

Revenues cross R01bn mark

Rise in state revenues mainly attributed to 132% year-on-year increase in current revenues

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate's public revenues in January 2024 recorded a 3% growth, reaching R01.014bn compared to R0982mn recorded in the corresponding period in 2023. This rise in revenues is mainly attributed to an increase in current revenues, which surged 132% year-on-year in January.

Oman's state budget recorded a surplus of R085mn for January 2024, compared to a surplus of R0145mn registered in January 2023.

Net oil revenue dropped 1% in January, accounting for R0595mn compared to R0602mn in the same month a year ago. The average price at which Oman sold its crude oil in



January was \$90 per barrel, and average oil production stood at 1,040,000 barrels per day.

Net gas revenues rose 48% to R0135mn in January com-

pared to the corresponding period in 2023.

Current revenues sharply increased by R0161mn to R0283mn compared to

R0122mn collected during January 2023. This increase is attributed mainly to an increase in government investments.

Public expenditure this Jan-

uary stood at R0929mn, up R092mn (or 11%) compared to the same period in 2023. Public expenditure of civil ministries stood at R0680mn in January this year, down R019mn compared to R0699mn during the corresponding period in 2023.

Development expenditure of ministries and civil units was R019mn or 2% of the total development liquidity allocated for 2024 (R0900mn).

The total of contributions and other expenses amounted to R0121mn in January this year, up 227% compared to R037mn during the same period in 2023.

Subsidies for the Social Protection System and petroleum products in January 2024 stood at R047mn and R026mn, respectively. Transfers for loan payment totalled R033mn.



Oman welcomes UN resolution on Islamophobia

Muscat - Oman has welcomed a decision of the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a resolution on measures to combat Islamophobia and to appoint a special international envoy for this purpose.

Adoption of the resolution coincided with the International Day to Combat Islamophobia on Friday.

The UN resolution condemns any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. It particularly condemns the incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence against Muslims as reflected in the increasing number of incidents of desecration of their holy book, attacks on mosques, sites and shrines and other acts of religious intolerance, negative stereotyping, hatred and

violence against Muslims.

The resolution requests the UN secretary-general to appoint a UN special envoy to combat Islamophobia and to submit a report to the General Assembly at the upcoming session on the implementation of the resolution and on measures taken by member states and the United Nations to combat Islamophobia.

The draft resolution, tabled by Pakistan, won 115 votes in favour, none against, with 44 abstentions.

Calling out social media for the spread of Islamophobia and other forms of bigotry, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, "Around the world, we see a rising tide of anti-Muslim hate and bigotry. We must call this what it is: hate - plain and simple."

Agencies

02

ROP, experts urge to drive safely during Ramadan

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, has confirmed that Oman is on track to produce no less than 30% of electricity from renewable sources by 2030.

He informed that efforts are underway in the oil and gas sectors to halt routine flaring, a process that significantly contributes to carbon emissions. Additionally, industrial areas and cities are actively exploring environmentally friendly energy alternatives.

H E Aufi highlighted the fact that ongoing studies are assessing feasibility, costs and necessary adaptations for industries to transition to renewable energy technologies. These efforts aim to address emissions from sectors responsible for approximately 95% of the country's carbon output, including industry, oil and gas, power, transport and construction sectors.

The government's broader strategy aims for carbon neutrality by 2050, with several activities already advancing towards this goal through a variety of initiatives, while others are exploring projects to reduce carbon emissions further, the minister informed.

Several projects have been announced for electricity production, including the Manah I and Manah II solar projects. Additionally, the R0155mn Ibri III Solar Independent Power Producer project is in the works. Five wind energy projects - Dhofar 2, Sad-ah, Duqm, Mahout and Jaalan Bani Bu Ali - are also in the pipeline.

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ROP, experts urge to drive safely during Ramadan

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Royal Oman Police (ROP) and safety experts have urged motorists to not rush home for iftar during Ramadan, emphasising the importance of road safety during the holy month.

In a statement released on Thursday, ROP highlighted the dangers of speeding, especially around iftar time. 'Speeding before iftar causes accidents. Be careful and do not put your life and the lives of others at risk,' the police warned.

This alert came in response to the tendency observed of motorists to speed in their eagerness to break fast in time, often leading to accidents and severe injuries.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Salem al Saeedi, a taxi driver,



voiced his concern over the reckless driving he has witnessed during Ramadan. "Regrettably, I often see drivers speeding before iftar."

Saeedi urged drivers to embrace the values of Ramadan - patience and endurance - and reminded them of the free snacks provided by various

restaurants and mosques for commuters to break their fast.

Sultan al Rawahi, a safety and security expert, pointed out the significant increase in traffic and likelihood of accidents and congestion as people rush to their homes or mosques for iftar. "Fasting from sunrise to sunset leads to fatigue and hunger,

Speeding before iftar causes accidents. Be careful and do not put your life and the lives of others at risk

ROP

making motorists more eager and, consequently, more likely to engage in rash driving," Rawahi explained.

He called for patience and caution on the roads, advising drivers to obey traffic laws, drive defensively and avoid risky manoeuvres. Rawahi also highlighted the role of community

awareness campaigns in promoting safe driving during Ramadan. "Local authorities, religious leaders and transportation agencies should remind motorists of the importance of safe driving practices through social media, public announcements and community events," he suggested.

Furthermore, Rawahi recommended alternative options for breaking fast to avoid the dangers of rushing home, such as utilising designated rest areas or eateries along the way. This will allow motorists to safely break their fast without the pressure of hastening home.

The ROP statement underscores the need for motorists to prioritise safety and patience, particularly during the busy evening hours of Ramadan, to ensure a safe and peaceful month for all.



OCCI to host Ramadan Evenings

Muscat - Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has announced plans to organise four 'Ramadan Evenings' dedicated to discussing the prevailing economic trends and challenges confronting the private sector.

These sessions will feature a range of speakers, including officials, experts and decision-makers. The first event will be held on Monday.

Announcing the evenings, Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of OCCI, said, "This year's Ramadan Evenings are designed to align with the strategic objectives of the chamber, reflecting the goals of Oman Vision 2040. These include enhancing the business environment, attracting investments, broadening the scope of economic diversification, and examining current trends across various economic sectors."

He informed that the initiative aims to address critical topics such as the organisation of the labour market, the synergy between public and private sectors to foster economic growth, and the role of Oman Future Fund as a key driver for economic development and diversification.

The sessions will cover a range of subjects pertinent to the business environment and sustainability of private sector entities. Topics such as streamlining litigation, decision-making and the execution of commercial judgments with the aid of advancements in information and communication technology, as



Ramadan Evenings is a platform for valuable exchange of insights and strategies, further establishing the chamber's role as a hub connecting economy experts and policymakers with businesses

FAISAL AL RAWAS

well as criminal accountability in the Commercial Companies Law, will be explored.

Rawas emphasised OCCI's intention to make these evenings beneficial to a diverse audience, including business owners, economists and officials, while facilitating the articulation of the private sector's perspectives and concerns.

Ramadan Evenings is a platform for valuable exchange of insights and strategies, further establishing the chamber's role as a hub connecting economy experts and policymakers with businesses.

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Omantel launches Ramadan campaign

Muscat - Omantel has launched its Ramadan campaign for 2024 under the slogan 'The Story has Changed', reflecting the efforts and positive change brought about by the company's previous 'Change the Story' campaign.

This year's campaign tells inspiring real-life stories that urge others to do good and change their own stories, as well as those of the people surrounding them. It includes community activities reflecting the company's commitment to community involvement and collaboration.

A video has also been published on Omantel's social media channels explaining the message and goals of the campaign.

The campaign highlights the 'Maqroo' initiative, the world's first Arabic dyslexic-friendly font.

ROHM unveils Ramadan concert series

Muscat - In a special tribute to the season of peace and devotion, Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) has announced its 2024 Ramadan concert series.

The opera house has scheduled three unique concerts with artists and ensembles exploring a deeper connection to the season through Sufi, nasheed and religious chanting.

The series begins on March 18 with the Ibn Arabi Ensemble from Morocco featuring the Al Zawya Ensemble of Oman.

Ibn Arabi Ensemble specialises in Sufi instrumental and chanting, focusing on reviving popular well-known tunes. 'Expect to hear renditions of famous Sufi poems by well-known figures such as Ibn Arabi, Ibn al Farid, Rabi'a al Adawiya, Abu al Najib Suhrawardi and others,' ROHM stated.

The second in the series is on March 25. In this exquisite concert, the Mawlawiyyin and Levantine Religious Chants Group of Syria, a quartet of vocalists, will be joined by instrumentalists and a choir.

Khalid al Araimi, Oman's most inspiring chant performer, will



Khalid al Araimi (Supplied photos)

join the group to create a beautiful moment of cultural harmony.

On the final evening on April 1, ROHM will welcome Egyptian artist Ali el Helbawy. A sought-after performer, Helbawy is well-known for his religious chanting, following in the footsteps of his legendary father Mohammed el Helbawy, and forging a devotional career of his own. Accompanied by his ensemble and a choir, he will perform nasheeds and Sufi and religious chants.

Combining renowned international ensembles with Omani participants, the concerts will enable the forging of authentic international partnerships through culture. All three concerts will staged starting 9.30pm.

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Winter tourism booms in Dhofar, visitors up 18.4%

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Visitors to Dhofar increased 18.4% this winter season, according to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. The governorate attracted over 35,000 visitors from October to February.

A significant number of tourists arrived on charter flights from European countries.

Salalah Airport is expected to receive a total of 239 charter flights in the current winter season.

Hotels, particularly 4- and 5-star properties, have witnessed occupancy rates surpassing 95% this season.

Khalid bin Abdullah al Abri, Director General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar, stressed the importance of advancing tourism projects throughout the governorate. Key initiatives include a collaboration between the ministry and Dhofar Municipality to develop mini tourist oases, the first of which, Hushir oasis, is slated for completion this year.

The ministry is also focusing on enhancing tourist attractions, such as the Haywar Cave in Jebel Samhan and upgrading adventure tourism sites. Additionally, plans are underway to offer small and medium-sized enterprises and Riyada card holders space at Al Baled Archaeological Park to sell antiques, gifts and handicrafts.

In terms of heritage preservation, Sadah Fort is poised to welcome visitors again following restoration, while Rakhyut Fort is



(Supplied photo)

Jabal Akhdar witnesses dip in tourist numbers

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In 2023, Jabal Akhdar in Dakhliyah saw a marginal drop of 1.1% in tourist arrivals to 205,992 visitors from 208,423 in 2022.

The data, released by National Centre for Statistics and Information, reflects a diverse visitor demographic.

The breakdown of tourist numbers shows that 102,241

were Omanis, highlighting Jabal Akhdar's popularity among locals. GCC visitors comprised a significant part of the total, with Saudi tourists numbering 13,430, followed by Kuwaitis (1,218), Emiratis (951), Qataris (729) and Bahrainis (554). Additionally, the wilayat attracted 6,784 visitors from other Arab and 80,085 from non-Arab countries, indicating its appeal to a broad spectrum of tourists.

Renowned for its unique cli-

mate throughout the year, Jabal Akhdar continues to be a popular destination for both domestic and international tourists. Its offers a blend of entertainment and adventure, besides heritage lodges, mountain camping facilities and farm trail walks, appealing to those seeking new tourist experiences.

Jabal Akhdar has 20 licensed hotels ranging from 3- to 5-star offering a total of 726 rooms of various sizes.

expected to reopen on World Heritage Day on April 18.

Abri highlighted the active search for investment opportunities, with more than 20 prospects identified in the governorate. To cater to growing demand, new 4- and 5-star hotel projects are in

the pipeline with the aim of increasing the total number of hotel rooms from 6,000 to 7,000 by the end of the year.

To further promote Dhofar as a leading tourist destination, the ministry is drawing a promotion strategy aimed at Gulf and inter-

national markets. Upcoming events like the Frankincense Season, Empty Quarter Festival and Omani Culinary Arts Festival are set to draw a wide array of visitors, celebrating the rich cultural and natural heritage of the governorate.

Municipality launches contest to develop Darsait wadi trail

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has launched a competition aimed at developing the area surrounding the Darsait wadi trail.

The competition is targeted at civil and architectural engineering students of University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Muscat.

The competition restricts design proposals for facilities to be accommodated in a defined route along the wadi up to the end of Darsait Park, without altering existing infrastructure.



(Supplied photo)

The objectives of the competition include encouraging national talents to engage in development projects within Muscat governorate and finding

innovative solutions to address water accumulation around the wadi without disturbing the natural flow or affecting existing infrastructure.

Interested individuals or groups (maximum of four students) must submit their designs by March 30. 'Participants will devise innovative designs that enhance the aesthetic appeal of the surroundings, manage water flow in the wadi, and incorporate urban elements while preserving the current infrastructure,' the municipality stated.

'Proposals are expected to showcase modern technologies and the creativity of participants while remaining feasible and cost-effective for implementation on the ground.'



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Tender Announcement



The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madaayn) announces the following Tenders:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of buying	Date of submission	Type of work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
6/2024/PEIE/H-Q-6	Consultancy Services for Detailed Design and Construction Supervision for Rehabilitation of Existing Infrastructure Facilities and Detailed Master Plan for WADI AL-KABIR Industrial City	31-03-2024	25-04-2024	Consultancy Offices	First and Above (Local)	150
7/2024/PEIE/H-Q-7	Consultancy services to study the improvement of existing services and implement the rehabilitation of existing infrastructure and supporting services in Sohar Industrial City	31-03-2024	25-04-2024	Consultancy Offices	First and Above (Local)	150
8/2024/PEIE/H-Q-8	Consultancy Services for Detailed Design and Construction Supervision of Development for Suwaiq Industrial City at Al Batinah North Governorate	31-03-2024	25-04-2024	Consultancy Offices	First and Above (Local and International)	150

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

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om and +968 24402200

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Omani banks' profitability to remain stable, says Moody's

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sound operating conditions and solid capital and liquidity buffers are supporting the stable outlook of Oman's banking system, according to Moody's Investor Service. Moody's has maintained a stable outlook on the Omani banking sector and expects the banks' profitability to remain stable during 2024.

According to Moody's, strong business and consumer confidence and a further recovery in tourism will support economic activity in the non-oil sectors of the economy. This will lift non-oil growth to around 3.0% in 2024 from 2.5% in 2023 and boost loan growth slightly.

'Omani banks will deliver steady profitability and retain solid capital buffers, but we expect a slight increase in problem loans as the ending of pandemic-related loan forbearance measures continues to take a toll,' Moody's said in its Oman Banking System Outlook report released on Thursday.

Moody's stable outlook also takes into account the improved capacity of the Government of Oman to support the country's banks in a crisis following a reduction in Oman's debt burden and improved debt affordability.



Strong business and consumer confidence and a further recovery in tourism will help to boost economic activity in the non-oil sectors of the economy, where Omani banks do most of their business

MOODY'S INVESTOR SERVICE

The rating agency said that strong business and consumer confidence will boost non-oil business activity for Omani banks.

'Strong business and consumer confidence and a further recovery in tourism will help to boost economic activity in the non-oil sectors of the economy, where the banks do most of their business,' it said.

Moody's expects Oman's

non-hydrocarbon GDP growth to slightly improve to 3.0% in 2024 from 2.5% in 2023. The agency forecasts real GDP growth to accelerate to 1.9% in 2024 from an estimated 0.8% in 2023, driven by a smaller decline in oil production compared to 2023, agreed with other OPEC+ countries.

Problem loans to remain low

Moody's expects that problem

loans in Oman's banking system will remain low this year. 'We expect problem loans to increase slightly in 2024 from 3.8% of the sector loan book at the end of September 2023, but to remain below 4.5%. The risk of non-repayment of some loans previously under pandemic payment moratorium will be partially offset by single-digit lending growth in the supportive operating environment,' the rating agency said.

According to Moody's, Omani banks' capital stands well above regulatory requirements, and the banks' solid earnings and good profit retention will keep levels steady. The agency expects Omani banks' profitability to remain stable in 2024. It

expects lower yields on Omani banks' US dollar-denominated loans and slightly declining margins on Omani rial loans over the next 12 to 18 months.

Nonetheless, lending growth between 4% to 5% this year will help to maintain profitability broadly stable, Moody's said. Banks, it added, will reprice down yields on local-currency assets, broadly in tandem with funding costs on Omani rial liabilities (largely deposits) as local currency liquidity improves.

'Omani banks price their local-currency loans with a fixed spread above their local-currency liabilities. Operating costs will rise in line with operating income, and the banks will continue to invest in digitalization and technology, while further growth in branch networks will be limited,' Moody's noted.

According to Moody's, the funding situation will remain tight for Omani banks, mitigated by solid liquid buffers. 'Omani economy is heavily dependent on oil, and prior periods of low oil prices have kept deposit growth sluggish for Omani banks. Deposits from the government and public-sector organisations make up a third of the sector total, exposing the banks to high funding concentration,' the agency said.



Oil prices hold near four-month high

Muscat - Oil held near a four-month high after the International Energy Agency (IEA) forecast a supply deficit through 2024, changing its earlier projection of a surplus, on the premise OPEC+ maintains production cuts.

Brent traded above \$85 a barrel after advancing 4.3% over the previous two sessions. West Texas Intermediate was near \$81 on Friday. The latest IEA view assumes that OPEC and its allies will retain their curbs for the rest of the year to "balance oil markets," it said in a monthly report on Thursday.

However, oil prices declined on Friday, pressured by a strong US dollar, following higher-than-expected consumer price inflation data and on fears that the US Federal Reserve will maintain high rates for longer.

Brent crude traded at \$85.02 per barrel on Friday for a 0.47% decrease from the closing price of \$85.42 a barrel in the previous trading session.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate traded at

\$80.92 per barrel at the same time on Friday, a 0.42% fall from the previous session that closed at \$81.26 per barrel.

The global benchmark was up by around 4% last week, having also been supported by the first drop in US stockpiles since January and heightened geopolitical tensions.

Oil futures have now broken out of a narrow range they had been trading in this year, but there are still headwinds that may limit further gains. These include rising non-OPEC supply, China's demand concerns and persistent US inflation that is pushing back expectations for interest rate cuts.

The strong US dollar is expected to lower demand by making oil more expensive for holders of other currencies.

Additionally, geopolitical unrest and the decline in US crude inventories raised global supply concerns, which prompted profit-taking by investors in Friday's early trade and increased pressure on prices.

Agencies

Non-oil activities reached 50% of Saudi GDP in 2023

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Non-oil activities in Saudi Arabia recorded their highest contribution to the kingdom's real GDP during the year 2023 at 50%, which is the highest historical level ever reached, based on the Ministry of Economy and Planning's analysis of data issued by the General Authority for Statistics.

Saudi Arabia's non-oil economy reached SAR1.7tn, driven by continued growth in investment, consumption, and exports, according to a press release.

The historic non-oil GDP rate was achieved due to an unprecedented performance in real non-government investment during the last two years with a growth rate of 57%, bringing the value of non-government investments to its highest historical level at SAR959bn in 2023.

Furthermore, the arts and entertainment sectors came at the forefront of activities that achieved exceptional growth of 106% during 2021-2022, while other activities grew robustly such as food and accommodation at 77%, and transportation and communications at 29%.

The growth in non-oil activities



during the year 2023 was exceptional in the diversity of contribution and growth momentum. Social services, such as health, education, and entertainment, recorded a growth of 10.8%, followed by transportation and communications at 7.3%, and trade, restaurants, and hotels at 7%.

In addition, service exports, represented by the spending of incoming tourists, recorded his-

toric growth rates during the last two years, at 319%.

This increase reflects the goals of Saudi Vision 2030, which is to achieve a prosperous economy by diversifying growth engines, and the kingdom's success in implementing the relevant programs and major projects, by opening new sectors that contribute to reaching sustainable and robust economic growth.

Mamun concludes Oman's first equity crowdfunding campaign with Zameeli

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omani Fintech firm Mamun has successfully concluded the sultanate's first equity crowdfunding campaign for Zameeli, an innovative platform connecting Omani freelancers with SMEs. This marks a significant achievement not only for Zameeli, which has now expanded its investment base to include the community and freelancers, but also for Oman's tech sector, which continues to thrive and attract diverse investment.

Zameeli, which initially received an investment from the Oman Technology Fund (OTF), has since broadened its circle of investors to include a diverse range through Mamun, underscoring the startup's appeal and Mamun's effectiveness in opening up investment opportunities.

With 1,369 registered clients, including prominent organisations like Omran and the Ministry of Information, and a vibrant network of 3,368 Omani freelancers, Zameeli stands as a beacon of Oman's tech sector and its burgeoning businesses. The platform's development marks a significant advancement for the



freelance economy within the sultanate.

The successful conclusion of the partnership between Mamun and Zameeli sets the stage for the upcoming launch of Mamun's secondary market, anticipated to foster new opportunities by enhancing participation in Oman's financial ecosystem and encouraging innovation across its tech sector.

In a statement, Mohammed al Tamami, COO of Mamun, said, "The successful conclusion of our secondary market represents a significant stride towards building

an ecosystem of investment and trust within Oman. Beyond facilitating transactions, our mission is to cultivate a culture of financial empowerment and to harness the exceptional talent within our region. Zameeli's equity crowdfunding campaign via Mamun exemplifies our commitment to bolstering the local freelancer economy and pioneering tech innovation, fostering a community where trust-based investments can thrive and reshape Oman's investment landscape," he added.

Tariq al Habsi, Co-founder and

CEO of Zameeli, emphasised the platform's commitment to its community. He said, "As Zameeli enters its growth phase, our recent fundraising efforts are strategically designed to empower our freelancers—the very heart of our community. We are dedicating a portion of our current raise to ensure that they can actively contribute to and benefit from the platform's future."

"Our aspiration is to evolve Zameeli into a community-driven platform that is not only shaped by but also shares its success with our freelancers. This collaborative approach not only ensures our sustainability and resilience but also reflects the spirit of unity and innovation that defines Oman's tech sector and its businesses," he said.

For both experienced and emerging investors, Mamun presents a unique opportunity to engage with pioneering equity and financing deals, focusing on the enrichment of the tech sector and enterprises in Oman. This initiative marks a pivotal move towards fostering a culture of investment and trust in Oman, highlighting the community-centric approach championed by Zameeli.

Dubai's Parkin completes record-breaking IPO, raising AED1.6bn

Dubai, UAE - Dubai's Parkin Company on Thursday announced that it has set the final offer price for its Initial Public Offering (IPO) at AED2.10 per share.

This will result in approximately \$428.69mn of gross proceeds for Dubai Investment Fund (selling shareholder). The company and selling shareholder confirm the previously announced offering size of 749,700,000 shares, equivalent to 24.99% of Parkin's total issued share capital.

The offering saw record-breaking interest with total gross demand for the IPO of around AED259bn (\$71bn) at the final offer price, implying an oversubscription level of 165 times for all tranches combined at the final offer price, representing the highest ever oversubscription level achieved on the Dubai Financial Market (DFM).

The Qualified Investor tranche attracted exceptional global demand of more than \$63bn implying an oversubscription level of

166 times at the final offer price. The retail offering saw tremendous appetite from local investors with demand of \$8bn, implying oversubscription levels of 153 times, and almost 63,000 applications received, a record for a DFM IPO.

This overwhelming demand is a testament to Parkin's compelling investment proposition and continued confidence in Dubai's critical infrastructure and long-term growth prospects.

Mohamed al Ali, CEO of



Parkin, said, "Today represents a milestone moment for our business as we secured record-breaking investor demand for Parkin shares with overall subscriptions covered 165 times. This resounding confidence in our attractive equity story is a testament to our best-in-class business model, strong financial performance, and the clear growth opportunities we see for Parkin."

"As a critical infrastructure to Dubai, we operate at the centre

of the city's exciting and ambitious growth plans. The IPO will enable us to build on and accelerate our success in providing seamless, sustainable, and innovative mobility solutions across the Emirate."

Parkin is expected to commence trading on the DFM on March 21, 2024, under the symbol 'PARKIN'. At listing, the company will have a market capitalisation of AED6.3bn (\$1.72bn).

WAM



Russian House Oman holds Spring Festival

The Russian House Oman hosted its biggest and most diverse event to date, the Spring Festival on Friday in Muscat.

The event brought together around 400 guests to celebrate Maslenitsa - Russian Pancake Week- and International Women's Day.

The festivities included traditional games and contests, art classes, dancing, and live music. Guests enjoyed a variety of activities, such as pillow fights, tug-of-war, and a strongman competition.

For the first time, the Russian House Oman that promotes cultural and business ties between Oman and Russia organised a marketplace featuring Russian-speaking businesses in Oman. Visitors had the opportunity to experience traditional Omani henna art and enjoy Arabic coffee and sweets.

"This event was a wonderful opportunity to showcase the diversity of Russian culture and to strengthen ties between Oman and Russia. The inclusion of the first-ever Russian-speaking business marketplace at the festival

provided a valuable platform for businesses to connect, network, and explore potential collaborations, ultimately facilitating business growth in both countries," said Igor Egorov, head of the Russian-speaking community in Oman.

Many guests came dressed in national costumes, adding to the festive atmosphere.

The Russian House Oman team expressed gratitude to the companies that supported the event and provided prizes for the raffle. The team also acknowledged the invaluable contributions of the volunteers who made the day unforgettable.

This event was a wonderful opportunity to showcase the diversity of Russian culture and to strengthen ties between Oman and Russia.

IGOR EGOROV

Student initiative raises funds for cancer charity

Alfarsi National Enterprises (HospitalShop.com) has partnered with the Oman Cancer Association (OCA) to launch the 'Pillows With Purpose' initiative, a project that not only supports a worthy cause but also promotes sustainability by repurposing unused materials from a mask factory into cushions and pillows.

The proceeds from this initiative will directly support OCA's mission to prevent, detect, and assist those affected by cancer.

Saju George, Managing Director of alfarsi.me and HospitalShop.com, expressed his enthusiasm for the initiative.

"Pillows With Purpose embodies our commitment to social responsibility and sustainability. By repurposing unused materials, we reduce waste and contribute to a more sustainable future while supporting OCA's crucial work," said Saju George.

The initiative, born from the idea of a 12th-grade student at International School Choueifat - Muscat, Kristina Sarah, serves as a testament to the creativity, social responsibility, and determination of youth.

"I am thrilled to see the impact that Pillows With Purpose has had in such a short time. It's inspiring to witness the community come together to support such a worthy cause," said Kristina.



I am thrilled to see the impact that Pillows With Purpose has had in such a short time. It's inspiring to witness the community come together to support such a worthy cause

KRISTINA SARAH

OCA headquarters in Muscat. 'Pillows With Purpose' has already made a significant impact, and with the capacity to produce 1000 pillows from existing raw materials, the initiative is poised to achieve even greater success.

The goal is to raise up to

RO8,000 to further support OCA's initiatives.

"We invite corporates and the public to join us in our mission to make a difference in the fight against cancer while promoting sustainability. Together, we can achieve remarkable outcomes and bring hope to those

affected by this disease," added Saju George.

The funds raised from the first phase of the initiative will be handed over to OCA in the coming days, marking a significant milestone in their partnership.

'Pillows With Purpose' con-

tinues to inspire individuals and businesses alike to contribute to a cause that touches the lives of many.

With each pillow sold, the initiative brings comfort not only to its users but also to those battling cancer, symbolizing the power of community, compassion, and sustainability.

To know how to support 'Pillows With Purpose' and the Oman Cancer Association, one can send an email to ceo@alfarsi.me or contact Sangeeta at +968 9127 5757.

KR Eshraqa distributes 10,000 Ramadan boxes across Oman

In line with its commitment to community welfare, the Khimji Ramdas (KR) Eshraqa Foundation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), distributed 10,000 boxes containing Ramadan essential food items across all wilayats in the sultanate.

The MoSD, in close coordination with specific committees led by the wali of each wilayat, facilitated the distribution process. The committees worked tirelessly with charity teams in each wilayat to ensure the efficient and equitable distribution of the boxes. The structured approach adopted in distributing the boxes ensured that they reached the intended beneficiaries - deserving families across the Sultanate of Oman.

Emphasising the importance of strategic partnerships between the public and private sec-



tors in achieving corporate social responsibility goals set by Oman's Vision 2040, Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas Group said, "At Khimji Ramdas, we firmly believe in the power of collaboration to drive positive change in society. The successful distribution of these boxes

demonstrates the impact of such partnerships in addressing critical social needs."

Expressing gratitude to all parties involved in the distribution efforts, Ahmed bin Darwish al Balushi, Director General, Planning and Development, Ministry of Social Development

mentioned: "We extend our sincere appreciation to the Eshraqa Foundation, charity associations, and social clubs for their unwavering dedication to supporting less privileged families. This initiative underscores our joint commitment to serving communities that are in need, and promoting social welfare across the nation."

The Khimji Ramdas (KR) Eshraqa Foundation has been established on the premise that the private sector has a responsibility towards the development of local communities and empowering talented individuals in the sultanate. By working towards nation-building at the grassroots, the Foundation aspires to contribute meaningfully by providing infrastructure that will lead to the enhancement of knowledge, skills, capabilities, health and overall wellbeing in society.

Asyad invites private sector to enhance competitiveness of Oman's logistics sector

Emphasising its commitment to strengthening partnerships with the private sector in the execution of logistics projects, Asyad Group, represented by its logistics arm Asyad Logistics, invited local companies and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) specialising in providing land transport solutions to submit bids for the (Framework Agreement for Providing Land Transportation) tender.

The tender is part of the group's strategy to involve the private sector in the implementation of its expansion plans, maximise the returns of the logistics sector, and cement Oman's position as a global logistics hub with competitive advantages and sustainable economic returns.

This strategic move highlights Asyad's steadfast commitment to maximizing



In-Country Value (ICV) and propelling Oman as a prominent global logistics hub, fostering economic growth and sustainability development as well as building SMEs and private businesses capabilities and experience, ultimately delivering

exceptional services to their clients in the local, regional and global markets.

Tender documents must be collected no later than March 31, and interested parties can contact Asyad: tender.asyadlogistics@asyad.om.

Rose experience at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort

Spring brings spectacular transformation to the mountainsides of northern Oman as Damask roses burst into bloom. Delicate hues flourish on rolling slopes and heady scents float across the lush and rugged landscape. Perched above it all, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort invites guests to become immersed in this radiant season with exclusive celebratory experiences.

Since ancient times, Damask roses have brought beauty to the desert and prosperity to the villagers who tend them. Cultivated

on terraced valley farms for over a millennium, traditions and techniques are passed on year after year as each new generation takes its place as custodians of these fragrant crops. Harvest occurs between mid-March and May when the flowers are plucked and distilled into rose oil, an essential gift from Oman to the world.

Hosted by Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort, the Rose Experience carries guests to a local village where rows of Damask roses sway in the warm breeze.



The Rose Experience carries guests to a local village where rows of Damask roses sway in the warm breeze.

After taking time to appreciate the splendour of the scene, transport is arranged to an enchanting location for a mouthwatering sunset picnic. Inspired by the season, roses infuse every

dish on the menu from sumptuous rose petal salad to creamy rose soup, rose-marinated Atlantic cod fillet, and a sweet rose semifreddo dessert.

Discover the process which turns petals into potions on the Rose Water of Al Jabal Al Akhdar tour. Meet the locals and see how roses from their garden are traditionally distilled in tarnished silver bowls and clay ovens. Learn about the healing properties of the resultant oil for skin, hair, and digestion before taking the opportunity to pur-

chase a sample for home.

Back at the resort, the therapeutic magic of the bloom can be experienced first-hand through the signature Rose Rescue Ritual at Anantara Spa. This 90-minute treatment with included refreshments features a milk and rose petal foot cleansing, a hydration facial with rose and coconut oil, a scalp massage, and a soothing stress release massage.

The Rose Experience is RO135++ per two persons. The Rose Water of Jabal Al Akhdar tour is RO55++ per two persons.

Bank Muscat's Sayyarati Auto Finance Option comes with best financing facilities for customers

Bank Muscat's Sayyarati Auto Finance Option constitutes one of the financing products that appeal to customers. On the occasion of Ramadhan, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the sultanate, commits to providing customers with the best financing offerings to keep pace with the high demand of both new and pre-owned cars and allow these customers to avail the offerings and features provided by various car centres across the country. In this regard, Bank Muscat has launched an attractive Sayyarati auto finance promotion with the best rates in the market that start at just 3.75 per cent on both new and pre-owned cars for Omani nationals and expatriates.

With this year's 'Sayyarati' offer, customers may start paying after two months of loan disbursement. It must also be noted that Sayyarati has some of the best interest rates in the country including 4% for a period up to two years and 4.25% for loan tenors of three years and 4.5% for a four-year loan tenor. Customers can now benefit from the offer by applying for the 'Sayyarati' loan financing product online through the Bank's Internet Banking and Mobile Banking Application.

The special rates are available for Omani individuals employed in government, quasi-government and expatriates individuals



employed in government and quasi-government institutions as well as Tier 1 companies.

The 'Sayyarati' financing product features multiple advantages including enabling customers to apply for a loan up to RO60,000 for both new and used vehicles, a tenor up to 8-10 years for Omani nationals, and

free third-party insurance in case of pre-owned car financing.

On this special occasion, Abdullah Tamman al Mashani, General Manager, Products, Bank Muscat, said: "Bank Muscat's Sayyarati is the most popular financing option in Oman and it has received great and positive feedback from customers.

Hence, Bank Muscat is always keen to follow up on the latest developments in the sector to meet our valued customers' needs by continuously launching new features and attractive rates in order to enable our customers to purchase their dream vehicles.

"We have ensured highly attractive terms and rates during

the holy month compared to rates offered in the previous year, so that more customers have a chance to benefit from this special offer."

Abdullah al Mashani further added: "Bank Muscat is dedicated to keeping pace with the latest advancements witnessed by the banking sector, aiming to

satisfy the various needs and aspirations of customers in line with the Bank's customer-centric vision 'To serve you better, everyday'."

"Due to customers' positive feedback on the various financing offerings Bank Muscat provides them with, the Sayyarati financing product comes with attractive and special offers during the holy month of Ramadhan. Further to this, the Bank takes pride in the strong partnership with the different car dealers

to process the loan facility, including the ID card for Omanis, passport for expatriates, salary assignment letter, quotation/car valuation from the approved valuator, driving license, Mulkiya (for pre-owned cars only) and seller's ID card (for pre-owned cars only). The monthly loan installments are automatically deducted from the customer's account once the mandate to do so is provided to the Bank. It is noteworthy that loans are disbursed within 24 hours subject to

We have ensured highly attractive terms and rates during the holy month compared to rates offered in the previous year, so that more customers have a chance to benefit from this special offer

ABDULLAH TAMMAN AL MASHANI

available all over the Sultanate to offer customers the best banking facilities and services."

Mashani extended his thanks to all customers for their continuous trust in the banking services and products."

Customers may apply for 'Sayyarati' financing loan online via Bank Muscat's Internet Banking and Mobile Banking platforms or by visiting the nearest Bank Muscat branch or Sayyarti Centres in Wattayah and Salalah. Customers are also required to submit the relevant documents

applicants meeting the concerned requirements.

As the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate for the last four decades, Bank Muscat has the largest banking network in Oman with 147 retail banking branches and over 850 ATMs, CDMs and multi-use machines distributed across the Sultanate. Customers can also visit the nearest branch, Sayyarti Centres in Wattayah and Salalah, or request Saed direct sales agents for more information and to apply for a loan.

Shaping Tomorrow's Beauty: Dr Faisal Salim keeps up with innovations in plastic surgery

Enter the dynamic world of plastic surgery, where revolutionary advancements are shaping the newest and safest personalized solutions. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) highlights this evolution with a remarkable 131% increase in cosmetic procedures from 2000 to 2020.

This surge in numbers reflects the growing demand and unwavering confidence that individuals place in these procedures.

Welcome to B-Spoke by Dr Faisal Salim, a leading force in redefining beauty through innovative technologies. B-Spoke is a clinic that epitomizes excellence, with cutting-edge technology at its core. Here, precision and progress converge, defining the future of beauty.

The field of plastic surgery is abuzz with excitement over cutting-edge techniques and trends.

Take, for example, the VASER liposuction technique, the pinnacle of minimally invasive technology. It targets and breaks down fat cells while preserving surrounding tissues. This technique offers smoother contours and reduces recovery time compared to traditional liposuction. Patients



Dr Faisal Salim

experience enhanced comfort and achieve results that look and feel natural, with minimal scarring. In the realm of breast augmentation, high-quality implants provide both durability and a natural feel. These implants are easier to customize, allowing surgeons to tailor them to the unique anatomy and aesthetic goals of each patient. The results are long-lasting and contribute to overall confidence and well-being.

Dr Faisal's practice is centred around delivering natural results. His specialisation in deep plane face and neck lifts ensures the most natural and long-lasting outcomes desired by his patients.

Ras Al Hamra Golf Club hosts 50th Muscat Open

Ras Al Hamra Golf Club hosted the 50th Muscat Open on February 23 and 24. It was the 10th time to be held on the grass course. There were 88 players who teed it up to try and become the next Champion. This is the oldest amateur golf event in Oman having started in 1973.

Day 1 saw some spectacular golf with Kaiser James Acebedo hitting an eagle on the 15th, 6 time Muscat Open Champion Azaan al Rumhy tied atop the leaderboard with 2024 Muscat Junior Open Champion Krish Pawani as both carded a score of 74. Jas Dhanju had the day's lowest net score of 67, one shot in front of Rahul Singh. At the end of play for the day we had six golfers within 6 shots of the leaders.

Sunny skies and a light wind welcomed our golfers to tee it up for the Championship Round. Hisham al Siyabi just missed a hole in one on the seventh hole



early in the morning field to highlight an excitement for the remainder of the day. Ayman al Busaidi was looking to make a charge after his front nine score of 39 had him 3 shots off the leader. However, Azaan would shot a 38 and look to be in control

with a one stroke lead on Krish Pawani and three strokes on Ayman.

Azaan would add to his lead on the 10th hole as he made par and Krish bogeyed. Both players would par 11, Azaan dropped a shot on the 12th and Krish made

birdie on 13 to tie the match. Krish made par on the 14th to take his first lead of the day.

Azaan's par on 15 evened the match again. Krish made par on 16 and 17 to take a 3 stroke lead into the final hole. Azaan just missed his birdie putt which

would have forced a playoff for the second straight year, while Krish sunk his putt to win the 50th Muscat Open.

Muscat Open weekend started off Thursday with the first ever Muscat Open Legends event. There was a field of 56 golfers who met the age minimum qualification of 50 plus years of age.

RAHGC General Manager Salim al Harthy edged out Puli Sharma by two shots to win the event. Masoud al Barwani was the net winner beating Andy Coutts by one shot.

The Muscat Open attracted golfers and visitors from the UK, Switzerland, India, Bahrain, and the UAE.

H H Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said took part in the tournament and was the guest of honour at the evening presentation ceremony at the Ras al Hamra golf club.

Six Senses Ziggy Bay hosts pop-up with chef Reif Othman

Six Senses Ziggy Bay is thrilled to announce its collaboration with the famed Dubai-based chef and restaurateur, Reif Othman, unveiling an exclusive series of culinary pop-ups this March. Together, they invite guests to embark on a gastronomic journey with two bespoke menus meticulously crafted by Chef Reif in collaboration with the resort's culinary team.

This unique experience seamlessly blends Reif's innovative cooking style with the resort's idyllic setting and ethos, promising an unforgettable fusion of flavours.

From March 28 to 30, the first part of the collaboration will unfold at Sense on The Edge, the resort's mountaintop restaurant which sits 293 metres above the azure waters of Ziggy Bay. Guests can overlook the magnificent Omani landscape whilst indulging in a kaiseki-style



selection of delectable small bites, as well as a plethora of desserts themed 'All About Chocolate'. The chef's inventive touch shines through dishes like the Caviar Tart or the Oven Baked Codfish with Wasabi Jalapeno Sauce.

Continuing the journey on March 31, guests will be treated

to an innovative Easter pop-up menu. Featuring creative delicacies, it promises to be a true feast for the senses.

The result is a collection of sophisticated dishes celebrating Eastern flavours, paying homage to Reif's roots while showcasing the abundance of exceptional local ingredients, from the fresh-

The eco-friendly Omani resort partners with the acclaimed Singaporean chef to curate an extraordinary gastronomic experience this March

est seafood to the delicious vegetables, sourced from the resort's own organic Dibba farm and on-site garden.

Chef Reif's culinary odyssey, from his mother's cafeteria to spearheading some of the world's most coveted kitchens, has been nothing short of remarkable.

His pioneering approach, artfully combining Japanese, Italian and French influences, has

earned him prestigious accolades.

Notably, he was awarded the Chefs' Choice Award in the inaugural MENA 50 Best Restaurants 2022 line-up and was the sole chef to make the Arabian Business Top 100 Power List in 2023. This journey has positioned him among the most acclaimed chefs, not only regionally but also on a global scale.

Six Senses Ziggy Bay's General Manager Diletta Guarino expressed her excitement stating, "Chef Reif is a true icon, and it is an absolute honour to welcome him to the resort, creating such an out-of-the-ordinary experience for our guests."

"Together, we have crafted a captivating itinerary through tastes and flavours aimed at redefining the concept of food, and we're eagerly anticipating this collaboration come to life," Diletta added.

Invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting

Annual General Meeting.
The Annual General Meeting has been scheduled for Friday 29nd March 2024 Via Online Platform at 11.30 AM.
Agenda of Discussions.
• Yearly Activity & Progress Report.
• Financial Reports 2023-2025.
Notes: The mee ng weblink will be shared thru Official social site of club.

For details and Queries please contact below:
Non-Resident Nepali Social Club Oman President: 98451839
General Secretary: 96748373
FB Page: <https://www.facebook.com/NRNSC>

‘Zap-X’ technology saves tumour patient from deafness

Ankara, Turkey - A robotic medical device has served to treat the progressive hearing loss of an elderly patient in one of Turkey’s well-known University Medical schools in Ankara.

One of the 18 advanced technologies in the world, the robotic gyroscopic radiosurgery device, Zap-X, was first used to heal patients at Hacettepe University Medical School in Ankara.

One of the first patients to be treated with Zap-X was retired English teacher Günsel Karaca, 64, who was grappling with a tumour that emerged in her hearing and balances vestibular nerves. After the application of Zap-X, Karaca’s tumour stopped growing and she was saved from the risk of completely losing her hearing.

The head of the radiation oncology department at Hacettepe Gökhan Özyigit shared information regarding radiosurgery treatment with Zap-X. He underlined that the device has features that can perform much more sensitive treatments.

Özyigit emphasised that Karaca had a tumour called ‘acoustic neuroma’.

“This is a tumour that is challenging to remove surgically and



is especially affecting the auditory nerve. Patients usually come to us with hearing loss. With these tumours, surgery in that area can cause hearing loss to deteriorate. The Zap-X device can easily treat these challenging tumours.

“We may not be able to reverse the existing hearing loss, but we can forestall the loss from progressing further and stop the growth of the tumour,” he said.

Özyigit stressed that acoustic neuroma is a benign tumour. But, when it grows, there is a danger of compressing the brainstem and causing more severe health problems.

“Our patient, Ms Günsel, had an acoustic neuron of approximately 1cm (0.4 inches) on her right and left sides. While she could hear 11% on the right side, she had a 20% hearing loss on the left side. We treated one first and the other the next day with Zap-X,” he said.

“The treatment period usually takes half an hour. We cure our patients without a scalpel or general anaesthesia during that time. Through this method, we can achieve nearly 100% disease control, and our patient’s hearing will deteriorate.”

Anadolu Agency

‘No revenge’ after election, says top Senegalese leader

Kigali, Rwanda - Top Senegalese opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, who was just been released from prison, said on Friday that there will be ‘no revenge’ when the opposition candidate he is backing wins the March 24 presidential poll.

“This is not the time for revenge. There will be no revenge, but there will be justice. We have a big project ahead of us. So, we don’t have time for a witch hunt. But let it be clear: There will be no impunity,” Sonko said at a news conference in the capital, Dakar.

Speaking alongside his allied presidential candidate, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, Sonko urged young people to turn up massively on Election Day and secure the vote after casting ballots to prevent possible rigging. Sonko predicted Faye, one of the main candidates, would win with not less than 60% in the first round.

The Supreme Court upheld on Friday that the presidential election must be held March 24, dismissing attempts to have the poll date pushed back by opposition politician Karim Wade, who claimed the campaign period was insufficient. Sonko was released



Senegalese opposition leader Ousmane Sonko was released from prison on Thursday

This is not the time for revenge. There will be no revenge, but there will be justice. We have a big project ahead of us. So, we don’t have time for a witch hunt

OUSMANE SONKO

from prison on Thursday, 10 days ahead of the presidential election, causing huge celebrations in the capital Dakar, according to local television.

State broadcaster RTS reported late on Thursday that Sonko was released, along with

Faye who was named as the opposition presidential candidate after Sonko was barred from contesting. Popular among young voters, Sonko ranked third in the 2019 presidential polls.

The 49-year-old opposition leader has had a standoff with the state for nearly two years, and has been in prison since July 2023 facing several charges.

His arrest led to several riots in the West African country in 2021-2023.

Senegal also witnessed mass protests earlier this year after President Macky Sall announced the postponement of the February 25 presidential elections.

RTS said Sonko and Faye’s release follows the promulgation of the law relating to general amnesty, adopted a few days ago by the majority of deputies of the National Assembly.

The legislative text cancels ‘all acts likely to qualify as criminal or correctional offenses committed between February 1, 2021 and February 25, 2024, either in Senegal and abroad, relating to demonstrations or having political motives’.

Anadolu Agency

Australian blueberry breaks world record as heaviest ever

Canberra, Australia - Australia has recently made waves in the world of fruit cultivation, with a remarkable blueberry breaking records as the heaviest globally. Tipping the scales at an astounding 20.4 grams (0.71 ounces), this giant blueberry has officially secured its place in the record books, CNN reported.

According to a spokesperson for Guinness World Records speaking to CNN on Friday, the fruit, picked on November 13, underwent confirmation this week, solidifying its status as the heaviest blueberry ever recorded. Measuring 39.31mm (1.55 inches) across, approximately the size of a table tennis ball, this exceptional berry was cultivated in Corindi, New South Wales, Australia, under the care of Costa Group’s blueberry growers.

The blueberry belongs to the Eterna variety, known for its impressive fruit size, crisp texture, and extended shelf life, as explained by senior horticulturalist Brad Hocking in a statement released by the company on Tuesday, according to CNN.

Hocking expressed: “Eterna as a variety has a really great flavour and consistently large fruit. When we picked this one, there were probably around 20 other berries of a similar size.”

The previous record for the heaviest blueberry, held by a 16.20-gram (0.57-ounce) berry grown in Western Australia in 2020, was surpassed by this extraordinary specimen. Costa Group, dedicated to developing new blueberry varieties adaptable to various conditions, highlighted the exceptional qualities of this achievement.

“This really is a delightful piece of fruit,” remarked Hocking. “While the fruit is large, there’s absolutely no compromise on quality or flavour as would be expected when developing a premium variety blueberry.”

Among other notable entries in the Guinness World Records, an Israeli farmer, Chahi Ariel, claimed the title for the world’s heaviest strawberry in February 2022 with a specimen weighing 289 grams (10 ounces).

ANI

Serbia’s Vucic predicts World War III if there is no ceasefire in Ukraine

Belgrade, Serbia - Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said on Friday that the world is facing two possible scenarios - a third world war or a long-term cease-fire in Ukraine.

“One scenario is whether the West will go in the direction of a full conflict with Russia, since it is not entirely easy to stop the Russian army on the ground,” Vucic said at a news conference in Belgrade with the President of Bavaria state in Germany, Markus Söder. “And the second is that with the help of the United States of America and China, some kind of long-term truce, if not permanent peace, would be established, which would mean a huge relief for the world.

He added that if it goes in the direction of conflict, nobody would gain anything. Söder said it is very important for Serbia to become a member of the EU and Bavaria will have its support.

“We are strongly advocating for Serbia to join the European Union. It would be a great shame for Europe, but I think also for Serbia, if you didn’t go that way,” said Söder. He said it is important that Serbia, as the strongest



Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic

With the help of the US and China, if some kind of long-term truce could be established, it would mean a huge relief for the world

ALEKSANDAR VUCIC

country in the Balkans, with a European tradition, be a strong and good partner.

Söder said Bavaria will open a representative office in Belgrade, which will be responsible for developing economic, and scientific and technical cooperation.

Vucic said cooperation with Bavaria is important for Serbia as Bavarian companies employ 25,000 workers in Serbia.

Anadolu Agency

I cannot in good conscience endorse Trump: Ex-vice president Mike Pence

Washington, DC, US - Former vice president Mike Pence made a surprising declaration on Friday (local time), stating that he ‘cannot in good conscience’, endorse presumptive GOP nominee Donald Trump, CNN reported.

This statement marks a significant departure from his previous alignment with his former running mate and the president he served alongside.

“Donald Trump is pursuing and articulating an agenda that is at odds with the conservative agenda that we governed on during our four years. That’s why I cannot in good conscience endorse Donald Trump in this campaign,” Pence said on Fox News.

Pence articulated his stance during an appearance on Fox News, expressing concern over the disparity between Trump’s current agenda and the conservative principles they upheld during their four years in office.

Although Pence refrained from endorsing any candidate in the 2024 Republican primary following the end of his own presidential bid in October, he had previously committed to supporting the eventual GOP nominee. Trump had urged Pence to endorse him after the former vice president withdrew



A file photo of Mike Pence and Donald Trump

from the race, emphasising his role in elevating Pence to the vice presidency. “I chose him, made him vice president. But ... people in politics can be very disloyal,” Trump had said.

While Pence expressed pride in the accomplishments of the Trump-Pence administration, he highlighted areas where he believes Trump has deviated from conservative principles. He cited Trump’s positions on abortion, the national debt, and the recent reversal on TikTok as examples of this departure.

“During my presidential campaign, I made it clear there were profound differences between me and President Trump on a range of issues. And not just our difference on my constitutional duties that I exercised January 6th,” Pence said on ‘The Story with Martha MacCallum’.

“As I have watched his candidacy unfold, I’ve seen him walking away from our commitment to confronting the national debt. I’ve seen him starting to shy away from a commitment to the sanctity of human life. And this

last week, his reversal on getting tough on China and supporting our administration’s efforts to force a sale of ByteDance’s TikTok,” he added, as reported by CNN. Addressing his own voting intentions in the 2024 general election, Pence opted to keep his choice private, stating: “I’ll keep my vote to myself.” He affirmed that he would not support President Joe Biden and indicated a reluctance to endorse a third-party candidate.

Pence’s break with Trump extends beyond policy differences. Notably, Pence declined to overturn the 2020 election results while presiding over Congress’ certification of Biden’s victory on January 6, 2021. He later criticised Trump for his role in inciting the violence that unfolded at the Capitol that day, asserting that Trump’s ‘reckless words’ endangered lives.

Throughout his own presidential campaign, Pence cautioned against the allure of populism embodied by Trump and his followers. Recently, Pence’s advocacy group, Advancing American Freedom, announced a US\$20mn initiative aimed at promoting conservative policies, CNN reported.

ANI

European countries use Russian assets to fund weapons for Kyiv

Intention is to use proceeds from the assets frozen in Europe to fund arms purchases

Brussels, Belgium - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that the European Union countries have intended to use proceeds from Russian assets frozen in Europe to fund arms purchases for Kyiv, reported TASS.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz while addressing a press conference with French President Emmanuel Macron and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk in Berlin, said: "We will use the super profits from Russian assets frozen in Europe to financially support the purchase of weapons for Ukraine. And the three of us will meet again next week and discuss these issues with our European partners in the European Council," he added.

According to a high-ranking EU representative, the EU is working on the 14th package of sanctions against Russia, which will include measures to combat circumvention of previous restrictions, TASS reported.

"We are already working on the 14th package of sanctions, and it will include measures to combat circumvention of all previous restrictions," he said.

He further denied mentioning when the next package of sanctions will be introduced.

Since February 2022, the European Union has introduced 13 packages of individual and economic sanctions against Russia due to the special military operation in Ukraine. Moreover, the last package was approved on February 23, according to TASS.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (left) welcomes French President Emmanuel Macron (right) and Polish PM Donald Tusk at the Chancellery Building in Berlin, Germany on Friday

The three of us (Olaf Scholz, Donald Tusk and Emmanuel Macron) will meet again next week and discuss these issues with our European partners in the European Council

OLAF SCHOLZ

Earlier on Thursday, the EU agreed to provide five billion euros (US\$5.48bn) for military support to Ukraine, as part of a revamp of an EU-run assistance fund, reported Al Jazeera.

In a move to extend military support to Ukraine as its forces

struggle against Russia's invasion, the EU stated that it will support Ukraine with whatever it takes to prevail.

European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell said: "We made it: #Coreper agreed

on the #UkraineAssistanceFund. The Fund will allow us to step up our military support to #Ukraine with another EUR5 billion. The message is clear: we will support #Ukraine with whatever it takes to prevail."

ANI

Putin casts vote online on day one of elections

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is running for the country's top office again as an independent candidate, cast his electronic vote in the presidential elections, Russia-based TASS reported.

Footage released by the Kremlin showed Putin walking towards a computer in his office, casting his vote and then smiling and waving at the camera. A notification on the computer monitor then read that a vote had been successfully cast. It was not the first time that Putin cast his vote online. In the last few years, the Russian President cast his vote online during the autumn single election day.

The ongoing polling to elect the Russian President marks the first time that online voting has been made available, according to TASS report. More than 3.5mn people cast their vote online on the first day of the presidential election across Russia, TASS reported, citing the e-voting monitoring portal.

As of 7:28pm (local time), as many as 3,500,331 ballots were issued to voters in 28 Russian regions, who had applied for voting online. The federal platform of electronic voting recorded a 73 per cent voter turnout on the first day, TASS reported.

ANI

Canada: Indian-origin couple, daughter killed in 'suspicious' fire

Ottawa, Canada - An India-origin couple and their 16-year-old daughter have died in a 'suspicious' fire at their home in Canada's Ontario province.

The incident happened on March 7, however, the police said that they identified the victims on Friday, whose remains were discovered at the site, reported CTV News.

The victims have been identified as Rajiv Warikoo, 51, Shilpa Kotha, 47, and Mahek Warikoo, 16. "All three of the deceased persons resided at the address prior to the fire," Peel Police said in a press release.

On March 7, at 1:30pm, police were called to the area of Big Sky Way and Van Kirk Drive in Brampton at a residential home that was fully engulfed in flames.

In the video captured on a neighbour's doorbell camera, large flames shoot out of the roof, and black smoke billows into the sky as a fire truck shows up, as reported by CTV News.

"Following the initial efforts of first responders to put the fire out, the fire Marshall's office was called in to help determine the cause of the fire. While examining the scene, investigators made an unfortunate discovery when they located what was believed to be human remains within the destroyed house," Peel Police added.

Moreover, the detectives from the Peel Regional Police Homicide Bureau have been working closely with the Office of the Chief Coroner.

ANI

UNSC extends mandate for Afghan mission

Toronto, Canada - The UN Security Council (UNSC) on Friday unanimously extended a mandate for an assistance mission in Afghanistan for one year.

The resolution extends the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) until March 17, 2025.

The resolution urges 'all relevant Afghan political actors and stakeholders, including relevant authorities as needed, as well as international actors to coordinate with UNAMA in the implementation of its mandate and to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations and associated personnel throughout the country'.

The 15-member Council also requested that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres 'reports to the Security Council every 3 months on the situation in Afghanistan and the implementation of UNAMA's man-



This file photo shows a volunteer taking classes for Afghan girls in Kabul, Afghanistan on October 31, 2022

date, including at the subnational level'. UN representative for Afghanistan, Naseer Faig, welcomed the extension of the man-

date at the UNSC meeting.

"We hope the UN's focus on political dialogue remains a priority alongside other aspects of

UNAMA's mandate," he said.

The Taliban returned to rule Afghanistan in August 2021.

The interim government set

up by the group continues to impose numerous rules, violating a range of fundamental rights.

Anadolu Agency

Special prosecutor Wade resigns from Trump case after judge's ultimatum

Washington, US - In an election interference case against ex-President Donald Trump, a special prosecutor who once had a romantic relationship with Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, resigned after a judge ruled on Friday that Willis can remain on the case, only if the prosecutor resigns.

Trump and his co-defendants had alleged that Willis benefited from her relationship with the Special Prosecutor Nathan Wade, a suggestion dismissed by Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee, who nonetheless said that either Willis or Wade must step aside to avoid any 'appearance of impropriety'.

"The Court finds the allega-

tions and evidence legally insufficient to support a finding of an actual conflict of interest. However, the appearance of impropriety remains and must be handled as previously outlined before the prosecution can proceed," McAfee wrote in a 23-page order.

Willis and Wade did not deny having a relationship but said it began before he was appointed to his office, and ended last summer prior to indictments being handed down against Trump and his co-defendants.

Justice delayed

The judge's ruling, which could delay the case, comes amid a number of recent decisions in the numerous cases against Trump



Former US president Donald Trump

making it doubtful if any of them will be concluded before November 5, Election Day. Polls say many voters would be reluctant

to vote for a candidate who was convicted of a felony, which may make the cases pivotal for who wins in the fall.

Trump and his co-defendants had alleged that the district attorney benefited from her relationship with special prosecutor Nathan Wade, a suggestion dismissed by Fulton County superior court judge McAfee

If he returns to the Oval Office, Trump has threatened to do everything he can to shut down the cases against him.

Critics say Trump's lawyers are deliberately 'slow-walking' the cases against him to make sure he is not convicted before the election.

Trump was indicted by a Georgia grand jury last August on 13 criminal counts, including violations of the state Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, solicitation of violation of oath by a public officer, conspiracy to commit impersonating a public officer and conspiracy to commit false statements. McAfee on Wednesday threw out the solicitation charges. Trump has been indicted four times in state and federal courts since he left office in January 2021.

The charges range from hush

money payments to an adult film star, efforts to overturn national election results, unlawful retention of classified documents, and efforts to prevent investigators from completing their duties.

Willis' probe was sparked by a January 2, 2021, telephone call Trump made to Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger in which he urged the senior state official to 'find 11,780 votes', the number he would have needed to win the battleground state. A recording of the call was later leaked to the media.

The investigation went on to include a probe of fake local electors who attempted to certify fraudulent election results in Trump's favour.

Anadolu Agency

WAR ON GAZA

At least 80 Palestinians killed in overnight attacks by Israel

The army bombed a house on Al-Jala Street, leaving many residents trapped under rubble

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories - At least 80 Palestinians were killed in overnight Israeli attacks against Gaza, according to media reports.

The Palestinian news agency, WAFA, said Israel continued to attack various parts of the Gaza Strip, including the Nusairat Refugee Camp and Gaza City. Many were injured in the attacks targeting civilian homes and buildings in Gaza.

The army bombed a house on Al-Jala Street, leaving many residents trapped under the rubble. It demolished a seven-story building near Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, where displaced Palestinians are staying, resulting in the deaths of dozens, with many more trapped under the rubble.

Civil defence teams retrieved the bodies of five Palestinians from the rubble of the building,



while rescue efforts are underway. At least five Palestinians were killed and others injured in an attack on a house in the Tuffah neighbourhood of Gaza City.

In the Nasr neighbourhood, many were killed when the army bombed a house, according to the Media Office of the Gaza

government. The army had targeted a house in the Nusairat Refugee Camp, killing at least 36 Palestinians.

Israel has waged a deadly military offensive on the Gaza Strip since an October 7 cross-border attack led by the Palestinian group, Hamas, in which less than 1,200 people were

killed.

At least 31,490 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have since been killed in Gaza, and 73,439 injured amid mass destruction and shortages of necessities.

Israel has also imposed a crippling blockade on the Palestinian enclave, leaving its popu-

lation, particularly residents of northern Gaza, on the verge of starvation.

The Israeli war has pushed 85 per cent of Gaza's population into internal displacement amid a crippling blockade of most food, clean water and medicine, while 60 per cent of the enclave's infrastructure has been

damaged or destroyed, according to the UN.

Israel is accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice. An interim ruling in January ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

20 more detained in West Bank

The Israeli army during its incursion across the occupied West Bank on Saturday detained at least 20 more Palestinians, including former detainees.

According to a joint statement from the Prisoners and Ex-Prisoners Affairs Authority and the Palestinian Prisoner Society, the new arrests bring the total number of Palestinians detained by Israeli forces since October 7, 2023, to 7,605.

Most of the arrests occurred in Jenin, Nablus, Tubas, Tulkarm, Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. During the Israeli arrest campaigns, Israeli soldiers beat and abused Palestinians and damaged their homes and properties, the statement said.

According to figures by the two rights groups, the total number of Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails exceeds 9,000, including 3,484 held under administrative detention without trial or charge, 200 children, and 70 women.

Tensions have been high across the West Bank since Israel launched a deadly military offensive against the Gaza Strip.

At least 434 Palestinians from the West Bank have been killed by Israeli forces and settlers since October 7, in addition to over 4,700 others injured.

Anadolu Agency



White House strikes guarded optimism on proposal by Hamas

Washington, DC, US - The White House struck a note of guarded optimism on Friday after Hamas presented a proposal for securing a ceasefire in the besieged Gaza Strip.

National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said the proposal 'is certainly within the bounds of, in broad brushstrokes, within the bounds of the deal that we've been working on now for several months'.

"The fact that there's another delegation now heading to Doha, the fact that this proposal is out there that there are conversations about it. That's all good," he told reporters. "We're cautiously optimistic that things are moving in a good direction, but that doesn't mean that it's done, and we're gonna have to stay at this till the very, very end."

Hamas has presented mediators from Qatar and Egypt with a three-phase plan for a ceasefire and a hostage swap deal, a Palestinian source told Anadolu earlier on Friday. The source, speaking on con-

dition of anonymity, said Hamas' proposal is made up of three stages, each lasting for six weeks.

"The first stage entails the withdrawal of Israeli forces from different cities' centres, as well as from Rasheed (coastal road) and (central road) Salah al-Din streets to allow for the return of displaced people and the delivery of aid," the source added.

The source noted that the second stage involves the release of Israeli women, children, and elderly hostages held in Gaza in exchange for the release of over 700 Palestinian inmates from Israeli jails.

The third stage would involve the release of Israeli soldiers who have been captured in Gaza, with a permanent ceasefire to be announced before the exchange of soldiers begins.

Hamas proposed to Israel the release of 50 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for each female Israeli soldier currently held captive.

Anadolu Agency

Unloading from first aid ship completed

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories - The unloading of the first aid ship that arrived on the shores of the besieged Gaza Strip a day earlier was completed on Saturday, local sources said.

"Small boats began unloading the ship's cargo on Friday and transporting it towards the shore of Gaza City," eyewitnesses told Anadolu. "Unloading operations were concluded on Saturday morning," they added.

The Open Arms towed a barge carrying 200 tonnes of food donated by the US-based charity World Central Kitchen.

The vessel departed from Larnaca port of the Greek Cypriot administration and arrived on Gaza's shores on Friday.

The aid mission, named Operation Safeena, aims to inaugurate a maritime aid corridor proposed by the Greek Cypriot



administration, and supported by the UK, the US, and the EU.

The US has separately announced to building of a temporary dock on the Gaza shoreline to allow the delivery of humani-

tarian aid on a large scale.

Meanwhile, Japan will join a maritime corridor initiative to supply humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip by sea, Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa has an-

nounced. "The Japanese government plans to coordinate promptly with other related countries to deliver food, medical and hygiene supplies through the maritime corridor,"

the Jiji Press news agency quoted Kamikawa as saying on Friday. He said the corridor could help get unconstrained aid to people in Gaza.

Anadolu Agency

Rachel Corrie, the activist who fought for Palestinian freedom

Jerusalem - In southern Gaza 21 years ago today, American activist Rachel Corrie was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer she was trying to stop from reducing the home of a Palestinian family to rubble.

Through her activism in Gaza, Corrie helped bring to light many rights violations perpetrated by Israel against Palestinians, becoming a symbol of the Palestinian cause.

Corrie, who devoted her life to defending the rights of Palestinians, was very much taken aback by what was happening under Israeli occupation.

In an email to her mother, Corrie wrote: "It is most difficult for me to think about what's going on here when I sit down to



write back to the United States."

She added: "I don't know if many of the children here have ever existed without tank-shell holes in their walls and the towers of an occupying army surveying them constantly from the near horizons.

"I think, although I'm not en-

tirely sure, that even the smallest of these children understand that life is not like this everywhere."

An Israeli investigation concluded that her death was an accident, in findings that has satisfied neither Corrie's parents, nor many others world-

Rachel Corrie was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer she was trying to stop from reducing the home of a Palestinian family to rubble

wide. In 2005, Craig and Cindy Corrie filed a civil lawsuit against Israel, asserting that she had either been intentionally killed or that the soldiers had showed criminal negligence. They sued for a symbolic one US dollar in damages.

An Israeli court rejected the

lawsuit in 2012, ruling that the Israeli government was not responsible for her death.

The ruling was slammed by human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, as well as activists. Corrie has since become a symbol of the fight for Palestinian rights.

An Irish aid ship that set out for Gaza in 2010 named itself after Rachel and her story has been told in several documentary films about the plight of Palestinians.

Born on April 10, 1979, in Olympia, Washington, Rachel Corrie had dedicated her life to human rights, defending Palestinian rights in particular.

Anadolu Agency

INDIA

LS polls from April 19 in 7 phases, result on June 4



Bharat Rastra Samithi (BRS) leaders stage a protest over the ED arrest of party leader K Kavitha, in Malkajgiri on Saturday (ANI)

BRS leaders stage protests over arrest of Kavitha

Siddhipet, India - Bharat Rastra Samithi (BRS) leaders on Saturday staged protests in several parts of Telangana over the arrest of party legislator K Kavitha by the Enforcement Directorate in the alleged Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case.

The leaders held a protest at Siddhipet's old bus stand. However, police detained the protestors.

Local BRS MLAs Rajashekar Reddy and Laxma Reddy held a protest in Hyderabad at Uppal Radhika X Roads and Malkajgiri X Roads with their followers.

BRS leaders were heard chanting the slogan 'ED Modi ek hai'.

Police on the spot detained them and shifted them to local police station.

Meanwhile, K Kavitha who was arrested from her residence in Bajara Hills Hyderabad on Friday was produced before Rouse Avenue Court in the national capital on Saturday.

The MLC and the daughter of

BRS founder and former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy, was arrested after a day-long questioning followed by a raid at her Hyderabad residence on Friday.

Appearing before Rouse Avenue Court, Kavitha told reporters that 'it is an illegal arrest'.

The action comes almost two months after the ED issued a summons to the 45-year-old BRS leader.

She was questioned thrice in this case last year, with the central agency recording her statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). In the arrest order, the ED investigation officer said: "I believe that Smt Kalvakuntla Kavitha w/o Mr D R Anil Kumar, residing at H No 8-2316/S/H, Road No 14, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad, Telangana-500034 has been guilty of an offence punishable under the provision of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (15 of 2003)." ANI

New Delhi, India - The general election for 543 Lok Sabha seats will be held in seven phases from April 19, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar announced on Saturday. The counting will be held on June 4.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) also announced the dates for four state Assembly elections.

Phase 1 elections will be held in 21 States and Union Territories (UTs) on April 19 and the last date for filing nominations is March 27. Phase 2 elections to be held from April 26 will cover 12 States and UTs and last date of filing nominations is April 4.

The third phase elections will be held in 12 States and UTs on May 7, for which candidates will have to file their nominations by April 19. Phase 4 elections to be held on May 13 will cover 10 States and UTs and last date for filing nominations is April 25.

As many as eight States and UTs will be covered in Phase 5 elections which will be held on May 20. The last date for filing nominations is May 3.

Covering seven States and UTs, the Phase 6 elections will be held on May 25, and last date for filing nominations is May 6.

The 7th phase elections, in eight States and UTs, will be held on June 1, for which candidates can file their nominations till May 14.

Phase 1 elections will be held in 102 constituencies, while a



Vendors selling flags of various political parties including BJP, TMC and Congress ahead of Lok Sabha elections, at a shop, in Kolkata on Saturday (ANI)

Nearly 97 crore voters are eligible to vote for 543 Lok Sabha constituencies across the country. With the announcement of dates, the moral code of conduct comes into force immediately

total of 89 constituencies will be covered in phase 2. In Phase 3, polling will be held in 94 constituencies while the fourth one will cover 96 constituencies. The fifth phase will cover 49 constituencies, while the remaining two phases will cover 57 constituencies each.

Assembly elections are being in Sikkim (April 19), Odisha

(May 13), Andhra Pradesh (May 13) and Arunachal Pradesh (April 19). Votes will be counted on June 4.

Nearly 97 crore voters will be eligible to vote for 543 Lok Sabha constituencies across the country. With the announcement of dates, the moral code of conduct (MCC) comes into force immediately.

CEC Rajiv Kumar said that strict directions have been given to District Magistrates and SPs to ensure level playing field. CAPF (Central Armed Police Forces) will be deployed adequately and assisted by integrated control rooms in each district, and check posts and drones will ensure vigil, he said.

"Ensuring voters' trust is paramount. Violence in elections is unacceptable. Impersonators will be swiftly punished," the CEC said.

The ECI has offered 27 apps and portals for all stakeholders, while cVigil will empower citizens to report MCC violations

against which action is assured within 100 minutes, he said.

The CEC further mentioned that the poll body is sensitive to environmentally sustainable elections. "We are making efforts to minimise single-use plastic and encourage eco-friendly practices in the election process," he said.

CEC Kumar informed that to curb the flow of illicit money, the poll body has held extensive reviews with enforcement agencies. "Cash movement worth around Rs 3,400 crore was restricted in the last 11 state assembly elections," the CEC said. ANI

Centre extends ban on JKLF-Y for 5 more years

New Delhi, India - The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has extended the ban on the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (Mohd. Yasin Malik faction) as an 'unlawful association' for a further period of five years.

In a notification, the MHA said its fresh move followed inputs received against the outfit, referred to as the JKLF-Y, for its involvement in 'activities, which are prejudicial to security and public order and have the potential of disrupting the unity and integrity of the country'.

Exercising the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (37 of 1967), the MHA declared the JKLF-Y as an unlawful association on March 22, 2019.

As per the fresh report received by the MHA, the JKLF-Y is still involved in anti-national



This file photo shows JKLF Chief Mohammad Yasin Malik being taken out of NIA Court in New Delhi on May 25, 2022 (ANI)

and subversive activities intended to disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India; it is in close touch with militant outfits and is supporting extremism and militancy in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere.

"The JKLF-Y is supporting and inciting claims for secession of a part of the Indian territory from the union and supporting terrorist and separatist groups fighting for this purpose by indulging in activities and articulations intended to disrupt the territorial integrity of India," reads the notification issued on Friday night.

Explaining its action, the MHA said, the Central government is of the opinion that if the unlawful activities of the JKLF-Y are not curbed and controlled immediately, it will take the opportunity to escalate its subver-

sive activities including an attempt to carve out a separate State out of the territory of Union of India while destabilising the Government established by law.

The Ministry further said that the outfit will also continue advocating the secession of Jammu and Kashmir from the Union of India while disputing the accession of the state of Jammu and Kashmir with the Union; propagating anti-national and separatist sentiments prejudicial to the territorial integrity and security of the country; and escalate secessionist movements, support militancy and incite violence in the country.

The notification further says the Central government firmly decided to declare the JKLF-Y as an 'unlawful association' with immediate effect. ANI

Delhi Court grants bail to Kejriwal in ED case

New Delhi, India - Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was on Saturday granted bail by the additional chief metropolitan magistrate (ACMM) of Rouse Avenue Court against arrest for skipping summons issued to him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the Delhi liquor policy money laundering case.

During the hearing, Kejriwal appeared physically before the court.

ACMM Divya Malhotra granted bail to Kejriwal and noted that the Section 174 of the Indian Penal Code is bailable and directed to furnish ₹15,000 each in both complaint cases.

Additional Solicitor Gen-

eral S V Raju along with Zoheb Hossain and Simon Benjamin appeared for the ED and senior advocate Ramesh Gupta along with advocates Rajiv Mohan, Mohd Irshad, Mudit Jain and Samprikta Ghosal appeared for Arvind Kejriwal. On Thursday, it was submitted that Kejriwal gave a reply to each notice issued by the ED but despite coming to know the reasons for their non-appearance in person provided by him, the ED continued issuing cyclostyle notices.

Kejriwal while challenging the summons in sessions court further submitted that there was no intentional disobedience on his part. ANI

India, Bhutan pledge to expand partnership in education sector

New Delhi, India - Highlighting the contribution of Indian teachers for strengthening STEM pedagogy in Bhutan, India and Japan agreed to expand their partnership in the education sector.

According to a joint statement, both sides agreed to boost vibrant people-to-people relations. Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, with his wife Tashi Doma, is on an official visit to India from March 14-18 at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This is Tobgay's first overseas visit after assuming office in January 2024.

Both sides also reaffirmed their desire to continue strengthening the positive col-

laboration between India and Bhutan in new and emerging areas such as digital technology, start-ups and STEM.

The Bhutanese side appreciated the Indian government's support for the development of sports infrastructure in Bhutan.

"Both sides agreed to strengthen and consolidate ties in the field of youth and sports development," the statement added.

Both sides further lauded the partnership between the two countries in the space technology sector, including recent initiatives such as the technical capacity-building on remote sensing technology organised by the Indian Space Research



Bhutan Prime Minister Dasho Tshering Tobgay lays a wreath while paying tribute at the Samadhi of Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat, in New Delhi on Friday (ANI)

Organisation for the Royal Government of Bhutan. Moreover, they welcomed the development of the Joint Plan of Action on Space Cooperation.

India and Japan welcomed the signing of the MoU on the Concessionary Financing of Rs 1500 crores to Bhutan for Gyal-Sung- Bhutan's National Service Programme initiated by the King for skilling and leadership development of the youth of the country.

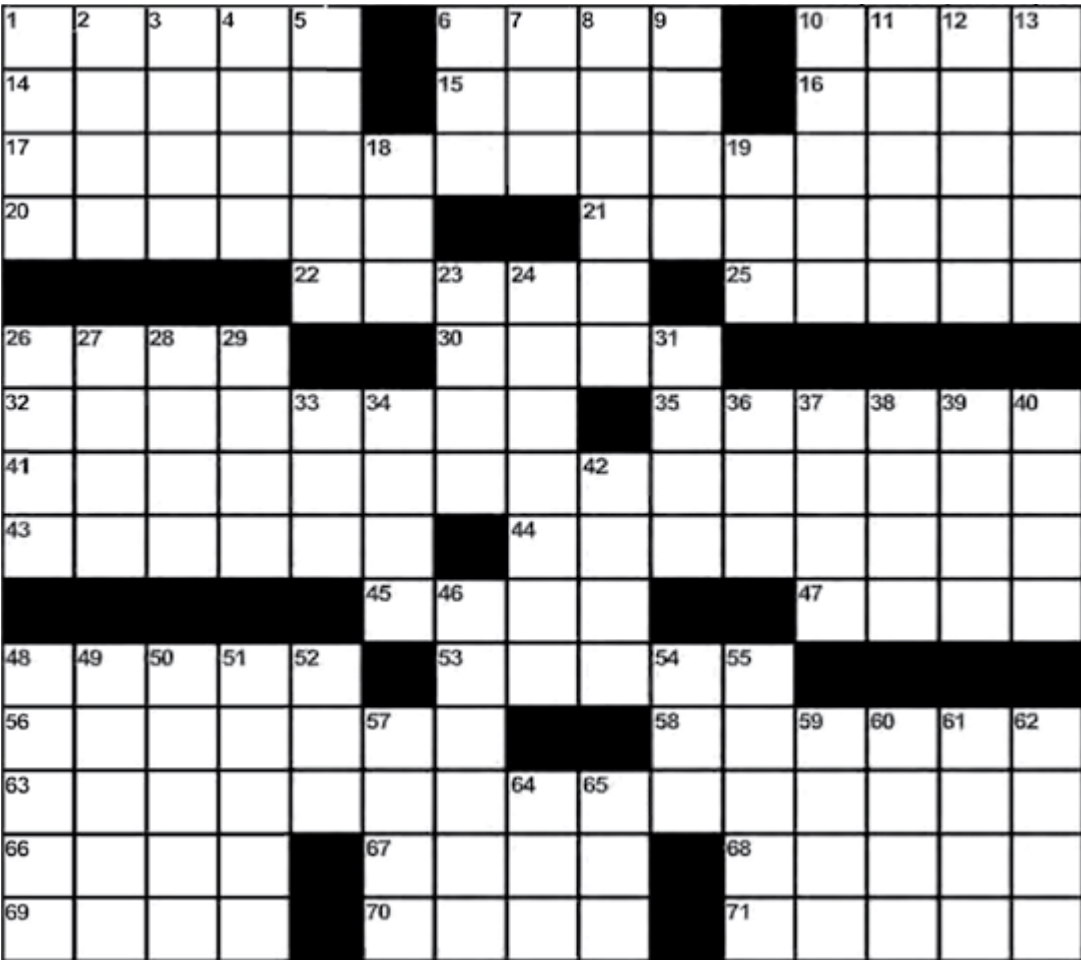
According to the statement, Modi conveyed that India remains committed to partnering with Bhutan in its quest to become a high-income nation in consonance with the vision of Bhutan's PM and the priorities of

the people and the government of Bhutan. "The two prime ministers acknowledged that the exemplary ties of friendship between India and Bhutan are a source of strength for both partners and the region," the statement stated.

During his visit, Tobgay called on President Droupadi Murmu and held discussions with Modi on the full spectrum of bilateral cooperation and regional issues of mutual interest.

Additionally, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Minister of Power, New and Renewable Energy R K Singh and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval called on the Bhutan PM. ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Celebrity haunt of the Rockies
- 6) Mountain peaks
- 10) Drained of color
- 14) Sparkly stone
- 15) Ready for publication
- 16) Homecoming visitor, for short
- 17) Nintendo 3DS, for one
- 20) Passionate states
- 21) Arrogance
- 22) Dictionary subject
- 25) Smart-mouthed
- 26) "No" voter
- 30) Head-and-shoulders sculpture
- 32) Friendly disposition
- 35) "Into the Wild" setting
- 41) Have no need for negotiations
- 43) Go around and around
- 44) Went about aimlessly
- 45) " Do not open til,"
- 47) Gulleets
- 48) Santa's reindeer, sans Rudolph
- 53) Like some indie films
- 56) Revered threesome
- 58) Not as knotty
- 63) Etsy offering, some-

times

- 66) Pointless Olympic event?
- 67) Kent's beloved
- 68) Coin of Pakistan
- 69) NL Central team
- 70) Dermatological diagnosis, perhaps
- 7 1) Baseball card data
- DOWN**
- 1) Turkish honorific
- 2) Brown meat
- 3) Diminutive lake
- 4) Taro root
- 5) Jacket named for an Indian leader
- 6) _Aviv
- 7) Not even
- 8) Forty-niner's quest
- 9) Greek portico
- 10) Pre-marathon staple
- 11) "A Lesson from_" (Fulgard drama)
- 12) Whoppers
- 13) Manicuring material
- 18) Driving-exam curve
- 19) Xi preceders
- 23) Not incompetent
- 24) 1990-91 hostilities
- 26) Culture medium
- gelatin

- 27) Cape Canaveral cancellation
- 28) Civil wrong
- 29) Mental germ
- 31) Mountain lake
- 33) Soaking
- 34) Goat seen on treks
- 36) Escorted
- 37) "May I have your attention?"
- 38) Gilbert of TV
- 39) Had down cold
- 40) Annexes
- 42) Kiln
- 46) Seaman's "Help!"
- 48) "None of the above"
- 49)_ myrtle
- 50) With prongs
- 51) "Alive" setting
- 52) Lacking in brightness
- 54) Meet, in poker
- 55) Bawls loudly
- 57) Rash treatment
- 59) Serve as an usher
- 60) Mozart's Trojan princess
- 61) Once, in the past
- 62) Some shaggy rugs
- 64) Coast Guard officer below lt.
- 65) Boeing 747, e.g.

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your instincts will lead you to like-minded people today, so if you are hoping to have a calm day with little disagreement, then go wherever your gut tells you to go. Fun people will be waiting there for you. Besides being able to predict how people are all going to react to you, your instincts will tell you how to prevent anything bad from hurting the people you love. This is a time of great connectedness between you and your people. Old friendships get new life.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You understand that anything of quality takes time, but not everyone else does. A few of your friends or coworkers are getting antsy today, and it's up to you to calm everyone down and keep them focused on the same goal. Together, you can all come up with good solutions if you just don't panic. Encourage brainstorming and see what ideas everyone has. This is your chance to lead the group on a path to some solid improvement and build your reputation as a leader.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You are ready for some audacious action today. Gone is any trace of shyness. You are full of confidence and burning with the desire to get your point across to the people who haven't been listening to you for far too long. Adopt a more direct manner of speaking with the people who usually intimidate you. Make eye contact and you'll make them want to hear you out. Step up and make the grand gestures you know you can make so well. It's now or never.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Today is a good day to evaluate some recent developments in your life. Your mind is clear and your attitude is positive. More than ever before, you are ready to learn from past mistakes. So take stock of the wins and the losses you've had and get perspective on where you really are in life. You are a lot further along than you thought. You can sense the momentum building. Some exciting transformations are going to start happening soon



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

It's time for some changes to your surroundings, and you're ready for them. Today is a great day to redecorate your home, repaint a room, or just rearrange the furniture a bit. Changing your physical space will go a long way toward freshening up your attitude and putting you on an even more positive track than you were already on. Plus, it will reinforce the idea that you can affect the world around you as much as you would like to.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

A recent development has been good for your social life but not very good for your money. Before things get too far out of hand, take some time today to review your accounts and get a better idea of what you are dealing with. Things are probably not as bad as you fear, but they're sure to get worse if you don't get a handle on things. Cutting back on spending doesn't mean cutting back on fun, though. Instead of going out to dinner, why not host a pizza party at your place?



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Schedule some time to see some of your relatives. Being in the midst of your family will give you a new point of view on where you want to take your life next. The people who have known you all your life can give you an evaluation you'll really appreciate, because they aren't afraid to tell you the truth. Also, they'll be able to encourage you and help you forget your fears. You need to step forward boldly and bravely, and they know how to help you do that.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Places like the grocery store, coffee shop, or big box store might not seem like places where you can make intriguing intellectual connections, but that isn't necessarily true. All it takes is for you to open your mouth and say something interesting, which is never a hard thing for you to do. Start some conversations with strangers who seem interesting. They probably are. And if you are looking to start a new romance, make sure you toss some flirtation in there too.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You will be given some preferential treatment today, and it will be just like you to feel guilty about it, but you shouldn't. You are good at inspiring others and instigating change, and that is a valuable skill that deserves to be rewarded. Just because this kind of work feels easy for you doesn't mean that it's not incredibly valuable. You don't have to break a sweat in order to do something amazing. It's time you realized your worth and accepted the praise.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Keep things low-key today, especially in terms of the money you spend. You might think that flashing a lot of dough around will get you noticed, and you're right. Trouble is it won't get you noticed in a very good way. If people think you have lots of money to toss around, they might try to figure out a way to get some of it. Or they might think you're a shallow show-off. Besides, moving toward a simpler life might be a good idea. The less stuff you have, the less stress you will have.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You're getting along quite well with someone you sometimes bicker with. For once, the two of you are on the same wavelength and see things in the same way. The only hitch in your harmony could come later in the day when they want to do one thing and you want to do another. It might be too difficult to come to a compromise, so don't try to force it. Just agree to disagree for now. You two will never negotiate an arrangement that will satisfy you both, so don't even try.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

It's true that the squeaky wheel gets the oil, so if you need some attention today, speak up loudly, early, and often. The usual agitators in your group are keeping quiet. Chances are good that you will have the center stage all to yourself. It's a great day to make a suggestion, sell an idea, or convince an opponent that you actually are the better competitor. Words are your best weapon now because your wit is sharp and your jokes are funny.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. A British expression sometimes used for "goodbye" is "toodle ..." what?

- A. Bye
- B. Poodle
- C. Pop
- D. Pip

02. Which is likely to be most useful in treating the symptoms of a cold?

- A. Warfarin
- B. Digitalis
- C. Lemon and honey
- D. Insulin

03. What is Cajón del Maipo in Chile?

- A. A mountain lake
- B. A canyon
- C. A wetlands
- D. An archipelago of offshore islands

Answers: 1. D, 2. C, 3. B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

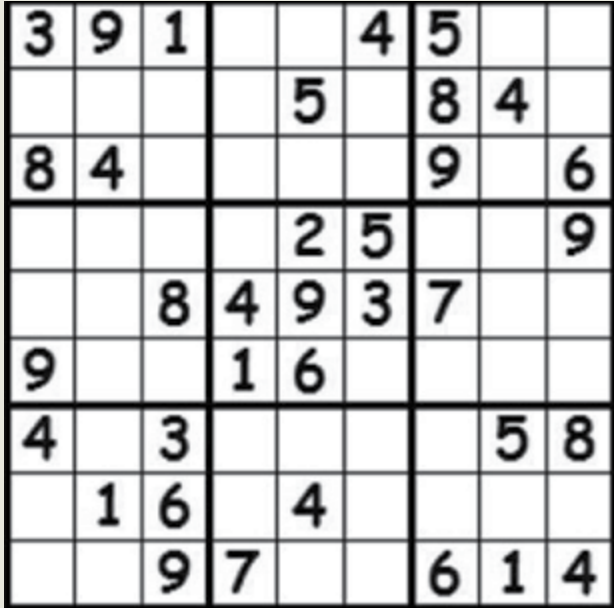


Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters.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



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



JUDE FACTOR

Real Madrid a different team with Bellingham, says Guardiola

Manchester, England - Real Madrid are a different side compared to last season thanks to midfielder Jude Bellingham's "obvious" impact, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said after his side were drawn to face the LaLiga club in the Champions League quarter-finals.

Holders City beat the 14-time Champions League winners in the Champions League semi-finals last season, drawing 1-1 away and securing a thumping 4-0 win at the Etihad in the second leg.

Bellingham, who joined Real from Borussia Dortmund in July for a fee of around 103 million euros (\$112.1 million), has scored 20 goals and set up nine for the Spanish side across all competitions this season.

Asked about the leading LaLiga goalscorer, the City manager told reporters on Friday: "(Bellingham's) impact has been massive. It's a different team from last season. His influence is obvious, and we have to try to discover what he does to control

it.

"Facing Real Madrid is always a tough challenge, nobody can deny it. They are an exceptional club, and in this competition they can control many things with the experience they have in the past.

"Like last season there will be moments for them and moments for us. The longer we can keep our moments, we'll be closer. We'll try to do a good performance in Madrid and then here, with our people, do it again."

The first legs of the Champions League's quarter-finals will be played from April 9-10 and second legs on April 16-17.

City play Newcastle United in the FA Cup quarter-finals on Saturday and face Arsenal in the Premier League after the international break.

The quarterfinal draw held at UEFA's headquarters in Nyon on Friday also pitted Barcelona against Paris St Germain while Atletico Madrid face Bundesliga side Borussia Dortmund, which means all three Spanish teams

have the opportunity to reach the semi-finals. This may also be Kylian Mbappe's last chance to win the title with PSG with the French forward set to leave the Ligue 1 club at the end of the season. PSG reached the final in 2020 where they lost to Bayern Munich.

Arsenal face Bayern

Arsenal returned to the quarter-finals for the first time in 14 years and they play Bayern Munich which will give the German club's star striker Harry Kane -- who has scored 36 goals this season -- another crack at his former north London rivals.

Kane has played Arsenal 19 times in all competitions and scored 14 goals. The former Tottenham Hotspur striker is the joint-top scorer in the Champions League this season alongside Antoine Griezmann, Erling Haaland and Mbappe with six goals.

Six-times champions Bayern have been Arsenal's biggest nemesis in the competition, with the German side triumphing in all four knockout ties between the two sides.

The last time they met, Bayern beat Arsenal 10-2 on aggregate in the last 16 in 2017.



Jude Bellingham



Vinicius Jr

Madrid file complaint after Vinicius allegedly targeted with racist abuse

Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid have filed a complaint with the state prosecutor's office over hate and discrimination offences after alleged racist chanting by Atletico Madrid and Barcelona fans directed at Vinicius Jr, the LaLiga club said on Friday.

On Thursday, Vinicius called on UEFA, Europe's soccer governing body, to punish Atletico for alleged racist chanting ahead of their team's Champions League match against Inter Milan on Wednesday.

A video posted on social media appears to show Atletico fans outside the Metropolitano stadium in Madrid before

Real Madrid condemns these violent attacks of racism, discrimination and hate against our player Vinicius Junior, which have sadly been a recurrent and ongoing concern

REAL MADRID

stadium in Madrid chanting racist abuse targeting Vinicius.

Real Madrid said the complaint was filed for "racist and hateful abuse" directed at Vinicius near the Olympic Stadium of Montjuic and the Metropolitano stadium in Madrid before

Barcelona and Atletico's Champions League matches.

"Real Madrid calls on Prosecutors to request the recordings available from both locations ... in order to identify the perpetrators of the abuse," the club said.

"Real Madrid condemns these

violent attacks of racism, discrimination and hate against our player Vinicius Junior, which have sadly been a recurrent and ongoing concern for some time.

"Our club will continue working hard to uphold the values of football and sport as a whole, and will remain steadfast in the fight for a zero-tolerance approach to the types of despicable incidents we have seen on multiple occasions in recent times."

The Real Madrid winger has been the target of racist abuse on a number of occasions, sparking a series of local and international campaigns.



Carlo Ancelotti

Ancelotti urges 'zero tolerance' of racism

Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti called for a zero tolerance policy against LaLiga's recurring "racism problem" following more incidents of racist abuse directed at forward Vinicius Jr.

On Thursday, Vinicius urged the European governing body UEFA to take action against alleged racist chants directed at him by Atletico Madrid and Barcelona fans.

Real Madrid have also filed a complaint with the state prosecutor's office over hate and discrimination offences, the LaLiga club said on Friday.

"The problem is there, I believe it is. I am not going to change my opinion" on racism in LaLiga, Ancelotti told reporters on Friday.

Vinicius was also racially abused last year while playing at Valencia. Several were arrested after that incident, and Valencia banned four people for life. "I think Valencia responded very well after their episode (with racism). It is others who have to act now. When we talk about zero tolerance, it is for us and for everyone," Ancelotti said.

Leipzig thrash hapless Cologne

Leipzig, Germany - RB Leipzig demolished struggling FC Cologne 5-1 helped by two goals from Lois Openda in the Bundesliga on Friday as they edged into fourth place in the race for a Champions League spot.

Leipzig are on 49 points, two ahead of Borussia Dortmund, who host Eintracht Frankfurt on Sunday. Cologne are 16th in the relegation playoff spot with 18 points. Leipzig's Xavi Simmons struck in the 15th minute but the home side equalised three minutes later when Sargis Adamyan met Eric Martel's header following a corner kick.

The visitors went ahead again in the 63rd as Simmons crossed for Openda to score and the Belgian netted again four minutes later with a fine header for his 19th league goal of the season.

Amadou Haidara then made it 4-1 with a long-range effort in the 70th minute before Yussuf Poulsen wrapped up the victory eight minutes from the end.



RB Leipzig's Lois Openda celebrates after scoring against FC Cologne

Bologna win

Bologna's Giovanni Fabbian scored in added time to snatch a 1-0 win at lowly Empoli and consolidate their hold on fourth spot in Serie A on Friday as they battle for a Champions League place.

Bologna have 54 points, six

ahead of AS Roma in fifth, while Atalanta and Napoli are also chasing European qualification with 47 and 44 points respectively. Empoli are 17th with 25 points.

Substitute Fabbian was in the right place to put home the re-

bound from goalkeeper Elia Caprile, who could not hold a long-range attempt four minutes into stoppage time.

Fabbian netted the decider after several wasted chances in a match played in heavy rain at Stadio Carlo Castellani.

Addo new Ghana coach

Accra, Ghana - Ghana have re-appointed Otto Addo as their new coach following the exit of Chris Hughton at the end of the dismal first round exit at the Africa Cup of Nations in the Ivory Coast earlier this year, officials said on Friday.

Addo is to take over the reins permanently in May, but will take charge of friendlies against Nigeria and Uganda in Morocco this month having led Ghana at the World Cup in Qatar.

He combined his post in Qatar with his role as talent scout for Borussia Dortmund, who have now agreed to release him from his contract to lead the national team on a full-time basis.

"There were some brilliant

individuals among the coaches who applied for the job," Ghana Football Association president Kurt Okraku said in a statement.

"Otto was exceptional in the interview process and was rated highly by the search committee."

Addo took over as coach of Ghana in February 2022 when the Serb Milovan Rajevac was sacked.

They beat South Korea at the World Cup but finished bottom of their pool and he left immediately afterwards.

"It wasn't easy for me to make this decision, but I'm very grateful and happy that those responsible at Borussia Dortmund are allowing me to take this step," Addo said.



Otto Addo

THREE-HORSE RACE?

Premier League battle for fourth spot set for thrilling finale

London, England - Tottenham Hotspur's 4-0 victory over Aston Villa last weekend was, for many onlookers, a decisive moment in the Premier League race for fourth spot and proof that Ange Postecoglou's side hold all the cards.

But there is a long way to go - and almost nothing separating the two sides, no matter how far apart the teams looked on Sunday.

Then there's Manchester United, currently eight points adrift of Villa in fourth but still clinging on, hopeful that at least one of their rivals will collapse over the last 10 matches and give Erik ten Hag the chance to redeem a disappointing campaign.

Things are complicated further by the possibility that England will be given a fifth UEFA Champions League spot based on the performance of English clubs in Europe this season.

As it stands, Opta give England an 82.5 per cent chance of finishing in the top two of UEFA's coefficient rankings.

But it would be naive to assume fifth is as good as fourth this year, and all three managers will be desperate to avoid relying on others by securing a place in the top four.



Aston Villa's Ollie Watkins



Tottenham's Son Heung-min



Manchester United's Rasmus Hojlund

Looking at their respective fixtures, and calculating the average points won so far by their remaining opponents, Villa face the most difficult set of matches. Man Utd and Spurs both have Sheffield United and Burnley to play, while Villa don't have anyone in the bottom five. That is a notable disadvantage for Unai Emery's side.

However, the fixtures alone don't tell us too much. Spurs and Villa both have to face Arsenal, Manchester City, Liverpool and Chelsea, and although United's

fixtures look considerably easier they have a much larger deficit to make up.

Villa's recent form has dropped over time while Man Utd's has improved, and yet even if they repeated their points tallies from the last 10 matches, United would not overtake them.

So, Man Utd need a major upturn in form and a complete implosion from Villa and Spurs to come fourth.

The underlying data cannot separate them, but a difference in fitness can.

Spurs have fewer injuries than any of their rivals and enter the run-in missing only Micky van de Ven from their best XI.

That is causally linked to a lack of European football this year, which has kept them fresh and fit - and allowed Postecoglou to spend full weeks on the training field preparing for Premier League matches.

This might make the telling difference. Without Van de Ven's recovery pace their high line is a little more precarious, and we know Postecoglou takes

risks. Spurs rank second in the Premier League for errors leading to a shot, with 17. But they are relentless - well-drilled, full of goals and enjoying their football.

Son Heung-min has 14 goals and eight assists in his last 21 matches, while Timo Werner has two goals and two assists in his last seven. They are sparkling in the frontline, their boundless energy counting for more as fatigue sets in at other clubs.

Postecoglou's adventurous tactics - and the optimism it brings - explains why Spurs are

over-performing their xG by 9.0 goals, the second-most in the Premier League, and why, aside from an injury-hit period in November, they have not relented. Villa's drop in form through 2024 can almost entirely be put down to injuries in central defence.

That's not to say Villa are about to fall off a cliff. In fact, there will be very little in it between Spurs and Villa, who have already proved over two-thirds of a season that they are the real deal.

But Villa's European excursions and Spurs' rest periods should, after last week's result, swing things in Postecoglou's favour. In fact, the 4-0 win was itself an example of Spurs' advantage here, with Villa looking jaded after their trip to Amsterdam three days earlier.

Whether that matters is a different question. Assuming Man Utd cannot move above sixth, both Villa and Spurs will get into the Champions League should England secure a fifth spot in the competition.

Salah ready against 'favourite opponents' Man United, says Klopp

Liverpool, England - Liverpool's easy Europa League win over Sparta Prague meant that they could already begin to focus on this weekend's FA Cup quarter-final with Manchester United during that game, manager Jurgen Klopp said on Friday.

Klopp's side were 5-1 up from the away leg and on Thursday they raced into a 4-0 lead after 14 minutes, with qualification to the quarter-finals secured. In the end Liverpool won 6-1 and 11-2 on aggregate.

"We were 4-0 up and that's the moment when you think,



Mohamed Salah

okay we take off now, x, y and z. I don't think we would have played Robbo (Andrew Robertson) as a centre-half if it's 0-0 or we're 2-0 down," Klopp told a press conference before Sunday's game.

"It's really strange, you cannot believe you are 4-1 up at half time and 9-2 on aggregate, so even the biggest pessimist would not think that we will not go through," said Klopp.

"Usually you really have no time and resources to think about the next game."

Ibrahima Konate missed

Thursday's game and last weekend's draw with Manchester City because of a thigh injury, and Klopp is waiting to see if he can train tomorrow, but said he is not hopeful of his defender winning the race against time.

Bobby Clark was taken off after taking a knock against Sparta but Klopp expects the midfielder to be fine to face United, and is very happy with Mohamed Salah's progress since his recent return from injury.

Salah scored on Thursday in his first start for the club since returning injured from the African Cup of Nations in January, and now comes up against his favourite opponent, with 12 goals in 13 games against United.

"Mo is definitely ready," Klopp said. "How many goals did he set up last night? Exceptional. Strange game second half, would have loved to take him off but wasn't possible because of Bobby's situation.

"Mo is pure quality. Ask him what he likes the most about Manchester United, but the more we talk about it the less likely that it will happen again," said Klopp.

Sakkari beats Gauff to book Indian Wells title clash against Swiatek

Indian Wells, US - Maria Sakkari endured a spirited fightback from Coco Gauff to stun the third seed 6-4 6-7(5) 6-2 in a rain-interrupted Indian Wells semi-final on Friday and set up an intriguing rematch of the 2022 title clash with Iga Swiatek.

U.S. Open champion Gauff looked far from her best early in the match as Sakkari draw first blood after a short rain delay by breaking the American third seed in the ninth game, before securing the opening set with ease.

The players were forced off the court for a longer spell as the showers returned at the start of the second set, but Sakkari picked up from where she left off when the action resumed and tightened her grip on the contest with a double break.

But Gauff was not done and the 20-year-old rediscovered her rhythm in the high-octane second set to save three match points and go level at 5-5, eventually forcing a tie break which



Maria Sakkari battled a spirited fightback from Coco Gauff to emerge on top in their semifinal match at Indian Wells

she dominated to set up a decider.

Ninth seed Sakkari regrouped and showed her quality in the decisive points after swapping breaks with Gauff early in the third set to prevail in the late-night thriller.

"I don't want to disrespect Coco, but it would have been

amazing if this match was over an hour ago," Sakkari said after the epic battle that lasted two hours and 41 minutes.

"I'm going to take this win even though it was in three sets. I was thinking of the finish line in the second set and then things got tricky. But that was an amazing win. "Coco is such an amazing opponent. She's incredible. She fights for every point. I'm just so happy I'm in the final once again here."

Top seed Swiatek earlier produced a near-flawless display in chilly, windy conditions to cruise past Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk 6-2 6-1 and remain on track for her second title of the year.

"For sure I'm happy with the performance. I think it was the cleanest match I played here. The focus was high throughout and I didn't have any doubts," said Swiatek, who has not dropped a set in the Californian desert this year.

"It's already a great tournament."

Injury boost for Man United ahead of Liverpool FA Cup clash

Manchester, England - Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag expects to have several key players back from injury for their FA Cup quarter-final against Liverpool on Sunday, with Rasmus Hojlund, Harry Maguire and Aaron Wan-Bissaka all training this week.

"They returned on the pitch. Partly in the start of the week and today we had a session that they were all training," Ten Hag told reporters on Friday. "I think (they will be available). We have, (Saturday) one session. We have to see how they recover from this, but it looks good."

Hojlund scored in six successive games across all competitions, with eight goals in his last eight games, before a muscle injury sidelined him for four games, including United's 1-0 win over Nottingham Forest in the FA Cup fifth round.

United are languishing in sixth in the Premier League and face a red-hot Liverpool side who are level on points at the top of the table with Arsenal, although they



Some games are bigger than others, I think Manchester United against Liverpool is always a big game

ERIK TEN HAG

trail the Gunners on goal difference. Facing their north west rivals adds some spice to the match at Old Trafford.

"Some games are bigger than others, I think Manchester

United against Liverpool is always a big game. I am looking forward to it," Ten Hag said. "The fans see it as a very big game and they are very eager for us to win ... our fans have to be loud.

"In such games, we always achieve good performances. I don't think in any really high-rated game that we had any lows. They are very consistent, we need our best to beat them."

The FA Cup is the only silverware United remain in the hunt for amid a tough season for Ten Hag's side. They lost to Manchester City in last year's final at Wembley.

United will be the more rested of the two sides after Liverpool clobbered Sparta Prague 6-1 on Thursday in the Europa League. United have not played since they defeated Everton 2-0 with penalties by Bruno Fernandes and Marcus Rashford in the Premier League on Saturday.

United have lifted the FA Cup 12 times, second only to Arsenal's 14, while Liverpool have hoisted eight.

ICC makes stop clocks permanent in ODIs, T20s after trial

Dubai, UAE - Stop clocks used to regulate the time taken between overs will become a permanent fixture at limited-overs internationals from June following a successful trial, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Friday.

The ICC said that the feature, which has been on trial in limited-overs men's internationals since December, demonstrated that approximately 20 minutes had been saved per one-day international game.

It has been added as a mandatory playing condition in all full member ODI and Twenty20 international matches starting with the men's T20 World Cup in the West Indies and United States, the ICC said after its annual board meeting.

Fielding sides will be expected to start a new over within a minute of completing the previous one, with an electronic clock displayed at grounds starting a countdown each time.

If a team is not ready to bowl the first ball of the next over within 60 seconds of the previous one being completed, they will receive two warnings with any further breaches leading to a five-run penalty per incident.

Clocks can be stopped in some cases as determined by the third umpire, such as when a new batter comes to the wicket in between overs, during official drinks breaks and injury breaks among other circumstances.

REIGN OF QURUM THUNDERS

Shrivastava shines for champions in Oman D50 final against Ruwi Rangers

Muscat - Qurum Thunders defeated Ruwi Rangers by 31 runs to lift the trophy at the inaugural edition of Oman Cricket's Oman D50 at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground recently.

The 14-day tournament featuring the top 5 premier division teams, was played in a single round-robin format followed by qualifiers and an eliminator for the final.

Qurum Thunders, co-owned by Khimji Ramdas LLC, delivered when it mattered the most after finishing second in the league stage behind Ruwi Rangers who won all their league matches.

Batting first after winning the toss, Qurum Thunders were five down in the powerplay as Kaleemullah proved lethal in overcast conditions.

But Shoaib Khan's resilient 60 of 95 balls and Samay Shrivastava's unbeaten 51 of 111 balls helped Qurum Thunders reach to 156 in 50 overs. Kaleemullah finished with four wickets while Umair Shakeel and Mohammed



Qurum Thunders players with Oman Cricket Chairman Pankaj Khimji as they celebrate their triumph

Nadeem picked two each.

In response, Khalid Kail's 78 off 94 balls gave Ruwi Rangers a strong start. However, they fell prey to Samay Shrivastava's four-wicket haul and were bundled out for 125. Ayaan Khan and Afreidh KT picked two wickets each.

Madhu Jesrani of Qurum Thunders said: "We did not start this season on an up, failing to qualify for D20 and D10. The boys were not looking switched on initially, however as the season progressed, we peaked at

the right moment and started showing character at crucial stages of the matches which helped us gain momentum and gave confidence to the boys.

We availed the missing services of our backbone, Jatinder Singh in the latter half of our season which boosted the team morale and gave us the right combination in the games. I commend Samay Shrivastava's outright performance this year in carrying the team on his shoulder when the team needed him. We congratulate every member

involved with the team backed by Khimji Ramdas to win the inaugural edition of the Oman D50 claiming the title of the Premier Division 2023-24".

In the closing ceremony, Samay Shrivastava was handed the player of the match award while Mohammed Adeeb Usmani was the player of the tournament for his 348 runs and five wickets in as many matches. He received the award from Maqbool Moosa Al Lawati, Board Member - Oman Cricket.

Mohammed Nadeem, skipper of the Ruwi Rangers collected the Runners Up trophy and Sandeep Goud, skipper of Qurum Thunders collected the Champions trophy from HE Pankaj Khimji, Chairman - Oman Cricket.

BRIEF SCORES

Qurum Thunders 156/9 in 50 overs (Shoaib Khan 60(95), Samay Shrivastava 51(111); Kaleemullah 4/12) beat Ruwi Rangers 125/10 in 30 overs (Khalid Kail 78(94); Samay Shrivastava 4/25)

Setback for Delhi Capitals as South Africa's Lungi Ngidi to miss IPL

New Delhi, India - Delhi Capitals' preparations for the new Indian Premier League (IPL) season suffered another blow on Friday when fast bowler Lungi Ngidi was ruled out of the tournament due to a lower-back injury.

England batter Brook pulled out of the IPL on Thursday following the death of his grandmother, leaving Delhi without two key players for their campaign.

South Africa's cricket board (CSA) said on Friday Ngidi sus-

tained the injury last month and was not expected to return to play until April.

Capitals have signed Australian top-order batter Jake Fraser-McGurk as replacement for Ngidi.

Ngidi is still recovering from the lower-back injury he suffered during the SA20 earlier in the year. Fraser-McGurk, who played three matches for Dubai Capitals in the ILT20 this season, will join Delhi Capitals for his base price of INR 50 lakh. Fraser-

McGurk was impressive in the ILT20, hitting 109 runs in his three innings, with a best of 54, at a strike rate of 213.72.

Fraser-McGurk, who also bowls some legspin, was listed as an allrounder at the last IPL auction. So far, though, he has only bowled four overs in professional cricket - and just the one in T20s.

Touted by Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting as a potential all-format star for Australia, the 21-year-old Fraser-McGurk

made his international debut last month, playing two ODIs at home against West Indies.

He has played 37 T20s so far and strikes at 133.54.

As for Ngidi, Delhi Capitals was his second team in a stop-start IPL career, which started with Chennai Super Kings in 2018.

In 2022, he was acquired by Delhi Capitals at the auction. Overall, he has played 14 IPL games, picking up 25 wickets with an economy rate of 8.30.



Lungi Ngidi

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THE MUNDANE AND THE MYSTICAL

UKRAINIAN ARTIST
RITA MAIKOVA
CONNECTS WITH
STIR TO DISCUSS HER
WORK THAT WAS
RECENTLY SHOWN AT
KRISTIN
HJELLEGERDE
GALLERY

MEET ME
IN THE
GARDEN



Surreal scenes of faceless beings blending into their environments adorned the halls of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in Berlin until recently. These creatures were created by the painter Rita Maikova, who is from Ukraine, and is based in Barcelona.

Maikova treats these beings as kindred spirits that have grown alongside her throughout her life. Following her solo exhibition Find Me in the Garden, running at the gallery from February 15 to March 16, Maikova joins STIR in an interview to discuss her artmaking and the physicalities of the beings she brings to life.

Maikova is a contemporary surrealist painter, and like the Spanish painter Salvador Dali and modern surrealists, she is also concerned with presenting a permissive state that sits between reality and the unconscious mind through her visual art. Owing to this preoccupation, the contemporary artist also shares some characteristics of Dali or Andre Breton's work within

her practice, such as a sense of fluidity to the forms of her protagonists. Maikova discusses her art practice, telling STIR, "My art is deeply personal, intertwining themes of memory, fantasy and the subconscious. My works explore the delicate balance between the real and the imagined, drawing from personal narratives, dreams and a connection to nature that reflects a distinct, imaginative world."

As the Ukrainian artist explains, the essence of her painting practice lies in the ability of her artworks to weave to-

I find the absence of faces in my work to represent an 'empty window' - a concept that I find both unsettling and fascinating in its boundless potential

Rita Maikova



gether the past, present and future through fragmented, yet interconnected narratives and symbolism. Besides her faceless, fluid protagonists, other fantastical elements such as dragons and magical eggs make appearances as well. Maikova notes, "The use of dragons and eggs in my work, for example, is not merely a nod to childhood fantasies but a complex exploration of protection, transformation and potential. These elements serve as metaphors for life's cyclical nature and the inner strength that guides us through its phases."

Coming to Maikova's protagonists, one wonders how faceless beings fit into her artistic worldview. Surely they are somewhat unsettling to behold? She acknowledges this, telling STIR, "I find the absence of faces in my work to represent an 'empty window' - a concept that I find both unsettling and fascinating in its boundless potential. It's a deliberate void..."

The artist believes that faces, especially eyes, concretise characters. She

prefers to present her protagonists as blank slates so audiences can endow them with any feeling that her compositions instil. "...Yet," she adds, "I am open to the evolution of my practice; I envision a future where faces might emerge within these windows, introducing new dimensions and enriching my world with additional layers of meaning."

Maikova's practice is deeply influenced by her life journey. She believes that her work expresses her desire for a 'simpler, more magical world', which one could certainly glean from a viewing of the art exhibition Find Me in the Garden, once they move past the strange nature of her characters. She intends to draw her audiences into that world and encourage them to reconcile the mundane and the mystical. As Maikova puts it, "My work is an invitation to explore the layers of our existence, to find unity and peace in the midst of chaos, and to dream of a world where the magical and the everyday coexist harmoniously."

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VAST AND VARIED *Creativity*

ART IS ART

Spurred by the belief that art changes lives, Florence and Elias Katz founded Creativity Explored in 1983, a San Francisco-based nonprofit studio and gallery designed for disabled neurodivergent artists. More than 135 people currently participate in its programming, learning techniques across painting, drawing, clay, textiles, and more. They also sell and exhibit their works in museums, galleries, and art fairs worldwide.

A new book by Ann Kappes, Creativity Explored's director of artist partnerships, celebrates the organization's 40th anniversary and continued support of artists with a diverse range of abilities. *Art Is Art: Collaborating with Neurodiverse Artists* at Creativity Explored features hundreds of works organized by themes like 'Dance Party!', 'I Speak Through My Art', and 'Blackiful'. While some chapters highlight single artists, others, like 'Mail Art Club', situate an ongoing group project within the broader realm of art history.

Originating in the 1960s with the Fluxus movement, mail art resurged during the pandemic, including with the artists of Creativity Explored. Teachers began connecting with their students via USPS and Zoom, sending each other letters and packages containing their artworks when they were unable to gather in the studio. This imaginative way of exchanging art and ideas continues now that artists are back together in person, and the Mail Art Club still meets regularly.

Another chapter is dedicated to Camille Holvoet, who's been working with the organization since 2001, and creates mixed-media renderings of pills and syrups to remedy any

Creativity Explored celebrates its 40th anniversary with a collection of powerful artwork and perspectives from its talented neurodiverse artists



issue. Titled 'Medicine Helps', the section presents several of her stylised, witty pharmaceuticals and their purposes, from 'Anti-Worrying Pills about Anything' to 'A Pill for Doing What



I Am Supposed to Do'. Along with a description of her practice and thinking, Holvoet relatably adds, "Making art is the hardest part of art."

About the book

This vibrant book uplifts the voices of the artists of Creativity Explored, a nonprofit that gives people with developmental disabilities the opportunity to express themselves through art and share their work with audiences from their local community and in the contemporary art world.

Featuring hundreds of original paintings, drawings, illustrations, and sculptures--as well as quotes from and stories about the artists--this curated collection invites readers to examine and challenge their perceptions about disability. Some artworks are humorous and blunt, while others are affecting and abstract, speaking to the artistic community's diversity and creativity. This book offers an engaging introduction to person-centered thinking for art lovers or anyone interested in learning about disability justice in a visual way.

Demystifying disability: This significant new anthology showcases an array of developmentally disabled artists and organizes their works



both individual and shared experiences as diverse disabled artists.

Beautiful and content rich: This gorgeous hardcover art book features more than one hundred original artworks in full color, from lively portraits and detailed drawings to abstract paintings and captivating illustrations. Quotes, interviews, personal stories, and artist statements also give readers deeper insight into the artists' creative practices, processes, and rituals. This book is a rich visual trove and source of inspiration for any contemporary art lover.

Support a great cause: Creativity Explored was founded in 1983 with

the belief that art is essential to life. This book celebrates the organization's mission and its talented artists after forty years of creating impactful arts and career programs with developmentally disabled artists. This collection is a meaningful way to learn more about Creativity Explored and the diverse community it continues to support today.



PERFECT FOR

- Art lovers and activists
- People who admire the mission and work of Creativity Explored
- The disabled community, allies, and educators
- Gift seekers for family and friends interested in learning more about disability justice
- Fans of self-taught artists, folk arts, and "outsider art"
- Contemporary art anthology and art book collectors
- #OwnVoices readers and anyone interested in diversifying their contemporary art knowledge



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