

Death toll rises to 18, including 10 children

Kamzar and Lima evacuated

Work from home in Musandam, Buraimi, Dhahirah, North Batinah and Dakhliyah on Tuesday

Our Correspondent Muscat

The death toll resulting from heavy rains and flash floods in the sultanate rose to 18, including ten children, on Monday.

In response to exceptional weather conditions expected, work has been suspended for government and private sector employees on Tuesday with a shift to remote work protocols. The directive applies to Musandam, Buraimi, Dhahirah, North Batinah and Dakhliyah governorates.

The villages of Kamzar and Lima in Musandam have been evacuated as a precautionary measure.

Rescue teams of Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) found the body of a missing child and another person in the Samad al Shaan area of Mudhaibi in North Sharqiyah on Monday afternoon.

Earlier in the day, the bodies of a woman and a man were found. Both were reported missing in North Sharqiyah on Sunday.

Two people lost their lives when a vehicle with four occupants was swept away in a wadi in Adam, Dakhliyah, on Monday. CDAA teams were able to recover bodies of the two, while a search and rescue operation continues for the remaining two individuals.

In Mahout, Al Wusta, a vehicle with four passengers got stuck in an overflowing wadi. While two passengers were rescued, two are still missing.

78 reports of stranding, outage

Concerned authorities are making concerted efforts to contain the effects of the inclement weather currently hitting Oman.

Lt Col Mohammed bin Salam al Hashimi, spokesperson of the Joint Media Committee of National Emergency Management Centre and National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre, informed that a total of 78 reports related to the weather condition were addressed till Monday afternoon.

"We received reports about power and communications network outages, as well as incidents of individuals being trapped in their homes and wadis, mostly in North Sharqiyah and South Sharqiyah."

Hashimi added that among the calls received on Monday was one involving 50 people being stranded in Mahout, Al Wusta. In response, Royal Air Force of Oman dispatched an aircraft to transport the victims to a safe shelter, where all necessities were provided.

"In North Sharqiyah, five families have been accommodated in a shelter centre. Many such centres have been prepared in other governorates."

Disruptions in communication services have been reported at several locations. "Work is continuing to restore services in 47 communication stations, 43 of which are in North Sharqiyah," Hashimi added.

Reports of road disruptions were concentrated in the governorates of North Sharqiyah, South Sharqiyah and Dakhliyah, including major links like the Izki-Sinaw and Sinaw-Adam roads.

Secondary roads in Jalan Bani Bu Ali, Ibri, Mudhaibi, Izki and Al Hamra were also damaged. "These reports are being fol-

NATION MOURNS



(Supplied photos)



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LT COL MOHAMMED AL HASHIMI

lowed up in coordination with the essential services sector."

Official visit

H E Said bin Hamood al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, undertook an official visit to North Sharqiyah on Monday. The purpose of the visit was to assess the impact of the ongoing weather condition on the region's roads.

He was accompanied by H E Khamis bin Mohammed al Shamakhi, Undersecretary

for Transport, Mahmoud bin Yahya al Thuhli, Governor of North Sharqiyah, and a delegation from the ministry.

The visiting delegation focused on evaluating the condition of roads affected by the rains. Following discussions with local authorities, they collaborated to develop repair plans and effective strategies to address the situation promptly.

Air ambulance

The Ministry of Health reported the successful completion of an air ambulance

mission in South Batinah on Monday. A ministry statement said, 'A critical medical case in the village of Hat in wilayat of Rustaq required emergency airlift. The Medical Response and Public Health Sector coordinated with South Batinah Governorate Police Command and Royal Air Force of Oman to ensure swift and safe transport of the patient to Al Rustaq Hospital.'

Schools to remain closed

The Ministry of Education (MoE) has extended the suspension of classes to all governorates except Dhofar and Al Wusta on Tuesday due to the inclement weather affecting the sultanate.

In a statement, MoE said, 'Public, private and international schools across all governorates will remain closed on Tuesday, April 16, due to unstable weather conditions. However, this decision does not apply to Dhofar and Al Wusta. Classes can be conducted online based on available resources.'



Honourable Lady, Council of Ministers condole families of the deceased

Muscat - Honourable Lady Sayyida Ahad Abdullah Hamad al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, and the Council of Ministers extended condolences to the families of those who died in North Sharqiyah governorate in heavy rains and flash floods during the current adverse weather conditions.

The Honourable Lady sent cables of condolences and sympathy to the families of the deceased. In the cables, she expressed her heartfelt sentiments of grief and profound sympathy to the families, praying to Almighty Allah to have mercy on the deceased and grant their families solace and patience to bear the loss.

Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers also extended its sincere con-

lences to families and relatives of the students who passed away in North Sharqiyah.

The Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers issued a statement to this effect, reading as follows: 'With hearts filled with grief and faith in the will of Almighty Allah, the Council of Ministers extends its sincere condolences and sympathies to the families and relatives of school students who recently died in Sharqiyah as a result of the heavy rains and overflowing wadis that accompanied the current adverse weather conditions.'

'The Council of Ministers prays to Almighty Allah to bestow His mercy on the deceased, grant them dwellings in heaven and support their families with solace and patience to bear the loss.'

Peak of weather disturbance on Tuesday night: CAA

Our Correspondent Muscat

Analysis of the National Multi Hazard Early Warning System at Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) indicate that the peak of the current weather condition affecting the sultanate will be on Tuesday night.

Aisha bint Juma al Qasimia, meteorologist at CAA, said rains will intensify during the evening hours of Monday. The peak of the impact will hit from Tuesday midnight till Wednesday dawn.

She added that Tuesday will witness the third wave of the current depression, the most intense in terms of impact.

As per CAA's weather bulletin, Musandam is likely to experience intense thunderstorms, accompanied by strong downdraft winds and hail, and rain of between 50mm to 150mm. Buraimi, Dhahirah, North Batinah and Dakhliyah are expected to receive 30mm to 120mm of rain, which may lead to flash floods.

Rain of varied intensity are also on the horizon in Muscat, South Batinah, South Sharqiyah, North Sharqiyah, and the northern parts of Al Wusta.

Isolated showers are expected in Dhofar on Tuesday, CAA stated.

According to the forecast, the effects will continue till Wednesday evening with rain of varying intensity in Dakhliyah, North Sharqiyah and South Sharqiyah.

According to Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources data from its rain monitoring stations, Wadi Bani



Musandam is likely to experience intense thunderstorms, accompanied by strong downdraft winds and hail, and rain of between 50mm to 150mm

Khalid received 159mm of rain from April 14 to April 15. Other areas also witnessed considerable downpours, with Ibri, Mudhaibi and Sinaw receiving 126mm of rain each, Bidiyah 114mm, Al Qabil 109mm, Quriyat 100mm, Sur 99mm, Izki 95mm, Jalan Bani Bu Hassan 90mm, Amerat 80mm, Yanqul 68mm and Bahla 64mm.

These developments suggest that Oman's readiness for adverse weather conditions will be tested. The importance of heeding warnings cannot be overstated to ensure public safety and to minimise disruptions.



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) 2024 is set underline the sultanate's dedication to environmental conservation and adoption of sustainable practices, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the national objectives outlined in Oman Vision 2040 and Net Zero 2050.

Poised to take place from April 28 to May 2 at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, the week this year will be hosted under the theme 'Sustainable Living in a Circular Society'.

At a press conference held on Monday, it was announced that

the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM), in collaboration with Petroleum Development Oman, will lead the event, showcasing a synergy of industry, power and environmental stewardship.

Dr Ali al Rajhi, Director General for Planning and Studies at MEM, underscored the significance of this national initiative. "Oman Sustainability Week 2024 stands as a beacon, casting light on the criticality of sustainable practices. It is not merely an event but a dynamic platform that sparks actionable insights and a communal exchange of knowledge towards achieving our sustainable development milestones," he stated.

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DR ALI AL RAJHI

Mustafa al Balushi, Vice-President of Continuous Improvement, Planning & Performance/Acting Communications at OQ, reinforced the company's strategic commitment, while highlighting its role as a strategic sponsor and its projects like the OQ Green Initiative that dovetail with national sustainability goals. "OQ remains steadfast in fostering Oman's

green landscapes, as exemplified by our engagement in the ten-million-trees plantation drive," he added, further affirming OQ's resolve to advance governance and support the growth of small and medium enterprises.

OSW 2024 promises to be a mix of dialogue and innovation, drawing participants from ASYAD Group, bp and Oman LNG, among others. Its robust

sponsorship roster illustrates the collective commitment to sustainable progress.

The OSW Expo, from April 29 to May 1, is expected to be a focal point for networking and sharing best practices, with over 120 companies from six countries and an estimated attendance of 12,000. Additionally, the event will present over 100 speakers and 500 delegates, ensuring that the discourse remains insightful and impactful.

The International Sustainability Resources & Technology Conference on April 29 and 30, co-organised by be'ah, is set to become a marquee event for global experts to discuss sustainable resource utilisation. Mean-

while, OSW Talks, with sessions accredited for professional development, will delve into innovations for a net-zero carbon future.

Launching the week on April 28, OSW Awards will honour organisations leading in sustainability, with a new category for Eco-Mobility introduced by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT).

OSW Future Mobility, supported by MTCIT, will spotlight the latest in clean mobility solutions, signifying Oman's foray into the future of transportation.

Notably, the event will also include the 2024 MEA CCS Forum by Global CCS Institute, catalysing discussions on carbon

capture solutions, essential to achieving global emissions targets.

The OSW C-level round table, facilitated by Ernst & Young (EY), will allow exchange of ideas for public-private partnership towards sustainable development goals.

Strategic partners will present their flagship sustainability initiatives, including Shell's NXplorers, PDO's Renewable Energy Awards and OQ8's youth empowerment programmes.

Concluding with OSW Site Visits, participants will witness the sustainable projects transforming the sultanate, offering a tangible experience of Oman's commitment to sustainability.

INVITATION TO TENDER	
	
Tender Ref.	TAIO 2024/006
Tender Title	Development of business continuity plan.
Tender Fee OMR	25 OMR

Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 8:00 AM on Tuesday 16/04/2024 Until 4:00 PM on Tuesday 23/04/2024. Tenderers to follow the steps below in order to obtain the electronic tender document;

Step 1: Interested tenderer should remit the stated tender fees to the bank details listed below:

Account Name	Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG
Account Number	100000000083
Bank Name	Muzn Islamic Bank
SWIFT	MUZNOMR1
Note: bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted	

Step 2: Please send a request for the electronic tender documents along with the scanned copy of the bank transfer receipt to **Procurement@takafuloman.om** (Kindly mention Tender Ref and Company name in Subject line)

	Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG. P.O. BOX 207, Postal Code 134, Bareeq Al Shatti, Sultanate of Oman Tel.: 00968 22303000, Fax: 00968 24699511
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Pioneering research advances brain abnormality diagnostics using AI

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a significant stride towards revolutionising the medical diagnostic field, a pioneering research conducted in Al Buraimi University College employed artificial intelligence (AI) to identify brain abnormalities.

Conducted by Dr Mohammad A N al Azawi, an associate professor at the college, the research is centred on the application of sophisticated computer vision and AI strategies to decipher medical images, with particular focus on magnetic resonance



Dr Mohammad A N al Azawi

imaging (MRI).

The research is part of a broader project exploring medical image processing and augments the capabilities of computer-aided diagnostic

(CAD) systems.

Azawi's method harnesses the bilateral symmetry of the brain, tapping into the principle that the organ's two hemispheres are typically mirror images of each other. Deviations in this symmetry, often caused by tumours, can now be detected through his innovative approach. By contrasting the two hemispheres, the system he developed is capable of identifying any abnormalities.

In practice, this process examines a multitude of image attributes, including variations in colour and texture. The algorithm

was tested on a set of 300 images from established datasets and delivered outstanding performance metrics, with precision, recall and accuracy rates reaching 95.3%, 94.7%, and 95% respectively.

The findings of the research, published in the journal *Multimedia Tools and Applications*, underscore the effectiveness of utilising the brain's inherent symmetry for detecting anomalies. This represents a significant advancement in the field of medical diagnostics, opening new avenues for non-invasive and accurate identification of brain disorders.

Thawani among top 50 fintech firms in ME

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Thawani Technologies, an Omani company specialising in providing innovative payment solutions, has been included in the Forbes Middle East Fintech 50 list.

The list features the top players that are revolutionising the financial technology landscape, spanning digital payment companies, open banking platforms, and apps for investments, savings and lending.

Egypt is the most represented country with 13 companies, followed by the UAE and Saudi Arabia with 11 each.



Majid al Amri

The only Omani company on the 2024 list, Thawani secured the 40th position.

Majid al Amri, founder and CEO of Thawani Technologies, stated that the company's inclusion in the top 50 fintech list con-

firms its continuous efforts and dedication to developing financial technology services in Oman and the Middle East.

"It serves as a culmination of a successful journey as the first financial technology company in Oman to provide smart, innovative, easy and fast payment services in various financial sectors, serving both businesses and individuals, to ensure access to the largest number of beneficiaries of modern financial technologies," he said.

Amri explained that the listing confirms the prominent role played by the company in driving digital transformation in financial

services in the region, through its smart applications that facilitate financial transactions and provide secure and fast solutions for all users and merchants.

Thawani Technologies has become the leading electronic platform for completing financial transactions in Oman, in addition to obtaining the first licence from Central Bank of Oman for payment services. It has contributed to shaping regulatory legislations for the financial technology sector in the sultanate, supporting and enabling startups and medium-sized companies to enter the financial technology sector.

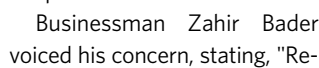




They discussed opportunities to enhance trade and expand

The meeting was attended by H E Al Sayyida Wafa Jabr Nasser al Busaidi, Oman's Ambassador-designate to Uzbekistan, Sheikh Ahmed bin Hashel al Maskari, Head of Foreign Ministry's GCC Department, H E Abdusalam Khatamov, Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Oman, and several officials from both countries.

He emphasised the significance of heeding warnings from the meteorology department to



grettably, certain individuals launched attacks, fomented resentment and stirred up public opinion against MoE for its deci-

Highlighting the emergency programmes European countries have in place for schools and colleges during extreme weather

The image is a vertical composition of two promotional banners for Purshottam Kanji Exchange.

Top Banner:
- Background: A warm-toned sunset over New York City, with the Statue of Liberty prominently featured in the center.
- Top Left: A gold shield-shaped badge with "TRUSTED SINCE 1920" and three stars below it.
- Top Right: A blue shield-shaped badge with "OMAN'S 1 EXCHANGE" and a large number "1".
- Main Text: "SEND USD WORLDWIDE FOR BUSINESS, EDUCATION, FIXED DEPOSITS & MORE" in bold blue capital letters.
- Service Fee: A black rounded rectangle containing "OMR 4 SERVICE FEE" in white.
- Features: Below the fee box, the words "SIMPLE | SECURE | SWIFT" are displayed in blue.

Bottom Banner:
- Background: A warm-toned sunset over Dubai, with the Burj Khalifa and Burj Dubai visible.
- Main Text: "SEND MONEY TO ANY BANK ACCOUNT IN UAE FOR CORPORATES AND INDIVIDUALS" in bold blue capital letters.
- Service Fee: A black rounded rectangle containing "OMR 2.5 SERVICE FEE" in white.
- Features: Below the fee box, the words "SIMPLE | SECURE | SWIFT" are displayed in blue.
- Bottom Section: A dark blue horizontal bar at the very bottom contains the company logo and name in English ("PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE"), Arabic ("شركة برشوتم كانجي للصرافة"), and social media icons for Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and LinkedIn, along with their phone numbers (+968: 91787829 | 99849289 | 91787829) and website (www.pkexchange.com). A QR code is also present on the left side of this section.

MARKET WATCH

MSX304,727.73

Sensex73,399.78

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

India216.91

Pakistan722.06

Bangladesh284.97

Philippines147.86

Sri Lanka776.64

*Rates as on April 15

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Oil down with uncertainty over Fed rate cut

Oil prices declined on Monday amid uncertainty over the timing of the US Federal Reserve's interest rate cuts and last week's profit taking from five-month high prices.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$89.94 per barrel at 0733 GMT, a 0.56% decline from the closing price of \$90.45 per barrel in the previous trading session.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$85.14 per barrel at the same time, a 0.61% drop from the previous session that closed at \$85.66 per barrel. Prices reached five-month highs last week over global oil supply concerns due to tensions in the Middle East.

The situation exacerbated tensions in the region, where busy energy supply routes are located.

Oman's budget surplus drops as oil & gas revenues decline

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's budget surplus shrank by more than 44% to RO207mn in the first two months of 2024, compared to the RO372mn surplus recorded in the corresponding period last year, mainly due to a decline in the sultanate's oil and gas revenues this year.

The sultanate's total public revenues decreased to RO1.958bn in the January-February period this year, down 9% compared to the RO2.148bn registered in the same period of 2023, according to the Fiscal Performance Bulletin published on Monday by the Ministry of Finance.

Net oil revenue decreased to RO1.102bn, a drop of 4% compared to the RO1.153bn registered over the same period in 2023, mainly due to lower crude prices compared to last year.

The average price at which Oman sold its crude oil stood at \$86 per barrel for January-February period, and the average oil production stood at 1,024,000 barrels per day during the first two months of 2024.

Net gas revenue dropped by a whopping 46% to RO281mn in the first two months of 2024 compared to the same period of



Net oil revenue decreased 4% to RO1.102bn while net gas revenue sharply fell 46% to RO281mn in the first two months of 2024

2023. This is attributed to a change in the procedures of collecting gas revenue.

'This decline (in net gas revenue) is due to the deduction of gas purchase and transport expenses from the total revenue collected from the Integrated Gas Company,' the Ministry of Finance bulletin noted.

The government's current revenue increased by RO102mn to stand at RO573mn for the January-February period of 2024 against the RO471mn collected in the same period of 2023.

'This increase is mainly attributed to the receipt of returns from Oman Investment Authority's profits, recording approximately RO200m collected in

January,' the ministry said.

Slight decrease in spending

Oman's total public spending for the first two months of 2024 decreased by RO25mn or 1% to RO1.751bn compared to the same period in 2023.

Of the total spending, the expenditure of civil ministries was down by RO17mn to RO1.277bn compared to RO1.294bn during the corresponding period in 2023.

Development expenditure of ministries and civil units stood at RO93mn, with a spending rate of 10% of the total development expenditure allocated for 2024 (RO900mn).

The total of contributions and other expenses amounted to RO231mn, comprising a surge by 75% compared to RO132mn during the same period in 2023. Subsidies for the Social Protection System and petroleum products till the end of February 2024 stood at RO93mn and RO44mn, respectively.

Transfers for the loan payment item stood at RO66mn in the first two months of this year.

In the wake of Oman's improving fiscal situation, S&P Global Ratings recently revised its outlook on Oman to 'positive' from 'stable'. At the same time, the rating agency affirmed its 'BB+/B-' long- and short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings on the sultanate.

The positive outlook reflects S&P's confidence that the Omani government's balance sheet will strengthen and the economic reform program could lead to faster-than-expected deleveraging in many state-owned enterprises, without dampening economic growth outcomes. This would strengthen the economy's resilience to adverse oil price shocks.

Oman Broadband launches data centre services

Muscat – Oman Broadband Company has launched data centre services in all governorates of Oman.

Through its more than 40 advanced data centres, the company seeks to significantly contribute to digital transition and realise the goals of economic diversification in Oman.

Oman Broadband focuses on providing network connectivity solutions, making use of the strategic location of its data centres and the strength of its infrastructure facilities. The company is keen to maintain highly efficient connectivity services and provide access for all customers anywhere in Oman.

Oman Broadband has a sophisticated operations network that ensures round-the-clock monitoring and sensors capable of detecting sources of water leakage and extinguishing fires. The company adheres to global standards of performance and service-level agreements. This enhances reliability in the company's outstanding services.

ONA



FSA imposes penalty on Shumookh Industrial Development Fund

Muscat – The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has issued the Administrative Decision No 1/2024 imposing a financial penalty on Shumookh Industrial Development Fund for failing to file financial statements for the second and third quarters of 2023.

It is in violation of Article 279 of the Executive Regulation of the Capital Market Law No 1/2009, the FSA said in a press release.

As per Article 279, every issuer shall prepare un-audited interim financial statements for first, second and third quarters of the financial year and disclose the same immediately after approval by the board of directors and within not more than thirty (30) days from the end of the quarter. However, the issuers who have subsidiaries and are required to prepare consolidated financial statements would be allowed forty-five (45) days for the same.

Financial statements include the balance sheet, income statement, cash flow statement, statement on change in shareholder's equity and the notes to the financial statements.

'Such disclosures shall be accompanied by a report containing the material events that affected the issuer's performance and its financial position during the fi-

Bank Muscat reports 5.7% growth in first quarter net profit at RO54.2mn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Bank Muscat, the flagship financial institution in Oman, announced its preliminary unaudited results for the three months ended March 31, 2024, on Monday. The bank posted a net profit of RO54.24mn for the first quarter of 2024 compared to RO51.30mn reported during the same period in 2023, an increase of 5.7%.

The bank's net interest income from conventional banking and net income from Islamic financing stood at RO95.45mn for the first three months of this year compared to RO91.71mn for the same period in 2023, an increase of 4.1%.

Non-interest income was RO37.25mn for the three-month period ended March 31, 2024, compared to RO31.5mn for the same period in 2023, marking an increase of 18.3%. This increase was attributed to overall improvement in various business lines and volume increase, according to Bank Muscat's press statement.

The bank's operating ex-



Bank's net interest income from conventional banking and net income from Islamic financing rose 4.1% to RO95.45mn in Q1 2024 compared to RO91.71mn for the same period in 2023

penses for the three-month period ended March 31, 2024, were RO51.8mn compared to RO48.7mn for the same period in 2023, reflecting an increase of 6.4%.

Net impairment for credit losses for the three-month period ended March 31, 2024, was RO16.13mn compared to RO14.44mn for the same period in 2023.

Bank Muscat's net loans and advances, including Islamic financing receivables, increased by 1.0% to RO9.854bn as of March 31, 2024, compared to RO9.762bn recorded a year ago.

The bank's customer deposits, including Islamic customer deposits, increased by 8.4% to RO9.75bn compared to RO8.992bn as of March 31, 2023.

Bank Muscat stated that its full results for the first quarter of 2024, along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements, will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors at its meeting scheduled later in April 2024.

OPEC lowers forecasts for non-OPEC supply growth in 2024, 2025

Muscat – OPEC has indicated that it is more optimistic on the challenge of mitigating non-OPEC supply growth in the coming months, with downward revisions to expected production growth outside the bloc in 2024 and 2025.

A recent price rally has eased some pressure on the group, which continues to implement major supply cuts, despite the rapid growth in non-OPEC supply.

According to a report published by S&P Global Commod-



ity Insights, the recent uptick in oil prices – supported by the overlapping cuts by the wider OPEC+ alliance and conflict in the Middle East and Europe – has led some analysts to forecast that the group may move to wind down some of its cuts in the second half of the year.

OPEC, as per the report, said in its closely watched monthly oil market report that it will remain vigilant and is prepared to act alongside its allies if necessary.

"The robust oil demand outlook for the summer months

and other countries in Asia driving demand. The group next plans to discuss policy on June 1, but its agreements include the option to convene earlier, if market conditions warrant.

Non-OPEC supply

OPEC forecasts that non-OPEC supply will grow by 1mn barrels per day (bpd) in 2024 – revised down by 100,000 bpd from its previous report released in early March.

It also revised down its estimate of non-OPEC supply growth in 2025 by 100,000 bpd to 1.3mn bpd, the report said.

OPEC sees the bulk of this growth coming from the US, Brazil, Canada, Russia, Kazakhstan and Norway. The bloc did not change its forecasts for global demand growth, or the call on its own crude in 2024 and 2025.

OPEC expects global oil demand to grow by 2.2mn bpd in 2024, with slight upward revisions to OECD Europe demand estimates offset by downward revisions to Africa and the Mid-

dle East. It forecasts global demand growth of 1.8mn bpd in 2025. OPEC's demand forecasts for its own crude were also unchanged at 28.5mn bpd in 2024, and 29mn bpd in 2025.

The 2024 forecast is 1.9mn bpd above current production, which would give OPEC significant influence over oil prices this year if it came to pass. OPEC said that its March crude output was up 3,000 bpd month on month at 26.6mn bpd, according to secondary sources, including S&P Global analysts.

US Fed needs more 'confidence' to cut rates



Washington, US – The US Federal Reserve wants to see more "confidence" that inflation is moving lower to its 2% target before beginning to cut interest rates, according to minutes of Fed's recently held meeting.

Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) participants generally noted their uncertainty about the persistence of high inflation and expressed that recent macroeconomic data have not increased their confidence that inflation was moving sustainably down to 2%, said the minutes from the Fed's last meeting.

"Participants noted indicators pointing to strong economic mo-

Annual consumer price inflation in US rose 3.5% in March, and it was up monthly 0.4%, both coming in above expectations

mentum and disappointing readings on inflation in recent months and commented that they did not expect it would be appropriate to reduce the target range for the federal funds rate until they had gained greater confidence that inflation was moving sustainably toward 2 percent," it added.

The Fed skipped an interest rate hike in March as widely expected, and kept its federal funds

rate unchanged between the 5.25% - 5.5% target range.

Annual consumer inflation in the US, however, rose 3.5% in March, and it was up monthly 0.4%, both coming in above expectations, according to figures released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics on Wednesday.

"(FOMC) Members agreed that they did not expect that it would be appropriate to reduce

the target range until they have gained greater confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward 2 percent," said the minutes.

The Fed's next two-day meeting will conclude May 1 and it is widely expected to keep the federal funds rate unchanged.

The probability of a rate cut of 25 basis points at the Fed's June 12 meeting stood at just 16.5% as of Wednesday, according to the FedWatch Tool provided by the US-based Chicago Mercantile Exchange Group.

The probability of a cut of 25 basis points at the July meeting was 35.7% and 45.5% for the September meeting.

Fed officials felt that the key interest rate was likely at its peak and it would be appropriate to loosen the monetary policy stance at some point this year, the minutes of its latest policy review meeting showed.

"Almost all participants judged that it would be appropriate to move policy to a less restrictive stance at some point this year if the economy evolved broadly as they expected," the minutes said.

The US Federal Reserve, in its March meeting, voted to leave the key interest rate unchanged at 5.25-5.50%, keeping the policy rate unchanged for the fifth



US interest rate cut in June seems off the table: Moody's

New York, US – Global rating agency Moody's believes an interest rate cut during the US Federal Reserve's June meeting is likely off the table given stubborn inflation in the country.

"The increase in the headline consumer inflation in March likely puts to bed hopes that June's Federal Open Market Committee meeting would usher in the first interest rate cut," Moody's said in a report.

March's increase in inflation surpassed expectations of a 0.3% increase and lifted the annual rate from 3.2% to 3.5%, its highest since September, noted Moody's. This assertion by the global rating agency comes soon after the US reported more than-expected inflation figures in March.

On Wednesday, the latest data showed inflation in the US increased more than expected in March, putting cold water to hopes of an interest rate cut shortly.

Consumer price inflation in the US continued to trend down, though it remained above 2%.

ANI

straight time on the trot.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the interest rates were kept near zero. Raising interest rates is a monetary policy instrument that typically helps suppress demand in the economy, thereby helping the inflation rate decline.

The US central bank then indicated three interest rate cuts this year and affirmed that solid economic growth would continue. The US Federal Reserve's commitment has been to bring down consumer inflation to its target of 2%.

Agencies

Elon Musk may unveil Tesla's India investment plan soon

New Delhi, India – Tesla chief Elon Musk may unveil India's investment plan this month. Confirming his upcoming visit to India, Musk had tweeted recently that he was looking forward to meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Looking forward to meeting with Prime Minister @NarendraModi in India!" Musk wrote on X.

Musk's visit to India where he is likely to announce investment in the country, comes at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi is bidding for his third term and may give a fillip to the government's image for attracting big-ticket investment.

It may also boost BJP's polls prospects given the party in power at the Centre is aggressively campaigning with global corporates to invest in India. Earlier this week in an X Spaces session, Elon Musk had said that India, like every other country, should have electric cars and it will be a natural progression for his company to provide Tesla electric vehicles in the country.



Elon Musk

According to sources, Musk, during his India visit, might make the much-anticipated announcement of setting up Tesla's first plant in the country. Musk will likely meet Prime Minister Modi on April 22 in the national capital, according to Reuters.

Apart from announcing Tesla's maiden foray in India, Musk is also expected to disclose details of the automobile major's plans for the country. However, the final agenda for Musk's trip to India is yet to be confirmed.

It was reported earlier that Tesla officials were exploring potential sites in India for a manufacturing plant, which is anticipated to necessitate an in-

vestment of approximately \$2bn.

Tesla's interest in expanding its presence in the Indian market has intensified, with the company actively searching for a suitable location to establish a cutting-edge manufacturing facility.

According to sources, the state governments of Maharashtra and Gujarat have extended attractive land offers to Tesla for this purpose, signalling significant progress in India's electric mobility landscape.

As reported earlier, initially Tesla would manufacture entry-level cars in India, priced around Rs2.5mn, with an annual capacity of 500,000 units. Tesla's move seemed to have fast-tracked in the wake of India's new EV policy, where incentives are proposed for setting up manufacturing units in India.

Earlier in June last year, Elon Musk said he was planning to visit India in 2024, added that he was confident that the electric carmaker will be in India and will do so "as soon as humanly possible."

ANI

Japan to spend \$33bn for developing next-generation hydrogen aircraft

Rachel Parkes

The Japanese government has revealed a multi-trillion-yen plan to develop a "Made In Japan" regional aircraft powered by next generation technology – such as hydrogen.

The government plans to partner up with the private sector to jointly invest 5tn yen (\$33bn) over ten years to make a narrow-bodied aircraft that can hit the skies by 2035 — and all technology options are on the table, officials told news agency AFP.

"Nothing concrete has been decided yet, but possibilities include hybrid electrics, hydrogen combustion, hydrogen fuel cell," an official from the ministry of economy, trade and industry (METI) said.

But hydrogen does appear to be in the foreground of discussions, with METI telling AFP that it is important for the country to "build next-generation aircraft based on technologies where Japan is competitive, while also contributing to the decarbonation of air transport".

"In the new business fields of carbon-neutral technologies, including hydrogen, we aim to take



a leading position", added minister for economy, trade and industry, Kazuchika Iwata at a press conference yesterday (Wednesday).

"For the Japanese aircraft industry to achieve sustainable growth, we cannot stay satisfied with our position as a parts supplier."

A official strategy on the new aircraft programme will be announced soon by METI.

Significantly, the new programme envisages Japanese aircraft makers partnering with global players to develop the plane, apparently in an effort to sidestep the problems faced by Japanese heavyweight Mit-

subishi Heavy Industries (MHI) in its SpaceJet programme (see below), which was scrapped in February last year after a decade of delays and problems.

There are several international companies developing hydrogen technology for regional aircraft, most significantly Anglo-American aviation firm ZeroAvia and US-based Universal Hydrogen.

ZeroAvia is currently developing a 19-seater hydrogen fuel-cell-powered aircraft for regional flights, but is also working on scaling up its technology to power larger aircraft capable of carrying 60-90 passengers.

Universal Hydrogen and Ze-

roAvia both carried out flight tests of their fuel cell-powered aircraft last year, with the aim of bringing them into service in 2025.

Meanwhile, budget airline Easyjet and engine maker RollsRoyce are collaborating on the development of a hydrogen-fuelled jet combustion engine, while Airbus is developing hydrogen-powered aircraft with a planned commissioning year of 2035.

SpaceJet, originally called the Mitsubishi Regional Jet programme when it launched in 2007, aimed to develop a Japanese-made aircraft capable of carrying up to 90 people, powered by conventional fossil fuel-powered jet technology.

But although the programme delivered one prototype aircraft, it experienced repeated delays and questions over its commercial viability.

SpaceJet received 50bn yen (\$330mn) in government funding research, but the technical and commercialisation of the scheme was shouldered entirely by MHI, which contributed to its failure, Japanese commentators said yesterday.(Copyright) [Source: Hydrogen Insight]

India's energy requirement expected to grow by 2.5 times by 2047

New Delhi, India – The energy requirements of India will be increased by 2.5 times by the year 2047, and right now around 84% of India's energy is produced using coal, said Venu Gopal Mothkoor, Senior Specialist- Energy, NITI Aayog.

He further added that achieving CO2 emission targets necessitates a focus on energy efficiency and demand electrification, which could potentially reduce CO2 emissions by 51%

by 2047.

Speaking at a roundtable discussion organised by FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) on 'Doubling the Rate of Energy Efficiency of Indian Industry 2030' he also underscored the pressing need to address this surge in energy requirements.

During the event, Abhay Bakre, Director General of Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), also highlighted that energy ef-



iciency is a low-cost option for meeting the growing energy demand in India.

The decarbonisation, adoption of clean fuels, digitalisation, and promotion of sustainable buildings and smart appliances were highlighted as the key areas for enhancing energy efficiency in the country.

"The government is targeting to reduce 686mn tonnes of CO2 by 2030, out of which 250mn tonnes of CO2 reduc-

tion is targeted from industries with specific focus on steel, cement, pulp & paper, petrochemicals and aluminium," said Arijit Sengupta, Director, BEE.

He also mentioned that the Energy Conservation Act got amended in 2022 and government is working on India Carbon Market plan. Soon, the Green Hydrogen consumption norms will be rolled out and the BEE is also working on 'Carbon Intensity Targets' to incentivize

energy efficiency efforts.

SP Garnaik, Country Representative India (In-Charge), Asia Regional Lead (Energy Efficiency), said, "We need to create conducive environment for technology adoption, financing and design national-level programmes for industries in the following key areas: waste heat recovery, industrial pump replacement progme-tering".

ANI

KR FSS aids Nama's electricity project

Khimji Ramdas (KR) Group's Facility and Security Solutions (FSS), a unit of the Special Projects Division, is pleased to announce the successful completion of a comprehensive project for the supply and commissioning of generators for Nama Electricity Distribution Company (NEDC) in the Musandam region.

Commencing in October 2023 and concluding in February 2024, the project encompassed the supply, delivery and commissioning of seven soundproof generators ranging from 250 KW to 500 KW at various government facilities across the Musandam Region of Oman, a press release said.

These generators were strategically distributed in Khasab, Bukha, Madha, and Dibba, areas characterised by diverse landscapes including mountainous terrains, seashores, and country borders.

The KR Facility and Security Solutions team successfully delivered and provided training to the Nama Electricity Distribution Company team, ensuring seamless integration and functionality. Experienced technicians and engineers from FSS undertook the delivery and commissioning, ad-



hering to the highest industry standards to ensure optimal performance and safety.

Moreover, extensive training sessions were conducted to equip government personnel with the necessary skills to efficiently operate and maintain the generators. The after-sales ser-

vices team of Facility and Security Solutions also provided on-site training to Nama Electricity Distribution Company's technical staff, guaranteeing 24x7 service support through their mobile service team.

Representing Mecca Power Generators in Oman, FSS offers

customizable solutions tailored to customers' operational needs, including preferred engine models and capacities. Renowned for their durability, efficiency, and reliability, the generators supplied by the company serve as ideal solutions for powering essential facilities during emergen-

cies and power outages.

Mohammed Yousuf al Shahi, regional manager - Musandam, Nama Electricity Distribution Company, said, "I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for the exceptional work carried out by KR FSS's team in supplying and commissioning the gen-

erator for the Musandam region within a short period.

Emphasising the significance of the project, Rajneesh Ar-mugham, general manager, KR Facility and Security Solutions, said, "Completing such a complex project in Musandam is a significant milestone for us; as it

exemplifies the quality we deliver through our specially designed equipment tailored for governmental entities. As we strive to enhance the national infrastructure by incorporating state-of-the-art equipment and technologies, all our endeavors align with Oman Vision 2040."

France unveils advanced energy solutions

As the world embarks on the journey post-COP28, the Middle East Energy exhibition, the premier event in the MENA region for energy, announces its commencement on April 16.

Held over three transformative days, the French Pavilion will be at the forefront, demonstrating the expertise of 23 French electrical equipment manufacturers adept in tackling the region's energy challenges, a press release said.

In the aftermath of COP28 UAE, lauded by Sultan al Jaber, UAE's Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, the region is witnessing an expedited shift towards diversified energy policies and innovation. These will complement existing strategies such as the 'UAE Net Zero 2050', supported by an expected investment of US\$163.3bn by 2050, and the 'smart grids' strategy implemented by the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority with an investment of US\$1.9bn. This momentum, amplified by population growth and increasing tourism development, underscores the significance of energy transition and digital transformation as major priorities.

The impending energy transition, linked with the demographic and tourism growth, underlines the imperative for en-



ergy and digital transformation. Egypt, for instance, predicts creating two million jobs in three decades, while other nations of the region see this as a path re-

duce their fossil fuel dependency.

Furthermore, the UAE's potential grasp of 25% in the burgeoning hydrogen market,

valued at over US\$400bn annually, underscores the region's monumental shift. Saudi Arabia's venture into green hydrogen initiatives signifies a broader

regional commitment to sustainable energy solutions, carving opportunities for French enterprises ready to embrace the technological wave.

In the context of the Middle East Energy 2024 exhibition, the France 2030 investment plan is a beacon of France's commitment to pioneering sustainable energy solutions on a global scale. With 54 billion earmarked for sector-wide decarbonisation, the plan is particularly resonant with the energy themes of the exhibition. Of this, 8bn is specifically injected into the energy sector to foster the development of small nuclear reactors and green hydrogen projects, aligning with the global energy transition trends showcased at the event.

"By participating in Middle East Energy 2024, France showcases its proficiency in the energy sector while also underscoring its comprehensive dedication to sustainability, innovation, and advanced technology. This commitment marks a step towards a future that greener and sustainable. France's presence in the Middle East contributes to the growing demands for energy and the region's sustainable future," Axel Baroux, managing director of Business France Middle East.

NBO's new digital credit card application empowers customers

In a ground-breaking move towards digitisation of products and services, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has revolutionised the process of applying for a digital credit card, making it easier and simpler than ever before emphasising customer convenience and trust.

Through the NBO Mobile Banking app, both, NBO and non-NBO, customers can effortlessly apply for their digital credit card against deposits from 10 April. This innovative service aligns with Oman Vision 2040 and NBO's strategic objective of digitisation products and services, leveraging technology to streamline financial services, a press release said.

Dr Ali Salim al Shekaili, assistant general manager - head of Digital and e-Channels at NBO, said, "At National Bank of Oman, we prioritise customer satisfaction. We are proud to be the first bank in the country to introduce digital credit cards for both, NBO and non-NBO, customers. With the introduction of our new digital credit card application service, we are empowering our customers with unparalleled

convenience and efficiency.

"This milestone underscores our commitment to innovation and exceptional service. By offering a smooth and efficient process, we are not only advancing the nation's vision of digital transformation but also ensuring that our customers enjoy a hassle-free experience in managing their financial needs."

Customers can easily apply for a digital credit card against deposits directly through the NBO app. The whole process is designed to be simple and efficient. Customers need only to fulfil the KYC requirements and meet the eligibility criteria for an NBO credit card. By utilising digital signatures, in alignment with the Central Bank of Oman guidelines, customers will receive a one-time password (OTP).



Sony introduces new speakers

Sony Middle East and Africa has announced the launch of ULT Power Sound - a new series of wireless speakers and headphones - designed to make you feel like you have dived into the front row of the arena. Built for music lovers, it produces powerful deep sound designed to make your heart tremble.

The new range consists of wireless speakers ULT Tower 10, ULT Field 7, ULT Field 1, and wireless headphones ULT Wear. All models in the series include the ULT button, providing signature sound quality by enhancing the music with one or two different sound modes, a press release said.

In line with the ULT Power Sound series launch, Sony has partnered with Grammy award



winner and global chart-topping sensation, Peso Pluma. "The powerful sound and massive bass of the ULT Power Sound se-

ries excites me," says Peso. "As a musician, I feel that these products provide the best listening experience for my fans."

Ooredoo Oman partners with Ericsson

Ooredoo Oman and Ericsson have partnered to provide Ooredoo's customers with state-of-the-art Ericsson Charging and Ericsson Mediation systems, providing an upgraded digital customer experience.

Under the five-year agreement, all exiting charging and rating platforms are being consolidated and replaced with on-line rating and charging using Ericsson systems. The collaboration significantly simplifies Ooredoo's charging infrastructure, a press release said.

Dr Ahmed al Abri, chief Technology and Information officer at Ooredoo, said, "We aim to play a significant role in driving Oman's digital transformation and provide products and services on par with customers'



Dr Ahmed al Abri

quickly changing requirements, including seamless nationwide connectivity. Through our partnership with Ericsson, we leverage their cutting-edge solutions to provide our customers with an upgraded digital experience and

innovative personalised product offerings."

Kevin Murphy, vice president and head of Ericsson Levant Countries and Global Customer Unit, Ooredoo Group at Ericsson Middle East and Africa, said, "This year, Ericsson celebrates five decades of technology leadership, pioneering innovation and strategic partnerships in Oman. Our ongoing collaboration with Ooredoo seeks to build on our legacy to shape the communications of tomorrow by creating resilient, future-ready networks along with the systems to monetise superior service experiences."

Ooredoo simplified its charging stack by leveraging Ericsson's flexible Business and Operations Support Systems portfolio, which

uses industry standards and protocols, to seamlessly integrate Ericsson Charging and Mediation within its multi-vendor Information Technology (IT) and network ecosystem. The Ericsson Charging system is now the single convergent charging solution for all of Ooredoo's prepaid and postpaid consumer subscribers, with plans to consolidate the rating of all lines of business utilising the digital capabilities of Ericsson Charging and Ericsson Mediation.

Ericsson has a long-standing relationship with Ooredoo that has enabled the CSP to pursue new opportunities, accelerate time-to-market, and provide agile, upgraded and reliable 5G services to its growing customer base.

INDIA

SC issues notice to ED on Kejriwal's plea

The Delhi CM challenged his arrest by the agency and his subsequent remand

New Delhi, India - The Supreme Court issued notice to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on a plea by Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Kejriwal challenging his arrest by the agency and his subsequent remand in the excise policy case.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta refused to give an early hearing of the case as sought by senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi appearing for Kejriwal.

During the hearing, Singhvi urged the bench to give a short date for the hearing, preferably the coming Friday.

The bench said: "We will give you a short date, but it is not possible to meet the date suggested by you." Singhvi said the arrest of Kejriwal was made to disable him from campaigning. The apex court posted the case for further hearing in the week commencing from April 29.

The bench, in its order, stated: "Issue notice. returnable on April 24. Notice is accepted by the respondent (ED), who is



Punjab CM and AAP leader Bhagwant Mann speaks to the media outside Tihar Jail after meeting with Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, in New Delhi on Monday (ANI)

presented in court on caveat. Reply to be filed on or before April 24 and rejoinder (by Kejriwal) on or before April 27. Post-in week commencing April 29."

The AAP leader had approached the Supreme Court

challenging a Delhi High Court judgment that dismissed his plea against arrest by the ED and his subsequent remand in the excise policy case.

While filing an appeal in the apex court, he contended that

his arrest after the announcement of the general elections was 'motivated by extraneous considerations'.

The appeal stated that the sitting chief minister had been arrested in a 'motivated manner'

in the middle of the election cycle, especially after the declaration of the schedule of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

On April 9, the High Court dismissed his plea for release from jail and rejected his argu-

ment of political vendetta amid the looming Lok Sabha elections. The High Court had said that Kejriwal's absence from nine ED summons over six months undermined any claims of special privilege as chief min-

ister, suggesting his arrest was an inevitable consequence of his non-cooperation. Seeking urgent intervention from the court, the chief minister's appeal stated, it is an issue of illegal curtailment of Kejriwal's liberty.

Kejriwal's arrest also constitutes an unprecedented assault on the tenets of democracy based on free and fair elections and federalism, both of which form significant constituents of the basic structure of the Constitution, the appeal stated.

The petition, while seeking the release of the Delhi chief minister from jail, said the ED has allowed its process to be used and misused by vested interests as an instrument of oppression to not only invade the liberty of the political opponents during the 2024 general election of such vested interests but also to tarnish their reputation and self-esteem.

Such lawlessness cannot be allowed to be perpetrated under any circumstances, it said while urging the apex court to declare Kejriwal's arrest illegal.

"The petitioner's arrest, therefore, bears serious, irreversible ramifications for the future of electoral democracy in India, for if the petitioner is not released forthwith to participate in the upcoming elections, it will establish a precedence in law for ruling parties to arrest heads of political opposition on flimsy and vexatious charges before elections," the petition stated.

ANI

BRS leader sent to judicial custody in excise policy case

New Delhi, India - The Rouse Avenue Court of Delhi on Monday sent Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha to judicial custody until April 23, in connection with the excise policy case.

The Special Judge Kaveri Baweja on Monday sent Kavitha to judicial custody after noting that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) did not want her custodial remand in the matter.

The CBI, while requesting that the court send her to judicial custody, stated that Kavitha is not cooperating.

Kavitha was produced physically before the court at the end of her three-day remand granted by the court on the last



date of the hearing.

The court, while sending Kavitha to CBI remand, said that from the material collected so far by the investigat-

ing agency, it appears that there is a need for a detailed and sustained interrogation of the accused.

ANI

Centre rubbishes report saying India spends low on healthcare

New Delhi, India - After a Lancet report that asserted that the Indian government spends just 1.2 per cent of GDP on healthcare and noted that it was among the lowest among G20 countries, sources in the government said that spending is at an all-time high and out-of-pocket expenditure as a per cent of the total health expenditure has decreased.

"As per the National Health Policy, 2017, public investment in health is envisioned to reach 2.5 per cent of GDP by 2025. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has taken up with States to prioritise allocation to the health sector and enhance their health budgets by at least 10 per cent every year to



reach the goal as envisaged," one of the sources said.

The budget estimates of the Department of Health and Family Welfare have reached from

Rs 86,175 crore in 2023-24 from Rs 36,948 crore in 2014-15, thereby showing an overall increase of 133.23 per cent during the period, they said.

According to the report by medical journal Lancet, the government spending on health has fallen and now hovers around an 'abysmal' 1.2 per cent of gross domestic product, out-of-pocket expenditure on health care remains extremely high, and flagship initiatives on primary health care and universal health coverage have so far 'failed' to deliver services to people most in need.

In response, the sources in the government said the Health Ministry is making continuous efforts to increase allocation in health budget. Further, the 15th Finance Commission has provided Rs 70,051 crore as grants for health through the local governments, the sources added.

ANI

Afghanistan : At least 33 killed in flash floods

Kabul, Afghanistan - At least 33 people were killed after snow, rain, and subsequent flooding wreaked havoc in the country over the past three days, according to TOLONews.

Moreover, 27 people were injured as a result of flash floods in the country.

"According to preliminary statistics, unfortunately, thirty-three people have died and twenty-seven others have been injured due to the recent floods. Similarly, 606 homes have been either partially or completely destroyed," said Janan Saiq, spokesperson for the Taliban-controlled State Ministry of Disaster Management.

Saiq further stated that the provinces of Farah, Herat, Zabul, and Kandahar suffered excessive loss. "The majority of the casual-

ties were in the provinces of Farah, Herat, Zabul, and Kandahar, with most victims coming from Kandahar province," he said, according to TOLONews.

Afghanistan is among the most vulnerable countries against natural disasters, including floods, earthquakes, avalanches, landslides and drought.

The State Ministry for Disaster Management Affairs said that over 22,000 needy families had received and dispersed national and foreign aid since the start of the current solar month.

The ministry also warned of the risk of increasing flood casualties, as well as further snow and rain precipitation causing flooding in the provinces in the coming days.

ANI

‘PTI candidates will win in Pakistan by-elections’

Lahore, Pakistan - Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Punjab information secretary Shaukat Mehmood Basra expressed confidence in his party and said that PTI-backed candidates will emerge victorious in the by-election through the power of the vote, *The Nation* reported.

Further, Basra claims that the electorate has previously supported PTI candidates and is expected to do so again in the upcoming elections.

"PTI candidates will sweep all the seats, including Lahore," Basra said.

According to *The Nation*, Basra claims that the people of Lahore will respond to PTI founder chairman Imran Khan's call to participate in the upcoming by-elections on



PTI's Punjab information secretary Shaukat Mehmood Basra

April 21, to vote for Muhammad Khan Madani, the candidate of PP 147, Hafiz Zeeshan from PP 149, Monis Elahi from PP 158, Chaudhry Yusuf Mayo from PP 164, and Mian Shehzad Farooq from NA 119.

Later on, Basra added that Muhammad Khan Madani, Hafiz Zeeshan Rashid, Monis Elahi, Chaudhry Yusuf Mayo and Mian Shahzad Farooq are conveying the message of PTI founder Imran Khan from

The candidates said that the people of their constituencies are excited to vote for PTI candidates and make them successful in electoral battle

SHAUKAT MEHMOOD BASRA

door-to-door to the people of their respective constituencies and are rallying support for PTI. "The candidates said that the people of their constituencies are excited to vote for PTI candidates and make them successful in electoral battle. By the grace of Allah, the candidates supported by PTI will win on April 21," he added, as per *The Nation*.

According to the Election Commission of Pakistan, a total of 239 candidates will

contest 23 vacant seats in both national and provincial assemblies in the upcoming bye-elections on April 21, ARY News reported on Sunday.

The ECP official said that a total of 23 candidates were vying for the vacant seats in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, while 154 candidates were seeking their fortunes in Punjab. In Sindh, Zubair Ahmed Junejo secured his seat unopposed on PS-80.

ANI

One year of war in Sudan: Thousands killed, millions displaced amid imminent famine

Khartoum, Sudan - The deadly war in Sudan, leaving thousands of people dead and millions of others displaced, is entering its second year amid repeated warnings of an imminent famine threatening to kill those who escaped death from bullets.

Since the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) broke out on April 15, 2023, 14,790 fatalities have been recorded, while the number of people displaced inside and outside of Sudan has reached 8.2mn, a report by United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) showed on Sunday.

"It's beyond time for this devastating war to stop," a UN fact-finding mission said on Thursday, urging the warring parties to commit to an immediate ceasefire, end attacks on civilians, and ensure unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance for millions of people in desperate need of aid.

"Sudan's warring parties are legally obligated to protect civilians, but they have shown little regard for doing so," said Mohamed Chande Othman, chair of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan.

"We are now investigating alarming reports of repeated at-



Since the conflict broke out on April 15, 2023, 14,790 fatalities have been recorded, while the number of people displaced inside and outside of Sudan has reached 8.2mn

tacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and schools," he added.

Starvation is looming as fighting rages on in Sudan.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has warned of a worsening food security crisis in

Sudan, urging warring parties to halt hostilities and allow for the access of humanitarian aid.

"The food and nutrition security in Sudan is very dire," Adam Yao, FAO deputy representative in Sudan, said in a recent interview with Xinhua. "Immediate

assistance is required."

Similarly, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) said on Friday that Sudan's hunger crisis will worsen unless its people receive a constant flow of aid via all possible humanitarian corridors.

"I fear that we will see unprecedented levels of starvation and malnutrition sweep across Sudan in this lean season," said Eddie Rowe, WFP representative and country director in Sudan.

According to the UN, half of Sudan's population - some 25mn

people - need humanitarian assistance and protection, with nearly 18mn people facing acute food insecurity.

However, the war so far shows no sign of ending, as none of the warring parties seems to be willing to silence the sounds of bul-

lets or sit to the negotiation table.

In a speech on the eve of Eid al-Fitr, SAF's General Commander Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan stressed that the war would continue until the RSF is 'eliminated'.

Meanwhile, the RSF Commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also in a speech on the Eid al-Fitr occasion, said the only option was 'to achieve victory' and congratulated his forces on what he said were 'great victories' in central Sudan's Gezira and Sinnar states.

The Coordination of Civilian Democratic Forces (Taqqaddum), a Sudanese political coalition led by former Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, condemned what it called 'the escalatory message' by the army and RSF leaders, which showed 'the lack of desire of both parties for any political settlement'.

"This embodies the underestimation of the extent of the tragedy the Sudanese people are suffering due to the war," Bakri El Jak, Tagaddum's spokesman, said in a statement. "It is not possible for any party to win this war." Khalid Omer Yousif, a leading figure in the Sudanese Congress Party, said that Al-Burhan and Dagalo, with their speeches, have smashed the hope for peaceful solutions.

Xinhua

Two officers shot dead in NY's Salina, suspect also killed

New York, US - As incidents related to gun violence continue to spike in the US, a police officer and a sheriff's deputy were shot dead in another heinous act of killing in New York on Sunday in the town of Salina, Fox News reported, citing the officials.

The suspect was also killed in the incident, which took place at a house in the area of Darien Drive at around 8:15pm on Sunday.

Notably, officers were responding to a report of a stolen vehicle in Syracuse, which led them to the Salina house, where they were shot.

Onondaga County Sheriff Tobias Shelley identified the two officers who died, as a

The incident took place at a house in the area of Darien Drive at around 8:15pm on Sunday

deputy and a Syracuse police officer, Fox News reported, citing WSYR-TV. However, their names have not been disclosed. Shelley stated that there is no direct threat to the neighbourhood, and the location is secure as of now. Further details are awaited as the investigation is underway.

ANI

Sydney shopping centre attack specifically 'targeted' women, says Australian police

Sydney, Australia - In another revelation, the Australian Police has said that the Sydney shopping centre attack specifically targeted women, reported Al Jazeera. In the brutal stabbing incident that took place on Saturday afternoon, five women and a man were killed.

The police said that the suspect was a 40-year-old man who acted alone.

New South Wales Police Commissioner Karen Webb on Monday stated that it was 'obvious' that the suspected attacker, Joel Cauchi, targeted women.

"It's obvious to me, it's obvious to detectives that seems to be an area of interest that the offender focused on women and avoided the men," Webb told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), according to Al Jazeera.

According to Webb, investigators interrogated Cauchi's ac-



According to Al Jazeera, the majority of those injured in the attack were also women

quaintances in an effort to obtain 'some insight into what he might have been thinking'. The victims' gender distribution, according to

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, is 'concerning'.

According to Al Jazeera, the majority of those injured in the

attack were also women.

Notably, those killed were identified as a 55-year-old designer, a 47-year-old architect

and volunteer surf lifesaver, the 25-year-old daughter of an entrepreneur, a 27-year-old student from China and a 38-year-old new mother.

The sixth deceased, a male, was a 30-year-old Pakistani security guard, who was killed, while reportedly trying to stop the attacker.

He was shot and killed by police inspector Amy Scott, ending the attack.

In remembrance of the victims, Australia's national flag has been flown at half-mast at significant locations, including at Sydney's Harbour Bridge and Parliament House. The Australian PM said the attack was 'beyond words and understanding'. As of now, eight additional people are being treated for injuries at hospitals in Sydney, following the barbarous attack.

ANI

Namibia: Village Sunday Market bolsters local product commerce

Windhoek, Namibia - The Village Sunday Market Day in Windhoek, Namibia's capital, is creating a trade space for local products and vendors to thrive and boost their businesses.

The market features diverse local goods, including cosmetics, arts, health, food, fashion, home decor, and music.

"The market serves as a catalyst for economic development through trade promotion," said Alain Seha of agricultural training firm Urban Eden, who established the market in 2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The focus was to revive struggling local commerce affected by shop closures and disruptions in the supply chain due to the pandemic. "During COVID, there were many restrictions, and the markets fell apart. I saw an opportunity and started the Sunday local market in my driveway at home with six vendors for free,"



A vendor stands at her stall at the Village Sunday Market Day in Windhoek, Namibia, on Sunday (Xinhua)

he said on Sunday.

What started with just six vendors in Seha's driveway has now grown to accommodate up to 50 vendors at bigger premises.

"What makes it unique is that the market strictly features locally made products to enhance the local trade in Namibia and promote cultural diversity," he said,

adding that the move aimed to prioritise health-conscious and organic products to promote overall well-being in the southern African nation. According to Seha,

During COVID, there were many restrictions, and the markets fell apart. I saw an opportunity and started Sunday local market in my driveway at home with six vendors for free

ALAIN SEHA

vendors register to occupy space at the market and contribute 10 per cent of their proceeds to corporate social responsibility, reinvested into the market's logistical needs. In turn, charity organisations are offered free space on market days.

Meanwhile, the weekly market

has become a thriving hub for trade, with vendors experiencing positive growth and impact on their businesses.

Namupa Nengola, chief executive officer of Pure Marula by Taneta, which manufactures organic health and beauty products, has been a vendor in the market since its inception and has witnessed the benefits of increased networking and sales. "Beyond financial gains, the market has also helped raise awareness about our brand, popular marula oil, and fostered a sense of community among vendors and customers alike," she said.

Gloria Simon, the owner of a catering and pepper sauce enterprise, said that the market came when she lacked access to platforms for marketing her business. Today, she credits it for enhancing her business skills and customer relations. "Each market day has increased client interaction

and improved marketing strategies, resulting in self-confidence and better sales," Simon said.

The market also attracts shoppers from afar, popular amongst tourists. This, according to Nengola, aids her efforts to expand and export products to the Asian market, in addition to current shipments to the United States and Europe.

Despite the progress made, some challenges remain. According to Seha, one key obstacle is attracting a diverse range of vendors to cater to the public's needs. "This is seen as a crucial step in the market's growth," he said.

According to Seha, the initiative hopes to attract vendors with high demand and quality products to establish the market as a premier destination in Windhoek to aid the country's economic growth.

Xinhua

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

'Attack against Israel was necessary'

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said military action became necessary after a lack of action by UNSC

Tehran, Iran - Iran's attack on Israel was 'necessary and appropriate' and was aimed at military targets, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

In a news conference in the capital Tehran, ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said the military action became necessary after a lack of action by the UN Security Council and also due to 'irresponsible behaviour' shown by the US, Britain and France.

On April 1, an attack on the Iranian Consulate in Damascus, which Iran blamed on Israel, resulted in the killing of seven Iranian military officials, including a senior commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) for Syria and Lebanon.

After the attack, top Iranian political and military leadership vowed 'definitive revenge'.

Late on Saturday, IRGC launched a barrage of drones and missiles at Israel in an operation, dubbed True Promise, that lasted several hours, inflaming the already tense regional situation.

Iranian officials, including President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, defended the military action, the first direct attack on Israel, as a 'legitimate



Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani

defence'.

Kanaani, addressing the weekly presser in Tehran on Monday, echoed them, saying the attack targeting military sites in Israel was 'in line with Iran's inherent right to self-defence' and 'within the framework of legitimate defence

under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter'.

He said the attack was in response to Israel's 'repeated aggression', including the attack on the Iranian Consulate in Damascus, adding that the Iranian military acted 'professionally and responsibly'.

Repeating what Iran's foreign minister said on Sunday, Kanaani said Tehran had given 'necessary warnings before the military action in a diplomatic way'.

Amir-Abdollahian on Sunday said Iran had 'communicated to our neighbours and allies that

our reaction would unequivocally manifest as a legitimate defence', adding that the objective was 'legitimate defence' and revolved around 'punishing the aggressive regime of Israel'.

Kanaani, reiterating the same, said Iran has 'issued warnings' against the potential

Kanaani said the attack was in response to Israel's 'repeated aggression', including the attack on Iranian Consulate in Damascus

utilisation of airspace and territory of regional countries by the US in support of Israel.

Amid speculation that Israel might respond to Iran's strikes, there are reports that US officials have urged Tel Aviv not to go ahead with any further military action.

Israel to build 'global alliance'

Israeli war cabinet member Benny Gantz said on Sunday that Israel would build an international alliance and make Iran pay the price at the right time and in the right manner for its attack on the country.

His remarks were made in a recorded video broadcast on his Facebook account amid escalating calls within the Israeli government to take immediate action against Iran.

"Iran launched an attack on Israel yesterday (Saturday), but it encountered the strength of the Israeli defence system," said Gantz, the leader of the Blue and White party.

He considered Iran a 'global problem and a regional challenge'. Gantz added that Iran 'also poses a threat to Israel'.

Confrontation between Israel and Iran is 'not over yet, and the strategic alliance and regional cooperation system that we have built and endured its crucial test must be strengthened now specifically', he said.

"In the face of the Iranian threat, we will build a regional alliance, and we will make Iran pay the price in the manner and at the appropriate time for us," he added.

Gantz did not provide details on how this alliance will be built and the parties that will form it.

He said that 'until today, we must remember that we have not yet completed our missions, including the return of the hostages (in Gaza) and removing the threat from the residents of the north (on the borders with Lebanon) and the south (on the borders with Gaza). We will continue the military campaign with determination and responsibility'.

Anadolu Agency

UK urges Israel not to escalate the situation

London, UK - Israel should not escalate the situation in the Middle East as Iran's weekend attack was a 'double defeat', the UK foreign secretary said on Monday.

Speaking to Sky News, David Cameron said the attack was an 'almost total failure', and Iran has 'revealed to the world that they are from malign influence in the region, prepared to do this'.

Cameron said: "So our hope is that there won't be a retaliatory response, and instead, the world's focus should shift to Hamas. They still hold those hostages. They've been offered a deal that prisoners can be released from Israeli jails in return for some of those hostages, and there'll be a pause in the fighting. That's what needs to happen next. And that's what I hope we can focus on."

UK's support to Israel

Also reiterating the UK's commitment to Israel's safety, Cameron said the UK is 'a supporter of Israel's right to self-defence'. Cameron said the



David Cameron

UK's role in the military operations was providing airplanes to support US Airforce jets 'so the Americans could do more over the skies of Israel'.

'But at the same time, we said that' if there are drones or missiles coming from that region into Israel, 'we'll shoot them down'.

"And that's what our very skilled pilots did there."

Asked about Iran's right to retaliate against the Damascus embassy bombing on April 1, Cameron said he would argue that 'there is a massive degree of difference between what Israel did in Damascus and ... 301 weapons being launched

by the State of Iran at the State of Israel for the first time a state on state attack 101 ballistic missiles, 36 cruise missiles, 185 drones, that is a degree of difference'. "And I think a reckless and dangerous thing for Iran to have done."

Cameron also spoke about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and said that 'not letting more aid into Gaza was a mistake', and the UK has told Israeli officials frankly that 'they needed to open up the crossing points and use more trucks in the need to make sure there was proper deconfliction so that aid workers could get around Gaza'.

"And we wouldn't have further incidents like the terrible killing of the World Central Kitchen workers," he added.

Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday that French jets intercepted 'what they should' during Iran's attack against Israel.

"For years now, we have a military base in Jordan to fight against terrorism," he recalled during an interview with broadcasters BFMTV and RMC.

Anadolu Agency

68 more Palestinians killed in Gaza Strip

Gaza City, Palestine - Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip killed 68 more Palestinians, pushing up the death toll since last October to 33,797, the Health Ministry in the besieged enclave said on Monday.

"The Israeli occupation (forces) committed seven massacres against families in the Gaza Strip, leaving 68 martyrs and 94 injured during the past 24 hours," a ministry statement said. "Many people are still trapped under rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them," it added.

Flouting the International Court of Justice's provisional ruling, Israel continues its onslaught on the Gaza Strip, killing 33,797 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injuring 76,465 others since Oct. 7, according to Palestinian health authorities.

Meanwhile, Malak Haniyeh, the granddaughter of Hamas's political bureau chairman Ismail Haniyeh, succumbed on Monday to injuries sustained in an Israeli strike that killed other family members on the first day of the Muslim festival of Eid-al-Fitr, medical sources told Anadolu.

Three sons of Haniyeh, along with several of his grandchild-



The death toll in Gaza Strip since last October has climbed to 33,797

Malak Haniyeh, granddaughter of Hamas's political bureau chairman Ismail Haniyeh, succumbed to injuries sustained in an Israeli strike that killed other family members

dren, were killed on Wednesday in an Israeli airstrike in a refugee camp in western Gaza City.

The Israeli airstrike targeted a car carrying members of the Haniyeh family in the Al-Shati refugee camp as they were giving good wishes to the camp's residents for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, eyewitnesses told Anadolu.

Medical sources told

Anadolu that the airstrike resulted in the deaths of three of Haniyeh's sons - Hazem, Amir, and Mohammed - as well as several of their own children, in addition to injuring others.

Fresh raids in West Bank

At least 25 Palestinians were detained in fresh Israeli raids in the occupied West Bank on

Monday, according to prisoners' affairs groups.

Most arrests took place in Tulkarm city, while others occurred in the cities of Jerusalem, Ramallah, Jenin, Tubas, and Nablus, the Commission of Detainees' Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoners Society said in a joint statement.

At least 8,240 Palestinians have been detained by Israeli forces in the West Bank since October 7, the statement added. Tensions have been running high across the occupied territory since Israel launched a deadly military offensive against the Gaza Strip.

Anadolu Agency

'We are at cliff's edge, and we must back away from it': EU chief

Oviedo, Spain - Following Iran's weekend attack on Israel, the EU foreign policy chief warned of the risk of a conflict that could 'destabilise' the entire Middle East and ripple across the world.

"We are at the cliff's edge, and we must back away from it," Josep Borrell told Spanish broadcaster Onda Cero on Monday. "It's time to stop. It's time to prevent the war from expanding. It's time to stop the war in Gaza."

Borrell said he believes that

Iran launched the missiles and drones in a way so Israel had 'time and capacity to intercept' them, adding that Iran did not try to hit civilian targets.

Some 99 percent of the barrage was intercepted, according to Israeli officials.

While he said the international community is trying to pressure the Israeli government to avoid escalation, he expressed concern that there is a faction in the Israeli War Cabinet that wants to take a 'strong' military response to Iran.



EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell

He explained that he had a long conversation with his Iranian counterpart this weekend and highlighted the need for dialogue. "We need to have the best relations possible with Iran, knowing what we think of its political regime and with all the condemnations and sanctions that the EU has imposed," he said.

"It's an important regional actor, and right now it's more important than ever."

Borrell added that he hopes Iran is not a nuclear power yet

and criticised the US for exiting the Iran nuclear deal in 2018.

"The risk that Iran becomes a nuclear power is a lot greater without the pact than with it," he said, lamenting the fact that the negotiations were recently frozen again.

He also said he doubts negotiations will get revived anytime soon, despite it 'being in our interest'. Borrell also discussed how more countries recognising the state of Palestine would be a 'boost' for the two-state solution, which he said should

be implemented.

He criticised the approach of the 1990s Oslo Accords for not explicitly endorsing a two-state solution, saying that the 'gradual project' of a five-year transition period 'didn't lead anywhere except making things worse'.

"Look at the West Bank, where every day there is violence... this weekend there were seriously violent acts resulting in the death of a 14-year-old."

Anadolu Agency

Islamophobic crimes in Germany have more than doubled in 2023

Berlin, Germany - The number of Islamophobic crimes in Germany has more than doubled last year, media reports said on Monday.

In 2023, some 1,464 crimes nationwide were classified as Islamophobic, compared to 610 anti-Muslim hate crimes in the country since the previous year, German Press Agency dpa reported, citing a government reply to an inquiry by Christian Democratic Union (CDU) lawmaker Christoph de Vries.

Meanwhile, police reported 137 Islamophobic crimes in the first quarter of this year.

The dramatic surge in anti-Muslim hate crimes is linked to the escalating Gaza war, according to the report.

The German government had repeatedly expressed concern about the rise in anti-Muslim racism in the country since the start of Israel's attacks on Gaza following attacks by Hamas on October 7.

Any attacks on Muslims in Germany, for religious or other reasons, are 'absolutely unacceptable', government spokesperson Steffen Hebe-



streit was quoted as saying.

"The nearly five million Muslims in Germany have every right to be protected," he added.

The Berlin-based Alliance Against Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate had also warned of growing anti-Muslim racism amid the escalating Israel-Palestine conflict in Gaza.

"We are witnessing an intensification of anti-Muslim racism in Germany. This is something we should all be concerned about and needs to be taken seriously," said Rima Hanano, the head of the nongovernmental organisation.

"We must not allow inhumane positions to be further normalised and thereby jeopardise social cohesion. All people must be protected from racist, antisemitic and other inhumane violence and threats," she added.

With a population of over 84 mn people, Germany has the second-largest Muslim population in Western Europe after France. Among the country's nearly 5.3mn Muslims, more than 3mn are of Turkish origin.

Anadolu Agency

Will defend, support Iran at UNSC meeting, says Russia

Russian FM made the remarks in a phone call with his Iranian counterpart

Tehran, Iran - The Russian foreign minister on Monday said his country will strongly 'defend and support' Iran's military action against Israel as 'legitimate defense' at the UN Security Council meeting.

Sergey Lavrov made the remarks in a phone conversation with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Monday, according to a statement issued by Iran's Foreign Ministry.

Lavrov expressed hope for the reduction of tensions in the region after Iran's retaliatory attack against Israel that came two weeks after an attack on the Iranian Consulate in Syria.

The attack on the Iranian Consulate building in Damascus, which resulted in the killing of seven Iranian military officials, including a senior Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commander for Syria and Lebanon, was blamed on Israel.

Russia was one of the countries that condemned the attack, which inflamed tensions between Tehran and Tel Aviv, two regional arch-foes, with Iran vowing 'definitive revenge'.

Many countries had urged



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

Iran to exercise restraint and abandon the planned retaliatory military action, but Iranian officials invoked the country's 'right to self-defence' under the UN Charter for the operation and carried out an attack on Israel on Saturday.

The US, UK, France and Germany condemned the strikes in separate statements on Sunday, following which Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned their ambassadors in Tehran to protest.

Lavrov criticised countries who refused to condemn the at-

tack on the Iranian Consulate in Damascus, adding that Russia 'had no doubt' about Iran responding to it.

Russia's foreign minister added that his country believes that the process of carrying out this military action by Iran was

Lavrov criticised countries who refused to condemn the attack on the Iranian Consulate in Damascus, adding that Russia 'had no doubt' about Iran responding to it

'based on a responsible response with self-restraint', the statement noted.

For his part, Amir-Abdollahian 'explained the objectives and manner of the military action' taken by the Iranian military on 'specific targets in the occupied territories of Palestine', referring to Israel, the Iranian Foreign Ministry statement said.

He emphasised that the 'limited action' was aimed at 'detering, punishing and warning' Israel, adding that if Tel Aviv takes any further action against Iran, it will 'definitely face a very strong response', it added.

Anadolu Agency

Singapore's PM to relinquish office in May

Singapore - Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said he will relinquish the office on May 15, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on Monday.

Lee will formally advise the country's president to appoint Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong to succeed him, said the statement.

Wong has the unanimous support of the Members of Parliament of the ruling People's Action Party, said the statement.

The new prime minister will be sworn in at 8pm on May 15 at the Istana, Singapore's presidential palace.

On social media after the PMO statement was issued, Lee also called on the Singaporeans to support Lawrence Wong and the fourth-generation leadership team (4G team).

"Lawrence and the 4G team have worked hard to gain the people's trust, notably during the pandemic. Through the Forward Singapore exercise, they have



Lee Hsien Loong

worked with many Singaporeans to refresh our social compact and develop the national agenda for a new generation," Lee said in his Facebook post.

The new leadership is committed to keeping Singapore working well and moving ahead, which are always top priorities for the government, Lee stressed.

"I ask all Singaporeans to give Lawrence and his team your full support, and work with them to create a brighter future for Singapore," Lee said. Lee announced his intention to hand over the power as prime minister last November.

Xinhua

INTO SPACE



A rocket carrying Gaojing-3 01 satellite blasts off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China on Monday (Xinhua)

Sharjah Art Museum a beacon of cultural enlightenment

Sharjah, UAE - Nestled in the heart of Sharjah, the cultural capital of the UAE, Sharjah Art Museum stands as a testament to the emirate's unwavering commitment to nurturing the arts.

Since its grand opening in 1997, the museum has not only played a pivotal role in elevating the appreciation of art among the public but has also contributed significantly to nurturing a community aware of museums' significance not merely as cultural destinations but as engaging and enjoyable educational spaces that enrich society.

The inauguration of the Sharjah Art Museum was propelled by the visionary aim of Dr Sheikh Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah, to make art accessible to all. Central to the museum's mission is to showcase the rich tapestry of cultural heritage alongside contemporary artistic expressions, underscoring the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation in the region's arts scene.

"Being the first purpose-built art museum in the gulf region, it had a very significant role to play in shaping the art and culture scene that has contributed immensely in the broader sense," said Alya Al Mulla, the museum's curator, underscoring the foundational philosophy of the museum.



Over the years, the museum has hosted an impressive array of exhibitions, numbering over a hundred. These exhibitions have spanned a diverse range of themes and epochs, from classical Islamic art to modern and contemporary works, ensuring that every visitor finds something that resonates.

The museum has been instrumental in bringing international art to the local audience, as well as promoting the works of regional artists on a global stage.

A standout feature of the museum since 2010 has been the *Lasting Impressions* series, an annual exhibition dedicated to celebrating the lifetime achievements of distinguished

artists from the Arab world.

Notable names featured in this series include Abdul Qader Al Rais, Najat Makki, and Samia Halaby, among others.

"The exhibition highlights the contributions of pioneering Arab artists to the history of Arab art. Many of these artists would not have had the opportunity to have a museum show on this scale. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for us to present their life and legacy in the most authentic way possible, while simultaneously making it accessible to the public helping them understand and appreciate various art forms," said Al Mulla.

The museum boasts an extensive collection that features some

of the most renowned artists from the Middle East and beyond.

"Beyond aesthetic values, each work of art tells a story, reflecting the artist's background, past experiences, and a social commentary on the region's complex history," reflects Al Mulla, emphasising the museum's role in preserving the legacy of artistic giants.

Among its most celebrated collections is the permanent exhibition dedicated to the works of the pioneering Arab artists, Louay Kayyali, alongside other luminaries such as Saloua Raouda Choucair, Ismail Fattah, and Faiq Hassan.

Sharjah Art Museum has been a key player in bridging the gap

between the art world and the public.

Through its educational programmes, workshops, and interactive tours, the museum has made art not just something to be observed but to be experienced and engaged with.

In 2023, it rolled out over 138 workshops engaging more than 2661 participants and more than 117 workshops targeting over 876 participants in 2022, while 2021 saw a little more than 12 workshops being carried out and supervised by artists attracting over 518 participants.

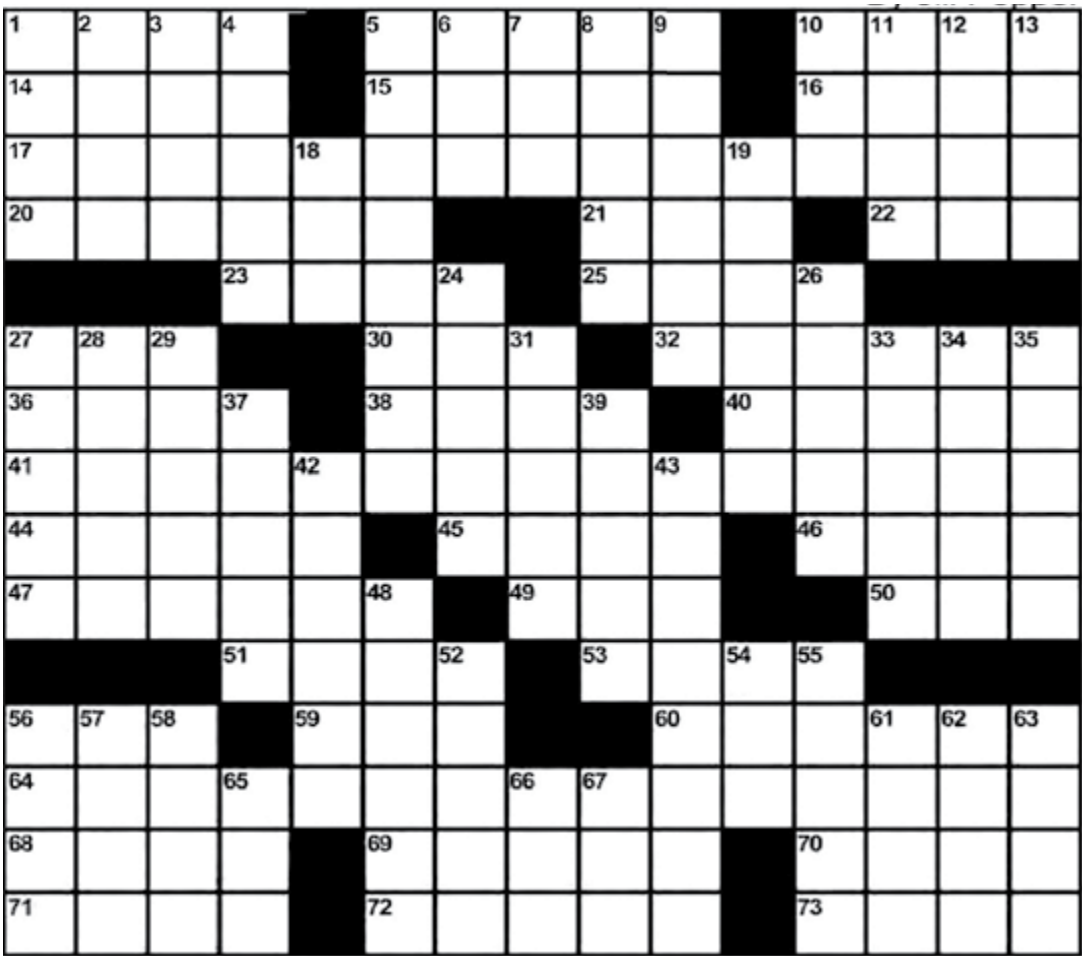
These initiatives have demystified the art world for many, making it more approachable and understandable to people from all walks of life.

Furthermore, the museum has become a platform for artists, both professional and amateur, to showcase their work. By hosting annual events such as the Sharjah Biennial, along with various exhibitions throughout the year, the museum offers artists the opportunity to gain exposure and connect with a wider audience.

Sharjah Art Museum's efforts to bring people closer to art, by providing platforms for artists to showcase their works and by engaging the community through educational initiatives, have cemented its status as a beacon of cultural enlightenment.

WAM

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Insect's sense organ
5) Log-transport channel
10) Sa robber, slangily
14) China is there
15) Caulking stu
16) Exam sans pencils
17) Choose a career, e.g.
20) Despotic one
21)"Ringson_ ngers..."
22) Yonder lass
23) "Dragnet" star Jack
25) Himalayan legend
27) Prints, pastels, paint-ings, etc.
30) Eyebrow shape
32) Take om a sum
36) Female hogs
38) Town near Santa Fe
40) Category of creative work
41) Be t
44) Don't di er
45) "Buona..." (Italian greeting)
46) Voicemail signal
47) Confused fights
49) Wriggly swimmer
50) Accountant's word 5l)
Way more than a few
53)Distinctive air

- 56) Microbrewery pint, sometimes
59) One may be thrown in anger
60) Magazine supervisor
64) What many have near Christmas
68) Paquin of films
69) Indigenous New Zealander
70) Opera solo
71) Rise up, as a horse
72) Acquired some more
73) Capone adversary

DOWN

- 1) Not present or ture
2) Like used briquettes
3) Pinocchio, infamously
4) Southe uit tree
5) Relief r sore tootsies
6) Computer linkage ab-breviation
7) Oahu instrument, briefly
8) Like cooked oatmeal
9) Hostedorroasted
10) Not me or them
11) Boots an easy grounder
12) Deep cut
13) Club that may per rm
18) Selma-to-Talladega di-rection

- 19) Nicaraguan statesman
24) Hillsides, to a Scots-man
26) That is, in Latin
27) Indian border state
28) Cheek application
29) Spin around
31) Outback ca
33) SAG is one
34) Witchlike old woman
35) Article of faith
37) Kind of wool or drum
39) Landslide debris
42) Start a round of golf
43) Something checked be re answering
48) Symbol of disgrace
52) Ending for "farm" or "home"
54) Commotion
55) Adar llower
56) From_ (at a distance)
57) Checkout annoyance
58) Where Vulcan rged
61) Buggy item?
62) Elevator pioneer
63) Showy Scandinavian rugs
65) Galley implement
66) Bidding action
67) "Look_ ye leap"

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

If your recent dreams have been unclear, don't waste any of your brainpower freaking out about it. There is no need to solve every puzzle they present, because they are not literal warnings of what is about to happen in your life. They are just pieces of your subconscious flying around in your brain, bouncing into each other. If you want to look for insight on how to handle tough issues, then turn away from dreams and toward your friends. They have advice you need to hear.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Now that you've made a tough decision, your day will feel effortless. Green lights, warm smiles, and an open road greet you everywhere you go today. Things are clearer. It's no surprise that with all this weight taken off your mind, you can move forward on what you really need to do. There's a strong sense of possibility that is shining brightly in your romantic life too. Unexpected invitations may intimidate you, so just take things at your own pace.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21

What happened to that famous "can do" attitude of yours? You can try to get it back today by asking friends to give you a few words of encouragement. And they're going to love being the people you can rely on right now, especially after all you've done for them. Your capabilities have never dimmed, but it looks like your self-confidence has, and that simply won't do. The good news is you can get it back today if you let your friends cheer you on.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Who, in 2004, riding the prototype KTM 250-SXF four stroke, won the MX2 World Championship?

- A. Marc DeReuver
B. Antonio Cairoli
C. Tyla Rattray
D. Ben Townley

2. In probability theory, a stochastic process is what kind?

- A. A guess, still to be proven
B. Random
C. Slow-moving
D. Interrupted

3. Drakensberg is a name for an escarpment in what area??

- A. The Swiss Alps
B. Southern Africa
C. The Balkans
D. The Maghreb

Answers: 1.D 2.B 3.B



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

There could be a strong connection between you and someone very surprising today. They will come out with an observation about you that is right on the mark, and the conversation that ensues proves the two of you have a lot in common. You will be the center of attention in this dynamic. Indulge yourself today. When you do something nice for yourself, you are showing the world that you value yourself, and that is very attractive.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You have an easy attitude about life today, and you'll have a good time just shooting the breeze with your friends, so try not to have a very ambitious schedule. It will feel liberating to slow down your pace. You are getting along really well with other people, so surround yourself with as many friends as you can all day long. It's a great time to have a big potluck dinner, get everyone together for a game night, or enjoy some other communal activity.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Cast a critical eye on all your relationships at work, in your family, and in your romantic sphere. There's nothing necessarily wrong, but you need to check in and make sure that you're doing your part to keep the lines of communication wide open. Be careful not to be too hard on yourself if you've been unavailable to the people who care about you. No one is perfect. Remember to treat yourself with the same gentle compassion you show to your friends and family.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

There is a growing imbalance between your heart and head and it's necessary for you to deal with it today. You have been feeling a lot more than thinking, which could cause a misunderstanding if you're not careful. Be aware of when your feelings are relevant and when they are not. Any major decisions you've been mulling over should be held off until a time when you know you're looking solely at the facts. You're not especially objective right now.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You should just relax and try to enjoy watching the world go by today. Resist the urge to dive into the rat race. Life from the sidelines can be just as beautiful as life in the heat of the action. Plus, gaining an outsider's perspective will come in handy in future relationships and job opportunities. Understanding why people are doing what they're doing will give you a leg up on the competition. Coasting through life today will help you greatly tomorrow.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

It's going to be an easy day for you. Most of your hard choices are behind you, you're in a wonderful mood, and any workload you've been assigned will be pretty simple to complete on time. This means that all your energy can (and should) be devoted to having fun and relaxing. This is a wonderful day to hang out with friends you haven't seen in ages. Reconnect and remember the good times together.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You might be forced to deal with a past failure today, but you can fix what needs to be fixed as long as you have confidence in yourself. Don't sell yourself short. You know exactly what to do and how to do it. Start listening to your strong intuition, because it's getting even stronger! Trust your gut to tell you the answer to a question you've had about someone who confuses you. If you overthink things, you'll lose an opportunity.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Getting a friend to join you in your latest plan might be difficult, but it will be worth all the effort it takes. They make things more fun! Even though they need to be convinced, when it comes to what to do next, their presence is important to you. Don't give up until they eventually say yes. You're ready to be more spontaneous, and they should try it too. Appeal to their imagination. Paint a picture of the best-case scenario. That might sway them over to your side.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Some surprising news will turn even the most level-headed people into temperamental children. Luckily, their transformation will be incredibly amusing to you. You're in a very tolerant mood overall right now, so this is a good day to put in some time with those relatives who sometimes test your patience. Conversation topics that used to make you groan will somehow be a lot more interesting than ever before. Your curiosity overrides your cynicism today.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

F	T	H	M
G	E	Qu	M
E	A	D	E
U	S	I	A

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

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

WORD BUILDER



You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

HISTORY MADE!

Unbeaten Leverkusen thrash Bremen to win maiden Bundesliga title



Bayer Leverkusen defeated Werder Bremen 5-0 on Sunday to win the title in emphatic fashion

Leverkusen, Germany - Undefeated Bayer Leverkusen secured their first Bundesliga title on Sunday with a 5-0 victory over Werder Bremen, breaking an 11-year stranglehold on the league by Bayern Munich.

Xabi Alonso's team, who have now gone a league-record 29 matches without defeat this season to secure their first trophy since 1993, have a 16-point lead over Bayern with five matches remaining. They can add more titles this season, having reached the German Cup final and the Eu-

ropa League quarter-finals where they have a 2-0 first leg advantage over West Ham United.

Leverkusen left nothing to chance and sealed their title win at the first opportunity with Florian Wirtz bagging a hat-trick in a win that stretched their unbeaten run across all competitions to a remarkable 43 games this season. "I cannot describe this," Germany international Wirtz said. "I personally can still not realise this has happened. I will need a few moments in the changing room to understand what we have achieved.

"We could not have imagined something like this when you see how the previous season went."

They earned a 24th minute penalty and Victor Boniface, who only recently came back after a three-month injury break, stepped up to score his first league goal since December and his 11th of the campaign.

There were more chances to double their lead in a one-sided first half, with Amine Adli also hitting the woodwork for the hosts.

Fans had been out in force

I cannot describe this. I personally can still not realise this has happened. I will need a few moments in the changing room to understand what we have achieved.

FLORIAN WIRTZ

from early morning across the city to prepare for the big moment, having queued for hours outside the stadium before the gates opened. Now they could barely stay in their seats with their team only 45 minutes away from the title.

Werder came out fighting after the break, trying to spoil the party, but Granit Xhaka's missile

on the hour from 25 metres out sparked wild celebrations.

The hosts were not yet done with substitute Wirtz adding another goal eight minutes later.

The Germany international, gearing up for Euro 2024 on home soil in June, bagged another in the 83rd with impatient fans then briefly running onto the pitch.



Bilal Khan took three wickets for 11 runs to emerge as the man of the match

Oman trounce UAE by nine wickets for third win in a row

Muscat - A dominant Oman outplayed UAE by nine wickets in a Group B match to register their third successive win in the ACC Men's Premier Cup T20I tournament at the Oman Cricket Academy ground on Monday.

For the second successive day, rains and wet outfield delayed the game and the game was curtailed to 15 overs a side.

Having defeated Bahrain in the opener and Cambodia on Sunday, the third victory for Duleep Mendis-coached side meant they stayed on top of the group with a game remaining. Oman will play their concluding game against Kuwait on Wednesday with a win sealing the top spot. UAE are at second spot with four after Monday's loss with Kuwait at third with two points but hav-

ing played a game less.

Nepal with three wins currently lead Group A.

On Monday, Oman chased down the target of 143 to win in 12.4 overs, as Kashyap Prajapati and Khalid Kail slammed unbeaten half-centuries and Naseem Khushi made a brisk 39 off 15 balls.

Oman openers Prajapati and Khushi were in rampaging form as the hosts sprinted to 30 for no loss in just two overs with the wicketkeeper-batter Khushi blasting 25 off just eight balls that included three huge sixes. Oman raced to 50 in only three overs with Prajapati at 18 and Khushi at 30.

Earlier, Bilal Khan who finished with three wickets for 11 runs gave Oman a dream start with a wicket off the second ball of the innings as he clean bowled Alishan Sharafu.

Last-gasp goal helps Lyon stun Brest



Ainsley Maitland-Niles celebrates his goal

Lyon, France - Second-placed Brest lost 4-3 at Olympique Lyon after a penalty 15 minutes into stoppage time by Ainsley Maitland-Niles left the visitors 10 points behind Paris St Germain in Ligue 1.

Eric Roy's side remain on 53 points, only one ahead of AS Monaco, who have a game in hand and visit Brest next Sunday.

PSG are top on 63 points, with their match this weekend rescheduled ahead of Tuesday's Champions League quarter-final second leg at Barcelona, who they trail 3-2.

Lyon have now gone five games unbeaten and climb to seventh place on 41 points, two points behind Lens in the race for European qualifying places.

Corentin Tolisso put Lyon ahead in the 18th minute with a

powerful half-volley into the top corner before Steve Mounie's header at a set-piece levelled the scores on the hour.

Romain Del Castillo gave the visitors the lead with a superb free kick in the 64th minute and made it 3-1 with his second goal into an empty net three minutes later.

Alexandre Lacazette pulled one back for Lyon with a close-range finish at a corner in the 70th and Nicolas Tagliafico equalised with a low shot nine minutes later.

Both sides were reduced to 10 men in the 86th when Tagliafico and Pierre Lees-Melou got red cards after a scuffle before a nasty tackle by Brest keeper Marco Bizot on Lacazette gave Lyon a penalty and victory through Maitland-Niles.

Roma's Ndicka 'feeling better' after collapsing on the pitch

Udine, Italy - AS Roma's defender Evan Ndicka is feeling better after he collapsed on the pitch in the second half of their match at Udinese and was carried off on a stretcher with the game later abandoned, the Serie A club said on Sunday.

The score was 1-1 when the Ivory Coast central defender fell backwards onto the pitch 18 minutes from time.

Ndicka was conscious but clearly in pain, rubbing his chest with his right hand as the medical team rushed towards him.

He was then carried off, giving a thumbs-up gesture.

"Following the on-field medical emergency involving Evan



AS Roma's Evan Ndicka is carried off the pitch on a stretcher after collapsing on the field

Ndicka, the match between Udinese and Roma has been suspended," Roma said on social media platform X.

"The player is conscious and has been taken to hospital for further checks."

After a lengthy delay, the match was suspended and the players left the field, with the game later abandoned.

Italian media reported that the tests carried out on Ndicka at the hospital ruled out a heart attack. Roma later said the 24-year-old will remain in hospital for further evaluation. "The squad went to visit Ndicka at the hospital. Evan is feeling better and is in good spirits," the club said on X.

Okafor strikes late as Milan escape with draw against Sassuolo in six-goal thriller

Sassuolo, Italy - Second-placed AC Milan twice fought back from two goals down to secure a 3-3 draw at relegation-threatened Sassuolo with a late equaliser by substitute Noah Okafor in Serie A on Sunday.

Milan have 69 points, six ahead of Juventus with six matches left. Sassuolo are second-bottom with 26 points. Inter Milan, who host Cagliari later on Sunday, are runaway leaders on 82.

It was a frustrating match for Milan, who dominated possession and chances, particularly for Samuel Chukwueze who had two goals disallowed for offside by a hair's breadth.

Sassuolo goalkeeper Andrea Consigli also made several fine saves, notably a sensational early stop when he clawed away Malick Thiaw's header which was destined for the top corner.

"We tried absolutely every-



AC Milan's Noah Okafor celebrates his goal with teammates

thing. We scored three goals and created many more chances. Nobody could have complained if we'd scored five or six today," Milan boss Stefano Pioli told DAZN.

"I saw errors today but there was nothing wrong with the attitude and I'd not say we were distracted by other issues," he added ahead of Thursday's Europa League quarter-final return

We'll do everything to win the derby. That's to make our fans happy, to confirm second place and that's a prestigious target.

STEFANO PIOLI

leg at AS Roma.

Milan also meet Inter on April 22 in a match that could potentially secure the Nerazzurri their 20th league title.

"Clearly, Inter will win the Scudetto. We'll do everything we can to win the derby. That's to make our fans happy, to confirm second place and that's a prestigious target," Pioli said.

Sassuolo shocked Milan after four minutes when the unmarked Andrea Pinamonti volleyed

home from close range after a fine cross was flicked on with his heel by Kristian Thorstvedt.

Armand Lauriente then doubled the lead six minutes later after sprinting into the box and striking a shot that was blocked by keeper Marco Sportiello but rebounded into the path of the Sassuolo striker for an easy finish.

Rafael Leao revived Milan's chances with a goal in the 20th minute when he went on a solo run, slipped past two defenders and slotted the ball into the far corner of the net.

The excitement continued as Lauriente scored again eight minutes after the break before Milan's Luka Jovic pulled one back just before the hour mark from close range.

Sassuolo looked exhausted near the end of the match, with Milan creating several chances but Consigli stood strong.

GUNNERS IMplode

Arsenal’s title hopes suffer after defeat to Villa

London, England - Arsenal’s Premier League title push was hit by late goals from Aston Villa’s Leon Bailey and Ollie Watkins as they suffered a surprise 2-0 home defeat on Sunday to hand the initiative to leaders and defending champions Manchester City.

Villa substitute Bailey tapped home from close range in the 84th minute before Watkins’ sublime finish three minutes later sent Gunners fans streaming for the exits. Arsenal’s loss, their first in 12 league games, leaves them in second place, two points behind City and level on points with third-placed Liverpool with six games left to play. “We knew that this moment could come and now it’s about reacting and keep believing and doing what we can,” Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta told reporters.

“Now is the moment to stand up, as a leader, as a character, to make yourself count. When you win and win and win for four months, it’s very, very simple to do it. The moment is now.”

Following Liverpool’s 1-0 defeat to Crystal Palace earlier on Sunday, the weekend belonged to City who bolstered their chances of an unprecedented fourth straight league title with a 5-1 demolition of Luton Town.

Opta now give City a 70% chance of winning the Premier League, with Arsenal on just over 18% and Liverpool nearly 12%.



Aston Villa’s Leon Bailey (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Arsenal

We had one of the best performances in the first half that we had this season by far ... it should have been three or four or more

MIKEL ARTETA

Arteta said his side’s trip to Bayern Munich in the second leg of their Champions League quar-

ter-final tie, after a 2-2 draw in midweek, was “a beautiful opportunity” to respond.

The win boosts fourth-placed Villa’s chances of qualifying for next season’s Champions League and moves them three points above Tottenham Hotspur, albeit having played a game more. Villa weathered pressure in the first half, with Kai Havertz shooting straight at goalkeeper Emi Martinez before Gabriel Jesus and Bukayo Saka hit the side-netting as an opening goal for the Gunners’ felt like an imminent inevitability.

“We had one of the best performances in the first half that we had this season by far ... it should have been three or four or more,” Arteta said.

Villa went closest, however, when Watkins’ effort bounced off one post and narrowly wide of the other, while Youri Tielemans’s rasping effort hit the bar then the post and somehow stayed out as the visitors improved markedly after the break.

Bayley gave Villa the lead when he turned in Lucas Digne’s dangerous cross before Watkins

broke Arsenal hearts with a beautiful chip over keeper David Raya to settle the contest.

The goal was Watkins’ 19th in the league, which with his 10 league assists puts him behind only Bayern Munich’s Harry Kane and Paris St Germain’s Kylian Mbappe for goal involvements in Europe’s top five leagues this season.



Mikel Arteta

Arteta wants Arsenal to ‘stand up and be counted’ after Villa blow

London, England - Arsenal’s Premier League title destiny was wrenched out of their own hands as they lost 2-0 at home to Aston Villa on Sunday but manager Mikel Arteta said how they react will be crucial.

A first loss in 12 league games brought back horrible memories of last season when Arsenal collapsed under the relentless pressure of Manchester City.

Late goals by Leon Bailey and Ollie Watkins secured a superb win for Villa on a day in which Manchester City were left as clear favourites to win a fourth successive title.

City, who thrashed Luton Town on Saturday, have 73 points from 32 games with Arsenal and Liverpool, who were stunned by Crystal Palace earlier on Sunday, on 71.

“That’s the reality now,” Arteta said when asked if Manchester City were now in charge of the title race.

“It’s been the same for a few months. We knew this moment could come and now it’s about reacting well. If one result is going to (derail us) then we are not strong enough.

“We had a great performance in the first half, it should have been three or four. Second half the momentum shifted. Now the moment is to stand up and be counted.”

Thousands of fans streamed out of The Emirates after Villa’s second goal. Midfielder Declan Rice said all was not lost.

“Sometimes you need a game like this to re-set and re-focus and I still believe there will be loads of twists and turns,” Rice, who was not at his influential best, told Sky Sports.

Klopp’s Liverpool farewell tour beginning to falter

Liverpool, England - Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp’s farewell tour could end with a whimper after Crystal Palace delivered a huge blow to his side’s Premier League title chances with a 1-0 win at Anfield on Sunday that left the German reeling.

“This one feels really, really rubbish. I need time to process that,” Klopp told Sky Sports.

Liverpool appeared poised to write Klopp a fairytale ending in his last season before leaving the club after they won the League Cup and sat atop the league table with just two losses.

But Eberechi Eze scored in the 14th minute on Sunday and unlikely foes Palace held on to hand Liverpool a third league loss of the season and their first at home since October 2022 while ending their own 10-match winless run on the road.

The defeat was the latest in a string of disappointing recent results for Klopp’s men, who have dropped five points in their last two league games to sit third, level on 71 points with second-placed Arsenal, who themselves lost on Sunday.

Manchester City climbed to



Liverpool’s Trent Alexander-Arnold (L) and Luis Díaz look dejected after their defeat to Crystal Palace

the summit with a 5-1 rout of relegation-battling Luton Town on Saturday, while Arsenal lost 2-0 to Aston Villa.

“Of course you have to ask these questions - what does it mean for the title race and stuff like this,” Klopp said on Sunday. “I’m not dumb, I know that. The answer is pretty easy: if we play like we did in the first half why should we win the league?”

“If you play like in the second half, we can win football games. So if we can win football games then we will see how many we can win. We have to be around

when the other guys now struggle, if they struggle, so that’s how it is. For us, obviously we have to win football games anyway.”

There was talk of Liverpool claiming four trophies in Klopp’s finale after they won the League Cup in February but they were ousted from the FA Cup by Manchester United’s 4-3 win in extra time in a thrilling quarter-final last month. Liverpool’s Europa League hopes also suffered a massive blow when they were beaten 3-0 by Atalanta at Anfield on Thursday in the first leg of their quarter-final tie.

‘Rafa is the ultimate challenge on clay’

Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France - Rafa Nadal could return to action this week in Barcelona and play just his second event of an injury-hit season and while the Spaniard lacks match practice Stefanos Tsitsipas said it would be no surprise to see him battling for the title in the final.

Nadal, who has said he expects to retire after the 2024 season, returned to the tour in Brisbane in January after nearly a year out with a hip flexor injury and the 37-year-old has not played an ATP tournament since due to a muscle issue. The 22-times Grand Slam champion looked set to make another comeback at the Monte Carlo Masters this month but withdrew days before the start of the clay-court tournament, saying his body would not allow him to play.

Nadal has won the Barcelona title 12 times and is drawn to play Flavio Cobolli on Tuesday, and while there has been no word on his status Tsitsipas said the Spaniard would have no trouble finding form on his favourite surface. “I wouldn’t be surprised if we



Stefanos Tsitsipas (L) defeated Casper Ruud in the final to win the Monte Carlo title

saw Rafa in the final of Barcelona, because that’s something he has done over and over again for years and years,” Tsitsipas, who won the Monte Carlo title for a third time on Sunday, told reporters.

“What he does have is this competitiveness and this fierce tennis when he gets into the mo-

What he (Nadal) does have is this competitiveness and this fierce tennis when he gets into the momentum that sometimes feels like on the outside perspective unstoppable

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS

mentum that sometimes feels like on the outside perspective unstoppable ... I think he’s the ultimate challenge on clay. Whether he’s playing now at, let’s say, later stages of his career or the ones before, what he has now that he

didn’t before is experience, and he for sure knows ways to win points and to prevail more in economy mode than before.”

World number seven Tsitsipas, a three-times runner-up in Barcelona, will aim to carry his good form from Monaco to Spain after winning his first title of the season with a 6-1 6-4 victory over Casper Ruud.

“I did need a week like this a lot, especially (after) the rough months I’ve been through the lat-

ter half of 2023 until now.”

“It hasn’t been the best of times in terms of where I wanted to be, so getting back here and winning the title is something I was definitely not aiming for and it came naturally.”



Real Madrid’s Aurelien Tchouameni scores against Mallorca

Mallorca launch probe after alleged racist gesture towards Real’s Tchouameni

Mallorca, Spain - Mallorca are working with the police to investigate an alleged racist gesture made during a 1-0 home defeat by Real Madrid on Saturday, the LaLiga club said.

Videos on social media appeared to show a fan at the Son Moix Stadium making a racist gesture towards Real midfielder

Aurelien Tchouameni, who scored the only goal of the match.

In the same fixture last year, Mallorca fans were filmed racially abusing Real’s Brazilian forward Vinicius Jr., with Mallorca revoking a fan’s membership card for three years.

“In yesterday’s match be-

tween RCD Mallorca and Real Madrid, images have been identified in which a person made racist gestures,” Mallorca said in a statement on Sunday.

“The club has activated the protocol against violence in football and is collaborating with the National Police in the identification of this person.”



PATHIRANA TOO HOT TO HANDLE

Pacer’s four-for overshadows Rohit’s ton as Chennai beat Mumbai

Mumbai, India - Sensational defensive bowling from Chennai Super Kings did what might have seemed unthinkable: successfully defend a total in the night at Wankhede Stadium. And it was not a huge total: pushed just over 200 by a MS Dhoni cameo of 20 off the last four balls of the innings after Shivam Dube had continued his dream season with an unbeaten 66 off 38.

For large parts it was a contest that fit the billing: between the two most successful teams in the IPL and two of the three most popular teams. For large parts, it seemed the defending champions CSK would be outgunned. Jasprit Bumrah restricted them with four overs for just 27 and the Mumbai innings looked like it was going smoothly, but Mathesha Pathirana started the comeback with two wickets in his first over.

Still, Mumbai were favourites going into the last seven, needing 83 with eight wickets in hand, but their fast bowlers led by Pathirana executed their plans of making batters hit into the bigger part perfectly, eventually winning by 20 runs. Rohit Sharma scored a century but it was only to Mumbai’s detriment: he scored just 14 off 14 between overs 13 to 18 and then found another wind when the task had become mathemat-



Matheesha Pathirana took four wickets for 28 runs for Chennai Super Kings

ically impossible.

The match was also a tactical classic from both sides. CSK promoted Ajinkya Rahane to open because he was carrying a niggles and thought it was better if he just batted in the powerplay. In a way it worked tactically too: Rituraj Gaikwad hasn’t been going at a million miles an hour in the powerplay and could also be there for when Bumrah bowled. Either way, Rahane didn’t last, and Gaikwad had to come out in the second over. Mumbai then started to bowl cheap overs of spin before Dube got a chance to bat.

When Dube came in, that was it for spin, and Bumrah came back to bowl a second over inside the first ten for only the second time this IPL. Except that Mumbai did have to bowl overs of less-than-express pace. Dube took a toll of Hardik Pandya and Romario Shepherd as Gaikwad slowed down from his starts of 24 off 12 to offer a catch on 39 off 31. Rohit dropped him, and Gaikwad took 29 off nine before he got out.

Hardik started reining CSK back in with clever use of a wide slower ball to get Gaikwad. Then Bumrah just bowled two ruthless overs full of attempted yorkers. Only one boundary came off the 17th and 19th, leaving CSK at 180 for 3. The problem for Mumbai was, that they had to now go to Hardik, Shepherd or spin for the last over.

The captain took the challenge on, but came a distant second to Dhoni, offering him the length to hit a hat-trick of sixes. Dhoni’s IPL this year: 25 balls, 59 runs, no dismissal.

Yet again Mumbai started like they would make short work of a target around 200 after gunning RCB’s 196 down in 15.3 overs. Rohit and Ishan Kishan looked smooth and brutal. Seven overs, 70 runs, not a sweat broken.

Enter Pathirana, coming back from an injury break. The first ball was a loose one on the pads, and Kishan found midwicket with precision. Six feet on either side and it would have left a hole in the boundary boards. However, following that lucky break, Pathirana was sensational. He welcomed Suryakumar Yadav with a 151.2kmph wide yorker and followed it up with a wide bouncer with the deep third placed fine just for the ramp. The assist came from Mustafizur Rahman, who took it overhead, flicked it back up, stepped outside, and came back to take the catch.

Ravindra Jadeja bowled four overs on the trot for 37, which is commendable in dewy conditions on a Mumbai night.

ESPNcricinfo

TODAYS MATCH

MATCH 31

6 PM



KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS VS RAJASTHAN ROYALS





Hardik Pandya

‘Fans will be singing Pandya’s praises when time comes’

Mumbai, India - Hardik Pandya looked forlorn. He had walked out to bat with Mumbai Indians’ asking rate just under 13, and by the time he was dismissed - for 2 off 6 balls - it had shot up close to 17. He paused on his walk back and joined the MI group that included the head coach Mark Boucher and batting coach Kieron Pollard as the timeout was taken.

A couple of hours earlier, Hardik took the responsibility of bowling the last over for Mumbai and gave away 26 as MS Dhoni smacked three successive sixes to help Chennai Super Kings to an unlikely 206. That total proved to be enough for Super Kings to script a 20-run win despite an unbeaten 105 from Rohit Sharma.

Pollard threw his weight behind MI’s under-fire captain Hardik and said everyone “will be singing his praises when time comes”.

“I don’t know if it will affect his confidence. He is a confident guy, he has been great around the group,” Pollard said after Mumbai’s fourth loss in six outings in IPL 2024. “In cricket, you have good days and bad days and I am seeing an individual who is working bloody hard to improve his skills and plying his trade.”

“I am fed up of [us] looking to pinpoint individuals; cricket is a team game at the end of the day. This is an individual that is going to represent the country in less than six weeks’ time, and all are going to cheer him and want him to do well. So high time we try to encourage and stop nitpicking and see if we can get the best out of one of the great allrounders India has produced. He can bat, bowl and field, and has a X-factor about him.”

“I hope very well deep down within my heart that when he comes out on top, I’ll sit back and watch everyone sing his praises.”

After the pre-season IPL trade, Hardik has been the subjected to jeers from the fans in Ahmedabad (where his former team Gujarat Titans is based) and Hyderabad in their first two games, and a similar treatment has continued in Mumbai’s home games, too. But his form this season has been a concern.

Returning from an ankle injury suffered during the ODI World Cup last year, he has scored 131 runs at a strike rate of 145.55 and picked up three wickets but at a high economy of 12.

CLASSIFIEDS

BIRTHDAY WISHES



NETRA

Happy 1st birthday to the little girl who has stolen our hearts and made us feel young again. May your life be filled with love, laughter and joy. With love Tapanpappa, Bhumicamom, Vishalmasha, Yashicamashi, Anandmama, Juhimami, Sanatdada, Kaushalballi, Sarlaba, Praharbhaiyu and Garvitbhaiyu.

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Embrace the outdoors

Summer is the ideal time to hit the great outdoors for your daily fitness activity, be it working out, playing or simply enjoying a daily constitutional

There's great sunshine, wonderful breeze, flowers blooming, birds chirping, butterflies fluttering around... Are you going to miss all this and confine yourself to mirrored walls inside a gym in summer?

As the weather warms up, it is the ideal time to work up a sweat, shed more calories and get in shape as fast as you can - there's no reason to wake up late for your morning fitness activity or to skip your sundown workout.

So, if you have been hopping from machine to machine in your gym throughout the year, it's time to get out in the open and enjoy your fitness activity amid nature. Take a jog or work out in the park, stroll on the beach and even enjoy the shallow tide beating against your feet. Enjoy fresh air and fragrances that abound everywhere, sport your favourite fitness attire and make fitness a much-sought after task everyday.

Sunrise or sunset

If you're debating whether you should do your workout in the morning or evening, consider this: how would you prefer to start your day? Both evening and morning exercises have advantages, but you should choose the one that best suits you and your daily routine.

If you are an early bird who enjoys watching the sunrise and sipping coffee slowly, then morning exercise will be just what you need to get your day started. You will feel energetic and refreshed afterwards, ready to face any challenges that come your way during the day.

On the other hand, you could be ready to conquer your day early on and then hit

the gym to get all that energy out before falling asleep like a baby. Doesn't it sound like a dream? Later exercise will reduce all of the stress in the body in preparation for an enjoyable night's sleep. You'll feel fantastic the next day.

Circuit training

Get ready for a blast of summer fun with circuit training! It's the ultimate way to get your heart pumping while toning your muscles and getting those summer abs. Say goodbye to boring workouts and hello to a full-body adventure!

Picture this: squats, lunges, push-ups, planks, and burpees - all in one amazing routine. No equipment required, just your awesome self and a desire to have a good time.

Here's how it works: set a specific time, or rep goal for each exercise, and keep the momentum going by moving seamlessly from one move to the next. Forget about those long rests between sets - it's all about the energy and flow here!

Don't forget to add a touch of flexibility and relaxation to your workout routine towards the end of it. It's time to relax, revitalise, and stretch like you've never

stretched before!

Find your Zen

Consider yourself gently flowing through a beautiful yoga practice or channeling your inner Pilates pro. These activities aren't only for the flexible; they're for everyone who wants to improve their mobility, avoid injuries, and find their Zen in the summer heat.

Make it a habit to spend some time stretching after your workout. It's like a cool breeze on a hot summer day. Feel the tension melt away as you stretch your muscles, letting go of the day's stress and discovering inner peace.

Let's face it, working out isn't always the most entertaining thing to do. But with this routine, you can spice it up and actually have fun while sweating it out. So next time when you take your workout outside to the shining sun and the chirping birds, make sure you stay hydrated and pick the perfect time to exercise.

Circuit training adds a fun twist to your routine, while engaging your whole body. And when you're done, don't forget to stretch it out and find your inner zen while improving your flexibility and mobility.



VANDANA CHAWLA

NUTRITION & YOU

Avocados - a blend of taste and nutrition

When we hear the name Avocado, terms like healthy food, superfood, and powerhouse of nutrients come to our mind. All these terms hold true for this soft, creamy textured, food, which is considered by some as fruit and by others as a vegetable.

Avocado or Persea Americana, belongs to the same plant family as cinnamon. Although a native to Mexico and Central America, this food has become a kitchen staple in many homes around the world. These countries introduced this food to the world by bringing out their traditional recipes, like guacamole, salads and many more.

Health benefits

- **Powerhouse of nutrients** - It is packed with healthy fats, mainly monounsaturated fats, vitamins E, C, B6, folate, potassium, magnesium, and fibre. Taking it regularly can improve the quality of our diet.
- **Keeps gut healthy** - As it promotes the growth of healthy bacteria, it keeps our gut healthy, improves digestion plus helps in giving protection against anti-inflammatory bowel syndrome.
- **Keeps heart healthy** - The nutrients present in avocados, be it healthy fats, fibre or vita-

min E, C, and others, all are heart-friendly. Studies have also indicated that consuming avocados regularly can help increase good cholesterol (HDL) and decrease bad cholesterol (LDL).

- **Protects against metabolic syndrome** - Owing to the presence of nutrients, like, vitamin E, C, and carotenoid lutein, avocados possess antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. These, in turn, help in providing protection against metabolic syndrome, which is a cluster of conditions that occur together and increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.
- **Supplement for weight loss** - As it is rich in healthy fats and fibre, it provides satiety or a feeling of fullness. This can help in controlling one's food intake and food cravings. Avocados, when part of a healthy diet plan, along with a healthy lifestyle, is a great booster for any weight-loss programme.
- **Keeps pregnant and breastfeeding mothers healthy and active** - During these stages, the requirement for calories, and nutrients like folate, magnesium, potassium, and vitamin C increases. Avocados work as a wonder food in meeting these increased needs in a healthy way.

Diet tips

- Swap it with butter or cheese on your morning toast.
- Add it to your salads
- Guacamole works as a great dip to satisfy mid-meal hunger pangs.
- Add it to smoothies or milkshakes to make them thick, creamy, and healthy.
- Add it to sushi platters to make it healthier.

Consumption quantum

Looking at the health benefits, one may think of eating it more to get more benefits. As they are high in healthy fats and it fills you up easily, it is harder to overdo the intake of avocados.

An average avocado provides 200-300kcal. If you are on a weight loss programme, then the best is to take ½ or ¼ avocado daily. Also, it contains carbohydrates that may not be digested well by some. Hence, taking smaller amounts daily or taking 2-3 times a week will be a wiser choice.

To conclude, avocados are a healthy food which can be added to a variety of recipes because of its mild taste. So, add variety and nutrition to your table.

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



LOWER-BODY WORKOUT

STRONG LEGS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR MOST SPORTS AND STRONG LEG MUSCLES SET YOU UP TO KEEP DOING THESE ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE WITH EASE. ADDING RESISTANCE BANDS CAN MAKE YOUR LOWER-BODY WORKOUTS MORE EFFICIENT

FITNESS BAND WIDTH

A new way of enhancing your lower-body workout is the use of resistance bands which provide the same benefits as using costly equipment in gyms or at home. “The resistance of the bands helps burn out the muscles quicker so you can work more in less time,” explains Sara Haley, an American Council on Exercise (ACE)-certified personal trainer and pre and postnatal exercise specialist in Santa Monica, California. “Resistance bands provide a specific form of mechanical stress unlike other exercise modalities like

dumbbells and bodyweight exercises,” says Marty Miller, a doctor of health sciences, a National Athletic Trainers Association-certified athletic trainer, and the vice president of education and training at Technogym North America in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. Free weights like dumbbells provide constant resistance, meaning the amount of resistance your muscles must overcome doesn’t change throughout the exercise - the weight stays the same whether you’re lowering into a squat or pushing back up to standing. Meanwhile, resistance bands provide variable re-

sistance, which means that the resistance level changes at different phases of an exercise. The more you stretch the band, the more tension you’ll encounter and the harder your muscles will have to work, which enables you to strengthen the leg muscles through their full range of motion.

SEVEN RESISTANCE BAND EXERCISES FOR STRONGER LEGS

The following routine from Haley uses a mini loop band to target all of your lower body muscles, including the quadriceps (the muscles in front of the thighs), hamstrings (the muscles in the back of the thighs), glutes (buttocks), inner and outer thighs, and calves. Choose the lightest band available to start. Increase the resistance with heavier bands when you’re ready. Perform the exercises one right after the other, resting as needed. Once you finish the last exercise, return to the start. Complete two rounds in total. If you’re doing this as a standalone routine or your muscles are cold, start with this brief warm-up using the mini band. Haley recommends doing the following workout two to three times a week.

1 BANDED SIDE SHUFFLE

Start standing. Place the mini band around your legs above your ankles. Step your feet hip-width apart. Bend your knees and lower your thighs until they’re almost parallel with the floor (or as close to parallel as you can get while keeping the upper body upright or slightly leaned forward). In this squat position, step your right foot to the right, and then follow with the left foot so your feet are hip-width apart again. Continue in the same direction for four steps total, keeping tension on the band at all times. Reverse directions and take four steps to the left. That’s 1 repetition. Do 5 repetitions.

2 BALANCING LEG LIFT

From a standing position, place the mini band around your calves. Step your feet hip-width apart. Shift your weight onto your left foot and lift your right foot off the floor in front of you, toe pointed downward. Keeping both legs straight, lift your right foot as high as your mobility and the band allow (the move could range anywhere from a few inches to hip height). Pause briefly, and then return to start, letting your right foot touch the floor. Do 8 repetitions before switching sides and repeating. If you’re struggling to balance on one leg, hold onto a chair for support.

3 BALANCING CALF RAISE

From a standing position, place the mini band around your calves. Step your feet hip-width apart. Shift your weight onto your right foot and bend your left leg to lift your left foot off the floor, toe pointed downward. From this position, lift your right heel to rise onto the ball of your right foot. Squeeze your right calf muscles at the top before lowering your right heel to the floor. Do 8 repetitions, keeping your left foot lifted the whole time. Switch sides and repeat. If you’re struggling to balance on one leg, hold onto a chair for support.

4 3-TAP STATIONARY LUNGE

From a standing position, place the mini band around your calves. Step your feet hip-width apart. Bend your knees slightly, and shift your weight onto your left foot. Keeping your knees slightly bent, step the right foot to the right side as far as you’re able, tapping the floor with your toes. Return your right foot to the starting position. Then, step the right foot back, crossing it behind your left foot and tapping the floor to your left side with your toes as far as you’re able, knees slightly bent. Return your right foot to the starting position. Then, step the right foot straight behind you and tap the floor with your toes as far as you’re able, knees slightly bent. That’s 1 repetition. Do 6 repetitions before switching legs and repeating.

5 PLIE SQUAT PRESS-BACKS

From a standing position, place the mini band around your calves. Stand with your feet a slightly wider than shoulder-distance apart, toes turned out at a 45-degree angle. Bend your knees to lower your thighs into a quarter-squat, making sure your knees are pointing toward your toes. Holding this squat position and keeping your upper body upright and your back straight, slightly push your knees back toward your pinkie toes before letting your knees return to the starting position. Continue making small pulsing motions. Complete 25 repetitions.

6 PRONE BUTT KICKS

Sit on the floor and place the mini band around the arches of your feet. Lie face-down on the floor, your legs extended straight behind you. Flex your feet to press your toes into the floor. Fold your arms on top of each other and rest your forehead on them. From this position, kick your left heel toward your butt, while pressing your hips into the floor. Release and repeat. Do 10 repetitions before switching sides and repeating.

7 3-IN-1 EXERCISE

1 Lie on the floor on your right side with your hips and knees bent so that your shins and thighs form a 90-degree angle. Place the mini band around your thighs just above your knees. Place your right elbow on the floor below under your right shoulder to prop up your upper body. For balance and stability, place your left hand on the ground in front of your chest. Lift your left knee and extend your left foot in front of your body until it’s straight. Reverse the movement and lower your knee to the starting position. Do 10 repetitions.

2 Stay in the same position: Lie on the floor on your right side with your hips and knees bent so that your shins and thighs form a 90-degree angle. Place the band around your right thigh just above the knee and the arch of your left foot. (You’ll need to draw your left knee in toward your chest to reach the position and pull the band over the top of your foot until it’s around the arch of your left foot.) From here, press your left foot away from your body so it’s in line with your spine. Release to start and repeat. Do 10 repetitions.

3 Stay in the same position: Lie on the floor on your right side with your hips and knees bent so that your shins and thighs form a 90-degree angle. Keep the band around your right thigh and the arch of your left foot. Extend your left foot away from your body in line with your spine as you did in the previous step. Keeping the left foot flexed and parallel to the floor, lift your leg up and down, touching the floor with your toes. Do 10 repetitions. Then, repeat 1, 2, and 3 on the other side. (Courtesy: everydayhealth.com)



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