

OMAN, GCC CONDEMN
ATTACK ON
NUSEIRAT CAMP

Muscat - Oman has condemned the brutal attack by Israeli occupation forces on Al Nuseirat camp in Gaza. The massacre resulted in deaths and injuries of hundreds of Palestinian civilians.

In a statement, the Foreign Ministry said that the continued perpetration of systematic war crimes against the Palestinian people is a clear and explicit violation of international conventions and humanitarian law. 'This necessitates urgent international intervention to put an end to these crimes against humanity, protect civilians and hold the Israeli occupation state accountable for its actions.'

Several countries and international organisations also condemned Israel for killing at least 274 Palestinians during the raid on Gaza's Nuseirat refugee camp to free four Israeli captives.

Authorities in the Gaza Strip said that at least 698 others were injured, some in critical condition.

Jasem Mohamed al Budaiwi, Secretary-General of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), described the attack as a heinous and terrorist crime, targeting defenceless civilians with unprecedented brutality.

Security deposit on LPG cylinders from December

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has introduced regulatory changes to the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) sector, aiming to improve safety standards and streamline the market for gas cylinders.

The new ministerial decision (No 185/2024) is set to reshape the LPG market in the sultanate by allowing the introduction of fibreglass cylinders and enforcing stricter control over cylinder distribution.

Under the new regulations, the market will see the introduction of new fibreglass cylinders, which must meet specific conditions and standards for safety. Additionally, all existing gas cylinders will be phased out within three years, to be replaced by company-branded cylinders that are clearly marked for easier identification and tracking.

The revised regulations include a structured security deposit system for new cylinder purchases, with the fees based on cylinder size, ensuring that customers are accountable for the cylinders they use. This deposit is refundable upon return of the cylinder for good.

For purchase of a new 12kg



SECURITY DEPOSIT FOR NEW CYLINDER	
12kg	RO5
22kg	RO10
51kg	RO15

cylinder, customers will have to pay RO5 as security deposit, RO10 for 22kg and RO15 for 51kg cylinders. The deposit on fibreglass cylinders of 8kg will be RO15 and RO20 for 12kg.

The decision will come into force 180 days (December 2024) after its publication in the Official Gazette.

In addition to enhancing safety, the decision introduces flexibility for market participants, allowing them to choose the duration of their licences and man-

dating that all gas distribution stations meet stringent new standards for equipment and operations.

The ministry has established a robust framework to enforce

these regulations, including significant penalties for non-compliance. Violation of the new rules can result in written warnings, administrative fines of up to RO1,000 and potential suspension or revocation of licences.

These sweeping reforms are expected to enhance the integrity of the LPG supply chain in Oman, from cylinder manufacturing and distribution to end-user compliance, thereby enhancing both consumer safety and industry efficiency.

Ten pacts signed to boost tourism in governorates

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) signed ten usufruct contracts on Sunday for investments exceeding RO6mn to spearhead projects across several governorates.

H E Salim Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, signed the contracts with company representatives.

The projects include an array of developments - establishment of a 3-star hotel and a tourist rest house in Salalah, a tourist camp in the Al Khadf area of Thumrait, and a 3-star tourist resort in Shalim and Hallaniyat Islands - in Dhofar.

Projects in Dakhliyah include a 3-star hotel, an adventure centre and a luxury tourist camp in Barakat al Sharaf; and a 3-star resort in Misfat al Abriyeen in Al Hamra.

Projects in South Batinah include tourist camps in Wadi Mastal and the Al Abyad area of the wilayat of Nakhal.

South Sharqiyah's development agenda includes a tourist camp in the wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali.

Amira bint Iqbal al Lawati, Di-

The economic and social potential of these projects will generate job opportunities and enrich local communities

rector General of Tourism Development in MHT, emphasised the fact that these contracts are part of an ongoing investment programme aimed at bolstering the tourism sector across all governorates.

She added that the economic and social potential of these projects will generate job opportunities, enrich local communities, and expand accommodation options and facilities to meet demand of the tourism sector in alignment with the comprehensive tourism development plan of the governorates.

Muslim bin Ahmed al Hadary, owner of a project in Salalah, informed that his resort features chalets designed to harmonise with the natural landscape of Dhofar. It aims to diversify tourism offerings and enhance the tourism landscape of the governorate.

03

Holiday bug bites people as nine-day break announced

04

Solar Wadi to establish PV power plant at KOM

Oman forays into microalgae farming to produce biofuel

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate is poised to exploit the global algae biofuel market, valued at US\$8.38bn in 2022, with a project to produce over 3,700 tonnes of microalgae per annum in several governorates.

A memorandum of understanding towards this end was signed last week between NTZ Solutions, Al Tharmad Business and Services, and Green Gulf Industries to set up commercial-scale farms - spread over 20,000sqm - with a total investment of RO9mn.

Facilitated by Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the project aims to use photobioreactor technology to produce specific strains of microalgae that are used in production of biodiesel.

"The use of photobioreactor technology significantly increases production rate to a commercial scale. In addition, it massively reduces water consumption and maintains the highest quality standards," Sharifa Aidid, Chairperson and Founder NTZ Solutions, posted on LinkedIn.

According to Sharifa, with its geographical location, the sultanate has all the factors conducive for the success of microalgae production projects.



Sharifa Aidid

"Microalgae is the only renewable source to produce biodiesel sustainably. Also, microalgae production is considered one of the most effective approaches to valorising CO2, using it in the production process. This contributes to the efforts of combating global warming."

Mazin al Saadi, CEO of Al Tharmad, added that biodiesel produced from microalgae at this commercial scale is an excellent opportunity to aid other industries in their decar-

bonatisation efforts. He also pointed out that after extraction of biofuel, the remaining biomass can be used to produce bioplastic.

Elaborating on the project, Luigi Monfardini, Business Development Manager at Green Gulf Industries, said, "We will use a patented photobioreactor technology and algae with higher oil content allowing us to maximise biofuel production. It will be the first biofuel plant of its kind in the Middle East."

The project will include development of photobioreactors, algae processing facilities, laboratories and storage silos.

Nine-day Eid al Adha holiday announced

Muscat - Based on Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik it has been decided that the Eid al Adha holiday for employees of the State Administrative Apparatus and other legal entities, as well as establishments of the private sector, will start from Sunday, 9 Dhul Hijja corresponding to June 16, till Thursday, 13 Dhul Hijja, corresponding to June 20. Work will resume on Sunday, June 23.



CATEGORY: DEMI CHEF

STIR UP A SENSATION

Nominate your Champions

Go to champions.nhioman.com
to register your property and nominate your Omani staff from the categories listed

Closing date: JUNE 27, 2024 Don't miss the chance... Call: 98246267

Terms And Condition Applies



Get more returns on High Yield Savings Account

With Al Rifaa Privilege Account

Visit your nearest branch today



الأعمال المصرفية الحصرية
PRIVILEGE BANKING

2479 918

www.bankdhofar.com



bankdhofar

Scan to learn more





Al Rifaa

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

State-of-the-art technology complements good governance. Royal Oman Police has introduced a new feature in its mobile app that allows motorists to view images of their traffic violations. What do you think about this decision and what other measures can be adopted to reduce traffic violations? Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers said -

Ahmed al Balushi
Driver

We welcome this move. There are times when drivers feel that the police are being unfair; that they have committed no violation. Now with the pictures, there will be more credibility. Some other measures can be installing more cameras on roads where motorist often overspeed.

Diju Parameswaran Nair
Business development manager

Such initiatives are necessary to improve road safety and create awareness among the public to follow traffic rules strictly. All violations should be captured and recorded properly for motorists to see and pay penalties. Digital technology solutions are creating a range of new opportunities to control/monitor and to reduce traffic violations. Automatic alerts and warnings will improve road safety conditions.

Priya Pisharody
Writer

The decision by ROP to instal cameras that capture images of motorists who violate traffic rules is a very significant move to enable an understanding of their own mistakes and take measures to rectify such occurrences in future. For any kind of accident investigation, such footage can provide valuable evidence. Sometimes, certain locations can be prone to more accidents owing to various factors, which can be assessed from such images. When live feeds are available, every situation can enable quick response from the ROP team. It may be facilitative to provide high resolution cameras for good images. Such cameras need to be placed in strategic as well as

vulnerable hot spots for live footage. Special light sensitive cameras may be installed for night time capture of images. A mere fine alone will not help people understand traffic violations; they must be called for interactive lecture sessions to sensitise them to the harsh realities of a careless attitude while driving. Finally, just as it is every driver's responsibility to understand new traffic rules, it's also the responsibility of the state to ensure their standards of excellence periodically.

Salim al Abri
Private sector employee

Such innovations are always welcome. It helps to have more trust in the administration. However, I feel that often fines are too harsh for minor mistakes (like unclean cars). Police can sometimes ignore these, but definitely not for habitual violators. Also another idea is to reward good drivers and people with no fines, at

least once every six months.

Kamashy V G
Homemaker

ROP's decision to introduce this new feature of allowing motorists to view their traffic violations in their mobile app is indeed very innovative and useful. This will be an eye opener for motorists to view their violations and also avoid these in the future. This will show the efficiency and accuracy of ROP in issuing fines to violators, which will ensure fewer violations in the future.

Lakshminarayanan
CEO

I am aware of the new rule of being photographed by AI cameras at the event of any traffic violation and I think it has really shown how technology has been integrated into our legal environment. This system has proven to be effective in India and will be in Oman as well. Some recommendations that can be imple-

mented with similar use of AI are traffic signal optimisation (optimise traffic signal timings to reduce congestion and minimise the likelihood of violations) and mobile phone detection cameras to prevent violations

Ofelia V Hassan
Lecturer

This is a good decision. Seeing one's own violations on screen impacts the motorist psychologically, considering the safety and life endangered by the violation, as well as the penalty for not following the rules. Stiffer penalties and sending a warning SMS to the violator instantly after committing the violation can also be introduced.

Zeenat Chowdhury
Student

The authorities should first monitor all the places where most accidents occur. At times, it's not the driver's fault. Maybe the road is improperly designed, speed limits need to be reduced or humps installed. For example, in Hamriya opposite Muscat Pharmacy, accidents are frequent. I've lived here since childhood and seen many deaths resulting from accidents. Many people don't know about zebra crossings, so they don't use these properly. Additionally, drivers do not always reduce speed when they see a person wanting to cross the road at a zebra crossing. We need a speed hump in Hamriya opposite Muscat Pharmacy. Something must be done about this road.

Raisa Saiki
Entrepreneur

If sponsors consider traffic violations as part of appraisals, the number of violations will dramatically reduce.

Dhofar Municipality invests RO3.5mn in Mirbat development

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Dhofar Municipality is currently undertaking development projects in the wilayat of Mirbat costing in excess of RO3.5mn.

In a statement, Dhofar Municipality said it is actively advancing various development projects in Mirbat. These include enhancing tourist sites and upgrading road infrastructure with lights and rainwater drainage.

Significant progress has been achieved in the civic body's construction efforts with the Itlalat al Dummar project 98% complete, the Agbeer Beach project 85% complete and the Mirbat Road dualisation project 43% complete.

Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed Baaween, Director of Projects and Technical Affairs in Dhofar Municipality, emphasised the focus on development projects in Mirbat and improving tourist

sites to uplift the governorate's overall infrastructure.

He highlighted the flagship 3.5km Mirbat dual road project equipped with a comprehensive water drainage network and three traffic lights at intersections with secondary roads. With anticipated completion date in early 2025, the total cost of this project is RO1.96mn.

In reference to projects to enhance tourist and recreational destinations in Mirbat, Baaween highlighted the progress made in development of Agbeer Beach. Costing RO932,000, this development includes construction of sports tracks for walking, a dedicated children's play area, public facilities and restaurants.

The Itlalat al Dummar project being implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism at a cost of RO617,000, will see establishment of a site overlooking the sea.

MHUP starts 11 services to boost social housing, urban planning

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) has launched 11 new services via the Amlak platform with the objective of simplifying procedures and enhancing accessibility.

In a statement, MHUP said these include six new services under social housing and five under urban planning.

Social housing services include request for housing assistance, extension of service period, change contractor for

housing assistance, transfer housing assistance from one governorate to another, and change of engineering consulting company for housing assistance.

Urban planning services include obtaining land data, compensation service for an affected plot of land, approval for adopting division of buildings into apartments and other units, and request change of use of land.

These new services are expected to streamline processes and improve the overall efficiency of social housing and urban planning initiatives.

NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Central Business District (CBD) in Ruwi looks deserted these days. Why do you think people and businesses are abandoning this once vibrant commercial area, and what can be done to rejuvenate it?

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

SEND US ON OUR NEW WHATSAPP NO 91953774

taste the

NEW GOODNESS

طبيعي أطيب



CRANBERRY Drink
NO SUGAR ADDED
VITAMIN C



NATURAL IMMUNITY BOOST

DISTRIBUTED BY



CATERING SOLUTIONS TRADING LLC

CONTACT NO.: +968 22060236 / 237

Holiday bug bites people as nine-day break announced

Muscat - As Oman prepares for a nine-day Eid al Adha holiday, residents and citizens are planning vacations both in the country and abroad. Popular destinations such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Georgia and Turkey, alongside new options like Albania and Armenia, are attracting significant interest.

Travel agencies are actively tailoring holiday packages to meet the diverse preferences of their clientele. Vinod CG Pillai, Manager of Al Hashar Tourism and Travels, said, "With the extended break this Eid, we expect a high volume of international travel. Albania has become particularly appealing due to direct flights offered by SalamAir."

European destinations remain desirable but are costly compared to countries in the Far East, especially during the Eid season when travel and accommodation prices typically surge. Despite the higher costs, destinations known for their rich cultural experiences, scenic landscapes and culinary



It is good to plan in advance but we do not know the holiday dates until last minute

KHALID AMRI



- although there is growing interest in destinations like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as these provide easy visa procedures."

Many have planned to take the opportunity to travel home. Ritika Suresh Pillai, a resident of Oman for the last 20 years, shared her travel plans saying, "Most of my family reside there and I plan to spend time with them."

Many residents plan to celebrate Eid with local travels or staycations, engaging in traditional activities and visiting popular sites such as Safari World in Ibra, the Ain al Kasfa hot springs and historical landmarks like Nizwa Fort.

Sharing her plans to enjoy the Eid festivities locally, Rahma Mohammed al Harthi said she'll visit cultural sites and participate in traditional meals and prayers with family.

This year's Eid al Adha not only reflects the easing of travel restrictions but also a renewed confidence in safe travel contributing to a surge in holiday planning and international exploration.

(Contributed by Sneha Lijoy and Gopika Baburaj)

SAYYID SHIHAB PINS AVIATION WINGS ON RAFO PILOTS



H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, pinned aviation wings on pilot officers following their graduation from flight training course. H H Sayyid Shihab also handed over the His Majesty the Sultan's Cup for Aviation to Flying Officer Khalid Hamad al Majrafi for securing the top position in the course. The event was attended by Air Vice-Marshal Khamis Hamad al Ghafri, Commander of Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), Air Commodore Khalid Mohammed al Abri, Director General of Operations, and others (ONA)

RO4mn pact signed to establish integrated fuel station in Bausher

Our Correspondent Muscat

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company and the Board of Directors of Sports Activities Support Fund (SASF) signed an agreement worth RO4mn for the establishment of an integrated station in Ghubra al Janubiyah in the wilayat of Bausher, on Sunday.

The collaboration aims to invest in land belonging to Oman Olympic Committee and various sports federations. The project, located opposite Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, will include setting up commercial facilities, a gas station and facilities dedicated to sports activities.

The commercial investment project, which will cover an area of 18,000sqm, is set to embody the essence of Omani heritage through its architectural design. It will feature a fuel station utilising renewable energy, an electric car charging area, and an integrated vehicle service centre set to international specifications.

The project stands out for its



(Supplied photo)

expansive panoramic area, offering parking facilities, a walkway, vast green spaces, a children's play area, stores featuring renowned brands, restaurants, cafes, a sports club, a health centre, and a hypermarket. Embracing sustainability, the stores will utilise green energy sources.

The agreement was formalised by H E Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Undersecretary for Sports and Youth in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, representing SASF, and Hamad bin Salim al Maghdari, CEO of Al Maha.

On the occasion, Maghdari said, "The project is strategically situated opposite the sports

complex in Bausher, rendering it an ideal hub for commercial and residential activities. With its extensive green spaces, emphasis on renewable energy, and energy efficiency, the project serves as a paradigm for sustainable initiatives, which are integral to Oman's future economy."

He added that it signifies more than just a commercial venture; it stands for a genuine partnership between the public and private sectors, "reflecting our commitment to fostering the economic and social advancement of Oman. We take pride in the employment opportunities this project will generate and its support for various institutions."

RO56mn Al Namaa Hospital to be built in North Sharqiyah

Muscat - The Ministry of Health is set to lay the foundation stone of Al Namaa Hospital in North Sharqiyah on Monday.

The ceremony will be held under the patronage of H E Sultan bin Salem bin Saeed al Habsi, Minister of Finance, and graced by the presence of H E Dr Hilal bin Ali bin Hilal al Sabti, Minister of Health.

In a statement, the Min-

istry of Health said that the project, slated for completion within 30 months, will be constructed on a 428,000sqm plot of land. The project is estimated to cost RO56.05mn.

In 2022, the Ministry of Health invited bids to develop hospitals in Al Falah in South Sharqiyah, Al Namaa in North Sharqiyah and the Samail Hospital in Dakhliyah.

oman OASIS

Exclusive OFFER

عيد مبارك



Hot & Cold Dispenser
+ 2 Full Bottles
+ 30 Refill coupons



White Tap Dispenser
+ 2 Full Bottles
+ 15 Refill coupons

OASIS WATER COMPANY SADC
PO Box 187, Rusayl 124, Sultanate of Oman.
CR No. 1035021-199-BURKHAD
Offer valid from 10th March to 30th June 2024.

800 71 222
9275 5522





Investment opportunity

Healthcare Industry

Well equipped clinic for lease at Al Hail !

For more details
Contact: 95076464



إعلان مناقصة
Tender Notice

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

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCT/58/2023 Recall - 1	Management and Operations of National Data Center and Government Cloud	04-06-2024	18-06-2024	16-07-2024	Experienced Companies And Registered With The Secretariat General Of Tender Board (Excellent & First)	(115/-) One Hundred And Fifteen Omani Rial For Local Companies (23/-) Twenty-Three Omani Rial (For Sme) Non-Refundabl

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

CORRESPONDANCE:
1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
2. E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: +968 24402200 e-mail : etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE



www.mtcit.gov.om

MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,737.96
Sensex	76,693.36
FOREX RATES (RO1 equals)	
India	216.97
Pakistan	727.15
Bangladesh	307.10
Philippines	152.65
Sri Lanka	791.49

*Rates as on June 09
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Russian central bank holds interest rates constant at 16%

The Central Bank of Russia left its key interest rate unchanged at 16% for the fifth consecutive meeting, in line with the market forecast.

The bank said it may raise the key rate in its upcoming meeting.

It stressed that the current price growth has stopped easing and domestic demand continues to outstrip the Russian economy's capabilities to expand the supply of goods and services.

According to the latest data, Russia's annual consumer inflation rate ticked up to 7.8% in April from 7.7% in March.

The bank will maintain tight monetary conditions for a longer time than expected in a bid to return inflation to the target.

Oman's trade surplus grows 35% to RO2.6bn in Q1 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's quarterly trade surplus expanded by 35% year-on-year thanks to a sharp increase in the value of the sultanate's merchandise exports and comparatively slow growth in imports in the first quarter of this year.

The sultanate's trade balance recorded a surplus of RO2.61bn during the January-March period of 2024 compared to RO1.932bn in the same period of 2023, according to the data released by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The statistics showed that the value of merchandise exports reached RO6.502bn in the first quarter, up from RO5.572bn in the corresponding period of 2023, recording an increase of 16.7%.

The increase in the value of exports was mainly due to the rise in both hydrocarbon and non-hydrocarbon exports. Oil and gas exports reached RO3.722bn in the first quarter of this year, recording a growth of 3.1% from RO3.609bn a year ago.

Among hydrocarbon exports, the value of Oman's crude oil exports amounted to RO2.704bn, recording an increase of 13.3%



Value of non-oil exports sharply increased by 44.9% in Q1 2024 to reach RO2.338bn, compared to the same period of 2023 when non-oil shipments amounted to RO1.614bn

over the same period last year. However, the value of refined oil exports decreased to RO336mn, a drop of 13.9%.

The value of Oman's liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports decreased to RO682mn, down by 18.1%, compared to the first quarter of 2023, according to NCSI data.

Non-oil exports jump 45%

The NCSI data revealed that the value of non-oil exports sharply increased by 44.9% in the first quarter of 2024 to reach RO2.338bn, compared to the same period of 2023 when non-oil shipments amounted to RO1.614bn.

Mineral products had the highest value among non-oil commodity exports, with their value reaching RO1.169bn, a sharp increase of 127% over the same period in 2023, followed by ordinary metal products and their derivatives at RO352mn, an increase of 9.6%. The value of exports of chemicals and related

products rose by 7.3% to RO253mn in the first quarter of this year.

Additionally, the value of Oman's exports of plastics and rubber and their products increased by more than 20% to RO233mn.

The value of re-exports from Oman increased by 26.8% to RO442mn in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the same period in 2023.

Imports rise 6.9%

On the other hand, the value of Oman's merchandise imports increased by 6.9% to RO3.892bn in the first quarter of 2024 against RO3.64bn in the first quarter of last year.

Metal products received the largest value of imports to Oman, recording RO1.097bn in the first quarter of this year, rising by 15%. This was followed by imports of machinery, appliances, electrical equipment and their parts, and audio recording and broadcasting equipment, with a value of RO605mn, recording a growth of 8.1% in the first quarter.

Imports of chemicals and related industry products grew 2.1% to RO375mn in the first quarter of 2024, while imports of transportation equipment decreased by 2% to RO330mn.

World food prices rise for third straight month

Muscat - Global food prices edged up for the third consecutive month in May, fuelled by higher cereal and dairy prices, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The FAO food price index rose 0.9% month-on-month to 120.4 points in May, marking its highest level in six months, a UN food agency report showed.

On an annual basis, the figure was down 3.5% from May 2023.

The FAO food price index is a trade-weighted index that tracks international market prices of five major food commodity groups.

The cereal price index surged 6.3% from a month earlier in May, led by rising global wheat export prices. The dairy price index went up by 1.8% with increased demand from the retail and food services sectors ahead of the summer holidays as well as market expectations that milk production in Western Europe may fall below historical levels.

The sugar price index, on the other hand, plunged 7.5% from the prior month in May, mainly driven by pressure from the good start of the new harvest season in Brazil.

The vegetable oil price index dropped 2.4% from April as lower prices for palm oil more than offset higher prices of soy oil, and firmer prices of rapeseed and sunflower oils.



Solar Wadi to establish PV power plant at KOM

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM), a technology park operated and managed by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), has signed an agreement with Solar Wadi Company to establish a 1.4MW solar PV power plant.

This new plant, with an estimated cost of RO500,000, will be installed and operational within a year at KOM, with a 25-year contract for installation, operation, and maintenance.

This agreement aligns with Madayn's objective to promote clean energy and contribute to the sultanate's efforts to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

Madayn is continuously working towards creating a dynamic live-work-play environment model while ensuring environmental preservation, particularly in the industrial sector.

In collaboration with its partners, Madayn is committed to raising awareness among investors in various industrial cities, encouraging the adoption of safe, sustainable, and innovative alternatives.

native sources.

In its industrial cities, Madayn also focuses on several key areas, including managing hazardous and non-hazardous waste, controlling liquid waste disposal into marine environments, reducing emissions of air and noise pollutants, ensuring proper handling and usage of chemicals (including storage, transportation, and loading), storing hazardous materials, safely demolishing buildings and disposing of asbestos, mitigating land pollution, and optimising water and energy consumption.

Fitch Ratings affirms Oman Re at 'BBB-'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Fitch Ratings has affirmed Oman Reinsurance Company's (Oman Re) Insurer Financial Strength (IFS) rating at 'BBB-'. The outlook on Oman Re is stable.

'The affirmation reflects Oman Re's investment risk tied to the credit quality of the Omani sovereign, and its good company profile, capitalisation and financial performance,' Fitch Ratings said in a statement.

Fitch regards Oman Re's investment and asset risk as strongly tied to the credit quality of the Omani sovereign. Oman Re's investments either in the form of term deposits placed with Omani banks or in the form of US dollar-denominated government bonds issued by Oman accounted for 60% of its total invested assets at end-2023, the rating agency said.

According to Fitch, Oman Re's investment strategy is prudent and its investment portfolio is well-diversified by type of instruments.

'Oman Re's conservative asset allocation is reflected in a risky-assets/capital ratio (RAR) of 66% in 2023, an improvement from 87% in 2022. This was due to the upgrade of Omani sovereign rating in September 2023 which improved the RAR



Fitch's affirmation reflects Oman Re's investment risk tied to the credit quality of the Omani sovereign, and its good company profile, capitalisation and financial performance

as well as the company's effort to diversify its investment portfolio,' Fitch said.

The rating agency said that Oman Re has expanded its operations via its Qatar Financial Centre branch and mainly invests new money in foreign currency-denominated assets of high credit quality. It added that

Oman Re has consolidated substantially its business franchise over the last five years.

'The reinsurer operates mainly in the Middle East and north African region, with the largest market in Oman Re's reinsurance book being Turkiye, which contributed 14% in 2023, followed by the UAE, Pakistan and Oman. However, Oman Re has a small operating scale versus its global peers, as underscored in its gross reinsurance revenue of RO42mn in 2023,' Fitch said.

Good capitalisation

Fitch views Oman Re's capitalisation as supportive of the rating. The reinsurer's Prism Global model score based on end-2023 data remained at the low end of 'Strong,' in line with 2022's. Target capital remained under pressure from strong double-digit growth in reinsurance revenue,

while equity increased only 8.4% in the same period.

'Oman Re's available capital is, however, of high quality, being made up mostly of paid-up share capital. Oman Re's regulatory solvency margin was also sound at 214% at end-2023,' the rating agency said.

Fitch views Oman Re's financial performance as good, as reflected in net income return on equity of 8.4% in 2023. The company achieved a net profit after tax of RO2.5mn in 2023, up from RO2.1mn in 2022, supported by a strong underwriting and investment results. The company-calculated combined ratio was 88.6% in 2023, driven by an improved loss ratio.

Fitch views Oman Re's reserving practices as prudent and its reserve adequacy as strong. The company has strong actuarial expertise and conservative underwriting policies.

Oil prices expected to average above \$85 per barrel in 2024: BMI

Tsvetana Paraskova

The international crude benchmark Brent is expected to average \$85 per barrel this year and \$82 a barrel next year, BMI, a Fitch Solutions company, said in a report, keeping its outlook on oil prices despite the balance of risks lying "firmly to the downside."

BMI noted that for its price forecast for 2024 to pan out, Brent needs to average \$86 a

barrel in the second half of the year, as it has averaged \$83.50 year to date.

"We have opted not to revise our outlook at this point, but rather wait and see how price action plays out over the coming peak demand season in the northern hemisphere," BMI said in a note carried by Bernama on Thursday.

Analysts at BMI expect the Fed to cut the key interest rate to 4.75% from 5.5% by the end



of the year, which is set to support oil demand.

Fed is meeting later this week for its next FOMC meeting, and the CME FedWatch Tool shows a 98.4% probability that the central bank will keep monetary policy as-is.

A Reuters poll showed this week that the Fed might start cutting interest rates in September. Nearly two-thirds of economists polled by Reuters early this month expect the first

cut from the Fed funds rate to a 5.00%-5.25% range, from 5.25%-5.50% now, to come in September this year.

Some analysts became more optimistic about Fed cuts later this year following some weak US economic data.

"Data outside of the oil world was sufficiently weak that it's going to give cover to the Fed to finally cut rates and spur some growth," John Kilduff, partner at Again Capital, told Reuters.

Meanwhile, oil prices rebounded in Asian trade, following days of selling, especially on Monday and Tuesday after OPEC's announcement of production policy for the year ahead.

However, Brent crude continued to trade below \$80 per barrel, at around \$78.80, and WTI Crude was below \$75 early on Thursday, at \$74.50 per barrel.

(Source: Oilprice.com)

MENA shows highest renewable energy growth factor: IEA

Abu Dhaib, UAE - The International Energy Agency (IEA) said that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has great and varying ambitions and drivers to achieve the goal of tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030.

In its report titled "COP28 Tripling Renewable Capacity Pledge: Tracking countries' ambitions and identifying policies to bridge the gap", the IEA explained that the MENA region shows the highest growth factor based on its ambitions - 4.5 times its current small base, led by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Algeria.

"The MENA region accounts for less than 8% of global emissions from power generation and heat production. It aims to realise its significant untapped renewable energy potential by increasing capacity from less than 50GW in 2022 to 200GW by 2030," the report said.

In total, the region seeks to raise its installed capacity by a factor of 4.5, the largest regional growth globally. However, the countries demonstrate stark differences in their levels of ambition and what drives it, the IEA noted.

Solar PV makes up almost half of the capacity aims for 2030. If all ambitions in the region are realised, solar PV capacity will increase from 16.5GW in 2022 to over 90GW by 2030.

Even higher amounts could be achieved if some of the non-specified capacity in government ambitions is allocated to solar PV. High solar irradiation levels and



Middle East and North Africa region aims to realise its significant untapped renewable energy potential by increasing capacity from less than 50GW in 2022 to 200GW by 2030, according to IEA

increasing competitiveness make solar PV the main technology choice in the region's ambitions.

Since 2015, prices awarded for utility-scale solar PV have plunged 75%, from \$56/MWh in Jordan's 2015 tender to \$14/MWh in the most recently awarded tender in Abu Dhabi.

"Awarded solar PV prices have dropped for several reasons," the report further re-

vealed. It said, "First, in addition to global equipment costs falling, the introduction of competitive auctions has helped attract lower bids. Plus, many projects are large and can take advantage of economies of scale to achieve cost reductions (in the last ten years, six of the 24 projects were more than 1GW in size)."

"However, these low prices may not reflect all the costs de-

velopers face and may not be replicable in all countries due to certain conditions. Access to state-backed financing and favourable land costs have also contributed to the reductions," IEA added.

Globally, the IEA's new analysis finds that countries have a significant opportunity over the coming months to develop clear plans for boosting renewable

power that could help move the world closer to achieving the COP28 goal of tripling global capacity by 2030.

The report finds that while renewable power is at the heart of achieving international energy and climate goals, very few countries have explicitly laid out 2030 targets for installed capacity in their existing Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs, under the Paris Agreement.

Official commitments in NDCs currently amount to 1 300GW - just 12% of what is required to meet the global tripling objective set in Dubai, the IEA noted.



Fitch maintains India's rating at BBB- Stable

New Delhi, India - Fitch Ratings has maintained its assessment of India's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook, despite the coalition government following the recent election results.

The affirmation of India's rating highlights Fitch's confidence in the nation's economic resilience and potential for growth, even in the face of political fragmentation.

Traditionally, coalition governments are perceived as unstable, often leading to slower policy implementation and economic reforms. However, India's rating stability suggests that the country's underlying economic fundamentals are strong enough to withstand such political dynamics.

Earlier this year, in January, Fitch Ratings assigned India a stable outlook, reflecting a positive assessment of the country's economic conditions and prospects.

The recent elections, which culminated in a coalition govern-

ment, have not altered Fitch's outlook. This decision highlights the agency's belief that India's robust economic growth and solid external financial position are significant strengths that support the country's rating.

In the past coalition governments often resulted in slower decision-making processes and policy execution, but with the BJP dominating the new NDA coalition India's economic outlook remains positive. One of the key factors supporting India's rating is its strong growth outlook.

According to the Fitch Ratings, India is expected to remain one of the fastest-growing economies globally, with a projected GDP growth rate of 6.9% for the fiscal year 2024.

Fitch's report also highlights that the improved health of the banks and corporate balance sheets should pave the way for a positive investment cycle. Sustained reform could support and boost growth prospects, but risks may arise from an uneven implementation record.

ANI

Nvidia exceeds \$3tn in market value on AI boom

New York, US - Global chip giant Nvidia has reached a significant milestone in the stock market, surpassing a market value of \$3tn for the first time. This achievement places Nvidia in a privileged position, being the third company to reach such a valuation, only behind tech giants like Microsoft and Apple.

This remarkable growth reflects not only Nvidia's strength in the tech sector but also its ability to capitalize on the growing interest and demand in artificial intelligence (AI).

The increase in Nvidia's stock value, which rose more than 4% to \$1,224 per share, has been driven by strong quarterly results and forecasts that exceeded Wall Street's expectations. These results highlight a significant increase in spending on AI-related semiconductors, a

sector in which Nvidia has proven to be an undisputed leader.

The company has successfully leveraged the trend toward automation and the adoption of advanced technologies, resulting in a steady increase in its revenues and, consequently, its market value.

One of Nvidia's key strategies to maintain and increase its appeal to investors has been implementing a 10-to-1 stock split, announced on June 7. This measure is designed to make Nvidia's shares more accessible to more investors, reducing the price per share and facilitating investment for both small and large funds.

The stock split reflects the company's confidence in its future and aims to expand its shareholder base.

Additionally, Nvidia has intro-

duced a new series of AI chips to succeed its current Blackwell chips. These new chips are designed to offer superior performance and greater efficiency, positioning Nvidia at a competitive advantage over other major market players like AMD and Intel.

Constant innovation and the ability to develop advanced products are crucial factors that have enabled Nvidia to establish itself as a leader in the semiconductor and AI technology market.

The competition in the AI chip market is fierce, and Nvidia has demonstrated that it is prepared to face these challenges with innovative products and intelligent market strategies. Its ability to anticipate market needs and its commitment to research and development have been fundamental to its success.

The company has managed to maintain its position in a competitive market and succeeded in expanding and leading in critical areas of modern technology.



Eurozone economy grows 0.3% in Q1 on increased household spending

Brussels, Belgium - In the first quarter of 2024, the eurozone economy grew by 0.3% compared with the previous quarter, according to the third estimate published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union.

Eurostat also reported on Friday that the EU saw a 0.3% increase in its gross domestic product (GDP) quarter-on-quarter.

Meanwhile, compared with the same quarter in 2023, seasonally adjusted GDP increased by 0.4% in the euro area and by 0.5% in the EU.

Among member states, Malta (+1.3%) recorded the highest increase of GDP compared to the previous quarter, followed by Cyprus (+1.2%) and Croatia (+1.0%). Decreases were observed in Denmark (-1.8%), Estonia (-0.5%) and the Netherlands (0.1%).

According to Eurostat, GDP components evolved in the first quarter of 2024. Household final



consumption expenditure increased by 0.2% in both the euro area and the EU. Government final consumption expenditure was stable in the euro area and increased by 0.1 in the EU.

Gross fixed capital formation decreased by 1.5% in both the euro area and the EU, while exports increased by 1.4% in the euro area and by 1.0% in the EU.

Imports decreased by 0.3% in the euro area and by 0.2% in the EU.

Meanwhile, the contribution to GDP growth came from household final consumption expenditure, which was positive for both the euro area and the EU (+0.1 percentage points), while government final expenditure was negligible for both zones.

Gross fixed capital formation

was negative for both the euro area and the EU (-0.3 percentage points for both), changes in inventories was negative for both euro area (-0.3 percentage points) and the EU (-0.1 percentage points), while exports minus imports was positive for both the euro area (+0.9 percentage points) and the EU (+0.6 percentage points).

Employment growth

Meanwhile, the number of employed persons increased by 0.3% in both the euro area and the EU in the first quarter of 2024, compared with the previous quarter, after +0.3% in the euro area and +0.2% in the EU in the fourth quarter of 2023.

"Compared with the same quarter of the previous year, employment increased by 1.0% in the euro area and by 0.9% in the EU in the first quarter of 2024, after +1.2% in the euro area and +1.0% in the EU in the fourth quarter of 2023," Eurostat said.

(Source: Euronews.com)

What to expect from upcoming US Fed meeting on interest rates

Diccon Hyatt

Don't expect the US Federal Reserve to make any changes to monetary policy, but Wednesday's meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee could shed light on when the central bank might lower interest rates.

When the Fed's policy-setting committee concludes its two-day meeting Wednesday, they're widely expected to keep the influential fed funds rate at

its current range of 5.25-5.50%. That's a 23-year high and has been at that level since last July in an effort to maintain downward pressure on inflation.

Should the Fed either raise the rate to squeeze inflation harder or lower it to stimulate the economy, it would come as a massive surprise to financial markets. Traders are mainly pricing in a September rate cut at the earliest, according to the CME Group's Fedwatch Tool,



US Fed chair Jerome Powell

which forecasts rate movements based on fed funds futures trading data.

Traders did scale back their bets for a September cut to 50.8% on Friday from 68.7% the day before following a Bureau of Labor Statistics report that showed the job market running hotter than expected in May, suggesting that wages and job growth may be putting upward pressure on inflation.

Movement in the influential

interest rate either way would also contradict the recent public statements of central bank officials, who have signaled they're willing to hold the fed funds rate higher for longer.

Fed policy committee members have said they're waiting for confidence that inflation is firmly on a path down to an annual rate of 2% before they'll consider lowering their key interest rate, which influences borrowing costs on all kinds of loans.

Those projections could be influenced by the report on the Consumer Price Index for May, which is set to be released Wednesday morning, hours ahead of the afternoon Fed announcements. Higher-than-expected inflation could even revive talk of possible rate hikes, Chris Clarke, assistant professor of economics at Washington State University, told Investopedia.

(Source: Investopedia.com)



Shell Oman collaborates with Al Meera Markets

Shell Oman Marketing Company (Shell Oman) has recently announced a strategic partnership with Al Meera Markets, effective June 1.

This collaboration will witness the co-branding of Shell Select shops with Al Meera Markets across the entire network - a move that heralds a significant expansion in product diversity, positioning these outlets as comprehensive one-stop shopping destinations for customers. This initiative aims to

cater to the diverse needs of customers, thereby focusing on improving overall customer satisfaction, a press release said.

Dr Mohammed al Balushi - CEO at Shell Oman Marketing Company, said, "The partnership between Shell Oman and Al Meera Markets is founded on shared values that prioritise understanding customer trends and responding to evolving needs. By partnering with Al Meera, we are poised to provide a seamless and enriching

shopping experience for our customers, as this initiative underscores Shell Oman's aim of increasing In-Country Value, whilst upholding sound principles of innovation, customer-centricity, and service excellence."

Suresh Nair, general manager - Mobility at Shell Oman Marketing Company, added, "At Shell Oman, we are committed to enhancing customer journeys. Partnering with Al Meera Markets helps us create

a unified shopping experience for customers while ensuring that our stringent standards of quality are adhered to.

"This collaboration allows us to offer a wider selection of food and essentials, significantly enhancing convenience for our customers. Additionally, it enables us to centralise our supply chain operations, streamlining processes to improve efficiency and maintain consistent, high-quality product offerings."

ISWK hosts Academic Excellence Awards



Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir (ISWK) held its prestigious Academic Excellence Awards Ceremony to honour meritorious students for the academic year 2023-24 on May 30.

The event featured the Late Mathradas Khimji Memorial Awards, Kanaksi Khimji Scholarships, and Academic Excellence Awards, a press release said.

The school was honoured to witness the presence of Ajay Mathradas Khimji - Founder of Mosaic, and senior director of Khimji Ramdas Group, and Nailesh Khimji, director of Khimji Ramdas Group as the chief guests for the evening's programme. Other esteemed included Anil Khimji, Rajendra Ved, members of the Education

The Kanaksi Khimji Scholarships were presented to students for their stupendous performance in academics, sports, and co-scholastic activities

sent by Ajay Khimji to the meritorious students of classes VI-XII who have excelled in academics in 2023-24. The Kanaksi Khimji Scholarships were presented to students for their stupendous performance in academics, sports, and co-scholastic activities, marking a pioneering initiative in the Indian schools in Oman. To recognise the commitment and hard work of the students, the CBSE toppers of classes X and XII were also felicitated. Section-wise toppers and subject toppers were also honoured with Academic Excellence Awards.

An inter-house short film competition showcased the creative talents of students, with Vivekananda House winning the award for the best short film.

'Louder Than Hearts' explores portraits of Arab women

The Middle East Institute (MEI) in Washington, DC is hosting a new exhibition, 'Louder Than Hearts: Women Photographers from the Arab World and Iran', highlighting the work of ten different Egyptian, Iranian, Jordanian, Lebanese, Palestinian, Saudi and Yemeni artists, capturing portraits of women in their regions.

The show borrows its title from a poetry collection on love and loss by the Lebanese poet Zeina Hashem Beck. According to MEI, the photographs selected for the exhibition are profoundly personal to their makers, reflecting their diverse experiences, and yet they also convey this sense of shared humanity among women.

Award-winning Lebanese photographer Rania Matar curated the exhibition, which includes some of her own work. "I'm not a curator. I'm a photographer. It's my first time being on the other side of things," Matar says in a MEI video. "I feel like with the situation in the Middle East right now, it's such a bright spot to look at art and beauty and humanity and all coming from women."

Matar was born in Lebanon. In 1984, at age 20, she moved to the United States due to the ongoing civil war in her country. Kicking off 'Louder Than Hearts', her six-photo series, 'Where Do I Go? 50 Years Later', depicts women who left Lebanon in the aftermath of the 2020 Beirut port explosion.



Oman Air and SalamAir announce codesharing pact

Oman Air and SalamAir leadership met recently to mark the launch of the airlines' latest codeshare partnership, which offers passengers an expanded range of travel options within the Sultanate of Oman and beyond.

During the meeting, the airlines discussed their future prospects as national carriers and their common commitment to supporting the country's tourism goals as part of Oman's 2040 Vision.

"We are thrilled to further strengthen our partnership with Oman Air," said Adrian Hamilton-Manns, CEO of SalamAir. "This extended codeshare agree-

ment reflects our shared commitment to providing passengers with unparalleled travel options and superior service. Together, we eagerly anticipate aligning ourselves with the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology's sentiments and the overarching vision of Oman 2040.

Con Korfiatis, CEO of Oman Air, said, "We are excited about this expanded codeshare partnership between Oman Air and SalamAir and the strengthening of our collaboration. This latest development enables us to jointly offer even more choice and schedule options."

ROHM announces blood donation drive

The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) has announced the launch of its 2024 blood donation campaign, celebrating the institution's 10th year of organising this life-saving initiative.

Under the theme 'Anyone Can Be a Donor', the campaign is run in collaboration with the Ministry of Health Blood Bank Services and will take place on 13 June, a day before World Blood Donation Day, a press release said.

Donors are invited to enter through the main entrance of the Royal Opera House Muscat and proceed to the donation clinic set



up in the South Porch. The clinic will be open from 9am to 3pm, providing ample opportunity for the community to participate. Any healthy individual between the ages of 18 and 65 is encouraged to participate in this vital cause.

Blood donations are vital for saving lives, supporting treatments for accident victims, blood cancer patients, and mothers during childbirth. Donating blood not only saves lives but also improves donors' health by promoting better circulation and reducing iron levels, besides helping prevent heart disease.

PowerDMARC wins Best ICT Startup Award

Leading Cybersecurity SaaS company, PowerDMARC, recently marked their participation at the 33rd edition of the Comex Global Technology Show in Oman and won the Best ICT Startup Award elected by a prestigious judging panel.

PowerDMARC has shown exponential growth year after year, contributing to enhancing the email security posture of 2000+ organizations and 700+ channel partners, a press release said.

The judging panel consisted of



notable senior technology experts from both government and non-government sectors. The award was presented by Dr Ali al Shidhani, undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology of Oman.

CEO of PowerDMARC, Maitham al Lawati, expressed his gratitude for receiving this recognition, stating "We are extremely appreciative of this honour. PowerDMARC has played a pivotal role in shaping awareness around DMARC technology and

email authentication which is now being globally adopted by major industry players. The entire PowerDMARC team is wholeheartedly dedicated to safeguarding digital communications by making our robust services accessible to organisations and governments in Oman and worldwide."

PowerDMARC is a leading provider of email authentication hosted services and domain security analysis tools. It has offices in Oman, UAE, Armenia, and US.

KOM and Madayn launch Smart Mobility scooter project

Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM), the tech arm of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates 'Madayn', launched on Wednesday a 'Smart Mobility' project in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Salik Mobility.

The project features an electric scooter service for the employees working in various companies within KOM, facilitating easy movement between buildings, a press release said.



This initiative aligns with Madayn's ongoing efforts to en-

hance facilities at the Knowledge Oasis Muscat and create a con-

ducive business environment through adopting environmen-

tally-friendly projects that reduce consumption, implement smart

building management, provide smart security and safety solutions, and integrate various smart technologies to transform Knowledge Oasis Muscat into a smart city.

Among these technology solutions are security management system, parking management, smart systems for building management, smart irrigation, waste management, and lighting management, smart facilities management and smart audiovisual display management.

New Preface redefines automotive excellence

Towell Auto Centre (TAC), the exclusive distributor of Geely vehicles in Oman, recently announced the launch of its leading segment C sedan model in Muscat, Oman - the new Preface.

Built on the advanced Compact Architecture (CMA) platform, this exceptional model is poised to redefine driving pleasure for Omani consumers while setting new benchmarks in automotive excellence. It reaffirms the brand's unwavering commitment to providing Omani customers with unmatched technology, comfort, safety, power and performance, a press release said.

The new Preface, a frontrunner segment C sedan, represents a harmonious fusion of technology, design, intelligence, driving precision, and safety - heralding a new era of 'perfected presence' on Oman's roads.

Crafted to command attention on the road with class leading dimensions & flawless lines, the new Preface redefines driving with its sleek design and forward-thinking technology. From its sophisticated front face to its aerodynamic exterior details, every aspect of the new Preface exudes elegance and style. With the longest, widest, and largest wheelbase in its class, this sedan promises a high-value driving experience for the people of Oman.



The new Preface is ingeniously crafted on Geely's Compact Modular Architecture (CMA) platform, which forms the foundation of its design philosophy. This platform harnesses advanced engineering

to seamlessly integrate aesthetics, functionality, and performance. By leveraging the advanced capabilities of the CMA platform, the new Preface achieves a perfect balance between elegance and perfor-

mance. From its sleek exterior contours to its meticulously crafted interior, every aspect of the new Preface showcases the engineering brilliance empowered by the Geely CMA form.

Step inside the new Preface and discover a world of luxury and comfort. Spacious and elegant camel brown-coloured interiors, meticulously crafted with exquisite details, invite you to indulge in every journey.



Ominvest, Oman In Focus ink pact

Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest) and Oman In Focus company have joined forces to create the documentary film 'Empty Quarter Desert', aimed at showcasing the pristine nature and ecological diversity of the desert.

This collaboration underscores Ominvest's commitment to support the ecotourism sector in Oman as well as to support the SMEs exploring the nation's unique tourist and natural treasures, a press release said.

The agreement was signed by Abdulaziz al Balushi, Group CEO of Ominvest, and Maisa al Hooti, owner and founder of Oman in Focus.

'The Empty Quarter Desert' is the latest in a series of documentary films by Oman In Focus, produced in collaboration with wildlife experts and filmmakers both local and international. The film will be broadcast in multiple languages on various specialised regional and international satellite channels.

Balushi emphasised that the agreement reflects the Ominvest's dedication to promoting tourism in Oman, encouraging eco-tourism, supporting Omani small and medium enterprises, and raising awareness about preserving the Omani environment as part of Ominvest ESG strategy.

In a press statement, he commended the dedication of Omani companies to documenting the wildlife of the Sultanate of Oman, emphasising Ominvest's efforts in preserving and sustaining the environment, positioning it as a unique tourist attraction on the global tourism map, and promoting it on international satellite channels.

Hooti expressed her gratitude to Ominvest for sponsoring this project. She stated that the support of leading Omani companies exemplifies the private sector's partnership in promoting tourism. The film, created by a team of international and local photographers, will facilitate the exchange of expertise.

Madayn launches new 'Murasalat' interface for digital documents

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates 'Madayn' has launched the new interface of 'Murasalat' system, which is designed for digital document management and is officially certified by the National Intellectual Property Office at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion.

The system operates with two main interfaces for managing correspondences and documents according to the National Procedures Manual for Electronic Documents issued by the National Records and Archives Authority in 2013, a press release said.

Najma al Amri, director of Documents Department at Madayn, stated that the Murasalat System offers various features for users, such as electronic signature and stamping, and applies the standards of the National Records and Archives Authority and the approved data classification criteria.

"The system is divided into two interfaces - the first interface is dedicated to managing corre-



spondences, allowing users to handle all current procedures and operations, such as creating, adding and approving internal and external transactions, exchanging them between relevant parties, as well as providing all necessary tools for searching correspondences, tracking tasks, and generating reports.

"The second interface is the record management system, which focuses on storing and classifying documents according

to the retention schedules approved by the National Records and Archives Authority, in addition to managing electronic storage during the intermediate period up to the end point. It should also be noted that a mobile application is now activated and linked to the system to facilitate the remote completion of tasks assigned to employees."

The launch of the new interface for the 'Murasalat' system reflects Madayn's commitment

to digital transformation, aligning with the pillars and directives of the national vision and the comprehensive framework of the unified Government Digital Transformation Programme by the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology. Over the past two years, Madayn has made significant strides in this area, as evidenced by its constant progress in the evaluations conducted by the ministry.

Bank Muscat launches Tap'N'Go service for Android devices

Bank Muscat has launched the Tap'N'Go service available on various Android devices that are enabled with the Near Field Communication (NFC) feature. The service eliminates the need of having a physical terminal to accept payments.

To launch the new service, it is worth noting that a memorandum of understanding was recently signed by Bank Muscat and Visa. The memorandum was signed by Abdullah bin Hamood al Jufaili, assistant general manager, Digital Banking, Bank Muscat and Manish Gautum, Visa's country manager for the Sultanate of Oman, a press release said.

Launching the new service came in translation of the bank's vision 'To serve you better, everyday', aiming to facilitate customers' access to a suite of innovative digital banking services and solutions that cater to their diverse needs and recent preferences. The new service also allows customers to initiate and complete transactions in a quick and secure manner.

The new service is a revolution-



tionary technology that allows merchants and business owners including home business owners to accept card payments directly on their Android phones and smart devices of version 11 and above. All NFC-enabled payment cards may be used for customers to initiate payment transactions via the Tap'N'Go application.

This digital service is available for Bank Muscat and Meethaq customers alike. However, merchants have to open a merchant

account that allows business to accept card payments, in addition to opening a Bank Muscat corporate account. Furthermore, the technology also enables merchants to verify their transactions through the application which can be directly downloaded using the App Stores on the Android smartphones and following the steps illustrated on <https://www.bankmuscat.com/ar/Business/Digitalsolutions/Pages/TapAndGo.aspx>.

Training on 'Oversight of budget, treasuries and Loans' Implementation' held

Muscat Governorate organised a training programme - 'Oversight of Budget, Treasuries and Loans' Implementation' on Sunday with the participation of several staff from Oman's governorates working in the fields of internal audit and financial affairs.

The programme aims to develop their skills in financial budgets' preparation and methods for the final accounts of government units' review, and introducing them to the audit risks that should be avoided when audit work implementation.



The programme addressed several topics for preparing financial budgets, their concept and importance's clarification, highlighting the most important necessary skills to prepare government budgets according to modern scientific methods, and elements' declaration of financial oversight's implementation, such as revenues and expenditures.

On the other hand, the programme aims to develop participants' skills in methods of the final account's preparation and review and clarifying the differ-

ence between it and the budget. It is by introducing the most important attentions that must be taken into consideration when preparing the final account according to the financial law.

Additionally, it dealt with informing participants of the risks associated with the general budget's implementation, discussion of methods and standards for funds' supervisory, the methods' Explanation of supervisory permanent and temporary loans, and ways to preserve public money.

France in hot water as demands for independence soar from colonies

Paris, France - France is struggling with increasing demands for independence from its overseas collectivities - a legacy of the country's colonial period.

The colonies make up 18 per cent of French territory and are home to 2.6mn people.

French collectivities have different political statuses and include Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint-Martin, Saint-Barthélemy, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, which are located in the Atlantic Ocean; Reunion, Mayotte and the French Southern and Antarctic Territories in the Indian Ocean while French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna are located in the Pacific Ocean; French Guiana is in South America.

Twelve French colonies, the closest is approximately 4,000km (2,485 miles) from France and the farthest is 17,000km, are far from the mainland in terms of living standards.

Struggling with various socioeconomic problems and complaining about the inadequacy of infrastructure and security services provided by the French administration to the lands, the colonies are demanding more autonomy and independence.

Anadolu compiled the demands of Indigenous rights supporters in French colonies and problems faced by the territories, which came to the fore again with the events in New Caledonia, where independence supporters took action and France used force to suppress protests.

New Caledonia

In New Caledonia, which is approximately 17,000km from the French mainland, the French government's constitutional reform initiative to reduce the influence of the indigenous people in elections has mobilised independence supporters on the island.

The French government's attempt to open the way for French people who have been living on the island for at least 10 years to vote in elections, contrary to the Noumea Treaty signed with the locals in 1988, caused protests.

The French government sent police and gendarmerie to the island to suppress protests that lasted about a month. Seven



people were killed in incidents that broke out on the island. A state of emergency, which was declared on May 13, was lifted on May 27 when the situation came under control in the capital, Noumea.

French President Emmanuel Macron did not withdraw the constitutional reform bill during his visit to the island and gave time for dialogue between supporters and opponents.

French Guiana

French Guiana in South America, 7,000km from France, suffers from security problems.

Undocumented migration and illegal gold mining on the Brazilian border are among the main problems of the colony of 300,000 people, where the murder rates are 10 times higher than the mainland.

Poverty and unemployment rates are high, and residents complain about the government's inadequacy in investments in infrastructure and the health sector.

Almost 40 per cent of the young population in French Guiana goes abroad for education and for work.

The local government is reacting to the fact that Macron promised more autonomy to

France's island in the Mediterranean, Corsica, while similar steps were not taken for Guyana.

Gabriel Serville, Speaker of the Parliament of French Guiana, criticised the government's 'double standards' in providing more autonomy, stating that the cultural diversity of the island of Corsica, which is 160km from France, is emphasised but French Guiana, which is 7,000km, is not seen in the same light.

The Congress of French

400,000 people located approximately 7,000km from France, is experiencing security difficulties due to crime rates that are six times higher than the French national average and armed robbery rates that are 20 times higher.

Due to the increasing involvement of young people in crimes, a curfew was imposed in April for Pointe-a-Pitre, the commercial capital of the island, for those younger than 18.

Sebastien Lecornu, said Paris was 'ready for autonomy negotiations'.

After the COVID-19 outbreak protests, demands for autonomy also gained momentum in the neighbouring colony of Martinique. Martinique Executive Council President Serge Letchimy sought support from regional partners to grant the island autonomy status without separating from France. In November, the Congress of Martinique voted in favour of adding an article to the French Constitution allowing laws to be adapted to the social and economic realities of the Island.

Mayotte, France's poorest land

In recent years, there have been security problems in Mayotte, a colony in the Indian Ocean, approximately 8,000km from the mainland.

A drinking water shortage, which has been going on for years, has reached a crisis level on the island with a population of 310,000, which is facing the 'worst drought of the century'.

In November, the French government created 82 water supply points on the island and began distributing drinking water to residents with soldiers.

On the island, where there is an influx of immigrants, the government decided to make constitutional changes to limit 'citizenship acquired by birth'.

French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin announced in February that children of immigrants born on the island would no longer 'automatically' become French citizens.

With the new regulation, children born on the island are required to have French parents to become French citizens.

The citizenship restriction was taken against Comoro Island immigrants who were blamed for the deterioration of living conditions on the Island.

On the island, where more than 90 per cent of the population is Muslim, a cholera epidemic, which is generally transmitted through dirty water, has become widespread in recent months. The French government dispatched 1,700 police and soldiers in April and launched an 11-week operation to control the security situation on the island, which suffers from an irregular flow of immigrants.

According to data, the living standards of Mayotte residents are seven times lower than the French and 77 per cent of residents live below the poverty line.

French Polynesia

French Polynesia, which consists of more than 100 islands in the South Pacific with a population of approximately 300,000 and is approximately 16,000km from the mainland, is protesting the effects of about 200 nuclear tests conducted by France between 1966 and 1996.

The pro-independence Tavini Huiraatira Party won last year's elections in Polynesia, which was expecting an apology from France for tests that had serious negative effects on the public.

While the Polynesian administration wants to advance the island toward full sovereignty, the French government is not interested in independence negotiations and argues that the island should work to become self-sufficient in agriculture, economy and food before its political independence.

Reunion

Reunion, which is approximately 9,000km from France, signed the 'Fort-de-France' call with its six accompanying colonies at the end of 2022, demanding more autonomy against the French administration. The signing by Reunion Regional Council President Huguette Bello created a debate in the Reunion Senate, and right-wingers declared that they would fight to 'keep the island French'.

Corsica Island

Corsica Island in the Mediterranean, known for its proximity to Italy rather than France, has a different history from the colonies but is known for wanting more autonomy.

During a September visit to the island, where pro-independence supporters have a majority in parliament, Macron called for 'autonomy unique to Corsica' and gave six months for right-wingers and pro-independence supporters to agree on a common text on autonomy.

In March, the parties agreed on a text granting more autonomy to the island. Progress in autonomy negotiations in Corsica, which has a culturally different identity and historical past, was met with a reaction in the colonies where the government did not show the same approach.

Anadolu Agency

Japan: Critical fuel shortages hinder flight increase plans

Tokyo, Japan - Critical fuel shortages for commercial flights at airports across Japan have hampered the increase in the number of international flights and adding new routes, local media reported on Saturday.

A spike in the demand for flights because of increasing inbound tourism has outpaced the supply capacity of petroleum refiners, with the issue further compounded by labour shortages in the distribution phase, according to Tokyo-based Kyodo News, citing unnamed government and industry sources.

The development has prompted government ministries to consider countermeasures as the problem may dampen efforts to revitalise regional economies through international tourism ahead of the peak summer holiday season. The Hiroshima prefectural government in western Japan said a foreign airline had to



revise plans to increase Asia flights to and from the Hiroshima airport because of insufficient fuel supply, while another is encountering challenges in securing fuel for summer and beyond.

The New Chitose, Asahikawa and Obihiro airports in Hokkaido have been similarly affected by fuel shortages as they planned to

increase flights.

The National Governors' Association is considering requesting that the central government take action as airports in parts of the Kansai, Shikoku and Kyushu regions also face difficulties in increasing the number of flights, according to local government sources familiar with the matter.

In Japan, petroleum wholesalers contractually supply passenger aircraft with fuel refined from crude oil. They cannot suddenly increase production as they have been consolidating facilities in anticipation of a medium to long-term decline in demand for petroleum products.

Anadolu Agency

Political violence increases in Europe amid rising polarisation

Brussels/Bucharest - The attack on Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on Friday serves as the latest indication of a troubling surge in political violence sweeping Europe, amid the ongoing European Parliament (EP) elections.

Over the past few months, attacks or threats on politicians in Germany, Spain, Ireland, and other European nations, notably including the attempted assassination of the Slovak prime minister and threats against leaders in Poland and Hungary, have further emphasised the growing violence in European politics.

Analysts predict that this wave of political aggression is unlikely to dissipate quickly after the elections, as the underlying causes of these violent acts are deeply complex and multifaceted.

Surging violence

Days after the shooting of Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico on



Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico

May 15, the German Interior Ministry released a report showing that politically motivated crimes in Germany rose by 1.9 per cent year-on-year in 2023, reaching a record high of 60,028 cases.

Both Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democratic Party (SPD) and its coalition partner, the Greens, as well as the opposition right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD), have been affected,

sparking concerns in the country.

German sociologist Wilhelm Heitmeyer noted that the AfD's nationalist rhetoric has shifted public discourse towards the extreme right, while left-wing extremists respond with equally radical positions. These tit-for-tat exchanges have escalated social conflicts, creating an environment inclined to exert violence.

In France, the Interior Ministry recorded 2,387 reports of physical or verbal offense against political representatives in the first three quarters of 2023, some of them violent.

Igor Mekina, editor-in-chief of Insider.com, a Slovenian news website, contextualised the recent violence within Europe's long history of tensions between nations. He said opposing centres of power and their disputes have been Europe's greatest strength, as well as a curse, from ancient times to modern Europe.

Xinhua

'Nuseirat massacre': Palestine demands emergency UN Security Council session

Incursion into the Nuseirat refugee camp left at least 210 people dead and more than 400 injured

Ramallah, Palestine - Palestine demanded an emergency session of the UN Security Council to discuss a 'massacre' committed by Israeli forces in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on Saturday.

'Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has instructed Palestine's envoy to the United Nations to request an emergency session of the UN Security Council to discuss the repercussions of the bloodshed' committed by Israeli forces in the Nuseirat camp, the Palestine News Agency Wafa reported.

Abbas' remarks came after heavy Israeli bombardment and sudden incursion into the Nuseirat refugee camp and other areas in the Gaza Strip left at least 210 people dead and more than 400 others injured.

"President Abbas is engaged in intensive communications with relevant Arab and international parties to convene this urgent session of the UN Security Council," according to the agency.

Abbas emphasised 'the urgent need for international intervention to halt the humanitarian



Palestinian women mourn as the bodies of the Palestinians killed in the Israeli attack are brought to the morgue of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah, Gaza on Saturday

catastrophe unfolding in Gaza, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem'.

He pointed out that 'Israel continues to exploit international silence and US support to perpetrate crimes that violate all international legitimacy resolutions and international law'.

According to witnesses, Israeli military vehicles unexpectedly advanced into areas east and northwest of the Nuseirat

camp, coinciding with heavy artillery bombardment targeting large areas of the camp.

Egypt, Jordan condemn attack

Meanwhile, Egypt and Jordan have condemned the Israeli attack on the Nuseirat refugee camp. The Egyptian Foreign Ministry, in a statement, termed the attack 'a blatant violation of all provisions of international law,

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has instructed Palestine's envoy to the UN to request an emergency session of the UN Security Council

international humanitarian law, and all human values and human rights'.

"Egypt holds Israel legally and ethically responsible for this blatant aggression and demands compliance as an occupying power to cease the indiscriminate targeting of Palestinian civilians, including those in displacement areas, and the devastating destruction of all infrastructure services in the Gaza

Strip," it said.

The ministry further called on 'influential international parties and the Security Council to urgently intervene to halt the Israeli war against the Gaza Strip and to take responsible action to end this humanitarian crisis, which has claimed the lives of over 36,000 martyrs'.

It affirmed 'the necessity of reaching a ceasefire throughout the entire Gaza Strip and ensur-

ing the full and unimpeded entry of humanitarian and relief aid through all land crossings into the strip'.

The Jordanian Foreign Ministry considered the Israeli attack on the Nuseirat camp as 'a practice that reflects the systematic targeting of Palestinian civilians, Israel's persistent violation of international law and international humanitarian law, and the continuation of committing war crimes'.

In a statement, the ministry affirmed 'the Kingdom's condemnation and absolute denunciation of Israel's continued commission of genocide in the Gaza Strip, which is suffering an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe due to the Israeli aggression since October 7'.

Jordan further stressed that the attack constitutes 'a blatant violation of international law and international legitimacy resolutions, and the international will calling for an end to the war that has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of innocent civilians'.

It called on 'the entire international community, especially the UN Security Council, to urgently and immediately take action to stop the war crimes committed by Israel in Gaza, and to oblige it, as the occupying power, to comply with the rules of international law and international humanitarian law and to stop its senseless war on the Gaza Strip', according to the statement.

On Sunday, Turkey said that it deplored the Israeli attack on the Nuseirat refugee camp. "We deplore the Israeli attack on the Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza," the country's Foreign Ministry said in an official statement.

Anadolu Agency



Australia: Opposition bloc vows to dump 2030 climate target

Sydney, Australia - Australia's opposition Coalition vowed to abandon the country's 2030 climate target, which it called 'unachievable', local media reported on Saturday.

Canberra committed under the Paris Agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 43 per cent compared to 2005 levels by the end of the 2020s.

Jettisoning this commitment would also mean withdrawing from the 2015 deal, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

The Coalition, which is an alliance of the Liberal Party of Australia and the National Party of Australia, argues that the centre-left ruling Labor party will 'fail' to meet the target, while 'significantly damaging Australian industry in the process of trying'. But it remains committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2050, arguing nuclear power should play a key role in getting there.

Shadow Energy Minister

Ted O'Brien said the cost would simply be too great.

"If Labour is going to achieve its 2030 targets, which industry is it going to attack?" he questioned. "The only way now that Labour can achieve its 2030 target, is to collapse industry. We will not have a bar of it from the coalition," O'Brien said.

Though, most recent projections from the Climate Change Authority found that Australia is not on track to meet the 2030 target, it, however, suggested if the government implemented policies as promised, the country could come 'very close to making the goal'.

The Coalition argues that too will be impossible to meet, and is preparing to detail a very different energy policy - relying more heavily on gas, while nuclear power plants are built on the sites of retired coal-fired generators.

Anadolu Agency

Gaza solidarity camp set up near White House

Washington, D.C., US - Pro-Palestinian protestors set up a Gaza solidarity camp late on Saturday across from the White House.

The encampment in the Ellipse, the 52-acre park directly south of the White House, was established after thousands of demonstrators gathered on Saturday outside the White House to protest US President Joe Biden's policy regarding the Israeli onslaught in the Gaza Strip, principally the invasion of Rafah.

Wearing red, the protestors surrounded the building with a two-mile red banner to symbolise Biden's 'red line' concerning Israel's invasion of Rafah.

Biden previously said an invasion of Rafah would cross a 'red line', but senior US officials were quick to backtrack on those remarks, saying the president did not set any 'red lines' for Israel as it carries out its deadly offensive.

Police tightened security and put additional safety measures, including anti-scale fencing, near the White House complex.

"Biden, We Are Your Red Line," protestors said, urging the president to stop the 'genocide' in the besieged enclave.

They also demanded a halt to sending weapons to Israel.

Some of the banners read: 'Genocide Is Our Red Line', 'Biden's Red Line Was A Lie',



The encampment was established in the Ellipse, the 52-acre park directly south of the White House

US resumes aid delivery to Gaza via temporary pier

Washington, D.C., US - The US resumed aid delivery to the Gaza Strip via the temporary pier on Saturday which was reestablished after it broke apart in rough seas late last month, said Central Command (CENTCOM).

"Today, a total of approximately 492 metric tonnes of much needed humanitarian assistance was delivered to the people of Gaza. To date, US-CENTCOM has assisted in the delivery of more than 1,573 metric tonnes of humanitarian aid," CENTCOM wrote on X.

It said no US military personnel went ashore in Gaza.



Rough seas affected four US Army vessels supporting the maritime humanitarian aid mission in Gaza, and the vessels broke free from their moorings, resulting in two vessels being anchored on the beach near the pier. The third and fourth vessels were beached on the coast of Israel near Ashkelon. US President Joe Biden ordered the establishment of a sea route to deliver

food and other aid to Palestinians on March 8 amid Israeli restrictions and months of conflict.

The JLOTS - the floating pier and the Trident pier - became operational on May 17 when trucks carrying humanitarian assistance began moving ashore via the pier.

The initial cost of the pier was estimated at US\$320mn. But the Pentagon said on Wednesday that the price had dropped to US\$230mn, due to contributions from the UK and because the cost of contracting trucks and other equipment was 'lower-than expected'.

Anadolu Agency

INDIA

Narendra Modi takes oath as PM

President Droupadi Murmu administered oath of office to Modi and to other members of his cabinet

New Delhi, India - Narendra Modi took oath as Prime Minister of India for his third successive term on Sunday at a ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan which was attended by leaders from India's neighbourhood and Indian Ocean region.

President Droupadi Murmu administered the oath of office to Narendra Modi, followed by other members of his team of ministers.

The prominent leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) who took oath as union ministers included Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, J P Nadda, Nirmala Sitharaman and S Jaishankar and Piyush Goyal.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Nepal PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe, Bhutan PM Tshering Tobgay, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth, Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina and Seychelles Vice President Ahmed Afif.

Modi was seen wearing a full-sleeved white kurta with churidar and blue half jacket.

Apart from two terms as Prime Minister beginning 2014, Narendra Modi also has the distinction of being the longest-serving Chief Minister of Gujarat with his term spanning from October 2001 to May 2014.

Born on September 17, 1950,



Narendra Modi takes oath as Prime Minister at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Sunday (ANI)

The ceremony was attended by leaders from neighbouring countries including Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, Mauritius and Bangladesh

in a small town in Gujarat, his family belonged to the 'other backward class'. In his initial years, he worked with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and later devoted himself to pol-

itics working with the Bharatiya Janata Party organisation at the national and state level.

Modi led the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to a third successive victory in the

Lok Sabha polls. The BJP won an absolute majority on its own in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls winning 282 and 303 seats respectively. Now, Modi leads an NDA coalition with 292 seats in the Parliament. Rajnath Singh has been a minister in Modi's cabinet since

2014. He was the eighth President of the Bharatiya Janata Party from 2005 to 2009 and again from 2013 to 2014. Singh was again elected president of the BJP in early 2013, succeeding Nitin Gadkari, who had replaced him in 2009. In 2014, Rajnath became Union Minister of Home Affairs

in the Narendra Modi government and in 2019 was made Union Defence Minister of the country. Nagpur MP Nitin Gadkari was also BJP chief in 2009. Gadkari resigned as party president in January 2013 and became the Minister of Road Transport and Highways and Minister of Ship-

ping in May 2014. The 59-year-old BJP leader Amit Shah served as the Union Home Minister in the previous Modi government. Meanwhile, the swearing in ceremony also witnessed allies of BJP in NDA joining the union government. Janata Dal (Secular) leader and former Karnataka Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy was the first among the BJP's partners to take oath of office and secrecy. The second leader among BJP's allies in the NDA to take oath of office was also a former Chief Minister as Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) leader and former Bihar CM Jitan Ram Manjhi joined the union council of ministers on Sunday. While Janata Dal (Secular) JD(S) won only two seats in the Lok Sabha polls, Manjhi is the only representative of his party in the Lok Sabha. Rajiv Ranjan Singh (Lalan Singh) of JD-U and Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu of Telugu Desam Party (TDP) took oath of office after Kumaraswamy and Manjhi. Both TDP and JD-U are crucial allies of BJP in NDA government. TDP has 16 MPs and JD-U has 12 MPs in the Lok Sabha. Among other leaders from among BJP's allies who took oath of office were Chirag Paswan of LJP (Ram Vilas) and Jayant Chaudhary of Rashtriya Lok Dal. ANI

Last rites of media mogul Ramoji Rao held in Film City, Hyderabad

Hyderabad, India - Last rites for industrialist and media mogul Ramoji Rao took place at the Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad on Sunday morning. The funeral rites were held with state honours of the Telangana government.

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu attended the last rites of Rao.

Andhra Pradesh government had also nominated three senior IAS officers to attend his funeral. And the state government had announced that it would observe State mourning on Sunday and Monday (June 9 and 10).

Rao passed away while undergoing treatment at Star Hospital in Telangana's Hyderabad in the early hours of Saturday. He was 87.

Top leaders of the country including President Droupadi



TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu along with others carry the mortal remains of Ramoji Rao, the founder of Ramoji film city and head of ETV network, during the funeral procession, in Hyderabad on Sunday (ANI)

Murmu, Prime Minister-designate Narendra Modi on Saturday consoled the death of Rao. Ramoji Rao's legacy is vast, encompassing numerous successful business ventures and

media productions. Under his leadership, Eenadu became a major force in Telugu media. His other business ventures include the film production house Usha Kiran Movies, the

film distribution company Mayuri Film Distributors, the financial services firm Margadarsi Chit Fund, and the hotel chain Dolphin Group of Hotels. ANI

Possibility of high waves, erosion predicted along Kerala's coast

Thiruvananthapuram, India - The National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) on Sunday predicted the possibility of high waves and coastal erosion along the Kerala coast until 11:30pm on Monday.

In light of this, the District Disaster Management Authority has urged fishermen and coastal residents to exercise extreme caution.

Authorities have advised certain precautions which include evacuation from Hazardous Areas. "Residents in danger zones should relocate as per the instructions of local authorities," stated officials.

Authorities have suggested securing fishing vessels. "Ensure the safety of boats and other fishing vessels. Maintaining a safe distance be-

Authorities have advised precautions including evacuation from hazardous areas, securing fishing vessels, and avoiding beach and sea activities

tween vessels can prevent collision-related accidents," stated authorities. The authorities further suggested avoiding beach and sea activities. "The public should completely avoid trips to the beach and recreational activities in the sea."

Meanwhile, the Indian Meteorological Department stated that various places across the state of Kerala received heavy rainfall in the last 24 hours. Thrissur district's Vellanikkara recorded 11cm of rainfall, Kasargod district's Muliyar and Idukki district's Peerumedu recorded 9cm of rainfall followed by Kozhikode district's Vadakara (8cm), Thrissur district's Enamakkal, Kasargod district's Kudulu, Thiruvananthapuram district's Palode and Thrissur district's Peechi (all 7cm). It has been raining heavily across many parts of South India, including in coastal Karnataka, Konkan and Goa, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry, the IMD statement said. ANI

6 candidates approved to run for Iran's presidency

Tehran, Iran - Iran's top vetting body has approved six candidates for the upcoming presidential election slated for June 28.

Among those whose candidacies have been approved by the Guardian Council are former Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, two high-profile conservative political figures.

Others in the race include former lawmaker Masoud Pezeshkian, former minister Mostafa Pourmohamadi, Tehran Mayor Alireza Zakani, and former lawmaker Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi.

The candidacy of former vice president Eshaq Jahangiri, who

was expected to be the top reformist contender, was rejected by the election supervisory body.

Ali Larijani, a former Parliament Speaker believed to have the backing of the reformist camp, also failed to make the cut. Both Jahangiri and Larijani had been disqualified by the 12-member council in the 2021 presidential election when Abdolnasser Hemmati was the lone reformist challenger to Ebrahim Raisi.

Hemmati, who was again in the running this year, also had his candidacy rejected.

The candidacy of former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was also rejected by the Guardian Council. Anadolu Agency

Russia's Kharkiv offensive 'failed', says Zelensky

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said Russia has 'failed' in its offensive in his country's northeastern Kharkiv region.

"Today I spoke with the Commander-in-Chief (Oleksandr Syrskiy) - overall, about the situation. A significant outcome is that the Russian army has failed to execute their Kharkiv operation," Zelensky said in an evening video address late on Saturday.

Expressing that the Ukrainian army is currently holding off Russian forces 'to the best of our ability', Zelensky said they reinforced the front in the region and they would reinforce further.

Zelensky also said he was made aware of a report on the situation in the 'most difficult' Donetsk front in the east, indicat-



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

ing that Kyiv was working to provide more reserves for the Ukrainian army. He said they achieved some 'new solutions' to

reinforce Ukraine's defence capabilities. "Progress has also been made in artillery - including the production of 155-caliber shells in

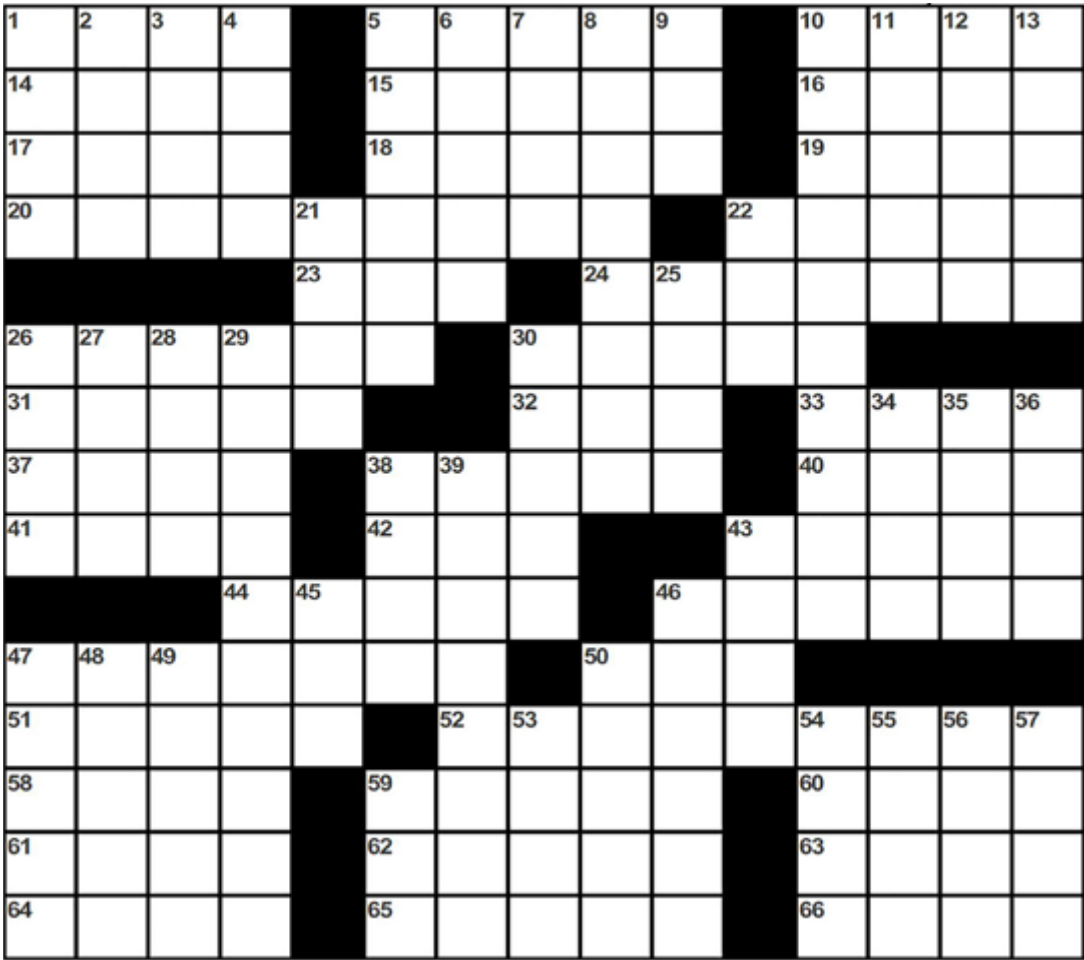
Ukraine, and we are preparing a new manufacturing platform. Our combat aviation and electronic warfare capabilities are also being

improved," Zelensky also said.

He went on to say that new security agreements for Ukraine are almost ready, adding that the past month had seen Kyiv expand its capabilities on the battlefield and that in June, the country should 'strengthen our diplomacy and strategic perspectives'.

Russian forces have been attempting to breach Ukraine's defences in the Kharkiv region since early May, opening a new front in the over two-year-long conflict that had hitherto been concentrated in the country's east and south. Clashes in the region have intensified since then, particularly near Vovchansk, located about 74km from Kharkiv, which has also been targeted by Russian airstrikes. Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Tinted
5) Junkyard junk
10) Coffee, informally
14) Say it isn't faux
15) Aussie "bear"
16) One who raised Cain
17) "Out" to an editor
18) Any Dogpatch character
19) Manage somehow
20) Careless pedestrian
22) Canton neighbor
23) Female parents, for short
24) They donate a tenth
26) Illegal entry by a government agent
30) Featured half of a 45
31) Black-and-white cookies
32) Bed-and-breakfast
33) It might be rigged
37) Wife of Jacob
38) Sign of late summer
40) "The Ghost and Mrs.
41) Repair sock holes
42) Suffix with "hero" or "rout"
43) "Slowly" in music
44) Trustingly innocent
46) Bow
4 7) Nineveh was its capital

- 50) Purchase add-on
51) Do a winter chore
52) Longshoreman
58) Lab heater of old
59) Instrument for an etude
60) Hectic episodes
61) It can be good, bad or rotten
62) Lethargic sleep
63) Easy win
64) Harmless sword
65) Hard to combine, chemically
66) Long basket, in basketball slang
DOWN
1) Pilgrimage to Mecca (var.)
2) Colored part of the eye
3) Lampreylike
4) Barrymore of "E.T."
5) '70s Earth orbiter
6) Proverbial broth spoilers
7) Autumn tool
8) Emulating Paul Revere
9) Trusted chum
10) Pavement pounder
11) Love deeply
12) Word with "lock" or "barrier"
13) Sunday approvals
21) Andy's radio partner

- of old
22) Breakfasted, e.g.
25) Fig. on a driver's license
26) Attention-getting type
27) Atlas stat
28) Neutral or reverse
29) Cornbread on the griddle
30) "Yes_Bob!"
34) Cousin bearer
35) Uses a pew
36) "Iliad" city
38) Two-by-four in 56-Down
39) Military incursion
43) High-class
45) "All bets_off"
46) Go on a gambling spree
4 7) Big name in pop music
48) Prepare
49) Continuously from
50) High male singer
53) Eight-track, e.g.
54) Arrow cousin
55) Household spray target
56) "Julius Caesar" setting
57) Catch a glimpse of
59) It's shaped like a trident

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

The Universe is challenging you right now to be more tolerant. This may feel like your patience is being tried by forces or people beyond your control, and this can be mighty annoying. Do something active to get some energy out, do your best to go with the flow, and smile while doing it. The first step might be to cut yourself some slack, thus making it easier for you to do the same for others.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Your generous heart, in addition to your desire to look like you're keeping it all together, has you going the extra mile in all areas right now. Home, work, relationships, not to mention extracurricular activities, are all more demanding than usual, and you're getting close to running yourself ragged by trying to keep up. Could you actually take a breather or even ask for a little help?



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You're not usually an acquisitive type. When you think about what you want, it's much more likely that philosophical ideals or interesting experiences come to mind than mere material objects. Right now, though, shopping with a friend might sound like it's just your speed. Knowing you, you'll find yourself in a tiny shop full of hidden treasures, making friends with the intriguing owner and learning their entire life story.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Which of these items used to be part of some kinds of typewriter?

- A. Daisy wheel
B. Primrose circle
C. Rose water
D. Daffodil twister

02. The era of political liberalisation in Czechoslovakia in 1968 was called what?

- A. Svoboda Times
B. Dubček's Summer
C. Wenceslas Winter
D. Prague Spring

03. Who is remembered in the name for the "cold rain" process, the process by which precipitation starts in a mixed cloud with a temperature below freezing, e.g. how ice crystals grow at the expense of liquid cloud droplets within the cloud?

- A. Jonathan E. Pleim
B. Bert Holtslag and Byron Boville
C. Robert C. Gilliam
D. Tor Bergeron

Answers: 1.A 2.D 3.D



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Something way, way out-there could happen in your world right about now, and your knee-jerk reaction might be to lose a bit of your cool. It's likely that no one else will even notice. After all, you'll make a graceful recovery and a more well-thought-out second response. Think about this happening as a message from the future, and consider responding in a way that's just as out-there.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Identifying what you want is the first step to getting it, so think it over and get the specifics fixed in your mind. Go ahead and think big. Let your vision of your perfect world percolate. Whatever you'd like to see changed in your work life, your relationships, or your living situation is likely a lot closer than you think (though, of course, perfection will be elusive). After you have it in your head, find a way to communicate it to the relevant parties.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Talk may sometimes be cheap, but right now the way you're communicating is totally on target, making you a valuable addition to any team. If there's a presentation to be given at work, you're the right person for the job. If you've been putting off making a phone call to a relative, now is the time. And any sticky relationship situation is no match for your ability to call it like you see it, and sound amazing while doing so.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Escaping to your own little world certainly has its appeal right now. You're just not feeling like your usual social butterfly self. However, withdrawing completely into cocoon mode could understandably alarm your nearest and dearest. Let them know that this is just a little vacation to inner space, and you'll tell them as soon as you're done musing and nesting. It'll probably be sooner than you think.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Outside factors are encroaching on your workday, and keeping everything in its separate compartment may prove difficult at the moment. Rather than go nuts trying to sustain your professional act, you might make a sensible plan to deal with these conflicts. Perhaps taking a long lunch will allow you to handle some of this, or maybe a couple of breaks during the day for a brisk walk around the block and some deep breathing.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

If you've been letting your bank statements pile up unopened, you may want to take a gander at the numbers there right about now. Mistakes do happen, and perhaps your responsibility in balancing your account will be rewarded by finding an error in your favor. Getting in touch with your financial situation also prevents you from landing in a sticky situation that could hang over your head for quite a while.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

That elusive balance between thinking and feeling has been extra difficult to strike lately, finding you in either very emotional mode or (less frequently) a very logical state. But you don't have to be either all wound up or super removed. It's time to reconcile these extremes and greet the world with both heart and mind engaged. Luckily, the stars are here to help with a nice boost in each department.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

The dividing line between fantasy and reality is a wavering, permeable one at the moment, providing you with some unprecedented opportunities, especially in the realm of romance. How to best take advantage of this unique situation? Get your feelings and desires out on the table. You should be able to do this in a creative way if you use your ample imagination. From there, follow your instincts to a dream come true.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You have enough good fortune going that you can afford to share the proverbial wealth, and there's little you enjoy more than giving. Taking some friends out and picking up the tab is one way to go, but then there are also the intangible things that you're so good at, such as divining what someone needs and finding a behind-the-scenes way to facilitate it. Virtue is definitely its own reward, and so is seeing them happy.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	T	R	N
J	O	A	S
K	E	R	E
S	C	R	S

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

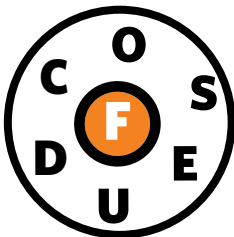
SOLUTION
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

VICTORY, HISTORY

Modric and Budimir goals help Croatia beat Portugal

Lisbon, Portugal - Goals in each half by Luka Modric and Ante Budimir got Croatia a historic first win over Portugal in eight matches when they beat the hosts 2-1 in an international friendly on Saturday, as Cristiano Ronaldo remained on the bench.

Vitinha brought down Mateo Kovacic in the box soon after kick-off, resulting in a penalty. Portugal keeper Diogo Costa rightly guessed where Modric would aim, but his dive to the right fell just short as the Real Madrid midfielder scored his 25th goal for Croatia.

But half-time substitute Diogo Jota brought Portugal level three minutes after coming on, when fellow substitute Nelson Semedo found him inside the six-yard box with a short cross from the right. The Liverpool forward made no mistake with the finish.

But Croatia restored their lead eight minutes later, despite Costa's best efforts as he did well to deflect Budimir's attempt to the crossbar. The rebound went right back to Budimir who headed it into the net with ease.

Portugal, who won six of their previous seven matches against Croatia, begin their Euro 2024 Group F campaign against Czech



Croatia's Luka Modric celebrates after scoring against Portugal in their international friendly on Saturday

Republic on June 18. Croatia face Spain in their first Group B fixture next Saturday.

'Ronaldo's experience key for Portugal'

Portugal will benefit from the wealth of experience veteran Cristiano Ronaldo brings to their squad, manager Roberto Martinez said ahead of this month's European Championship in Germany.

Portugal, who won six of their previous seven matches against Croatia, begin their Euro 2024 Group F campaign against Czech Republic on June 18. Croatia face Spain in their first Group B fixture next Saturday.

Ronaldo, the leading scorer in men's international football with 128 goals in 204 official matches, will be playing in his sixth Euros,

from the European elite to Saudi Arabia in 2023 has raised questions about whether his career is nearing an end, but Martinez said the Al-Nassr attacker still had a lot to offer.

"Cristiano had very consistent performances at his club. There is no doubt that he is an incredible scorer," Martinez said. "He is in his sixth European Championship, and he is the only player who has played in five European

Championships. So, we are talking about achieving a unique feat in the world of soccer and his experience is important for us.

"We have 23 players. We create competitiveness and the game makes decisions. But Cristiano is prepared to help the team and give everything he can give. And there is no other player in the world of soccer who can bring what Cristiano can to the dressing room."



Belgium's Romelu Lukaku celebrates his goal with Leandro Trossard

Lukaku hits double in Belgium's easy win

Brussels, Belgium - Romelu Lukaku extended his Belgium scoring record as they ended their preparations for the European Championship with a 3-0 win over neighbours Luxembourg in Brussels on Saturday.

Lukaku netted a 42nd-minute penalty for his 84th international goal and tapped in a second after being set up by Jeremy Doku's jinking run down the left and square pass. Leandro Trossard added the third 10 minutes from time.

A near full-strength Belgium made a fast start but both Kevin De Bruyne and Lukaku were denied opportunities to open the scoring by a determined Luxembourg defence.

There was also a chance

Lukaku netted a penalty for his 84th international goal and tapped in a second after being set up by Jeremy Doku



Spain coach Luis de la Fuente talks to his players during their match against Northern Ireland

De la Fuente: Pedri living up to 'infinite' expectations

Mallorca, Spain - Pedri is rediscovering his best form and will have an important role to play in Spain's European Championship campaign, head coach Luis de la Fuente said after the Barcelona midfielder scored twice in a 5-1 win over Northern Ireland.

The 21-year-old, who struggled with injury problems last season and didn't play for Spain in 2023, scored his first and second international goals in Spain's final warm-up match before the European Championship.

"We have been very happy and because he is a very good player and he knows that I have confidence in him and he is going to give us very good things in this competition," De la

Fuente told reporters on Saturday after the win.

"I have always talked about it from the point of view of the confidence he has to have. I said that 'Pedri has to meet Pedri', in the figurative sense of gaining confidence. The best version of Pedri we don't know where he is, because he's so good. We expect so much from him that it's infinite.

"It has to be the player who takes that step forward, as he has done, to be sure and confident to do the things that only he can do."

Spain start their Euros campaign on June 15 against Croatia in Group B. They will also take on Italy and Albania.

Pedri double helps Spain ease past Northern Ireland in final warm up

Mallorca, Spain - Spain strolled to a 5-1 win over Northern Ireland in Palma de Mallorca on Saturday as midfielder Pedri scored twice in their final warm-up match before the European Championship starting in Germany next week.

The visitors took a shock lead two minutes into the game when defender Daniel Ballard headed home a long free kick from Caolan Boyd-Munce.

Spain dominated the match, however, and levelled through a Pedri strike from distance in the 12th minute, his first international goal, before Alvaro Morata, Fabian Ruiz and Pedri again put the hosts 4-1 up at the break.

Mikel Oyarzabal sealed the win for the three-times European champions in the 60th minute, bundling in Lamine Yamal's pass.

"Above all, I'm very happy for the match, for the team's reaction. (But also) very happy to make my scoring debut, I was looking forward to scoring here," said Pedri.

"I've worked hard during the season, I've had several mishaps but I've worked hard to get to the



Spain's Pedri celebrates after scoring against Northern Ireland in Palma de Mallorca on Saturday

end of it.

"With the goal it has been seen that the injury is behind me. Physically, I feel very well, looking forward to the Euros and happy to be here."

The 21-year-old Barcelona

player struggled with injury problems last season.

Manager Luis de la Fuente made nine changes from Wednesday's 5-0 victory over Andorra, with Pedri and striker Morata the only players retained

in the starting line-up.

Morata, who nodded home to give Spain the lead in the 18th minute with his 35th international goal, drew level with David Silva as Spain's fourth highest scorer.

for Trossard while Doku troubled the visiting defence but tenacious tackling kept them at bay until Lukaku set off on a powerful run from the halfway line and won a penalty after a challenge by Enes Mahmutovic.

Lukaku scuffed the spot-kick but found the net and there was no stopping his effort at the back post when Doku set him up for his second after 57 minutes.

Trossard netted the third in the 80th minute, running from deep on to Wout Faes' long pass, bringing the ball under control and firing home.

It could have been more had Luxembourg's Belgian-born goalkeeper Anthony Moris not made several important saves after skipping his brother's wedding to play in the match.

There will be concern in the Belgian camp about the availability at Euro 2024 of full back Thomas Meunier, who had to leave the field after 18 minutes with what looked a thigh injury.

Endrick scores winner as Brazil beat Mexico

Texas, US - Brazil enjoyed the perfect warm-up as they secured a 3-2 win over Mexico in their pre-Copa America friendly in Kyle Field stadium in Texas on Saturday.

Coach Dorival Junior, who assumed the Brazil job in January, decided to rest first-choice players such as Vinicius Jr, Rodrygo and Raphinha. His decision paid off as they took an early lead when Andreas Pereira scored from a Savio pass in the 5th.

Mexico enjoyed the majority of possession in the first half but lacked the cutting edge to test goalkeeper Alison Becker, who replaced the injured Ederson after he was ruled out with a fractured eye socket.

Brazil doubled their lead nine minutes after the break when Eder Militao's long throw-in was met by Yan Couto, who flicked the ball back into the area for Gabriel Martinelli to tap in alone.

The Mexican side weren't

done yet, though, as Julian Quinones scored in the 73rd minute from Alexis Vega's superb cross, before Guillermo Martinez Ayala equalised in the 92nd minute of added time.

But it was young prodigy Endrick who sealed Brazil's victory four minutes later, heading in a cross from Vinicius Jr, who had come on as a substitute.

"I'm very grateful to God for another opportunity to score for the national team. Thanks to the

squad and Dorival's excellent work. We trained well and I hope we can work even harder because the goal is to win Copa America," said 17-year-old Endrick after the match.

The nine-times champions face the U.S. in another warm-up friendly on Wednesday before opening their Copa America campaign against Costa Rica on June 24 followed by Paraguay four days later and Colombia on July 2.



Brazil's Endrick scores against Mexico

Uganda tumble to equal lowest score in defeat to West Indies

Georgetown, Guyana - Uganda equalled the lowest score ever recorded at a Twenty20 World Cup on Saturday when they tumbled to 39 all out against the West Indies at the Providence Stadium.

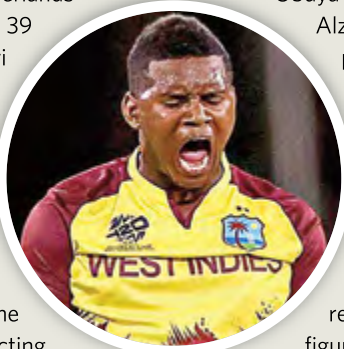
The Netherlands also scored 39 against Sri Lanka in 2014.

West Indies, who reached 173 for five after winning the toss and electing to bat won by 134 runs, the second largest margin in T20 World Cup history.

West Indies, playing their final game in Guyana before flying to Trinidad where they meet New Zealand next Wednesday, also struggled to time the ball on another low, slow pitch.

Opener Johnson Charles top scored with 44 from 42 balls hitting one mighty six and captain Rovman Powell hit another on to the top of the grand stand in his innings of 22.

However, it was once again the powerful Andre Russell (30 not out) who accelerated the scoring rate by slashing



Akeal Hosein took five wickets for 11 runs in four overs

four boundaries in the final over.

Uganda were immediately in trouble when Roger Mukasa fell lbw to Akeal Hosein off the second ball and a sorry procession then ensued.

Russell bowled Robinson Obuya for six and Alzarri Joseph picked up a couple from his three overs while Joshua Miyagi was the only batsman to reach double figures, scoring 13 from 20 deliveries.

Left-arm spinner Hosein took five for 11 from his four overs after opening the bowling.

"I think I needed this," said Hosein after accepting the man-of-the-match award.

"In the nets and in the previous series I felt the ball was coming out good but I was just not getting the rewards."

Powell paid tribute to Hosein and said his team were looking to improve by 10 to 15% in each of their games.

"Last game we were flat so we just wanted to improve as a team," he said. "When you are playing at home the pressure can sometimes get to you."

England in trouble

Batting cameos underpin Australian victory as reigning champions fall away in chase

Bridgetown, Barbados - Australia outplayed England in Barbados to leave the defending champions sweating on their qualification for the Super 8s. They posted the highest score of the T20 World Cup to date after David Warner and Travis Head blitzed 70 runs in the first five overs, before Adam Zampa made the difference in England's lacklustre run chase.

The result is not terminal for England's title defence, but they have one point from their first two matches and face an anxious week ahead in Antigua. They will almost certainly need to beat both Oman (on Thursday) and Namibia (on Saturday), but even then would likely have to rely on net run rate to qualify for the second round ahead of Scotland.

The dimensions played a major role at Kensington Oval: one square boundary was nine metres shorter than the other, measured at just 58m. Australia targeted it, almost immediately.

Will Jacks, surprisingly given the second over, conceded three sixes in his first four balls, all flying over the shorter leg-side boundary; Mark Wood's first over from the same end also cost 22.

Australia's total relied on cameos throughout their batting line-up rather than one substantial innings. Warner, likely facing England for the final time in international cricket, top-scored with 39 but everyone in their top five reached at least 28; Matthew Wade's 10-ball 17 not out was



Australia's Adam Zampa celebrates with Mitchell Marsh after taking the wicket of England captain Jos Buttler on Saturday

England were 73 for 0 after seven overs but only managed 92 for 6 in the following 13, their middle order failing to adjust to a dry pitch quickly enough against a clinical Australian attack.

another useful contribution from No. 7, taking Australia past 200.

England, by contrast, fell away badly after Zampa accounted for both of their openers - Jos Buttler and Phil Salt - inside his first 11 balls.

They were 73 for 0 after seven overs but only managed 92 for 6 in the following 13, their middle

order failing to adjust to a dry pitch quickly enough against a clinical Australian attack.

For the first time in their T20 history, England opened the bowling with spin from both ends.

It didn't work: Moeen Ali's first over cost only three runs to Head and Warner, Australia's left-handed opening pair, but Jacks - who had only bowled two overs in his 14 previous T20Is - was pumped over the short boundary three times in four balls.

Wood took over from Jacks at the same end and his first over was equally as expensive: he tried to tuck Warner up and bowl to his sweepers, but instead fed his strengths and was cracked over the short side for three more sixes and a four. Moeen broke through when a ball skidded under Warner's bottom edge, but only after conceding two fours and a six in his second over.

ESPNcricinfo



David Miller celebrates after guiding South Africa to victory against the Netherlands

South Africa survive big scare against Netherlands

New York, United States - South Africa survived an early scare before David Miller guided them to a nervy four-wicket victory over the Netherlands in the Twenty20 World Cup in Long Island, New York on Saturday.

Miller hit an unbeaten 59 off 51 balls as South Africa scored 106 for six in 18.5 overs in reply to the Netherlands total of 103 for nine.

It was second successive win for South Africa in Group D and a first defeat for the Dutch after they beat Nepal in Dallas.

The Dutch, put into bat, were under immediate pressure from tall opener Marco Jansen and had

only scored 35-4 after 10 overs.

They pushed up the run rate towards the end of their innings when Sybrand Engelbrecht and Logan van Beek shared a 54-run partnership for the seventh wicket before South African-born Engelbrecht fell for 40 in the last over.

Newcomer Ottneil Baartman took three wickets in the last over to finish with figures of 4-11 and Jansen and Anrich Nortje claimed two wickets each.

The Netherlands took a wicket with the first ball of South Africa's innings as hesitant calling led to a mix-up and Quinton de Kock was run out without facing a ball.

That precipitated a sudden panic as Reeza Hendricks was bowled and captain Aiden Markram caught down the leg side as South Africa slumped to 3-3.

Heinrich Klaasen's dismissal in the fifth over had South Africa teetering at 12-4 before Stubbs and Miller set about the modest target with a 65-run partnership.

When Stubbs fell in the 17th over, however, 27 runs were still required for victory but Miller took his side over the line.

South Africa play Bangladesh on Monday and the Dutch face Bangladesh on Thursday.



Vincent Aboubakar scored two goals for Cameroon

Emphatic victory helps Cameroon put turmoil behind them

Yaoundé, Cameroon - Captain Vincent Aboubakar scored twice as Cameroon put weeks of turmoil around their national team behind them to beat the Cape Verde Islands 4-1 in a World Cup qualifier in Yaounde on Saturday.

They moved level with Libya at the top of Group D on seven points from three matches.

In Saturday's other qualifier in Africa, Gambia hammered the Seychelles 5-1 in Group F.

Centre back Michael Ngadeu marked his return to the team after a two-year absence to put Cameroon into a 13th-minute lead, rising to power home Nicolas Ngamaleu's corner.

The left winger also provided the assist for a second goal 12 minutes later with a cross that Aboubakar turned into the net from close range as the defence backed off.

Jamiro Monteiro pulled back a goal in the 37th minute, running in behind the home defence and getting on to the ball before goalkeeper Andre Onana.

But a foul on Ngamaleu three minutes later by Dero

Duarte gave Cameroon a penalty that Aboubakar converted to restore their two-goal lead.

The Indomitable Lions went 4-1 up when a 54th-minute cross was headed forward by Ngadeu and finished off by Nohou Tolo.

Cameroon have been to more World Cups than any other African country but their bid for a ninth appearance in North America in 2026 threatened to be derailed by a spat between the country's football federation and sports ministry.

The government, which pays the coach's salary, named Belgian Marc Brys as coach in April to the disappointment of soccer federation president Samuel Eto'o who was not consulted on the matter.

He at first rejected Brys, then bowed to political pressure to accept the appointment but wanted his own choices added to the technical team. It took several weeks of posturing and power plays, including denying the team equipment to train with, before a compromise was reached.

Russell pips Verstappen to Canadian pole

Montreal, Canada - George Russell put Mercedes on pole position for the Canadian Grand Prix by the blink of an eye on Saturday after setting exactly the same time as Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

Triple Formula One world champion Verstappen missed out on pole because he set his time of one minute 12.000 seconds after his British rival in a drama-filled qualifying session at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve.

Mercedes signalled they were going to be a threat for pole earlier on Saturday when Lewis Hamilton, a seven-times winner in Canada, posted the top time in final practice with Russell close behind in third.

Russell will start on pole for the first time since Brazil 2022, joined on the front row by Verstappen who is chasing a Canadian Grand Prix hat-trick.

"I've missed this feeling," Russell said. "Excited for tomorrow,



George Russell (R) of Mercedes with Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

first step done but now obviously we've got our eyes on that win.

"The car has been feeling amazing since we brought some upgrades to Monaco, we have re-

ally been in that fight now. So we're going for it tomorrow."

Russell's pole provided yet another sign that Red Bull's domination is waning.

After Verstappen's run of eight consecutive poles extending back to last season, three different drivers have started from the front in the last three races.

The car has been feeling amazing since we brought some upgrades to Monaco, we have really been in that fight now.

GEORGE RUSSELL

If Russell can follow up his pole with a victory on Sunday he would also become the fourth different winner in the last four.

Red Bull and Verstappen will not be waving the white flag, however, and the Dutchman showed that his team are still a threat. "I think overall we still had a good qualifying," summed up Verstappen, who tops the drivers standings 31 points clear of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc. "The whole weekend has been still a bit tricky for us, but to be P2, I'd take it."

'REALLY PROUD OF MYSELF'

Perfectionist Swiatek savours third straight French Open title

Paris, France - Iga Swiatek described her French Open triumph on Saturday as an emotional win and said she was proud to have handled the pressure of being the favourite to win a third consecutive title on the Parisian clay.

World number one Swiatek steamrolled Italian surprise finalist Jasmine Paolini in straight sets, 6-2 6-1, to claim her fifth Grand Slam title, and fourth at Roland Garros, but said that being a perfectionist meant there had been an added challenge.

"I'm a perfectionist, so there's always pressure on me. I'm fine handling my own pressure. When outside pressure hits me, it is a little bit worse. But I managed it really well at this tournament," Swiatek told reporters.

"It was an emotional win because I felt a lot of stress yesterday and today in the morning. And I knew if I'm going to just focus on tennis I can kind of fight



Iga Swiatek dropped just one set throughout the tournament, in the second-round against Naomi Osaka

through it, and at the end it all went how I wanted. So I just felt really proud of myself."

Dubbed the queen of clay by fans and pundits for her dominance on the surface, Swiatek dropped one set throughout the tournament, in a second-round epic with Naomi Osaka where she had to save a match point.

She shrugged that off and blew away all comers, showing

tionist everywhere," Swiatek said. "But this is a tricky thing because it helps you to be better but sometimes it can be huge baggage as well."

Looking ahead to the grass-court season and next month's Wimbledon, Swiatek said she hoped to adapt quickly to the change of surface, like she did last year when she made the quarter-finals.

If I would lose here earlier, maybe I would be able to play two more weeks on grass and then be a better grass player. But if I would choose, I love playing on clay, so I'm not going to give up that ever

IGA SWIATEK

her might by putting Anastasia Potapova to the sword in the fourth round with a 40-minute 6-0 6-0 victory.

The 23-year-old Pole, who also won the Roland Garros title in 2020, said she was fully aware that perfectionism was a double-edged sword.

"When I do anything, I want to do it 100%. I think when you're a perfectionist, you are a perfec-

"Last year's result was pretty nice. I feel like every year it's easier for me to adapt to grass," Swiatek said.

"But it's a huge challenge. If I would lose here earlier, maybe I would be able to play two more weeks on grass and then be a better grass player. But if I would choose, I love playing on clay, so I'm not going to give up that ever."



Coco Gauff and Katerina Siniakova celebrate with the trophy

Gauff and Siniakova bag doubles title

Paris, France - Coco Gauff and Katerina Siniakova claimed the French Open women's doubles title on Sunday with a 7-6(5) 6-3 victory over Italians Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini - a day after the latter's crushing loss in the singles final.

The win was Siniakova's eighth women's Grand Slam doubles crown and Gauff's first.

Their makeshift pairing only came together days before the start of the French Open, after the American's regular partner Jessica Pegula withdrew from the tournament.

"Thank you Katerina for playing with me, we decided to do it two days before the tournament started," said Gauff, a doubles finalist at the 2022 French Open.

"It was very last-minute, I wasn't planning on playing doubles, so thank you for asking me."

The first hour of the match was largely dictated by Errani and Siniakova's struggles on serve, as both were broken twice each, with the first set going into a tiebreaker.

Arevalo, Pavic win men's doubles title

Paris, France - El Salvador's Marcelo Arevalo and Croatian Mate Pavic beat Italian pair Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori 7-5 6-3 on Saturday to win the French Open men's doubles title.

It was the ninth seeds' first Grand Slam crown as a pair. Arevalo, 33, won the French Open men's doubles in 2022 with Dutchman Jean-Julien Rojer and the 30-year-old Pavic has now won the men's doubles titles at all four Grand Slams.

"It feels special," said Pavic, who has won seven Grand Slams, including three mixed doubles titles. "I want to thank Marcelo for bringing me to the top. He knows how it is to be done."

"Two crazy weeks, a lot of tough matches... we did it together. I am really happy," Arevalo said.

The first set was poised at 5-5 when Arevalo and Pavic saved four break points to win the game and broke their opponents

I had it in the back of my mind, (that) I lost here twice (in) the finals. I was pretty close even before...

MATE PAVIC

to clinch the set.

"Of course, I had it in the back of my mind, (that) I lost here twice (in) the finals," Pavic, who

lost the men's doubles finals in 2018 and 2020, told reporters. "I was pretty close even before... you have it there in your mind, you want to win."

Bolelli and Vavassori, who reached this year's Australian Open final, broke to go 2-1 up in the second set, but Arevalo and Pavic broke back immediately and did so again to take a decisive 5-3 lead.

"You played an unbelievable match," Vavassori told the winners.



Marcelo Arevalo (L) and Croatian Mate Pavic celebrate with the trophy

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Interior designer (3D rendering, shop drawings, site supervision & marketing) with 15 years of experience in a reputed furnishing company in Oman. Looking for suitable placement. D/L 95060377

BIRTHDAY WISHES



APARNA GOPAKUMAR

Happy Birthday to you!!! Have a great day and a wonderful year ahead

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي
ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Yoga, Kalari, Panchakarma, Massage, Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Beauty therapy & post Delivery Care



Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road ,near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-king Tel:24475280, GSM: 95371664 , 92504980 , Website:www.siddhayur.com

CLASSIFIED LISTINGS

MUSCAT DAILY offers a variety of classified listings for individuals and establishments:
Situations Vacant/Wanted, Accommodation Wanted or Available, Sale of Household Items, Cars for Sale or Wanted, Matrimonial Alliances, etc

Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call: 99104346





FOR RENT/SALE

Available 2100 sq meter best in class Warehouse cum office Space, fully furnished ready to use, Located at Prime area of Ghala in the heart of the city having easy access to airport & express Way.

Contact: Mr.Sumit Mudgil - 95616835
Girish Sewani - 93893596

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com



أوربت ORBIT

Car Rental & Lease

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease



mai alkaline
pH 9.1 to 9.5
Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

OmanOasis OmanOasisOfficial OmanOasisWater



HYDRATE SMARTLY

- Ultra-hydrating
- Revitalizing
- Energizing
- Electrolytes

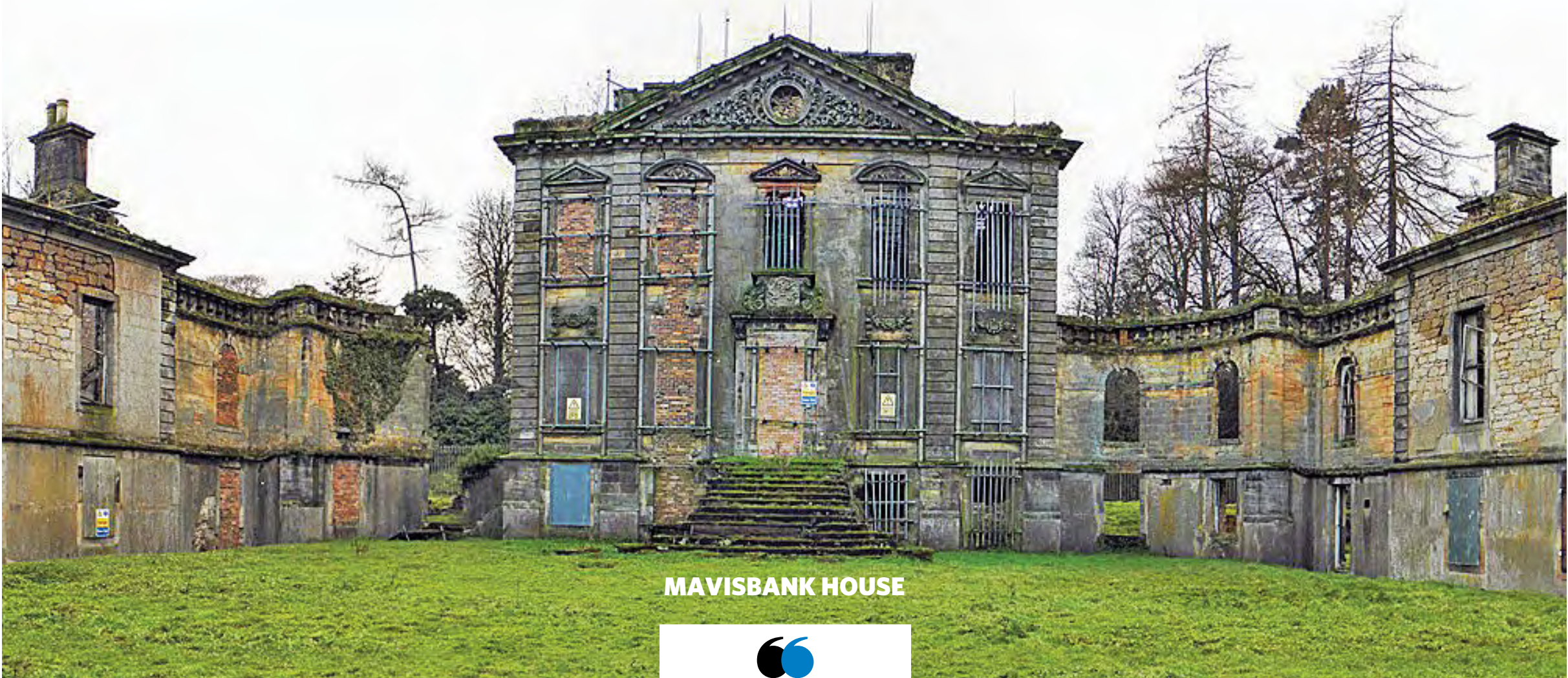
800 71 222
9275 5522

oman OASIS

CA. No. 7309452

Restoring a relic

An abandoned Scottish 18th-century mansion near Edinburgh is considered one of Britain’s most important buildings. Mavisbank House is to be restored soon



The gutted shell of Mavisbank, an 18th-century Scottish mansion regarded as one of Britain’s most important but near hopeless buildings at risk, will be restored by the Landmark Trust charity, with a major grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

The NHMF will today announce a £5.3 grant to the Landmark Trust to save the building, which is judged in danger of total collapse.

Apart from its disastrous condition, the tangled ownership of Mavisbank has sunk several previous restoration attempts, including a failed application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. It will now be acquired by the local authority, Midlothian Council, through compulsory purchase, and im-

mediately sold on to the trust, which restores historic properties and maintains them through use as holiday lets, with regular public open days.

Despair of historians

The house near Edinburgh, designed in 1723 by the Scottish architect William Adam for John Clerk of Penicuik, is Grade A listed, but has been the despair of building historians and local campaigners for more than half a century. It was gutted by a fire in 1973, condemned to be demolished in 1987, but saved by local protests, and barely survives as a propped and bricked up shell.

Its most recent recorded owner was a scrap car dealer who filled the forecourt with rusting carcasses, and claimed to

Mavisbank has hung by little more than a thread for so long, with demolition seriously contemplated on more than one occasion

ANNA KEAY

have sold part of the building to individuals in the US who have never been traced.

Anna Keay, the director of Landmark, described the grant as a once-in-a-lifetime moment. “Mavisbank has hung by little more than a thread for so long, with

demolition seriously contemplated on more than one occasion.”

Anna Eavis, the chair of the NHMF, described the house as “of outstanding importance to Scottish and UK national heritage.”

The £5.3m will be added to £1.38m already committed from other sources including Landmark’s own funds. A further £1.16m will have to be raised to complete the project.

Mental asylum

The Clerk family archives record many of the 18th-century craftsmen who worked on the building, regarded as the first Palladian house in Scotland and an influential style setter. It was intended as a summer escape for John Clerk, a politician and leading figure in the Scottish Enlightenment, from Edinburgh and the grandeur of the main family seat at Penicuik.

The house was sold out of the family in the early 19th century, and in 1876 bought by a group of Edinburgh doctors as a pioneering mental hospital, where treatment included gardening under Mary E Burton, the first female professional gardener in Scotland and later the first female president of the Scottish Horticultural Association.

The asylum closed in the 1950s and the house was sold into private ownership, which led to its parlous state of having no identified legal owner at all. “Landmark is not used to giving up”, the trust commented.



RETREAT REALM

Designed by William Adam, with Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, Mavisbank is one of the finest examples of a Palladian villa. It was built in the 1720s as a re-

treat for Sir John, a wealthy merchant and prominent figure in the Scottish Enlightenment, to escape the polluted atmosphere of Edinburgh.



WE EXCHANGE TRUST

WORLD WIDE REMITTANCE

WE BUY & SELL GOLD & SILVER

1 gm to 1kg 24ct gold bars available at best international rate.

PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE

شركة پرشوتم کانجی للمصارفة

Download it NOW!

+968-91787029 | 91849289

www.pkexchange.com

1920

1

TIJUCA NATIONAL PARK

After the forest was decimated by colonial plantations, an ambitious rewilding programme is now aiming to ensure the survival of Rio de Janeiro's ancient rainforest.

One minute you get choked by fumes under a concrete overpass. Minutes later, you are soaked in sweat, sticky with the respiration of a forest. Now, that's not something you feel in every city – especially one with more than six million inhabitants.

Rio de Janeiro might be known for its beaches, football and carnival, but few realise that it contains the world's largest urban forest: the Tijuca forest.

Tijuca is no typical forest. First protected in 1861 – a decade before the first national park in the United States – Tijuca forest is a 40sq km chunk of Atlantic Forest, a once-vast biome that covered 1,000,000sq km of Brazilian coastline. Today, roughly 15% of the Atlantic Forest remains, decimated by sugarcane and coffee plantations as well as logging by the European colonists that first stepped on Brazil's shores in the 16th Century.

In Rio de Janeiro, the loss of Atlantic Forest over the next 200 years was nearly a death knell for the young settlement. Rivers that quenched the city dried up and drought was imminent. Nineteenth-century Emperor Peter II had a solution: bring back the forest. So, in the 1860s, farmers and city dwellers living on forest land were

Where to go and what to do

Travellers can visit all three sectors of Tijuca National Park via public transport, bike or taxi/Uber from Rio's South Zone.

At Tijuca Forest, one can hike to waterfalls, coffee plantation ruins, climb the city's highest point (Tijuca Peak) and try to spot Project Refauna's introduced species.

At Pedra Bonita and Pedra da Gávea – Climb two of Rio's most popular mountains – Pedra Bonita and Pedra da Gávea – for views over the city.

At Carioca Mountain – See the world wonder, Cristo Redentor, on a hike from 19th-Century palace Parque Lage.

Without them, the forest can't capture as much carbon – a necessity for slowing down climate change – and will become a disturbed forest that is a mess of trees of every size.

In a healthy forest, tall trees should also intertwine overhead, providing a healthy forest canopy – but they currently aren't. "What tells you the Atlantic Forest is mature is that if you are standing in the forest, you can see another person 50 or 100m from you," he said.

The reason Tijuca's tall trees are struggling to spread is because the forest is empty of many of the seed-spreading animals that used to thrive there. "If you don't have the animals, you don't have the trees," said Catharina Kreischer, a researcher with Project Refauna.

Trees grow colourful with delicious



The fight to rewild the world's largest urban forest is currently on in Rio de Janeiro. The reason Tijuca's tall trees are struggling to spread is because the forest is empty of many of the seed-spreading animals that used to thrive there

Rewilding

THE WILD



expropriated and enslaved Africans were ordered to plant more than 100,000 trees. However, they didn't bring back many of the animal species that once thrived in the forest.

In 1967, the Tijuca forest was declared a national park divided into three non-contiguous sectors – Tijuca Forest west of the city centre, Carioca, where the world wonder Cristo Redentor statue is located, and Pedra Bonita and Gávea mountains overlooking the beach. Tijuca National Park has since become the country's most visited, with more than 3.5 million visitors annually.

"Picture in your mind just for a second Rio without the forest, just the bare mountains and the seas – Rio would not be the wonderful city anymore," said Fernando Fernandez, a professor of ecology at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and co-founder of conservation organisation Project Refauna.

But the Tijuca forest isn't just eye candy – it's a critical temperature regulator and source of freshwater for Brazil's second-largest metropolis. And according to Fernandez, the forest isn't healthy.

When you hike through Tijuca National Park, the forest looks like it's thriving. Trails leading to more than 30 waterfalls and climbs up iconic mountains like Pedra da Gávea and Pedra Bonita reveal lush flora with drooping vines, giant jackfruit splattered on the ground and cute capuchin monkeys picking apart bananas.

Fernandez, however, says the forest's tall trees are slowly dying and not being replaced.

fruit to attract hungry animals who then digest the seeds and defecate them out elsewhere, spreading the plant species across the forest, explained Kreischer. But many of the seed-spreading animals disappeared from this particular part of the forest when it was cleared and have never returned. That's why Project Refauna is bringing the fauna back to Tijuca – because a forest isn't just trees; it's also animals.

While other forest restoration projects around the world involve "rewilding", by reintroducing headline-driving predators like wolves or bears, Project Refauna prefers to start small. "Most people that think about introducing species think about endangered species," said Fernandez. "With Refauna, we purposely work with non-endangered species – those that relocated elsewhere when the forest was cleared."

Tijuca Forest used to be home to 33 large

and medium-sized species, including jaguars, tapirs and peccaries, but just 11 remain. Project Refauna could hypothetically reintroduce some of these animals, but many require a much larger area to hunt or are simply too dangerous to be dropped into the middle of a city. Instead, it's reintroducing species that are endemic to the forest, easy to work with and thrive elsewhere in Brazil.

(Courtesy: bbc.com)



Project Refauna is reintroducing many of the forest's seed-spreading animals. Seen here is a trap set up for dogs