference.

“Russia is trying to disrupt the peace summit and that is true ... (Russia) is now travelling around

many countries in the world threatening them with the blockade of the agricultural goods, of the food products, of chemical products ... it is simply pushing the other countries of the world so that they’re not present on the summit,” Zelensky said after delivering an address at the defence conference, which is taking place in Singapore, according to CNN.

Upon being questioned thereafter over China’s absence at the peace summit on Ukraine, which is slated to take place in Switzerland, Zelensky accused Russia of manipulating the gathering by sending Chinese diplomats.

“Regrettably, it is unfortunate that such a big independent powerful country as China is an instrument in the hands of Putin,” Zelensky said, as per an interpreter, reported CNN.

In a speech earlier today, Chinese Minister of National Defence Dong Jun stated that China has been ‘promoting peace talks with a responsible attitude’.

In his speech, Dong also seemed to address US accusations that China is using dual-use exports to support Russia’s defence industry, as per CNN. He stated that China has placed ‘stricter control’ on dual-use exports and has not given weapons to either side in the conflict.

During a Friday side discussion, US Defence Chief Lloyd Austin brought up those exchanges with Dong and threatened to hold China accountable for any Chinese military assistance to Russia.

The Shangri-La Dialogue serves as Asia’s premier annual defence summit, convening government leaders, senior officials, experts, and business icons to foster cooperation and address regional security challenges.

ANI



Icelandic entrepreneur and investor Halla Tomasdottir

Halla Tomasdottir wins presidential polls in Iceland

London, UK - Icelandic entrepreneur and investor Halla Tomasdottir won the presidential elections in Iceland, leaving former Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir behind, local media reported on Sunday.

Tomasdottir secured 32.8 per cent of votes against Jakobsdottir, who had the support of 25.7 per cent votes, while an environmental expert Halla Hrund Logadottir stood in third place with 14.6 per cent, the state-owned broadcaster RUV said in the early hours of Sunday.

Jakobsdottir, also the party leader for the Left-Green Movement who served as the head of the left-right coalition government from 2017, congratulated Tomasdottir. “Yes, I congratulate her on that and know she will be a good president,” she told RUV when the initial results came out.

Jakobsdottir in April announced that she would be stepping

ping down as the prime minister to run for president.

The hugely popular incumbent Gudni Johannesson, who has held the position since 2016 and was re-elected in 2020 with a massive 92 per cent of the vote, did not stand again after two terms in office.

Presidential contenders during debates discussed the country’s NATO membership, the Israeli war on Gaza, arms deliveries to Ukraine, use of presidential veto powers, and the sale of Iceland’s national power company, according to RUV.

In Iceland, the president holds a ceremonial position in the parliamentary republic, acting as a guarantor of the constitution and national unity, however, the president can also play a role during a government formation process and can refuse to dissolve the parliament.

Anadolu Agency

North Korea sends 600 more trash balloons into South Korea

Seoul, South Korea - Ramping up its ‘trash balloon operations’, North Korea sent 600 more trash-filled balloons to South Korea on Saturday evening, leaving bits of paper, cloth, and cigarette butts scattered over the nation, CNN reported, citing Seoul officials.

South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff had said ‘no substances harmful to safety have been found’ among the balloons that reached the country on Saturday evening - unlike just a few days ago when used toilet paper was found in some of the about 150 balloons that crossed the border.

In the most recent images made public by the JCS, a sizable sack seemingly filled with paper is seen on the side of the road.

According to images released by authorities, the packages are conveyed by large, gas-filled balloons, reported CNN.

In order to securely recover the balloons and the debris, South Korea claimed that the



military is collaborating with the police, the local government, the safety ministry, and the United Nations Command.

The provinces of Gyeonggi and Chungcheong, as well as the nation’s capital, Seoul, were where the balloons were discovered. Some were also seen in Gyeongsang province, more than 300km (more than 185 miles) south of the city, CNN reported.

After the Korean War ended in 1953 with an armistice, the two adjacent nations were cut off from one another.

In a sense, they are still at war. The balloons were referred to as ‘sincere presents’ by Kim Yo Jong, a top official in her brother Kim Jong Un’s isolated dictatorship, and she promised to send more.

ANI

SANDCASTLES IN SAN FRANCISCO



People view a sandcastle work created by competitors during a sandcastle competition in San Francisco, the United States, on Saturday (Xinhua)

UAE, Qatar call for intensifying efforts to reach a ceasefire deal in Gaza Strip

The call was made during a meeting in Abu Dhabi between the UAE President and the Qatari Emir

Istanbul, Turkey - The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar called on Sunday for intensifying efforts to reach a ceasefire deal in the Gaza Strip.

The call was made during a meeting in Abu Dhabi between UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

The two leaders underlined the importance of stepping up efforts 'to achieve an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and provide full protection for civilians', the Emirati state news agency WAM reported.

They also affirmed support for 'all concerted initiatives and efforts aimed at de-escalating the situation in Gaza'.

On Friday, US President Joe Biden said Israel presented a 3-phase deal that would end hostilities in the Gaza Strip and secure the release of hostages held in the coastal enclave.

Biden called on the Palestinian resistance group Hamas to accept the proposal and urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to resist pressure from members of his governing



Hamas has said it will respond positively to any proposal that includes a permanent ceasefire, a full withdrawal from Gaza Strip, reconstruction efforts, the return of the displaced, and the completion of a comprehensive hostage exchange deal

coalition to reject the plan.

Netanyahu's office reiterated on Friday his intention to continue his deadly offensive in Gaza until all of Tel Aviv's war goals are achieved.

Hamas, for its part, said it will 'respond positively to any proposal that includes a permanent ceasefire, a full withdrawal from

the Gaza Strip, reconstruction efforts, the return of the displaced, and the completion of a comprehensive hostage exchange deal'.

Meanwhile, Malaysia said on Sunday that it 'welcomes and supports' any proposal aimed at achieving an 'immediate and permanent' ceasefire in the Israel-Gaza conflict, including US

President Joe Biden's three-stage plan.

Speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue conference in Singapore, Defence Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin said Malaysia 'firmly believes Palestinians must be granted the full right to self-determination and dignity, national independence and

sovereignty, and the right to freedom of movement', the daily *Malay Mail* reported.

"The conflict has challenged our very conscience as human beings and tested our courage to confront and condemn acts of genocide," the minister was quoted as saying by the Malaysian daily.

"In line with the obligations under the Genocide Convention, Israel must immediately halt its military offensive and any other action in Rafah," he stressed.

He suggested that Singapore, which has hosted Asia's premier defence summit since 2002, invite a Palestinian representative to participate in inclusive and

constructive dialogue. Besides, Israeli President Isaac Herzog announced his support for PM Netanyahu on Sunday, contingent on Netanyahu's agreement to Biden's proposal for a deal between Israel and Hamas aiming to bring an end to the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip.

Anadolu Agency

Israeli PM proposes defence portfolio to opposition party chief Lieberman

Jerusalem - The head of the opposition Yisrael Beytenu Party, Avigdor Lieberman, received an offer from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to assume the defence minister position, Israeli media reported on Sunday.

The right-wing politician confirmed that he received the offer over the weekend, according to the daily Yedioth Ahronoth.

"Netanyahu is under very heavy pressure," said Lieberman, as quoted by the daily.

"There have been offers to join in the last week as well, these are offers with Netanyahu's knowledge," he added.



"I prefer to wait for the elections," said Lieberman, who served as the defence minister in 2016-2018, noting that 'the Iranians are advancing toward a

nuclear bomb and planning a multi-front attack on Israel, while our government is focused on political survival'.

There was no immediate

Netanyahu is under very heavy pressure. There have been offers to join in the last week as well. These are offers with Netanyahu's knowledge

AVIGDOR LIEBERMAN

comment from Netanyahu's office regarding Lieberman's statements.

Last Monday, during a meeting of his party's parliamentary

bloc, Lieberman called on opposition leaders to 'unite efforts and form a joint Cabinet to work on changing the government'.

Lieberman, at the time, presented two options: forming an alternative government in the Knesset (parliament) or agreeing on a date for early elections.

He also urged the members of the Likud Party, which holds 32 seats and is led by Netanyahu, to defect and join him.

Lieberman had frequently criticised Netanyahu, saying 'the Israeli government has run its course', and 'removing Netanyahu would be a benefit for Israelis'.

Anadolu Agency



Former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

Ex-Iranian president Ahmadinejad joins presidential race

Tehran, Iran - On the penultimate day of registration for Iran's snap presidential election, former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was among the high-profile names to file their nomination.

Ahmadinejad, who served as the country's president for two consecutive four-year terms between 2005 and 2013, appeared at the election headquarters in Tehran on Sunday morning, flanked by close aides.

The conservative-hardline politician, who fell out of favour with the country's top leadership after leaving office, has had no significant political activity since 2013.

He was disqualified by the Guardian Council, the top vetting body, in both the 2017 and 2021 presidential elections. In 2017, Hassan Rouhani was re-elected president, and Ebrahim Raisi was elected in 2021.

The snap presidential election is slated to be held on

June 28 following the death of Raisi in a helicopter crash in northwestern Iran on May 19.

Monday is the last day of registration, after which the Guardian Council will vet the candidates and release the list of qualified candidates on June 11.

The qualified candidates will have two weeks for campaigning before the polling on June 28.

After filing his nomination, Ahmadinejad said the country's problems can be solved by making the maximum use of available capacities.

He said he joined the race again 'at the request of the people' and is motivated to 'solve people's livelihood problems, promote and improve the business environment, end corruption, limit the government's excessive interference, open up the area for entrepreneurs, and create a platform for investments'.

Anadolu Agency

Qatar condemns Israeli plans to dismantle UNRWA

Istanbul, Turkey - Qatar condemned on Sunday Israel's attempt to dismantle the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) and classify it as a 'terrorist organisation'.

This attempt is 'an extension of the systematic campaign aimed at dismantling the agency at a time when the need for its humanitarian services is dire due to the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip', the Qatari Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

It renewed calls for the international community 'to stand firmly in the face of Israeli plans aimed at liquidating the agency and depriving millions of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon of its necessary services'.



Qatar reiterated its full support for the UN refugee agency, 'based on its firm and steadfast position on the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people, foremost of which is their

right to establish their independent state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital'.

On Wednesday, the Knesset (Israel's parliament) advanced a bill to revoke the immunity and

privileges afforded to UNRWA, in a move seen by Palestinians and the UN as part of an Israeli campaign to dismantle UNRWA and resolve the refugee issue.

Israel accuses UNRWA em-

ployees of contributing to the Hamas attacks on October 7, claiming that the agency's education system 'supports terrorism and hatred'.

Meanwhile in Gaza Strip, at least 36,439 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's ongoing offensive since last October, the Health Ministry in the besieged enclave said on Sunday. A ministry statement added that 82,627 other people have also been injured in the onslaught.

"Israeli attacks killed 60 people and injured 220 others in the last 24 hours," the statement said. Besides, more than 120 bodies of Palestinians were recovered from the rubble two days after Israeli forces left the Jabalia camp.

Anadolu Agency

INDIA

North India to reel under heatwave today

PM Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a meeting to review the situation of the ongoing heatwave

New Delhi, India - Heatwave conditions are likely to reel over most parts of the country on Monday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Sunday.

"Heatwave conditions are very likely in isolated pockets of Punjab, Haryana-Chandigarh-Delhi, Jammu division, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh and Odisha on June 3," said the weather bulletin.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a meeting to review the situation of the ongoing heatwave in the country and the preparedness for the onset of monsoon.

The Prime Minister was briefed that as per IMD forecasts, the heat wave is likely to continue in parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh.

This year, the monsoon is likely to be normal and above normal in most parts of the country and below normal in parts of Peninsular India, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) stated. "Fire audit and electrical safety audit of hospitals and other public places must be undertaken regularly," PM Modi instructed. He also said that regular drills for the maintenance of firelines in forests and productive utilisation of biomass must



Women cover themselves with scarves to protect from the heat on a hot summer day, in Kanpur on Sunday (ANI)

be planned. The Prime Minister was informed about the usefulness of the 'van agni' portal in the timely identification of forest fires and their management. With scorching heatwaves gripping several parts of the country, at least 56 deaths from heatstroke have been confirmed in multiple states by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), sources said on Saturday. The Southwest Monsoon hit the coast of Kerala and ad-

vanced into parts of northeast India from Thursday, said the Indian Meteorological Department. This year's Monsoon onset is two days earlier as the usual date of the onset is on June 1. This year, Kerala experienced widespread pre-monsoon rains. In 2023, rainfall over the country as a whole during the monsoon season (June-September), was 94 per cent of its long-period average. as several other residents run along it with buckets and pipes. Meanwhile, speaking on the water crisis in Delhi, Water Minister Atishi said: "Because of the heatwave, water demand has increased and on the other hand, the water level in Yamuna has decreased. Last year, there was 674.5ft of water in the Wazirabad pond... Despite so many requests, only 671ft of water has been released... All water treatment plants are

This year, the monsoon is likely to be normal and above normal in most parts of the country and below normal in parts of Peninsular India, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) stated

Water shortage in Delhi

Meanwhile, the water crisis in the national capital amid soaring temperatures has left residents scrambling with empty buckets after water tankers. Delhi's Okhla, Chanakya-puri's Sanjay Camp area and the Geeta colony area are among those facing acute water shortages. Residents queued in many areas of the national capital waiting to fill their buckets in the blazing heat. People could be seen climbing atop a moving water tanker being affected due to low levels of water in the Wazirabad barrage... We have requested Haryana and UP government to release more water." On May 31, the Delhi government approached the Supreme Court to get immediate additional water from neighbouring Haryana. Delhi government in its plea said that it is constrained to file the petition on account of the acute shortage of water being faced by the people of Delhi, triggered by the ongoing severe heat conditions. ANI

PM Narendra Modi reviews impact of Cyclone Remal

New Delhi, India - Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday reviewed the impact of Cyclone Remal which claimed three dozen lives and affected more than two lakh people across the northeastern states due to flash floods, heavy rains, and landslides.

In a press release by the Prime Minister's Office, Narendra Modi was briefed about the impact of the cyclone on the affected states during the meeting. "The loss of human lives and damage to houses and properties due to landslides and floods in Mizoram, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura was also discussed. NDRF teams have been deployed as per the needs. The teams have carried out evacuation, airlifting and road clearance operations," the press release added. During the meeting, it was



A group of cows walk in a road that got damaged due to heavy rainfall triggered by Cyclone Remal, in Nagaon, Assam on Sunday (ANI)

mentioned that the Ministry of Home Affairs is in regular touch with the State Governments. Assuring support to the affected states by the Centre, the PM said that the Government of India will continue to extend full support to the State affected by the cyclone. "The PM also instructed the Ministry of Home Affairs to monitor the situation and review the matter regularly to extend necessary assistance for restoration," the press release said. The Principal Secretary to the PM, Cabinet Secretary, Home Secretary, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, DG NDRF and Member Secretary, NDMA alongwith other senior officials from PMO and concerned Ministries were also present in the meeting. ANI

ECI seeks response over allegations against Amit Shah

New Delhi, India - The Election Commission of India has sought factual information and details from Congress leader Jairam Ramesh for his public statement through a post on his social media handle alleging that calls have been made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to 150 District Magistrates just days before the scheduled counting of votes (June 4).

The poll body has sought a response from Jairam Ramesh by Sunday evening for further necessary action.

In a letter to Congress General Secretary (Communications) Jairam Ramesh, the Election Commission mentioned that 'the process of counting votes is a sacred duty cast upon every RO, and such public statements by a senior, responsible, and ex-



Congress leader Jairam Ramesh

perienced leader tend to put an element of doubt and thus, deserve to be addressed in the larger public interest'. "Although, no DM has reported any undue influence, EC had sought details and information from Jairam Ramesh of 150 DMs whom Amit Shah has influenced, as alleged by Mr Ramesh and

which he believes to be true, and had thus made these allegations," the letter added. Earlier on Saturday, Jairam Ramesh had alleged that 'outgoing Home Minister has been calling up DMs/Collectors'. He called it 'BJP desperation' and said officials should not get under the pressure by such intimidation. "So far, he has spoken to 150 of them. This is blatant and brazen intimidation, showing how desperate the BJP is. Let it be very clear: the will of the people shall prevail, and on June 4th, Mr Modi, Mr Shah, and the BJP will exit, and the INDIA Janbandhan will be victorious. Officers should not get under any pressure and must uphold the Constitution. They are under watch," he said. ANI

LS polls: NDA leaders exude confidence in winning third term

New Delhi, India - Leaders from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party expressed confidence in the Narendra Modi government coming back to power for the third time as the exit polls results predicted a landslide victory for the National Democratic Alliance.

Former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Raman Singh said that the country will now move on the path of Sanatan which will set the stage for India to emerge as the third largest power in the world.

"The kind of results that are being seen across the country, shows that this country will move on the path of Sanatan,

which is ancient as well as the most modern. The poor, workers, farmers, and women of the country have put their stamp on the 10 years of development. The third term will be for the glorious development of the country, it will be a start towards making India the third largest power in the world..." Singh said speaking to ANI on Saturday.

Slamming the opposition INDIA bloc, Union Minister Giriraj Singh said that people have recognised the real face of the opposition and have accepted Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"People have understood the reliability of PM Modi and have recognised the real face



Polling officials and security personnel unload trunks containing EVMs in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh on Sunday (ANI)

of the opposition. The people have understood that the opposition has come to save themselves...The people have accepted PM Modi," Singh said.

Meanwhile, as the exit polls predicted the victory of the Mahayuti alliance in Maharashtra, BJP leader Kirit Somaiya said that the ruling alliance will gradually emerge victorious in the state Assembly elections and after that in the Mumbai Municipal Corporation.

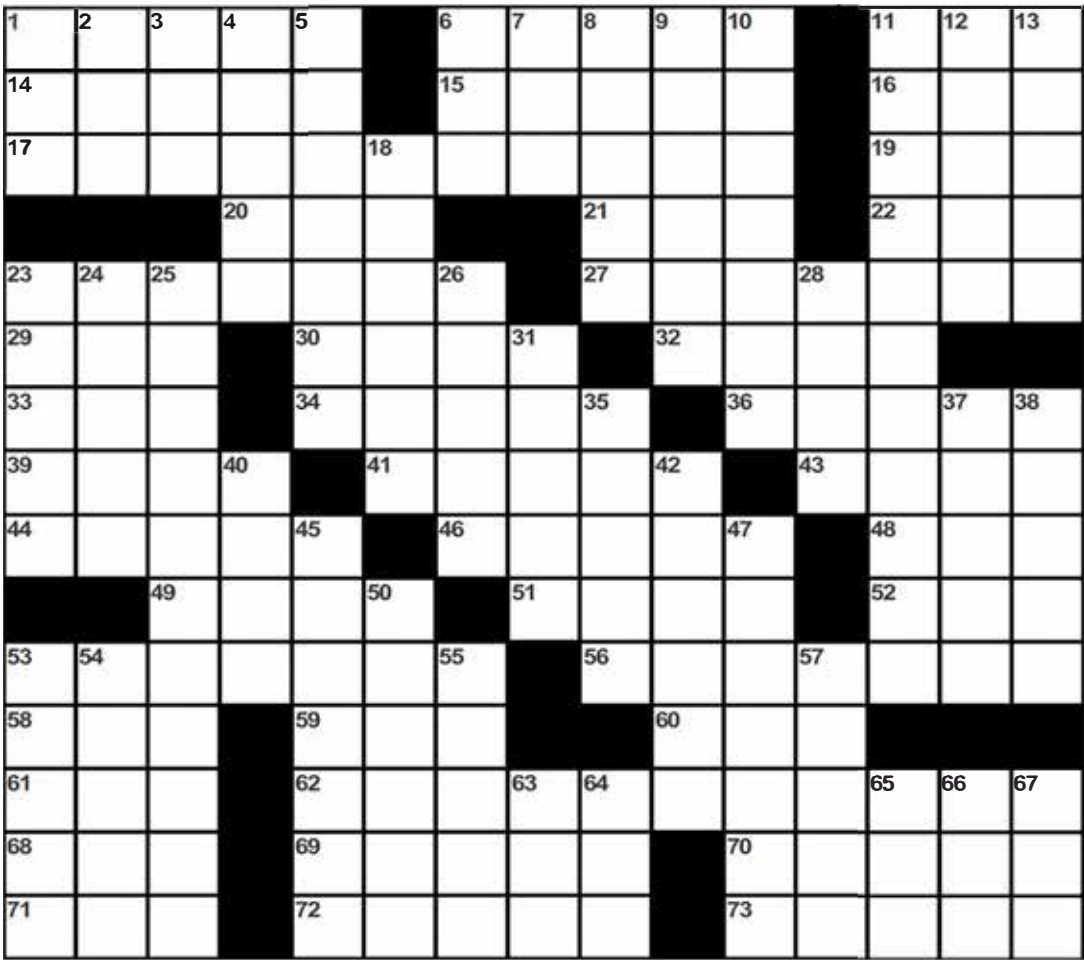
"...Now nobody can stop India...Uddhav (Thackeray) what will happen to you now? Now, who will go out of India, PM Modi or Thackeray? People of Maharashtra have once again expressed their trust in

PM Modi...now Lok Sabha elections, after 4 months, Assembly elections and after 8 months, Mumbai Municipal Corporation elections, PM Modi will have hat-trick victory in Maharashtra," Somaiya said.

Sive Sena leader Manisha Kayande said that the nation will see Prime Minister Narendra Modi's magic in the poll battle for the third time.

"The exit polls are full of hope... The results on June 4 would be even better... We will see Modi's magic for the third time..." he said. The Eknath Shinde faction of the Shiv Sena is in alliance with the BJP in Maharashtra and is part of the ruling Mahayuti alliance. ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Dare alternative
- 6) Enlightened one, in Buddhism
- 11) ABC overseer
- 14) "Faster!"
- 15) First class alternative
- 16) "Iron Horse" Gehrig
- 17) Unlimited power
- 19) Museum attraction
- 20) Sound of enlightenment
- 21) "... the ramparts ..."
- 22) Machine gun sound effect
- 23) Strikes make them happy
- 27) In a clumsy way
- 29) "To _ is human
- 30) Bites lightly
- 32) Fable
- 33) "East" on a grandfather clock
- 34) Chips and a pop, e.g.
- 36) Camp shelters
- 39) One who favors dressing in
- 41) Galahad's quest
- 43) Yachting across the Pacific
- 44) Go inside
- 46) Polar drudges

DOWN

- 1) Notwithstanding that, informally
- 2) Bacardi, for one
- 3) Pedestaled vessel
- 4) Courtroom event
- 5) Jack-in-the-box needs?
- 6) Go before the camera
- 7) Fish eggs
- 8) Asian capital
- 9) Brogue or twang, e.g.
- 10) Contract adverb
- 11) Steamrolls

- 12) _ Gables, Fla.
- 13) _ Sark (scotch)
- 18) Working in a crew
- 23) Brown shade
- 24) Belted constellation
- 25) Like things you don't want to forget
- 26) Extra
- 28) "Don't hurt me!" for one
- 31) Dandruff origin
- 35) Pueblo Indian dwellings
- 37) Short and snappy
- 38) Swashbuckler's sword
- 40) Parts of skirts
- 42) Lentil, for one
- 45) Burst
- 47) Ancient Hebrews, e.g. later
- 53) Starter for "sayer"
- 54) Arm stiffeners
- 55) Electric car brand
- 57) Annapolis freshman
- 63) "Now, where _!"
- 64) Mr. Potato Head part
- 65) Persona-grata link
- 66) Naval rank (Abbr.)
- 67) One way to be blond

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You're the playful sort. Always have been, always will be. And for the most part, your family, friends, and sweetheart appreciate that fact even when you push the envelope past the point of no return. They let you slide because you're you and they love you.

At the moment, however, it will be tougher to talk your way in or out of a particular situation. Think about that before you open your mouth.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

As usual, your intuition will be absolutely impossible to deny. If a coworker asks for help, advice, or even just a sympathetic ear, don't hesitate to offer it. You should probably expect it, in fact. If they don't sound like they're going to follow your counsel, don't be hurt, especially if they're a younger person. Do you remember how it was to be so young that you thought you knew it all? Be understanding, and let them live their own life.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You could take any and all disagreements quite personally today. In fact, others may even describe you as being a bit cranky. The problem is that you may have to put out some cash for something you weren't prepared to buy. Don't hold back your feelings. Be cranky if that's how you feel. Do get to know your audience before you let it all out, though, just so you can be sure they'll forgive you



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Why can't life be less complicated? The answer is simple: if you were just handed what you wanted all the time, you'd never learn to appreciate those things. Remember that as you deal with a complex situation that could crop up today. It's a good idea to keep your normally colorful self a little more subdued at work to find an answer to this puzzle. Discretion is definitely the better part of valor!



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Whoever you see on a daily basis will suddenly seem much closer to you than just a casual acquaintance now. In fact, you could be amazed by the amount of flirting you can fit into a casual conversation and how quickly it can happen.

So when someone who's really not much more than an acquaintance starts getting close to you, enjoy it, but if you're attached, don't let it go too far..



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You're a veritable fount of willpower now and only too happy to get everything done that needs doing.

You won't have to tackle it all by yourself, though. You'll have plenty of help if you let your loved ones know what's in your mind and in your heart. You have more than enough enthusiasm to win anyone over to your side, and you have a couple of favors to call in too.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Your deepest feelings and the words you utter will be extraordinarily tender and well thought out today.

In fact, no matter who you're talking to or what the subject might happen to be, the depth of your feelings will be quite evident in both the words you choose and the way you phrase your opinions. If you're asked to talk about your feelings, don't hesitate to do it.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

It's time to take care of the ones you love, whether it's your family, the friends you've had for years and years, or your current romantic interest. You're tuned in. In fact, they probably won't even need to mention what they need. Your antennae are running on high alert, so you'll know what they need before they know they need it. Let them make the decision, though, for the sake of their pride.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Keeping everyone you know and love happy will go quite well today. In fact, if you've been involved with one particular person or group for some time now, regardless of the personalities involved, you'll be amazed by how easily everyone will get along, and it will all be thanks to you. Give yourself some credit, by the way. If you hadn't brought them together, there wouldn't be a party.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Your feelings for your loved ones (especially your special someone, if you're attached), and also your oldest and dearest friends, will be quite obvious to one and all now. They'll be written all over your face. Why bother trying not to express them? Be proud of what you're feeling and share it all easily with the ones you love. Sure, it may be sentimental or nostalgic, but who cares?



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Anyone you think of in intimate terms will become even closer to you now, especially your siblings. This closeness will happen without your thinking about it, not consciously, at least. If you sense that a loved one needs your help or advice, you'll simply do what comes naturally: help them without hesitation. Just don't go overboard and sell yourself short on anything you need in the process.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Staying home alone might seem appealing at first, but if you really think about it, you might decide that a good, long, heart-to-heart chat with a friend would be a much better use of your time. Before you slam the door closed and turn your phone off, make a call to someone you know, love, and trust. You need to get whatever you've been worrying about off your chest, and they're ready to listen.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. A group of young early 20th century composers working in Montparnasse who became known as Les Six, included Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Francis Poulenc, Germaine Tailleferre and which other?

A. Béla Bartók
B. Maurice Ravel
C. John Cage
D. Darius Milhaud

02. What was the name of the Liverpool club where the Beatles played in the early 1960s?

A. Abyss
B. Trench
C. Hole
D. Cavern

03. What London establishment was created in 1753 by Sir Harris Sloane?

A. London Zoo, Regents Park
B. The British Museum
C. The National Portrait Gallery
D. The Royal Society

Answers: 1. D 2. D 3. B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

F	T	A	E
F	Y	E	S
E	A	N	S
I	S	B	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

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

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

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

Bridgetown, Barbados - It seemed that even the rain gods wanted the Oman players to complete their training session at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, on Saturday afternoon. Minutes after Duleep Mendis, Oman's head coach, concluded the team's final training session, rain poured in for an hour before it halted.

Oman would hope the rains stay away on Sunday night (Monday morning, 4.30am, Oman time) at the same venue when they launch their campaign in the 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup against Namibia in a Group B match.

Oman were the first team among the participating nations to arrive in the West Indies for the World Cup, which for the first time will feature an expanded version with 20 teams.

Oman's newly appointed skipper Aqib Ilyas exuded confidence in the team's preparations and said: "We have had excellent preparations, and the boys are raring to go. It is a big stage, but we are prepared to give our best."

Ilyas, the team's star all-rounder, said: "The team benefited from the early arrival as the players got a good idea of the wicket and weather conditions. What is also in our favour in Bridgetown is that the wickets are on the slower side and resemble what we play in Muscat."

"We also got acclimatised to the humidity level, which is quite high here. Our team's composition goes well with the way the wickets have been behaving in Barbados. We have top-quality spinners and skillful batters. The three weeks of our preparations here will stand in good stead for us."

Ilyas, who took over from seasoned campaigner and long-serving captain Zeeshan Maqsood, said: "The team has worked hard to reach this stage and we can create upsets. The

'OMAN FAVOURITES AGAINST NAMIBIA'

Skipper Ilyas confident about team's chances in their opening match



(From right) Oman captain Aqib Ilyas with Australia's Mitchell Marsh, England's Jos Buttler, Namibia's Gerhard Erasmus and Scotland's Richie Berrington

time has come to showcase our potential." Ilyas denied that his team is under any pressure and said: "The recent wins against Namibia during the T20I series in Oman will only be of statistical relevance but the players will take that confidence going into tomorrow's game. It is a fresh game, but I believe we are the favourites."

Oman's T20I head-to-head record against Namibia in the six

games played is two wins and four defeats.

Asked who would be the key players in the squad, Ilyas was clear. He said: "The success will depend on how the whole team performs" but admitted that seniors like Bilal Khan, the pace spearhead, and all-rounder Zeeshan Maqsood, along with himself, will have a larger role to shoulder in West Indies.

On more Associate nations

Our team's composition goes well with the way the wickets have been behaving in Barbados. We have top-quality spinners and skillful batters.

AQIB ILYAS

coming in to play in this edition of the World Cup, Ilyas said: "The Associate nations are working hard and there could be few upsets witnessed at this edition. The Associate nations would like to prove a point and let the world know what they can do. I thank the International Cricket Council for this format."

Ilyas, who suffered a serious injury during the 2021 World Cup, which Oman co-hosted

with the UAE, said: "The injury made me realise to be always thankful to Almighty. I am more thankful now and will try to do my best. With Oman Cricket entrusting me the responsibility of captaincy, I know that I am capable of handling it."

With Oman being the only nation from the region, there are high hopes that coach Mendis will script another famous win as he led Oman to one win in each

of the previous two T20 World Cups, the country featured in 2016 and 2021.

The former Sri Lankan captain said: "I am happy with the preparations of the team. The boys are raring to go, and we hope to have a winning start tomorrow. The plan to come early and acclimatise in Barbados has really been helpful. The weather is quite different to Oman, but the wickets are similar, which will be to the liking of my boys."

"The three practice games in Barbados and two official warm-up games in Trinidad have yielded positive results. This is the first time that our boys are playing in the West Indies, so training in Barbados helped them a lot," he added.

Namibia qualified for the T20 World Cup on the back of a stellar run at the Africa Regional Qualifier stage. They were undefeated in the tournament, securing wins over six teams including co-qualifiers Uganda and Test-playing Zimbabwe. Success over Test nations isn't a new phenomenon for the Eagles, who stunned Sri Lanka in the last edition of the T20 World Cup, and they'd like to repeat the feat in the upcoming event.

Namibia are also the highest ranked Associate nation (14th) at the World Cup.

Oman squad: Aqib Ilyas (c), Zeeshan Maqsood, Kashyap Prajapati, Pratik Athavale, Ayaan Khan, Shoaib Khan, Mohammad Nadeem, Naseem Khushi, Mehran Khan, Bilal Khan, Rafiullah, Kaleemullah, Fayyaz Butt, Shakeel Ahmad, Khalid Kail.

Namibia squad: Gerhard Erasmus (c), Zane Green, Michael Van Lingen, Dylan Leicher, Ruben Truempelmann, Jack Brassell, Ben Shikongo, Tangeni Lungameni, Niko Davin, JJ Smit, Jan Frylinck, JP Kotze, David Wiese, Bernard Scholtz, Malan Kruger, PD Blignaut.

Namibia skipper hopes to start with victory

Bridgetown, Barbados - Namibia skipper Gerhard Erasmus is looking forward to the opening match against Oman on Sunday (Monday, 4.30am, Oman time) and hopes they could begin the tournament with a victory.

Speaking at the pre-match press conference at the Kensington Oval stadium on Saturday, Erasmus said: "We recently concluded a series against Oman in Muscat. We did lose two games in the five-match series, but this is a new tournament, and it is a World Cup. We have had a fair amount of success in recent times, and we hope to continue with it. We hope to begin this World Cup with a win."

Erasmus added: "We have

good information about Oman as teams now have enough access to enough footage to analyse players from other teams."

On the new format, which allows more Associate nations to compete in the 20-team World Cup, he said: "The sheer hunger of Associate nations can help them achieve great things. We are closing the gap with the Test-playing nations as we gain more exposure. Our players are eager to showcase their potential at the big stage."

The Namibia skipper added: "What we lack in consistent exposure to the bigger teams we make up by experience in cut-throat matches at Associate teams' level."



Gerhard Erasmus

He added: "Qualifying for major tournaments can be the difference between an Associate player having a job or not, can decide how big their country's slice of the ICC's revenue pie will

be, or the difference between simply being able to afford to put on games. Tournament cricket normally suits the Associate nations. They only have something to gain."

"That type of pressure and consequence on the games, it would be interesting to see how other teams, especially teams that go really hard-up top, (handle that). Unfortunately, it doesn't come around enough for the Associate teams and they're not exposed to it year round. Making that jump up in a tournament and making it very quickly is really challenging, but really cool at the same time."

Namibia made the main stage of the 2021 World Cup that Australia won and took a major scalp by beating Sri Lanka in Hobart in the first match of the 2022 edition, yet they have not faced the Aussies in any format since the 2003 ODI World Cup.



Aaron Jones of the United States celebrates after steering his team to victory against Canada in the opening match of the Twenty20 World Cup in Dallas on Saturday.

CARIBBEAN CHATTER

Certainly feels like a World Cup: Australia skipper Marsh

The 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup features an unprecedented 20-team lineup, marking the tournament's largest scale to date. While opinions vary on whether Associate nations should partake in such a significant event or undergo a stricter qualification process, there's no denying the excitement it brings.

On Saturday during a media interaction, Australia's skipper Mitchell Marsh ex-

pressed his enthusiasm and said, "I think it certainly feels like a World Cup. I got presented a Ugandan playing shirt the other day in our team hotel and that was a really special moment. And it's things like that, it's not just about the cricket throughout these World Cups, it's about opportunity and teams have earned the right to

be here. I think that adds a lot of excitement to the whole tournament, so it's really special, I think." Australia kick off their tournament against Oman on June 5, Wednesday (June 6, Thursday, 4.30am Oman time).

Archer in good space: Buttler

England captain Jos Buttler said pacer Jofra Archer, who made a return to international cricket, during the T20I series against Pakistan last month, after a year out with injury, is in really good space and the team management doesn't want to put him under undue pressure. At a media briefing on Saturday, Buttler said: "Playing cricket again and being back in an Eng-

land shirt, I know how hard he has worked to get back and it's been a long time for him. As I've said before, we're not trying to put too much expectation on him. We know what a superstar he can be, but it's been a long time since he's played international cricket so it's very easy to get very excited about it and expect big things from him. But I think I'll just give him a bit of time. He's happy and smiling and loving being back in the changing room as much as he is on the field. So, he's in a really good space."

Solar panels at Kensington Oval

Ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, Kensington Oval,

renowned as one of the world's most iconic cricket stadiums, has undergone a sustainable transformation with the installation of solar panels across its stands, including the Peter Short Media Centre, the 3Ws Stand, the Hall and Griffith Stand, the Greenidge and Haynes Stand, and the Hewitt and Inniss Stand. This eco-conscious initiative aims to harness renewable energy, with an estimated generation capacity of 700 to 800 kilowatts once fully operational. By reducing electricity expenses, this endeavour aligns with global efforts towards sustainability.

Kensington Oval will host the match between Namibia and Oman on Sunday (Monday, 4.30 am Oman time).

US down Canada in World Cup opener

Dallas, US - The United States destroyed Canada's bowling after a slow start to overpower their neighbours by seven wickets in the opening match of the Twenty20 World Cup in Dallas on Saturday.

Aaron Jones muscled 10 sixes in an unbeaten 94 from 40 balls to propel his team to 197 for three from 17.4 overs in reply to Canada's 194 for five.

Opener Navneet Dhaliwal top-scored with 61 for the Canadians before he was caught off former New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson bowling his first delivery for his new team.

The ninth edition of the sport's shortest format opened with a match-up between two countries who in

1844 played the first international in the summer game of the British Empire. Canada won a low-scoring three-day game in New York that year by 23 runs.

Cricket had been a popular sport in the United States, particularly in Philadelphia, but was supplanted by baseball in the latter stages of the 19th century.

Now with T20 cricket, a format of similar length to baseball games, on the agenda for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, the International Cricket Council hopes to attract a new and potentially lucrative audience by splitting the World Cup between the Caribbean and the United States.



Mitchell Marsh

MAGICAL REALISM!

Madrid put up late show against Dortmund to win Champions League title



Real Madrid players celebrate with the UEFA Champions League trophy

London, England - Real Madrid won their 15th European Cup at a raucous Wembley on Saturday when they delivered another late surge to claim a 2-0 victory over a Borussia Dortmund team who had threatened an upset win after dominating the first hour.

With Dortmund having made, but spurned, several good chances, Real took control when Dani Carvajal headed in from a corner after 74 minutes and Vinicius Jr. fired home the second to beat German hearts.

Victory secured the trophy for the sixth time in 11 seasons and it was Real's 11th straight triumph in a European final - their last defeat coming against Aberdeen in the Cup Winners' Cup 41 years ago. They have now won the continent's most prestigious club competition more than twice as often as the next best team.

It was a record-extending fifth

success as a coach for Carlo Ancelotti, who also won the trophy twice as a player with AC Milan.

"I never get used to it, because it was difficult, very difficult, more than expected," the Italian said. "In the second half we were better - this is a dream that continues."

Dortmund defender Mats Hummels said Madrid have been doing that for 100 years, and he was not far off given they were 2-0 down in the first European Cup final in 1956 before coming back to beat Stade de Reims 4-3 for the first of their five in a row that started their love affair with the competition.

Words bouncing around in post-match interviews on Saturday included "clinical", "ice-cold", and "belief", while Carvajal summed up the match perfectly after the latest turnaround as his side completed a LaLiga-Champi-

ons League double.

"After the first half we didn't even deserve to go to the changing rooms level," he said. "But we came out of the first half alive,

After the first half we didn't even deserve to go to the changing rooms level. But we came out of the first half alive, knowing that we would have our moment...

DANI CARVAJAL

knowing that we would have our moment... and here it is".

Dortmund, who had shocked Paris St Germain in the semi-finals, had a dream first half in

every aspect other than scoring.

Playing with confidence and aggression, their first good chance came after 21 minutes when Karim Adeyemi went too wide when rounding goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois. Then came a flurry of opportunities as Niclas Füllkrug hit the post and low shots by Julian Brandt and Marcel Sabitzer were saved by Courtois.

Dortmund had been attacking towards their own fans who, revelling in their team's first Champions League final since 2013 and only their third ever, did their best to reproduce the yellow wall atmosphere of their Westfalenstadion with noise and unified bouncing that shook the stadium to its foundations. Madrid were unfazed by what was happening, however, and looked livelier from the start of the second half without really threatening.

Courtois saved a diving header

from Füllkrug and Dortmund were soon ruing the misses as 5ft 8 ins (172cm) full back Carvajal rose to meet a Kroos corner and steer in a glancing header.

The assist was a fitting way for Germany midfielder Kroos to mark his final game for the club while he Carvajal, Nacho and Luka Modric all equalled Francisco Gento's record of six titles from their first era of Real dominance.

Madrid added their second goal when Dortmund's Ian Maatsen gave the ball away on the edge of his box. LaLiga player of the year and former Dortmund midfielder Jude Bellingham fed Vinicius Jr in space and the Brazilian fired home unerringly.

Dortmund's fans continued to sing in defeat, though they and their players will know this was a missed opportunity that will hurt for a long time.



Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti is thrown into the air by his players as they celebrate winning the Champions League final

Real's triumph tougher than expected, says Ancelotti

London, England - Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti said winning the European Cup for a record-extending 15th time on Saturday had been much harder than expected for the Spanish champions.

Real needed two late goals to beat Borussia Dortmund 2-0 at Wembley after the German side had dominated the first half.

"I never get used to it, because it was difficult, very difficult, more than expected. In the second half we were better, more balanced, fewer losses... This is a dream that continues," Ancelotti told Spanish TV station Movistar Plus+.

"In the first half we were a bit lazy, we had losses and they played what they wanted," the Italian added.

"After the first half we had, we didn't even deserve to go the changing room with a level score... but this is football and we're very, very happy," said Real defender Dani Carvajal, who scored the first goal.

Real's England midfielder Jude Bellingham described it as the best night of his life.

"I have always dreamed of playing in these games," Bellingham said.

"You go through life and there are so many people who say you cannot do things. I was alright until I saw my mum and dad's face.

"My little brother is there and I'm trying to be a role model for him. I cannot put it into words. The best night of my life."

For Dortmund, it was another Champions League final loss at Wembley.

Dortmund coach Terzic rue missed chances against Real

London, England - Borussia Dortmund paid the ultimate price for failing to take their chances against an incredible Real Madrid side, the Bundesliga club's coach Edin Terzic said after the Spanish team's 2-0 triumph in Saturday's Champions League final.

After Dortmund wasted several good opportunities in a one-sided first half, Dani Carvajal and Vinicius Junior struck late goals to secure Real's 15th European crown.

"We didn't show the efficiency to score," a visibly downcast Terzic told reporters. "This is something we have to learn from."

Dortmund, who finished fifth in the Bundesliga this season, reached their first Champions League final since 2013 when



Edin Terzic

Wembley also hosted their defeat by Bayern Munich.

They gave their all on the night, as did their incredible supporters.

"I am proud, that is the first thought, a proud moment,"

Terzic said.

"We brought nearly 100,000 people to London and everybody had the belief we could make it. It was a fantastic journey this year in the Champions League - a great campaign - but to be hon-

est it is a little empty inside. It was a great opportunity to win it and we unfortunately didn't make it."

Dortmund centre back Mats Hummels could not hide his disappointment.

"We had four chances and we should have scored one of them. We had so many chances and you just have to score," he said.

"At the end of the day we should have defended a little better with their goals. But there is no one to blame for that. We played a good game."

Terzic tried to stay positive for the Dortmund fans.

"Thank you for your belief, don't let the doubt take over," he said. "We're going to bounce back, we're going to learn from this."

Real Madrid's 15th European title marks new dynasty

London, England - Real Madrid added another chapter to their already astonishing love affair with European soccer's elite club trophy by claiming a 2-0 win against Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League final on Saturday as they were crowned for the 15th time.

The story of the season they finished at Wembley was about two generations of players who met, bonded as a group and connected on the pitch like a well-oiled machine to establish the second great dynasty Real spent half a century looking for.

It all started at the dawn of the competition when, during the Alfredo Di Stefano years, the Madrid side won the first five editions of the European Cup from 1956 and another in 1966.

The current crop of youngsters and seasoned veterans have matched that with a sixth title in 11 seasons, although Dani Carvajal, who scored the opener, is the only surviving starter from the side that won 'The 10th' a decade ago. Vinicius Jr, hero of their 14th title triumph in Paris two years ago, on Saturday became the first Brazilian to score in two Champions League finals and is the symbol of Real's young guns who keep proving they can prolong the club's success.

"Why not think about 'The Seventh'? We don't reset, we al-



Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior celebrates with Rodrygo after scoring against Borussia Dortmund

ways want more and more and more," Carvajal said.

In March, Carlo Ancelotti gave an insight on managing suffering and happiness inside a changing room to explain the complexity of handling the personalities at a club constantly under pressure and held to such high standards.

He has expertly managed to keep Real's momentum going after

Cristiano Ronaldo, Sergio Ramos, Marcelo, Karim Benzema and Casemiro had all long gone and with Modric, 38, becoming a rotational player in a young squad brimming with talent.

Next year Ancelotti will face another challenge by having to replace Kroos, who has just had a retirement send-off from the fans at the Bernabeu.

Kehl: Dortmund can be proud of their performance

London, England - Borussia Dortmund sporting director Sebastian Kehl said he is proud of his side for giving a good account of themselves in the first half of their 2-0 defeat to Real Madrid in Saturday's Champions League final.

Dortmund were unable to make the most of several good chances in the first half, before



Sebastian Kehl

Dani Carvajal headed in from a corner after 74 minutes to give Real the lead and Vinicius Jr. fired home the second to seal the win.

The German club, who finished fifth in the Bundesliga this season, were playing in their first Champions League final since 2013, which they lost to rivals Bayern Munich.

"I think we played a great game, especially in the first half, a nearly perfect one," Kehl said.

"It would have been perfect, if we would have scored. I think that's the negative point, that we didn't use our chances. In the end, we saw how strong Real Madrid can play in a final, and how they can deliver from standard situations."

POLEAXED!

Swiatek thrashes Potapova to reach French Open quarterfinals



World number one Iga Swiatek needed just 40 minutes to dismantle Anastasia Potapova

Paris, France - World number one Iga Swiatek continued her relentless march to a fourth French Open title with a 6-0, 6-0 demolition of former junior rival Anastasia Potapova in 40 minutes to reach the quarterfinals at Roland Garros on Sunday.

Potapova was in uncharted territory, playing in the second week of a Grand Slam for the first time in her career, and Swiatek took full control of the play, giving the Russian no time to breathe during a flurry of points.

Such was the top seed's domination that Potapova won only

10 points in the encounter as Swiatek extended her win-streak on clay to 16 with the quickest match of her career.

The pair had met before at junior level where Potapova had come out on top in what Swiatek described as "heartbreaking matches" but in their first meeting as professionals, the Russian was truly outclassed.

"I had just a thought that times change a little bit because I remember she was always the player to beat me. I don't think I won against her... We always played against each other (at)

European championships," Swiatek said. "Honestly, there's no point thinking about that, but I had just a thought. It lasted two seconds and then I was focusing on my work because that's the best thing I can do."

Potapova attacked Swiatek's serve on the odd occasion to claim a couple of winners, earning some warm applause from a crowd eager to see a contest.

But Swiatek's near-perfect performance from the baseline and at the net left the Russian with no answers as the top seed wrapped up the first set in 19

minutes. The crowd inside Court Philippe-Chatrier tried their best to encourage Potapova but Swiatek looked at ease, forcing the Russian into several mistakes as the top seed consolidated her early break.

The only problem Swiatek had was the swirling wind on serve, with the roof finally left open after several days of rain.

"I have someone in my team who is a sailor, so I know a little bit about the wind," Swiatek said.

I had just a thought that times change a little bit because I remember she was always the player to beat me. I don't think I won against her...

IGA SWIATEK

Swiatek will next face Marketa Vondrousova in the quarterfinals after the fifth seed dispatched Serbian qualifier Olga Danilovic 6-4 6-2.

Gauff in last eight

American world number three Coco Gauff was far too strong for Italian Elisabetta Cocciaretto at the French Open on Sunday, sealing a 6-1 6-2 win to reach the quarterfinals.

The match began at a frenetic pace, with the 45th-ranked Cocciaretto winning only two points in the first four games on unforced errors by Gauff, who won the U.S. Open last year after losing the 2022 final in Paris.

Cocciaretto regained some confidence at the end of the first set with longer rallies and a few winning shots but Gauff kept the upper hand, losing only one game to her 23-year-old opponent.

Djokovic gets 'new wave of willpower and energy'

Paris, France - Novak Djokovic credited a wave of support from the French Open crowd for helping him avoid an upset at the hands of Lorenzo Musetti in a third-round thriller that ended in the early hours of Sunday morning.

The world number one is renowned for his will power and stamina but conceded his title defence had been on shaky ground when his Italian opponent took a two sets to one lead during the 4-1/2-hour match.

"I was in real trouble on the court and he was playing some really amazing tennis. I didn't know really what to do," the 37-year-old said.

"From both hands, he was getting a lot of balls back, winners from both corners. Good serves running every ball down the court. It didn't feel great playing him that third set and the beginning of the fourth."

"The (crowd) start chanting my name and I just felt a great



Novak Djokovic

new wave of willpower and energy. I really needed that push, I really needed that energy.

"I think I was a different player from that moment onwards. And I think from that moment, I probably lost only one game in the rest of the match. I was on a high, riding that wave."

Defeat would have ended the Serbian's quest for a record-extending 25th Grand

Slam trophy and resulted in him losing the number one ranking to Musetti's compatriot Jannik Sinner later this month.

Djokovic might have had grounds for complaint after organisers had wedged another contest into the evening schedule, pushing the completion of his match to 3:06 a.m. (0106 GMT), the latest ever finish at the French Open.

The three-times French Open champion preferred to focus instead on the quality of the five-set contest.

"I don't want to get into it. I have my opinions but I think there are great things to talk about in this match today," he said.

"Both Lorenzo and my performances stand out so I don't want to be talking about the schedule. I think some things could have been handled a different way but there's also a beauty in winning a match (so late)."

De Minaur seeks young superfan's support for clash against Medvedev

Paris, France - After a week in which the French Open crowd grabbed headlines for all the wrong reasons, Australian Alex De Minaur launched a social media hunt for a young superfan on Saturday.

Following his 4-6 6-4 6-3 6-3 win over Jan-Lennard Struff, 11th seed De Minaur hugged the boy and gave him a towel before posting on Instagram that he would need him again when he faces Daniil Medvedev in the last 16.

"That young lad was there



Alex De Minaur

from the very first point till the last, with five hours of rain delay. He was this little kid that every single change of ends, every single point I won, he was scream-

ing at my face," De Minaur told reporters.

"I'm looking at him and thinking... if I was a fan, I would probably be back home, because it was bloody cold out there. I don't understand what this kid is doing, but he gave me life."

French Open organisers posted a picture of the boy on social media site X.

"I would have given him everything in my bag," De Minaur added. "I just wasn't thinking straight with the emotions. But he deserved everything."

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FLYING LAB



AFTER MORE THAN THREE DECADES OF SERVICE AND 158 SCIENCE MISSIONS, NASA'S ICONIC DC-8 AIRBORNE SCIENCE LABORATORY HAS TAKEN ITS FINAL FLIGHT. MEET THE WOMEN BEHIND THE WORLD'S LARGEST FLYING LAB



Erin Waggoner



Carrie Worth and Nicki Reid



Kirsten Boogaard

NASA's Airborne Science programme, and the DC-8 in particular, have made significant contributions to our understanding of Earth's environment and systems.

After more than three decades of service and 158 science missions, on May 15, the aircraft touched down at Idaho State University in Pocatello, Idaho, where it will be repurposed as a training tool for the university's Aircraft Maintenance Technology Programme. This transition will provide future aircraft technicians with invaluable real-world experience.

NASA's DC-8 aircraft had begun its science missions in 1987 and since then, has flown in service of the science community over places like Antarctica, Greenland, and Thailand. Aircraft like the DC-8 have enabled scientists to ask questions about life on Earth and explore them in a way that only NASA's Airborne Science programme can make happen.

As the DC-8 approaches its retirement, meet five of the women who have made the aircraft and programme a success. Kirsten Boogaard, Nicki Reid, Carrie Worth, Erin Waggoner, and Wendy Bereda of NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center in Edwards, California, are building the legacy of women who are helping pave the way for the next generation.

Kirsten Boogaard wears many hats for the DC-8 programme, including deputy project manager, mission manager, and assistant mission director. Since 2020, she has served as the deputy project manager on the DC-8 Airborne Science laboratory, leading and managing project planning, integration, and resources. She is one of three women qualified in the mission director role for the flying laboratory.

"I am really proud of what I accomplish at work," Boogaard said. "And I am most proud of being able to work full-time and support numerous deployments while having a child."

Nickelle Reid, Operations Engineer, authorises the airworthiness for the aircraft by ensuring that the science instruments added onboard sustain the aircraft's safety. She also serves as the mission director, where she manages communications with the cabin and cockpit crews.

"It takes a lot of practice to get used to hearing all the different conversations and weeding out what's important, staying focused, and staying on

top of all the action that's happening," Reid said.

For a science mission project, that focus is essential to maintaining efficient communication between scientists and pilots. Reid has been honing that skill since she started as an intern at NASA Armstrong.

Carrie Worth is part of a team uniquely qualified to fly the DC-8. Her journey to her career as a pilot began as a child.

"When I was a little kid, I saw Patty Wagstaff perform aeronautical stunts at the airshow in Oshkosh, Wisconsin," Carrie Worth, NASA DC-8 pilot, said. "I decided then and there that I wanted to be a pilot."

I've learned a lot about team dynamics from my time on the DC-8, like how to integrate new members into an existing team

ERIN WAGGONER

Before joining NASA, Worth served 21 years in the US Air Force as a special operations and search and rescue pilot, and then worked as a 747 pilot for United Parcel Service in Anchorage, Alaska. As a woman working in a male-majority industry, Worth is grateful for the supportive work environment at NASA and the DC-8 programme.

"I feel incredibly lucky for the support I have and have had from my male peers," she said. "I have seen a significant improvement in the [aviation] culture, but there's still work to be done."

Erin Waggoner, research aerodynamics and propulsion branch chief, joined the Research Aerodynamics and Propulsion Branch at NASA Armstrong in 2011 to support sonic boom research. Today, she is the branch chief.

"I'm thankful for all the mentorship I've received throughout my career," Waggoner said. "Everyone from the maintenance crew to the researchers are very welcoming, willing to share their expertise, and mission-focused."

Waggoner's experience with the DC-8 programme inspired her to recognise the value of a

team spirit in a successful project.

"I've learned a lot about team dynamics from my time on the DC-8, like how to integrate new members into an existing team," Waggoner said. "I love being able to encourage young women interested in NASA and aviation, and learning from the women who blazed the trails ahead of me."

Wendy Bereda started working on the DC-8 aircraft in 1999, first as a logistics clerk, later as a project support supply tech. She is now the site supervisor for the maintenance contract at NASA Armstrong.

"Through the years, I've received different accolades, but the one that meant the most to me was

given to me by headquarters for my administrative excellence in finding parts and keeping the DC-8 flying."

As a science-driven platform, the DC-8 project is composed of a team driven to provide the best customer service.

"Our team has so much love for the DC-8," Bereda said. "We live and breathe to make things happen. This is why I'm proud to have been a big part of the DC-8 life at Armstrong."

Experts like the women mentioned above enrich NASA's legacy of innovation and exploration, and make programmes like the DC-8 a success.

(Courtesy: nasa.gov)



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AMSTERDAM

Arty, active, *amazing*

Amsterdam offers a mixed bag of attractions for people of varied ethnicities and age groups, from historic relics and heritage monuments to opportunities for hiking and biking

Amsterdam has all the beauty and charisma of a postcard - beautiful bridges decked with flowers, historical canals, and residences dating back hundreds of years. The city is multifaceted, it caters to every palette, luxury lovers, history buffs, backpackers, solo travellers and families.

In addition to historic landmarks, such as the Anne Frank House and the Rijksmuseum, the capital of the Netherlands boasts parks, stylish boutiques, and a wonderful feeling of history. Picking one of the many options is easy when you have world-class museums, bike trips and an electrifying art scene to choose from.

So, the best time to visit? Spring is the best season to visit Amsterdam. The mild temperatures are perfect for biking and walking around the city as well as exploring the surrounding countryside. In April, the tulips begin to bloom, and this natural show attracts travellers from all over the world. Another major highlight which shouldn't be missed is the famous King's Day carnival, held on April 27 every year.

Getting around the city is one of the easiest things to do. As mentioned, walking is the best mode of transport when in the city, to get to the different neighbourhoods use the tram system, you also have a choice of buses, the metro and boats. Boats crossing the IJ River are free of charge. Where to stay? Stay in one of the many neighbourhoods, each with its unique charm. I would usually tell you to choose the hotel and then check the proximity to the centre, as Amsterdam is so compact you can stay anywhere and still be close to the hustle and bustle.

My favourite neighbourhood, which happens to be the most popular, is Jordaan, get lost exploring the narrow-cobbled streets, boutiques, and canals; take a break at cosy cafes, relax and watch people as you rest your feet. You must not miss The Nine Streets right next to Jordaan, as the name suggests it is a cluster of nine streets packed with cafés and homegrown boutiques for those of you who would like something unique.

Another neighbourhood to stay in is De Pijp, this neighbourhood is quieter, a little more residential but no shortage of boutiques, cafes and restaurants. One can't mention Amsterdam without mentioning its ancient De Wallen locality with varied nightlife activity, but best avoided by the conservative.

As far as hotels go, you will find a plethora of boutique hotels, luxury five-star hotels, as well as budget hotels. The luxury hotels and main chain hotels are in Centrum - Jordaan caters to the five-star hotels and luxury boutique hotels.

Amsterdam is jam-packed with things to do from canal cruises to museum hopping, or maybe visit The Adam Tower - go to the top for one of the best views of the city. Although this city will keep you occupied, I would suggest heading out of the city into the neighbouring countryside.

Take easy day trips from Amsterdam to Haarlem city, The Hague and Rotterdam to name a few. Haarlem city is a 20-minute train ride from Amsterdam. This city has pretty much everything, it retains its medieval character of cobblestone streets and gabled houses, walking around this whimsical city is like going back in time.

Visit museums, shop at its many concept stores, and take your pick of its many restaurants. Walking around this little city you will come across family-run boutiques and traditional home-run shops, a unique shopping experience. There is also a beach not too far away. You will be surprised by the bunch this boutique city packs.

The Hague, a city that offers a one-of-a-kind combination of history, art, architecture and natural beauty. A 45-minute train journey from Amsterdam, it is known worldwide as the seat of international justice and peace, the city is also where the royal family resides. Spend the day exploring the city's historical buildings, and museums or head to the nearby seaside area of Scheveningen.

Art lovers head to Mauritshuis Museum set in a fairy-tale palace surrounded by water. The Hague can easily be an alternative base to Amsterdam as you do have everything here too.

Another day trip to take and not to miss is Rotterdam. This city is Amsterdam's cool little sister. An old industrial port town home to Europe's largest port. A haven for shoppers and foodies alike, head to the Market Hall to grab a taste of whatever your heart desires, for unparalleled views, go up The Euromast.

Feel like a spot of shopping? The city has multiple shopping areas each area has a different character. You will find high end as well as high street shopping in the Centre; if you're looking for a more arty feel, head to Noord. Oost is a little more creative, with a touch of exclusivity. West is diverse, vibrant and timeless. There is so much to choose from and you will be spoilt for choice.

Amsterdam and its neighbouring cities and towns will leave you feeling utterly enchanted. Its rich culture, stunning beauty and magical atmosphere will make your trip even more enchanting, from exploring the picturesque canals to the vibrant art scene, every moment will be filled with wonder and excitement.

(Contributed by Maittha Ritchie, insta: @artistic_quest1)

