

H M issues Royal Decree appointing four non-resident envoys

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal Decree No 17/2024 on Monday appointing non-resident ambassadors.

Article 1 appoints Talal bin Sulaiman bin Habib al Rahbi, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Federative Republic of Brazil as Extraordinary, Plenipotentiary and Non-resident Ambassador of Oman to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay and the Republic of Colombia.

Article 2 appoints Badr bin Mohammed bin Badr al Mantheri, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as Extraordinary, Plenipotentiary and Non-resident Ambassador of Oman to the Republic of Iceland.

Article 3 appoints Ahmed bin Ali bin Said al Rashidi, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka as Extraordinary, Plenipotentiary and Non-resident Ambassador of Oman to the Republic of Maldives.

Article 4 appoints Hamoud bin Salim bin Abdullah al Tuwaiyah, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Russian Federation as Extraordinary, Plenipotentiary and Non-resident Ambassador of Oman to the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Serbia.

Article 5 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

ONA

New foundation to support Islamic teachings unveiled

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority, unveiled the Hidayah Endowment Foundation at an event held in Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Monday.

The foundation's objective is to secure sustainable funding to support initiatives to introduce Islamic teachings and facilitate scientific and cultural exchange.

Sheikh Abdul Rahman bin Ahmed al Khalili, Chairman of Board of Directors of the foundation, said it aims to present the essence of Islam to non-Muslims, while also showcasing Omani civilisation on a global stage. He emphasised Oman's historical role in upholding truth and supporting the oppressed, which has garnered scholarly interest worldwide.

Sheikh Abdul stressed the foundation's commitment to establishing sustainable financial sources, emphasising the importance of collaboration between

the public and private sectors, as well as individual philanthropists. He commended the cooperation from companies and institutions in support of the foundation's initiatives.

Highlighting Oman's historical significance and its openness to the world and its Islamic and Arab surroundings, Sheikh Abdul informed that the foundation's goal is to facilitate research and understanding of Oman's heritage. He stressed on the importance of collaboration and partnership between society, individuals and institutions to achieve this noble cause.

During the unveiling, the foundation signed five memorandums of understanding to establish strategic partnerships with various public and private institutions and agencies.

The agreements included a usufruct contract with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, cooperation in endowment work with Imam Jaber bin Zaid Endowment Foundation, and collaboration in institutional service with Bank Nizwa, among others.

H E Sayyid Badr calls for the need to compensate Palestinians in Gaza

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, has called for the need to compensate the Palestinians in Gaza for the loss of innocent lives and those affected by the Israeli war, and the need to make a collective and comprehensive effort to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

In an interview with Becky Anderson for CNN, H E Sayyid Badr touched on the critical and tragic situation in the Gaza Strip, calling on the international community to play a vital role in securing sustainable peace and taking quick measures to achieve it.

"The whole world is calling Israel not to move on to Rafah. I think enough is enough," he said.

The minister added that he joins US Vice President Kamala Harris' call for a ceasefire. "This will allow aid to flow by land and it will also allow Israel's remaining hostages to be released peacefully



"The whole world is calling Israel not to move on to Rafah. I think enough is enough"

H E SAYYID BADR AL BUSAIDI

fully and not through war. And then a process of peace and reconstruction of shattered lives can begin. After a ceasefire, the

international community has to work swiftly and courageously for a sustainable peace."

H E Sayyid Badr pointed to the

escalating tensions in the Red Sea, which underscores the complexity of regional dynamics, pointing out the importance of in-

volving all parties in the dialogue.

"We will always be in favour of de-escalation and in order to do that, we need to get people to talk with each other. Iran is part of the region and I think engaging with all the regional countries is a very important element, a prerequisite for de-escalation and for bringing a common goal of peace for the whole world. However horrifying the action of Hamas has been or however devastating Israel's assault on Gaza and the 30,000 deaths inflicted, both Israel and Hamas have to be part of the solution."

H E Sayyid Badr stressed on Oman's commitment to peace and stability in the region. "The whole world has said again and again, there is no other way to have sustainable peace in the long term except the establishment of a two-state solution. In order to stop the cycle of violence and to stop terror and stop the killing and save lives, we need to establish that goal in mind and turn it into action."



Israeli army orders evacuations from Gaza City



Oman to host Namibia for five-match series





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Zakat Committee allocates RO37,000 to support the needy in Muttrah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Zakat Committee in Muttrah is distributing food baskets worth over RO37,000 among needy families, laid off workers and expatriates. This is in addition to over 900 iftar meals prepared daily by the committee in its efforts to enhance social solidarity this Ramadan.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Salim bin Mohammed al Ghamari, Chairman of Zakat Committee in Muttrah, said, "Zakat committees are administered by the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs. The Muttrah committee aims to support 500 needy families this Ramadan."

Each family will be supported with a food basket that contains



500 families will receive food baskets having items valued at RO25, vouchers of RO20 for vegetables and fruits and RO30 for other items

MOHAMMED AL GHAMARI

rice, flour, coffee, sugar, tomato paste, dates, powdered milk and other items valued at around RO25. The committee will also



give them vouchers worth RO20 to buy vegetables and fruits and RO30 for various other items. "The committee also dis-

tributes more than 900 iftar meals daily in mosques in Muttrah and to students from low-income families," Ghamari

informed. The committee has a stringent monitoring and selection process to identify its beneficia-

ries. "If someone approaches us to receive zakat or donations, we ask them to submit a bank statement, salary certificate of the applicant or of any other working family member, rent details, utility expenses, and loan installment details," Ghamari added.

"We calculate the income of the whole family and decide if the applicant is eligible for zakat. We pay an amount based on the number of family members. If the family is big, we pay a bigger amount."

Every wilaayat in the sultanate has a zakat committee connected to a central database. Applications for assistance in more than one wilaayat are automatically rejected. "We have a clear and transparent system. If someone wishes to know where we

have distributed zakat, we can provide a statement of our transactions - where and to whom we have paid his or her zakat amount. The details will include the names and phone numbers of beneficiaries. They can be called directly if anyone wants to cross-check."

In 2023, the Zakat Committee in Muttrah allocated over RO306,379 for various Ramadan programmes.

The programmes are wide-ranging and include Zakat, Sadakh, Eid Meat, Eid Clothing, Orphan Sponsorship, Student Sponsorship and Family Empowerment.

Those interested in contributing directly to the Zakat Committee in Muttrah can call on 96774459 or contact via Zakat_muttrah on Instagram.

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Fak Kurbah to secure release of 1,500 prisoners this year

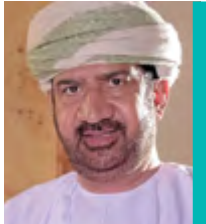
Our Correspondent
Muscat

A number of public and private sector institutions have pledged support to the 'Fak Kurbah' initiative, which will help secure the release of 1,500 people convicted or imprisoned for insolvency this year.

Now in its 11th edition, Fak Kurbah is organised by Omani Lawyers Association under the theme 'Because we believe that a person deserves a second chance'.

Dr Mohammed al Zadjali, Chairman of Omani Lawyers Association and Supervisor of Fak Kurbah, thanked all contributors to the initiative, which includes individuals, groups and institutions.

He emphasised the fact that the initiative's remarkable success is testament to the solidarity and compassion inherent in Omani society, as well as its unwavering commitment to extending support to the less fortunate. This bolsters the efforts of those leading the charge towards achieving Fak Kurbah's



The initiative's remarkable success is testament to the solidarity and compassion inherent in Omani society

DR MOHAMMED AL ZADJALI

social and humanitarian objectives.

Zadjali underscored the significant role played by both public and private entities, highlighting their invaluable contributions as a further testament to the initiative's effectiveness and its impact resonating across all sectors of society. "Such col-

laborations are a compelling evidence of the resilience and unity of Omani society, uniting individuals and institutions alike in pursuit of shared humanitarian goals."

Since its launch in 2012, Fak Kurbah has facilitated the resolution of over 5,890 insolvency cases, including 925 last year.

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Bima Insurance launches Ramadan Padel Cup

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To encourage sportsmanship and supports sports activities in society, Bima Insurance Company has announced the launch of the inaugural Ramadan Padel Cup from March 19 to March 23.

Organising the tournament reflects the company's continued dedication to its customers, encouraging them to engage in physical activities and maintaining physical fitness during Ramadan.

Padel is easy to learn and practise, and is suitable for all ages and athletic levels. In addition, padel is an excellent way to improve physical fitness and enhance social interaction, as it brings players together in fun and exciting



Abdullah al Kharousi (L) and Zuhair Fadi el Haj (Supplied photo)

settings.

Stressing the significance of organising the tournament, Abdullah al Kharousi, Marketing Director at Bima Insurance, said, "We realise the vital role sports play in enhancing physical and mental health of individuals, and therefore we always strive to encourage our customers to engage in physical activities for entertainment and motivation."

According to Zuhair Fadi el Haj, Events Manager at

Choice Advertising Agency, the tournament is an opportunity for customers to interact with each other through the exciting sport, while enhancing the spirit of solidarity and cooperation among community members.

The tournament will be held at Al Hayat Padel Courts in Hilton Garden Inn Hotel, Al Khuwayr, providing an opportunity for participants to enjoy a range of exciting matches and compete to win valuable cash prizes.



Student company develops smart shoe for diabetics

Our Correspondent

Muscat

Nine students of Oman College of Health Sciences have developed a smart shoe with the aim of reducing complications in diabetic patients.

The idea for the smart shoe emerged from experiences of the team during their training in hospitals, where they observed the significant challenges faced by diabetic patients.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Yassin Khalfan al Alawi, CEO of Boora student company, informed that the team conceived the idea in October 2023. The objective of the device is to decrease the incidence of amputations in the sultanate, while alleviating the severe complications associated with diabetes, including neuropathy and slow wound healing.

Alawi emphasised that as medical students, their inspira-

tion came after witnessing the rising prevalence of diabetes in Oman. The shoe is equipped with essential features for diabetic patients, besides a layer of nano-coatings to inhibit bacterial and fungal growth.

He added that the smart shoe incorporates sensors to anticipate the likelihood of ulcers or wounds in the feet of diabetic patients. It is also connected to a mobile app, enabling patients or their family members to receive real-time alerts from anywhere in the world. Additionally, the shoe houses a database for patients to utilise during consultations with their healthcare providers.

To facilitate smooth operations, the team is structured based on members' roles - finance of director, operations director; human resources director; production, development and quality review committee; and promotions, marketing and sales committee.

Boroa has applied for intellectual property and patent protection rights from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

"Despite encountering challenges, including access to manufacturers or investors initially, the team persevered, which led to the successful production and launch of the shoe on March 10 this year. We are working to commercialise the product in local markets and attracting foreign investments," Alawi said.

He reiterated Boroa's commitment to offering innovative medical solutions, aiming to revolutionise the healthcare sector by integrating cutting-edge medical technologies. He emphasised the team's dedication to innovating medical products to enhance healthcare services and aligning these with the industrial revolution.

The team can be contacted through X @boroa_co

Municipality plans better accessibility to Wadi al Arbaeen, invites bids to develop road

Our Correspondent

Muscat

With emerald green streams and enticing pools, Wadi al Arbaeen is nature's gift to Oman, attracting both adventure seekers and families. However, the 7km dirt road to access it is a deterrent for many, especially during rains.

To make Wadi al Arbaeen easily accessible, Muscat Municipality is planning to develop a road from Al Bathaa village in Quriyat for which it has floated a

tender.

In a statement, the municipality said 'The tender floated for the Wadi al Arbabeen road project aims to address issues caused by the current dirt road that connects villages around the wadi, particularly during heavy rains and the flow of the wadi. The rugged road often becomes impassable during unstable weather conditions, hindering the movement of residents in the region and neighbouring areas.'

The proposed road will run a length of 6.5km. It will include the construction of 18 box culverts to efficiently drain rainwater, installation of LED street lights and implementation of safety measures.

The objectives of this infrastructure project are to enhance the region's connectivity, promote tourism and development, provide efficient and high-quality services, and contribute to the overall sustainability of Muscat as a city.

Wheat harvest commences in Dhofar, cultivation expands 29%

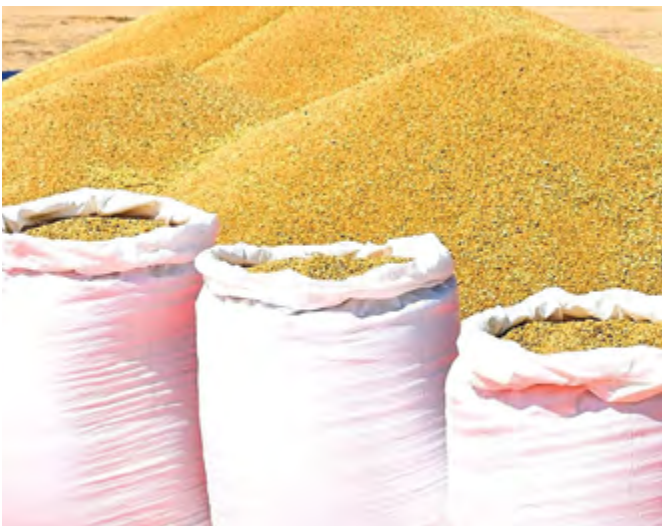
Our Correspondent

Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in collaboration with Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund, has started the 2023/2024 wheat harvest season in the Najd region of Dhofar.

This season, the wheat cultivation area expanded to 7,200 acres, up 29%. The increased cultivation area is expected to increase production to around 10,000 tonnes.

Saeed bin Muslim al Kathiri, Director of Department of Agriculture and Water Resources in Thumrait, informed that the 7,200 acres of cultivated area in the Najd region are spread over 82 farms. Six agricultural harvesters have been mobilised to



support farmers during the harvest.

To facilitate cultivation in the expanded area, the ministry allocated 30 tonnes of wheat seeds to farmers, provided wheat har-

vesters free of charge, and streamlined the wheat purchasing process in collaboration with Oman Flour Mills Company.

Kathiri emphasised the critical role of wheat in bolstering food

security, highlighting its significance as a vital economic and strategic crop. He underscored the ministry's commitment to increasing wheat cultivation across the sultanate, particularly in the Najd region of Dhofar.

The Najd boasts ample agricultural land and accessible groundwater making it an ideal location for wheat cultivation.

The ministry's incentives to encourage farmers to increase wheat cultivation and quality, include distributing fortified seeds - varieties such as Wadi Quriyat 110, 308, 226 and 227, Jibreen, Kuli, Najd 1 and Najd 2.

The ministry also provides guidance on agricultural practices and necessary equipment for wheat harvesting to further support and boost wheat cultivation in the region.

ABRAJ

ENERGY SERVICES SAOG

Chairman's Report

Dear Shareholders,

The Board of Directors is pleased to welcome the Shareholders to the eighth Annual General Meeting of Abraj Energy Services SAOG (Abraj) and to present the Annual Report for the financial year ended 31st December 2023.

Abraj had, sustainably, performed well throughout the year 2023, with good steady results from the Drilling and workover services and a remarkable contribution from Well Services. Building on the strong recovery post-Covid-19, the company has continued to grow in revenue, net profit, and market share. Abraj has successfully managed to grow outside Oman for the first time by winning a contract for the provision of drilling rigs in Kuwait. This breakthrough in penetrating the regional market will form a strong base for Abraj to retain the current growth rates.

Abraj is focused on providing services around Oil and Gas Wells, during and post wells construction. From building a wider service portfolio, Abraj now focuses on strategic, top-tier services coupled with strong operational efficiency to realize maximum financial returns and sustainable growth. Abraj continues to benefit from the strength of long-term contracts in generating sufficient cash flow for growth.

Abraj Energy Services SAOG Performance:

In 2023, Abraj managed to breakthrough the regional market by penetrating the Kuwait drilling market with the award of 3 drilling rigs with KIGOC, expected to start operation in 2024. Abraj fleet remained at 25 Drilling rigs with 100% utilization for our drilling rigs and 100% utilization for workover rigs. Our market share is at 29% for drilling rigs and becoming the leader and national champion of Oman.

HSE:

Abraj had a very good HSE Performance in the year 2023. Abraj managed 2023 with zero LTI and as a result LTR remained zero against the threshold of 0.36, whereas TRCF by end of the year was 0.49 against the threshold of 1.17. RTAF remain 0.09 against the threshold of 0.20. Management site audits were completed successfully as per plan in 2023. Also, level 1 contractor audit completed as per set plan in 2023. Medical fitness to work compliance achieved 99% by the end of 2023. All Abraj units (Rigs, Workover and Well Services) achieved LTI free year in 2023 however below units LTI free years are among the top:

MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,770.28
Sensex	72,748.42
FOREX RATES	
(RO1 equals)	
India	215.42
Pakistan	726.30
Bangladesh	285.27
Philippines	144.50
Sri Lanka	793.54

*Rates as on March 18
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

China's auto exports soar 30%

China's automobile exports jumped 30.5% year-on-year in the first two months of 2024, industry data shows.

A total of 822,000 vehicles were exported during the period, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

Exports of passenger vehicles soared 31.5% year-on-year to 686,000 units, and exports of commercial vehicles totaled 136,000 units, rising 25.9% from the same period last year.

The data has also revealed that China exported 182,000 new-energy vehicles during the period, up 7.5% year-on-year.

China surpassed Japan to become the world's number one car exporter last year, driven by strong demand in Russia and growing global appetite for electric vehicles (EV).

Galfar's order book increases to RO579mn on new contracts

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Driven by new contract awards, Galfar Engineering & Contracting Company, the largest construction firm in Oman, has recorded significant growth in its order book, which rose to RO579mn at the end of 2023 compared to RO517mn a year ago.

The order book improvement came as a result of new project awards worth RO397mn to the company during 2023, according to Galfar's yearly financial statement submitted to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Galfar generated significantly higher sales revenue during 2023 and continued to achieve positive operating results. The company's sales revenue jumped by 43.7% year-on-year during 2023 to reach RO239mn, supported by a robust order book with a positive operating profit.

However, the parent company's net profit dropped to RO0.57mn in 2023 compared to RO4.63mn recorded in the previous year. The parent company continues to make 96% of Galfar's entire consolidated business.

The main factors for the decline in net profit are related to non-operational reasons concerning the implementation of the new labour law, especially regarding end-of-service benefits for foreign employees,' Galfar said in its report.

Galfar mentioned that its subsidiary companies in Oman, which include Aspire Readymix,



Galfar expects to maintain a solid order book of over RO500mn in the future with a significant number of tenders under evaluation across a diverse array of sectors and clients

Aspire Projects, and Al Khaliq Heavy Equipment, substantially improved their performance in 2023. The subsidiary companies' bottom line improved from a loss of RO2.94mn in 2022 to RO0.02mn in the year ended December 31, 2023.

As per the company report, Galfar is determined to improve its subsidiaries and associates' performance and has put in place strategic plans and measures to overcome associated challenges

to further improve the business with full support from the parent company.

Future outlook

Galfar expects to maintain a solid order book of over RO500mn in the future with a significant number of tenders under evaluation across a diverse array of sectors and clients.

'We reasonably expect to be successful in a number of those projects which will ensure the stability and sustainability of our strong market position. In addition, the company continues to progress in various diversification opportunities in construction technology, energy, PPP projects, and other sectors that will provide long-term sustainability and growth opportunities for the company in the future,' Galfar said.

With the announcement of numerous infrastructure projects in Oman, Galfar said it is looking ahead to 2024 with optimism, buoyed by the substantial volume of work available in Oman. The company said it views the abundance of projects as a significant opportunity for growth and expansion. Particularly crucial to Galfar's strategy is its continued emphasis on the energy sector, where it maintains a robust order book.

'As of the outset of 2024, Galfar's order book stands at an impressive value of over RO579mn, underlining its strong position in the market and its readiness to capitalise on emerging opportunities. This substantial backlog not only provides a solid foundation for the company's operations but also signifies its proactive approach to securing future growth and success in Oman's thriving construction landscape,' the company said.

In its report, Galfar noted that it is committed to turnaround and improving financial performance with a continued focus on implementing the company's turnaround strategy.

'The company continued to explore avenues to strengthen its financial position in a challenging and highly competitive economic environment. As part of the company's turnaround strategy, measures to control expenses and improve efficiencies in project execution are pursued,' Galfar added.



TENDER REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION LEADING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF WIND INDEPENDENT POWER PROJECTS (IPPs), SULTANATE OF OMAN

Nama Power and Water Procurement (PWP) is responsible for procuring new capacity for power and water and for purchasing and selling the output in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with the requirements of the law for the regulation and privatization of the electricity and related water sector promulgated by Royal Decree 78/2004 as amended and the PWP license. PWP is announcing the launch of the qualification process for interested developers through the issuance of the Request for Qualification (RFQ) document.

In line with Sultanate of Oman vision to diversify fuel sources and achieving net zero target by 2050 through the use of clean energy for power generation, PWP is planning to develop five Wind projects with a cumulative capacity of around 1000 MW at various location ("Wind IPPs" or "Projects") in partnership with the private sector, projects details below:

Project	Capacity	Location	SCOD
Sale of Dhofar I	50 MW	Harweel	Achieved COD in 2019
Dhofar II	114-132 MW	Harweel	Q2 2027
Jaalan Bani Bu Ali	91-105 MW	Jaalan Bani Bu Ali	Q1 2027
Duqm	234-270 MW	Ras Madrakah	Q4 2027
Sadah	81-99 MW	Sadah	Q4 2027
Mahoot I	342-400 MW	Mahoot	Q4 2027

PWP is announcing the launch of the qualification process for interested developers through the issuance of the Request for Qualification (RFQ) document.

Tender Number	Tender Title	Tender Purchase Price	Statement of Qualification Submission Deadline
OPWP/2024/08	Request For Qualification for the Development of Wind IPPs	RO 500 Last day of purchase is 08 April 2024	08 May 2024 Before 12.00 pm (Gulf Standard Time).

Disclaimer: This RFQ is for interested developers and is not applicable to interested or potential EPC contractors.

The tender documents are available for purchase in an electronic format through PWP website: (<https://www.omanpwp.com/new/Default.aspx>) after completion of the registration process via the e-tendering system.

The supplier user manual can be accessed on the official website of the Company. In case of any queries, please send an email to: (procurement.officer@Omanpwp.nama.om).



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البريد الإلكتروني: info@omanpwp.com
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Madayn launches 'Explore' platform to showcase investment opportunities

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has officially launched its geographic information system 'Explore', marking a significant step in its efforts to provide an attractive investment environment and promote project localisation across diverse sectors.

The system, which was launched under the auspices of Eng Dawood bin Salim al Hadabi, CEO of Madayn, aims to assist investors in pinpointing the available investment opportunities in the industrial cities.

Aliaa al Nassri, Planning and Geographical System Director at the Directorate General of Facilities and Infrastructures at Madayn, said that the Explore platform comes as part of Madayn's Digital Transformation Plan (2021-2025), which is aligned with the objectives of Madayn Vision 2040.

"The platform aims to create sustainable digital solutions con-



Aliaa al Nassri

ducive to industrial growth and investment appeal, ensuring a robust and competitive industrial sector," Aliaa said.

She added, "Through Explore, investors can access comprehensive information about each industrial city, including area size, leasing policy, investment data, and types of activities. They can explore the profiles of companies and investors operating within the industrial cities, gaining insights into their business activities and contact details."

The platform also offers dynamic 2D and 3D views of the Knowledge Oasis Muscat, and allows users to search for invest-

ment opportunities tailored to their specific needs by identifying relevant industrial and commercial activities and specifying required land areas.

Aliaa further elaborated that the Explore platform provides an array of services catering to both current and prospective investors in Madayn through (www.explore.madayn.om).

"The platform features a user-friendly interface, seamlessly integrated with Masar Service Centre. Once a request is made through the Explore platform, it smoothly transfers to Masar for further processing. Moreover, the platform presents a variety of up-to-date investment opportunities, allowing investors to explore a range of options across all industrial cities based on their respective business and industrial activities," she added.

Initially introduced in 2009, the geographic information system has undergone a comprehensive restructuring as part of Madayn's Digital Transformation Plan (2021-2025).

GROWTH THROUGH TOURISM

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) would like to invite competent and experienced companies to participate in the following Tender:

Tender No.	03/2024
Tender Title	Supplying, Installing, and Commissioning Two Diesel Generator Sets for Al Bustan Palace Hotel
Tender Submission Closing Date	09 April 2024
Tender Process Details	Please visit: www.omran.om/tenders/



omran.om/tenders/

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Oil prices likely to be above \$80 in 2024: Survey

London – Brent oil is expected to be above \$80 a barrel at the end of 2024, the price OPEC+ seems to be targeting as a floor, according to the majority (53%) of respondents to Bloomberg Intelligence’s (BI) February oil-price survey, with only 5% seeing prices surpassing \$100.

Just a quarter (24%) of respondents expect peak oil demand before 2030 – compared with almost 50% in BI’s 2022 oil survey – as sentiment shifts around the resilience of demand and the outlook for continued consumption growth. In addition, a significant majority of respondents (92%) said there is a less than a \$5-a-barrel geopolitical risk premium attached to oil prices by the market currently, despite several high-profile disputes and tensions.

In a press release, Salih Yilmaz, Senior Industry Analyst – Energy at Bloomberg Intelligence, said, “The turmoil in the Red Sea and the Israel-Hamas conflict has arguably had a limited effect on prices, given there hasn’t been any substantial disruption to oil flows, and OPEC+ has a meaningful amount of spare capacity. However, the Middle East tensions and the geopolitical risk premium may be slowly starting to become more baked into oil prices. That’s after they were outweighed by weak economic prospects and a bleak demand picture in the past few months, as Brent oil price tests \$85 a barrel.”



Global oil demand expected to reach a record in 2024, helped by a recovery in jet-fuel consumption

BI’s survey shows that there is a wide disparity of opinion around what the biggest driver

will be for oil prices over the next two years. Over a quarter of respondents (27%) said it will be

OPEC+ policy, while another 27% said it’ll be the China demand story. Some 22% believe it will be the non-OPEC+ supply growth, and another 14% think it’ll be the Fed policy and interest rate outlook.

Yilmaz added, “According to our findings, geopolitical devel-

opments have been one of the key drivers of crude in the past few months though only 10% of the respondents think this will be the biggest driver of oil prices over the next two years.”

More than half (55%) of those polled think the OPEC+ alliance will still be in place in

2025, as its intervention in the market during the pandemic was deemed successful overall, noted BI. This compares with 76% in its 2023 survey, however, showing confidence in the group’s unity has fallen as there’s still some tension among some members amid the contin-

ued need for the output cuts. Yilmaz added, “The addition to OPEC of Russia and other oil-producing states has created a larger bloc, enabling more output to be monitored and managed. The group’s agility has helped it become effective in responding to market moves. With a monitoring committee overseeing output more closely, OPEC+ is also arguably better positioned to manage the supply-demand balance.”

Demand outlook
BI’s latest survey has shown a shift in sentiment over the resilience of demand and the outlook for continued consumption growth, with only 24% of the respondents expecting peak oil demand before 2030 – compared with almost 50% in the 2022 survey. More than a third (69%) see demand for crude peaking by 2035 vs. more than 80% of respondents in the 2022 poll. Global demand is forecast to be between 102mn-103mn bpd on average in 2024 (vs. 101.8mn bpd in 2023), according to 51% of respondents, while only 18% see it above 103mn bpd. Yilmaz concluded, “Global demand growth was underwhelming last year, driven by a softening outlook in China amid rising unemployment and turmoil in its property sector. Even so, demand is still expected to reach another record this year, helped by further recovery in jet-fuel consumption – about 8% of the pre-pandemic total.”

Iran signs \$13bn new oil contracts

Irina Slav

Iran has signed new contracts for the development of oil fields worth \$13bn, planning to add 350,000 barrels per day (bpd) to daily production.

The deals are the biggest in the energy space for the past decade, state news agency Shana reported. They were all signed with local companies, according to oil minister Javad Owji.

The production increase effort will focus on six fields, including the biggest one that Iran shares with neighbor Iraq—Azadegan—and its oldest producing field, Masjed Soleyman. The latter is the oldest producing field in the Middle East, with a total output to date of over a billion barrels.

Iran has been working on boosting both its oil production and exports for a while now and the effort is paying off. Last year, the country exported 1.29mn bpd on average, which was 50% more than a year earlier. As before, most of this went to China.



As for production, as of January this year, this stood at 3.163mn barrels. This compares with over 4.3mn barrels daily before the US reimposed sanctions on Tehran, but there is space for growth.

According to Iran’s former oil minister Bijan Zanganeh, this growth could take the average

daily all the way to 7mn barrels in less than ten years. The boost would cost about \$70bn, Zanganeh said recently, as quoted by Iran International.

Last year, Iran’s oil minister said the country’s oil production should rise to 3.6mn by the end of the Iranian calendar year, which ends this month. Output

will probably fall short of that, as the latest monthly figures hover around 3.2mn barrels daily.

Last year’s exports, however, have topped the target for the next calendar year, which was set at 1.35mn barrels daily. The price, at which exports were calculated, was \$65 per barrel.

[Source: Oilprice.com]

UAE-US non-oil trade rises to \$31.4bn in 2023

Abu Dhabi, UAE – The volume of non-oil trade between the UAE and the United States reached \$31.4bn in 2023, and is expected to continue growing at the same pace in 2024, according to Danny E Sebright, President of the US-UAE Business Council.

Sebright added, in statements to the Emirates News Agency (WAM), that US exports to the UAE reached \$24.8bn last year, exceeding 2022 exports of \$20.8bn, by 19%, noting that the UAE remained the top US export destination in the Middle East and Africa for the fifth consecutive year.

The President of the US-UAE Business Council highlighted that US exports to the UAE support 125,000 jobs in



Danny E Sebright

the US, while UAE exports to the US totaled \$6.6bn last year.

Sebright said that UAE investments in the US market continue to grow, focusing on various sectors including real

estate, manufacturing, healthcare, and technology.

He pointed to three areas with greater potential for further cooperation between the two countries in 2024: healthcare and life sciences, financial services and private equity, and technology and artificial intelligence.

Sebright said that the UAE and the United States continue to build on the tremendous progress made last year in the lead-up to the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in the areas of renewable energy, food security, and sustainability, in addition to the continued strength of traditional foundations of the bilateral trade relationship between the two countries in sectors such as space, defence, and energy.

Indian patent office grants record 100,000 patents in past year

New Delhi, India – India’s Ministry of Commerce and Industry said that the Patent Office has granted an unprecedented 100,000 patents within a single year.

As per an official release, in the fiscal year 2023-24 alone, the Patent Office received an all-time high of 90,300 patent applications. The Patent Office granted over 100,000 patents in the last one year (15-Mar-2023 to 14-Mar-2024). Every working day, 250 patents were granted, the ministry said.

Alongside patent grants, there has been a notable surge in GI registrations, demonstrating a threefold increase compared to the previous year. Currently, India boasts 573 registered GIs, with 98 new registrations in the fiscal

year 2023-24, according to the release.

Additionally, copyright registrations have reached a record-breaking 36,378, underscoring the vast potential within the creative sector. In the realm of design, the fiscal year 2023-24 witnessed the highest number of registrations to date, totalling 27,819, alongside the final disposal of 30,450 applications.

Noteworthy initiatives such as Toycathon, jointly organized by J&K SCERT and the Indian IP Office, have facilitated the registration of 115 novel designs by J&K school students, according to the release.

The Trade Marks Registry has also redoubled its efforts to expedite trademark protection.

ANI

China’s industrial output accelerates pace

Beijing, China – China’s industrial production picked up pace in the first two months of 2024, accompanied by faster growth in the high-tech manufacturing and the consumer goods manufacturing sectors, official data showed Monday.

The value-added industrial output, an important economic indicator, went up 7% year-on-year during the January-February period of 2024, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said.

The growth accelerated 0.2 percentage points from December 2023, according to the NBS.

On a monthly basis, industrial output edged up 0.56% in February from the previous month.

Commenting on the industrial data, NBS spokesperson Liu Aihua highlighted the notable uptick in the high-tech manufac-



turing and consumer goods manufacturing sectors.

High-tech manufacturing registered a 7.5% year-on-year increase in industrial output during the January-February period, up

1.1 percentage points from December 2023. The figure saw accelerated expansion for the third consecutive month, Liu said.

During the same period, the consumer goods manufacturing

sector saw its value-added industrial output rise 4.7% year-on-year, accelerating by 4.4 percentage points from that in December 2023, according to Liu.

While cautioning about the remaining challenges faced by industrial enterprises stemming from a lack of orders and rising costs, Liu also highlighted the increasing innovation capacity in the industrial sector. She noted that China has nurtured a number of competitive industries in key fields.

A slew of supportive policies introduced lately including large-scale equipment renewal, trading-in of consumer goods and business environment optimization, are expected to further boost the subsequent industrial economy, according to Liu.

The industrial output is used to measure the activity of enterprises each with an annual main business turnover of at least 20mn yuan.

Xinhua

MoE partners with Bank Muscat to conduct training programme on financial awareness

The Ministry of Education and Bank Muscat signed an agreement on implementing a training Programme that falls within the Bank's sustainable 'Maliyat' academy programme.

The agreement was signed by H E Majid bin Said al Bahri, Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs in the Ministry of Education and Sheikha bint Yousuf al Farsi, Chief Operating Officer, Bank Muscat, in the presence of a number of officials from the bank and the ministry.

Signing the agreement came with the aim of raising and enhancing the awareness of students from different schools across the sultanate on financial affairs, as well as encouraging them to embark on saving practices that allow them to prepare for a financially planned-for future at an early stage. It is worth noting that 10,000 school students from different governorates will be trained at the programme with the participation of 60 professionals.

Financial awareness is one of the major themes which must be instilled among individuals in the society, as it allows them to gain the confidence, skills, and knowledge needed to take proper financial decisions in multiple areas in life. Considering the present economic changes, gaining financial awareness constitutes an important practice as it helps individuals and families enjoy financially stable and decent lives and represents a crucial pillar for futuristic economic growth both for Omanis and non-Omanis. Hence, it is critical that all individuals be financially aware and knowledgeable for them to be able to set proper financial plans



10,000 school students from different governorates will be trained at the programme with the participation of 60 professionals

for their future, understand major terminology related to finance such as budgets, returns, insurance, and loans, in addition to coping with unexpected life circumstances such as economic crisis and job loss cases.

About signing the agreement, Majid al Bahri said, "We are pleased to enhance our partnership with Bank Muscat, a leading institution in launching initiatives

and Programmes that serve different segments of the society including school students. Enhancing students' awareness on financial affairs is a key subject to be considered and enhanced among this segment. The ministry is keen to fostering its partnership with various institutions committed to launching such initiatives that aim to encourage students to set financial and reg-

ular plans for their future."

Sheikha al Farsi of Bank Muscat said, "We take pride in the Bank's successful partnership with the Ministry of Education, driving both partners to be contributory to serving all segments of the society. We would like to extend our appreciation and gratitude to the ministry for its dedication to supporting and implementing the training Programme at different schools across the sultanate, targeting a large number of participants of school students. Bank Muscat gives special attention and im-

portance to sustainability and CSR-related fields and it commits to raising the financial awareness of the society through the launch of sustainable initiatives and Programmes, encouraging all segments to financially plan well for their future."

She further added, "The Maliyat academy falls under Bank Muscat's initiatives launched to spread financial awareness among the youth in the society and allow them to prepare themselves for a well-planned future. These initiatives are set to equip the youth, espe-

cially school students, with the skills they need to take prudent decisions on how to financially become independent individuals. We would like to extend our thanks to all relevant stakeholders for making Bank Muscat's initiatives and events a success."

In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, it is worth noting that Bank Muscat previously organised a 'train-the-trainer' programme for a number of professionals representing different schools across the sultanate and the ministry's department of Entrepreneurship to enable them to

deliver the programme material to students.

The programme comprised workshops delivered to participants who were introduced to the 5 key chapters of the bank's 'Maliyat' academy programme, each focusing on a different subject. Chapter 1 of the academy covers 'Sound Decision-Taking', which defines money and introduces students to the importance of taking sound financial decisions for securing a decent life. Chapter 2 touches upon 'Learn How to Gain Money' and urging students to look for possible ways to acquire money for the future. Chapter 3 focuses on 'Saving and Spending' and it emphasizes the significance of setting sound spending plans to familiarize students with the effective objectives of doing such a practice. The chapter also introduces the students to the concept of budget and its role in money-saving practices. Chapter 4 sheds the light on 'Grow Your Money' and it aims to raise students' awareness about the impacts of taking effective investment decisions on capital growth by time. Chapter 5 focuses on 'Giving' and the sense of strength and satisfaction this practice triggers in individuals.

The training Programme targets school students aged 13 years old and above and it is set to combine the theoretical material with engaging activities for enabling a facilitated learning process. In this regard, the learning manual designed for students is composed of multiple engaging chapters, each introducing a basic concept about financial awareness including gaining, saving, and growing money.

Ramadan specials at Mövenpick Hotel and Apartments Ghala

Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts had recently made its Oman debut with the launch of the Mövenpick Hotel and Apartments Ghala Muscat, a contemporary and stylish five-star property that introduced the brand's renowned accent on Swiss hospitality to the sultanate.

Amoun is the signature dining destination at Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Ghala Muscat; with the restaurant's name itself derived from the word, Oman. A little haven representing the Omani historic and culinary richness, Amoun's friendly and informal ambience is punctuated by little surprises - from Arabian pottery to Portuguese tiles and a vibrant Zanzibari colour palette. Amoun in the future will display a range of specially curated cookbooks and Omani products, like honey, dates, and handmade baskets, which patrons can simply pick up and add to their dine-in bill.

This Ramadan, Amoun is recreating an iftar themed on, and inspired by, the traditions of Batinah, Dhakliya and Sharqiyah regions. The extravagant spread will also include international dishes for added variety.

One of the attributes being represented from the region is the tradition of breaking the fast with deliciously nutritious dates that are locally sourced from plantations that are watered by the famed Omani Al Falaj system, listed on the Unesco World Heritage List in 2006 under the name 'Aflaj Irrigation System of



Oman', which channel mineral-rich water from natural aquifers and mountain springs.

After breaking the fast, guests can indulge in customary appetisers and salads followed by timeless Omani classics like Chicken Mandi rice with fried onions and nuts, Lamb harees, Beef saloona, Shish taouk with garlic sauce, Chicken madrouba, Lamb qalya, Lamb Ouzi and succulent Prawns jareesh.

Special items on the menu also include a fare of international dishes all topped-off with a mouthwatering selection of authentic desserts, like Mouhalabiah, Umm Ali, Luqman, and Aleasida.

"From the Omani coast to the interiors; from the mountains to the valleys, we have a full range of tastes to suit every palate," said Erhan Demmir, executive chef. "Also, to complement the

richness of the traditions and flavours of the menu, for iftar at Amoun on the weekends, we will host cultural entertainers and local artisans."

Iftar at Amoun will open with a special all-inclusive pricing of RO16,500 net for confirmed bookings before the 20th of March. "For larger gatherings of private guests for Iftar, we recommend the exceptional 630sqm free space of Al Falaj Ballroom with a delicious international and traditional Arabic spread to choose from. The ballroom comes with a separate entrance and outstanding service provided by our dedicated events team," Erhan explained.

Iftar at Mövenpick Hotel and Apartments Ghala Muscat will offer both international travellers and local residents a truly memorable blend of Swiss hospitality and Omani charm this Ramadan.

OAB ties up with Lulu to offer 20% discounts for credit card holders

Committed to continue providing innovative financial solutions to customers during the holy month of Ramadan, Oman Arab Bank (OAB), has partnered with Visa and Lulu Hypermarket, one of the largest retail chains in the region, to offer exclusive discounts to OAB credit card holders.

Fro on March 15, OAB credit card holders began enjoying a 20% discount on all food item purchases, with a maximum discount of RO10 per transaction, whether in-store or online.



Khalid al Amri

This partnership follows a successful campaign in 2023, where OAB and Lulu Hypermar-

ket provided a 10% discount on food products, demonstrating the bank's continuous effort to add value to its customer offerings. This year, the collaboration with Visa aims to further enhance the shopping experience for OAB customers, allowing them to enjoy cost-effective benefits throughout Ramadan.

"At Oman Arab Bank, we're dedicated to delivering innovative financial solutions that cater to our customers' needs throughout the year," said Khalid

al Amri, Acting Chief Retail Banking Officer. "We are excited to be teaming up with Visa and Lulu Hypermarket again, to bring even more benefits to our credit card customers by enhancing their shopping experience and providing them unparalleled value this Ramadan."

The ongoing campaign with Lulu Hypermarket and Visa, running until April 7, underscores the bank's dedication to empowering individuals with convenient and tailored services.

CREATIVE CHILDREN OF ASIA



The first art exhibition of creative and talented children of Asia was held from March 6 to 8, in Muscat. The art show was organised in association with the Aqeeq Women's Artists & Craftsmen Association, Asso Art Academy and Al-Rihan Art Institute

'Chapters of Islamic Art: Carpets' exhibition opens at Sharjah HoW

Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan al Qasimi, Chairperson of the Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq), has inaugurated the 'Chapters of Islamic Art: Carpets' exhibition, at House of Wisdom (HoW) in Sharjah.

The three-month exhibition, inspired by a section of Chapters of Islamic Art: The Private Collection of Dr Richard Ettinghausen', which was generously donated to HoW by H H Dr Sheikh Sultan bin Muhammad al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah, highlights the cultural and historic significance of artisan carpets and textiles across the Muslim world.

Fatma al Mahmoud, HoW's Cultural Planning Manager, toured Sheikha Bodour al Qasimi, along with Ahmed Obaid al Qaseer, CEO of Shurooq; Mohamed Juma al Musharrah, CEO of Invest in Sharjah; and Reem bin Karam, Director General of the Irthi Contemporary Crafts Council, through the 4-zone exhibition, which featured physical copies and digitised versions of books and manuscripts on Islamic carpets, a display of masterfully crafted rugs, and fascinating artwork inspired by the classic 'Al-shanof' motif with modern twist.

House of Wisdom's expan-



sive lobby has been ingeniously transformed into an exhibition space, where visitors are first greeted by the Ettinghausen Book Collection on Carpets. This curated exhibition showcases a stunning array of illuminated

manuscripts and large-sized books on Islamic art in textiles, meticulously selected from Dr Richard Ettinghausen's private library. Ranging from the uniquely weaved carpets of Mesopotamia (Iraq - Abbasid Period) to the in-

tricate designs of Persian rugs, the SEHNA technique of Punjab, and the indelible Oriental carpets, each artwork tells a story of its people, landscape, and history, reflecting the diverse cultural heritage of the Muslim

world.

Marwa al Agroubi, Executive Director of House of Wisdom, said, "Our primary objectives for this event are to honour the intricate beauty of Islamic art, facilitate cultural dialogue, and

provide a platform for both local and international artists to showcase their impressive and creative artwork. We are proud to house Dr Richard Ettinghausen's priceless collection at HoW, and we look forward to highlighting a different section of the works during the holy month of Ramadan and beyond, providing a compelling experience for visitors."

Collaborative space curated with Jaipur Rugs, FBMI & Emirati weaver Sarah al Khayyal.

Fatima Bint Mohamed Bin Zayed Initiative (FBMI), a pioneering project founded with the noble aim of empowering underprivileged communities with a strong focus on women. While Zone 4 of the exhibition is dedicated to encouraging artist-community engagement, it celebrates HoW's efforts to support local and emerging talents.

Here, HoW has collaborated with the young contemporary artist and designer, Sarah al Khayyal, to display her art instal-

The three-month exhibition, inspired by a section of Chapters of Islamic Art: The Private Collection of Dr Richard Ettinghausen, highlights the cultural and historic significance of artisan carpets and textiles

The second zone of the exhibition is the fruit of a collaboration between HoW and Jaipur Rugs, an Indian company renowned for its exquisite craftsmanship and dedication to social responsibility. Their retail display features Jaipur Rugs' diverse collections, including a curated selection of vintage and antique carpets.

Zone 3 showcases contemporary UAE-based artists. Central to this zone is the inclusion of the

lation called 'Where the Grid Lies'. Through this artwork, Sarah emphasises the importance of the grid structure, honouring the enduring tradition of 'Sadu' craftsmen.

Through the future iterations of this exhibition, HoW intends to annually shed light on additional chapters of Islamic art embedded in the Ettinghausen collection, including Islamic architecture, travel literature, and ceramics.

ahlibank participates in SQU Career Fair

Within the framework of its strategic objectives to develop national expertise and empower young cadres to begin a promising journey in the banking sector, ahlibank recently participated in the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) Career Fair.

The event took place over the span of three days, from March 4 to 6, and it succeeded in connecting groups of students; giving them a brief look into the intricacies of ahlibank.

The event marked ahlibank opening its doors to the Business Graduates Programme, in tandem with the popular Career Fair that aims to provide job and training opportunities for students and graduates. Students interested in working for the companies and institutions at the career fair were given insight on how they operate and what is expected of them upon joining the workforce. Representatives of ahlibank offered consultations

to those present at the event, driving forward the Bank's mission to nurture bright, young individuals.

Talent acquisition plays a big role in events such as the SQU Career Fair. ahlibank en-

The event marked ahlibank opening its doors to the Business Graduates Programme, in tandem with the popular Career Fair that aims to provide job and training opportunities for students and graduates

deavours to harness youth potential, improve their capabilities and accelerate their growth. By providing a platform to empower national cadres, the Bank has con-

tributed to the country's socio-economic development, thus aligning with the goals set in Oman Vision 2040.

ahlibank adopts a strategic approach, providing training and development programs that address its employees' needs. Programmes to note, such as HIMAM, IGeneration, and the Business Graduates Programme, all play into a well-crafted system that enables the youth to pursue career opportunities in the banking sector.

Promoting young talent is among ahlibank's many objectives to support the national economy; it provides a distinguished platform for young Omanis to set their career path and excel. The bank boosts youth morale by encouraging them and guiding them in their initial steps. ahlibank's active role as part of the SQU Career Fair underscores its dedication to create a brighter and more prosperous future for Oman and its people.

Meethaq Islamic banking unveils exclusive offers to mark Ramadan

In alignment with its commitment to providing unparalleled customer value proposition, Meethaq Islamic banking from Bank Muscat proudly unveils exclusive offers to commemorate the holy month of Ramadan.

Customers will be thrilled by the opportunity to receive guaranteed cashback for transferring their salary. Those who transfer their salary to Meethaq Islamic Banking will be eligible for a cash back up to RO500 on the first salary credit, capped at 10% of total salary.

Individuals must maintain a minimum monthly salary of RO250. Furthermore, customers who receive the cash bonus need to maintain an active salary account, ensuring regular salary credits for a minimum of 12 months from the initial salary transfer date. The cashback benefit extends specifically to savings accounts, providing added



value to our customers' banking experience.

Revving up the excitement even further, both existing and new customers can benefit from a competitive profit rate of 4.85% (excluding life takaful) on Auto Finance for both new and used cars, valid until May 2.

Eligible customers can avail financing of up to 80% of the vehicle's value, with reduced

payments and extended financing tenure of up to 10 years. Meethaq customer can enjoy the convenience of accessing and managing their finances seamlessly through Meethaq's expansive network of branches across Oman. Applicants can benefit from swift processing and minimal documentation requirements for both of these offers. The launch of these highly at-

tractive offers follows a detailed study of the needs of different customer segments in the country. This initiative aims to further enhance the services and facilities offered.

On this occasion, Sami Bait Rashid, assistant general manager - Meethaq Personal Banking, expressed his enthusiasm, stating: "We are delighted to introduce our special Ramadan offers, which empower customers to make substantial savings on our auto financing product and enjoy a cashback on salary transfer offer. Each year, these offerings attract significant interest, enabling customers to benefit from a competitive profit rate and a wide range of facilities. I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to our valued customers for their trust in Meethaq's financing solutions and our comprehensive suite of products and services."

Samsung: Closing the distance between 'you and a great shot' this Ramadan

Shaky hands, long distance, darkness - if you are not up close and personal with the subject of your photo, a lot can come between you and the perfect shot. With the Samsung Galaxy S24, that is a thing of the past.

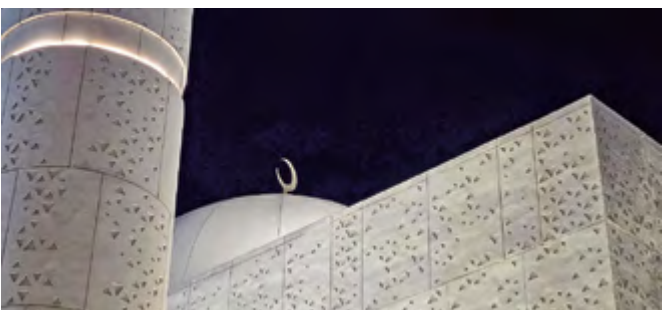
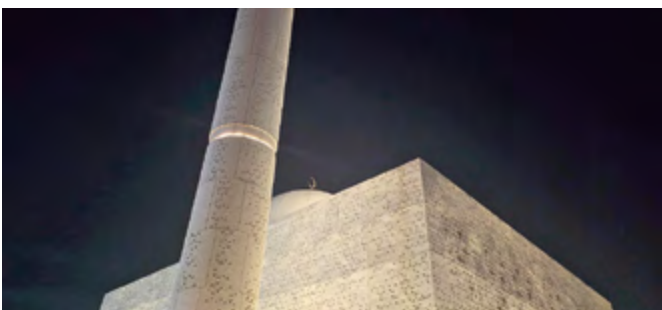
This Ramadan, embrace the power of AI on the Galaxy S24 camera to capture the essence of the holy month. From the intricate details of mosques and minarets to the vibrant Ramadan decorations, the Galaxy S24's ProVisual Engine uses upgraded hardware and new AI capabilities, ensuring you capture every moment with clarity and beauty without needing to be up close.

Galaxy S24's companion

Newly introduced on the Galaxy S24 series, the ProVisual Engine

is a revolutionary suite of AI image capture and editing tools dedicated to enhancing every step of the creative journey, from setting up a shot to taking and editing it. It includes Nightography, AI Zoom, Instant Slow-mo, Edit Suggestion, Generative Edits and Super High Dynamic Range (HDR), ensuring that distance no longer hinders your ability to document the rich Islamic architecture while trying to capture special Ramadan moments and experiences.

While AI is front and centre on Galaxy S24, it's been playing a role in enhancing content creation since the Galaxy S10 series, which applied AI models, Neural Processing Units (NPU) and large-scale datasets. Compared to those initial capabilities, Galaxy S24's ProVisual Engine



sports 112 AI models - 28 times more than Galaxy S10 - and 13 times the NPU performance for an intelligent Galaxy photography experience like never before.

Quad Tele System

The Galaxy S24 Ultra's Quad Tele system is a game-changer for photography enthusiasts who want to capture special Ramadan moments. Featuring state-of-the-art AI capabilities

and hardware that capture the architectural magnificence of mosques - from the sweeping curves of their domes adorned with intricate geometric patterns to the finely etched calligraphy on their walls. Imagine you encounter the tranquility of a beautifully designed contemporary mosque, the Galaxy S24 Ultra's Quad Tele system ensures you can document this spiritual connection and the

artistry that evokes it with clarity and beauty without needing to be up close. With the ability to zoom up to 10x optically, you can effortlessly encapsulate the serene and intricate details from a distance, without the need to switch lenses or modes, maintaining image clarity and vibrance in every shot.

Research shows that users have a strong demand for greater flexibility between the 3x and 10x zoom range. That's why the Quad Tele System was created: to deliver optical quality images across a wide zoom range, from 2x to 10x. Samsung's innovative approach ensures that each zoom level, from the more intimate 2x to the expansive 10x, is optimised to bring Ramadan's precious moments closer, no matter the distance.

One step away from World War III: Putin

Winning the Russian presidential polls, Putin warned a direct Russia-NATO conflict could lead to WWIII

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday warned the Western powers that any direct conflict between Russia and the NATO alliance, led by the US, would mean the world will be 'one step away' from a full-scale World War III, TASS reported. However, he also said that it is 'unlikely' that anyone is interested in this.

The Russia-Ukraine war has sparked the most severe strain in Moscow's relations with the West since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Putin has frequently highlighted the dangers of nuclear warfare but asserted that he has never deemed it necessary to employ nuclear weapons in Ukraine, according to TASS.

Speaking to reporters, here, after emerging victorious in the Russian presidential elections, Putin said that in the future, a direct conflict between Russia and NATO cannot be ruled out, although no one is interested in this. "I think that everything is possible in the modern world. But it will be one step away from a full-scale third world war. I think it's unlikely if anyone interested in this?" TASS quotes Putin as saying.

Before Russia's March 15-17 elections, Ukraine had ramped up its attacks against Russia.

On Kyiv sending a large number of soldiers on the border zone, Putin said that 'somewhere up to five thousand people' are present here.

The Russian Volunteer Corps (recognised as a terrorist organisation in the Russian Federation) and similar groups include twenty-five thousand, who are now, 'like meat... thrown into assaults', in the latest attacks these 'so so-called volunteers' lost approximately 800 people, according to TASS.



Russian President Vladimir Putin emerges victorious in the presidential elections held over the last three days

Securing a crushing victory in the Russian Presidential elections, Putin also said that he had agreed to a prisoner swap involving Alexei Navalny before the opposition leader's sudden death in an Arctic prison in February.

Calling Navalny's death a 'sad event', Putin said there were other cases of people in prisons passing away.

In his address at his election headquarters on Sunday, Putin

said, "As for Mr Navalny - yes, he passed away. It is always a sad event. And there were other cases when people in prisons passed away. Didn't this happen in the United States? It did, and not once.'

Putin added that he was told of a proposal to exchange Navalny for prisoners held in Western nations days before the Opposition leader died in prison.

Putin won the presidential

elections, receiving 87.17 per cent of the votes based on the result of processing 70 per cent of the electoral protocols, Russia-based TASS reported, citing data from the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation candidate Nikolai Kharitonov secured the second spot with 4.4 per cent of the votes while New People Party candidate Vladislav Davankov

stood third with 3.8 per cent votes. The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) candidate, Leonid Slutsky, received a mere 3.15 per cent of the votes counted. According to preliminary data as of 6pm (Moscow time) on Sunday, the voter turnout in the presidential elections, which for the first time took place over three days from March 15-17, stood at 74.22 per cent.

ANI

Putin reveals plan to establish 'sanitary zone' in Ukraine

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin, in his remarks at his campaign headquarters, suggested the possibility of establishing a 'sanitary zone' in neighbouring territories in response to the attacks by the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) on the Belgorod region, TASS reported.

"I'm not ready to talk now about what, how and when we should annex.

"But I do not rule out that, bearing in mind the tragic events taking place today, we will be forced at some point - when we consider it appropriate - to create a certain 'sanitary zone' in today's territories subordinate to the Kiev regime," Putin said, commenting on proposals to annex the Kharkov region to prevent Ukrainian attacks on the Russian border.

"To create a security zone, which will be quite difficult to overcome using the weapons that the enemy uses, primarily, of course, foreign-made," the head of state stated, however, he refrained from specifying what the depth of the 'sanitary zone' might be, according to TASS.

"This is a separate issue," he said in response to a corresponding request.

Russia's recent presidential election, spanning from March 15 to 17, marked a key moment in the nation's political landscape. With a record-breaking turnout of over 74 per cent of eligible voters, this

engagement soared to heights unseen in over two decades, as confirmed by the Russian Central Election Commission (CEC) on Sunday.

Putin's remarks at his campaign headquarters underscored the gravity of the situation, as he contemplated the necessity of such a security measure in response to the challenges posed by the Kyiv regime.

We will be forced at some point - when we consider it appropriate - to create a certain sanitary zone in today's territories subordinate to the Kiev regime

VLADIMIR PUTIN

The president's comments come amidst reports of military build-up and clashes along the border, with Kiev amassing significant troop deployments while facing losses during confrontations, including casualties among so-called volunteer forces.

Putin, however, adopted a pragmatic stance, acknowledging that these losses could inadvertently favour Russia's strategic objectives by diminishing enemy capabilities in other theatres of conflict.

ANI

US will work with S Korea against N Korea's provocations: Blinken

Seoul, South Korea - United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Monday and said that the US will always work with South Korea to firmly respond to North Korea's provocations, according to state media Yonhap.

The US reassurance came hours after Pyongyang fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters, a statement released from the South Korea's presidential office said

"Secretary Blinken said the United States will always be with South Korea to respond firmly to North Korea's provocations and for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula," the presidential office said in a media statement, Yonhap news agency reported.

The US diplomat made the remarks, during a meeting with the South Korean President Yoon on the sidelines of the third Summit for Democracy being held in Seoul. The Summit for Democracy, an initiative of US President Joe Biden is being hosted by South Korea this year from March 18-20 and brings together government officials, NGOs and civil society members.

Blinken, who arrived in Seoul on Sunday, called for continuing close coordination and communication between the allies, while further strengthening their 'extended deterrence', the US commitment to using the full range of its military capabilities,



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Monday, on the sidelines of the Summit for Democracy

As authoritarian and repressive regimes deploy technologies to undermine democracy and human rights, we need to ensure that technology sustains and supports democratic values and norms

ANTONY BLINKEN

including nuclear, to defend its ally.

Meanwhile, South Korean President Yoon welcomed Blinken and said that the recent flurry of senior-level exchanges shows the strength of the alliance, which has evolved into a 'global comprehensive strategic alliance', Yonhap reported.

Earlier today, Japanese media Kyodo reported that North

Korea had launched three ballistic missiles toward the Sea of Japan on Monday that likely fell outside of Japan's exclusive economic zone. Following Prime Minister Fumio Kishida speaking at a parliamentary session later in the day said that Tokyo 'strongly condemns the latest ballistic missile launches, which violate relevant UN Security Council resolutions'.

Incidentally, South Korea and the United States had last Thursday wrapped up 10 days of large-scale annual joint military drills.

North Korea has long condemned military drills by the US and South Korea, claiming they are rehearsals for an invasion, and has conducted weapons tests in response to previous exercises. Earlier this month, KCNA quoted an unnamed spokesperson for North Korea's Ministry of Defence urging Seoul and Washington to cease their 'reckless' and 'frantic war drills'.

Shortly after Pyongyang fired the missiles into the country's eastern waters, Blinken and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol addressed the Summit for Democracy.

Co-hosted by Korea, Britain, the United States and Ecuador, the ministerial conference brought together top government delegations from some 30 countries. In his address, Blinken said: "As authoritarian and repressive regimes deploy technologies to undermine democracy and human rights, we need to ensure that technology sustains and supports democratic values and norms."

South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul said the interplay of AI and digital technologies present both opportunities and challenges in a world that is witnessing a 'retreat from the democratic values' amid the rising geopolitical tensions.

ANI



Extreme temperatures have been a hallmark of the climate crisis in Zimbabwe

El Nino jeopardising domestic animals, wildlife alike in Zimbabwe

Harare, Zimbabwe - A month ago, 56-year-old Thulani Bhebhe owned a herd of 23 cattle, but that's no longer the case thanks to a rampaging El Nino-induced drought that has not spared his home area in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland North province.

In Tsholotsho district, where he has lived since birth, the El Nino has left trails of disaster.

For Bhebhe, pastures that have fed many cattle like his are no more.

"The grass has been scorched by the severe heat and the trees are dying, and the small dams that have provided water to our livestock have dried up," he told Anadolu.

"We are faced with a disaster. I no longer have cattle just because of this latest drought."

Not only domestic animals are perishing in this southern African country, but even the wildlife has not been spared by the marauding El Nino drought.

Tinos Malaba, a wildlife conservationist based in Hwange, said wild animals straying from Hwange National Park were dropping dead due to the drought.

"Every day, villagers here are having to encounter carcasses of dead wild animals. These animals die often in search of water and pastures to feed," said Malaba.

Severe temperatures have been a hallmark of the climate crisis in Zimbabwe, where disruptions in rainfall have wrought havoc on the country's wildlife and domestic animals.

Yet the raging El Nino is not the first of its kind in the southern African nation.

Five years ago, more than 200 Zimbabwean elephants perished in a severe drought, according to the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW).

In addition, in 1992, the worst drought in living memory hit Zimbabwe and the entire southern

African region, leaving well over a million cattle dead and some wells and perennial rivers dry.

Amid the current El Nino drought, Hwange National Park's 45,000 elephants stand at greater risk, as a fully-grown elephant requires about 200 litres of water daily.

In November and December last year, Zimbabwe lost 7,000 cattle as the drought peaked, according to the Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services. In the Matabeleland provinces, where many like Bhebhe have become cattle-poor overnight, 2,427 cattle were killed by the El Nino drought, based on statistics from the department.

Tinashe Farawo, spokesperson for the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks), could not immediately provide the number of wild animals that have so far succumbed to the drought.

Anadolu Agency

Human rights groups call on Finland to tackle racism, discrimination

London, UK - Human rights groups have urged the Finnish government to introduce extensive legislative and policy measures aimed at eliminating Finland's 'system of structural racism', local media reported on Monday.

A total of 33 organisations - including Amnesty, the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, Save the Children Finland, and the Family Federation of Finland - issued a joint statement, calling on the government to tackle racism and discrimination.

Human rights groups argued that the government's own legislative proposals - outlined in its programme for government published last year - as well as comments made by prominent members of the governing coalition are threatening to deepen structural racism in Finland, according to local media outlet Yle.

Prime Minister Petteri Orpo is scheduled to hold a round-table discussion with representatives from immigrant organisations on Monday to discuss how people from immigrant backgrounds might enter working life in Finland more easily, according to the outlet.



A total of 33 organisations issued a joint statement, calling on the government to tackle racism and discrimination

On Tuesday, the Finnish government revealed that it will be launching an anti-racism campaign after a series of far-right and racism scandals threatened to topple the governing coalition. Last Summer, Finland's government was faced with months of accusations over racism after the media found online postings and articles by ministers from the Finns Party, a far-right member of the coalition, that were considered racist.

As a result, the government initially agreed on a policy last June to combat intolerance in the hope of preventing the collapse of the four-party, right-wing coalition consisting of the conservative National Coalition Party, Christian Democrats, Swedish People's Party, and the controversial far-right Finns Party.

In a 2019 report, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Council of Europe's independent rights watchdog, warned that 'racist and intolerant hate speech in public discourse is escalating' in Finland.

It said the 'main targets are asylum seekers and Muslims'. Anadolu Agency

Israeli army orders evacuation of Gaza City's Al-Rimal neighbourhood, Al-Shifa Hospital

WHO warned on Monday that health care facilities should never be used as battlegrounds

Jerusalem - The Israeli army ordered on Monday residents and displaced people in the Al-Rimal neighbourhood and the Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City to evacuate immediately to the southern part of the Gaza Strip.

"For your safety, to all those present and displaced in the Al-Rimal neighbourhood and in the vicinity of Al-Shifa Hospital, you must evacuate the area immediately to the west, then southward through Rashid Street to the humanitarian zone in Al-Mawasi," army spokesperson Avichay Adraee said on X.

Early on Monday, the Israeli army announced that its forces stormed the Al-Shifa Hospital, which houses thousands of ill and wounded patients, as well as displaced people.

According to Israeli public broadcaster KAN, around 80 Palestinians were detained from the facility.

Adraee claimed that the military and Shin Bet security agency



Israel has announced it plans to conduct what it called a 'major activity' in the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, following the evacuation of Palestinians to the western area of the city

were operating inside Al-Shifa 'to thwart terrorist activities and arrest saboteurs'.

"During the operation, the army forces came under fire from saboteurs inside the hospital, and the forces responded by firing back and injuring the saboteurs," he said.

WHO warning

Any hostilities or militarisation of

Al-Shifa Hospital in the Gaza Strip endangers health services, the World Health Organization's (WHO) director general warned on Monday, stressing that health care facilities should never be used as battlegrounds.

"We are terribly worried about the situation at Al-Shifa Hospital in northern #Gaza, which is endangering health workers, patients and civilians," Tedros

Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrote on X, emphasising that hospitals should never be battlegrounds.

Ghebreyesus said the hospital has only recently restored minimal health services in northern Gaza, which is 'endangering health workers, patients, and civilians', and that any hostilities or militarisation of the facility would 'jeopardise health services, access for ambulances,

and delivery of life-saving supplies'. "Hospitals must be protected," he said, reiterating his call for a ceasefire in the besieged enclave.

'Major activity'

Meanwhile, Israel has announced it plans to conduct what it called a 'major activity' in the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, following the evacuation of

the southern Gaza Strip to its north. He said: "When we have to act in Rafah, I see no gap between the US and Israel, including evacuating civilians."

Katz's statement comes a day after a spokesperson for the US National Security Council, John Kirby, confirmed that Washington would not support any large-scale Israeli military operation in Rafah without a viable plan ensuring the security and safety of 1.5mn displaced people.

On March 15, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approved plans for a military operation in Rafah, and the army is preparing to evacuate the residents.

Death toll in Gaza reaches 31,726

At least 81 Palestinians were killed and 116 others injured in the last 24 hours as Israel continues its onslaught on the besieged Gaza Strip since October 7, the territory's Health Ministry said on Monday.

"The Israeli occupation committed eight massacres against families in the Gaza Strip, leaving 81 martyrs and 116 injured during the past 24 hours," the ministry said in a statement.

At least 31,726 Palestinians have been killed, mostly women and children, and 73,792 injured since October 7, according to Palestinian health authorities. Anadolu Agency

8 killed in Pakistan airstrikes on Afghanistan, says Kabul

Istanbul, Turkey - Pakistani military aircraft struck homes in two provinces of Afghanistan in pre-dawn attacks on Monday, interim Afghan spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said.

Kabul said its forces retaliated against the airstrikes by hitting Pakistani military installations.

Condemning the attacks, Mujahid said eight people, including three children and five women, were killed due to the aerial strikes in the southeastern Paktika and Khost provinces.

The cross-border aerial strikes were reported at around 3am (2230GMT Sunday), he added.

No official statement has been released by Islamabad on the alleged attacks, which Mujahid called a 'reckless violation of Afghanistan's territory'.

Mujahid stressed that Afghanistan would 'not allow anyone to invade its territory' and called on Pakistan to stop 'wrong policies... and spoiling relations of the two neighbouring Muslim countries'.

The airstrikes came after at least seven Pakistani troops were



Zabihullah Mujahid

killed by militants in North Waziristan's Mir Ali area on Saturday.

Islamabad accuses Afghanistan of failing to prevent militants from the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a conglomerate of various militant groups, from carrying out attacks in Pakistan before returning to Afghanistan for refuge. Afghanistan has denied the charges.

It was in April 2022 when Pakistan had launched cross-border air strikes against the alleged militants of the banned group.

"The person named Abdullah Shah, who the Pakistani side claims was targeted in the incident, is in Pakistan," Mujahid claimed.

'Pakistani military installations hit'

In a separate statement, Afghanistan's interim Defence Ministry described the Pakistani airstrikes as an 'aggressive operation', and said border forces 'of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan retaliated by targeting Pakistan's military installations along the imaginary border with powerful weaponry'.

Afghanistan does not recognise the Durand Line - the de facto border region between the two countries - on the grounds that it was created by a British colonial regime 'to divide ethnic Pashtuns'.

The 2,640km (1,640-mile) border was established in 1893 as part of an agreement between India under British colonial rule and Abdur Rahman Khan, the then-ruler of Afghanistan. Anadolu Agency

Gaza in state of 'man-made famine' by Israel: EU foreign policy chief Borrell

Geneva, Switzerland - The EU foreign policy chief on Monday warned that Gaza is already 'in a state of famine', saying the situation is 'entirely man-made' by Israel.

"In Gaza, we are no longer on the brink of famine, we are in a state of famine affecting thousands of people," Josep Borrell told the opening ceremony of the two-day European Humanitarian Forum 2024 in Brussels.

"This is unacceptable," he stressed, adding: "Starvation is used as a weapon of war."

Borrell warned that the besieged strip is 'becoming a territory without any kind of order', due to conflict that started last October. "The territory of Gaza is very quickly becoming a territory without any kind of order, is more and more looking like Haiti, Somalia, Syria, or Mosul. This will be the first failed state before having existed," he said.

He also voiced hope that 'in the intermediate future the discussion of the United Nations Security Council will allow for a



European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell

In Gaza, we are no longer on the brink of famine, we are in a state of famine affecting thousands of people. This is unacceptable

JOSEP BORRELL

ceasefire in Gaza'.

Humanitarian lifeboat is 'sinking'

The EU commissioner for crisis management, for his part, warned that humanitarian aid is far away from meeting the 'alarming' needs resulting from the 'very high number' of conflicts, saying the lifeboat is 'sinking'.

"The lifeboat of humanitarian aid is increasingly helpless against the growing alarming of humanitarian needs. Make no mistake, this lifeboat is

sinking. And the time is running out for us to fix it," Janez Lenac said.

"In 2023, we witnessed the highest number of active conflicts since the end of the World War II, becoming more protracted and complex with horrific consequences, as we can see from Gaza to Ukraine, to Sudan, and beyond."

He urged not only EU member states but other countries as well to adopt the goal of allocating 0.07% of their gross national income for humanitarian aid.

The UN relief chief, in his address, warned that the relief efforts are 'facing an alarming humanitarian funding crisis'.

"We are all and our colleagues in the field in particular daily, making extremely difficult decisions, decisions about life and death, about what to fund and who to prioritise," Martin Griffiths, the under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, lamented. Anadolu Agency

INDIA

Poll panel removes police chief in Bengal, home secretaries in 6 states

New Delhi, India - Ahead of the ensuing Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Monday issued orders for the removal of West Bengal's Director General of Police Rajeev Kumar and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation Commissioner Iqbal Chahal along with some other senior officials from various states.

The ECI has also ordered the removal of certain key officials of six states in what it termed 'a decisive move towards upholding the principles of free, fair and transparent elections'.

Home secretaries in six states-namely Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have been asked to step down. Additionally, the secretaries of the General Administrative Department in Mizoram and Himachal Pradesh have been removed.

The DGP had been in the spotlight after the BJP and other opposition parties criticised the Bengal police for alleged inaction in giving justice to the victims of Sandeshkhali.

The Sandeshkhali area had been witnessing unrest after women protestors sought justice against alleged atrocities committed by Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Sheikh Shahjahan and his aides.

Meanwhile, the Election commission also directed all the State governments to transfer



An election officer demonstrates the working of an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) during a training programme ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, in Dehradun on Monday (ANI)

officers connected with election-related work, who have completed three years or are in their home districts.

Maharashtra had not complied with the directions in respect of few municipal commissioners and some addi-

tional/deputy municipal commissioners. While conveying displeasure to the chief secretary, the commission directed the transfer of Brihanmumbai municipal corporation commissioner and the additional/deputy commission-

ers with the direction to report by 6pm on Monday.

The chief secretary was further directed to transfer all the similarly placed municipal commissioners and additional/deputy municipal commissioners of other corpo-

rations in Maharashtra.

CEC Rajiv Kumar, recently during the press conference for the announcement of Schedule for general elections 2024, had emphasised on the commission's resolve and commitment to maintaining a level playing

field and ensuring the integrity of the electoral process.

The commission meeting, chaired by Rajiv Kumar, comprising of election commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu was held at noon on Monday.

The officials who have been removed in these seven states were found to be holding dual charges in the office of the chief minister in respective states which may potentially compromise or be seen to be compromising the impartiality and neutrality required during the electoral process, the order said.

BJP trying to 'grab' ECI, says TMC

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress leader Kunal Ghosh on Monday hit out at the BJP over the removal of the West Bengal's DGP and said that the BJP was trying to 'grab' the ECI and other such organisations to fulfil their political purpose.

Speaking to ANI Ghosh said: "The BJP is trying its best to grab organisations like ECI and others. They are trying their best to grab and monitor their jobs only to fulfil their political purpose. So, according to their programme, their planning, and requests from different states, they have done this."

"The BJP is trying to help their state organisations because they know that in the elections, the BJP will be defeated in most of the seats in West Bengal. We are confident that the BJP may transfer a few of the officers but the public is with the Trinamool Congress and Didi (Mamata Banerjee). The TMC will defeat the BJP," said the TMC leader. ANI

No stay on disqualification of six MLAs from HP Assembly

New Delhi, India - The Supreme Court on Monday refused to stay the disqualification of six Congress leaders of Himachal Pradesh who had crossed voted for the BJP candidate during the Rajya Sabha elections in the State and issuing notice to the respondents on their petition challenging the decision of the Legislative Assembly Speaker.

"We are not going to stay the disqualification," the apex court said.

A bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta also denied the six MLAs permission to vote or participate in proceedings of the House.

The top court listed the matter for the second week of May.

The court was apprised of the fact that date of the general elections has been announced and that the date of filing of nomination has been notified



A view of the Supreme Court of India building, in New Delhi (ANI)

for this May.

On February 29, Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania disqualified six Congress MLAs Sudhir Sharma, Rajinder Rana, Davinder K Bhutto, Ravi Thakur, Chaitanya Sharma and Inder Dutt Lakhanpal under the anti-defection law.

After the 2022 Assembly elections, the Congress had 40 MLAs, while the BJP had 25 in

the 68-member state assembly. The remaining three seats are held by independents.

In the voting of the Rajya Sabha election recently, the BJP, which has just 25 MLAs, managed to secure nine additional votes. The vote ended in a 34-34 tie, with three Independents and six Congress MLAs cross-voting for the BJP candidate.

ANI

Toll rises to 4 in Kolkata building collapse

Kolkata, India - The death toll in the collapse of the under-construction building in South Kolkata has risen to four, city police said on Monday.

A five-storey under-construction building collapsed in Kolkata's Garden Reach area late on March 17.

"The death toll in South Kolkata's Metiabruz building collapse incident has reached 4," Kolkata police said.

Earlier in the day, West Bengal Fire and Emergency Services Minister Sujit Bose said that 13 people were rescued from the site of the mishap.

"As many as 13 people have been rescued. Rs 5 lakh will be given as compensation to the next of kin of the deceased and Rs 1 lakh will be given to those injured," Bose said.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee visited the site of the incident and also met with the injured at a hospital in



NDRF personnel and others during a rescue operation at Metiabruz, South Kolkata on Monday (ANI)

South Kolkata.

Expressing grief over the incident, Banerjee wrote on the social media platform X: "Sad to learn about the house collapse disaster of an under-construction building in the Garden Reach area of the Kolkata Mu-

nicipal Corporation. Our mayor, fire minister, secretaries and Commissioner of police, civic, police, fire and disaster management officers and teams (including NDRF, KMC and KP teams) have been on site throughout the night to mitigate

the disaster."

"This is an illegal construction. I express my condolences to the families. I will urge the administration to take strict action against those involved in illegal construction," Banerjee said.

ANI

Pakistan: Scrutiny of nominations for Senate polls on March 19

Islamabad, Pakistan - The scrutiny of nomination papers for elections in the 48 vacant seats of Pakistan's Senate will be conducted on March 19, Pakistan-based Geo News reported.

The Election Commission of Pakistan has said that the elections for the upper house of Pakistan's Parliament will be held on April 2. The revised list of candidates will be issued on March 29 and the candidates can withdraw their nomination papers by March 27. Members of the National Assembly in Islamabad will

elect members of the Senate against one general seat and one seat for technocrats including Ulema, according to Geo News report.

Members of the four provincial assemblies will elect senators for seven general seats, two women seats, and two seats for technocrats, including Ulema from each province and one seat for non-Muslims from both Punjab and Sindh provinces. A total of 42 candidates have submitted their nomination papers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

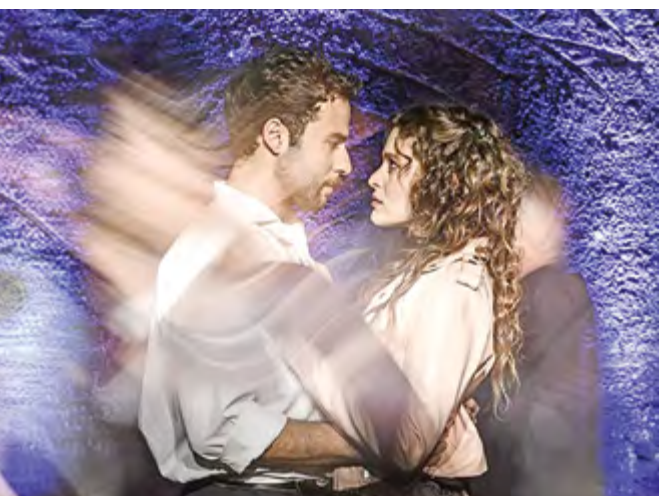
ANI

A new version of *Romeo and Juliet* to improve Turkish-Greek ties

Athens, Greece - The creators of a new interpretation of the timeless play *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, which has been performed throughout the world for centuries, hope to bridge the gap between the two sides of the Aegean.

The play, being jointly prepared in Athens by the Turkish State Theatres and Greece's Municipal Theatre of Piraeus, will open in both countries in April.

Speaking to Anadolu, Lefteris Giovanidis, the artistic director of the Theatre of Piraeus, said the House of Capulet would represent Greeks and speak Greek while the House of Montague would represent Turks and speak Turkish.



"We are basically reconstructing a play which has been interpreted many times previously by getting inspired by Turks and

Greeks, who have many common points, not only differences," he said. Eray Eserol, a senior actor with the Turkish State Theatres in

Ankara who is taking part in the endeavour, said the love story between Romeo and Juliet, the children of two rival families, exemplifies how Turks and Greeks feel towards each other.

"Through this play, we also would like to present our modest contribution to Turkish-Greek friendship," he added.

Kalliopi Chaska, a well-known contemporary young Greek actress who will be playing Juliet, said being part of the play is a very valuable gift. "Often during rehearsals, we even forget who is Turkish and who is Greek. That shows how close these two nations are," she noted.

Chaska said she is certain that the project will be remembered

for a long time.

"This play and this role of mine are a gift to me. I am happy to be part of this team," she added.

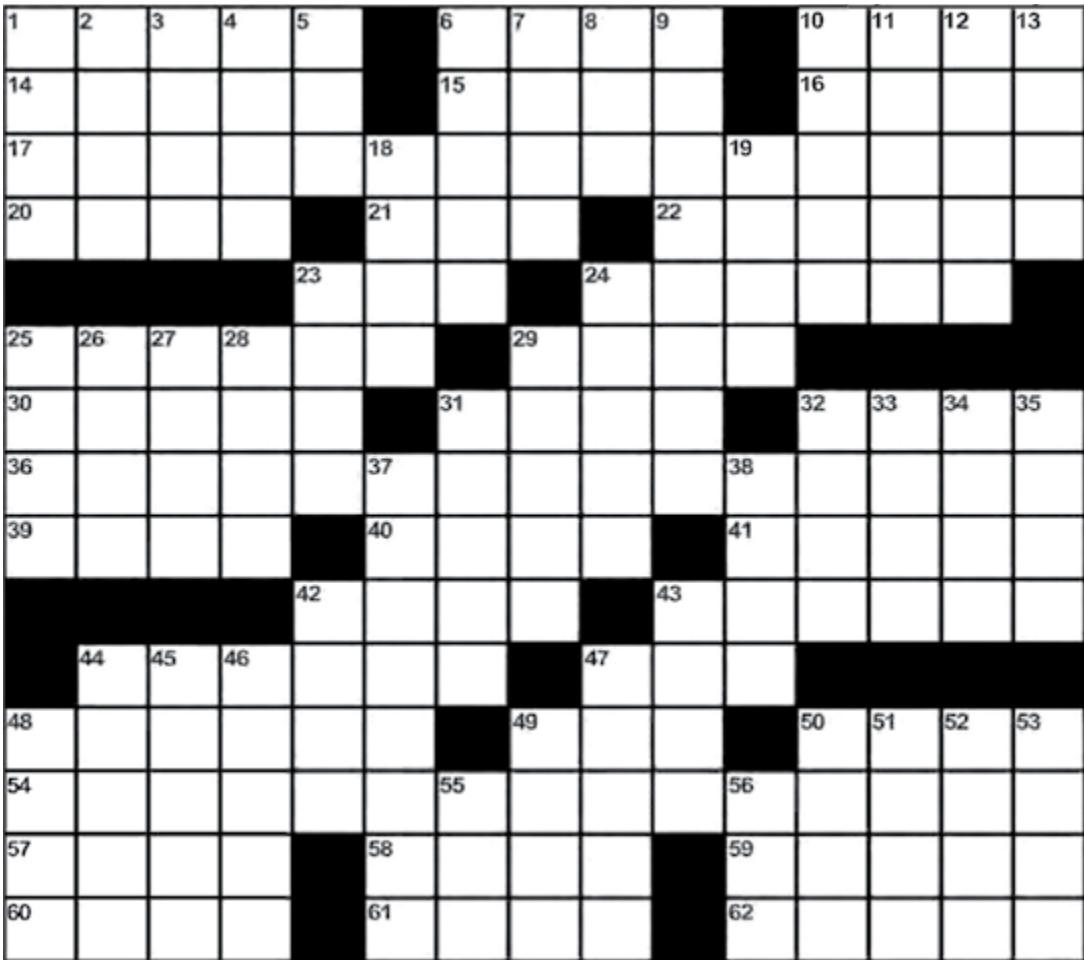
Alp Unsul, an actor at the Istanbul State Theatre who will be playing Romeo, agreed with Chaska.

"Even though the rehearsals have been going on for some six weeks, we feel like we have been part of the same team for six years," he said.

"We will highlight the common ties and friendship between the two neighbouring nations," he said, adding 'this play will convey some nice, some deep and some positive messages to its Greek and Turkish audiences'.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1) Biggest round trip in the world?
6) Blossom holder
10) Crave
14) Animal followed by a tickbird
15) "Les Miserables" novelist Victor
16) Miscellaneous mix
17) Balance point
20) Palm tree variety
21) Bran source
22) Coughs up
23) Where grapplers grapple
24) Outlaw hunter's reward
25) Carnivorous freshwater fish
29) Except for
30) They divide Europe and Asia
31) Dublin's isle
32) Pond coating
36) One way to attract attention
39) Quite a few
40) Possessive adjective
41) Unit of magnetic flux density
42) Moments, for short
43) Dinner-table accessory
44) Islamic spiritual leader

47) Check
48) Former Nicaraguan president Daniel
49) Yonder damsel
50) "It_ what you think!"
54) Place for younger criminals
57) Beloved person
58) Apple-seed holder
59) Previously, previously
60) Quick-footed
61) Proceed with a game plan?
62) Behaving like a ruffian
DOWN
1) Mythical monsters
2) Actress Perlman
3) Perry on "Friends"
4) Obsessed with
5) Little piggie
6) Little hog
7) Cockatoo's crest
8) Bacon go-with
9) Additionally
10) Interlaced
11) Choice invitees
12) Gritty lead-in
13) Kiddie litter?
18) Kind of horse or leather
19) Chills, fever and sweating, together
23) "Other" category (Abbr.)
24) Less leafy, like a tree

25) "No ifs, ands, or..."
26) Kind of communication
27) Become conscious
28) Went Southwest?
29) Original positions
31) Eldest son of Cain
32) Resign, with "down"
33) Winery container
34) "Unattractive" Jamaican fruit
35) Intend
37) Item for a pirate, stereotypically
38) Brief try
42) Make a contract official
43) Drug cop
44) Willies giver
45) Floral perfume
46) Uneasy
47) Believe it, coming or going
48) At_ (disagreeing)
49) Feature of 14-Across
50) Insider dirt
51) Cram into the overhead
52) Role in many teen flicks
53) Deuce beater, barely
55) Bad bettor's letters
56) Word before drop or drum

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You are about to get a seriously sweet dividend from all the good karma investments you've made over the past few months. People will be giving you things left and right like great advice, gifts, dinners out, and who knows what else. Whatever these things are, they will be nice surprises and sweet reminders of how you are valued by others. People are communicating their affection for you in their unique ways.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Your future is yours, so don't let anyone influence your hopes and wishes or tell you what goals you should start setting for yourself. These people don't know better than you, no matter how smart they may be. And while the fact that they're trying to tell you how to run your life might annoy the heck out of you, you can't fly off the handle. Be sympathetic. They want to boss you around because they feel so powerless over their own life.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Your focus on building your bank account and adding to your material wealth is starting to slow down just as your social life is starting to speed up. This is perfect timing for you and your friends, because there are lots of interesting things coming up and you need to switch your focus toward more altruistic pursuits. Volunteering your time to help make your community (however you define that) a better place should be high on your agenda.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Before you say what's on your mind when someone does something outrageous today, stop for a moment and review the situation. Put yourself in their place and their behavior might make a lot more sense. Things that affect you might not be meant for you, so don't jump to any conclusions or take this person's actions personally. Be objective, analytical, and cautious. Listen to your conservative side today and give people the benefit of the doubt. They'll do the same for you.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Why fight the urge to start new projects today? If you feel the need to do something, do it. No one cares if you don't exactly have all the time in the world to take it on. There will never be a period in your life when you have all the time you need to do whatever you want, so waiting for it is pretty silly. You'll do fine juggling a new relationship, endeavor, or job right now. Just believe in yourself and have fun with it. Your good attitude will take you a very long way.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You can change the minds of some influential people today. All you have to do is get a little face time with each of them. Use your charm and logic to enlighten these people. They don't know all the facts of the situation and it's up to you to educate them. They're letting their own desires cloud their thinking, and you have to show them that by agreeing with you they're helping themselves just as much as the cause you believe in.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
All the facts you need are right in front of you today, which means you are in a particularly exciting and powerful position. While everyone else is struggling to figure out what the heck is going on, you will be able to see right through all the chaos and misunderstandings. Your ability to sort through all the data to find the information that really matters will help you save time, money, and your sanity. You will be the big hero.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Not much is going to get done today, but don't get upset if things don't progress at the speed you would like. There's no point in beating yourself up about it. You're much better off just admitting temporary defeat. Kick off your shoes, sit down, and get comfortable. This pause in the action will give you a chance to practice patience and get some stuff done around the house. Learning how to accept things you can't change is crucial.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
People might say they need you now, but do they really? Perhaps they make do without you just this once. Find out. You can't possibly respond to every fire that erupts, and right now you need to prioritize yourself. There's nothing wrong with taking care of your own issues and then seeing how you can add something to others' lives. Too many people think they can snap their fingers and you'll come running. Show them that's simply not the case.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
You may be brimming with good energy right now, but it's not likely that you will have a good place to exert it. None of your friends are in need, and all the details of your life is pretty well under control. So what to do with your excess energy? Exercise! You don't have to haul yourself to the gym. Just take a walk around the block. Or get some friends together for a game of pickleball. Run around and have fun. You'll feel great afterward.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
No matter what your philosophy of life, you need to be open to new ideas and different ways of thinking. Someone very influential in your work or school could help you move further along on your path, but they don't feel the same way you do about a lot of important topics. You need to accept this. You can't change people's minds about things that are important to them, so don't even try. But don't just agree with them in order to earn their favor either.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
No matter how strong your opinions, be open to change. Someone could come on the scene who has a very different way of thinking, acting, and dressing. You might be tempted to not take them seriously, but they are a force to be reckoned with. Listen to what they have to say and observe how they capture people's attention. You could learn a lot from a person who sees the world so differently from you.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 01. What is the British Engineeringium, in Hove?**
A. An engineering and steam power museum
B. An advanced wind tunnel facility
C. A university
D. A land transport museum
- 02. Gordonstoun School is famous mainly because of which past pupils?**
A. Prince Philip & his 3 sons
B. Elton John & Bernie Taupin
C. All British prime ministers between Harold Macmillan and Tony Blair
D. Margaret Thatcher and Madonna
- 03. In gymnastics, what is a salto?**
A. Leap
B. Somersault
C. Pirouette
D. Roll

Answers: 1.A 2.A 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

T	S	P	C
L	E	E	E
A	I	E	R
G	U	A	S

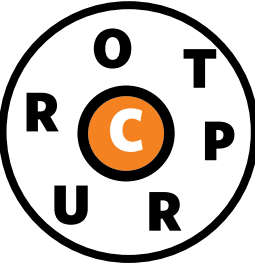
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

CARLOS THE BOSS

Alcaraz beats Medvedev to retain Indian Wells title

Indian Wells, US - Carlos Alcaraz surged past World No. 4 Daniil Medvedev 7-6(5), 6-1 on Sunday to retain the Indian Wells title. It is the 20-year-old's first title since he triumphed at Wimbledon last year.

Alcaraz entered the Indian Wells fortnight with a 6-3 record on the season and during his most recent outing, in Rio de Janeiro, he suffered an injury scare to his ankle, forcing him to retire. But the world No 2 emerged from a star-studded field in the California desert with the trophy and restored confidence.

"Winning this tournament means a lot to me because the week before it began, I had a lot of doubts about my ankle," Alcaraz said in his on-court interview. "I remember my first practice here was just 30 minutes with no movement and probably the first practice with really good tennis players was really tough for me, because I thought I was not going to play my best."

"I was not feeling well with my ankle, so a lot of doubts for me. But once I stepped on the court, the first round, I started to feel better."

Alcaraz and Medvedev also met in the Indian Wells final one year ago, when the former won 6-3, 6-2. The two-time Indian Wells champion took a 5-3 lead in their head to head rivalry after

a championship performance in which he hit 19 forehand winners compared to 11 total winners for his opponent.

Alcaraz was not as sharp early on as he was in the semifinals, when he ended Jannik Sinner's perfect 16-0 start to 2024. Medvedev broke in his first return game of the match and appeared confident in the California desert, while his opponent was making uncharacteristic unforced errors.

But once Alcaraz battled back onto serve at 3-2 with a sensa-

Winning this tournament means a lot because the week before it began, I had a lot of doubts about my ankle. As I said after every match, I was feeling better and better

CARLOS ALCARAZ

tional forehand passing shot, the message was clear.

The Spaniard showed the incredible athleticism and shot-making that has earned him millions of fans across the globe. Many rallies were adventures with the players' sneakers squeaking on the court as they quickly changed directions to adjust during the thrilling points.

Alcaraz broke in his first return game of the second set, dismissing a forehand return for a winner up the line. He never



Carlos Alcaraz celebrates with the Indian Wells trophy

looked back, claiming the crown after one hour and 42 minutes.

According to Infosys ATP Stats, Medvedev lost 16 service games en route to the final and while he saved seven of the 10 break points he faced against Alcaraz, he still dropped three service games.

The champion took a page out of the Medvedev returning book, standing well behind the baseline to take full cuts at the ball and immediately put pressure on his opponent.

The tournament did not start well for Alcaraz, who lost his opening set of the event against rising Italian Matteo Arnaldi. But once he found his game, it became clear that Alcaraz was back near the best. The 20-year-old defeated two of the Top 4 players in the world over the final weekend to earn his fifth ATP Masters 1000 title and 13th tour-level crown overall.

"As I said after every match, I was feeling better and better," Alcaraz said.

"I'm really, really happy to be able to win this tournament again."

Celebrities were out in force at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden, with Zendaya, Tom Holland, Charlize Theron and Maria Sharapova among the stars in attendance for the scintillating showdown.

Medvedev tried to earn his first Indian Wells trophy. The California event is the last hard-court Masters 1000 event he has not yet won — the 28-year-old has claimed six of nine Masters 1000s overall.



Carlos Alcaraz and Daniil Medvedev greet each other after the final

‘I am playing better with a smile on my face’

Indian Wells, US - Carlos Alcaraz said his successful Indian Wells title defence was all the sweeter because he felt he had found himself in the California desert after a difficult few months.

The Spaniard, still only 20, had not won a title since clinching his second major crown at last year's Wimbledon until he beat Daniil Medvedev 7-6(5) 6-1 on Sunday in a rematch of last year's final.

Alcaraz said the title drought had not bothered him but, struggling with injury, he felt he had lost his way a bit and was not enjoying being on court. "It's difficult to put it into words, because I had really difficult months," he told reporters.

"Let's say the last two months it was difficult for me to find myself. I didn't enjoy stepping on the court. I wasn't

myself on the court the last two months, three months, so it was difficult for me.

Alcaraz started the year with a quarter-final exit at the Australian Open before being knocked out in the semifinals in Buenos Aires and retiring from his first match in Rio de Janeiro with an ankle injury.

"I was struggling to enjoy being on the court," he added. "My family, my team, people close to me were telling me that I was not smiling as much as I was doing before."

Enjoying his tennis was important to Alcaraz, he said, and nothing was more likely to bring out his trademark grin than winning a point with the sort of "special shot" he produced to get past Jannik Sinner in the semis and Medvedev on Sunday.

"I always say that I'm playing better with a smile on my face," he said.

Swiatek storms past Sakkari to win Indian Wells title

Indian Wells, US - World number one Iga Swiatek dominated ninth seed Maria Sakkari to win the Indian Wells final 6-4, 6-0 and claim the title for a second time in the California desert on Sunday.

In a rematch of the 2022 showpiece, Swiatek's precise serving and speedy defence proved too much for her Greek opponent and the Pole reeled off the final eight games to close out a tournament where she never dropped a set.

"I'm really proud of myself, I'm super happy," Swiatek told reporters.

"Even though this tournament looked like, the scores, maybe I had everything under control, it wasn't from the beginning to the end so easy."

"So I'm happy I could improve during the tournament. I felt really good on the last two matches, big amount of confidence. I'm really proud of myself."

Swiatek, who won her third straight Qatar Open in Doha last



Iga Swiatek celebrates with the Indian Wells trophy

month, beamed a big smile on the sun-soaked stadium court after getting her hands on the Indian Wells trophy again.

"Right now I just feel I've done really good work," said the 22-year-old, who was upset in the third round of January's Australian Open.

"It hasn't been easy after Australia, and I've been working hard to play well and to handle everything mentally well."

The top seed came out firing in Sunday's final, building a 3-0 lead before Sakkari worked her

way back into the set for 4-4.

But on her third set point, the Pole dragged Sakkari from one side of the court to the other before capturing the opener with a forehand winner.

Swiatek dominated the second, crushing a running back-

hand for a 3-0 lead and then breaking serve for 4-0 as the outmatched Greek began to fade.

A backhand winner down the line put Swiatek a game away and she sealed the win by breaking serve to love when Sakkari's forehand sailed wide on match point.

"It's an amazing thing to be standing here again," Swiatek told the crowd during the trophy ceremony.

"Thank you for really making this feel like home. Every year that I come here I feel really positive vibes because of you."

Swiatek is now 19-4 in career finals and 8-2 at the WTA 1000 level while Sakkari has a 2-8 record in showpiece matches.

"I'm sorry I couldn't put up a better fight," Sakkari told the crowd after the match lasted just over an hour.

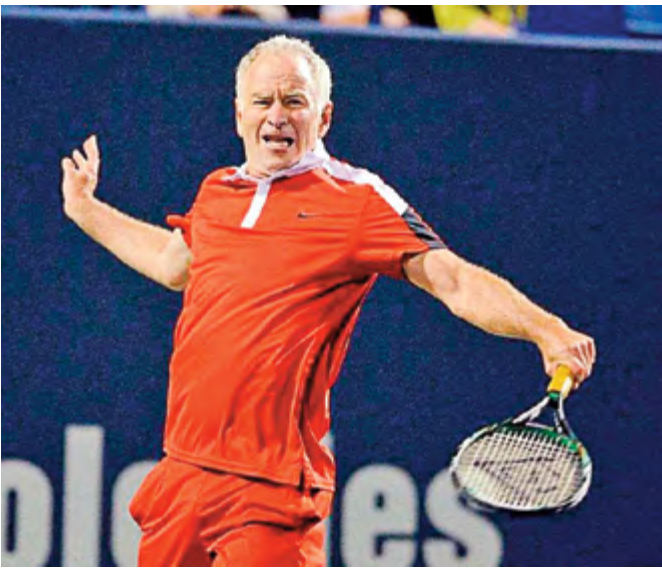
"It was pretty quick for you guys but credit to Iga... You and your team have created something incredible. I'm really hoping we can play a lot more finals."

‘I’m not a big believer in having tennis circuit go year round’

Bengaluru, India - John McEnroe accepts the inevitability of Saudi Arabia's growing influence on tennis but the American great fears the country's ambition to host a 10th Masters tournament could add to player and fan fatigue.

The outspoken New Yorker has been one of the most vocal critics of Saudi Arabia's big-money push into tennis, describing the potential engagement of the women's tour with the country as "laughable".

According to a source with knowledge of the plans, Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) is keen to own a tennis



John McEnroe

We need an off season. Not only for players to recuperate but for fans to recuperate.

JOHN MCENROE

event featuring the top players, with multiple reports saying they are eyeing a slot before the Australian Open in January.

"I read recently they're talking about an event before the Australian Open. That's going to open up a whole can of worms.

So we'll see what develops," the 65-year-old McEnroe told Reuters in a video call from New York.

"I'm not a big believer in having the tennis circuit go year round. We need an off season. Not only for players to recuperate but for fans to recuperate. And this is something we've always had difficulty with."

"I think tennis has shot itself in the foot for too long."

SRJ Sports Investments, which was formed by the PIF to accelerate the growth of sports in the Gulf country, declined to comment. Reuters has contacted the PIF for comment.

OMAN TAKE ON NAMIBIA

Bilateral T20I series ideal preparation for T20 World Cup, says Oman coach Mendis

Muscat - Oman Cricket is all set to host Namibia for a five-match bilateral T20 international series at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat from April 1-7.

Both the teams have qualified for ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, to be jointly hosted by West Indies and the USA, and the five-match series will serve as a good preparation for the World Cup-bound squads.

Confirming the tour, Oman Cricket Chief Development Officer Duleep Mendis said: "The bilateral series involving five matches series presents an invaluable opportunity for the teams to fine-tune their strategies and compositions before the World Cup commences in June."

The matches will be played



Oman's Bilal Khan celebrates a wicket against Namibia in this file photo

from April 1-7 with April 3 and April 6 rest days. The matches will start from 2.30 pm.

Oman and Namibia are

clubbed in the same Group B at the T20 World Cup. The group also consists of the last two winners of the Men's T20 World

Cup in England and Australia, and Scotland. Coincidentally, Oman and Namibia will inaugurate their World Cup campaign

by facing each other on June 2, 2024, in Barbados, West Indies. Oman had recently hosted Papua New Guinea, another

team bound for the T20 World Cup, for an unofficial one-day international series and a T20I series with the hosts drawing level the one-day two-match series and winning the T20I series 2-1.

Head coach of Oman, Mendis, is looking forward to the series against Namibia and hopes that his players will keep the winning momentum as they prepare themselves for the World Cup.

Oman were initially scheduled to travel to a four-nation tournament in Uganda in April, also comprising the Netherlands and Namibia.

However, following the cancellation of the tournament, Oman Cricket got in touch with the Namibian Cricket counterparts and agreed for the five-match series in Oman.

With teams preparing for the World Cup in June, the upcoming five-match series is an "ideal way" to proceed, according to Mendis.

Oman head coach said: "Following the cancellation of the Uganda tour due to unforeseen reasons, we were fortunate to get Namibia agreed to a tour to

Oman, despite that fact that both the teams are in the same pool at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

"This will be a good preparation for us ahead of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Men's T20 Premier Cup, Asia Cup Qualifier, which we will be hosting from April 12-21. A total of ten teams will be competing in the Premier Cup, which will also boost our preparations ahead of the June ICC Men's T20 World Cup."

Mendis said: "The tour against Namibia serves as optimal preparation for the two major events in April and June. Oman Cricket extends its gratitude to the Namibia Cricket Association for their cooperation and agreement to the tour."

At the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in West Indies and the USA from June 1-29, Oman is one of the 20 teams competing. The event is split up into four groups consisting of five teams, with the top two sides from each group then progressing to the Super Eight phase of the tournament ahead of the knockout semi-finals and final.

Leverkusen edge closer to title

Freiburg, Germany - Bayer Leverkusen beat hosts Freiburg 3-2 on Sunday to stay 10 points clear at the top of the league standings and edge closer to a first ever Bundesliga title.

Fresh from qualifying for the Europa League quarter-final in mid-week, Leverkusen showed no signs of fatigue as they earned a club record 22nd win in a Bundesliga season.

Xabi Alonso's team, who also set a club record with their sixth straight away win, are on 70 points, 10 ahead of second-placed Bayern Munich with eight league matches left to play.

VfB Stuttgart are third on 56, with Borussia Dortmund in

fourth on 50 following their 3-1 win over Eintracht Frankfurt.

"It is always difficult to play against Freiburg," said Leverkusen coach Alonso. "Their second goal injected some more emotions late in the game. We could not score a fourth but it was a deserved win with a good performance."

They face West Ham in the Europa League quarter-finals and are also through to the German Cup last four where they host Fortuna Dusseldorf on April 3.

"That is my main concern, that the players come all back healthy (from the international break) with no problems from their national teams."

Royal Challengers Bangalore win maiden WPL title

New Delhi, India - Royal Challengers Bangalore won their maiden Women's Premier League (WPL) title after their spinners restricted Delhi Capitals to 113, setting the stage for an eight-wicket victory with just three balls to spare in New Delhi on Sunday.

Chasing a modest total, Bangalore started slowly and weathered the loss of openers Sophie Devine (32) and captain Smriti Mandhana (31) before Ellyse Perry (35 not out) and Richa Ghosh (17 not out) led them to victory in the final over.

Delhi captain Meg Lanning won the toss and chose to bat, Shafali Verma (44) and Lan-



Royal Challengers Bangalore players celebrate with the trophy

the same decision she made last year when her team lost the final of the inaugural edition to Mumbai Indians.

Shafali Verma (44) and Lan-

ning (23) started well with a blistering 64-run opening stand in seven overs before Sophie Molineux (3-20) put the stops on their charge with three wick-

ets in four balls.

"Finals are funny games," Molineux said after winning the player of the match award. "We knew it was going down to the wire."

Little would have pleased the RCB management more than Molineux's returns in the tournament. The punt they took in picking her at the auction paid off as she returned 12 wickets at an economy rate of 7.31, bowling a majority of her overs in the powerplay and at the death. She was RCB's joint-second highest wicket-taker, that too after coming in on the back of an ACL injury that had kept her out of

action for a large part of two years.

"This one's special - to be taken by RCB after not playing any cricket for a while was pretty special," Molineux said. "I felt like I was bowling really slow tonight. I got a bit quick throughout the tournament. I suppose that is tournament play - you have to keep learning from the innings and the mistakes that you make before that and look forward to the next game."

Sobhana Asha (2-14) and Shreyanka Patil (4-12) then chipped in with wickets at regular intervals to clean up the middle order and tail.

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GENDER INEQUALITIES



Fair share for health

WHO report reveals gender inequalities at the root of global crisis in health and care work

A new report published by the World Health Organization (WHO) illustrates how gender inequalities in health and care work negatively impact women, health systems and health outcomes.

The report - 'Fair share for health and care: gender and the undervaluation of health and care work' - outlines underinvestment in health systems results in a vicious cycle of unpaid health and care work, lowering women's participation in paid labour markets, harming women's economic empowerment and hampering gender equality.

Women comprise 67% of the paid global health and care workforce. In addition to this paid work, it has been estimated that women perform an estimated 76% of all unpaid care activities. Work that is done primarily by women tends to be paid less and have poor working conditions.

The report highlights that low pay and demanding working conditions are commonly found in the health and care sector. Devaluing caregiving, which is work per-

formed primarily by women, negatively impacts wages, working conditions, productivity and the economic footprint of the sector.

The report illustrates that decades of chronic underinvestment in health and care work is contributing to a growing global crisis of care. With stagnation in progress towards universal health coverage (UHC), resulting in 4.5 billion people lacking full coverage of essential health services, women may take on even more unpaid care work. The deleterious impact of weak health systems combined with increasing unpaid health and care work are further straining the health of caregivers and the quality of services.

"The 'Fair share' report highlights how gender-equitable investments in health and care work would reset the value of health and care and drive fairer and more inclusive economies," said Jim Campbell, WHO Director for Health Workforce. "We are calling upon leaders, policy-makers and employers to action investment: it is time for a fair share for health and care."

The report presents policy levers to better value health and care work:

- Improve working conditions for all forms of health and care work, especially for highly feminised occupations
 - Include women more equitably in the paid labour workforce
 - Enhance conditions of work and wages in the health and care workforce and ensure equal pay for work of equal value
 - Address the gender gap in care, support quality care work and uphold the rights and well-being of caregivers
 - Ensure that national statistics account for, measure and value all health and care work
 - Invest in robust public health systems
- Investments in health and care systems not only accelerate progress on UHC, they redistribute unpaid health and care work. When women participate in paid health and care employment, they are economically empowered and health outcomes are better. Health systems need to recognise, value and invest in all forms health and care work.



Global women's health market

Visiongain recently published a new report entitled Women's Health Market Report 2024-2034, in which it predicted the Global Women's Health Market to register a CAGR of 4.6% from 2024 to 2034, valued at US\$61bn in 2034.

The women's health market is experiencing a significant shift towards preventive healthcare, driven by increasing awareness and a proactive approach to wellness.

Recognising the importance of early intervention and disease prevention, healthcare providers and consumers alike are placing greater emphasis on preventive measures tailored to women's specific health needs. This shift encompasses various strategies, including routine screenings for breast and cervical cancer, vaccination against HPV to prevent cervical cancer, and education on lifestyle factors that impact women's health, such as diet, exercise, and reproductive health choices. Additionally, advancements in genetic testing and personalized medicine are enabling more targeted approaches to disease prevention and risk assessment. By prioritizing preventive healthcare, the women's health market aims to not only reduce the burden of disease but also empower women to lead healthier lives and make informed decisions about their well-being.

Visiongain is one of the fastest-growing and most innovative independent market intelligence providers around, the company publishes hundreds of market research reports which it adds to its extensive portfolio each year. These reports offer in-depth analysis across 18 industries worldwide.



THE RECIPE FOR
TOGETHERNESS
FOR EVERY IFTAR



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Say cheese!

ALL ABOUT COTTAGE CHEESE...



TIPS ON INCLUDING COTTAGE CHEESE IN DIET AS A HEALTH FOOD

- Go for low-fat, low, or no-sodium cottage cheese available in the market.
- If making at home, use low-fat milk and do not add salt.
- Add it to pancakes, cakes, overnight oats, smoothies, or salads.
- Substitute it with jam, butter, mayonnaise, or sour cream.
- Add it to scrambled egg or any pasta, to get that creamy texture.

Cottage cheese is one dairy product which is liked and enjoyed by everyone, be it young or old. Across all continents, one finds a variety of cheese, from cheddar, to cream cheese to halloumi or mozzarella. But health experts always advise to take it with caution, due to its high saturated fat and salt content, both considered as evil for cardio health.

But lately, there is a type of cheese which is gaining popularity and is even termed by some as 'Health Food'. Yes, we are talking about, Cottage Cheese.

What is cottage cheese?

It is a soft, creamy, white cheese, which does not have any strong or specific flavour and is usually considered as fresh cheese as it does not undergo any ripening process. This cheese is made simply by curdling milk, which can be regular or low-fat with some acidic agent, like vinegar or lemon juice. It can be made at home, but is also available in the market as creamed, whipped, lactose-free or low-sodium.

What about its nutritional profile?

Since it's made from milk and not many preservatives added excepting salt, it has more or less the same nutrients as milk.

Cottage cheese made from low-fat milk is low in calories, high in proteins, low in carbs and fats, and a good source of some vital nutrients, like, calcium, phosphorus, selenium, potassium, and Vitamin B12.

Is it same as paneer?

Paneer is a household name in In-

dian cuisine and in many menus, it is also called cottage cheese. Hence the thought that comes to one's mind is that they are both same. They are both made from similar ingredients, but the main difference comes in the process of making and this gives rise to difference in taste and texture. While cottage cheese is creamier and crumblier, has tangier flavour, paneer is more like a hard block, with mild taste and chewy texture. Nutritionally both are similar but each one has its own specific use in different preparations.

What are health benefits of cottage cheese?

Helps in weight-loss- Low-fat cottage cheese, is low in calories and high in proteins and calcium and therefore is always included in weight-loss diets.

Helps in muscle gain- A popular food among athletes and people who want to build muscles. Research indicates that high casein in cottage cheese is more effective than whey in building muscle mass.

Great for bone health- Owing to the presence of all key nutrients, like, proteins, calcium, and phosphorus, it helps in keeping bones healthy and strong.

A great source of proteins for vegetarians.

A word of caution. People with lactose intolerance or dairy allergy should avoid using it.

To conclude, Cottage cheese is a healthy food, packed with many vital nutrients. But with careful selection while buying and if eaten in moderation along with other healthy foods; you can enjoy it and 'Say Cheese'.



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09



Showroom - Ghala Heights, Muscat

Offer valid from 12th February, 2024 to 11th May 2024 & applicable on all models and model variants. *5 Years/100,000 kms manufacturer warranty + 1-year unlimited KMs extended. **Service - Whichever is earlier. *** Applicable for the first 6 years. #Petrol Card worth of 600 litres with every vehicle purchased. Rate calculated as per 0.239 OMR per litre for M95 petrol. ## LULU gift voucher with every vehicle purchased. EMI mentioned are of the base models, subject to 20% down payment & calculated @ 5.25% reducing interest PA from Bank Muscat for a tenure of 8 years (conditions apply) & subject to approval. Vehicle shown are for illustrative purposes. Specifications subjected to change without notice. For more details, please visit our showroom. Offer valid only for private vehicles. Not available on fleet, Ministry & Taxi / Rental / commercial car purchases.

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