



Oman's cultural edifice rising

(ONA)

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik presided over a ceremony to lay the foundation stone of the Oman Cultural Complex project and building of the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) at Airport Heights in Muscat on Sunday.

When His Majesty the Sultan arrived at the project site, he was received by Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth and Chairman of Founding Committee of

Oman Cultural Complex, and Dr Hamad bin Mohammed al Dhoyani, Chairman of NRAA.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan viewed the design and components of the complex project.

Oman Cultural Complex is considered an embodiment of the Royal vision of His Majesty the Sultan to establish a state-of-the-art cultural landmark, a civilisational accomplishment and a scholarly and institutional edifice of Oman's blessed renaissance.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik lays foundation stone of Oman Cultural Complex

Then, His Majesty watched a visual presentation on the project and listened to a briefing about the building's innovative model.

The project will house several institutions and facilities, including the National Library, the National Theatre, Children's Public Library, the House of Arts, the House of Cinema, and the Literary Forum, besides NRAA. It will also have restaurants, cafeterias

and a public park.

His Majesty then laid the cornerstone marking the start of construction of the complex - a building spread over 80,200sqm that will be constructed on a 400,000sqm plot of land, costing around RO147.8mn.

Oman Cultural Complex will promote cultural, literary, theatrical and research activities through the enhancement of relevant programmes aimed to expand the scope of engagement in

highlighting Oman's cultural heritage and exploring the country's accomplishments.

The complex will provide services to scholars and researchers, and help organise cultural events and programmes to develop vistas of cultural action that will focus on Oman's history and cultural identity.

The ceremony was attended by Royal family members, ministers and senior officials.

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'Palestinian statehood not negotiable'

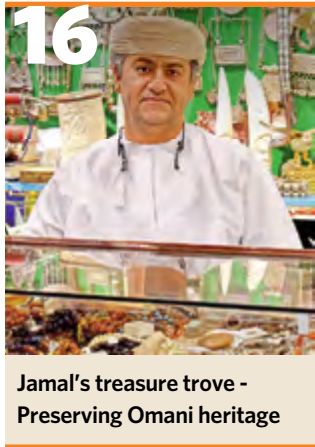
Muscat - H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, held a telephone conversation with Hakan Fidan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkiye, on Sunday.

The talks focused on Israel's brutal aggression and illegal siege of Gaza Strip and the danger of escalation in the region as a result.

"We shared our growing concerns at the regional escalations. The case for the Palestinian statehood is non-negotiable and we shall continue working towards it," H E Sayyid Badr posted on X.

The two sides agreed on the importance of intensifying political efforts at calming the situation, achieving a ceasefire, and resuming humanitarian work to provide relief to the population in Gaza Strip.

The death toll of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip since war broke out between Israel and Hamas in October has passed 25,000, according to Gaza health officials.







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OCC TO REVOLUTIONISE ART AND CULTURE SCENE

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on Sunday laid the foundation stone for the Oman Cultural Complex (OCC) at the Airport Heights in Muscat, marking a significant step in the sultanate's cultural advancement.

The complex, to be developed at an estimated cost of RO147.8mn, will come up on 400,000sqm of land with a built-up area of 80,200sqm. It will be the address of three major national institutions - the National Theatre, the National Library, and the National Records and Archives Authority.

With eight additional buildings for various facilities, the complex will be the central hub for preserving, showcasing, and celebrating Oman's history, and contemporary arts and culture.

The project is set to boost the cultural, literary, and theatrical activities in Oman, alongside research works in various fields. It will also contribute to the preservation of Oman's national heritage and achievements.

The complex will have diverse components such as the Children's Library, the House of Arts, the House of Cinema, and the Literary Forum, complemented by halls dedicated to fine arts, restaurants, cafés, and public gardens.

One of the complex's core objectives is to advance cultural and literary work, supporting the Ministry of Culture, Sports and



Estimated cost
RO147.8mn

Spread over
400,000sqm

To house three national institutions - National Theatre, National Library, and National Records and Archives Authority

Children's Library, House of Arts, House of Cinema, and Literary Forum to advance cultural and literary work



Youth's plans and the implementation of the cultural strategy for community service. It will oversee and aid in the development of both governmental and private cultural centres and institutions across Oman.

The National Library - 23,500sqm in area - will focus on acquiring literary and intellectual productions with a higher benchmark, besides creating a system of collecting and housing millions of data and documents for superior research work. It will also enhance the efficiency of private libraries through technical expertise and information exchange.

The National Theatre, over an area of 16,500sqm, will have a 1,000-seat capacity auditorium, which is expected to inspire theatrical activities in Oman. It will be the venue for various training programmes to integrate theatre into student activities and school curricula. The centre will oversee and coordinate theatrical programmes and activities, and host local and international theatre festivals, officials said.

The Arts House, on 3,500sqm of land, will nurture young talents in drawing, fine arts and music. It will offer training programmes, laboratories, and tools to assist artistes, organise art exhibitions, and support young musicians.

Lastly, the National Records and Archives Authority, on an area of 22,500sqm, will utilise documents to highlight Oman's cultural and historical aspects through ages.

This comprehensive cultural complex is a landmark move in Oman's dedication to preserving and promoting its rich heritage and artistic legacy.

MAFWR to introduce solar energy for farming

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a significant move towards sustainable living, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has taken up a project to install 55 independent 10kW solar energy systems to meet the power requirements of agricultural farms in North Batinah.

The initiative, part of the fourth edition of the Mustadeem programme, was launched in collaboration with bp Oman and Nafath Renewable Energy under the patronage of H E Dr Hamoud bin Saud bin Ahmed al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.



The initiative highlights the government's commitment to food security and sustainable farming practices, a ministry official said.

'The Mustadeem programme aims to equip farms in Khaboura and Suwaiq, areas adversely affected by Cyclone Shaheen, with solar-powered systems', MAFWR stated, adding that 'these systems, which will be primarily used to operate water pumps in greenhouses and farms, are a step towards energy self-sufficiency and resilience in the face of power grid disruptions'.

An integral part of this programme is also to impart training to farmers and jobseekers specifically for the sector.

These training sessions have been designed to educate them on the usage of solar energy, which directly results in reduced electricity costs and a continuous power supply.

The project is a stride towards Oman's sustainability goals. It is projected to offset 640 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, aligning with the country's commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

The initiative reflects a broader effort to integrate sustainability into national development plans.

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Ideas invited to address local challenges

MoHERI launched a competition as part of Oman Innovation Festival

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation (MoHERI) has launched a governorate-level competition to encourage a culture of innovation and address the unique challenges faced by each governorate in Oman.

The Governorates' Innovation Competition launched as part of the Oman Innovation Festival, called upon both citizens and residents to propose innovative solutions to specific issues in their respective governorates, MoHERI said in a state-



ment.

The deadline for submission of ideas and plans has been set for January 31, the ministry informed.

The competition, in collaboration with the governorate offices across Oman, has been designed to engage participants in identifying and addressing local problems. It seeks ideas that offer innovative solutions with potential economic, social, and environmental benefits.

'Entries will be evaluated based on the originality and

clarity of the idea, its relevance to the problem, feasibility, and any associated risks,' the ministry underlined.

Eligibility criteria mandate that a participant must be either an Omani national or a resident, and must reside in the governorate for which one is offering ideas. Proposals should be original and must offer a solution to a particular problem in the governorate or for utilisation of the region's natural resource.

The winning team from each governorate will be obligated to participate in an exhibition to be held during the Oman Innovation Festival.

This platform will showcase their ideas and contributions towards innovative local development. The competition underscores MoHERI's commitment to promoting inventive thinking and problem-solving at a local level, furthering the advancement of Oman's governorates.

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Source: xe.com

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Europe gas prices at lowest level since August

The price of gas per megawatt-hour in February futures contracts on the TTF, the Netherlands-based virtual natural gas trading venue with the most depth in Europe, fell by 6.49% on a daily basis, to its lowest level since August 4 last year.

The gas price per megawatt-hour for February futures contracts on the TTF fell to 29.91 euro.

Forecasts of rising temperatures towards the end of January and the abundance of natural gas in storage have tempered supply concerns.

The supply concerns stemmed from conflicts in the Middle East and resulted in declines in natural gas prices in Europe.

Natural gas storage in Europe is 79.74% full as of January 13.

Salalah Free Zone attracts new investments worth RO728mn during 2023

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Salalah Free Zone, a regional business hub for industrial and logistics activities, has reported impressive investment growth for 2023, securing new investments worth RO728mn during the year.

The zone signed nine new investment agreements, allocated 1.2mn square meters of leased land, and issued eight construction permits during 2023, according to data issued by Salalah Free Zone on X, formerly Twitter.

Salalah Free Zone highlighted the significant milestones achieved in 2023, including a substantial increase in investment size, quantity, and the leasing of extensive land areas, emphasising the zone's commitment to the sultanate's economic development.

These accomplishments have led to a substantial surge in the cumulative investment in Salalah Free Zone, now exceeding RO4.5bn. The land occupancy rate has crossed the 50% mark, with 129 investments and a leased land area of 6mn square meters, the data showed.



By December 2023, as many as 39 projects were operational in Salalah Free Zone, with an additional 21 projects under construction

By December 2023, as many as 39 projects were operational in the Salalah Free Zone, with an additional 21 projects under construction, showcasing the zone's growing attractiveness to businesses and investors.

Salalah Free Zone, in collaboration with Omani authorities, is dedicated to providing comprehensive support facilities for hosted industrial projects. The zone's goal is to identify opportunities across various economic sectors and establish enduring partnerships with customers. This involves creating modern, integrated infrastructure in a strategically located area, offering attractive incentives, a secure environment, and reliable services.

As a premier hub for high-quality industrial and logistical activities, Salalah Free Zone extends various economic incentives, advantages, and facilities to investors. Noteworthy among these are tax exemptions and the right to full foreign ownership of investment projects.

Additionally, the zone's strategic location next to the Port of Salalah, overlooking major global shipping routes, positions it among the world's top-tier commercial ports.



Omani, Saudi private sector firms sign MoUs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) on Sunday hosted the Omani-Saudi Business Forum with the primary goal of fortifying joint cooperation between Oman and Saudi Arabia in both economic and investment sectors. The event also focused on fostering strategic partnerships between Omani and Saudi companies.

On the sidelines of the Omani-Saudi Business Forum, a number of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) were inked, specifically addressing cooperation in the expansive domains of construction and legal consultations. These agreements were signed between private sector companies in both countries.

The forum, through a comprehensive array of working papers,

discussed investment opportunities and incentives in Oman and Saudi Arabia. It further shed light on the potential for investment in special economic zones and free zones, emphasising prospective opportunities in the housing and real estate sectors.

Beyond the structured sessions, the forum facilitated impactful business-to-business (B2B) meetings, fostering dynamic interactions among business leaders from the two countries. These sessions served as a platform for in-depth discussions on strategies to establish robust trade and investment partnerships.

The Omani-Saudi Business Forum not only stimulated collaborative efforts between private sector entities but also provided a platform for exploring economic cooperation and investment synergy.

OQ operates RO800mn projects in Musandam

Khasab – OQ, the sultanate's global integrated energy group, is making significant strides in Musandam Governorate with its three major energy sector projects valued at approximately RO800mn.

These projects include the Musandam Gas Processing Plant, the management of offshore fields in Concession Area 8 and the Musandam Power Plant.

The Musandam Gas Processing Plant, located in Concession Area 8 and owned by OQ, plays a pivotal role in the region's energy infrastructure. Utilising gas for power generation, it supports the energy needs of the governorate.

Additionally, OQ efficiently operates the offshore fields in Concession Area 8, owned by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. Since initiating the oil and gas production operations in January 2019, OQ has focused on enhancing operational efficiency, increasing production and reducing operational costs. The area includes the Bukha and West Bukha fields, essential for supplying gas to the Musandam Power Plant. The plant provides vital electricity to the governorate with a production capacity of about 120 megawatts per hour.

Moreover, OQ, in collaboration with the Office of the Governor of Musandam, is executing a number of social investment projects across the governorate's wilayats. Valued at around RO4mn, these initiatives focus on urban, environmental and tourism aspects, reflecting OQ's commitment to social responsibility and serving local communities.

The social investment projects being implemented include a diverse array of significant developments. These include the Daba Archaeological Centre, developed in partnership with the Ministry of Heritage and



Tourism; the Daba Waterfront Project; the development of Telegraph Island; the Basah Beach project, undertaken with the Omran Group; the enhancement of Madha Park; the Bukha Waterfront development; and the establishment of the Musandam Science and Innovation Centre.

These initiatives effectively enhance the region's natural charm while bolstering the services sector and the tourism industry. Their design focuses on harmoniously blending aesthetic improvements with practical benefits, while placing a strong emphasis on the sustainable impact of the completed and current projects.

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New guide on 'Doing Business in Oman' launched at Oman-India Investor Forum

Muscat – Drafted by Crowe Oman, a new comprehensive guide on 'Doing Business in Oman' was launched at the Oman-India Investor Forum at the JW Marriot hotel by H H Faras bin Fatik al Said in the presence of OCCI Chairman Sheikh bin Abdullah al Rawas.

The former union minister of India for commerce power and fritters, Suresh Prabhu and the Indian ambassador H E Amit Narang was also present on the occasion. The book was published as in initiative of the Foreign Investment Committee of OCCI.

In a press release, Davis Kallukaran, Managing Partner of Crowe Oman said, "The last two years have seen tremendous momentum in the diversification of the economy. Oman is committed to net zero carbon emission by 2050. To achieve this, RO190bn has been budgeted to be spent over the next 25 years".

He said, "Currently 67 % of Oman's revenue comes from oil and gas, while 11% comes from custom duty, excise duty, income tax and value-added tax. The rest 22% is contributed by other sectors. Oman's 2040 vision is very relevant in this context. It focuses on the sectors other than oil and gas. Agriculture and fisheries, transport and logistics, energy and mining, tourism and manufacturing have been identified as the core industries to spearhead the acceleration of the economy."

At the end of 2023, the GDP of Oman is projected at RO63bn on purchasing power parity terms. The GDP is budgeted to almost double by 2040, Kallukaran said.

"Oman 2040 Vision, the carbon neutralisation policy by



2050 and the budgeted outlay of RO190bn towards this, all points to the tremendous investment opportunity for both national and foreign investors, as the country progresses to net zero neutrality in the next 25 years," he added.

The book takes readers through the economic, business, regulatory, banking, labour and taxation environment of Oman and gives a summary of the free trade agreements and freezones. With the Invest Easy and Exit Freely Policy of the government, Oman is bound to attract many

investors.

The encouraging factors of no minimum capital requirement, 100% foreign ownership, no personal income tax, no currency exchange controls, no restriction on repatriation of profits, no taxes on dividends are all vital factors that can attract investors to Oman.

The India-Oman Investment Forum is jointly organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) Muscat Chapter.

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Saudi Arabia to host World Economic Forum special meeting in April

Davos-Switzerland – Saudi Arabia will host a high-level World Economic Forum (WEF) Special Meeting that will focus on global cooperation, growth and energy, during April 28-29, in Riyadh.

Announced by Faisal F Alibrahim, Minister of Economy and Planning, and Børge Brende, World Economic Forum President, at the 54th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the new event is part of a landmark agreement between Saudi Arabia and the WEF.

The gathering will convene more than 700 global leaders from the public and private sector, international organizations, NGOs, academia and civil society to foster dialogues between countries to revive international cooperation and address current challenges to growth and development.

Announcing the event, Alibrahim said, "Riyadh is becoming a global capital for progress and thought leadership on the critical topics of our time. The World Economic Forum Special Meeting



in Riyadh will focus on global collaboration, growth, and energy. We believe this new platform will enable the World Economic Forum, the kingdom, and our global partners to further engage in cooperative dialogues and find the right answers to the challenges we have at hand."

Børge Brende, President of the World Economic Forum, remarked, "At a time of growing divides between developed and emerging economies, there is a pressing need to not only identify areas of shared interests but foster

new, impactful partnerships.

"As a critical player at the intersection of many of the world's economies, Saudi Arabia is uniquely positioned to work alongside both developed and developing markets to foster cooperation between the two, and help them reach their long-term commerce, energy, and finance goals."

Being hosted in Riyadh, the capital of the largest economy in the Middle East, a world-leading hub between Asia, Africa and Europe, and a midway point between

tween the Global South and the Global North, the WEF Special Meeting will provide a platform for global leaders to assess current challenges and propose transformative ideas to create a positive global impact.

Following Saudi Arabia's presidency of the G20 in 2020, and building on the long-standing partnership between Saudi Arabia and the World Economic Forum, this latest collaboration underscores the kingdom's commitment to continue shaping the future agenda.

Business leaders 'optimistic' about global trade in 2024

Davos, Switzerland - Despite the challenges of 2023 and escalating geopolitical tensions, business leaders remain surprisingly optimistic for 2024, according to new research from Economist Impact and DP World, unveiled at the World Economic Forum.

The primary driver is a growing belief that technology will transform the efficiency and resilience of supply chains. Amid escalating concerns about protectionism, global fragmentation and political instability, businesses are reassessing risks within their supply chains and pivoting towards friendshoring and dual supply chain strategies.

The fourth annual Trade in Transition study, commissioned by DP World and led by Economist Impact, captured the perspectives of trade experts and senior executives across a variety of regions and sectors. This period of unprecedented transformation - heightened geopolitical risk, the urgent realities of climate change and significant advancements in technologies - is causing businesses to face complex challenges, "Yet there are also opportunities".

The global survey of 3,500 company executives found technologies that improve supply chain efficacy and resilience to be the main source of optimism for business leaders when asked



to assess the future of global trade.

At the core of this sentiment is the widespread adoption of AI, with 98% of executives already using AI to revolutionise at least one aspect of their supply chain operations.

From solving inventory management issues and reducing trade expenses to optimising transport routes, executives are taking advantage of integrating AI. A third of businesses are utilising AI to deliver a reduction in overall trade operation costs and the same amount to enhance resource and supply chain planning.

Over one-third of companies view boosting the use of digital

tools for enhanced inventory management as the most effective strategy in cutting overall trade and supply chain costs.

Businesses expect to ramp up their technological adoption further this year, a proactive approach that underscores a commitment to deploying innovation to navigate the evolving business landscape with increased efficiency and resilience.

Of those surveyed, a third will focus on advanced automation and robotics for logistics efficiency; 28% will turn to blockchain for enhanced traceability and data security; and 21% will embrace artificial intelligence, big-data analytics and predictive analytics for real-time

insights and disruption forecasting.

In the new era of globalisation, a landscape of heightened geopolitical risk is shaping the contours of global trade as businesses attempt to reduce risks across their supply chains. More than a third of companies are using friendshoring to shape trade and supply chain operations, while 32% are creating parallel supply chains or dual sourcing.

In addition, more than a quarter are opting for fewer suppliers - a 16-percentage point increase from the previous year - as businesses weigh the advantages of consolidation against diversification and control against re-

silience.

Speaking at the launch of the report at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Saturday, DP World Group Chairman and CEO Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem said, "The findings in this report reveal a remarkable optimism, despite businesses having to operate in an increasingly uncertain environment. Governments can maximise the significant economic benefits of trade by providing the predictability that businesses need, while reducing trade friction. This entails not only tariff reduction, but also collaborating with the private sector to roll-out technological advancements - most notably in digitalisation, automation and AI - that enable greater efficiency, visibility and adaptability."

John Ferguson, Global Lead, New Globalisation, Economist Impact, stated, "In 2024, amidst heightened geopolitical risk and the rising impact of climate change, there is an observable increase in the variability of approaches businesses are taking to their supply chains. This reflects a growing understanding that no single strategy will meet the needs of different businesses. What's clear is that technology is being implemented across supply chains to ensure business can adapt faster and smarter."



Bank Muscat wins Best Private Bank Award from Global Finance

Muscat - Bank Muscat has been awarded the Best Private Bank in Oman for 2024 by Global Finance, a well-known publication specialised in reporting financial and banking developments. The award sheds light on the high professional standards achieved by the bank, in accordance with international standards and practices.

It is an acknowledgment of the effective role of Bank Muscat in providing unique services and enriching wealth management solutions, catering to diverse needs of Private Banking customers. The selection results came after extensive consultations with corporate financial executives and bankers, banking consultants and analysts across the world.

In a press release, Abdulnassir al Raisi, General Manager - Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, delivered his thanks to Global Finance for recognising the bank as the best private bank in Oman.

The continuous and consecutive recognition of Bank Muscat

reflects its leadership position in delivering the best banking services and facilities to its customers. Bank Muscat Private Banking customers enjoy an exclusive banking experience through a suite of diversified banking and investment solutions including dedicated Private Banking centers, dedicated relationship managers for banking as well as wealth management, catering to their expectations with an endeavor to deliver excellence in all aspects. The bank's efforts to maintain highest standards of professionalism, when servicing the Private Banking customers, especially for their wealth management needs, have been regularly applauded by pioneering institutions around the globe.

Raisi took this recognition as an opportunity to thank Bank Muscat's customers for their continuous confidence in the bank's services and facilities that satisfy their various banking needs and enhance their banking experience.

China auto production and sales rise to 30mn units

Beijing, China - China's auto production and sales surpassed 30mn units for the first time in 2023, retaining the country's leadership as the world's largest car market for the 15th consecutive year, People's Daily reported.

According to recent data released by the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM), automobile sales in China reached a total of 30.094mn units, while the production figure amounted to 30.161mn units, thereby consolidating China's position as the foremost global producer and consumer of automobiles.

China has also maintained its top position in the production and sales of new energy vehicles (NEVs) for the ninth consecutive year, with over 9 million NEVs manufactured and sold.

Additionally, automobile exports reached nearly 5mn units in 2023, reflecting a remarkable year-on-year increase of 57.9%.

This growth underscores the escalating global competitiveness of Chinese car manufacturers, particularly in the field of New Energy Vehicles (NEVs).

"This new record is the result of the collective efforts of the entire auto industry," said CAAM Executive Vice President Fu Bingfeng.

He attributed the milestone to China's massive market scale and robust consumption potential.

Agencies



China has also maintained its top position in production and sales of new energy vehicles (NEVs) for ninth consecutive year, with over 9mn NEVs manufactured and sold



Emirates Steel Arkan signs 5-year \$2bn contract with Bahrain Steel

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Emirates Steel Arkan (ESA) recently signed a five-year iron-ore pellets (IOP) supply contract with Bahrain Steel Company (BSC). The contract, valued at approximately \$2bn, was formalised at the Industrial Partnership for Sustainable Economic Growth initiative, held recently in Bahrain.

Rooted in a 16 times growth since 2009, ESA's partnership with BSC extends with this new contract, aiming for even greater heights in sourcing IOP.

Under this agreement, Bahrain Steel will supply high-grade iron ore oxide pellets annually to Emi-

rates Steel Arkan. This partnership is poised to significantly impact the iron and steel industry within the region, fostering sustainable economic growth and exemplifying the potential of cross-border collaborations.

Saeed Ghumran al Remeithi, Group CEO at Emirates Steel Arkan, said, "Through this strategic partnership, we aim to not only foster integrated industrial growth, ensure a stable supply chain and enhance the foundations of our steel manufacturing capabilities, but also strengthen economic ties within the GCC."

He added that this initiative

aligns with the UAE's vision of bolstering partnerships and multilateral cooperation, as well as the goals of the Integrated Industrial Partnership for Sustainable Economic Development, launched in 2022 to achieve integration in resources, capabilities and experiences owned by the partnership countries."

Dilip George, Group CEO at Bahrain Steel, expressed his enthusiasm about the partnership, stating, "We are honoured to play a crucial role in supporting the economic development initiatives outlined in the Industrial Partnership for Sustainable Eco-

nomic Growth. The five-year contract underscores our commitment to delivering high-quality iron ore oxide pellets to meet the evolving needs of Emirates Steel Arkan."

The signing ceremony, which is part of the collaborative initiative comprising the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, and Bahrain, marked a key milestone in fostering economic ties within the region. It also solidifies a strategic alliance between Emirates Steel Arkan and Bahrain Steel, further enhancing both companies' growth prospects over the next five years.

WAM

Qatar, WEF establish Centre for Fourth Industrial Revolution in Doha

Davos, Switzerland - In a stride towards advancing innovation and technology, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has joined forces with the State of Qatar to launch a Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR) in Doha.

The collaboration, symbolising Qatar's commitment to sustainable development and economic competitiveness, will unfold as an autonomous non-profit organisation, with a slated inauguration in June 2024.

Emerging technologies and

their intersection with sustainable development and economic competitiveness will be the primary focus areas of C4IR Qatar.

This initiative aligns seamlessly with Qatar's national priorities and its ambitious Vision 2030, aiming to position the country as a global hub for innovation and financial prowess.

"At a time of global fragmentation, innovation and technology promise to propel our shared priorities of sustainable development, cooperation and resilience, which has long been a key priority



Borge Brende, President, World Economic Forum

for Qatar's leadership," said Borge Brende, President, WEF.

He added, "The new centre in Doha joins a growing network and platform, serving as a focal point for advancing innovation and unlocking growth opportunities in the region and beyond."

He emphasised the role of the new centre in Doha as a vital focal point for advancing innovation and unlocking growth opportunities in the region and beyond.

C4IR Qatar is set to become a catalyst for developing groundbreaking policy frameworks and

frontier technology applications.

Qatar's Ministry of Finance will host and collaborate with other national stakeholders from the private and public sectors to drive initiatives that contribute to the advancement of sustainable development on local, regional, and global scales.

Ali bin Ahmed al Kuwari, Minister of Finance, highlighted Qatar's commitment to sustainable development, stating, "Building on Qatar's longstanding partnership with the World Economic Forum and our commit-

ment to sustainable development, we are delighted to be launching a Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in Qatar".

"Over the past decade, Qatar has cemented its position as a global financial and innovation hub and the centre will further solidify the state's economic competitiveness by developing ground-breaking policy and frontier technology applications for the advancement of sustainable development locally, regionally and globally," he added.

ANI

Avenues Mall signs deal with OTaxi



Oman Avenues Mall, Oman's premier shopping and leisure destination, recently formalised its partnership with leading cab-service provider OTaxi. This collaboration aims to offer convenient and cost-effective transportation for mall patrons, as well as offer a plethora of services by the latter, aimed at enhancing the guest experience.

The agreement was officiated by Gogi George, General Manager Development & Leasing of Lulu Group International, and Harith Khamis al Maqbali, CEO of OTaxi.

As part of this collaboration, OTaxi will serve as the dedicated transportation service provider for Oman Avenues Mall, enabling shoppers to avail reliable and hassle-free commutation. To streamline the booking process, OTaxi kiosks have been strategically stationed at four locations within the mall, fully equipped with butlers to assist customers with taxi-bookings and personalising the ride experience.

In a pioneering move, OTaxi will also deploy dedicated female drivers to cater to customers who prefer this option, a one-of-a-kind service offered to mall visitors.

Commenting on the collaboration, Gogi George said, "At Oman Avenues Mall, it is our endeavour to ensure our cherished customers enjoy a unique shopping experience that is entertaining, accessible, and budget-friendly. In line with this, we are delighted to embark on this journey with OTaxi to offer our customers exclusive benefits; we believe it will not only make commuting more convenient, but also add value to the overall shopping experience."

OTaxi CEO Maqbali said, "As the leading providers of convenient, affordable, and seamless transportation across the sultanate, we are excited to bring our unmatched services to Oman Avenues Mall's patrons. We are committed to creating a worry-free and enjoyable commuting experience, and our focus on customer satisfaction aligns perfectly with the mall's commitment to excellence."

OTaxi will extend additional perks to Gold members and above categories of the Oman Avenues Mall mobile app users. This exclusive benefit is designed to acknowledge and reward the loyalty of the mall's esteemed patrons.

While this collaboration introduces an added layer of reliability and security to the commuting experience, OTaxi has also advised that they are working on more strategic offerings as part of the association to provide more value to customers.

This partnership underscores Oman Avenues Mall's dedication to curating a distinctive shopping experience for its customers.

Health Minister leaves for WHO meet in Switzerland

H E Dr Hilal Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, left the country on Sunday heading the Sultanate of Oman's delegation for the 154th session of the World Health Organization (WHO) Executive Board, that will take place on January 22-27 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Oman's delegation will take part in several topics of the program agenda including follow-up to the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, draft global action plan for infection prevention and control, end TB Strategy, antimicrobial resistance: accelerating national and global response, and the Global Health and Peace Initiative.

Throughout its five-day summit, EB154 will address spectrum of topics on the pillar one: Billion more people benefiting from universal health coverage outlining draft global action plan for infection prevention and control, Immunization Agenda 2030, and



end TB Strategy.

Moreover, on the pillar of one billion more people better protected from health emergencies, the meeting will review Poliomyelitis and Smallpox eradication. As for the Pillar 3 regarding one billion more people enjoying better health and well-being, the board will highlight social determinants of health, maternal, infant and young child nutrition, well-being and health promotion, in addition to climate change, pollution and health, and economics and health for all.

Furthermore, the meeting will touch upon budget and finance matters, management and governance matters, committees of the executive board, staffing matters, and report on meetings of expert committees and study groups.

The Director-General report, reports of the regional committees as well programme, budget and administration committee to the executive board will be reviewed.

Samsung opens pre-orders for Galaxy S24

Samsung customers in Oman can avail pre-order benefits on the latest Galaxy S24 Series, such as free double storage upgrade, one-year Samsung Care+ warranty, trade-in benefits and more.

Samsung Gulf Electronics has announced that the new Galaxy S24 Series - Galaxy S24 Ultra, Galaxy S24+ and Galaxy S24- are now available for pre-order for customers across Oman until January 30.

The Galaxy S24 Series ushers in a transformative era for mobile devices, with AI enhancing every aspect of the user experience. From seamless communication through intelligent text and call translations to the Galaxy ProVisual Engine that expands creative possibilities to setting a new benchmark for mobile search, the Galaxy S24 Series, powered by Galaxy AI, is the premium, intelligent experience only Galaxy could create.

Fadi Abu Shamat, Head of the Mobile eExperience Division at Samsung Gulf Electronics, remarked, "The Galaxy S24 Series marks a significant leap in global connectivity and mobile innovation. With Galaxy AI at the fore-



front, we're excited to introduce the Galaxy S24 Series to Oman, offering Galaxy enthusiasts the chance to explore myriad unique opportunities enabled by Galaxy AI. Our exclusive pre-order promotions ensure easy access to

these devices and provide exceptional value for those looking to upgrade."

To celebrate the milestone, Samsung has announced special offers across Samsung.com, in Samsung stores, and at retail

partners.

Oman customers who pre-order the new Galaxy S24 Series will benefit from a complimentary double storage upgrade, a 1-year Samsung Care+ support service covering accidental damage and repairs, and a free 45W travel adapter.

Additionally, customers can take advantage of trade-in deals, with potential savings of up to RO370 on the Galaxy S24 Series.

The Galaxy S24 Ultra introduces a durable titanium frame, a first for Galaxy phones, delivering enhanced longevity. Its slimmer design ensures a more comfortable grip for on-the-go use. The Galaxy S24+ and S24 feature a sleek One-mass design, merging the rear cover and side frame for a more elegant look.

Reflecting the hues of Earth's minerals, the Galaxy S24 Series offers a palette of sophisticated colours. The Galaxy S24 Ultra is available in Titanium Gray, Titanium Black, Titanium Violet, and Titanium Yellow, while the Galaxy S24+ and Galaxy S24 come in Onyx Black, Marble Gray, Cobalt Violet, and Amber Yellow.

Lulu launches 'Let's Grill' weekend event to celebrate local cuisine, talent

Lulu Hypermarkets retail chain inaugurated the first 'Lulu Let's Grill' weekend event that took place near its outlet at Bousher.

'The all-evening BBQ extravaganza is a platform for Omani chefs to step into the limelight and grill-up some of the favourite local recipes,' said Lulu.

The first 'Let's Grill' event took place on January 19 and 20 (Friday and Saturday). It was inaugurated by Ali Khalfan Said Alhasani, Member of the Shura Council - Representative of Bousher State.

"The event is a celebration of Omani culinary standards and a testament to the vibrant flavours that our local SMEs bring to the table," said Ananth A V, Director, Lulu Hypermarkets Oman.

"At Lulu, we believe in nurturing and promoting Omani talent. Our BBQ challenge in particular is designed to highlight the incredible talent within Oman. By providing a platform for these passionate individuals, we aim to



not only tantalize taste buds but also bolster the growth of SMEs in Oman."

The entire event is designed around wholesome family fun with interactive entertainment,

stage performances and loads of giveaways, besides a delicious variety of food for all.

A highlight of the first event was live performances by talented Omani dance troupe - Leg-

end Crew. Another special milestone was the creation of the longest pizza in Oman that de-

lighted onlookers. The culinary adventure will continue for the whole family as a series of events in different locations, taking advantage of the salubrious outdoor weather in Oman.

Shabeer K A, Regional Director, Lulu Hypermarkets remarked, "We view the event from a larger perspective than a great evening outdoors, with food and entertainment. It is a celebration of cultural diversity, entrepreneurship and the rich tapestry of flavours."

"To ensure wider participation, we are taking 'Let's Grill' nationwide to other prominent Lulu Hypermarket locations as well," he continued. "Lulu Mall of Muscat followed by Lulu Al Amerat in the capital area; with plans for the interior regions subsequently."

"We hope the event will be an inspiration and a launchpad for passionate, enterprising Omani chefs and culinary enthusiasts," he concluded.

Redefining driving excellence with JS6 SUV

Jianghuai Automobile Company (JAC Motors) from China introduces its latest innovation to the roads of Oman - the JS6 mid-size SUV.

This remarkable vehicle, set to redefine the driving experience, arrives in collaboration with Towell Auto Centre (TAC), an esteemed name in Oman's automotive industry since 1972, and a trusted member of the W J Towell Group.

"As we proudly unveil the JAC JS6 SUV, it stands as a testament to JAC's commitment to excellence in innovation and craftsmanship," said Riyadh Ali Sultan, General Manager of Towell Auto Centre, adding that this vehicle is not merely a showcase of advanced features and exceptional build quality, but also an embodiment of the group's dedication to redefining the automotive landscape in Oman.

"The JS6, with its blend of cutting-edge technology, comfort, and striking design aesthetics, is specifically tailored to meet the sophisticated demands of our



Omani customers."

The JS6 encapsulates the epitome of sophistication, marrying a stylish design, cutting-edge technology, and advanced safety features. JAC Motors' unwavering commitment to innovation and quality finds its culmination in this exceptional SUV.

Under the hood lies the impressive 1.5 Turbo Engine, delivering a commanding 280 Nm of torque between 2000 - 4500 rpm. Accelerating from 0-100 km/h in a mere 9.8 seconds, with a brisk 30-60km per hour acceleration in just 2.8 seconds, the JS6 ensures responsive, agile, and efficient performance across Oman's diverse terrains.

Step inside to discover its spacious interior offering a voluminous 670 litres trunk capacity, catering to both your daily er-

rands and extended adventures. The avant-garde 24.6-inch Dual Screen navigation system is a technological marvel, accompanied by 360 Panoramic Images that enhance visibility. Embrace the scenic beauty with the Panoramic Sunroof while ensuring seamless connectivity with Wireless Charging - an amenity crafted for modern-day convenience.

Safety remains paramount with the JS6, attaining a stellar C-NCAP 5 Star Rating. Equipped with the Bosch 9.3 ESP System, it assures stability and control on every journey. Further enhancing safety are features like the Tail-gate Escape System for emergencies, ACC Adaptive Cruise Control, AEB, LDW, FCW, BSM, and HMA - transforming the JS6 into a vigilant and secure travel companion.

Towell Auto Centre (TAC) stands as the exclusive distributor for JAC Motors in Oman, ensuring exceptional after-sales service, providing genuine parts for all JAC models, and offering innovative customer solutions.

Ooredoo adds latest IoT technology

Ooredoo has rolled out Narrow-band Internet of Things (NB-IoT) technology to power various IoT-enabled applications that can result in energy savings and supply chain management optimisation.

IoT is an umbrella term for devices connected to and communicating with the Internet and each other, merging the digital and physical worlds.

"From the smartwatch we wear, to the metres that allow for remote readings of our water and gas usage, to the solutions that allow us to track the delivery of our packages, IoT has entered the mainstream, and Ooredoo is making this happen," the service provider stated.

"The Internet of Things technology drives the digital transformation of businesses and the economy," said Saoud al Riyami, Chief Business and Wholesale Officer at Ooredoo.

"It has become embedded in our daily lives and the operations of entities in the private and Government sectors. Companies and consumers are employing these smart solutions to streamline operations, manage physical assets, and improve their health and well-being."

As a leading connectivity and infrastructure provider boosted by the roll-out of our NB-IoT network, "we ensure Internet of Things-enabled devices stay connected and functional", he added.

Ooredoo has been at the forefront of adopting the latest IoT technology and knowing how IoT devices can benefit its cus-



Saoud al Riyami

tomers. The company has also stepped up the future-proofing of IoT-enabled devices which currently rely on mobile 3G connectivity.

In August 2023, Ooredoo Group became the first telecommunications operator in the GCC region to join the IoT World Alliance, the world's largest Mobile Network Operator cooperative, to drive connectivity to the next level. The company also entered the LoRa Alliance, a nonprofit association of members that believes the IoT era is 'now'. These partnerships enable Ooredoo to collaborate with other IoT service providers, chip manufacturers, solution developers, and other businesses serving the industry's requirements to push the technology forward.

Ooredoo also partnered with Nama Holding company, successfully installing 330K IoT-enabled smart water metres and continuing connections of more than 285K electricity metres.

Oman Air signs 21 Omani cadets for pilot training

In alignment with Oman Air's commitment to the objectives of Oman's 2040 Vision, the airline's management, represented by the Transformation Office, has announced the signing of 21 Omani cadets as part of its Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL) programme.

Joining as Second Officers, the cadets will undergo comprehensive training at Oman Air's state-of-the-art Flight Training Centre, specialising in the operation of Boeing 737 aircraft, before they are able to earn their official pilot's licence from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). It's the latest in a number of pilot training programmes Oman Air has engaged in over the years as part of several government partnerships.

Oman Air (WY) began operations in 1993. Initially founded



to serve important domestic routes, it has since undergone rapid growth and is today recognised as a major international carrier connecting cities around the world to Oman's stunning nature, rich heritage and welcoming culture.

The award-winning airline has been instrumental in transforming Muscat into one of the Middle East's most desirable travel destinations, while supporting adjacent commercial, industrial and tourism activities.

With a young and modern fleet, Oman Air is renowned for its exceptional products and services, both in the air and on the ground.

Maserati adds new Overseas Region to global structure

Maserati kicked off 2024 by announcing the creation of a new global region, expected to give the Italian luxury manufacturer's markets a new business configuration. Hamdy Elshantoury has been appointed as the new head of the Overseas Region, starting from January 1.

With this latest addition, Maserati's new market organisation now consists of five regions, namely: US and Canada (North America), Europe, China, Japan and Korea, and the newly created Overseas.

With the new Overseas Re-

gion, Maserati is reshaping the borders of its worldwide organisation. It is redistributing some of markets that were previously part of the former regions and has merged them into a completely new one, with a relevant marketing team ready to act as a gateway for partners and the dealer network in everyday activities and initiatives.

Alongside with the new head of the Overseas Region, Hamdy Elshantoury - who is also maintaining ad interim responsibility for MEA - Wong Yi Mui Wallace has been appointed responsible



for SEAP & India markets and Marco Spadaro has taken responsibility for the East Europe and Latin American markets.

The decision to add the new region was made as a result of Maserati's commitment to serving every market, with the intention of implementing focus, growth, and expanding relationships with the relevant players; the aim is to seize every opportunity and meet the differing requirements of the various business structures.

The region head and the regional functions will be based in Italy, at Maserati's headquarters in Modena, to deeply connect the new Overseas Region leadership team with central manage-

ment and make the support to markets and decision-making process faster and more effective. Conversely, the market management team will remain in the region with close contacts to their countries.

"We are pleased to begin the year with the announcement of a new global region and the appointment of Hamdy Elshantoury as its head," said Maserati CEO Davide Grasso. "The creation of a fifth region confirms the intention to give our business an even more precise and specific configuration at a global level."

Mazda Service Drive 2024: Free check-up by Japanese experts in Muscat

Mazda Service Drive 2024, a distinguished event exclusively for Mazda owners in Oman, has been scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday at Al Hail Service and Ghala Service centres from 9am to 5pm, a release stated.

This initiative represents Mazda's dedication to offering unparalleled vehicle care through the expertise of its professional engineers from Japan.

On the spotlight in this Mazda Service Drive 2024 are Osada and Sakuma, highly esteemed engineers from Mazda's Japan headquarters in Hiroshima. These experts will be present at the event, ensuring meticulous care and expert attention to



every Mazda vehicle. This event is tailored to cater to a range of Mazda models, from the city-friendly Mazda 2 and the elegant Mazda 6 to the versatile Mazda CX-5, and the most powerful Mazda CX-90.

'Each model will undergo a comprehensive 52-point check-up, a critical service to maintain optimal vehicle condition and preempt any potential issues,' the company stated in a release.

Attendees of the Mazda Service Drive 2024 are set to enjoy several exclusive benefits. Each

participant will receive a complimentary engine oil coupon, redeemable on their next service visit, and a free car wash, ensuring their Mazda leaves both mechanically sound and aesthetically pleasing. Additionally, a substantial discount on labor, a variable parts discount, and many more exclusive offers are waiting for them.

The service drive also includes a free tyre check-up and personalised advice from Mazda's engineers, providing invaluable insights into maintaining vehicle health. This aspect of the service underscores Mazda's dedication to not only delivering superior service but also to educating and

supporting its customers.

As anticipation builds among Mazda owners across Oman, the Mazda Service Drive 2024 stands not just as a service appointment, but as an experience, a congregation of car enthusiasts, and a reflection of Mazda's dedication to excellence. This is an amazing opportunity for Mazda owners to ensure their vehicle continues to epitomise the performance and enjoyment that is characteristic of Mazda.

'This event is a golden opportunity that should not be missed. We encourage all to seize this chance to give their vehicles the expert care they deserve,' the company said.



Ax-3 mission crew docks at International Space Station

Istanbul, Turkey - The Ax-3 space mission crew, including Türkiye's first-ever space traveler Alper Gezeravci, docked at the International Space Station (ISS) at 05.42am Eastern Standard Time (ET) (1042GMT) on Saturday.

The mission was launched from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Florida at 4.49pm ET on Thursday (2149GMT) on a Falcon 9 rocket of private space exploration company SpaceX.

Gezeravci and his three crewmates from Spain, Italy, and Sweden will conduct over 30 scientific experiments and demonstrations on the ISS as part of the Ax-3 mission.

The Ax-3 mission is being led by Michael Lopez-Alegria, representing the US and Spain, while the crew also includes Walter Villadei from the Italian Air Force as the pilot, and Marcus Wandt of Sweden, representing the European Space Agency.

Gezeravci will conduct 13 sci-

entific researches during his 14-day stay on the ISS.

The docking process was planned for January 19 but the liftoff was postponed twice from January 9 to January 17 and January 18. The 70-metre (230-foot) Falcon 9 rocket, with a diameter of 3.7 metres and weight of roughly 550 tonnes, has a payload capacity of 22,000kg in low Earth orbit, 8,300kg in geostationary transfer orbit and 4,000kg on Mars.

The 8.1-metre Dragon capsule, which can carry seven people or an equal amount of cargo in its pressurised area with air flow inside, is capable of carrying cargo in its unpressurised rear section.

As the largest space station, the ISS, built by major space agencies - NASA (US), Roscosmos (Russia), JAXA (Japan), ESA (Europe) and CSA (Canada) - is serving for scientific researches in low Earth orbit.

Anadolu Agency

Tshisekedi sworn in as DR Congo president for new term

Kinshasa, DR Congo - Felix Tshisekedi, president-elect of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), was sworn in on Saturday for his second five-year term in office at a ceremony attended by regional leaders and other foreign dignitaries.

The DRC Constitutional Court in early January officially confirmed the reelection of President Felix Tshisekedi following the December 20 polls. Tshisekedi secured 73.47 per cent of the vote, while main opposition candidate Moise Katumbi trailed behind with 18.08 per cent.

The inauguration took place at the Martyrs Stadium of Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC, in the presence of about 20 heads of state, mainly from Africa, and several high-level foreign representatives.

In his inauguration speech, he promised to take action, including the creation of more jobs, the protection of purchasing power for households, national security, economic diversification, and access to basic services. He denounced the resilient threats against the DRC while observing a minute of silence in memory of the heroes fallen and victims killed by barbarism in the DRC.

"Today, a new era is born, an era of maturity, a magnified era, an era transcended by the renewed oath 'Never betray the Congo'," reelected President Felix Tshisekedi declared.

According to the Independent



President-elect of DR Congo Felix Tshisekedi attends the swearing-in ceremony in Kinshasa, on Saturday (Xinhua)

National Electoral Commission that oversaw the general elections, more than 18mn Congolese, from a total of 44mn registered voters, cast their ballots in the elections for the president, the National Assembly and the 26 provincial assemblies. The process, however, was not without controversy as opposition candidates raised allegations of irregularities, which the electoral commission said would not impact the election outcome.

Constitutional Court in early January officially confirmed the reelection of President Felix Tshisekedi following the December 20 polls. Tshisekedi secured 73.47 per cent of the vote

This election was significant as it marked the second peaceful transfer of power in the country's history since independence in 1960. In 2018, Tshisekedi ascended to power after winning the election, marking the country's first peaceful transfer of power since its independence from Belgium.

Xinhua

SALVE FOR THE SOUL



Holy water is being sprinkled onto the crowds during Timket, the annual Ethiopian Epiphany festival, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Saturday (Xinhua)

25 killed in shelling of Russian-controlled city

Istanbul Turkey - At least 25 people were killed and 20 others injured on Sunday due to shelling in the Ukrainian city of Donetsk, which is currently under Russian control.

"At the moment, information about 25 deaths has been confirmed. At least 20 more people were injured, including two children in moderate condition," Denis Pushilin, the Russian-installed head of the Donetsk region, said on Telegram.

Pushilin claimed the artillery shells were fired from the settlements of Kurakhove and Krasnohorivka, which are under Ukrainian control.

Ukrainian officials have not yet commented on Pushilin's claim.

In an earlier statement, Pushilin said that at least 13 were killed and 10 were wounded due to the shelling of a market area in Donetsk's Tekstilshchik suburb.

Both Moscow and Kyiv have exchanged accusations over airstrikes against each other that



intensified in late December when at least 40 people were killed in various regions of Ukraine in a massive air attack, which President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described as the 'heaviest attack' since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war.

On January 1, Russian President Vladimir Putin said his country would not let 'a single crime of this kind' go unpunished following a subsequent raid on the Russian city of Belgorod, which killed 25 people and wounded many others.

Meanwhile, Russia claimed that its forces have taken control of a village in Ukraine's eastern Kharkiv region.

"The village of Krokmalne in the direction of Kupiansk in the Kharkiv region was 'liberated', as a result of successful active actions by units of the Western group of troops," the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement. Ukrainian officials have not yet commented on Russia's claim, and independent verification is difficult due to the war.

Anadolu Agency

Casualties feared as charter plane crashes in northern Afghanistan

Ankara, Turkey - Casualties are feared as a charter plane with six people onboard crashed in northern Afghanistan, officials and local media reported on Sunday.

A statement from Afghanistan's Information Ministry said that the ill-fated plane that belonged to an Indian company crashed in northern Badakhshan province.

There were no immediate reports about the casualties.

Zabihullah Amiri, an official of the provincial Department

of Information and Culture, said that a team has been sent to the crash site in the Topkhana area of Kuran-wa-Munjan district.

However, the Indian Aviation Ministry clarified that the plane was neither owned by the Indian government nor a company.

"The unfortunate plane crash that has just occurred in Afghanistan is neither an Indian Scheduled Aircraft nor a Non-Scheduled (NSOP)/Charter aircraft. It is a Moroccan-regis-

tered small aircraft. More details are awaited," the ministry said in a post on X.

Russian aviation authorities said that the plane with six people onboard was a charter flight traveling from India via Uzbekistan to Moscow.

The plane, a French-made Dassault Falcon 10 jet, was registered in Russia and disappeared from radar screens over Afghanistan on Saturday evening, the Russian authorities said.

Anadolu Agency

German farmers protest subsidy cuts

Berlin, Germany - Farmers in Germany seeking sustainable agriculture, demonstrated on Saturday with tractors in front of the headquarters of the Social Democratic Party in Berlin.

The farmers are opposed to the government's plan to remove agricultural diesel subsidies. Hundreds of demonstrators, led by the coalition of SPD with the Greens and the Free Democratic Party, gathered in front of the SPD headquarters, chanting slogans: 'We're fed up', 'Everyone can do something' and 'Good food needs a future'.

Protesters held banners with



messages that read: 'The land belongs to the farmers', 'Food is political' and 'Farmers come before corporate interests'.

Klaus Böglen expressed frustra-

tion with the government's agricultural policies.

Böglen told Anadolu: "We believe the government is very inconsistent in protecting the in-

terests of nature and future generations. This is not just about agricultural policy - it is also applicable to social policy and climate policy."

"Decisions are made very quickly on some things that concern farmers without prior discussion, and we want to discuss this. Everyone needs to contribute to something, such as subsidising diesel, subsidising flights, for example," he said.

A young woman who did not want to disclose her name emphasised that protesters gathered for ecological farming and supporting farmers.

Anadolu Agency

178 killed in Gaza in last 24 hours

With latest Palestinian casualties, death toll from Israel’s attacks since October 7 has risen to 25,105

Ankara, Turkey - At least 178 Palestinians have been killed and 293 injured in the last 24 hours as Israeli forces continued their onslaught on the besieged Gaza Strip, the territory’s Health Ministry said on Sunday.

“The Israeli occupation committed 15 massacres against families in the Gaza Strip, leaving 178 martyrs and 293 injured during the past 24 hours,” the ministry said in a statement.

“Many people are still trapped under rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them,” the statement said.

With the latest Palestinian casualties, the death toll from Israel’s ongoing attacks on Gaza since October 7 has risen to 25,105, with 62,681 others injured, the ministry said. Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip since a cross-border attack by Hamas on October 7, which Tel Aviv says killed nearly 1,200 people.

The Israeli offensive has left 85 per cent of Gaza’s population internally displaced amid acute shortages of food, clean water, and medicine, while 60 per cent of the enclave’s infrastructure was damaged or destroyed, according to the UN.

US confirms death of American civilian

The US State Department on Saturday confirmed the death of an American civilian on Friday in the occupied West Bank and said it has asked the Israeli government for more information.

“We extend our deepest condolences to the family,” a State Department spokesperson told



The Israeli offensive has left 85 per cent of Gaza’s population internally displaced, while 60 per cent of the enclave’s infrastructure was damaged or destroyed, according to the UN

We are asking for a cease-fire because this is a foundation for a lasting peace, we must first have a cease-fire before we can discuss lasting peace at all

KARA CLARKSON

Anadolu. “We are working to understand the circumstances of the incident and have asked the

Government of Israel for further information.” The spokesperson refused to

provide further information ‘out of respect to the family during this difficult time’.

National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Friday that the US was ‘seriously concerned’ by reports that Israeli forces fatally shot a Palestinian-American teen in the occupied territory. Tawfiq Hafiz Hajazi, 17, was killed on Friday by the Israeli army near the town of Al-

Mazraa Al-Sharqiya, east of Ramallah, according to the official Palestinian news agency, WAFA. It said he was shot in the head and was taken to a hospital where he died.

Israeli police said on Saturday that it was investigating the shooting.

Tensions have been running high across the West Bank since Israel launched a deadly military

offensive against the Gaza Strip following a Hamas attack on October 7. At least 370 Palestinians have since been killed and nearly 4,200 injured, according to officials.

Protest in Prague

Scores of Czech protesters expressed disappointment on Saturday in Prague for the government’s strong support for

Israel with its ongoing military operation in Gaza.

The protest which was called by pro-Palestine advocacy and solidarity groups, started at the Namesti Miru and then marched with more than 1,000 people to different areas of the city.

Demonstrators demanded an immediate cease-fire in the Gaza Strip. Authorities deployed a heavy police contingent to avoid untoward incidents.

“We are asking for a cease-fire because this is a foundation for a lasting peace, we must first have a cease-fire before we can discuss lasting peace at all,” Kara Clarkson told Anadolu. She requested those from other European countries immediately demand a cease-fire.

Protestors demanded the Czech government roll back its pro-Israel policies and they called the military action ‘an unjust war’. Czech researcher Pavel Borecky told the Turkish news agency that he disagrees with the official position of the Czech government which keeps supporting Israel even in times when an international court is probing whether Israel is committing genocide.

“It is an important cause and we need more people to hear and be here with us,” he added.

The protest was the largest pro-Palestinian gathering in Prague since the start of the Israeli onslaught in Gaza which indicates that pro-Palestine momentum is surprisingly rising in a country that claims to be the ‘voice of Israel in Europe’.

Anadolu Agency

Israel conducting 2nd Nakba, says Israeli-British historian

Istanbul, Turkey - Israeli-British historian Avi Shlaim said the scale of destruction and brutality in Gaza is like that ‘Israel is conducting a second Nakba today’.

Professor Avi Shlaim, faculty member of politics at the international relations department at Oxford University, evaluated the Israel-Palestine conflict and the displacement of Palestinians since 1948 in an interview with Anadolu.

“You do not have the right to defend yourself against the people that you occupy. It is the people who are under (Israeli) occupation who have the right to resist, including the right to armed resistance,” he said.

Regarding whether Israel committed genocide in Gaza, Shlaim said: “What is absolutely clear is that Israel is carrying out the ethnic cleansing of the Gaza stream.”



Professor Avi Shlaim

“I believe that scale of the carnage and the killing and the indiscriminate attack on civilians and civilian neighbourhoods would justify the term genocide,” he said.

He defined genocide. “There has to be the genocidal intent as well as the practice, and there is ample evidence from the statements by Israeli leaders that they have a genocidal intent,” he said

“(Israeli) President Itzhak Herzog said that there are no innocent people in Gaza. Well over 7,000 children have been killed.

They surely are innocent people,” he stressed.

Shlaim pointed out that the majority of casualties in Gaza are civilians, not Hamas fighters, and expressed concern about Israel’s Defence Minister Yoav Gallant’s statement that ‘we are fighting with human animals’.

He stressed: “This is very worrying because dehumanising the enemy paves the way to genocide. Israelis are dehumanising not just Hamas, but the entire Palestinian people.”

Shlaim argued that Israel aims to evacuate residents from Gaza as much as possible and push them from the North Sinai border to Egyptian territories.

Anadolu Agency

US destroys Houthi anti-ship missile aimed at Gulf of Aden

Washington, US - The US on Saturday carried out airstrikes against a Houthi anti-ship missile that was aimed at the Gulf of Aden, according to the American military.

“U.S. CENTCOM Destroys Houthi Terrorists’ Anti-Ship Missile as part of ongoing efforts to protect freedom of navigation and prevent attacks on maritime vessels, on January 20 at approximately 4am (Sanaa time), U.S. Central Command forces conducted airstrikes against a Houthi anti-ship missile that was aimed into the Gulf of Aden and was prepared to launch,” US Central Command (CENTCOM) wrote on X.

US forces determined the missile posed a threat to merchant vessels and US Navy ships in the region, and destroyed the missile in self-defence, it said.

The military said this action



was conducted to make international waters safer and more secure for US Navy and merchant vessels.

The airstrike follows a wave of strikes against Houthi targets since the US and UK began car-

rying them out on January 12.

The Biden administration said the strikes were ‘defensive’ in nature, and were intended to erode the Houthis’ ability to strike vessels in the Red Sea, which is one of the world’s most frequently

used sea routes for oil and fuel shipments.

The Houthis have been attacking commercial ships in the Red Sea and warned they will attack all Israeli-bound ships.

Anadolu Agency

Imran Khan warns of further ‘instability and uncertainty’ in Pakistan

Islamabad, Pakistan - Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has sought a level playing field for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the run-up to general elections and warned that lack of transparency in elections would cause more ‘instability’, Pakistan-based Dawn reported.

Speaking to reporters at Adiala Jail after the hearing of the Toshakhana case, Khan warned that if fair elections were not carried out, then it would result in further ‘instability and uncertainty’. He further said that PTI candidates ‘are being harassed and detained’ by the authorities to stop them from contesting polls.

Speaking about the crack-

down on PTI, Imran Khan said the establishment could not ‘dismantle the party since it has roots in the masses’. He warned ‘turn-coats’ that their politics would end if they left PTI, according to Dawn report.

The cricketer-turned-politician accused the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) of deliberately delaying the matter related to the PTI’s intra-party elections to take ‘stern and sudden action’ to deprive the political party of its electoral symbol.

Highlighting the efforts of Pakistan’s president to bring down the political temperature, Khan said Arif Alvi tried to mediate but to no avail. Expressing his views about Pakistan Muslim League-



Pakistan’s former prime minister Imran Khan

Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif, Imran Khan said that Pakistan would suffer ‘irreparable loss’ if attempts were made to impose an ‘absconder’

on Pakistan. PTI founder said that Nawaz Sharif cancelled his rally in Layyah as PML-N did not have the strength to organise a power show. He claimed that the PTI

Imran Khan accused Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) of deliberately delaying the matter related to PTI’s intra-party elections

will hold the ‘biggest ever’ gathering even if he is released from jail only a couple of days before the polls.

Speaking about his cases in courts, Imran Khan said that despite the disposal of his plea by

the Lahore High Court regarding the rejection of nomination papers, the order in this regard was not released, Dawn reported.

He said that his plea against disqualification was not being heard and added that Nawaz Sharif had been given a clean chit by the courts and allowed to contest polls. PTI founder said that another petition he registered against violations of human rights was also pending before the Supreme Court for a long time.

Imran Khan said there was no rule of law in Pakistan. However, he added that he would not take the law into his own hands as a politician and would ‘play till the last ball’.

Meanwhile, the internet ser-

vices in Pakistan were interrupted at about 7pm (local time), an hour prior to the ‘virtual power show’ of the PTI broadcast on social media websites, especially YouTube.

In a post shared on X, Global Internet Monitor Netblocks stated that live metrics showcase ‘a nation-scale disruption to social media platforms across Pakistan, including X/Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube’, Dawn reported.

Taking to X, Netblocks stated: “The incident comes as persecuted opposition leader Imran Khan’s political party, PTI, launches its second virtual gathering.”

ANI

INDIA

'Pran Pratishtha': Heavy security in Ayodhya

Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh - Ayodhya went under a heavy security blanket ahead of the opening of the Ram Temple, with Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) commandos deployed at Lata Mangeshkar Chowk ahead of the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony on Monday.

The Uttar Pradesh Police said new-age, state-of-the-art technology has been used for elaborate security arrangements for the ceremony.

Milind Raj, who has come to be nicknamed as 'Lucknow's Drone' after developing unmanned aerial vehicles to keep a hawk-eye on the city, said he willingly volunteered to help the police ensure tight security in Ayodhya.

These drones have enabled the police to throw a proper security blanket around the temple town a day ahead of the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony.

The drone is equipped to patrol the sky like a police vehicle and can also send back real-time alerts if any suspicious person or object is seen.

It is equipped with a special software through which it will also be able to identify criminals or potential trouble-makers.

Security was tightened in the temple town from Friday for the January 22 event, which would be attended by nearly 8,000



Security tightened near Lata Mangeshkar Chowk on the eve of 'Pran Pratishtha' (consecration) ceremony of the Ram Temple, in Ayodhya on Sunday (ANI)

Drones equipped to patrol the sky like a police vehicle have enabled the police to throw a proper security blanket around the temple town a day ahead of the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony

have been deployed in the entire district are also being used for aerial surveillance. Patrolling on the Saryu River is being done through boats," a senior police officer said.

A host of leaders and dignitaries from all walks of life have been invited to the temple opening in Ayodhya.

Vedic rituals for the Pran Pratishtha ceremony of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya began on January 16, a week before the main ceremony.

The idol of Ram Lalla was placed inside the 'Garbha Grah' of the Ram Temple on Friday amid chants of 'Jai Shri Ram'.

A priest from Varanasi, Lakshmi Kant Dixit, will lead a team of seers officiating the main rituals during the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony.

ANI

VIP guests.

UP Police has deployed personnel in the city, with patrolling being done on all three fronts -

land, water and air.

Additional Director General (ADG), Lucknow Zone, Piyush Mordia said patrolling on the

Saryu River is being done through boats and drones were also being pressed into service for aerial surveillance.

"Our personnel have been deployed in Ayodhya for the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony. A security briefing was held for all

the deployed personnel again today. Briefing and debriefing sessions are being conducted daily with officers. Drones that

Republic Day: Army personnel carry out rehearsals for gun salute

New Delhi - In line with the preparations for Republic Day, Indian Army personnel carried out rehearsals for the 21-gun salute to be given on the January 26 parade.

Army personnel used Indigenous 105 mm field guns to carry out their rehearsals.

The gun was earlier used for the first time for a 21-gun salute during the Republic Day parade in 2023. The Indian guns had replaced the British 25-pounder guns.

The 21-gun salute is conducted by a specifically designed cartridge or blank round, which is used to create the sound of firing as opposed to actual shells being fired.

Meanwhile, Delhi Eastern Range's Additional CP Sagar Singh Kalsi took stock of security arrangements in several areas of Shahdara District on Saturday ahead of Republic Day.

Speaking to ANI, Sagar Singh



A glimpse of the rehearsal for upcoming Republic Day celebrations, at Gandhi Maidan, in Patna on Sunday (ANI)

Kalsi said: "Given Republic Day, we are making several arrangements. Our only motive is to organise a smooth celebration... Security checks are also underway at all the borders..."

For the first time in the country, a tri-service contingent will

be marching in this year's Republic Day Parade.

Captain Sharanya Rao from the Indian Army told ANI that she is proud that she will be leading the Army component of the tri-service contingent.

"I am the supernumerary of-

ficer and will be leading the Army component of the tri-services contingent. It is a proud moment because, for the first time in history, a tri-services contingent would be marching," she told ANI.

ANI

Cold wave continues to grip Delhi; flights, trains delayed

New Delhi - The National Capital woke up to another chilling morning on Sunday as the temperature was recorded in single digit, causing inconvenience to passengers as several flights and trains were delayed.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), visibility at Delhi-Palam was reduced from 400 metres at 2am to 100 metres at 2:30am on Sunday, and it further reduced to 0 metres since 3am.

The minimum temperature in Delhi on Sunday morning was recorded to be 8.5 degree Celsius, as per IMD. In another post on X, the IMD said: "Fog layer is very clearly visible over the plains of north India from Punjab to Bihar across Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, northwest Rajasthan, and north Madhya Pradesh at 6:30am today."

"Dense to Very Dense Fog observed in isolated pockets over Delhi, North Haryana, West Uttar Pradesh, West



Vehicles ply on a road on a cold winter day, in Bikaner on Sunday (ANI)

Madhya Pradesh," the weather department added. Nearly a dozen passenger trains to the national capital were also running behind schedule.

As per the northern railways, around 11 trains like the Amritsar-Nanded Express, Puri-New Delhi Purushottam Express, Ambedkarnagar-Katra, and Manikpur-Nizamuddin Express, among others, were delayed due to dense fog conditions.

At Delhi airport, people were seen waiting for their flights that were late by several hours. Some of the flights were also announced as cancelled, causing inconvenience to the passengers. "My flight was delayed because of fog. It was supposed to land here at 4:45am, but it landed at around 5:35am," said Neha Beniwal, a passenger who came from Bahrain.

ANI

'FOR UNITY AND JUSTICE'



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during the 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra', in Assam on Sunday (ANI)

Proposal before UN body to reduce carbon footprints for climate-resilient fisheries

Ernakulam, Kerala - In a bid to address the looming threat of climate change on fisheries, India has proposed a substantial reduction of the carbon footprint as a significant step towards climate-resilient fisheries.

This was suggested at the first session of the Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management under the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

India's statement on climate-resilient fishing was presented to the global body by the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kochi. The Indian delegation was led by J Balaji, former Joint Secretary, Department of Fisheries,

Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India.

Carbon emissions per kg of fish caught in India's marine fisheries are 17.7 per cent less than the global average according to a recent study, said India.

It maintained that, in terms of climate change, India falls into the medium-to-high category considering the overall impact by 2050. J Jayasankar, Head of Fishery Resources Assessment, Economics and Extension Division of CMFRI, read out the statement, highlighting India's

proactive stance on tackling the climate crisis in fisheries sector.

The meeting, held virtually from FAO, Rome, was attended by members of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) plus one member organisation, representatives from three specialised agencies of the United Nations, observers from other FAO member nations and non-governmental organisations.

Apart from CMFRI, officials from the Department of Fisheries, Govt of India and the Fishery Survey of India were also

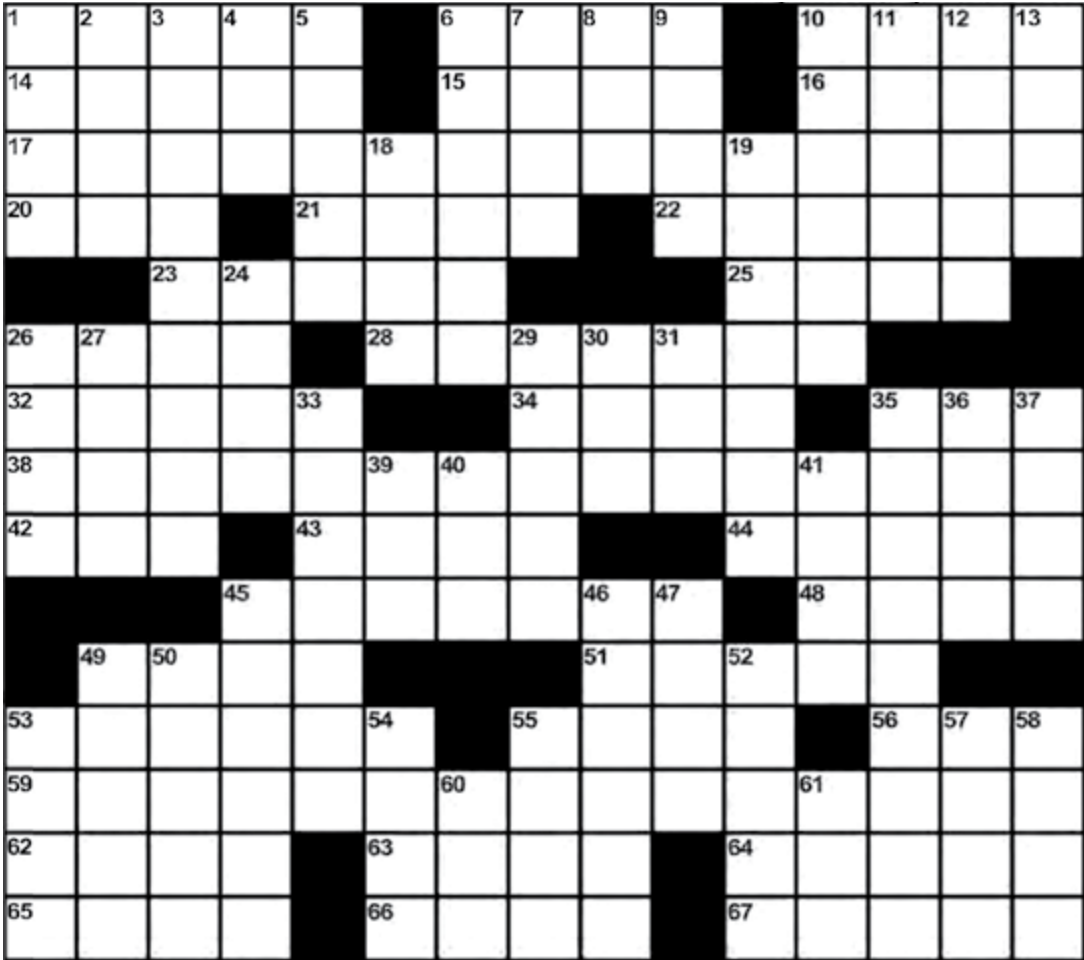
part of the Indian delegation. Dr Balaji was elected as the first vice-chairperson of the incoming bureau of the sub-committee, which serves as a forum for consultation and discussion on fisheries management, associated technical and policy issues, and the related work performed by FAO.

"A big step towards climate-resilient fisheries is harnessing the carbon sequestration potential of seaweeds to mitigate climate change impacts. Enhancing natural habitats for improving seaweed resources and enhancing mangrove ecosystems may help lay the path for better carbon sequestration," India's statement said.

ANI



DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Nebraskan city
- 6) Jungle primates
- 10) Davenport
- 14) Group of nine
- 15) Bus money
- 16) Parts of history
- 17) Three magic things
- 20) Word before a maiden name
- 21) " ... and make it fast!"
- 22) Superdome team
- 23) Deep cavity
- 25) They're under the table
- 26) Completely fill
- 28) Bad news from car-makers
- 32) Dodge successfully
- 34) Johnny Cash's " _ Named Sue"
- 35) After-school grp.
- 38) Two magic things
- MAGIC ACT
- 42) Planning center?
- 43) "Yup" opposite
- 44) Old caulking material
- 45) Thing tugged by a tyke
- 48) Infamous fiddler
- 49) Yarn lump

- 51) Low point
- 53) Metal fastener
- 55) Remove, as a rind
- 56) Org. involved with many touchdowns
- 59) Three magic things
- 62) Insistent impulse
- 63) Crime boss
- 64) Russian country house
- 65) Bouncy gait
- 66) Try, as a case
- 67) Luster
- DOWN**
- 1) "Do not take_ empty stomach"
- 2) "Encore!"
- 3) Long-snouted formicary consumers
- 4) "For_ a jolly ... "
- 5) Cornered
- 6) Burning
- 7) Insect's sense organ
- 8) " ____ he drove out of sight"
- 9) Mounts, as a gem
- 10) Any weekly TV show
- 11) Round sealing gasket
- 12) Truisms
- 13) Emulates a quizmaster
- 18) Khrushchev's country

- 19) Fox-hunter's cry
- 24) Road shoulder
- 26) Call at home?
- 27) Bard of_ (Shakespeare's title)
- 29) Ship of the desert
- 30)_ Dhaba (Persian Gulf sheikdom)
- 31) "Angeles" header
- 33) Like pianos and car engines
- 35) Bluff concealer
- 36)_ de force
- 37) Armory supply, briefly
- 39) Chaney Jr. or Sr. of old horror films
- 40) Befitting
- 41) Indian princess
- 45) Marionette kin
- 46) Fill with affection
- 47) Clothing
- 49) Beatle Ringo
- 50) Key_, Florida
- 52) Accomplishments
- 53) Rabbit's tail
- 54) Carve in stone
- 55) Insect stage
- 57) Advil target
- 58)_ impasse (stymied)
- 60) Scottish denial
- 61) "Go team!"

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your resources are a bit pinched lately, but your creativity is still fully fleshed out. And powerful! So if you're feeling strapped for cash, simply apply your ingenuity to the situation. Why not barter if you don't have the money? Talk them into giving it to you for free? You can think of a new way to get what you want without giving up more than you have. People are willing to work with you on this, so ask them how you can make it work.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You are feeling more open to new things than ever before, so this is a great day to explore a new physical exercise like Pilates, yoga, or rock climbing. You'll be able to get the hang of any new physical actions in no time, and you just might find the next great obsession in your life. You are moving toward a more movement-oriented phase, when the greatest joy you'll experience comes from getting your blood pumping and your body sweating.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Making a fresh start with someone is proving to be much more challenging than you initially thought it would be. Moving past grudges and hurt feelings is taking longer than you'd hoped, but the reward for your efforts will be larger than you expect. Resign yourself to the fact that it's going to take time to dig through those deep feelings in order to move beyond them. This person deserves a second chance, and you need to do whatever you can in order to give it to them.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01.Which is the oldest identified era of activity by homo sapiens and relatives?

- A. Bronze Age
- B. Palaeolithic
- C. Iron Age
- D. Jurassic

02. What sportsman would perform a triple salchow?

- A. Show jumper
- B. Figure skater
- C. Gymnast
- D. High diver

03. What is the nationality of Mohammed Al Fayed, who sold the department store Harrods Knightsbridge to Qatar Holdings in 2010?

- A. Iranian
- B. Iraqi
- C. Egyptian
- D. Syrian

Answers: 1.B 2.B 3.C



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You might have to perform a tricky negotiation with someone who rubs you the wrong way, but you'll do well with it, and your confidence will send a very powerful signal to some very powerful people. Being more compromising will put you in a much more powerful position than you'd be in if you pushed to get your own way. You're starting to understand how to get more of what you want out of life by giving up something to other people every once in a while.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

People are going to be extra sensitive to whatever you say today, so do your best to offer constructive criticism instead of being just plain critical. While you don't relish the idea of walking on eggshells all day long, you will be glad you did. The extra effort will prevent them from getting bent out of shape and creating some drama that you just don't need right now. Give these touchy people lots of space throughout the day. Avoid interacting with them altogether if you can.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Changing your daily routine sounds a lot easier than it is, there is no doubt about that. But the effort you are putting forth to find a better way of doing things will definitely be worth it. Not only will it make your life more interesting, but it will also keep a certain someone more interested in finding out what your next move might be. Every once in a while you have to do something to ensure that you are not getting stuck in a rut, and right now is a perfect time to do it.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

There is nothing to fear from trying something that you have never tried before. Foreign influences are having a very strong and positive impact on your life right now, so be open to them. It's a wonderful day to explore a culture that is strange or unusual to you. Learn about its customs, foods, traditions, and music. Get an education on how other people live. This education will inspire you to continue to move beyond your comfort zone and take more risks.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You could have an unexpected hole punched in the middle of your day. These free hours can offer you a very good excuse for deep thought and contemplation about a recent conflict you had with a friend or coworker. Your subconscious has been mulling this conversation over for a while, but today you should get your conscious mind involved. Think it through and examine where you may have gone wrong. Be prepared to make or ask for an apology depending on what you discover.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

There is a satisfaction to be had in fulfilling mundane responsibilities with enthusiasm. So the next time you're facing an array of boring errands or tedious commitments, take a deep breath and turn your annoyance into determination. Even if you're just going to pick up your dry cleaning, for instance, give the person behind the counter your warmest smile. These tasks can be enjoyable if you make the effort.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You will get a lot further if you connect with other people today than if you stick to yourself. Do not be aloof, because it could give you a reputation for being difficult to work with or even rude, and that's not you. Open yourself up to other people as much as you can and don't be afraid to give your honest opinion about things, even if you think it will create a ruckus. You need to realize that sometimes people like a rabble-rouser who tells it like it is.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

It's time to finish up some unfinished business with one of your relatives. Whether you forgot someone's birthday, still need to buy someone a wedding gift, or left a conversation hanging, today is the day to make up for it. Whoever is waiting to hear from you has a longer memory than you do, but they also have a huge heart, so don't worry about anger or hurt feelings. There's no need to be embarrassed. Everyone procrastinates.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Your analytical side and intuitive side are in conflict right now, and you have to balance the two or else you won't be able to get anything done today. So acknowledge that while you really do feel strongly about something you have no evidence for, you need to get the facts before you can make any kind of commitment. It's not wise to make choices based on your feelings. You need cold, hard facts or else it will be too hard to focus clearly.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

P	L	P	Y
A	R	I	L
O	N	I	L
A	O	T	T

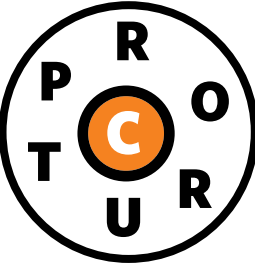
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggler Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. 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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

'I PLAYED GREAT FROM THE FIRST TO THE LAST POINT'



Novak Djokovic celebrates after winning a point against Adrian Mannarino in their Australian Open match on Sunday

Djokovic crushes Mannarino to storm into Australian Open quarterfinals

Melbourne, Australia - Novak Djokovic marked a rare daytime Australian Open appearance with a crushing win over Frenchman Adrian Mannarino on Sunday as the 10-times champion flirted with a 'triple bagel' before sealing a 6-0, 6-0, 6-3 win to reach the quarter-finals.

Djokovic, handed an early session slot at Melbourne Park for the first time since 2021, said earlier in the week he had been battling a viral affection and the world number one was coughing and appeared to be breathing heavily at times during the match.

The Serb's health issues had no impact on his play, however, and with the roof at Rod Laver Arena closed due to rain he eased to a 32nd straight match win at the tournament and a 58th Grand Slam quarter-final, equalling the all-time record of Swiss maestro Roger Federer.

"The way I played today, I don't mind playing in the day to be honest," said Djokovic, who is chasing a 25th Grand Slam to go past Margaret Court. "It's no secret I like to play at 7 p.m. but it was not too bad today at all."

Tricky left-hander Mannarino can pose problems for the best of players by working the angles and the world number 19 pushed Djokovic hard in the opening

game of the contest but still found himself down a set in only 33 minutes.

Djokovic let out a roar after breaking early in the second set.

Two sets down and still not on the scoreboard, Mannarino finally won a game early in the third to draw level at 1-1, avoiding a rare "triple bagel" - 6-0 6-0 6-0 - and smiled as the crowd cheered. Djokovic soon closed out victory, however, and said it had been one of his best perfor-

through the tournament was not something new to him.

"It's not the first time I have this particular circumstance where I start off slower and then I build as the tournament goes on," Djokovic, who won last year's title with a hamstring tear sustained in the build-up to the event, told reporters.

"Today was the best day in terms of tennis, the way I felt on court. I'm really excited to enter the second week.

It's not the first time I have this particular circumstance where I start off slower and then I build as the tournament goes on. Today was the best day in terms of tennis.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

mances. "Yeah, after the first two sets, one of the best I've played in a while," he said. "I really wanted to lose that game in the third set because the tension was building up in the stadium.

"I just needed to get that one out of the way so I could refocus on what I need to do to close out the match. I played great from the first to the last point."

Djokovic, who next faces American Taylor Fritz, said slowly gaining momentum

Meanwhile, Jannik Sinner, tipped as a title contender after a red-hot finish to last season, beat Russian Karen Khachanov 6-4, 7-5, 6-3 to reach the last eight without dropping a set but the match was tougher than the scoreline would suggest.

Next up for Sinner is Andrey Rublev, who ended Australia's interest in the singles draws with victory over Alex de Minaur in a five-set evening thriller at Rod Laver Arena.



Aryna Sabalenka hits a return to Amanda Anisimova during their Australian Open match on Sunday

Sabalenka marches into Melbourne quarterfinals

Melbourne, Australia - Reigning champion Aryna Sabalenka reached the quarterfinals of the Australian Open in dominant fashion on Sunday when she swept past American Amanda Anisimova with a clinical 6-3, 6-2 victory on Margaret Court Arena.

The top remaining seed after Saturday's early exit for world number one Iga Swiatek, Sabalenka's biggest enemy has often been her own emotions but she continued to keep them strictly under control to reach the last eight with the loss of only 11 games.

"I'm super happy with the level, super happy with the win," said Sabalenka.

"I just tried to stay focused on my game, and just focus every single point. I want to stay here right until the very end and hopefully we can get this one again."

The Belarusian was not distracted by her relegation to the second showcourt for the first time in the tournament, or by a couple of rain showers that interrupted the contest and forced the closure of the stadium's roof.

Anisimova, ranked 442nd in the world after an eight-month break from the game, had held a 4-1 lead in career meetings with Sabalenka but found the 2024 version of the 26-year-old a much tougher nut to crack.

Gauff reaches last eight in Melbourne for first time

Melbourne, Australia - Fourth seed Coco Gauff was happy to avoid another Grand Slam "dogfight" as the American reached the quarter-finals of the Australian Open for the first time with a 6-1 6-2 win over Pole Magdalena Frech on Sunday.

The U.S. Open champion, who has yet to drop a set at the Melbourne Park major this year, broke the unseeded Frech in the opening game at a chilly Rod Laver Arena and never let her settle into a rhythm.

While Gauff has enjoyed relatively smooth passage through the first four rounds in Melbourne, her run to last year's Flushing Meadows final saw her battle through several three-set matches before claiming her first Grand Slam title.

"I'd love for every match to go



Coco Gauff hits a return to Magdalena Frech in their Australian Open match on Sunday

pretty easy. I know that's not the case," Gauff said.

"At the U.S. Open, every match I won was pretty much a

dogfight.

"Sometimes, I don't know if that's the ideal way to win a Slam because you have to last seven

matches. I just think I had the physical ability and mental ability to do that.

"Going into this, I've always

Defeat 'a feeling of evolution' for Tsitsipas

Melbourne, Australia - Stefanos Tsitsipas said he hoped to emerge stronger from his fourth-round defeat by Taylor Fritz at the Australian Open on Sunday after the Greek world number seven suffered his earliest exit in four years at the Melbourne Park Grand Slam.

The 25-year-old reached the last four in 2019 and lost in the third round the following year, but embarked on two more semi-final runs before losing to 10-times champion Novak Djokovic in last year's title clash.

Tsitsipas said he would need a few days to reflect and recover from his 7-6(3) 5-7 6-3 6-3 defeat. "It's not a negative feeling," he told reporters. "It's a feeling of evolution, of change, which is constant. Change is always constant. One day you're in the top 10, the other day you're not there anymore."

"So you have to keep on work-



Stefanos Tsitsipas

You have to keep on working and allowing yourself to flourish through these experiences

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS

ing and allowing yourself to flourish through these experiences, allow yourself to seek for all these moments that have been working for you over the last few years, give it another shot time after time."

Tsitsipas, who is yet to win a Grand Slam, said dealing with setbacks was part of the job.

"There's way more moments in your career that are painful and tough to deal with, suffering and all that, than moments of glory and success and opening champagne bottles," he added.

"These are a small percentage of what a tennis player lives on a yearly basis."

Meanwhile, Fritz equalled his best result at a major.

"I was just really trusting my shots," Fritz said. "I served well the whole match. It just kept me in it and then when I really needed it at the end I just started playing my best tennis."



Harry Brook

Brook withdraws from England squad for India tour due to 'personal reasons'

London England - England batter Harry Brook has withdrawn from the squad for their tour of India due to personal reasons, the country's cricket board (ECB) said on Sunday.

England have called up Dan Lawrence, who last played a test match in March 2022, to replace 24-year-old Brook in the squad.

"The Brook family respectfully requests privacy during this time," the ECB said in a statement.

"In light of this, the ECB and the family kindly request the media and the public to respect their wish for privacy and refrain from intruding on their private space."

STAYING ALIVE

Bounedjah's late goal helps Algeria draw with Burkina Faso at Cup of Nations

Bouake, Ivory Coast - Algeria netted a stoppage-time equaliser to escape defeat at the Africa Cup of Nations finals on Saturday in a 2-2 draw with Burkina Faso in Group D in Bouake that spared the 2019 champions a major setback at the tournament.

Baghdad Bounedjah netted from a corner five minutes into stoppage time at the end to ensure his side a share of the spoils and deny Burkina Faso early progress to the next stage.

Bounedjah scored both Algeria's goals while Mohamed Konate and Bertrand Traore netted for the Burkinabe, who remain top of the group on four points compared with two for Algeria.

Burkina Faso came desperately close to a smash-and-grab victory that would have seen them through to the last-16 with a guaranteed top-two finish.

They were under pressure for much of the match but had the fortune of two VAR decisions going in their favour.

Algeria failed to take their first-half opportunities, with Youcef Belaili wasteful as Burkinabe goalkeeper Herve Koffi looked nervous and twice cleared balls straight to the Algerians and was fortunate they did could not finish.

Almost inevitably, Burkina scored with a rare attack in stoppage time at the end of the first half as a long ball from Abdoul Fessal Tapsoba went over the Algerian defence and was headed homed by a leaping Konate. The whistle was immediately blown for offside, but a VAR check went in Konate's favour.

Algeria equalised in the 51st minute when a free kick was partially blocked and fell for Nabil

ing a wild tackle by Rayan Ait Nouri on Issa Kabore. The referee had not given the kick but replays showed Ait Nouri had missed the ball as he attempted to clear and caught Kabore on the shin.

A corner late in the game delivered relief for Algeria as Bounedjah leaped up to head home from the set piece.

"I have confidence in my players, they came back with the same determination, what we

Bounedjah scored both Algeria's goals while Mohamed Konate and Bertrand Traore netted for the Burkinabe, who remain top of the group on four points compared with two for Algeria

Bentaleb, whose shot was parried by the goalkeeper down to the feet of Bounedjah, who recovered quickly to sweep the ball in from close range.

Burkina Faso's lead was restored from the penalty spot in 71st minute by substitute Traore, who had also netted a stoppage-time penalty for a 1-0 win over Mauritania in their first Group D game. It was another VAR check that went Burkina's way, reveal-

are missing is being more killer (instinct)," said Algeria coach Djamel Belmadi afterwards.

Algeria were Cup of Nations winners in 2019 but made a horror defence of their title in Cameroon two years ago, where they went home with a single point and in last place in their group and faced a similar scenario again after drawing their opening game in the Ivory Coast against Angola.



Algeria's Baghdad Bounedjah celebrates after scoring against Burkina Faso on Saturday

Tunisia pick up first Cup of Nations point with 1-1 draw against Mali

Korhogo, Ivory Coast - Tunisia picked up their first point at the Africa Cup of Nations, coming from behind to draw 1-1 with Mali on Saturday in their second Group E game.

Mali took an early lead through Lassine Sinayoko but Hamza Rafia equalised for Tunisia within 10 minutes at the Amadou Gon Coulibaly Stadium.

Tunisia had suffered an upset defeat in their opening game against Namibia while Mali beat South Africa the same evening and now top the standings with four points.

Namibia and South Africa play their second group game in Korhogo on Sunday.

Mali were ahead in the 10th minute as Sinayoko scored a second goal at the tournament, striking home from the left with his shot going in off the inside of the post.

But in the 20th minute, Tunisia levelled as sweeping passing move was completed by fullback Ali Abdi pulling the ball



Tunisia's Hamza Rafia celebrates with teammates after scoring against Mali on Saturday

back into the path of Rafia, who fired it home to level matters.

The match struggled to match the excitement of Saturday's earlier games in nearby Bouake where the two Group D games featured nine goals in a blitz of entertainment.

Korhogo's proximity to the Mali border meant plenty of sup-

port but not too much for the supporters to enthuse over.

Sinayoko had a half chance 11 minutes from time to restore Mali's lead and qualify them early for the next round, but his effort was smothered by the Tunisian defence.

With the top two teams in each group, plus the four best

third placed finishers, advancing to last 16, Mali's four-point haul is almost certain to secure them a place in the next round.

But Tunisia, who beat France at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, will likely need a win in their last game on Wednesday against South Africa in Korhogo to stand any chance of advancing.



Brentford's Ivan Toney scores against Nottingham Forest

Forest manager Santo urges players to sharpen focus after Toney's trickery

London, England - Nottingham Forest players need to be more vigilant after they allowed Brentford striker Ivan Toney to move the ball to a more favourable spot for a free kick that helped the Londoners secure a 3-2 Premier League win, Forest manager Nuno Espirito Santo said on Saturday.

The Portuguese manager was left frustrated by Toney's 19th minute equaliser, with television replays showing the striker moved the ball from the marked spot before curling it around the wall and into the net.

The goal by the 27-year-old, who was making his comeback following an eight-month ban for betting offences, triggered a Brentford fightback in a 3-2 thriller.

Television replays appeared to show Toney twice moving the ball from its original placing, to find space behind Forest's defensive wall, without the referee being alerted.

"The situation is clear, there is a ball displacement. I think everybody saw it," Santo said in a post-match press conference, suggesting that it should have been checked by the referees.

Late goal helps Milan win at Udinese in game interrupted by racist chants

Udine, Italy - A stoppage-time goal by striker Noah Okafor secured AC Milan a 3-2 win at lowly Udinese in Serie A on Saturday after the game was briefly suspended in the first half due to racist chants towards Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan.

Milan are third in the standings on 45 points from 21 games, six behind leaders Inter Milan and four adrift of second-placed Juventus, who both have a game in hand.

Midfielder Ruben Loftus-Cheek gave Milan the lead with a low first-time shot inside the post shortly before the match was interrupted in the 33rd minute.

Maignan alerted the referee before leaving the pitch due to repeated racist chants from the local fans, as reported by Italian media, and was followed by his team mates to the tunnel.

"These things have nothing to do with football and they hurt, there is no such thing as black or white. We are all the same," Okafor told DAZN.

The club and the league took

to social media platform X, formerly Twitter, to express their disappointment.

"There is absolutely no place in our game for racism: we are appalled," Milan said.

"Lega Serie A condemns any form of racism," added the Italian league.

The game was restarted after less than 10 minutes and midfielder Lazar Samardzic levelled for the hosts before the break before Florian Thauvin put Udinese in front in the 62nd minute.

But Milan managed to snatch victory when substitute Luka Jovic netted on a rebound in the 83rd minute, following up after Olivier Giroud hit the bar, and Okafor made it 3-2 in stoppage time from close range.

"In the first half hour we played well, we could have scored a few more goals," coach Stefano Pioli said. "The (Maignan) episode then destabilised us a bit, but we recovered by returning to play our game and we managed to find the victory with great determination."



AC Milan's Noah Okafor wheels away in celebration after scoring against Udinese on Saturday

Last-gasp Leverkusen snatch comeback win at Leipzig

Leipzig, Germany - Bundesliga leaders Bayer Leverkusen twice came from a goal down and then bagged a second half stoppage time winner through Piero Hincapie to snatch a 3-2 win at RB Leipzig on Saturday and remain unbeaten in the league this season.

It was the second consecutive match that Xabi Alonso's team won with a last-gasp goal after their stoppage-time win over Augsburg last week.

Leverkusen, unbeaten in 27 consecutive matches across all competitions this season, are now on 48 points from 18 games,



Piero Hincapie scored the winner for Bayer Leverkusen

with second-placed Bayern Munich, who play Werder Bremen on Sunday, on 41 from 16 matches.

Leipzig, who have now gone three league games without a win for the first time under coach Marco Rose, are fourth on 33 points, level with fifth-placed Borussia Dortmund, winners 4-0 over Cologne.

"I don't know what this win means for the future but for now it is good to have a positive atmosphere in the team and sit in a good position in the table," Leverkusen coach Alonso told a press conference.

OMAN STAY IN CONTENTION

Ivankovic-coached side register first point with goalless draw against Thailand in the AFC Asian Cup in Qatar

Doha, **Qata** - Oman enjoyed the bulk of possession but were held to a goalless draw by Thailand in their Asian Cup Group F tie on Sunday.

The point helped Thailand boost their hopes of advancing to the knockout stage, while Oman are also in contention for progressing into the next round.

The result took Thailand to four points with three-time champions Saudi Arabia their final group stage opponents while Oman on one point, will need a convincing win against Kyrgyzstan in their concluding tie and a favourable result from the Thailand-Saudi Arabia match.

Thailand defeated Kyrgyz Republic 2-0 in their opener while Oman suffered a 2-1 defeat to Saudi Arabia.

While Thailand showed slightly more initiative in the

early minutes of the game, both teams began the match with a measured approach and avoided too many offensive forays. The War Elephants had their

Oman on one point, will need a convincing win against Kyrgyzstan in their concluding tie and a favourable result from the Thailand-Saudi Arabia match

first chance when a 15th minute corner kick from Teerathon Bunmathan was powerfully headed towards the Oman goal by defender Elias Dolah.

However, the attempt was



Oman's Salaah al Yahyaei (R) tries to stop Thailand's Suphanat Mueanta

cleared to safety by midfielder Abdullah Fawaz after being initially punched away by goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini.

Oman began to find their footing, Issam al Sabhi receiving Jameel al Yahmadi's cross at an opportune position inside the box but had his left-footed shot to the centre of the goal blocked by Thai goalkeeper Siwarak Ted-sungneon.

The West Asian side closed the half strongly but couldn't find a breakthrough as they took the stalemate into the break.

A more determined Thailand side took the field in the second half. There was a window of opportunity opened when Suphanat Mueanta intercepted an overhead cross from Oman's Arshad al Alawi and charged forward into the Oman box but was met by the steely figure of defender Ahmed al Khamisi.

Madan goal helps Bahrain edge Malaysia

Doha, **Qatar** - Ali Madan scored in the final seconds as Bahrain edged Malaysia 1-0 in Group E of the Asian Cup at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium on Saturday.

The win revives Bahrain's hopes of advancing to the knockout stage, with the West Asian side to face Jordan on Thursday while the defeat ends Malaysia's hopes, with the Southeast Asian side to conclude their campaign against South Korea.

Malaysia head coach Kim Pan-gon rang in the changes, with Dominic Tan and Shahrul Saad in a revamped defensive line-up with Corbin Ong and Matthew Davies on the flanks and they withstood Bahrain's early pressure.

Despite Bahrain starting on the front foot, it was Malaysia



Bahrain players celebrate with fans after their victory against Malaysia on Saturday

who had the first look at goal in the seventh minute when Corbin Ong 's long throw-in was deflected into the path of Dion Cools, who couldn't get his shot on target.

Malaysia came close again

shortly after when Faisal Halim weaved his way into the Bahraini box before relaying the pass to Paulo Josue who was dispossessed, with the ball then landing nicely for Arif Aiman, whose shot was saved by Ebrahim Lutfallah.

Malaysia grew in confidence and threatened again in the 20th minute with Josue finding space down the left flank to send a delightful cross to Arif, only for the Johor Darul Ta'zim midfielder to squander the opportunity.

Malaysia's Davies tested Lutfallah seven minutes later from distance while at the other end, Madan waltzed his way inside the box before rattling the upright from an acute angle.

Bahrain almost took the lead in the 31st minute through Khamis Al Aswad when he surged into the box and managed to slip the ball past goalkeeper Syihan Hazmi, only for Dominic to scramble the ball off the line .

Bahrain started the second half with the same intensity as they did the first but Abdullah Al Hashash, Al Aswad and Madan all saw their attempts go to waste.

Bahrain's persistence finally paid off when Madan struck with the outside of his left foot in the fifth minute of added time.

Klinsmann hails South Korea for not giving up

Doha, **Qatar** - South Korea coach Jurgen Klinsmann heralded his team's fighting spirit after the Taeguk Warriors salvaged a 2-2 with Jordan on Saturday through Yazan Al Arab's late own goal in their Asian Cup Group B tie.

The Jordanians succumbed following a prolonged period of sustained Korean pressure to give up the equaliser in the 91st minute having been on the cusp of a famous win against the two-time AFC Asian Cup winners.

"I was very pleased today with the reaction when we were 2-1 down," said Klinsmann. "In the last seven, eight games we've won every game and you can lose the feeling when you are a goal down and this was very important.



Jurgen Klinsmann

"Today the team had to swallow that Jordan went up 2-1 and had to react then and come back and the reaction was very positive. We had enough chances to win the game and Jordan had chances as well.

"It's important to see when things don't work out how players react and that's what I was really happy with."

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TURKISH CRAFTS

Beautiful

TURKIYE'S RICH HISTORY IS REFLECTED IN ITS CRAFTSMANSHIP RANGING FROM EMBROIDERY, TAPESTRY, WEAVING, METALWORK, WOODWORK AND MANY OTHERS, ALL OF WHICH ARE REPUTED FOR BEING BEAUTIFUL AND EVOCATIVE



One of the reasons to visit Turkiye is to encounter its rich cultural heritage reflected in its traditional crafts which have existed and evolved from ancient times till modern day civilisation.

Traditional Turkish handicrafts form a rich mosaic by bringing together genuine values with the cultural heritage of the different civilisations which have passed through Anatolia over the millennia.

Traditional Turkish handicrafts include carpet-making, rug-making, sumac, cloth-weaving, writing, tile-making, ceramics and pottery, embroidery, leather manufacture, musical instrument-

making, masonry, copper work, basket-making, saddle-making, felt-making, weaving, woodwork, cart-making etc.

Weaving materials in traditional Turkish handicrafts consist of wool, mohair, cotton, bristles and silk. Weaving can also be done with all kinds of cloth, and produces plaits, carpets, rugs and felt obtained by spinning thread, connecting the fibres together or by other methods.

Embroidery excellence

Embroidery, a unique example of Turkish handicrafts, is not only used for decoration but also as a means of communication tool with the symbolism in its designs. Today, embroidery made with tools such as the crochet needle, needle, shuttle and hairpin is designed either as a border or motif, and goes by different names according to the implement used and the technique. Embroidery is generally seen in the provinces of Kastamonu, Konya, Elazig, Bursa, Bitlis, Gaziantep, Izmir, Ankara, Bolu, Kahramanmaraş, Aydın, Içel, Tokat and Kütahya, although it is losing importance and being restricted to trousseau chests.

Along with embroidery used in traditional costumes, jewellery is also commonly used as an accessory. All the civilisations which have existed in Anatolia have produced artistic works made from precious or semi-precious stones and metal. Turkoman jewellery is an excellent example of genuine methods that were brought by the Seljuks.

In the Ottoman period, jewellery gained importance in parallel to the development of the empire. In the Bronze Age in Anatolia, bronze obtained by mixing tin with copper, and materials such as copper, gold and silver were also wrought and cast. Various techniques, such as casting, scraping, savaklama, küft-gani, ajir kesme and kazima were used. There are also different techniques for working

other materials such as brass, gold, silver, and today these handicrafts are trying to be kept alive today by using high quality workmanship and a variety of designs.

Woodwork, instruments

Architecture, whose origins lie in a need to provide permanent shelter, has also changed and adapted in accordance with local environmental conditions. This development led to wood carving gaining its unique characteristics during the Seljuk period. Seljuk wood-working crafts include extraordinary, high-quality workmanship, the commonest products most common being mosque niches, mosque doors and cupboard covers.

The materials used in woodworking were mostly walnut, apple, pear, cedar, ebony and rosewood. Wooden objects were created by such techniques such as tapping, painting, relief-engraving, caging, coating and burning, and these are still employed today. The use of walking sticks became popular in the 19th century, and these are still popular and made by the same methods in the provinces of Zonguldak, Bitlis, Gaziantep, Bursa, İstanbul-Beykoz and Ordu provinces. While the handles of walking sticks are made of materials such as silver, gold and bone, the sticks themselves are usually made of rose, cherry, ebony, bamboo and reed.

Making musical instruments has also been a tradition for many long years. These are made from materials such as trees, plants and the skin, bones and horns of animals, and are classified into string, percussion and woodwind groups.

Earthenware, stonework

Another art form is glazed earthenware tiles, which were brought to Anatolia by the Seljuks. Seljuk artists were especially successful at creating animal designs. The glazed earthenware tiles initiated in the 14th century in İznik, in the 15th century in Kütahya and in the 17th century in Çanakkale, made a positive contribution and brought new interpretations to Ottoman ceramic and glazed earthenware tile art.

The most distinctive examples of the glasswork of Anatolian civilisations illuminate

the development of the history of glass work.

The first production of glass in the form of a bead to ward of the evil eye was carried out by expert craftsmen in the village of Görele in the province of Izmir. It is possible to see beads for warding off the evil eye in every corner of Anatolia.

Stonework, too, plays an important role in exterior and interior decoration in traditional architecture. In addition to architecture, gravestones are other examples of stonework. Techniques such as carving, relief and inscription are applied to gravestones.

Basket-making is carried out by weaving reed, willow, and nut branches in a way that has come down from our ancestors. It is now used for home decoration in addition to its original purpose of helping to carry things.

By order of the Folk Culture Research and Development General Directorate, area inspections of handicrafts and expert producers are carried out each year wherein works of art are photographed and recorded for the archives, for use by scientists/researchers.

The General Directorate holds exhibitions making use of this archive, both inside and outside Turkiye. Regional handicraft exhibitions are also arranged for the purposes of promotion and to help artists find markets for their products.

The 'International Folk Culture Congress' once every five years also is a platform for scientific meetings and deliberations.

(Source: www.ktb.gov.tr)





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Photo: Tridwip K Das

JAMAL'S TREASURE TROVE

Jamal Muhammad Ali al Balushi's expertise in Omani jewellery is sought after by tourists, collectors and museums

Tridwip K Das

How can you tell Saidi khanjars from others made for commoners? They have seven rings. All others have four. How can you tell a bedouin's khanjar from others? From leather used in its sheath.

And how can you distinguish a khanjar made in North or South Sharqiyah from those originating in other governorates? From the mix of silver and gold inlay in the sheath. "The people of Sharqiyah were generally wealthy. They could afford gold," says Jamal Muhammad Ali al Balushi.

"Not just on khanjars, the mix of gold and silver is also a distinguishing feature of

and handicrafts shops in the souq. It all started with Muhammad's which he opened 49 years ago to sell Omani silver displayed on a rug spread out on the floor. Now 78, he's at his shop every day, setting an example for his sons to be there in person and actively involved in their businesses.

Balushi is making efforts to instil interest in his children to run his business. His eldest son occasionally accompanies him to the shop on school holidays. "He's only 15. I would like my children to take care of the business, but only time will tell."

He, however, sees the business from a wider perspective. "I am helping preserve Omani heritage and handicrafts by dealing in only authentic items. I can tell a fake from a distance. I hope this heritage and the traditions are treasured by future generations."



The people of Sharqiyah were generally wealthy. They could afford gold. The mix of gold and silver is a distinguishing feature of khanjars and traditional jewellery from the region



I am helping preserve Omani heritage and handicrafts by dealing in only authentic items. I hope this heritage and the traditions are treasured by future generations



John Kerry, ex-United States secretary of state and current US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, at Jamal al Balushi's shop on a visit to Oman in 2014

the traditional jewellery from the Sharqiyah region."

Balushi will drop these and more nuggets of information about traditional Omani jewellery and handicrafts by the dozen if you engage him in a conversation. Provided you can catch him when he's not busy at his shop named after him in Muttrah Souq. It has a steady stream of customers, who seek him out. A local celebrity - no less - it's easy to find him in the souq. Just ask for Jamal's shop.

A busy man

He comes highly recommended to customers for the authenticity of his wares. Not

just tourists, but for museums and collectors, too, who consult his expertise on traditional Omani jewellery. And when he's not regaling customers with his insightful tidbits, he's dealing with clients - including bedouins - who visit him to sell family heirloom like jewellery and khanjars or handicrafts.

Not quite heirloom but just as much, jewellery which Balushi sold many years ago have been sold back to him. He cited the case of an expatriate Petroleum Development Oman employee who had bought a collection of Omani jewellery from him. The expat's children got in touch with Balushi two decades after their father left Oman with



Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, at Balushi's shop in Muttrah Souq on a visit to Oman in 2014

an offer to sell the collection back to him.

Among those who source items for display from Balushi are the National Museum of Oman, Oman Across Ages Museum in Mannah, the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha and some others spread across Europe.

So, whether it's the lean summer months or busy winter tourist season, Balushi claims he keeps busy. If not at the counter, he'll be found tinkering away, inspecting or repairing items at a silversmith's workstation set up in a corner of his 26-year-old shop.

How it all started

Balushi's father Muhammad and his five brothers all have their own Omani jewellery

RO2,000 copper coffee pot

Besides Omani jewellery and handicrafts - khanjars with rhino-horn handle; 100-150 year old khanjars that can fetch upwards of RO15,000; copper coffee pots which collectors would consider a steal for RO2,000 - Balushi's shop is a treasure trove of curios, including antique ivory and coral, a curious device for face massage and still ticking West End watches that look from another era.

He himself wears two Rolex watches, one on each wrist, and two huge rocks - a blue sapphire and an emerald - on his fingers. "I can enjoy these treasures in Oman - it's safe here. Why not make the best of it?" he asks, signing off.