

Helicopter carrying Iran's President Raisi crashes

Tehran, Iran - A helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his foreign minister crashed on Sunday as it was crossing mountain terrain in heavy fog, while rescuers were struggling to reach the site of the incident, an Iranian official told Reuters.

The official said the lives of Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian were "at risk following the helicopter crash", which happened on the way back from a visit to the border with Azerbaijan in Iran's northwest.

"We are still hopeful but information coming from the crash site is very concerning," said the official.

The exact location of the helicopter carrying President Raisi 'is unknown as search and rescue teams are braving adverse weather conditions and challenging terrain to locate the site',



The last photo of the helicopter that crashed with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (inset) and his foreign minister

Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

'The weather is extremely foggy, which is making the rescue efforts very difficult,' it added.

Iranian state media said bad weather was the cause of the crash and was complicating rescue efforts. The chief of staff of

Iran's army ordered all the resources of the army and the elite Revolutionary Guard to be put to use in search and rescue operations.

"It is dark and it has started raining, but the search continues. Rescue teams have reached the area ... however, the rain has cre-

ated mud, making the search difficult," a reporter told state TV.

State TV had earlier stopped all its regular programming to show prayers being held for Raisi across the country and, in a corner of the screen, live coverage of rescue teams on foot in the mountainous area in heavy fog.

Babak Yektaparast, spokesman for the National Emergency Organisation, said that emergency medical teams consisting of technicians and doctors were deployed to the site immediately after the incident was reported.

He added that an emergency helicopter was also dispatched to provide assistance, but was forced to turn back due to the heavy fog, as it was unable to land in the area.

Iran's Interior Minister Ahmed Vahidi confirmed to state TV that there had been an accident involving one of the helicopters in Raisi's convoy.

Iran flies a variety of helicopters in the country, but international sanctions make it difficult to obtain parts for them. Its military air fleet also largely dates back to before the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Agencies

Vehicle registration can be extended beyond a year: ROP

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has issued a decision extending the validity of vehicle operating licences (mulkiya) for private vehicles beyond one year, subject to certain provisions.

Lt Gen Hassan bin Mohsen al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, issued the decision (No 61/2024), amending some provisions of the executive regulations of the Traffic Law.

According to the decision, the validity of mulkiya for private vehicles will be one year from the date of registration or renewal. However, the authorities will allow an extension of this period based on the owner's request, provided the vehicle is covered by insurance or unless it has been decided to inspect it annually as per the provisions of Article 39 of these regulations.

Tractors used for agricultural purposes have been exempted from the duration requirement,

A decision published in the Official Gazette on Sunday comes into effect from today

the decision confirmed.

It also states that vehicles subject to technical inspection upon registration and renewal of mulkiya include commercial vehicles of all types - except for small trucks (pick-ups), heavy government vehicles, taxis of all types, buses of various types, and cars and bikes that were manufactured ten years ago or more.

It stated that vehicles will also be subject to technical inspection if there are changes or replacements to their engine, structure, colour, or any essential part thereof.

This decision was issued on May 13, and was published in the Official Gazette on Sunday.

The decision shall come into effect from Monday.

Human rights commission addressed 523 cases in 2023

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) addressed 523 cases in 2023 through collaboration with relevant parties, providing legal guidance and directing individuals to authorities for further action, according to its latest

report. The commission engaged in civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights cases, totalling 65 communications, while offering opinions on 458 human rights issues.

OHRC conducted field visits across various governorates, including inspections at the central prison and detention centres to

review the condition of inmates and detainees.

'The release of 864 inmates last year, following Royal Orders, positively influenced their social reintegration,' OHRC stated.

Additionally, the commission actively monitored international governmental and non-governmental reports on the human

rights situation in Oman and responded to inquiries from the United Nations special rapporteurs, ensuring compliance and dialogue on human rights standards.

OHRC also enhanced its outreach through educational seminars and forums aimed at raising awareness across different soci-

etal segments. Participation in international conferences further extended its engagement in global human rights discussions.

As part of its accountability, the commission prepares an annual report detailing its efforts and activities. This report was published in accordance with Article No 16 of the OHRC's system.







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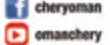
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*Chery Automobile took the first spot among all Chinese automotive brands in J.D. Power 2023 China Initial Quality Study(SMIQS). For more details please visit <https://china.jdpower.com/press-release/2023-02>





THRILL SHOULDN'T KILL!

Oman is bestowed with breathtaking outdoors - diverse mountain ranges, serpentine wadis and extensive coastline - which provide the right vibe for trekking and hiking round the year. However, despite the efforts of the authorities for the safety of hikers, unfortunate accidents and often deaths continue to occur. What measures should be taken to enhance safety of hikers and reduce outdoor accidents in recreational areas? Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers said:

Khalid al Amri
Filmmaker

Authorities should conduct regular educational programmes and awareness campaigns to inform hikers about the potential risks and hazards associated with trekking and hiking in mountainous terrain. This should include information on weather conditions, trail difficulty levels, necessary equipment and emergency procedures. Proper clear signages and trail markings should be installed along hiking routes to guide hikers and help them stay on designated paths.

Amit Kumar
Private company employee

Establishing an effective emergency response



system is crucial for providing timely assistance to hikers in distress. This includes setting up of emergency helplines, equipping hiking trails with emergency call boxes and deployment of rescue teams trained in swift response

techniques. Regular maintenance of hiking trails, including the clearance of debris, repair of damaged pathways, and installation of safety barriers, is essential to minimise potential risks to hikers.

Salim Ahmed
Private company employee

Introduction of hiking permits and regulations can help control the number of hikers access-

ing certain trails and ensure that individuals are adequately prepared for the challenges they may encounter. Enforcing rules such as group size limits, restricted access during hazardous weather conditions and mandatory equipment requirements are a must.

Mohammad al Hinai
Government employee

By implementing some steady and fast measures effectively, authorities can create a safer environment for hikers and outdoor enthusiasts. Conducting periodic monitoring of environmental conditions can help identify potential hazards. There should also be regular inspection of trail conditions, weather forecasts, and natural phenomena such as rains and landslides.

Sushanth Prabhu
Physiotherapist

Proper planning is essential before engaging in any outdoor activity. Research the area, understand the terrain and weather conditions. Make sure you have the right gear for the activity and that it is in good condition. Whenever possible, engage in outdoor activities with a partner or a group. This can provide support in case of emergencies and help reduce the risk of injury.

Dr Hameed Parappil
ENT

Despite earnest efforts by authorities, hiking accidents and fatalities persist. To bolster safety, rigorous trail maintenance, clearer signages, and regular safety briefings are crucial. Moreover, implementing mandatory hiking permits, advanced GPS tracking systems, and increased ranger patrols can mitigate risks. Vigilance and proactive measures are imperative to safeguard outdoor enthusiasts.

**NEXT ON YOUR SAY**

Ministry of Health-run Shifa app has registered over 11,000 potential donors for organ transplant. However, only 30 liver and kidney transplants took place in 2023. What additional measures should be taken to promote the culture of organ donations?

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

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

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Announcement

Public Auction of Mining General Sites for Building Materials

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals MEM is pleased to announce the public auction of 3 mining blocks for building materials within the general site in the Wilayat of Ibra No. (GS-0000023). This opportunity is open to Omani companies with experience in mineral sector projects.

The general site is located 17 kilometers from the center of the Wilayat towards the north-east. It is a mountainous area consisting mainly of gabbro rocks. MEM has conducted the preliminary studies for this general site, and the opportunities - shown in the table below - will be available for competition between Omani companies via the Taqa platform <https://taqa.mem.gov.om/emining> starting from the date of this announcement.

The General Site Number (GS-0000023) for Building Materials in he Wilayat of Ibra	The mining block Number
	GS-0000023-4
	GS-0000023-7
	GS-0000023-12

For more details, please contact the number 24640654/24640561 or email: concessions.dept@mem.gov.om

MAFWR launches campaign to curb coconut palm infestation in Dhofar



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) launched a campaign to combat infestation of coconut leaf beetles - Brontispa longissima - in Dhofar, on Sunday.

The ministry has assembled field teams equipped with all necessary resources to carry out both ground and aerial spraying operations, utilising drones for en-

hanced efficiency.

The campaign was launched under the patronage of Hamed bin Awad Sawakhron, a member of Majlis A'Shura representing Salalah.

The goals of the campaign, running till June 13, are to safeguard coconut palms, foster the protection and growth of the agricultural sector, and aid farmers in pest control efforts. Eng Rashid bin Saeed al Ghafri, Director General of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources

in Dhofar, informed that the current campaign is the fifth one to be undertaken in the governorate.

"It covers both Salalah and Taqah and is part of an annual programme to spray date palm trees, conducted in collaboration with various government agencies and volunteers."

The Directorate of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources in Dhofar organised a joint meeting of the governmental and private agencies with farmers to discuss the latest developments in the spraying process and the campaign's schedule.

MHT serves notices to 32 illegal hotels in Al Wusta

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has issued violation notices against 32 establishments in Al Wusta for running hotels without licences. A statement issued by the

ministry said, 'Within the context of checking hotels and tourist establishments, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, has issued violation notices against 32 establishments for running hotels without obtaining licences in Al Wusta governorate.'

The ministry called on all unlicensed establishments to stop illegal practices until the conditions are met. It asked all parties to obtain the necessary approvals and licences in order to avoid legal proceedings in accordance with the executive regulations of the Tourism Law.

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OETC ensures readiness for summer; electrical load to rise 7% this year

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With the demand for power going up significantly during summers, the load on Oman's electric grid is anticipated to rise by 7% this year as compared to last year.

This rise in load is driven by the integration of new areas into the main grid, such as Duqm, Mahout and Saih al Khairat, along with a significant increase in various industrial loads, the Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) stated.

Confirming its readiness for the summer this year, OETC said it is prepared to enhance the reliability, safety and sustainability of the electricity transmission network across Oman.

"This includes preparedness at the load dispatch centre in Muscat and the control centres in Dhofar and Musandam. The company is committed to meet-



ing the increasing electricity demands in the sultanate', OETC added.

OETC, the company responsible for transmission and control of electricity in Oman, has collaborated closely with Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (NPWP) to guarantee ample generation of power during the summer period.

The company has conducted

a series of mock drills, technical workshops, and training programmes involving all technical teams to ensure their preparedness for anticipated challenges and to ensure the completion of all asset maintenance programmes, thus ensuring readiness for the summer peak.

The company has successfully completed and energised several projects aimed at sup-

porting the safe and reliable operation of the network during the summer. These projects are Jefnain 400/132 kV Grid Station, part of Rustaq 400/132 kV Grid Station and Jawabi 132/33 kV Grid Station.

Eng Sultan al Rawahi, general manager, Load Dispatch Centre, OETC, reaffirmed the company's commitment to enhancing the quality, safety and reliability of

the electricity transmission network. He underscored the ongoing efforts to deliver high-quality and dependable services to the community and all developmental sectors in Oman.

"OETC is keen to enhance the efficiency of the electricity transmission network and train employees, technical teams, and all related parties to ensure the smooth flow of work as per plans and for optimal response to the significant growth in the sector," the general manager of the centre underlined.

The company organises many training campaigns to avert power outages, besides holding technical workshops and field visits in cooperation with relevant parties to enhance the readiness of all teams to deal with any emergency situation.

"Our target is to ensure quick response to restore services efficiently, safely, and professionally," Rawahi added.



R025mn Labour Village at Khazaen nears completion

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Construction of a R025mn Labour Village at Khazaen Economic City in Barka, South Batinah, is nearing completion, with 90% of the work finished within 22 months since the project's inception.

The village, sprawling over 55,000sqm, is poised to be the first integrated accommodation facility for workers in the area.

Eng Salem bin Sulaiman al Duhli, CEO of Khazaen Economic City, shared with ONA that this project is part of broader efforts to create a self-sustaining economic hub.

"The Labour Village is a step towards well-integrated social infrastructure within Khazaen, offering a conducive environment for working, liv-

ing, and recreation under the umbrella of sustainable urban development," he stated.

The village features residential complexes with high standards of living designed to accommodate over 5,000 employees.

While the residential complexes cover 25,000sqm, an additional 35,000sqm area hosts an integrated service complex. Amenities include shopping stores, restaurants, banks, gyms, sports facilities, a mosque, clinics, and other essential services. Strategically located, the Labour Village is surrounded by key projects such as the Khazaen Land Port, the Khazaen Logistics Centre, Medicine City, and the Food City that houses the Central Market for Vegetables and Fruits, enhancing its appeal and functionality.

Manjam Labs simplifies 45 govt services for better efficiency

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has streamlined 45 government services in 2023 as part of the third phase of Manjam Labs, an initiative led by the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MTCIT) to make

the services more efficient.

This measure follows a similar simplification of 265 services last year, through collaboration with 22 government institutions.

The services simplified in this phase covers essential public services such as issuance of birth certificates, ID cards and Omani passports, alongside facilitation

of marriage guidance, pre-marital examinations and the registration of marriage contracts.

Additionally, specialised services for the elderly and people with disabilities have also been improved, so as to ensure better home care, disability benefits and social rehabilitation efforts.

MTCIT highlighted the intro-

duction of a one-time request submission feature, bundling several services to expedite the processing time. It also offers certain services without the need for formal requests, streamlining access for beneficiaries.

These enhancements align with Manjam Labs' methodology for smooth conduct of essential

services throughout life stages - from birth to death - ensuring relevance and accessibility.

The third phase of Manjam Labs, running until July, continues to gather community feedback to further simplify and improve the services through efficient public administration in Oman.

EA calls on firms to obtain licences for waste management

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Environment Authority (EA) issued a notice on Sunday to all institutions and companies involved in the collection and transportation of waste in Oman.

In a statement, EA emphasised that all waste collection and transport companies must obtain the necessary licences from the Environment Authority and comply with its requirements. It is not permissible to transfer or sell waste from recycling institutions and companies that are not licensed by the Authority. Furthermore, EA stressed the importance of correctly storing the waste to avoid any environmental pollution.

Institutions and companies dealing with hazardous waste must obtain specific licences for hazardous waste management - transportation and collection. These entities are required to register in the National Waste Management Registry System.



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*Rates as on May 20
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Eurozone inflation falls to 2.4% in April

Annual inflation registered at 2.4% in the eurozone and 2.6% in the EU in April, Eurostat revealed.

Both figures were stable compared to March figures, but fell from 7% and 8.1%, respectively, from April 2023, the 27-member bloc's statistical authority revealed.

The lowest annual national rates were seen in Lithuania (0.4%), Denmark (0.5%) and Finland (0.6%).

GCC banks to post strong profits in 2024 amid delay in US rate cuts: S&P

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The delay in interest rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve is positive news for banks in Oman and other GCC countries, whose currencies are pegged to the US dollar, according to S&P Global Ratings.

S&P expects GCC banks' profitability to remain strong in 2024 due to the delayed US rate cuts. The global rating agency also anticipates that GCC banks' asset quality will stay resilient despite the prolonged higher rates, thanks to supportive economies, controlled leverage, and substantial precautionary reserves.

'GCC banks have benefited from the recent monetary policy tightening cycle. Since most GCC



central banks typically mirror the Fed's rate movements to maintain their currency pegs, the delay in rate cuts will boost GCC banks' profitability. The banks have benefited from the increase in interest rates over the past

couple of years, and they stand to continue benefiting in 2024," S&P said in a report.

On a positive note, S&P believes lower interest rates are likely to reduce the amount of unrealised losses that GCC

banks have accumulated over the past couple of years. It estimates these losses at around \$2.8bn for the rated GCC banks, or 1.9% on average of their total equity.

S&P now believes that the

first rate cut will likely occur in December 2024 – several months later than we had previously forecast. We still think that the Fed is likely to pick up the pace of easing in 2025 as economic growth slows below its

the US Fed could start cutting rates in December 2024, and most GCC central banks are likely to follow suit to preserve their currency pegs. However, we believe that several factors will mitigate the overall effect,' S&P added.

According to S&P's estimates, every 100 basis point drop in rates reduces the rated GCC banks' bottom-lines by an average of around 9%. 'This is based on the GCC banks' December 2023 disclosures and assumes a static balance sheet and a parallel shift in the yield curve,' S&P noted.

In 2025, as interest rates drop, S&P expects GCC banks' profitability to decline, but several factors are likely to mitigate the overall impact.

GCC banks have benefited from the increase in interest rates over the past couple of years, and they stand to continue benefiting in 2024

S&P GLOBAL RATINGS

U Capital gets investment banking license from FSA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ubhar Capital (U Capital), a leading financial services firm in Oman, announced that it has officially been permitted to engage in investment banking activities by the Financial Services Authority. As the first Omani private company to be awarded this prestigious license, U Capital is now poised to expand its comprehensive suite of investment services.

In a press release, U Capital said that its enhanced capabilities will enable it to provide diverse and innovative financial solutions. This expansion further strength-

Receiving investment banking license is not just a milestone; it is a testament to our commitment to excellence and innovation in financial sector

ABDULAZIZ AL SAADI

ens U Capital's comprehensive investment offerings, which include corporate finance and advisory, brokerage, asset management, liquidity provision and market making, wealth management, research, and the is-

suance of structured instruments.

Abdulaziz Khalifa al Saadi, CEO of U Capital, said, "Receiving the investment banking license is not just a milestone for Ubhar Capital; it is a testament to our commitment to excellence and innovation in the financial sector. We are now uniquely positioned to provide our clients with a full spectrum of investment banking services, reinforcing our role in bolstering the economic growth and diversification of Oman."

With this license, U Capital will leverage its extensive experience and in-depth industry knowledge to offer tailored and diversified financial services.



Sohar Port and Freezone earns prestigious RoSPA awards for health and safety

London, UK – In an exceptional celebration of excellence and recognition at the iconic House of Lords in London, Sohar Port and Freezone received the RoSPA's Best New International Entry Award, and the RoSPA's Gold Sector Award for Health and Safety performance for the period of January 2023 to December 2023 by Lord Bill Jordan, Life President of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA).

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents is a not-for-profit organisation patroned by His Majesty King Charles III, King of the United Kingdom that has worked for more than 100 years to exchange life-enhancing skills and knowledge to reduce serious accidental injuries.

The esteemed RoSPA Awards programme is celebrating its 68th year as the UK's largest and most impactful health and safety programme. With almost 2,000 entries annually from over 50 countries, impacting over seven million employees, they offer a

platform to spotlight an unwavering commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in health and safety.

Omar bin Mahmood al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Freezone and Deputy CEO of Sohar Port, said, "We are honored to receive the Gold Award for Health and Safety 2023 and the Best New International Entrant Award from RoSPA. This recognition reflects our team's and tenants' dedication and efforts to ensure a safe and healthy work environment. It strengthens our commitment to improving standards, enhancing safety culture, and developing best practices for all stakeholders."

Rebecca Hickman, CEO of RoSPA, expressed her delight in welcoming Sohar Port and Freezone to the Society. Hickman commended Sohar Port and Freezone's exceptional commitment to safety excellence and their efforts to promote a safety culture among the companies within the port and freezone.

In line with this achievement,

Sohar Port and Freezone has signed an agreement with RoSPA to collaborate on occupational safety training and the exchange of expertise. This partnership aims to enhance safety standards and boost operational efficiency, establishing Sohar Port and Freezone as a benchmark in this field.

As one of the world's most rapidly growing integrated industrial and logistics projects, Sohar Port and Freezone capitalises on its strategic location to cement its status as a crucial logistics hub in the region and globally. A unique collaboration between the Port of Rotterdam and Asyad Group marks it as a key mega-project in Oman, offering a range of services including logistics, petrochemicals, metals, and the region's first dedicated agro-terminal. With 20 over years of operation, Sohar Port and Freezone is the main gateway for Oman's import and export, contributing 2.1% to the nation's GDP and creating almost 26,000 jobs.

AL FAJAR AL ALAMIA CO. SAOG				
PO BOX 78, QURUM CITY CENTRE, PC 102, SULTANATE OF OMAN				
Group's Unaudited Financial Results for the nine months ended 31 March 2024				
Chairman's Report		Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income		
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present to you the report on the activities and unaudited financial results of the company for the 3rd quarter ended 31 March 2024.		GROUP		PARENT
		31.03.2024 RO.	31.03.2023 RO.	31.03.2024 RO.
1. Operating Results				
The Group's total revenue for the nine-month period ended 31 March 2024 declined by 11% to RO 7,088 million compared to the previous year's revenue of RO 7,938 million. The decline in revenue was mainly attributed to the UAE operations, which experienced a general slowdown. However, the revenue from the Oman operation during the reporting period was higher than its level in the corresponding period of the previous year.		7,087,624 (7,366,576)	7,937,653 (9,584,853)	3,039,321 (2,367,063)
Revenue				2,268,078
Cost of Sales				(2,518,857)
Gross Profit/(Loss)		(278,952)	(1,647,200)	672,258
Other Income		135,189	90,527	230,248
Administration & General expenses		(1,142,804)	(1,217,150)	(341,479)
Sales & Distribution expenses		(207,413)	(305,311)	(196,170)
Operating Profit/(Loss)		(1,493,980)	(3,079,134)	364,857
Finance charges		(1,403,970)	(1,475,918)	(641,057)
Profit/(Loss) from Operations		(2,897,950)	(4,555,052)	(276,200)
Share of loss from Investment in an associate		(36,431)	-	(36,431)
Profit/(Loss) before taxation		(2,934,381)	(4,555,052)	(312,631)
Taxation		95,540	257,340	35,910
Profit/(Loss) and total comprehensive income		(2,838,841)	(4,297,712)	(276,721)
The Group recorded a consolidated loss after interest and tax of RO 2.802 million for the nine months ended 31 March 2024 against the net loss of RO 4.297 million in the same period of the previous year.				(1,230,525)
2. Operations				
The Group's revenue decreased by 11% YoY due to lower revenue from the UAE compared to the previous year. Although the Group's revenue in Oman started to reach the break-even point with the arrangement of explosives raw materials, the total revenue is remained below the previous year due to lower revenue contribution from the UAE.				
Oman's drilling and blasting industry is expanding due to numerous infrastructure projects expected to commence in the first half of 2024. The Group aims to enhance its capabilities to meet the growing demand.				
The Metso Crusher installation in our gypsum quarry in Thumrait is almost completed and expected to commence production shortly. This will undoubtedly help the Group achieve its monthly production goal of 150K tons monthly or more, up from the current 70K-80K tons per month. This will contribute to revenue growth at the Group level and support cash flow commitments.				
The D&B industry in the United Arab Emirates is facing serious challenges due to severe competition for the available fewer projects. However, your company has recently signed new projects including the infrastructure and quarry projects that will help to improve the revenue in the UAE. Also, Management is in discussion with various quarries for signing long term contracts.				
The explosives production facility in Siji – Fujairah is in the final stages toward completion and is expected to be completed in the first half of 2024. This will undoubtedly strengthen the Group's position in the UAE market for drilling, blasting, and explosives.				
3. Health, Safety and the Environment				
Your Company is operated in a safe and efficient manner in strict compliance with the highest safety standards and in accordance with the prevailing Royal Oman Police and UAE authorities Explosives Rules and Regulations.				
No accidents or environmental incidents were reported during the period ended 31 March 2024.				
Your Company was in compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance and other applicable rules and regulations during the 9 months ended 31 March 2024.				
4. Future Outlook				
As informed earlier, we are pleased to inform you that the ANFO production facility and raw materials depots are progressing well and expected to be completed by June 2024. These facilities will serve to supply the Drilling and Blasting sector in the UAE, which we believe will significantly enhance the Group's overall profitability. The completion of this project will be a significant milestone in the company life and will definitely reposition your D&B division in the UAE at the lead again.				
Based on current and upcoming projects, we anticipate increased revenue growth in the drilling and blasting divisions in both the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates. Moreover, as there is an increasing demand from export markets, we are well-positioned to handle the rising demand from the mining industry.				
We expect that the demand and price of gypsum will increase in the upcoming months, enabling the company to capitalize the situation with increased production from the Metso Crusher to generate higher margins and increased cash flow.				
5. Acknowledgements				
The Members of the Board wish to record their gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haithem bin Tariq bin Taimur and the Government of Oman for the successful efforts made to improve development and prosperity within the Country.				
The Directors also wish to thank the Royal Oman Police, other Government bodies, our valued customers and Banker for their cooperation and support.				
Haythem Mahmood Abd Al-Nabi Macki Chairman				
Note				
The complete accounts shall be delivered to any shareholder or beneficiary upon request, in Arabic or English, within 7 days from receiving the application.				

80% business leaders globally adopt AI for growth: Survey

New Delhi, India – More than eight out of 10 – nearly 80% – senior business leaders have already deployed artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance existing revenue streams or create new ones, a new study by India-based global IT services giant Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) found recently.

The 'TCS AI for Business Study', a report on the state of AI adoption and its impact on businesses, also found that 69% of businesses are more focused on using AI to spur innovation and increase revenue than on productivity improvement and cost optimization.

The study found that executives are generally positive about the impact of AI, with 57% reporting excitement or optimism about the potential impact of AI on businesses.

Among respondents in the study, 45% expect up to half their employees will need to use generative AI capabilities to do their job in three years' time – and another 41% think even more will do so.

Most, at 65%, believe AI will augment and enhance human capabilities, enabling people to focus on higher-value activities that require creativity and



The TCS survey also found that 69% of businesses are more focused on using AI to spur innovation and increase revenue than on productivity improvement and cost optimisation

strategic thinking.

Harrick Vin, Chief Technology Officer, Tata Consultancy Services, said, "2023 was a year of exuberance, with every enterprise experimenting with AI/GenAI use cases."

Enterprises are realising that

the path to production for AI solutions is not easy, and that building an AI-mature enterprise is a marathon, not a sprint, said the CTO.

The survey also highlights the need for businesses to take a strategic approach to AI adoption and develop the right performance indicators to measure the impact of the technology on their businesses.

TCS itself was one of the first organisations in the industry to bring together the capabilities of cloud computing and artificial intelligence under the AI Cloud unit to cater to the emerging needs of customers.

TCS surveyed nearly 1,300 CEOs and other senior executives with profit and loss responsibilities, across 12 industries and 24 countries.

About half the companies had \$1bn to \$5bn in annual revenue and the other half had over \$5bn in revenue.

During the study, it was found that 65% of senior executives say their competitive advantage will still come from humans – with their creativity, intuition, and strategic thinking unleashed by AI's augment and assist capabilities.

ANI

New LNG projects will be needed after 2030: Qatar

Doha, Qatar – Demand for natural gas will keep growing and more supply projects will be required globally beyond 2030, Qatar's energy minister said.

The comments from one of the world's biggest suppliers of liquefied natural gas (LNG) come amid fears of a potential glut later this decade as more projects, including in Qatar, come online.

The Middle Eastern country is pressing on with its multibillion-dollar LNG expansion, and may consider adding further capacity if more gas becomes available, minister Saad al-Kaabi said in Doha, as reported by Bloomberg.

"If we have a reasonable economic growth going forward, I think you'll see all that supply and demand will catch up and you'll need another phase of development of gas in the 2030s," he said at the Qatar Economic Forum. "I don't think gas is going away anytime soon."

The LNG market has been tight since Russia's invasion of Ukraine knocked out piped gas supplies to Europe, forcing the continent to import more



Saad al-Kaabi

liquefied fuel. It's likely to flip into a surplus as a wave of new LNG developments brings fresh supply from about 2026, despite some projects in the US facing delays.

Qatar is boosting its LNG capacity to 126mn tonnes a year by 2027 from 77mn tonnes a year currently. It's targeting 142mn a year by the end of the decade. Projects by other countries, including in Africa, are also planned.

Kaabi said all that new supply won't be enough as expanding economies and populations drive up demand. Power from gas, for example, provides reliable backup to intermittent renewable energy, he said.

US inflation rises to 3.4% in April as prices remain elevated

Washington, US – The US inflation eased slightly in April for the first time in months, a welcome sign for the Federal Reserve even as prices remained uncomfortably high for millions of Americans.

The Labor Department said that the consumer price index, a broad measure of how much everyday goods like gasoline, groceries and rent cost, rose 0.3% in April from the previous month. Economists expected to see a 0.4% monthly increase. Prices climbed 3.4% from the same time last year, down from the 3.5% reading in March.

Another data point that measures underlying inflationary pressures within the economy also moderated last month. So-called core prices, which exclude the more volatile measurements of gasoline and food in order to better assess price growth trends, increased 0.3% in April.

The US Labor Department said that the consumer price index rose 0.3% in April from the previous month

From the same time last year, the gauge climbed 3.6% – the lowest reading since 2021.

Altogether, the report indicates that while inflation has fallen considerably from a peak of 9.1%, it remains well above the Fed's 2% target.

High inflation has created severe financial pressures for most US households, which are forced to pay more for everyday necessities like food and rent. Price hikes are particularly devastating for lower-income Americans, because they tend to spend more of

their already-stretched paycheck on necessities and therefore have less flexibility to save money.

Housing and gasoline costs were once again the biggest drivers of inflation last month, accounting for more than 70% of the total monthly increase, according to the report.

The report comes as Federal Reserve policymakers weigh when to start cutting interest rates amid concerns that progress on inflation has stalled. Investors have steadily dialed back their expectations as central bank officials signal they are in no rush to cut, and that incoming economic data will guide their decision.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell last week said the central bank will need to be patient and wait for evidence that inflation is slowing before it cuts rates.

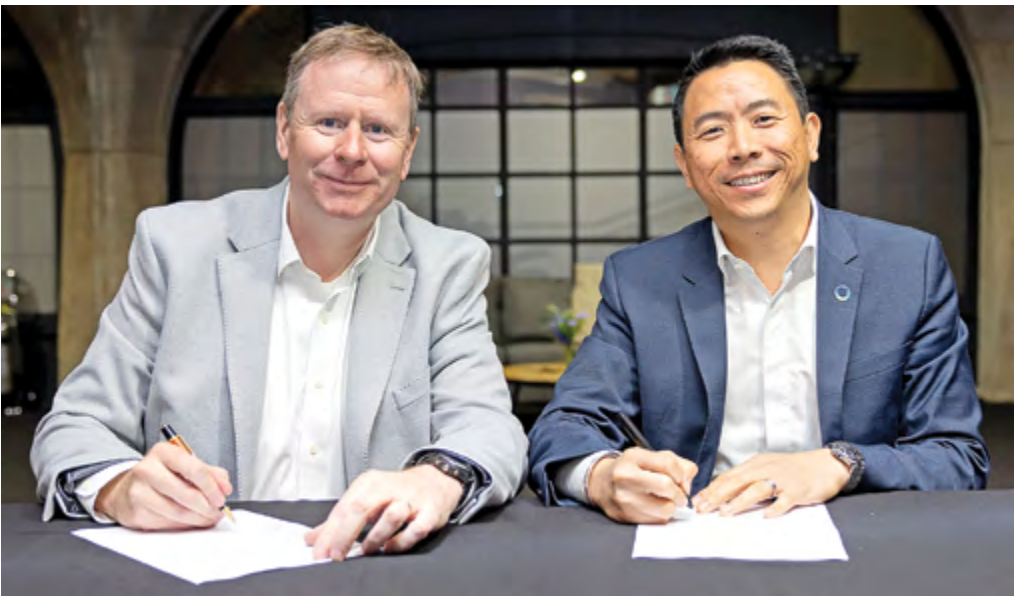
(Source: Fox Business)

Presight, Intel to collaborate in driving AI innovation across Middle East

Abu Dhabi, UAE – Presight, the Middle East region's leading big data analytics company powered by generative AI, and Intel, a global leader in cloud computing, data center, AI, and PC solutions, have announced a strategic collaboration aimed at accelerating applied AI projects and developing cutting-edge AI solutions in the Middle East.

Signifying a commitment to advancing AI research and development in the region, Intel and Presight will together lead the development of AI products, including Smart Cities through innovative R&D initiatives, focusing on leveraging open-source tools and industry standards to optimize AI software for efficient AI workloads.

Thomas Pramotedham, CEO of Presight, said, "In this collaboration with Intel, we are excited about unlocking new possibilities in artificial intelligence. Together, we combine Intel's leading technology capabilities with our deep insights in big data and AI, aiming to drive significant advance-



ments. This collaboration goes beyond technical achievements; it's about creating real value and making a lasting impact on our stakeholders and society."

The MoU will include both entities engaging in mutual collaboration and innovation, knowledge-sharing through technical workshops, and developing technology roadmaps to

empower and upskill developers in optimized AI application development. This will help create cutting-edge AI solutions that address the region's unique challenges and opportunities.

Also, under the MoU signed by the two companies, there will be a focus on strengthening AI data security and privacy through the implementation of

confidential AI technologies – including safeguarding sensitive data used in AI models during the AI lifecycle, from data training to inference stages.

Leveraging Intel trust authority technologies, the platforms running AI models will be verified for trustworthiness, ensuring data security and integrity throughout the AI ecosystem.

Google working to reinvent itself for artificial intelligence age

Daniel Howley

Mountain View, US — Google is in the midst of a full-blown AI evolution. Last week, the company announced a flurry of AI products and services during its I/O developer conference with the aim of repositioning itself as the world's AI software leader.

"We are fully in our Gemini era," CEO Sundar Pichai said during his keynote, referring to the company's latest Gemini AI models, while noting that AI is still "in the very early days of the AI platform shift."

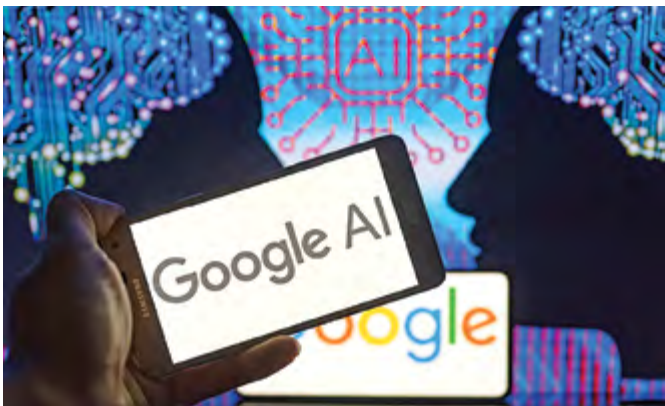
For years, Google was considered Silicon Valley's AI powerhouse. But OpenAI and Microsoft threw the company off course, entering into a multibillion-dollar, multiyear partnership in 2023 that saw Microsoft integrate OpenAI's most advanced

models into its productivity, search, and cloud products.

All this helped crown Microsoft as the world's most valuable company earlier this year.

Google's climb back hasn't been easy. It originally debuted a ChatGPT competitor called Bard that fell short of initial expectations. And more recently, it bungled the rollout of its generative AI-powered image generator, a tool that the company admitted was not "working the way we intended."

Stealing back the AI throne starts with Google reinventing its most important product: Search. Now – or soon, as it's rolling out over time – at the top of the screen, you'll find a generative AI-powered area called AI Overview that offers summarised responses to queries along with links to the sources.



It's a major departure for Google and could impact everything from the company's advertisers, its main source of revenue, to websites that rely on the firm for search traffic, such as travel platforms and media organizations.

While the Search changes are easily the biggest updates to Google's public-facing products,

they weren't the only consequential announcements at the show. Google also showed off a new AI-powered prototype assistant called Project Astra.

During a pre-recorded stage demo, the platform, which views content streamed through your smartphone camera, was able to identify objects, solve programming problems, and more.

Unlike digital assistants Google Assistant and Apple's Siri, Project Astra offers a more creative, conversational tone that sounds more human-like. It's even able to understand when you interrupt it, stopping to listen without getting mad. Not human-like!

Google co-founder Sergey Brin, who was touring the I/O demo areas, said the technology behind Project Astra would have been helpful for the company's canceled Google Glass, adding that the headset was 10 years ahead of its time.

But Google's announcement came a day after OpenAI debuted its own GPT-4o model, which, based on pre-recorded and live-streamed demos, is capable of many of the same tasks as Project Astra. What's more, OpenAI is making parts of its

GPT-4o model available to users for free, while Google says it will charge for access to Project Astra.

Google also revealed AI updates to its Workspace productivity suite, including bringing Gemini to the Gmail mobile app. The feature allows users to quickly summarize emails and write contextual replies based on messages.

Android, Google's mobile operating system, also received its share of generative AI improvements, including scam call detection and the ability to add AI-generated images and more to text messages and Gmail.

As of now, that puts Google far ahead of Apple, which has yet to introduce generative AI features to its iOS operating system for the iPhone. But that is largely expected to change when the

company hosts its annual WWDC event in June.

Even if Apple debuts new generative AI offerings, it could still be a boon for Google, since, according to Bloomberg, Apple is working to use Google's Gemini to power the iPhone's AI capabilities. But Apple is also in talks with OpenAI. Folks, we've got an AI bake-off.

For now, Google appears to be back on top. While GPT-4o cooled some of the excitement around Project Astra, Google's AI Overview for Search will expose far more people to its generative AI technologies than Microsoft or Apple when the latter shows its hand.

But with Microsoft preparing to host its Build developer conference next week, Google's lead could be short-lived.

(Source: Yahoo Finance)

Ooredoo backs Jareed project for SME women



Ooredoo recently celebrated adding the 'Jareed' project to its growing list of women-dedicated incubators.

'Jareed' is an innovative project where members of the Omani Women's Association in the Wilayat of Nakhal make eco-friendly paper from palm tree leaves. The women are all trained by the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Development Authority, a press release said.

The launch of the 'Jareed' project as an Ooredoo women-dedicated incubator was held under the auspices of Maymouna Bint

Salim al Mandhari, director-general of Social Development in South Batinah, Professor Bushra Bint Yousef al Kindi, assistant director of the Department of Associations and Community Clubs at the Ministry of Social Development, and coach Ayesha Bint Salim al Shoily, department head of CSR at Ooredoo. The SME Development Authority was represented by Maryam Bint Khalfan al Hamrashidi, head of Craft Industries Department in South Batinah Governorate, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, along with sev-

eral calligraphers, painters, and Omani Women's Associations.

An innovative hub for creating various types of natural paper, 'Jareed' offers a strong value proposition and aims to become a well-established brand. The workshop presents a good business opportunity for the members of the Omani Women's Association in the Wilayat of Nakhal as it is unique to the region. The women produce high-quality, distinctive and eco-friendly paper with exclusive specifications and that is ready to enter the market, benefitting

many creative individuals, including calligraphers, writers, and painters.

Ooredoo's women-dedicated incubators are learning hubs that support women across Oman in developing vocational skills and setting up businesses in information technology, beauty products/services, cooking, sewing, and handicrafts. Since the launch of this corporate social responsibility initiative in 2015, the incubator programme has trained more than 10,000 women to set up and promote their businesses and overcome challenges.

Sohar Islamic's offers new competitive Interest Rates

In line with the bank's dedication to expanding its offerings and enhancing its value proposition, Sohar Islamic - Sohar International's Islamic Window - has launched its groundbreaking Auto Finance campaign.

The campaign presents an exclusive opportunity to acquire auto finance at a competitive interest rate starting from 3.35%, reflecting the bank's unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional value to its customers. Valid until 30 June, this fully Shariah-compliant offer extends to both salaried and non-salaried customers, a press release said.

Abdulwahid al Murshidi, chief Islamic Banking officer at Sohar International, said, "The strategic launch of our Auto Finance offers was meticulously timed to integrate with the prevailing market dynamics. Through astute observation of evolving consumer trends, Sohar Islamic's Auto Finance offering stands as a cornerstone, empowering customers with competitive financing.

This initiative not only enhances consumer convenience but also exemplifies our commitment to providing tailored solutions that resonate with the unique needs and aspirations of our esteemed clientele. At Sohar Islamic, we understand the varying needs of our discerning customers, and our latest endeavour



signifies our dedication to facilitating their financial pursuits with unparalleled efficiency and integrity. This campaign also serves as a testament to Sohar Islamic's steadfast resolve to continually innovate and adapt to the evolving dynamics of the financial landscape, thereby forging enduring bonds of trust."

Sohar Islamic's Shariah-compliant auto financing solutions extend beyond gasoline-powered vehicles to encompass environmentally friendly options as well. These offerings are designed with tailored interest rates to align with customer preferences, emphasising the bank's dedication to sustainability.

Rates for gasoline-powered vehicles start at an enticing 3.45%, dipping to 3.90% for two years and adjusting to 4.95% for

longer tenures. While customers can avail themselves of reduced rates when purchasing environmentally friendly vehicles, starting at 3.35% for one year, 3.80% for two years, and 4.80% for extended periods until June 30, 2024.

With financing available for up to 80% of the vehicle's value, Sohar Islamic ensures a seamless journey towards vehicle ownership. The application process is streamlined, requiring minimal documentation and no joint registrations or mortgages. Approval is swift, enabling customers to realise their automotive dreams with ease.

Omani nationals with a minimum monthly salary of RO300 and non-Omanis with RO400 can avail themselves of this offer, subject to specific service period.



Bank Muscat opens Lighting Project for Al Haram Sports Team

Bank Muscat enhance the annual Green Sports programme through the inauguration of more green sports fields across the sultanate.

The bank has recently participated in the inauguration of the lighting project for Al Haram sports team in Barka, South Batinah. The event was hosted under the patronage of the businessman Sami bin Ali al Siyabi, in the presence of Adnan bin Ahmed al Balushi, assistant regional manager of Bank Muscat branches, South Batinah Governorate, Younis bin Hashil al Yahmadi, head of Alharam sports team, and a number of invitees and team members.

During the inauguration ceremony, Balushi expressed his happiness about the successful execution of Al Haram sports team's lighting project as part of the Green Sports programme. He congratulated the team for the successful completion of the project which will contribute to the development of the main infrastructure of the team.

The field will also represent a suitable venue for the team to organize events and different cultural and sports activities contributing to the enhancement of their sports skills. Furthermore, a large segment of the Omani youth with different age groups are keen to join the events related to the sports and communal arenas. Bank Muscat will remain committed to serving the youth through its CSR pro-

gramme Green Sports to keep pace with the developments that contribute to the growth of the sports teams all over the Sultanate.

Speaking on the occasion, Younis bin Hashil Al Yahmadi, Head of Al Haram sports team, said, "I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bank Muscat for the continuous support to enhancing the Green Sports programme. This programme represents a major social initiative for developing the youth's talents and sports teams in the sultanate. The fields of local sports teams constitute strategic and convenient areas to organise various events and sports activities. Therefore, the new lighting project of Al Haram sports team was the dream of the Omani youth and now it would provide the team with an ample opportunity to develop their talents and sports potential through hosting multiple sports and cultural events, activities, and competitions in the evening."

The Green Sports programme is one of Bank Muscat's CSR initiatives, which manifests the values of leadership and partnership to create a positive impact on the Omani community.

The scope of Green Sports comprises greening of football fields with natural or synthetic turf, floodlights and water desalination equipment in areas facing water salinity. Bank Muscat's Green Sports programme has so far benefitted 183 teams.

Indian artist launches book on captive creativity

Dr Shalini Gupta Kumar, a renowned Indian poet and artist residing in Muscat launched her debut publishing venture - a book documenting her experiences during the pandemic related quarantine.

The book with watercolour illustrations consists of 39 poems with corresponding paintings across 80 pages. Each piece reflects her observation of the world around her, from the minute details of people and things in her daily life to profound reflections on human emotions and experiences.

The launch event, attended by art enthusiasts and media, celebrated her artistic journey, with special acknowledgment given to Mohamed Issa al Rawahy and many others' contributions who helped in translating the poems into English as well as Arabic ensuring that the essence of each poem remained intact.

Speaking at a press conference, Dr Shalini shared insights



Dr Shalini Gupta, 2nd from right

into her creative process during quarantine, emphasising the importance of taking the time to truly observe and reflect. Her vision extends beyond mere publication, she aspires for her book

to reach libraries worldwide, in schools and colleges, due to its relatable theme and message.

Dr Shalini's perspective on the human experience is evident as she invites readers to order

through email, whatsapp or platforms like Amazon, and embrace moments of solitude, find beauty in the ordinary, and discover new perspectives that resonate.

Indian School Wadi Kabir celebrates 35th Founders' Day

The senior wing of Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir marked its 35th Founders' Day with grandeur at Majan Heights, with Ahmed al Mukhaini, advisor, Capital Market Authority Oman, as the chief guest.

Dignitaries present included Anil Khimji, Kiran Asher, Rajendra Ved, Harshendu Shah, Alkesh Joshi, Sachin Toprani, and other members of the school management committee, former members of the school management committee, members of the BoD, principals of various Indian schools and special invitees.

The event commenced with the ceremonial lamp lighting and rendition of national anthems of Oman and India, followed by a warm welcome to the chief guest and other distinguished guests. Acknowledging the dedication and hard work of teachers, parents, and students, Sachin Toprani, honorary president of ISWK, praised the school's journey to becoming a premier educational institution in Oman.

A special segment honoured staff who have completed 10,15,



20, 25 or 30 years of dedicated service at ISWK. The former school management committee members of ISWK and ISWK International were also felicitated by the chief guest. The head of the A.B.L.E. team, Rashmi

Patankar and the school principal, D N Rao, presented insightful reports on student activities and academic achievements respectively.

Mukhaini's address emphasised the importance of uphold-

ing societal values and commended the Indian community's contributions to Oman's development. The event culminated in the recognition of student achievements, including the presentation of special awards by

Mukhaini to those who brought laurels to the school.

The highlight of the evening was the awarding of the Cock House trophy to Tagore House, celebrating their triumph in the academic year 2023-2024.

Youth Camp empowers future leaders

The Sustainable Leaders Youth Camp (SLY), hosted by Carbon6, concluded its successful two-day event, leaving a lasting impact on 53 young participants poised to become leaders in sustainability.

Held on May 10 and 11, the camp provided a dynamic platform for youth to engage with pressing environmental and societal issues, fostering innovation and leadership in sustainability, a press release said.

From an initial pool of 281 applicants, 53 outstanding young minds were selected to participate in the SLY camp, showcasing their dedication and passion for creating positive change. Throughout the event, participants immersed themselves in workshops, interactive activities, and inspiring talks, learning, innovating, and preparing themselves to address the challenges of tomorrow.

The final ceremony, held on May 11, was graced by Dr Hashil al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran, as guest of honour.

Omran's partnership as a platinum sponsor underscores a strong commitment to sustainability and youth development. Additionally, be'ah's role as a golden partner brought valuable



insights into environmental conservation, while the strategic partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth highlighted governmental support for empowering youth and promoting sustainable development.

The SLY camp featured three inspiring talks by distinguished speakers, including Debbie

Richardson, senior Corporate Affairs strategist, Talal Hassan, CEO of 44.01, and Nick Little, Community Outreach coordinator at Waste Lab. These talks

provided invaluable insights covering various aspects of sustainability and innovation.

Awards were presented for Best idea in Innovation and Tech-

nology, Best idea in Circular Economy and Environment, Best idea in Sustainable Tourism and Hospitality and Best-performing team.

DCDE partners Engineering Championship

Dubai Chamber of Digital Economy (CDCDE), one of the three chambers operating under the umbrella of Dubai Chambers, has announced its participation as the strategic partner of the Global Prompt Engineering Championship, a generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) competition held under the patronage of Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, Chairman of the Executive Council, and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Dubai Future Foundation (DFF).

The event will take place at Emirates Towers and Museum of the Future in Dubai from 20 - 21 May, with prizes worth AED 1 million. Organised by the Dubai Centre for Artificial Intelligence and the Dubai Future Foundation, the event is the biggest of its kind globally in the field of generative AI and will see participants in literature, art, and coding.

Abdulaziz al Jaziri, deputy CEO of Dubai Future Foundation, stated that Dubai Chamber of Digital Economy's participation in the Global Prompt Engineering Championship represents an effective partnership to strengthen Dubai as a leading global hub.

EU supports clinic on Green Jobs

The European Union, in partnership with the Environment Society of Oman and ASYAD Group, successfully concluded the much-anticipated clinic, Green Jobs and The Youth Perspective, at Muscat University.

This event marks a significant milestone in addressing climate change challenges and promoting sustainable development across Oman, a press release said.

The clinic brought together 140 participants, including university students, academic professionals, and other stakeholders keen on understanding and contributing to the green job market. Throughout the day, attendees engaged in interactive sessions, workshops, and panel discussions led by esteemed experts in the field of sustainability and green careers.

Notably, Raquel Noboa, CEO of Fifty Shades Greener, and Romain Boitard, Human Capital Development Expert from the European Union, provided invaluable insights into the necessity of integrating green skills across all job sectors and the critical role of education in sustainable development.



Key highlights of the clinic included comprehensive presentations on the evolving landscape of the green job market, workshops focused on identifying and developing essential green skills, a dynamic panel discussion that emphasised youth empowerment and the pivotal role of education in fostering a sustainable future.

The European Union's active involvement in the clinic underscores its commitment to fostering international cooperation on

environmental issues and supporting Oman's strategic green initiatives.

"The EU continues to lead by example, demonstrating the significant role that international partnerships play in advancing global sustainability goals," stated H E Christophe Farnaud, EU Ambassador to Oman.

Suaad al Harthi, executive director of Environment Society of Oman, said, "I want to express our gratitude to the EU Delegation for their partnership and for

sharing their expertise and knowledge with us. Collaboration is key in addressing climate change, and partnerships like these strengthen our collective efforts.

"Oman has committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 - an ambitious target that requires the involvement of all sectors of society. From NGOs and government entities to corporates and academic institutions, everyone has a role to play in supporting this."

Shangri-La Muscat appoints new Director of Sales

Swedish national Joakim Velinder will assume the role of Director of Sales and Marketing for Shangri-La Muscat in Oman from May 19.

Joining Shangri-La Group from the Hyatt Group, Joakim Velinder has distinguished himself as an award-winning and visionary leader in his field, a press release said.

After gaining early experience in Europe, his career has focused on commercial roles in the Middle East's hotel industry, with assignments in Dubai, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and culminating in his most recent role as the cluster director of Sales and Marketing for Alila Hotels in Oman.

The commercial leader brings a wide-ranging experience within the hospitality industry to bear on his new role, holding several operational positions before moving into sales and marketing. In a career that has already taken him to several landmark luxury hotels around the world, including London's Goring Hotel and the Park Hyatt Dubai, this broad operational and strategic knowl-



edge is complemented by an in-depth understanding of the regional market, with successful leadership positions & assignments in GCC states.

"I'm looking forward to joining the Shangri-La team, leveraging my regional expertise, global connections and enhance and

expand the group's exceptional partnerships across the board," says Velinder. "I relish the opportunity this presents to drive business in our key source markets, in alignment with the ethos of the Shangri-La Group, which prides itself on giving a local flair to international standards."

Infoline celebrates 20th business anniversary

This year, Infoline, a trailblazer in digital business process outsourcing and technology-driven solutions, marks its 20th anniversary.

A journey that began in 2004 as a modest venture has flourished into a beacon of innovation and excellence, profoundly impacting the business landscape across Oman and beyond, a press release said.

Founded in 2004 as a visionary venture managing Gulf Air's contact centre, Infoline has significantly broadened its services and market presence. Among its notable achievements, Infoline introduced the 1318 Omantel Directory, now known as Daleel 1010, and launched Oman's first Cloud Contact Centre, transforming communication

solutions in the aviation and banking sectors.

Infoline's history is marked by strategic alliances and significant technological advancements that have propelled the company to the forefront of the industry. The introduction of ERP and CRM practices, partnerships with major national projects, and ISO certifications underscore Infoline's commitment to quality and innovation.

Infoline's dedication extends beyond business innovation to profound community engagement and development, particularly through its Omanisation policy, which has significantly contributed to the employment and training of Omani youth. Infoline's efforts have been recognised by the Ministry of Manpower.

SQU College of Education gets international accreditation

The College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University has received International Academic Accreditation for its undergraduate studies programmes from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

This accreditation is a significant achievement that reflects the College's commitment to maintaining the highest standards in teacher preparation. It also confirms the position of Sultan Qaboos University as a leading institution in the field of university education and learning and its continuous efforts to improve academic and professional opportunities for its faculty members and students, a press release said.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) is an organisation that accredits Educator Preparation Institutions inside and outside the United States of America by providing evidence that confirms



Prof Saleh Salim al Busaidi



Dr Shubair Abdullah

This accreditation is a significant achievement that reflects the College's commitment to maintaining the highest standards in teacher preparation. It also confirms SQU's leading position

quality and supports continuous improvement to enhance the learning of school students.

CAEP has six standards that

must be met in teacher preparation programmes. Each standard includes a set of standard characteristics and conditions for the

educational program in order to obtain academic accreditation. These include Standard 1 - Content and Pedagogical Knowledge, Standard 2 - Clinical Partnerships and Practice, Standard 3 - Candidate Recruitment, Progression, and Support, Standard 4 - Programme Impact, Standard 5 - Quality Assurance System and Continuous Improvement, Standard 6 - Fiscal and Administrative Capacity.

The College of Education has met all of the aforementioned accreditation standards, which qualified it to obtain the highest period of accreditation, which is seven years. Thus, the accreditation is valid for the period from the Spring Semester of 2024 until the Spring Semester of 2030.

Further, the academic accreditation includes the teacher preparation programme in all specialisations of the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos Uni-

versity.

The Dean of the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University, Prof Saleh Salim Mohammed al Busaidi, stated that what distinguishes the teacher preparation programmes at the College of Education is the balance between the theoretical and practical aspects where students obtain a broad depth of knowledge in their specialty and at the same time acquire practical skills through field experiences and field training.

Dr Shubair Abdullah, head of the Quality Assurance and Academic Accreditation Unit at the College of Education, indicated that preparations for the academic accreditation process began early, and that the College adopted the participatory method in managing the accreditation stages. For instance, a main committee was formed to review all requirements for academic accreditation.

Europe uses myth of Russian threat to escalate arms race, says Lavrov

Moscow, Russia - Western countries are using the myth of an imaginary Russian threat to escalate the arms race and form a 'European military alliance with a nuclear component', Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Saturday.

Speaking at a meeting of the Russian Assembly of the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy in Moscow, Lavrov said the acute phase of the military-political confrontation between Russia and the West continues and is in full swing. Addressing Europe's plans to restore the number and combat readiness of the armies of its states, as well as the transfer of military-industrial complexes of NATO countries to wartime mode, the minister asse-

sessed them as an 'escalation'. The diplomat stressed that French President Emmanuel Macron spearheaded the anti-Russian movement in Europe, saying: "Emmanuel Macron admitted in an interview the other day that Paris and Berlin have al-



ways seen Russia as the main threat." Russia remains open to dialogue with the West on security and strategic stability, but only if interests of both sides are taken

into account, he asserted. "Not from a position of strength, not from a position of one's own exclusivity, but only on equal terms and with respect for each other's interests," he underscored.

He also noted that taking into account the current position of Western politicians, it would be fair to say that Europe will not be relevant as a partner for Russia for at least one generation.

Turning to the situation in Ukraine, Lavrov said Russia will defend its interests in this country and criticised the upcoming summit on the Ukrainian settlement in Switzerland as 'having no

Russia remains open to dialogue with the West on security and strategic stability, but only if interests of both sides are taken into account

SERGEY LAVROV

prospects'. As for the West's build-up of long-range arms supplies to Ukraine, Russia sees them as a signal of unreadiness for a serious conversation on the peaceful settlement, he added.

"This means that they have made their choice in favour of a showdown on the battlefield," he said. Based on the current circumstances, Moscow deems as a more appropriate option the formation of global security from Eurasia as the regional alliances in this sector are established on the principles of mutual and indivisible security, he noted.

"This idea was discussed during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to China this week, including with President Xi Jinping."

Poland to enhance border security
Meanwhile, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced on Saturday that his country will spend US\$2.5bn to improve the security of the border it shares with Russia and Belarus. Speaking at an event organised in connection with the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Monte Casino in the city of Cracow in southern Poland, Tusk stated that his country has started work on the 'Shield-East' project, which aims to strengthen military checkpoints along the border with Russia and Belarus, according to the state-run PAP news agency. Anadolu Agency



Death toll from floods in Brazil surges to 155

Bogota, Colombia - The death toll from floods caused by heavy rains in Brazil has risen to 155 on Saturday, with 94 people still missing.

The floods caused by heavy rains in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, have resulted in increasing loss of life and property over the past two weeks.

According to a statement from the state's Civil Defence, the death toll has risen to 155, and the number of missing persons stands at 94.

The statement reported that the number of injured has reached 807, with over 2.3mn people having been affected by the floods. Additionally, more than 620,000 people have been displaced.

The statement also noted that 82,666 people have been rescued from the disaster area and 77,202 people are staying in shelters.

On May 3, Rio Grande do Sul Governor Eduardo Leite stated: "We are experiencing an extremely exceptional situation. This is not just a critical event; it is the most devastating event in the state's history."

Leite announced a 'state of disaster' for 180 days due to the scale of the tragedy and emphasised significant efforts to evacuate people.

Meanwhile, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who visited the affected areas three times, has promised to rebuild the region. Anadolu Agency

Georgian president vetoes foreign agents bill

Tbilisi, Georgia - Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili said on Saturday that she vetoed the Bill On Transparency of Foreign Influence passed by the parliament earlier this week.

"Today I vetoed the 'Russian' law. This law is essentially and spiritually Russian. It contradicts our constitution and all European standards, therefore it represents an obstacle to our European path," Zurbishvili said at a press briefing in Tbilisi.

She noted that the vetoed document will be transferred to the parliament today. "This law is not subject to any changes or improvements, so the veto is very simple. This law has to be revoked," Zurbishvili stressed.

According to the Georgian legislation, the presidential veto



can be overcome if the majority in the parliament votes for lifting it. The Georgian parliament on Tuesday passed the bill in the third and final reading, introducing control over foreign financing of non-governmental organisations in the Caucasian state.

Despite escalated tensions that even led to a physical confrontation between supporters and opponents of the proposed legislation, the bill was passed with 84 votes for and 30 against.

There have been protests against the legislation, which mandates that non-governmental organisations receiving more than 20 per cent of their funding from abroad must register as entities pursuing foreign interests or face penalties. Anadolu Agency

Fresh volcanic eruption triggers evacuation in Indonesia

Jakarta, Indonesia - Authorities ordered evacuation after a volcano on a remote Indonesian island erupted, spewing a grey ash cloud into the air, local media reported on Sunday.

Mt Ibu, located on Halmahera island, erupted on the evening of May 18, sending ash 4km (2.5 miles) high, said Indonesia's Centre for Volcanology and Geological Disaster

Mitigation (PVMBG).

Residents of at least seven villages have been evacuated by a joint team comprising police, military and search-and-rescue officials, Abdul Muhari, the head of the disaster agency's disaster data, said in a statement.

He did not provide the number of people evacuated but authorities have recommended that a 7km (4.3-mile) radius be

Mt Ibu erupted on the evening of May 18, sending ash 4km high, said Indonesia's Centre for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation

cleared. The PVMBG raised the alert level of the volcano to the highest level on May 16, after Mt Ibu erupted multiple times earlier in May.

Positioned on the so-called 'Pacific Ring of Fire', Indonesia, the largest populated Muslim country, experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity with 127 active volcanoes.

On May 11, flash flooding and

cold lava flow from Mt Marapi, one of the most active in West Sumatra province, covered several nearby districts following torrential rain, killing more than 60 people. Last month, volcanic eruptions in North Sulawesi province left dozens of flights cancelled, affecting thousands of passengers, as authorities closed Sam Ratulangi Airport. Anadolu Agency

VINTAGE SHOW

Vintage vehicles are pictured during a vintage vehicle show in Pacifica, California, US on Saturday (Ochiuua)

Fresh exodus in Myanmar's Rakhine: 150,000 Rohingya Muslims displaced

Ankara, Turkey - The reported seizure of Buthidaung town of Myanmar's Rakhine state by the rebel ethnic Arakan Army (AA) has triggered a fresh exodus, displacing 150,000 Rohingya Muslims, a Rohingya rights group said on Sunday.

On Saturday, the rebel group claimed that it took complete control of Buthidaung township, home to the ethnic Rohingya population, near the Bangladesh border after the regime's Strategic Military Command in the northern Rakhine State town fell.

The group said it seized four Light Infantry Battalion headquarters and two border guard bases in the township this week amid continued clashes outside



Buthidaung town with the rebels chasing 'retreating' junta soldiers.

Buthidaung has the largest Rohingya population since the massive wave of violence against the Rohingya in 2017 by the Myanmar army.

"On May 17, the (Arakan Army) ordered the Rohingya in

downtown Buthidaung to leave the town no later than May 18 at 10am. When the Rohingya refused to leave, they set fire to the entire downtown area at 9:30pm, not even waiting until their own deadline," according to Free Rohingya Coalition, a global network of Rohingya activists who share common concerns

about Myanmar's human rights violations.

As of now, more than 150,000 people have become homeless and need urgent humanitarian intervention, Nay San Lwin, the coalition's co-founder, told Anadolu.

The displaced residents, according to him, are still inside the township with many fleeing to rural areas.

Some are on the road and in paddy fields, he added.

They were trying to flee to Maungdaw township, which borders Bangladesh. However, they were not allowed by the Arakan Army to flee to Maungdaw, he went on to say. Anadolu Agency

Dozens of Palestinians killed in Gaza Strip

At least 20 Palestinians were killed after Israeli airstrike on a residential area at Nuseirat refugee camp

Gaza City, Palestine - Dozens of Palestinians were killed and others injured on Sunday in a series of Israeli raids across all governorates of the Gaza Strip.

In the northern Gaza Strip, medical sources told Anadolu that 'more than 40 Palestinians were killed and dozens wounded in three massacres committed by the occupation on Saturday night in northern Gaza, some of them arrived at Kamal Adwan Hospital, and others are still under the rubble'.

Eyewitnesses reported that violent clashes broke out between resistance members and Israeli forces, amid explosions and continuous intense artillery shelling on several areas in the North Gaza Governorate.

They pointed out that there was heavy artillery shelling on several areas in the towns of Jabalia and Beit Lahia and the vicinity of the Kamal Adwan Hospital.

For days, clashes between Palestinian resistance fighters and Israeli forces have been escalating east of the city of Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip.

In the central Gaza Strip, medical sources confirmed to Anadolu that 'the director of the Central Governorate Investigations, Zaher Hamid Al-Houli, and his colleague Jihad Al-Hamidi were killed in an Israeli attack on the city of Deir Al-Balah'.

Also, at least 20 Palestinian, mostly children and women, were killed and dozens of others



There was heavy artillery shelling on several areas in the towns of Jabalia and Beit Lahia and in the vicinity of Kamal Adwan Hospital

Israeli warplanes also targeted Palestinians in the Maghazi camp in the central Gaza Strip, killing three Palestinians and injuring several others, said medical sources

were injured as a result of an Israeli airstrike targeting a residential area at the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on Sunday.

The Palestinian official news agency Wafa reported medical and civil defence teams recovered the bodies of at least 20 people from beneath the rubble

of the targeted homes.

Israeli warplanes also targeted Palestinians in the Maghazi camp in the central Gaza Strip, killing three Palestinians and injuring several others, said medical sources.

In Gaza City, medical sources at the Baptist Hospital said six Palestinians were killed in an Israeli bombing of a house on Jaffa Street in the Daraj neighbourhood, east of the city.

Two Palestinians were also killed and others were injured as a result of a bombing that targeted a school housing displaced people in the centre of Gaza City, they added.

A number of Palestinians were also injured in an Israeli bombing that targeted a residential apartment in the Al-Shati Camp west of Gaza City.

Meanwhile, in the southern Gaza Strip, at least five Palesti-

ans were killed within 24 hours due to Israeli raids, medical sources at the Kuwait Hospital in Rafah told Anadolu.

Eyewitnesses reported that violent clashes erupted between Palestinian resistance fighters and the Israeli army east of the city, resulting in columns of smoke rising from the area.

The Israeli army continues its military operation against Rafah, which began on May 6,

disregarding regional and international warnings about its repercussions.

According to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), the operation in Rafah has forcibly displaced over 630,000 people to Deir al-Balah in central Gaza.

Israel continued its brutal offensive on Gaza despite a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire. Meanwhile, the Health Ministry in the besieged enclave said on Sunday that at least 35,456 Palestinians were killed in Israel's ongoing offensive on the Gaza Strip since last October 7.

A ministry statement added that 79,476 other people have also been injured in the onslaught. "Israeli attacks killed 70 people and injured 110 others in the last 24 hours," the statement said.

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

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

Israel is accused of 'genocide' at the International Court of Justice, which has ordered Tel Aviv to ensure its forces do not commit acts of genocide and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

Anadolu Agency

France launches big operation to regain control of New Caledonia

Paris, France - France launched a large-scale operation on Sunday with more than 600 gendarmes in New Caledonia, a colony 17,000km (10,500 miles) from its territory, to suppress the incidents initiated by the local people in response to the granting of voting rights to French citizens.

The operation includes around 600 gendarmes, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin announced on X.

The goal of the operation is to re-establish republican order and regain control of the main 60km road between the New Caledonian capital Noumea and the airport, Darmanin said.

Nearly 60 roadblocks were neutralised with the help of the national gendarmerie and police, the High Commission of the Republic in New Caledonia reported. Over 200 people have been arrested and 20 food shops reopened so far in the region, Darmanin noted.

He said the French govern-



ment knows that there are still many roadblocks to clear and they gave the firm orders to law-enforcement units.

At least six people have been killed in the unrest and hundreds arrested since Monday.

Protests erupted after the French National Assembly adopted constitutional reform on voting rules. The reform will give French nationals, who have lived on the island for at least 10 years, the right to vote in local elections.

French President Emmanuel Macron declared a state of emergency in the archipelago on Wednesday and deployed army personnel to the region.

Amnesty's call

Amnesty International, meanwhile, has called on French authorities to respect the rights of the indigenous Kanak people amid unrest in New Caledonia.

"The state of emergency declared by the French government and the deployment of the

French army, coupled with a ban on the social media app TikTok, must not be misused to restrict people's human rights," Kate Schuetze, Amnesty International's Pacific researcher, stated.

Noting the fatalities during the unrest, Schuetze said: "It is imperative that French police and gendarmes only use force as reasonably necessary and prioritise protecting the right to life."

She said that banning TikTok is a 'disproportionate' measure that would violate freedom of expression, adding it could set a precedent for other governments worldwide to justify shutdowns in reaction to public protests.

"French authorities must uphold the rights of the Indigenous Kanak people and the right to peaceful expression and assembly without discrimination. People calling for independence should be able to express their views peacefully," Schuetze said.

Anadolu Agency



Purevsuren Lkhagvajav, 31, was found dead at 8,300 metres (27,231 feet) near the 'balcony' of Mt Everest

Climber found dead on Everest

Ankara, Turkey - The body of a second Mongolian climber, who went missing on Mt Everest, has been found, local media reported on Sunday, confirming the second death on the world's highest peak in five days.

Purevsuren Lkhagvajav, 31, was found dead at 8,300 metres (27,231 feet) near the 'balcony' of Mt Everest on Friday, Everest Chronicle, a mountaineering website, reported citing government officials. "We have received reports that it was found 30 metres (98 feet) down the rope near the stone of the south summit," said Director of 8K Expeditions Khimlal Gautam. Lkhagvajav was in contact with his countryman Usukhjargal Tsendendamba, 53, till last Sunday evening from Camp 4, which is situated less than a kilometre below the summit.

Tsendendamba's body was also found on Friday at an altitude of 8,600 metres (28,215 feet) after days of search and rescue operations that had been hampered by bad weather.

"We are trying to bring the bodies down," Gautam said.

Nepal is home to eight of the world's 10 highest peaks, and mountain climbing is a major tourism activity and a source of income as well as employment for the tiny Himalayan nation.

Earlier this year, two climbers died on nearby Makalu, the world's fifth-highest peak.

Anadolu Agency

Foreign presence on Gaza's coast is 'occupation', says Palestinian groups

Istanbul, Turkey - Palestinian groups warned on Sunday that any foreign troop presence on the coast of the Gaza Strip would be considered an 'occupation force'.

The US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Friday that a temporary pier was anchored to Gaza's beach and will be used to funnel humanitarian aid into the besieged enclave.

"The US floating pier on Gaza's coast is a source of concern," the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) said in a statement.

"We warn against its potential misuse for purposes beyond aid delivery such as displacement or bolstering the Israeli occupation's interests," it warned.

The PFLP called for opening Gaza's crossings, including the Rafah border terminal with Egypt, 'to ensure unhindered aid flow without restrictions or conditions'. The Palestinian group reiterated its rejection of any US, Israeli or foreign presence in Gaza.

"Any force from the US, Israel or any other country on our lands will be considered a legitimate target for our forces," it added.

The Popular Resistance Committees said the US was complicit in the Israeli onslaught on the Gaza Strip.

"The pier is an attempt to distract attention away from the siege, genocide and war of starvation staged by Israel against our people," the group said in a



Whoever wants to provide relief to our people must first stop the war, killing and massacres and cease military and financial support for the enemy

PFLP

statement.

"Whoever wants to provide relief to our people must first stop the war, killing and massacres and cease military and financial support for the enemy (Israel)," it added.

18 detained in West Bank

The Israeli army on Sunday detained at least 18 Palestinians across the occupied West Bank.

According to a joint statement by the Commission of Detainees' Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoner Society, the new arrests brought the total number of Palestinians detained by the Israeli forces since October 7, 2023 to 8,775. The arrests mainly took place in the cities of Tulkarm, Nablus, Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem.

During the Israeli arrest campaigns, the Israeli forces beat and abused Palestinians and damaged their homes and properties, the statement also said.

Anadolu Agency

Meet Mohammad Shafi in J&K, for whom pottery is a way of life

Udhampur, India - Mohammad Shafi, a 77-year-old resident of Langa village in Panchayat Marta, Ramnagar tehsil of Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district, has dedicated his life to pottery, preserving this fading art. For Shafi and his family, pottery is more than a skill; it's a way of life.

Shafi has been in the profession for the last 60 years, learning the craft from his father, a master potter who passed the tradition on to generations.

Speaking with ANI, Shafi explained how earthen pots have served people for ages, used for

cooking, eating, and cooling; these earthen utensils have been the medium of life for several years. "We have been making these pots for centuries. People used to cook and eat food in them. Unlike refrigerators, these earthen pots have numerous health benefits," said Shafi.

Shafi also advocates for the usefulness and eco-friendliness of earthenware. In an era dominated by refrigerators, he explains the benefits of earthenware to the people.

"In the old days, people used 'ghadas' to cool water, but now refrigerators have taken over,

which can be hazardous to health. We have been making these pots for centuries. It's our responsibility to keep this tradition alive so that people can have access to clean, healthy and safe drinking water," he stated.

Shafi also explains how earthen pots naturally cool water through evaporation, keeping it fresh and pure. Unlike refrigerators, they don't emit harmful radiation, which can have negative health consequences. Reflecting on the potential of the profession, Shafi shared, "Initially, I earned Rs 100-150 a day, but now, the potential has increased



77-year-old potter Mohammad Shafi makes eco-friendly earthen pots, at his shop, at Langa, in Udhampur, India on Sunday (ANI)

significantly. One can earn up to Rs 3000-5000 a day, depending on the hard work and efforts."

Starting his craftsmanship in childhood, Shafi continues to create a variety of clay products, including kulhads (clay cups), matkas (earthen pitchers), ghadas (large pots), diyas (oil lamps), and more, which are then sold in local markets.

A similar story unfolds with the various residents of Kashmir, who have been serving this profession as the epitome of craftsmanship. Saima, a girl from Kashmir, has not only revived the dying art but has also become a

youth influencer, inspiring a new generation to embrace the pottery wheel.

Similarly, Shaheena, a young girl from a potter family in Budgam who used to secretly practice at the wheel, is now flourishing her skills in creating exquisite pieces of artistry.

Pottery, is more than just a skill; it's a way of life. For generations, potters have been the original eco-warriors, using natural materials and techniques to create essential utensils to provide the warmth and touch of mother nature to their fellow beings.

ANI



Afghanistan: 70 people killed in recent floods

Kabul, Afghanistan - Nearly 70 people have been killed in recent floods in Ghor and Faryab provinces of Afghanistan, Afghanistan-based TOLO News reported. Local officials in Ghor province have reported that 10 people are still missing, and the death toll from the floods that occurred on Friday might rise.

Thousands of homes, hundreds of shops and thousands of acres of farmland have been destroyed in these floods and thousands of livestock have perished.

Nearly 80 per cent of the city of Ferozkoh has been devastated in the floods that occurred in Ghor. Furthermore, the heavy rainfall has submerged the surroundings of the Minaret of Jam in Ghor, sparking concerns about the potential destruction of 800-year-old monument.

Taliban-appointed Ghor province's spokesperson Abdul Wahid Hamas has said that 50 people, including women and children have died and several

are missing in recent floods.

Speaking to TOLO News, Abdul Wahid Hamas said: "In these floods, fifty people, including women and children, have died, and several are missing. Two thousand houses have been completely destroyed, and more than four thousand houses have been partially damaged. Furthermore, two thousand five hundred shops in the city of Ferozkoh and the districts of this province have been destroyed."

The districts of Shahrak, Dolina, and Tiura alongside the city of Ferozkoh have been impacted by the floods in Ghor. The main Herat-Ghor highway and roads connecting the districts to Ferozkoh have been destroyed and blocked. Homeless people have been facing difficult conditions.

Speaking to TOLO News, Nazar Mohammad, a resident of Ferozkoh city, said: "These floods have left us without clothes or a morsel of bread."

ANI

Nawaz accuses Imran Khan of 'backstabbing' him in 2013

The PML-N supremo was addressing a meeting of party's CWC in Lahore

Islamabad, Pakistan - Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif accused Pakistan Tareek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan of 'backstabbing' him in 2013 by carrying out protest rallies despite assuring him of cooperation after elections, reported Dawn.

Addressing a meeting of the PML-N's Central Working Committee (CWC) in Lahore, Nawaz said upon assuming power in 2013, he visited Imran at his residence in Banigala and they agreed on a working relationship for the country's sake.

Nawaz further said Imran, thereafter, went to London along with other political leaders where a 'plot was hatched' as per which protests were launched in the country upon the latter's return, Dawn reported.

Nawaz said he was left befuddled by the development, adding that he should have been informed about the matter or whatever the PTI's reservations were, according to the report.

"I visit you and you stab me in the back by assuring cooperation, and then you begin protests



Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan Tareek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan



Nawaz Sharif accused Pakistan Tareek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan of 'backstabbing' him in 2013 by carrying out protest rallies despite assuring him of cooperation after elections, reported Dawn

in Islamabad's D-Chowk?" Dawn quoted Nawaz as saying. He added that his cabinet also called for a crackdown on the protests by the police but he asked them to desist, Dawn reported.

The former PM added that it was a 'matter of record' that his

Pakistan," the PML(N) chief said.

Urging the people to take a judgment call on which political party had served them the best, Nawaz said they should consider these aspects before casting their votes.

"I have the right to ask my nation this question: What do you think, before voting, about Nawaz Sharif's performance was and what was that of his opponents?...the nation should answer this. I have a slight complaint with the nation as well. A prime minister is removed in a false case of not tak-

ing a salary from his son and the nation stays silent, this is not right," the former PM said.

Addressing the meeting, Nawaz said false cases against the party were 'exposed'.

Lauding the performance of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he also predicted a turnaround in the country's fortunes going forward, according to Dawn.

Speaking before him, the PM said he was at peace with stepping down as the PML(N) chief and wanted his brother to assume the party's presidency.

ANI

INDIA POLLS SET FOR FIFTH PHASE



Polling officials collect the election materials before leaving for their respective polling station on the eve of the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha polls, at a distribution centre in Mumbai, India on Sunday (ANI)

Digital connectivity strengthens India-Sri Lanka bilateral relations

Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka - Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Santosh Jha, underscored the thriving nature of the bilateral relationship between India and Sri Lanka, highlighting the current state as 'probably the best ever seen', and emphasised its multifaceted and ambitious nature.

In an interaction with ANI, Jha pointed out significant developments in energy, digital connectivity, and land connectivity corridors, signifying remarkable progress over recent years.

"Currently, the India-Sri Lanka relationship is in very good shape. I often said in public remarks earlier that it is probably the best ever that we have seen the relationship to be. It's multifaceted. It is really more ambitious than ever before. The kind of things we are doing to connect each other, whether it is on the energy side, digital side, or even the land connectivity corridor, all of that is really, really



Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Santosh Jha

remarkable development over the last few years," he said.

Speaking on the digital front, Jha elaborated on the collaboration between PhonePe and Langanpay, facilitating UPI payment acceptance in Sri Lanka.

"Earlier this year, the UPI was launched in Sri Lanka, enabling Indian tourists coming to Sri Lanka to pay in Indian rupees using the UPI app," he said. "The PhonePe is a further elaboration of that. So even PhonePe customers can then use the UPI,

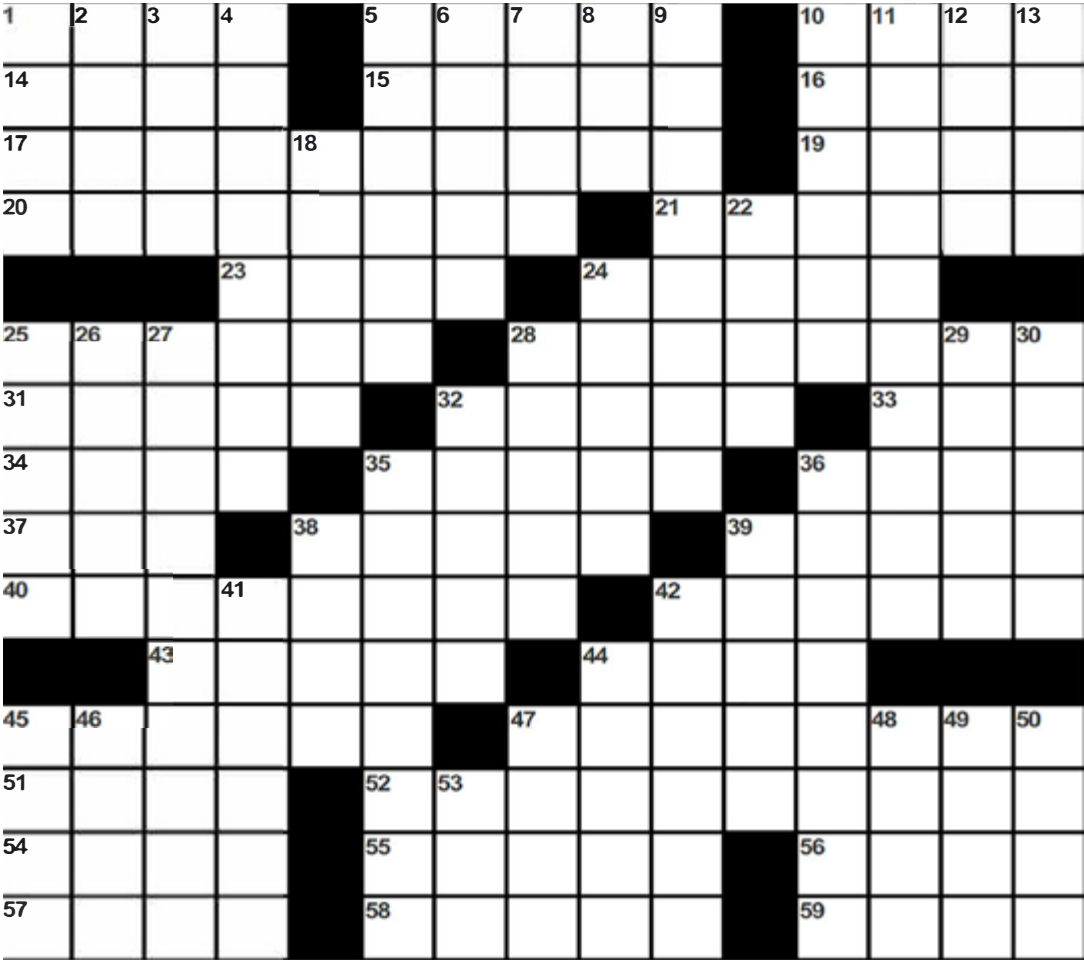
you know, the medium of UPI, to make the transactions in Indian Rupees."

Moreover, amidst historic events like the Ayodhya Pran, bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka are further solidified. Jha described the Mahakumbhabhishekam at the Sita Amman temple as a significant and long-awaited occasion, stating: "This is a really special occasion which has been in planning for a long time." He noted the presence of esteemed priests and spiritual leaders from India, including Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, and emphasised 'the entire saga only tells you how close we have been, not just in the last few years, but for thousands of years'.

The convergence of digital advancements and cultural exchanges underscores the deep-rooted relationship between India and Sri Lanka, fostering mutual growth and collaboration across various domains.

ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) The _ and short of it
5) Utterances that attract attention
10) Boat with an open hold
14) Trigger for a tracking dog rope
15) Scalawag
16) You can see right through it
17) Double dessert?
19) Andean civilization
20) Captures
21) Kowtow
23) June 6, 1944
24) Mets manager John-son
25) Vampire's bed?
28) On watch
31) Astronomer Hubble
32) Walked nervously
33) Golf standard score
34) Wasn't truthful
35) Pivots
36) Altar location
37) General Robert E. _
38) Boot in geography class?
39) Separate the strands of, as

- 40) Currently leading
42) Collaborator with Marx
43) Point one's finger at
44) Catamaran canvas
45) Crownlike object
47) Most courageous
51) Oil org.(Var.)
52) Pin-up's favorite dessert?
54) Balloonist's worry
55) Caste member
56) Midvoyage on the In-dian
57) Tacks on
58) Awfully expensive
59) Daily paper staple

DOWN

- 1) Run with a long, easy stride
2) Valhalla VIP
3) Negative responses
4) Doted-on one, often
5) Noah's landfall
6) Like Mom's place
7) Bruised or inflated items
8) Pie you don't eat
9) Oozings
10) Mineral used as a gem
11) Halloween treat
12) Less than twice

- 13) Have on
18) Weighed down, as with packages
22) Zealous
24) Rather risky
25) It has four strings
26) French farewell
27) Gland meat, ironically
28) Bank's safe
29) Relating to the nose
30) Low cards
32) It takes flight
35) They may roar when empty
36) Like the Archbishop of York
38) Persia no more
39) Consolidate
41) Sheep collections
42) Devours heartily
44) Shoe material, some-times
45) Fast-food restaurant offering
46) Newspaper page
47) Trait carrier
48) "At_, soldier!"
49) Throw out of kilter
50) Hot or cold beverages
53) Successful at-bat

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You'll be seeking injustice today, because you know what it feels like to be treated unfairly. This compassion will force you to butt into a situation you feel isn't right. Friends will admire your principled ways and call you a hero when you stop a silly situation from rapidly growing into a heated argument. Though you strive to avoid conflict, you simply can't ignore this one. Besides, it feels good to fight for the little guy.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Your attention span will shrink as the day goes on, so it's not a good day for afternoon meetings or lectures. Even a foreign film with subtitles might be a bit too much to capture your concentration for long. Facts, figures, numbers, and names will just bounce around you head today, so it's not a good day for finalizing business deals or dealing with complicated math. Right now, your mind would rather deal with instant gratification and brief interludes of stimulation.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

If you are put into an involuntary partnership today, be as open-minded about this person as you can be. Set aside any negative feelings or preconceived notions you might have about them, and focus on completing the task at hand. The two of you complement each other more than you realize, so you will be able to keep busy and avoid awkward silences. This experience is bound to be much more rewarding than you could imagine, so be confident about the pairing.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

It might be time to take a gamble on love. You're feeling brave today, so take the leap! Just make sure that any risk you take is only a little bit out of your comfort zone. This is not the time to leap outside of yourself and start acting totally out of character. After all, if you are presenting yourself to someone, you have to be who you really are. Authenticity is crucial. But being more bold will invigorate you and give you a glow that is hard to resist.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your career ideas are simmering, and if you are looking to achieve any big points with an authority figure, you can do it today with ease. With cold logic softened by a warm smile, you can run circles around any competitors. You'll not only charm them into submission, you will also inspire them to become your biggest fans! All eyes are on you, and you are not going to disappoint. As long as you stay confident and prepare a clear communication plan, you will soar.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Don't chat too long with any one person today. You have to spread your charm around! Tons of people will be up for conversation too. Whether it's the chatty barista at the coffee shop, the talkative stranger next to you on the bus, or the coworker who always has a story to tell, people you encounter today are up for sharing their lives. Just be sure that none of the anecdotes take too long. You have to keep moving and not get in too deep with anyone.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Connecting with other people is getting much easier day by day, mostly because you are feeling more comfortable in your own skin. Accepting yourself for who you are and for what you bring to any relationship, no matter how brief, is the best new trend, and you wear it well. Meeting new people will be easy for you right now because you're ready to reach out and share a little bit of yourself. The fear of rejection has faded into obscurity.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Share your woes with one of your closest friends today. They know you better than anyone else and are the best equipped to navigate you through choppy waters. Do not be embarrassed about what you're struggling with, and don't fear that they will think less of you or judge you. After all, you wouldn't judge them or think less of them if they were in your shoes. You are special to this person, and it will make them very happy to be able to listen and let you vent.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You are far too unique to look like, act like, dress like, or behave like anyone else today, so skip the mob mentality and be proud of your perspective. Take your own path today and don't look back. If you thought you needed other people to reach your goal, think again. Like it or not, no one can see your vision with as much passion as you, so stop wasting your energy trying to convince them that what you want is the right thing. Just go for it.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Today, keep yourself from getting too emotional when someone ticks you off. Being cool, calm, and collected is better than being frantic, hyper, and loud any day of the week, especially today. To deal with this agitator, clearly state your issue, but don't expect them to do anything about it. It's not about solving the problem; it's about communicating your feelings regarding this person's behavior. That will make a bigger impact.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Helping someone live a happier life is a nice goal, but it's a difficult undertaking, and it's also a big gamble. You might think it's your job to bring someone out of their shell and be more social, but it isn't. You have to let people live the life they choose to live even if you think it's not making them happy. All you can do is invite them places, encourage them whenever it seems appropriate, and respect them if they don't follow your suggestions.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Do you know your limits? Now's a great time to get a better idea of what you can and can't do, or else you will end up getting frustrated. Recently, you have been pushing yourself to stretch and grow, but if you continue on this aggressive path you will get overwhelmed. To prevent that, you have to take care of yourself. It's time to act more conservatively and slow down. Take a step back from life. You won't miss out on a thing.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. How heavy is a megagram?

- A. 0.1 tonnes
B. 10 tonnes
C. 100 tonnes
D. 1 tonne

2. The 2nd and 6th presidents of the USA had the same sur-name. What was it?

- A. Jefferson
B. Adams
C. Grant
D. Lincoln

3. In which of these areas would you be most likely to find a traditional dwelling called a rondavel?

- A. Pacific Islands
B. Alaska
C. Mongolia
D. South Africa

Answers: 1.D 2.B 3.D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

G	B	D	L
E	N	E	I
L	T	A	D
S	I	O	Qu

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



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

'BAYER 04 NEVERLUSEN'

Champions
Leverkusen
finish
Bundesliga
season
unbeaten to
make history

Leverkusen, Germany - Champions Bayer Leverkusen, long derided as 'Neverkusen' for their failure to win a major title for decades, edged past Augsburg 2-1 on the last matchday on Saturday to become the first team in the history of the Bundesliga to complete a full season without a loss.

The club hailed the achievement by giving themselves a new nickname on their social media channel - 'Bayer 04 Neverlusen'.

Xabi Alonso's treble-chasing team also stretched their European record unbeaten run across all competitions this season to 51 matches in a perfect dress rehearsal for next week's Europa League final against Atalanta.

Leverkusen, who also face Kaiserslautern in the German Cup final on May 25, finished in top spot on 90 points with 28 wins and six draws, 17 points ahead of second-placed VfB Stuttgart, winners 4-0 over Borussia Moenchengladbach.

"It is an exceptional season, not only in Germany but in Europe," Alonso said in a press conference. "We deserve now to be part of that history of European football. In 20 years we will look



Bayer Leverkusen players celebrate with the Bundesliga trophy

back and we will say 'we did that'.

"It is an important day for the club. We have to be proud of the way we played. 90 points and undefeated," he said. "We need a bit more time to value this title. The first Bundesliga title but a big Bundesliga title victory."

"I believe it (the unbeaten title win), but I need more time. But we have no time because we have the next big goal (on Wednesday). It is unique opportunity," Alonso said.



"We will remember this day. It is a special day to have the

We deserve now to be part of that history of European football. In 20 years we will look back and we will say 'we did that'.

XABI ALONSO

league trophy here and having done it undefeated. This team

has now been engraved in Bundesliga history."

At the other end of the table Cologne were relegated, joining Darmstadt 98, following a 4-1 defeat at Heidenheim. VfL Bochum will go into a relegation playoff.

Leverkusen got off to a strong start and Victor Boniface intercepted a ball from Augsburg keeper Tomas Koubek to tap in for the lead in the 12th minute as the home fans prepared to kick off the city's big party to celebrate

the club's maiden league title.

Robert Andrich, part of Germany's Euro 2024 preliminary squad, doubled the advantage from close range in the 27th but Augsburg came out fighting after the break and cut the deficit with Mert Komur just past the hour.

Both teams had their share of chances but it was always going to be Leverkusen's day, with fans hoping their first ever Bundesliga trophy will be the first of three titles in what is already a remarkable season.



Torino's Duvan Zapata celebrates his goal

TORINO STUN MILAN

Turin, Italy - AC Milan lost 3-1 at mid-table Torino in Serie A on Saturday, another disappointing result for the seven-times European champions who will finish second in the standings behind local rivals Inter.

Torino dominated the first half, taking the lead through Duvan Zapata's header into the bottom corner after 26 minutes, and Ivan Ilic doubled the advantage with a diving header before the break.

Former Milan player Riccardo Rodriguez needed only 18 seconds to unleash a fierce left-foot shot from distance into the top corner of the net to score Torino's third goal.

Ismael Bennacer converted a penalty for Milan in the 55th minute after a foul on Christian Pulisic, but the visitors, seemingly focused on their final match against relegated Salernitana, never threatened to get back into the game. "It's not that we didn't play, but they were more focused and determined in the incidents that decided the match," Milan manager Stefano Pioli said.

'Atalanta are not afraid of Leverkusen'

Bergamo, Italy - Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini said his side were not afraid of an all-conquering Bayer Leverkusen team he likened to a tank as they prepare to meet in the Europa League final.

For Gasperini to turn a good season into a great one, the Italians must beat the German champions in Dublin on Wednesday. "They dominated the Bundesliga and are like a tank, but we are not afraid of them and will go there to play with courage and in good shape," he told Sky Sport Italia on Saturday.

Leverkusen became on Saturday the first team to complete a Bundesliga season without losing a match, stretching their Euro-



Gian Piero Gasperini

pean record unbeaten run across all competitions to 51 games.

The club hailed the achievement by giving themselves a new nickname on their social media channel - 'Bayer 04 Neverlusen'.

"I think about that, I also think

every run has to end sometime," Gasperini added. "Atalanta can trouble Bayer Leverkusen too."

The Bergamo club qualified for the Champions League with a 2-0 victory at Lecce on Saturday, providing some consolation after

losing the Italian Cup final to Juventus last week.

"As far as we are concerned, Champions League qualification is an extraordinary result and these lads are going beyond all expectations," Gasperini said.

"I am truly happy with this and we need to dedicate it to everyone in Bergamo."

Gasperini has been linked with a move to Napoli and the 66-year-old did not rule out leaving Atalanta after eight years in charge. "We are playing Wednesday, then after that we'll see," he said. "What the difference means to me is the challenge and whether it is credible in the choices and evaluations, that is the most important thing."



Bayern Munich players thank the fans after their match against Hoffenheim on Saturday

Bayern finish third after defeat to Hoffenheim

Sinsheim, Germany - Bayern Munich squandered a two-goal lead to slump to a 4-2 loss at Hoffenheim courtesy of an Andrej Kramaric hat-trick in the Bundesliga finale on Saturday, ending a disappointing season in third place as coach Thomas Tuchel bowed out.

Saturday's performance was indicative of Bayern's first season without a trophy in over a decade, having played outstandingly to reach the Champions League semifinals, but also falling prey to weaker opponents, including third-tier Saarbruecken who beat them in the German Cup.

"We started really well but then we had a string of string of individual mistakes," Tuchel said in a short press conference.

"In the second half we played well for 15 minutes but then it was again a series of individual mistakes and loss of possession," Tuchel said. "We gave away a two-goal lead for a completely unnecessary and bitter defeat."

Early goals from Mathys Tel and Alphonso Davies put the in-

jury-depleted Bavarians 2-0 up after six minutes.

They were without leading striker Harry Kane, back in England to treat an injury ahead of Euro 2024, as well as Serge Gnabry, Kingsley Coman, Jamal Musiala and Leroy Sane.

Hoffenheim did not give up and pulled a goal back through

where we conceded two late goals (for a 3-1 defeat). In Heidenheim the same (for a 3-2 loss), here the same. It just happens too often," Tuchel said.

"I have an explanation for that but it is not for the public," he said.

Tuchel was told in February he would be leaving at the end of

We started really well but then we had a string of string of individual mistakes. We gave away a two-goal lead for a completely unnecessary and bitter defeat

THOMAS TUCHEL

Germany international Maximilian Beier two minutes later and the hosts gradually took some of the early pace out of the game.

Croatia international Kramaric delivered a stunning 19-minute hat-trick with the Bayern defence in ruins, to send them down to third place in the standings on 72 points.

"It happens far too often, like that. It happened in Stuttgart

the season, a year earlier than his contract. He confirmed there had been talks last week to potentially reverse that decision, but no agreement was reached.

Bayern are struggling to find his successor after several other coaches, including Bayer Leverkusen's Xabi Alonso, Ralf Rangnick and Julian Nagelsmann, opted to remain in their current jobs.

Ramirez stars as Chelsea crush Man United 6-0 to win record fifth straight WSL title

Manchester, England - A virtuoso performance from striker Mayra Ramirez set Chelsea on course for a 6-0 rout of Manchester United at Old Trafford on Saturday to secure a record fifth successive Women's Super League title in coach Emma Hayes's last game in charge.

Chelsea finished the season on 55 points, level with Manchester City but seven ahead of them on goal difference, and the final whistle prompted an outpouring of joy from the travelling fans as Hayes got the send-off she deserved.

"It's extra special to get it for Emma and the players who are leaving us," Chelsea captain Millie Bright, who returned from injury to play a key part in the run-in, told Sky Sports.

"We've got the monster mentality, we've shown it season after season," she added.

Ramirez grabbed the opening



Chelsea players are joined by coach Emma Hayes in celebration

goal for Chelsea after 89 seconds, heading home a brilliant cross from Guro Reiten, and she set up Johanna Rytting Kaneryd for a second six minutes later as the hosts struggled a week after their FA Cup final win over Tottenham Hotspur.

Colombian international Ramirez continued to dominate, teeing up Sjoekie Nusen for the third in the 44th minute before slamming home her second in first-half stoppage time. Any chance of Chelsea being caught by Manchester City effectively ended when Melanie Leupolz added a fifth two minutes after the interval to turn the remainder of the game into a victory parade.

United's players never got to grips with their rampant opponents, failing to register a shot on target against the team they beat in the FA Cup semifinals as they slumped to their heaviest-ever league defeat.



Yash Dayal of Royal Challengers Bengaluru celebrates with teammates after their victory against Chennai Super Kings on Saturday

YASH REDEMPTION

Bengaluru pacer holds his nerve in final over to knock Chennai out

Bengaluru, India - Virat Kohli was nearly in tears. Faf du Plessis could not contain his joy. MS Dhoni was nowhere to be seen after the game. All of it summed up the drama of the night in Bengaluru, as Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) won their sixth game on the trot in IPL 2024 to knock Chennai Super Kings (CSK) out and make the playoffs. RCB have been in this situation many times - needing a win in their last league match to make it to the knockouts. They were at the same venue last year, where they managed to post a tall score featuring a Kohli century, only for a Shubman Gill ton to overshadow it all and knock them out. On Saturday, they found themselves in a similar situation again. RCB were asked to bat first. They posted 218 and needed to win by at least 18 runs to knock

CSK out. They were helped by blazing starts from Kohli and du Plessis with cameos from Rajat Patidar and Cameron Green. CSK came within touching distance. They needed 10 off the last two balls to qualify with Ravindra Jadeja, the batter who hit a six and four to win CSK their fifth title last year, on strike. Yash Dayal, the bowler, had failed to defend 28 in the last over when he was with Gujarat Titans, as Rinku Singh clobbered five sixes in a row. But this was redemption time and he bowled

two off-pace length balls to deny Jadeja and CSK. This was after being taken for a massive six on the first ball of the last over by MS Dhoni, and then using the back-of-the-hand slower one to have him caught at deep square leg. CSK hopes dipped at that moment and RCB never let them back. Kohli has reinvented himself this season like none other. He is leading not just the pack of run-scorers this season (708) but also that of six-hitters with 37 to his name. Tushar Deshpande de-

livered a couple of length ball that he duly deposited into the stands. Du Plessis also struck one off Shardul Thakur when rain hit pause on RCB's charge at 31 for 0 in three overs. The 40-minute intervention seemed to have changed the track, with both Maheesh Theekshana and Mitchell Santner bowling seven dots in the two overs since resumption. RCB finished the powerplay at 42 for none, their joint-lowest score this season alongside the 42 for 3 they made against CSK in the season opener. Kohli tried to break the shackles with sixes off Santner and Ravindra Jadeja but holed out to wide long-on. Du Plessis, though, hit two sixes and a four of a Jadeja over to get to a 35-ball fifty after being on 29 off 28 at one point. That Patidar takes down spin

is an open secret, and he proved it with a massive hit over long-off off Theekshana, who was the most economical CSK bowler. But he loves playing fast bowlers more. And that facet came to the fore with the ease he hit Simarjeet Singh for a four and six off successive balls. He continued his unhindered strokeplay against Deshpande and Thakur to super-charge RCB's progress, along with Green, who showed his power game to full effect. Green slapped Simarjeet through point before hammering Theekshana straight down the ground. He then hit Thakur for back-to-back sixes as RCB crossed 200 for the sixth time this season, becoming the third team to do so in an IPL season. The result? CSK leaked 63 at the death (overs 17 to 20), the most they conceded in the phase in the entire season.



Abhishek Sharma of Sunrisers Hyderabad made 66 off just 28 balls

Hyderabad ride on another Abhishek blitz to beat Punjab

Hyderabad, India - Prabhsimran Singh and Atharva Taide put on 97 for the first wicket off 55 balls, Rilee Rossouw hit 49 at a strike rate above 200, and Jitesh Sharma provided the closing fireworks, with 32 not out off 15. They set Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) 215 to win. And still it wasn't enough for Punjab Kings (PBKS). Not nearly enough to halt the batting juggernaut that SRH have been in IPL 2024. They lost their best batter Travis Head first ball, but raced through the powerplay thanks to Abhishek Sharma and Rahul Tripathi, who hit 66 off 28 and 33 off 18 respectively, propelling the team to 84 for 2 at the end of their first six overs. From then, the scoring didn't really slow until the target was within sight. Heinrich Klaasen led SRH to the brink of victory with 42 off 26. The winning runs were hit with five balls to spare. Dare we say something about the bowlers? Only SRH's T Natarajan escaped with decent figures, taking 2 for 33. SRH now move into second on the points table. Whether they stay there and play the

Qualifier 1, rather than the Eliminator, depends on whether Rajasthan Royals win in the second game of the day, against table-toppers Kolkata Knight Riders. In what was their last home game this season, Abhishek gave the SRH faithful a show to remember a batting-powered season by. He smashed his first two sixes over fine leg, when bowlers delivered short-of-a-length balls into the body, and went on to hit six sixes in all, in addition to five fours. Most of these relied on excellent timing, but there was luck there too - one of the sixes came off the outside edge. He sped past 50 off 21 balls, but this was only his third-fastest half-century this season - he had hit fifties off 16 and 19 balls in the weeks gone by. Abhishek's 72-run partnership with Tripathi, which came off 29 balls, was the foundation of SRH's chase. Even after they were parted, the required rate seemed tame. As good as Abhishek's fireworks were, SRH still needed 86 off the last 59 balls after he was out, and Klaasen delivered one of his more chilled-out innings.

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HISTORY MAKERS

Manchester City beat West Ham United to win fourth straight Premier League title

Manchester, England - Manchester City won an unprecedented fourth straight English top flight title with a 3-1 win over West Ham United on Sunday to pip rivals Arsenal on the final day of a thrilling Premier League season as the fans turned the pitch into a sea of blue.

Two glorious early goals from league player of the season Phil Foden created a party atmosphere in the sunshine at the Etihad Stadium, before a stunning bicycle kick from Mohammed Kudus before halftime brought West Ham briefly into the game.

But Rodri sealed the victory with a low 59th minute shot from outside the area, giving Pep Guardiola's side a phenomenal sixth title in seven years. Fans danced in their seats, belting out: "Champions again!" and "Are you watching Arsenal?"

In one of the closest title races in Premier League history, Arsenal could have taken the championship had City dropped points. But the Londoners' 2-1 win in their game against Everton was in vain, leaving them two points behind.

City have the chance of winning the double as they face Manchester United in the FA Cup final next Saturday. Foden's already brilliant season got even better when he arrowed the ball into the top corner in the second minute then capped a fine team move to sweep home the second in the 18th. "It's so hard to put into



Manchester City's Phil Foden celebrates after scoring against West Ham United on Sunday

words what we've done today," Foden said. "No team has ever done it. You see what it means to the fans and it means to us. Working all year for this moment. I thought today we just looked

confident and just played our football and in the end it paid off." The midfielder has scored 19 league goals this season and has won six Premier League titles at just 23, making him one of Eng-

land's best hopes for this year's Euros in Germany.

Arsenal title wait goes on
Arsenal's 2-1 victory over Ever-

ton proved in vain as their hopes of a first Premier League title for 20 years were crushed on the final day of the season on Sunday.

All hope looked lost when

It's so hard to put into words what we've done today. No team has ever done it. You see what it means to the fans and it means to us. Working all year for this moment.

PHIL FODEN

Idrissa Gueye's deflected free kick put Everton in front and City led 2-0 but Takehiro Tomiyasu levelled before halftime.

Kai Havertz fired home Arsenal's winner late meaning they ended the season with six successive victories.

Verstappen holds off late charge from Norris to win at Imola

Imola, Italy - Max Verstappen held off a late charge by McLaren's Lando Norris to win the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix by less than a second on Sunday.

Red Bull's triple Formula One world champion took the chequered flag just 0.725 of a second ahead of the man who beat him at the previous round in Miami and sensed he might snatch another.

The win was Verstappen's fifth in seven races this season, the 59th of his career and the third edition in a row at Imola. Last year's race at the Italian circuit was cancelled due to heavy flooding.

"I had no grip anymore. I was



Max Verstappen celebrates his victory

sliding a lot. I saw Lando closing in. The last 10 laps were flat out," said a relieved Verstappen, who had appeared set for another easy win but had to sweat ultimately for the spoils.

"It's difficult when the tyres were not working anymore and you have to go flat out. I couldn't afford to make too many mistakes. Luckily we didn't."

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc was third at the Italian team's atmospheric home track, 7.916 off the pace, for his fourth podium finish of the season and a home race to come in Monaco next weekend.

The victory extended Verstappen's championship lead to 48 points, with Leclerc now his

closest rival after Red Bull's Sergio Perez started 11th and finished only eighth.

Verstappen has 161 points, Leclerc 113 and Perez 107. Red Bull have 268 in the constructors' standings with Ferrari on 212 and McLaren on 154.

McLaren's Oscar Piastri finished fourth, after starting fifth due to a three-place grid penalty for impeding in qualifying.

Ferrari's Carlos Sainz was fifth and the Mercedes pair of Lewis Hamilton and George Russell sixth and seventh on another afternoon to forget for the onedominant team.

Lance Stroll was ninth for Aston Martin, whose other driver

Fernando Alonso started in the pitlane and finished 19th, and Yuki Tsunoda took the final point for Red Bull's Faenza-based RB team in their home race.

Verstappen held off Norris at a start without incident, the top four then running in grid order on a sunny afternoon at a track where overtaking can be tricky.

What had looked like being one of the duller races so far this year came to life as Norris began eating into Verstappen's lead in the closing laps and the crowd, 200,000 over the weekend, sensed an upset.

Norris was 1.1 seconds adrift starting the final lap but just ran out of time.

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Houssam Ghacha of Esperance (L) battles for the ball with Al Ahly's Marwan Attia in their first leg of the African Champions League final

Al Ahly hold Esperance in first leg of African Champions League final

Tunis, Tunisia - Holders Al Ahly of Egypt held out for a goalless draw in Saturday's first leg of the African Champions League final at Esperance of Tunisia, putting them in an advantageous position for next week's return in Cairo.

Al Ahly are looking to extend their dominance of club football on the continent with a fourth Champions League success in the last five seasons, and a

record extending 12th overall. They had a defensive approach to the away match at the Rades stadium and restricted their hosts to a single early chance that Esperance's Brazilian import Rodrigo Rodrigues headed wide of goal.

It proved a dour encounter with no other chances in the match. It is Esperance's first final appearance since winning the Champions League in 2019.



Xander Schauffele

Schauffele, Morikawa share lead in PGA Championship

Louisville, US - Xander Schauffele and Collin Morikawa shared the PGA Championship lead after the third round on Saturday in Louisville, Kentucky while Shane Lowry made an epic charge up a jam-packed leaderboard.

Schauffele birdied the final two holes at Valhalla Golf Club en route to a three-under-par 68 that left him at 15 under on the week and level with twice major winner Morikawa (67).

"I need to really just stay in my lane and do a lot of what I've been doing and just worry about myself," Schauffele said.

Swiatek beats Sabalenka to win Italian Open title

Rome, Italy - Iga Swiatek beat Aryna Sabalenka 6-2 6-3 to win her third Italian Open title on Saturday as the Pole came out on top once again in a battle between the top two in the women's rankings following her Madrid Open triumph earlier this month.

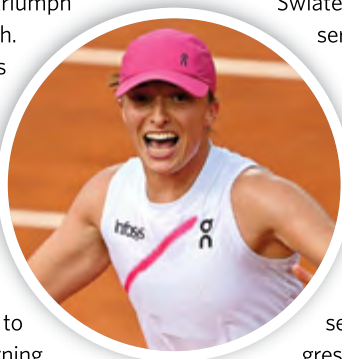
The title was the 21st of Swiatek's career as the world number one extended her unbeaten run to 12 matches on clay to sound out a warning to her rivals ahead of this month's French Open where she is a three-time winner and the defending champion.

"After Madrid I knew it would not be easy. It can always go both ways," 22-year-old Swiatek said. "Thank you (Sabalenka) for sharing the court with me and pushing me to be better."

Swiatek broke Sabalenka twice in the first set where the Belarusian conceded 12 unforced errors in a lopsided start to the match. Sabalenka fought back, reaching five break points in a bid to lead 2-0 in the second, but Swiatek held her own serve.

Sabalenka failed to break again with Swiatek holding her nerve to save two break points on her next serve. The set progressed to 3-3 before the Pole broke twice, ensuring her victory in the tournament without dropping a set.

"I love this tournament... I'll come back stronger next year and hopefully win the trophy," Sabalenka said as she congratulated Swiatek. "I hope we make it to the final at Roland Garros and I will get you there."



Iga Swiatek

CLOUD SEEDING

Aerial cloud seeding has been around since the 1940s, and countries all over the globe have been doing it for various reasons, but it has now become a growing practice in many of the hardest-hit drought regions of the world.

As with many unique flight operations, there is controversy or misunderstanding. Regarding aerial cloud seeding, this particular Aerial Work operation faces criticism and skepticism, particularly related to its effectiveness, ethical concerns, and potential unintended consequences.

Many believe aerial cloud seeding is 'playing God' or 'stealing water from the clouds'. Another concern surrounding aerial cloud seeding is its impact on the environment.

As we peer through our windows, contemplating the day's weather forecast, the idea of influencing the skies becomes more tangible. The mysterious interaction between cloud droplets and the profound science behind weather modification have propelled cloud seeding into the spotlight – a realm both captivating and contentious.

At its essence, cloud seeding ambitiously attempts to assist mother nature by introducing into the clouds additional 'nuclei' around which water condenses, stimulating precipitation. However, this technological tool prompts intriguing questions.

Could cloud seeding be a solution to drought or aid in fighting forest fires? Could increased precipitation in one area inadvertently trigger a drought elsewhere? Might cloud seeding cause excessive rain, leading to flooding? The answers aren't straightforward, as conjuring clouds remains beyond its current scope.

The cloud seeding industry has always been a topic of debate. Advocates highlight its efficacy, with studies indicating a 10-15% increase in rainfall. Conversely, skeptics raise cautionary flags, emphasising potential hazards to public safety and the environment. Decades of research have yielded static and dynamic seeding techniques, showing indications of effectiveness by the late 1990s.

Delving into the scientific complexities

‘Stealing from the sky’

Cloud seeding has evolved into a potential solution to droughts, a tool for firefighting, and a catalyst for weather modification. However, the promises and perils of this scientific tool are still under study and while some champion its efficacy, skeptics raise cautionary flags



Cloud seeding drone

reveals two techniques - hygroscopic for warm clouds and glaciogenic for super-cooled.

Whether dispersing salt particles, such as sodium chloride (NaCl) and calcium chloride (CaCl₂), in liquid clouds or triggering ice production in supercooled clouds with silver iodide (AgI), each method has a unique approach. Other chemicals used are potassium iodide (KI), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), frozen carbon dioxide – dry ice (CO₂), bismuth tri-iodide (BiI₃), propane (C₃H₈), and others.

Despite debates, silver iodide persists as the most common material, known for its efficient ice nucleating properties. However, its use raises ecological concerns because it might be toxic to terrestrial and aquatic life, prompting exploration of less harmful alternatives.

Due to this, ongoing studies explore using negatively charged ions like calcium chloride instead of ice-like crystals as less harmful, but uncertainties persist. Cloud seeding can be conducted using ground-

based generators, rockets, and aircraft.

As governments and private companies weigh benefits against risks, cloud seeding remains a polarising subject. While some countries embrace it for agricultural and environmental purposes, others proceed cautiously, aware of the potential consequences.

The historical dimension of this debate resonates with events like Operation Popeye during the Vietnam War, where weather modification was a military tool. The extended monsoon season and resulting floods led to an international treaty in 1977 prohibiting the military use of weather modification.

Countries like the Russian Federation and Thailand are successfully using it for suppressing heatwaves and wildfires, while the USA, China, and Australia are applying its potential for maximising water utilisation during rainfall for drought mitigation. In the United Arab Emirates, the technique is actively used to expand its agricultural capabilities and battle ex-

treme heat.

Private companies actively employ it, especially in hail-prone areas where insurance companies fund projects to minimise property damage. The applications span various domains, from generating rainfall for drought mitigation and enhancing snowfall at ski resorts to managing hail in agriculture.

Ski resorts leverage it for intensified snowfall, hydroelectric companies use it to boost spring runoff, and it even aids in fog clearance and enhancing airport visibility. In regions like Canada's Alberta, cloud seeding adjusts the composition of hail-producing clouds to minimise damage.

Despite scientific literature seemingly giving cloud seeding a clean bill of health, there's an undeniable air of uncertainty that beckons a closer examination.

Consider the alluring promise of amplified precipitation through cloud seeding – an idea that, while tantalising, raises eyebrows about its lasting effects on our cli-

mate.

It is important to understand that cloud seeding can only change certain clouds and does not affect the complex patterns of big-scale weather and climate events. Certainly, it helps right away with water and soil, but looking deeper suggests a complicated relationship with possible effects on local ecosystems.

The prospect of increased precipitation is not without its shadows, casting doubt on unintended outcomes like the heightened risks of flooding and erosion. Hence, before we wholeheartedly embrace widespread cloud seeding, a meticulous dive into scientific investigation and comprehensive research seems like a non-negotiable prerequisite.

We need to ensure that the envisioned benefits of water resources do not inadvertently upset our ecology and climate stability. Also, let us not forget air pollution – a chilling revelation that surfaces from empirical investigations into cloud seeding.

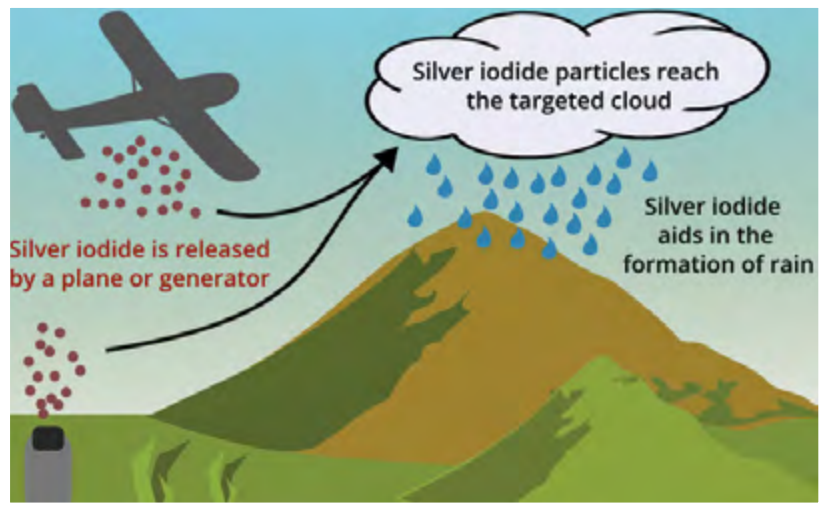
Then, there is the scary possibility of contamination, a significant unknown in the cloud seeding process. Mishandling silver iodide and other chemicals could set off a chain reaction of environmental pollution, with consequences echoing across natural ecosystems and posing tangible risks to human health.

Finally, let us shed light on the often-overlooked aspect of human exposure in the cloud seeding process. The environment becomes tainted, and we are abruptly confronted with the threat of iodism – a rather unpleasant combination of skin rashes and digestive issues.

All this strongly underscores the need to strike a careful equilibrium between the alluring benefits promised by cloud seeding and the lingering health risks.

In the end, as governments and private companies weigh the pros and cons, the debate around cloud seeding remains as dynamic and unpredictable as the weather it aims to influence. It is not just about playing with clouds – it is about finding a delicate balance between progress and the potential pitfalls that come with tampering with nature.

(Courtesy: earth.org)



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Equine experience

SWIMMING WITH HORSES

IT IS ONE THING TO BOAST OF SWIMMING IN THE CRYSTAL BLUE SEAS AT EXOTIC LOCATIONS BUT TO SHARE YOUR SWIM WITH AN ANIMAL AS MAGICAL AS THE HORSE, IS AN EXHILARATING AS WELL AS HUMBLING EXPERIENCE



Cornwall, England

Cornwall is popular for its captivating scenery, dramatic coastline and spectacular beaches that provide the perfect natural playground for many water sports - but swimming with horses here is yet another highlight.

Whether you are an experienced horse rider or a novice, 'Cornwall Swimming Horses' will be an ideal experience for you - everyone's horse choice is tailored to your specific needs.

During the booking process, you will be assessed on your riding abilities, then taken down to the seaside to breathe in the fresh salty air and offered the incredible opportunity to venture into the wild waves on horseback for some swimming.

This is a popular sport as well as passtime for tourists and citizens.

Surely one of the most amazing experiences in the world has to be swimming with horses.

Whether you are riding or swimming alongside this is the most beautiful marriage of human and horse - especially after a long ride on a hot day in the saddle. The feeling of weightlessness as the horse enters the water is indescribable - to have a 700kg animal powering through the water alongside you before resting in the shallows and allowing you to climb back on board once again is a once in a lifetime experience.

Here are a list of the finest places to swim with horses in the world. Granted they made the grade by also offering incredible post-ride experiences, from spa safari in Bali to a cocktail at sundown watching over the giraffes in Africa, but all are unified by the bonding of water and horses.



Mozambique Horse Safari

At the Mozambique Horse Safari, Pat, Mandy and Charlotte offer the epic adventures of the 104 horses rescued from South Africa. To start the ride, the guides lead the horse into the sea where there is a sense of excitement as they thrash the water, then lay down to wallow and roll. This is the most wonderful wake up for the horses - equivalent to a splash of cold water for a human.

Once the horses have settled, riders are invited to mount bareback and wade out to the deeper water following their guide along the coastline past colourful dhows and sandy beaches towards distant Mangrove trees. As the riders get into the deeper sea they will feel the exploding surge and strength as the horse propels forward.

Half Moon Equestrian Centre, Jamaica

The Half Moon Equestrian Centre, located on the breath-taking island of Jamaica has been operating for over 30 years.

A trip with the horses to Half Moon can include relaxation at the spa, an exploration of Jamaican cuisine at their dining hall, the opportunity to visit the famous golf course and let's not forget the most amazing offer of all, horseback swimming in the turquoise waters.

It is one thing to boast that you have swam in the crystal blue seas of Jamaica, but to share your swim with an animal as magical as the horse, is quite humbling.



Horizon Horseback in South Africa

Horizon Horseback in South Africa has been running horseback safaris in Africa since 1993. They offer three-horse safaris (Signature Safari, African Explorer and the Tuli Safari) in South Africa and Botswana and with a huge herd of horses, the experience is suitable for everyone from beginners up.

As if galloping alongside giraffes and zebras is not enough the ending to these rides is always marked by this incredible unity of horse and rider as they submerge into the dam and cool off. The feeling of weightlessness as the horse leaves the ground promises to leave guests with a lasting memory.

A mere 6,058 miles away are the shores of the remote island of Sumba and the wild horses of NIHL. Each morning the herd of 20 wild horses are released from Sandalwood Stables each morning to gallop along the 2.5km beach and swim in the sea.



For guests enjoying a morning coffee at the hotel, this is a truly magical spectacle to witness and often of some surprise how much the horses love engaging with the guests - from playing football to swimming together the horses really enjoy the interaction with humans.

The stables also offer everything from yoga to meditation and safari spa rides through the jungle. (Courtesy: thetravelmagazine.net)