

CAA PLANS SIX NEW AIRPORTS

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is set to build six new airports, which are expected to begin operations between 2028 and 2029, according to Naif bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority.

In an interview with *Al Sharq* on the sidelines of the Future Aviation Forum in Riyadh, Abri informed that the consulting designs for the new airports have begun this year.

Through this planned expansion, he said, Oman aims to increase the number of airports in the country to 13, facilitating domestic aviation and bolstering tourism.

The CAA chairman asserted that with the completion of these projects, Oman anticipates a significant surge in airport passenger traffic, projected to reach 50mn by 2040 from the current 17mn.

The upcoming airports are strategically planned to attract more international traffic and bolster logistics and tourism in specific regions. These new facilities



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NAIF BIN ALI AL ABRI



Aviation Strategy 2030. "Following the pandemic, we focused on heavily restructuring the aviation sector and dismantling our holding structure and various companies," he pointed out.

"CAA took additional responsibilities of building airports and overseeing all related infrastructure. Given the change in forecasts for tourism beyond the pandemic, CAA decided to review its 2030 strategy and extend its targets to 2040."

The strategy involves multiple facets beyond just airports and commercial airlines, training and traditional operations. "Today we are talking about many new issues, such as implementing new

CAA mandates training for drone operators

Muscat - The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has introduced a new requirement mandating formal training for all drone operators engaged in commercial or government activities.

The directive, part of Drone Regulation No 1412/2023, aims to enhance aviation safety and operational standards across the sultanate.

According to the regulation, all unmanned aircraft system (UAS) operators must now complete a comprehensive training programme approved by the Civil Aviation Authority. This training will align with

Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 102/Subpart F or its equivalent, ensuring that operators are well-versed in safe and compliant UAS operations.

The regulation will take effect from December 1 this year, and from then on, all applications for UAS operations must include a valid training certificate from a CAA-approved organisation. This move underscores Oman's commitment to fostering a safe and competitive aviation environment while keeping pace with global technological advancements in aviation.

Sayyid Badr welcomes ICC action on Gaza war crimes

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, has welcomed the International Criminal Court's (ICC) order seeking arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

"I welcome the clear-eyed judgment of the ICC. History will remember the real criminals committing genocide and war crimes against humanity. Justice must prevail," H E Sayyid Badr posted on 'X'.

ICC is also seeking arrest warrants against Hamas leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar; Mohammed Diab Ibrahim al Masri, the leader of the Al Qassem Brigades - better known as Mohammed Deif; and Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas' political leader on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity over the October 7 attacks on Israel.

In a statement on Monday, the court's prosecutor Karim Khan said, "No foot soldier, no commander, no civilian leader - no



No foot soldier, no commander, no civilian leader - no one - can act with impunity. The law cannot be applied selectively. If that happens, we will be creating conditions for its collapse

KARIM KHAN

one - can act with impunity." The law, he said, cannot be applied selectively. If that happens, "we will be creating conditions for its collapse".

"Today's applications are the outcome of an independent and impartial investigation by my office. Guided by our obligation to investigate incriminating and exonerating evidence equally, my office has worked painstakingly to separate claims from facts and to soberly present conclusions based on evidence to the Pre-

Trial Chamber," Khan said.

The move against the Israeli politicians mark the first time the ICC targeting the top leader of a close ally of the United States. The decision puts Netanyahu in the company of the Russian President Vladimir Putin, for whom the ICC issued an arrest warrant over Moscow's war on Ukraine, and the Libyan strongman Moammar Gadhafi, who had been facing an arrest warrant from the ICC for alleged crimes against humanity at the time of

his capture and killing in October 2011.

By applying for the arrest warrants against the Israeli and Hamas leaders in the same action, the decision has attracted criticism that it places a supposedly 'terror' organisation and an elected government on an equivalent footing.

US President Joe Biden said it was 'outrageous' to apply for arrest warrants. There was "no equivalence - none - between Israel and Hamas".

Hamas demanded the withdrawal of the allegations against its leaders, claiming that the ICC's prosecutor was "equating the victim with the executioner".

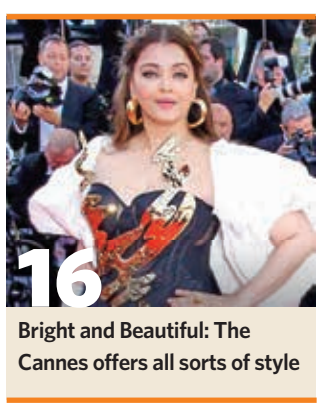
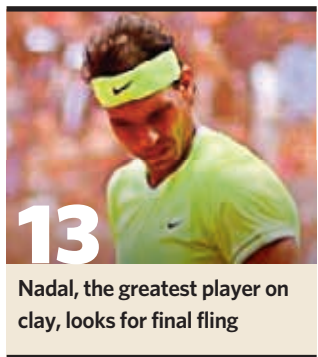
It said the request to issue arrest warrants for the Israeli leadership came seven months too late, after "the Israeli occupation committed thousands of crimes".

Reacting to the news, Gallant on Tuesday described the arrest warrants against him and Prime Minister Netanyahu as a 'disgraceful' attempt to interfere in the war. "The State of Israel is not a party to the Court and does not recognise its authority," he added.



H M RECEIVES MESSAGE FROM GEN BURHAN OF SUDAN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from Gen Abdul Fattah al Burhan, Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council in the Republic of Sudan. The message deals with relations between Oman and Sudan. It was handed over to Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, when he received in Muscat Gen Burhan's envoy Hussein Awad, Sudanese acting Minister of Foreign Affairs. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the bilateral relations and means of promoting them in various areas to serve the joint interests. They also touched on the developments in Sudan



Over 3,000 tenders worth RO584mn floated in Q1 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Secretariat General of the Tender Board on Tuesday said that the board floated 3,056 tenders costing over RO584mn during the first quarter of 2024 through the electronic bidding system 'Isnad'.

These tenders encompass various development and service projects across Oman. Among the most significant tenders presented this year were the expansion of the Muscat Expressway, the establishment of Al Falah Hospital in the South Sharqiyah, the dualisation of the Al Kamil Wa Al Wafi-Jalan Bani Bu Hassan road, the unified municipal



Eng Badr Salim al Maamari



system, establishment of a livestock market in Sinaw in North Sharqiyah, and the rehabilitation of the Al Qaim road from Al Hazm to Al Washil in Rustaq.

The Secretariat General further informed that 22 tenders have been awarded in the first quarter, with a value exceeding

RO136mn. This is a slight increase from the same period last year when 20 tenders were awarded.

The most important tenders awarded this year include the remaining works of the Al Sharqiyah Expressway Project (Part Two-Phase Two) from Al Kamil

Wa Al Wafi to Sur in the South Sharqiyah, consultancy services for the design and supervision of the proposed development of Musandam Airport, and the supply of laboratory materials to the Ministry of Health.

Other significant tenders include the funding to the National

Programme for CEOs, providing high quality buses to government agencies, a framework contract for printing and supplying textbooks for four academic years to the Ministry of Education, and designing and constructing 14 schools in various governorates.

Contracts for constructing 20 housing units and maintaining 32 others in the wilayat of Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands in Dhofar were also awarded.

Eng Badr Salim al Maamari, Secretary General of the Tender Board, stated that the secretariat has worked to enhance the efficiency of bidding procedures, develop models to enhance local content in contracts and tenders, and ensure the implementation

of these models to achieve local added value from spending on government projects and procurement.

Additionally, procedures related to unified purchasing and government procurement were activated to achieve the best value and service. He added that the Tender Board has provided numerous facilities to companies, including measures to facilitate bidding for small and medium enterprises and local companies.

These measures include exemption from registration fees for SMEs, setting nominal prices for purchasing tender documents, and exemption from providing temporary insurance in tenders.

'Denying NRIs option to vote from abroad fails democratic principles'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

India is currently witnessing the world's biggest parliamentary election, unfolding in seven phases from April 19 to June 1. With a large Indian diaspora in Oman, the country's expatriates feel left out of the exercise to choose their representatives for the parliament.

The expats in Oman are calling upon the Indian government to make provisions for voting from outside the country so that they could also participate in the democratic process.

Speaking on the issue, Lijoys John, General Manager of Al Fawah International, said that as a resident of Oman for the past 20 years, he has had a voter ID but has never been able to vote. "It would be convenient if the Embassy of India takes measures to organise voting for us. Every vote matters; it is important for us to have the opportunity too."

Denying non-resident Indians (NRIs) the option to vote in their host countries is an infringement on their fundamental rights, felt Devika Baburaj, a chartered accountant, living in Muscat.

"This denial undermines the democratic principles of equality and inclusivity."

Over the years, several requests and petitions have been made to the Indian authorities in Oman and in India with the ob-



It would be convenient if the Embassy of India takes measures to organise voting for us

LJOYS JOHN

jective of getting the option to vote from abroad.

Santhosh, the Kerala Wing Convener, said, "Social groups in Muscat like Kerala Wing, Malayalam Wing, Kairali Wing submit-

ted a petition to the Supreme Court to enable NRIs to vote remotely (through ballots or online voting)."

The Election Commission of India and the government have been exploring options and are yet to provide any final decision. "Full implementation requires policy formulations to address all associated challenges," he added.

The Indian Embassy in Oman, when contacted stated that Indians can vote only when they are present in the country as per the government policies and not

abroad.

"If one is willing, he can travel to India to cast vote. Hosting polling at embassies is a daunting task. However, there have been proposals to the government, which are being looked into," said an embassy official.

Travelling is not always feasible, Vinod Raghavan, an advertising professional, said. "Travelling back to India solely for the voting purpose is impractical and costly and is the privilege of a few."

With the advancements in technology, Raghavan said the

government of India should provide an option to vote remotely. "This will ensure that NRIs have equal rights and opportunity to participate in the democratic process from abroad."

Aswan Sathyam, a Muscat resident, added, "India is the largest democracy and we as NRIs feel left out during the voting process.

"NRIs in the Gulf contribute immensely to the economy by remitting billions that helps in growth of our nation. We deserve the right to vote from our country of residence."



Regional UN meet to focus on sustainable tourism and financing

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT), will be hosting a regional meeting of the UN Tourism beginning in Muscat on Wednesday.

The three-day long meeting of the 50th UN Tourism Regional Commission for the Middle East will see the organisation of the conference on 'Investing in Tourism: Opportunities and Challenges in Sustainable Financing'.

The opening ceremony will be held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Taimur bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman.

H E Salim Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, said that the hosting of this meeting and conference is a great opportunity to showcase the tourism assets and products of Oman.

"It underscores the significant position of the Omani tourism sector within the Middle East and globally, as Oman has emerged as a promising destination due to its diverse tourism offerings."

H E Mahrouqi told ONA that the event will not only

promote Oman as a key venue for international meetings and conferences but will also highlight its continuous efforts in tourism development.

Additionally, the conference will facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge in the field.

The minister explained that the meeting aims to reaffirm the commitment to enhancing the potential of the tourism sector in the region. It will review the plans and strategies of the UN Tourism, along with some upcoming projects.

The discussions will focus on aligning with the global tourism trends that prioritise the preservation of natural resources and the reinforcement of Omani culture and heritage.

It will offer an opportunity to strengthen the relationship of Oman's tourism sector with its regional counterparts.

Regarding the conference, H E Mahrouqi noted that it will address the sustainable financing of the tourism sector, discussing related challenges and opportunities.

"The goal is to raise awareness about the importance of directing funding towards tourism projects that support economic and social growth in sustainable ways," he underlined.

Korean embassy celebrates Omani taekwondo players' achievements

Muscat - The Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Muscat organised a reception on Tuesday to congratulate the Omani National Youth Taekwondo Team for its outstanding performance at the GCC Youth Games held in the UAE in April. The Omani team won 11 medals in total including eight gold medals.

The former president of the Oman Taekwondo Committee Brigadier (Retired) Abdulmalek Ghassan al Mazruoi as well as



Hon Mohamed bin Salim al Harthy, Member of State Council

and Oman's former ambassador to Korea, attended the event and

addressed the gathering.

This year marks the 50th an-

niversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between Korea and Oman.

H E Kim Kiejoo, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the Sultanate of Oman, congratulated all the players and talked about Oman's prosperous relations with Korea. "Taekwondo serves as a common bridge uniting the two countries. Korea and Oman celebrate a friendship of many years," he proudly stated.

Contributed by Sneha Lijoys

GROWTH THROUGH TOURISM

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender No.	08/2024
Tender Title	Fixed Assets Physical Verification
Tender Submission Closing Date	04 JUNE 2024
Tender Process Details	Please visit: www.omran.om/tenders

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MoH begins distribution of devices for diabetic kids

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health on Tuesday began providing insulin pumps and electronic sensor devices to monitor glucose in diabetic children, marking a notable advancement in paediatric diabetes care in the sultanate.

The initiative - spearheaded by the National Diabetes and Endocrine Centre - comes following a Royal Order of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq issued in February this year.

The Royal Order instructed a budgetary allocation for acquisition of these critical healthcare devices for Omani children under 18 years suffering from Type 1 di-



abetes.

"The state-of-the-art glucose monitoring sensors represent a leap forward in technology, offering precise control and management of diabetes symptoms and preventing the onset of severe complications," the ministry said.

It added that there is no perfect cure for Type 1 diabetes, but

it can be controlled in children by restricting the occurrence of its serious complications.

"This is achieved through the use of advanced medical methods and technologies, which improves the quality of a patient's life by enabling him or her to live more easily with the disease and participate in various activities in

school and outside."

In February, Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, said the Royal Order reflected His Majesty the Sultan's ongoing commitment to elevating the standard of comprehensive healthcare for citizens.

"This initiative significantly eases the daily challenges faced by children with Type 1 diabetes, ensuring a smoother coexistence with the condition and reducing the risk of life-threatening incidents caused by extreme blood sugar levels," Dr Sabti stated.

Introduction of electronic sensors and insulin pumps is heralded as a transformative step for better management of diabetes in children.

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Govt units honoured for institutional excellence

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a glittering ceremony on Tuesday, the Ministry of Labour (MoL) awarded various government units for their meticulous implementation of the 'Institutional Excellence System' in 2023.

The ministry hosted the Institutional Excellence Award ceremony to recognise the "significant strides made by these units in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness", said Sheikh Mohammed bin al Waleed al Hinai, Project Director of the Individual Performance and Institutional Excellence System at the Ministry of Labour.

The government units are making huge efforts in imbibing a culture of continuous development within the workforce.

"The effective response of the state's administrative apparatus to the system's requirements in its initial years clearly reflects a robust desire to embrace best practices and achieve a significant paradigm shift," stated Hinai.

While speaking about the progress made since the system's inception in November 2022, he emphasised that the initiative had led to the analysis of 8,000 performance indicators and feedback from approximately 170,000 beneficiaries.

The evaluation process, he



said, was focused on seven criteria including leadership, strategic planning, human capital, institutional culture, partnerships, resources, customer satisfaction, innovation, governance, environmental and societal impact.

Each criterion incorporated five distinct performance indicators to assess the government units thoroughly.

After a rigorous evaluation, eight government units stood out for their exceptional performance, including the Oman 2040 Vision Implementation

Follow-up Unit; the Oman Investment Authority; the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; South Sharqiyah governorate; the Central Bank of Oman; the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority; Muscat Municipality; and the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education.

Additionally, the ceremony recognised the best service provision outlets across governorates for their exceptional service in 2023.

H E Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Ba'owain, Minister of Labour, highlighted the profound impact of the Institutional Excellence System. "This system marks the beginning of a relentless journey towards progress and prosperity, signifying a major stride in our administrative evolution and a benchmark for future advancements," he said.

The event was held under the patronage of Sheikh Ghosn bin Hilal al Alawi, Chairman of the State Financial and Administrative Audit Institution.

ASMED holds Salalah Summer Nights

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) launched the 'Salalah Summer Nights' activities in Dhofar governorate on Tuesday, with an aim to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The authority opened the Salalah Summer Nights in the Al

Sadah Park in the wilayat of Salalah,' ASMED said in a statement.

The event, which targets SMEs across various sectors and all segments of society, will continue until June 16.

'The event venue has an entertainment tent featuring children's games, competitions, while a consumer tent has been set up with approximately 70 participants from across Oman

and abroad, showcasing their marketing and service products,' ASMED stated.

The programme features poetry evenings, competitions, popular bands, and live performances by craftsmen.

'The event aims to promote Omani products, create temporary job opportunities for young people, and provide marketing opportunities for SMEs,' the statement added.



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Forum to review vision and plans of governorates

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Economy is organising a forum on Wednesday focused on decentralisation and economic diversification at the governorate level.

The Governorates Economics Forum will be inaugurated at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre under the patronage of H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, in the presence of H E Dr Saeed bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy; H E Dr Khalfan bin Saeed al Shuaili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning; and Sayyid Ibrahim bin Saeed al Busaidi, Governor of Musandam.

The forum aims to enhance cooperation and exchange experiences between various governorates to achieve sustainable development and economic diversification.

All governorates will review their visions and plans to improve their economies, aligning with the Oman Vision 2040 that

provides a strategic framework to develop the national economy and achieve sustainable development.

The participation of all governorates in the forum will focus on highlighting their comparative and competitive advantages within various sectors, such as tourism, logistics, and industries. They will also review the promising economic sectors and investment opportunities available in their regions.

Additionally, the forum will provide an opportunity to review efforts in the implementation of strategic urban projects and real estate development plans, particularly in Muscat governorate.

These include digital projects, partnership projects with the private sector, and major projects implemented by other entities.

The participation of all governorates in the forum underscores the empowering effect of decentralisation in development work and decision-making for development projects and initiatives.

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BRIEFS

Euro area records \$26bn trade surplus in March

The eurozone trade balance posted a €24.1bn (\$26.2bn) surplus in March, according to official data released on Tuesday.

The figure improved from a €19.1bn deficit last year, Eurostat data showed.

Euro area exports of goods to the rest of the world fell 9.2% at an annualised pace to €245.4bn this March, while imports decreased 12% to €221.3bn.

The EU ran a trade surplus of €21.7bn in March, compared to a €17.4bn surplus in March 2023.

The EU's other major export markets were the UK (€29bn), China (€19.8bn), Switzerland (€16.8bn), and Türkiye (€10bn). On the other side, China was the main source of imports, with €41.2bn, falling 4.5% compared to the prior year.

Adrak appoints MTDI as master developer for Haitham City's NH 12 D

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Adrak Developers, the real estate development arm of Al Adrak Group, on Tuesday announced a significant partnership with MTDI, a globally acclaimed architectural and design group, as the master developer for Neighborhood 12 D (NH 12 D) project within the Sultan Haitham City. This collaboration follows the recent signing of a development agreement between Adrak Developers and the Ministry of Housing & Urban Planning.

NH 12 D will encompass over 300 luxurious apartment buildings with various configurations, spread across a land area exceeding 56,000 sqm, Adrak said in a press release.

Residents of NH 12 D will enjoy a vibrant community atmosphere with a central plaza, a dedicated commercial area featuring an array of restaurants, and a host of other amenities. The development boasts an estimated investment value of RO38.7mn and promises to be a landmark addition to Sultan Haitham City.

MTDI brings a wealth of ex-



MTDI brings a wealth of experience and international recognition to the NH 12 D project

NH 12 D will encompass over 300 luxurious apartment buildings with various configurations, spread across a land area exceeding 56,000 sqm

perience and international recognition to the project. With a proven track record of designing award-winning spaces around the world, MTDI is renowned for its innovative approach, focus on sustainability, and commitment to creating places that foster human connection.

Dr Thomas Alexander, Chairman of Al Adrak Group of Companies, expressed his enthusiasm about the partner-

a new standard for luxury living in Oman."

Marek, Group Founder and Design Lead of MTDI, said, "We are honored to be selected by Adrak Developers for this transformative project. Neighborhood 12 D presents a unique opportunity to design a vibrant and sustainable community that celebrates Omani culture and caters to the evolving needs of modern residents. We are committed to working collaboratively with Adrak to create a legacy project that will enrich Sultan Haitham City for generations to come."

Ryan Maxwell, Business Development Manager at Adrak Developers, commented, "The collaboration between Adrak Developers, the Ministry of Housing & Urban Planning, and MTDI signifies a new chapter for luxury living in Muscat. This development is more than just beautiful apartments; it's about creating a holistic living experience that fosters a sense of community and well-being. We are confident that Neighborhood 12 D will be a highly sought-after address and a testament to the innovation and excellence that all parties involved represent."

Oman-Jordan trade jumps 25% in 2023

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As of the end of 2023, direct investments from Jordan in Oman reached approximately RO241.8mn. Around 988 companies with Jordanian shareholding were registered in Oman with total invested capital of RO78.8mn

According to the statistics released by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the bilateral trade exchange between Oman and Jordan saw a 25% growth in 2023, reaching RO74.51mn compared to RO59.75mn in 2022.

The NCSI data showed that Omani exports to Jordan in 2023 rose by 28.2%, exceeding RO43.85mn, compared to RO34.21mn in 2022. Meanwhile, Oman's imports from Jordan in 2023 amounted to RO27.51mn, showing a 41.5% growth from RO19.44mn in 2022.

As of the end of last year, preliminary statistics indicate that direct investments from Jordan in Oman reached approximately RO241.8mn. Additionally, 988 companies with Jordanian shareholding were registered in Oman by the end of 2023, compared to 758 companies in 2022, with a total invested capital of more than RO78.77mn.

In February, both countries signed several memorandums of understanding (MoUs) in areas such as attracting direct investment, developing and boosting cooperation between their chambers of commerce, and supporting foreign trade. A MoU between the Omani and Jorda-

nian private sectors in the field of supply and trade was also signed.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), said that economic, trade, and investment relations between Oman and Jordan have witnessed significant development and growth in recent times, thanks to continued interest and support from the leadership of both countries.

Over the past few years, the two sides have held numerous joint economic and investment meetings and forums, gathering officials and stakeholders from public and private sectors to discuss expanding trade cooperation and investment partnerships.

Oman-Qatar bilateral trade increases 20% in 2023

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The economic and trade relations between Oman and Qatar have witnessed significant progress in recent years, with bilateral trade exchange between the two countries increasing 20% to QR5.4bn in 2023 compared to QR4.5bn in the previous year, according to a senior official of Qatar Chamber.

The Qatar News Agency reported that Qatar Chamber highlighted the close relations with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), citing the exchange of business delegations to explore new opportunities for cooperation across various sectors in both friendly countries.

Speaking at the OCCI's 50th-anniversary celebrations in Muscat, Qatar Chamber's First Vice-Chairman Mohamed bin Twar al Kuwari praised the brotherly relations between Qatar and Oman, emphasising their advanced ties across vari-



ous fields, particularly in the commercial aspect.

Kuwari noted that numerous Omani companies operate in Qatar across different sectors and highlighted successful Qatari investments in Oman. He lauded the efforts of the Qatari-Omani Business Council in enhancing cooperation between the business sectors of both countries.

Affirming Qatar Chamber's commitment to strengthening communication with Gulf cham-

bers, Kuwari stated that OCCI is one of the most important and active chambers among Gulf chambers.

During the ceremony, OCCI Chairman Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas reviewed the chamber's progress, milestones, and contributions. The event also marked the launch of a new visual identity for OCCI, the establishment of the Social Investment Center, and the Center for Economic Studies and Research.

OAB, U Capital sign strategic partnership to launch liquidity provider service

Muscat - Oman Arab Bank (OAB) signed a strategic partnership agreement with Ubhar Capital (U Capital), appointing U Capital as the liquidity provider for OAB shares listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

Sulaiman al Harthi, Chief Executive Officer of OAB, and Abdulaziz Khalifa al Saadi, Chief Executive Officer of U Capital, signed the agreement. The agreement embodies OAB's objectives to contribute to the development of the capital market and ensure a liquid and efficient trading environment for its shares on the MSX.

In a press release, Harthi said, "This agreement with Ubhar Capital represents a new step in OAB's efforts to support innovation in financial services and comes within the framework of the bank's strategic direction towards providing the highest value to investors and shareholders. With this agreement, the bank continues its commitment to sustainable growth and con-



tributes to achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040 by supporting efforts to revitalise the Muscat Stock Exchange and foster an investment culture."

He added, "After completing the merger of OAB and Alizz Islamic Bank in 2020, OAB emerged as a leading financial institution publicly listed on the MSX with a market cap today of \$0.6bn. We had several successful local and international bond

issuances, attracting local and foreign investors. All of these milestones contributed to the development of the capital and debt markets."

Harthi further noted that OAB's partnership with U Capital underscores the bank's commitment to ensuring a seamless trading experience and liquid listing of OAB stock.

Saadi said, "We are pleased to have been appointed as the liq-

uidity provider for OAB. Our expertise will contribute to stimulating trading and enhancing liquidity flows for OAB shares, strengthening its position as a leading stock on the MSX.

"We aspire that this strategic partnership will enable U Capital to create value for OAB's shareholders and to expand the capital market, which the sultanate relies on to support diversification and attract investments."

Oil prices fall amid uncertainty on US Fed's future rate-cutting schedule

London, UK - Oil prices fell on Tuesday ahead of the release of the minutes of the US Federal Reserve's most recent meeting to gain insight into demand in the US and the Fed's interest rate policy.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$83.24 per barrel in morning trade in London, a fall of 0.56% from the closing price of \$83.71 per barrel in the previous trading session.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$78.84 per barrel at the same time, a 0.58% decrease from the previous session

that closed at \$79.30 per barrel.

Oil prices drifted lower on Tuesday due to "cautious" guidance from Fed official statements that disclosed that interest rate cuts should not be implemented hastily.

The recent statements issued by Fed officials put downward pressure on oil prices by fueling demand concerns.

US Federal Reserve Vice Chair of Supervision Michael Barr said Monday that he thinks inflation readings in the first quarter of this year were "disappointing."

Meanwhile, San Francisco



Fed President Mary Daly said it was unclear whether inflation had definitively decreased, adding that there was "no urgency" to adjust interest rates. At the same time, the head of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, Loretta Mester, said that inflation risks are on the rise.

Market players are now awaiting the American Petroleum Institute's (API) forecast for commercial crude oil inventories to be released later on Tuesday to gauge demand in the US, the world's largest oil-consuming country.

The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) will release official stockpile data on Wednesday.

Nonetheless, political uncertainties in Iran and Saudi Arabia, the world's major oil producers, are bolstering supply risks and supporting upward price movements.

Tehran confirmed earlier on Monday that Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, along with Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and other officials, perished in a helicopter crash on Sunday afternoon.

Anadolu Agency

Global tourism set to return to pre-pandemic levels: WEF

New York, US - International tourist arrivals and the travel and tourism sector's contribution to global GDP are expected to return to pre-pandemic levels this year, driven by the complete lifting of Covid-19-related travel restrictions and strong pent-up demand, as per the new World Economic Forum travel and tourism study, released on Tuesday.

Topping the 2024 list of economies are the US, Spain, Japan, France and Australia. The Middle East had the highest recovery rates in international tourist arrivals - 20% above the 2019 level, while Europe, Africa and the US all showed a strong recovery of around 90% in 2023.

Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024 (TTDI), a biennial report published in collaboration with the University of Surrey, analysed the travel and tourism sectors of 119 countries around a range of factors and policies.

"This year marks a turning point for the travel and tourism sector, which we know has the capacity to unlock growth and serve communities through economic and social transformation," said Francisco Betti, Head of the Global Industries team at the World Economic Forum.

"The report offers a forward-looking window into the current



Middle East had the highest recovery rates in international tourist arrivals – 20% above the 2019 level, while Europe, Africa and the US all showed a strong recovery of around 90% in 2023

and future state of travel and tourism for leaders to navigate the latest trends in this complex sector and sustainably unlock its potential for communities and countries across the world."

The global tourism industry is expected to recover from the lows of the Covid-19 pandemic

and surpass the levels seen before the crisis.

As per the report, this is largely being driven by a significant increase in demand worldwide, which has coincided with more available flights, better international openness, and increased interest and investment

in natural and cultural attractions. However, the report painted that the global recovery has been mixed. While 71 of the 119 ranked economies increased their index scores since 2019.

Although the sector has moved past the shock of the global health crisis, it continues to deal with other external challenges, from growing macroeconomic, geopolitical and environmental risks, to increased scrutiny of its sustainability practices.

In addition, labour shortages are ongoing, and air route capac-

ity, capital investment, productivity and other sector supply factors have not kept up with the increase in demand. This imbalance, worsened by global inflation, has increased prices and service issues.

Out of the top 30 index scorers in 2024, 26 are high-income economies, 19 are based in Europe, seven are in Asia-Pacific, three are in the Americas and one (the UAE) is in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA). The top 10 countries in the 2024 edition are the United States, Spain, Japan, France, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, China, Italy and Switzerland.

The results highlight that high-income economies generally continue to have more favourable conditions for travel and tourism development. This is helped by conducive business environments, dynamic labour markets, open travel policies, strong transport and tourism infrastructure, and well-developed natural, cultural and non-leisure attractions.

If managed strategically, the travel and tourism sector - which has historically represented 10% of global GDP and employment - has the potential to emerge as a key contributor to growth, the WEF said.

ANI



UAE tops MENA in WEF's tourism development index

Dubai, UAE - The UAE has ranked first in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and 18th globally in the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI).

According to the report, the UAE raised its score by 4.4% in the 2024 index, climbing seven places from its 25th global ranking in the previous report issued in 2021.

The report ranks 119 economies based on a set of factors, and the index consists of five sub-indices, including the enabling environment, travel and tourism policy and infrastructure, infrastructure and services, travel and tourism resources such as nature and culture, and the sustainability of the travel and tourism sector.

The index provides a strategic benchmarking tool for companies, governments, international organisations and others to de-

velop the travel and tourism sector. The United States topped the index, followed by Spain and Japan, with the top three countries maintaining their ranking as in the previous report.

Among high-income economies, only the UAE and Saudi Arabia were ranked among the top ten that showed the most improvement in their performance between 2019 and 2024.

The Middle East witnessed the highest recovery rates in the number of international tourist arrivals, 20 percent above 2019 levels, while Europe, Africa, and the Americas showed a strong rebound, regaining 90% of 2023 movement compared to pre-COVID-19 levels.

The report anticipates that the global and regional tourism sectors will recover from its COVID-19 lows and surpass pre-crisis levels, driven by a surge in demand worldwide.

WAM

US inflation slowing toward 2% target: Fed official

Washington, US - Inflation in the US is slowing toward the Federal Reserve's 2% target level thanks in part to a run of interest rate hikes instituted by the central bank, according to Fed Governor Christopher Waller.

In remarks on Wednesday, Waller said the Fed's restrictive monetary policy stance is "helping to cool off aggregate demand," adding that softer inflation data for April suggests that "progress toward 2% has likely resumed" after appearing to have stalled earlier in 2024. Businesses also seem to be in less need to fill vacancies and offer relatively high starting salaries, which could lead to a moderation in wage increases and broader price pressures, Waller said.

"Central bankers should never say never, but the data suggests that inflation isn't accelerating, and I believe that further increases in the policy rate are probably unnecessary," he noted.

The comments come after several of Waller's Fed colleagues sounded a largely cautious note on Monday, flagging that they have yet to see sufficient evidence that a cooldown in inflation will be long-lasting. As a result, they largely hinted that borrowing costs will need to stay at their currently elevated level of 5.25% to 5.5% until there is more proof that price pressures are abating.

The Fed's next policy meeting is slated for June 11-12. Traders are widely betting that officials will leave rates unchanged.

(Source: Investing.com)

Russia's Gazprom to diversify export markets

Moscow, Russia - Russian state natural gas giant Gazprom is trying to diversify its export markets to compensate for the market decline it has experienced in Europe.

Gazprom, which recorded a loss of 629bn rubles (about \$6.9bn) last year for the first time since 1999, saw its revenue fall from 11.7tn rubles relative to 8.5tn in 2022. The company's sales revenues decreased to 364bn rubles in 2023 from 1.9tn rubles the previous year.

Before the Russia-Ukraine war, Gazprom's natural gas shipments to Europe reached a record high of over 200bn cubic meters in 2018, but last year shipments fell below 30bn cubic meters.

The main pipelines carrying Russian gas to Europe, Nord Stream 1, Nord Stream 2 and Yamal-Europe, have become inactive, and one of the two pipelines that distributes gas via Ukraine has been disabled.

Today, Gazprom continues to deliver an average of 42mn cubic meters of natural gas per day through a single line to Europe via Ukraine. However, Ukrainian authority statements reveal that the gas shipment agreement with



Gazprom will not be extended, while also being indicative of a trend of further decreases in gas volumes from 2025 onwards.

In order to compensate for these losses, Gazprom is planning to increase its export capacity through the TurkStream gas pipeline and through liquefied natural gas (LNG), as well as a new pipeline project to China.

The company also aims to prioritize the expansion of natural gas consumption in its own country.

Shipments to China

Gazprom, which has significantly lost its dominant position in the European market and is not expected to regain this position in the medium term, has pivoted its export priority to China, the world's second-largest economy.

With a consumption rate seen last year of 430bn cubic meters of natural gas, China is gas hungry. The company exported 22.7bn cubic meters of natural gas through the Power of Siberia pipeline to China, but plans are

afoot to expand this annual capacity to 38bn cubic meters in 2025.

An extension to the pipeline by building the Power of Siberia 2 line will see Gazprom's aim of increasing its total natural gas shipments to approximately 100bn cubic meters.

Although China imports large amounts of natural gas and LNG, particularly from Turkmenistan, Gazprom's difficulty in finding alternative market share is a factor that weakens the company's

hand in negotiating gas prices with the Asian country.

Russia has long been negotiating the construction of the Siberian Power 2 pipeline, which will transport 50bn cubic meters of natural gas annually to China via Mongolia.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said on May 17 that they expect to get project approval soon.

Aleksandr Frolov, an energy expert at the Russian-based data and analysis center InfoTech, attributes deregistered assets worth more than 1.1tn rubles as the main factor in Gazprom's losses last year.

"If we do not take into account the assets that have fallen from the records, the company's current operations have generated profits," Frolov said.

He also perceives that China will be the main target area for Gazprom's gas export expansion. He forecasts that shipments will rise to at least 48bn cubic meters annually by 2030, along with increases in gas exports to Central Asian countries, to the extent that by the second half of the 2020s, supply will grow by at least 10bn cubic meters, or even higher.

However, Frolov also drew attention to some ambiguities as to the timing of when the Power of Siberia 2 line would be signed off. Nonetheless, he foresees that if the project is signed off next year or in 1.5 years' time, Gazprom could deliver an additional 50bn cubic meters to China by 2030.

Frolov believes that the loss in volumes that Gazprom experienced in Europe was due in the most part to falling demand for natural gas on the continent, with reduced consumption as a result of high gas prices.

"Therefore, in order to compensate for its losses in Europe, Gazprom itself needs to cope with the economic difficulties that have caused gas consumption in the EU and the UK to decrease by about 100bn cubic meters since 2021," he said.

He said that building LNG facilities would be a good step, but warned that the issue is more about incentives for the development of Russian shipbuilding and cryogenic (freezing) technologies to enable the further development of LNG production than trying to find new Russian gas consumers.

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Bitcoin tops \$70,000 for first time in over 5 weeks

New York, US - Bitcoin on Monday climbed above the \$70,000 level for the first time in more than five weeks.

The last time the world's biggest cryptocurrency stood above that level was on April 12.

The price of Bitcoin topped that at around 19:55GMT, while it was trading at roughly \$69,800 at 4.16pm EDT for a daily gain of 5.3%, according to data from CoinMarketCap, a digital asset price-tracking

website.

Ethereum, the world's biggest altcoin by market cap, was up by a massive 11.7%, reaching \$3,440 at that time. Other altcoins saw their daily prices gain as much as 20%.

The value of the cryptocurrency market stood at \$2.54tn with a 6.23% daily gain, while Bitcoin's share of the crypto market, known as dominance, was at 54.1%, while Ethereum's was at 16.2%.

Bitcoin on May 1 plummeted



below the \$57,000 level for the first time in more than two months, marking its lowest level since February 27.

The cryptocurrency market experienced a selloff during that period as investors' demand for Bitcoin fell following its halving last month, and Binance's former CEO and co-founder was sentenced to four months in prison.

The most recent rebound in cryptocurrencies came on Monday after US April con-

sumer inflation showed a slowdown on Wednesday from the previous month, boosting investor hopes that the Federal Reserve could start easing interest rates this September.

Moreover, Bitcoin ETFs, or exchange-traded funds, saw inflows of more than \$940mn over the past week, which now amounts to over \$13bn since the start of this year, according to capital market firm CoinShares.

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Toyota's Biggest Excitement ends

Toyota Oman has announced the 5th and final raffle draw winner - Al Sayyid Ahmad Badr Hamoud al Busaidi - from Muscat, who purchased a Toyota Camry 2.5 Premium, as the winner of a Toyota Crown.

The popular campaign - The Biggest Excitement had many benefits for customers opting to buy a Toyota. Customers has a chance to enter the Raffle draw and win one from 5 Toyota Crown cars and avail exclusive benefits including Service from 3 Years /30,000km up to 10 Years /100,000km, insurance for 1 year and free registration, a press release said.

Customers could also avail attractive instalments during the campaign that begun on March 3 and ended on May 1.

Building on the legacy of one of the world's best-loved vehicles since the 1950s, the Crown has been built to provide an intuitive driving experience that will exceed expectations and establish a new benchmark. When the first generation was launched, the Crown came to symbolise 'innovation' and 'pushing the limit' within Toyota. Since then, it has gained recognition in Japan as Toyota's premium sedan.

The Toyota Crown is built around the Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA-K) platform. The new Crown comes exclusively with a choice of two environment-friendly powertrains. The first hybrid electric powertrain consists of a front electric motor and Toyota's first-ever 2.4ltr inline four-cylinder turbo engine with All Wheel Drive, paired with direct shift six-speed automatic transmission with a combined power of 340 HP and 40.7 Kg.m. torque.

The second hybrid electric powertrain consists of two electric motors and a 2.5ltr four-cylinder petrol engine, generating a total power of 222 HP. The hybrid-electric system, paired with an Electric Continuously



ously Variable Transmission (e-CVT), achieves the lowest fuel efficiency, with a consumption rate of 21.6 km/l.

The Toyota Camry is available with a choice of three powertrain options. They include a 2.5ltr four-cylinder Dynamic Force engine that produces 204 hp and

24.8 kg.m of torque which is paired with an eight-speed Direct-Shift Multi-mode automatic transmission. A 3.5ltr V6 engine with D-4S fuel injection system produces 298hp and 36.3kg.m of torque and which is mated to an eight-speed multi-mode automatic transmission. It has an

electrified hybrid system, which combines a petrol engine and two electric motors. The combined power of the two power sources is 208hp. It is also paired with an Electrically Controlled Continuously Variable Transmission (E-CVT), delivering heightened driving pleasure.

Yoga Day commemorated by Indian embassy

On May 10, the Indian embassy, in collaboration with Vyaniti Yoga, organised a yoga event to commemorate the 10th International Day of Yoga.

The occasion was graced by yoga enthusiasts Kiran Asher, Jayshree Asher, Chitra Narayan, Dr Devyani, and Chetan Shah, besides Reen Jain and Acharya Manoranjan from the Indian embassy.

The programme began with felicitations of those who completed the teacher training course under the Indian Yoga Association -Foundation Course. Certificates of appreciation were awarded to encourage participants who practiced yoga diligently.

The main aim of the yoga session was to spread awareness about various practices of yoga, and to promote the Indian culture by wearing traditional Indian



attire for all age groups. The programme was meticulously curated to include yoga practices for corporate workers, animal postures performed by children, and yoga based on chakra awakening performed by women.

The audience was guided through meditation and actively engaged in performing postures along with the performers throughout the programme. It was conducted by Prema Nagesh, founder of Vyaniti Yoga.

GCC creative conference decodes luxury market

The prestigious Harvard Graduate School of Education recently witnessed a groundbreaking event - the inaugural Gulf Creatives Conference (GCC) - conceived and organised by Diwan, a student-run initiative.

This first-of-its-kind conference brought together distinguished individuals from all six GCC countries, spanning diverse sectors like healthcare, education, and luxury. The aim was to foster cultural exchange, build meaningful connections between the GCC and the United States, and ultimately, encourage foreign investment in the Gulf region, a press release said.

One of the conference's most captivating panels, 'Evolving Elegance and Arts: Navigating the Luxury Market in the Gulf Region', was moderated by Dr Esraa al Shatti, a prominent figure in the GCC luxury landscape. Dr Shatti opened the discussion by highlighting the unique char-



acter of the region's luxury market, fueled by its high concentration of affluent consumers. She emphasised the industry's consistent growth, driven not just by a desire for exquisite products, but also by the 'socio-psychological essence' associated with luxury brands.

Marco Parsiegla, CEO of

Amouage Perfumes, offered valuable insights on adapting to global trends while catering to the specific preferences of GCC clientele. Amouage's success story, with its perfumes available in over 70 countries, serves as a testament to their approach, Parsiegla said, attributing part of their growth to its R & D strategy.

SQU lecturer bags esteemed Italian literary award

Amita Sanghavi, English lecturer at Sultan Qaboos University, has been honoured with a joint third prize in Italy's prestigious Amilcare Solferini International Literary Competition.

This year's contest marked a significant expansion, welcoming 65 participants from 41 countries across five continents, a press release said. The competition, named after the Rodallo poet Amilcare Solferini (1870-1929), was founded in 2016 by Alessandro Actis Grosso, president of CARC, the cultural association of Rodallo.

Sanghavi, who represents SQU and Oman, has authored three poetry books and edited two anthologies, showcasing her literary talent. This 5th award highlights the global impact of her poems.

Other awards won by her include the open category International prize in 'The Savano International Poetry Competition, 2020' Italy. She has also won the prestigious Jury award and is part of the land installation - Voices for Peace - at Villa il Meleto di



Guido Gozzano. Sanghavi has published her poetry in journals and magazines across India, UK, USA, South Korea, Sweden, China, Georgia and Germany. The upcoming launch of her poetry book at the Santiniketan International Literature and Art Festival, and her research presentation at the University of Minnesota, Rochester, demonstrate her continued commitment to advancing literature and academic discourse worldwide.

Shofha announces strategic partnership with Weyyak

Shofha, one of the region's homegrown streaming platforms, has announced a strategic partnership with Weyyak, a prominent entertainment provider.

This collaboration aims to elevate Shofha's content offerings, particularly in the highly sought-after Indian, Arabic, and

Turkish content realms. This strategic move will not only bolster the existing content offerings but also reinforce Shofha's position as a leading provider in the industry, a press release said.

Shofha is poised to substantially enrich its content library by procuring an estimated total of approximately 11,000+ hours' worth of captivating and diverse content, with a particular emphasis on Indian, Arabic, and Turkish movies and series.

Among the standout titles that will now be available on Shofha's platform include the global Bollywood sensations 'RRR' (2022), 'Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway' (2023), and 'Bob

Biswas' (2021). This fresh content, alongside a variety of other exciting options, is available starting May 1.

Weyyak's chief business officer, Nadine Samra, said, "We are excited to join forces with Shofha in this strategic partnership, which marks a significant milestone in our commitment to delivering premium entertainment experiences to audiences across the MENA region.

FIA president visits Oman to develop motorsport

President of the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), Dr Mohammed Ben Sulayem, arrived in Muscat on an official visit aimed at developing motorsport in the Sultanate of Oman.

Upon arrival, the FIA President was warmly welcomed by Brigadier Salim al Maskari, chairman of the Board of the Oman Automobile Association (OAA), Brigadier Jamal al Tai, vice chairman of the Board of the OAA, and Suleiman al Rawahi, managing director of OAA, a press release said.

During the visit, the FIA President praised the efforts of H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth for his keenness in creating a thriving sports environment in the Sultanate of Oman and emphasised the importance of these efforts in nurturing talent and supporting sports competitions at both local and international levels.



Dr Sulayem also met with H E Khalfan bin Saeed al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, and discussed with him the possibility of developing the infrastructure for motorsport in the sultanate, including the establishment of more racetracks, training facilities, and sports tourism facilities. He also met with Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair, president of

the Oman Olympic Committee, to discuss ways to enhance co-operation between the FIA and the Oman Olympic Committee in the field of motorsport.

MoE concludes third forum for school administration

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision, concluded the Third Forum for School Administration on its second day with three simultaneous sessions, in which 12 papers and two dialogue sessions were presented.

The forum aims to inform school principals and administrative supervisors of modern educational developments, and to activate them in society to achieve integration with different sectors of society. It also aims to introduce target group to best practices in the areas of digital transformation, and harness artificial intelligence applications and technologies in education.

The second day of the forum began with a first simultaneous session in which Dr Ali bin Mahdi bin Kadhim, professor at the Department of Psychology at Sultan Qaboos University, presented a paper on 'A safe, Comprehensive School Environment that Enhances Psychological Awareness among Students'.



The second paper was on 'Improving a Healthy and Equitable School Environment', presented by Dr Amal al Mahana, senior consultant at the Ministry of Health, and Dr Khalaf al Omari, associate professor at Sultan Qaboos University, who discussed school practices that enhance national identity and global citizenship.

The first session concluded with a paper on global marketing skills among school principals, and their role in sustaining school projects, by Dr Ruqaya al Wahabi, a lecture at the Vocational College of the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation in Saham.

In the second session Hamad al Shukaili, director of the Projects Department, Judiciary Program at the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology, presented a paper titled 'The impact of employing technology techniques and judicial sciences on the educational process', and Yaroub al Maamari, vice president of the Omani Society for Educational Technologies presented the second paper titled 'Digital culture skills, and their impact on improving school performance'.

The third paper was presented by Dr Ahmed al Kalbani, dean of the Advanced Cyber Security Academy, titled 'Cybersecurity and its Challenges in the Educational Process'. The final paper of the second session was presented by Badriya al Abri, digital transformation project management specialist at the Ministry of Education, titled 'Re-engineering procedures and digital transformation as one of the approaches to developing the roles of school administration'.

Trend Micro elevates digital resilience

Trend Micro Incorporated, a global leader in cybersecurity, announced the findings of its 2023 annual cybersecurity report titled 'Calibrating Expansion', on the sidelines of its participation at the 33rd edition of COMEX Global Technology Show 2024 which will be held from May 27 - 30, at Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre.

The report revealed that the company effectively blocked and detected a significant number of threats worldwide, amounting to 161 billion threats on a global scale and 15 million threats specifically in Oman, a press release said.

As a Diamond Sponsor, Trend Micro will be showcasing its state-of-the-art security offerings, including On Prem AI Security for Sovereign and Private Cloud and the groundbreaking Trend Vision One meticulously crafted for businesses. This unified platform offers an innovative and robust approach to cybersecurity, surpassing traditional methods. It strengthens cyber

resilience with Advanced XDR and AI capabilities, providing comprehensive ASRM.

This integrated solution enables effective threat identification, response, and risk analysis through continuous discovery and automated mitigation actions. By harnessing these advanced technologies, organizations in Oman can bolster their cybersecurity defences, supporting digital transformation initiatives and driving sustainable growth across industries.

In Oman, the company played a pivotal role in cybersecurity, with its solutions blocking and detecting over 3 million email threats and more than 2 million malicious URL victim attacks. Additionally, Trend Micro identified and stopped more than 8 million malware attacks, showcasing its effectiveness in safeguarding digital assets in Sultanate of Oman. These recent figures indicate, that throughout the evolving threat landscape, organisations need to adopt multilayered solutions.

Socca World Cup 2024 signing ceremony



In preparation for the Sultanate of Oman's hosting of Socca World Cup 2024, a partnership signing ceremony was held at the Oman International Hospital headquarters between the Cristiano Ronaldo Group, represented by the Isparia Clinic, and Oman International Hospital, with Sports Makers, the organising body for the Socca World Cup 2024, Six-Six Football Championship, scheduled to begin on November 29 in Madinat Al Irfan.

Arabic Language experts visit Majdalawi

A delegation from the Directorate-General of Curriculum Development, represented by the Human Sciences Curriculum Department, visited the Majdalawi Masterpieces Library Foundation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The delegation also visited the Lebanon Publishers Library Foundation in the Arab Republic of Egypt, a press release said.

The two visits were carried out over the course of four days and targeted six employees from the Arabic language curriculum specialists in the directorate, an assistant director of the Heritage City School for Basic Education, and a special education teacher at al Tomouh School for Basic Education in Al-Dakhiliyah Governorate. It aimed to benefit from the experience of the two institutions in applying story series that support Arabic language curriculum.

The visit included the presentation of two training workshops



on building story series. The first episode implemented by the Majdalawi Masterpieces Library Foundation, included introducing the collection of story series, its

objectives, their application in the classroom, and their impact on raising students' levels. The second episode implemented by the Lebanon Publishers Library

Foundation, touched on introducing the short story 'Butterfly Chains', its objectives, and its relationship to guided reading and graded reading.

Eint Automotive wins ME Grand Prix 2023

In the ever-evolving automotive lubricant market of Oman, Eint Automotive, a subsidiary of the venerable Towell Group, stands out as a pioneering force.

The year 2023 marked a significant milestone in their journey as they celebrated their first anniversary of partnership with PETRONAS, achieving remarkable success.

Eint Automotive's commitment to excellence was spectacularly recognised at the PETRONAS Middle East Grand Prix-2023, where they clinched the title, a press release said. This achievement underscores the company's dedication to best practices and the effectiveness of their aggressive marketing strategies, including the launch of a visually striking new website in Oman that significantly enhanced their online presence.

The grandeur of the awards ceremony, held at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel in Dubai, was matched by the thrilling activities that followed, including a drift sprint experience and karting at Yas Marina in Abu Dhabi. These events mirrored the dynamic and forward-thinking



ethos of Eint Automotive. The accolades from PETRONAS during this event were a testament to the positive impact Eint Automotive has made within a short period. Shajahan Azeez, AGM of Eint Automotive LLC, attributed these successes to the "sincere

teamwork" of their dedicated staff, whose efforts have resonated deeply across the business landscape in Oman. Shajahan Azeez said, "Our ambition at Eint Automotive is not only to meet the needs of today's market but to set a benchmark for tomorrow.

With PETRONAS, we aim to elevate our brand to become the number one lubricant brand in Oman in the coming years. Our strategy involves pioneering initiatives, enhanced customer engagements, and sustained excellence in our operations.



Health Minister chairs meeting

The Healthcare Management and Organisation Committee convened its first meeting at the Ministry of Health headquarters, chaired by H E Dr Hilal Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, and attended by representatives of relevant authorities on Monday.

The minister elaborated the importance of the committee, its responsibilities, and its crucial role in healthcare in the country. He also emphasised the significance of concerted efforts from all involved parties to achieve the outlined objectives, a press release said.

The meeting reviewed the Ministerial Decision No 94/2024 issued by the Minister of Health regarding the formation of the Healthcare Management and Organisation Committee and the delineation of mechanisms to achieve the committee's objectives.

The committee is tasked with several responsibilities, including organising ways to maximise the

The committee is tasked with organising ways to maximise the utilisation of government health-care facilities, their distribution, management, and determination

utilisation of government health-care facilities, their distribution, management, and determination in a manner that ensures the integration of clinical services without compromising the objectives for which the healthcare institution was established. It aims to reduce waiting times and eliminate duplication in the provision of services of the same type to beneficiaries.

Additionally, the committee supervises the strategic plans to combat epidemics, chronic diseases, and rare genetic diseases, enabling the provision of vaccines, medicines, and necessary medical supplies for their prevention in a manner that ensures easy distribution without duplication.

Germany seeks more support for Ukraine

German FM Annalena Baerbock arrived in Kyiv for talks with Ukrainian leadership

Berlin, Germany - German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock on Tuesday urged more military support for Ukraine as she arrived in Kyiv for talks with Ukrainian leadership.

"To protect Ukraine from the Russian hail of missiles and drones, it urgently needs more air defence. That's why, together with (German) Defence Minister (Boris) Pistorius, I launched a global initiative for more air defence," Baerbock said in a statement.

"Almost €1bn (US\$1.09bn) have now been raised to provide additional support for the Ukrainian air defence forces, and we are working intensively to ensure that there is even more," she added.

Baerbock stressed that everything should be done to ensure that 'Ukraine can survive, so that Ukrainians can continue to live



German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock

self-determined lives in the future'. The German minister said last week that the Ukrainian Armed Forces need more long-range weapons to be able to hit targets deep behind the frontline as Russia makes gains on the battlefield.

Speaking on the sidelines of a meeting of European foreign ministers in Strasbourg, Baerbock called the military situation in north-east Ukraine as 'highly dramatic' amid reports that Russian forces are making significant advances of up to 10km

(6.2 miles) in one place. Germany is now Ukraine's second-biggest arms supplier, after the Americans, but Chancellor Olaf Scholz has refused to provide Ukraine Taurus missiles, saying that doing so would drag Germany deeper into the war.

Baerbock's arrival was reported by local media and later confirmed by a statement from the German Foreign Office, which noted the visit to be her eighth since the launch of Russia's 'special military operation' in February 2022.

"Russian rocket terror, constant air alerts, permanent power outages, hardly any water: the situation in Ukraine has once again escalated dramatically with the massive Russian air strikes on the civilian infrastructure and the brutal Russian offensive in Kharkiv,"

During a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group attended by representatives of the US Defence Department, Ukraine and other nations, Defence Minister Margarita Robles urged the international community to continue supporting Kyiv. Given the 'critical situation'

Almost €1bn have now been raised to provide additional support for the Ukrainian air defence forces, and we are working intensively to ensure that there is even more

ANNALENA BAERBOCK

Baerbock was quoted as saying following her arrival.

"We must now join forces so that Ukraine can survive, so that Ukrainians can continue to live self-determined lives in the future. And so that (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's troops don't soon find themselves at our own borders," the foreign minister added.

Leopard tanks from Spain

Spain will send a second batch of Leopard tanks to Ukraine along with other weapons, the country's defence minister announced on Monday.

that Ukraine is dealing with now, Robles said it was a 'collective obligation to continue providing, with even greater urgency, the support that Ukraine needs and deserves', according to a statement from Spain's Defence Ministry. Besides the Leopard tanks, Robles also announced a military package that includes 155mm artillery ammunition, Patriot anti-aircraft missiles, anti-drone systems and optronic surveillance and tracking systems.

In a post on X, Ukraine's Defence Ministry said it is 'grateful to Spain' for the package. Anadolu Agency

White House pushes senators to pass border security bill

Washington, D.C, US - The White House on Monday urged the Senate to pass a border security bill later this week that Republicans blocked in February.

"This bipartisan border legislation would deliver the significant policy changes, resources and personnel needed to secure our border and make our country safer," Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

She said it would add thousands of additional Border Patrol agents, invest in technology to catch fentanyl and go after drug traffickers and add asylum officers and immigration officers.

"We strongly support this legislation and call on every Senator to put partisan politics aside and vote to secure the border," she added.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Monday that he would put the 'strongest, most comprehensive' border security bill back on the Senate floor.

The bipartisan border bill



We strongly support this legislation and call on every Senator to put partisan politics aside and vote to secure the border

KARINE JEAN PIERRE

would reform asylum laws, boost staffing at the border, stop the flow of drugs like fentanyl, and give emergency powers to shut the border, he added.

However, House Speaker Mike Johnson's GOP leadership team issued a statement saying the bill has already failed once in the Senate because 'it would actually codify many of the disastrous Biden open border policies that created this crisis in the first place'. "Should it reach the House, the bill would be dead on arrival," the statement said.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden spoke with Johnson and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell on Monday as the White House pushed for the bill's passage.

"In these calls, President Biden reiterated that Congressional Republicans should stop playing politics and act quickly to pass this bipartisan border legislation," the White House said.

Anadolu Agency

Australia, NZ evacuate citizens from violence-hit New Caledonia

Istanbul, Turkey - Australia and New Zealand are evacuating their citizens from the violence-hit French colony of New Caledonia.

"We've received clearance for two Australian government-assisted departure flights today for Australian and other tourists to depart New Caledonia," Foreign Minister Penny Wong said.

She added: "Passengers are being prioritised based on need. We continue to work on further flights."

Two C-130 Hercules planes of the Australian Air Force arrived at Magenta Airport in New Caledonia's capital Noumea on Tuesday.

New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters said a government plane will bring home its citizens from New Caledonia who 'have faced a challenging few days'.

"The situation in New Caledonia remains dynamic, and New Zealand officials are con-



tinuing to work with French counterparts and other partners especially Australia to understand what is needed to ensure the safety of our people there," Peters said.

The evacuation of foreigners from New Caledonia came as French President Emmanuel Macron convened a third de-

fence and national security council meeting on Monday over riots in the overseas territory of New Caledonia.

The unrest has gripped New Caledonia for a week, prompting Paris to declare a state of emergency.

French territorial High Commission on the island had said

that more than 1,000 police officers, gendarmes, and civil security agents were sent to assist the local forces to reinstate order.

The French forces launched an operation on Sunday to regain access to some parts of the capital Noumea and also to reopen the airport.

At least six people, including two gendarmes, were killed during the riots, and 240 rioters arrested, the statement noted.

The unrest was sparked by a constitutional review initiated by Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin in New Caledonia.

If the changes are adopted, French nationals who have lived on the island for at least 10 years will be eligible to vote in local elections.

Locals, however, are concerned that such changes will dilute the indigenous Kanak population's vote.

Anadolu Agency

Pet owners band together as attacks by rabid hyenas surge in Kenya's capital

Nairobi, Kenya - A recent spate of attacks by rabid hyenas in the Kenyan capital Nairobi has sent a ripple of fear through the city and across the East African country.

In February this year, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) confirmed rabies as the cause behind hyena attacks in Nairobi, Kajado and Kiambu counties.

KWS attributed the unusual aggression to rabies, citing its well-documented tendency to induce abnormal animal behaviour. "The general public in the affected localities, in particular, are advised to exercise caution as they go about their daily activities as the necessary measures are put in place to manage the situation," it said.

These attacks have tragically claimed the lives of two people and caused injuries to others. Moreover, the hyenas have expanded their targets beyond humans, with reports indicating a rise in attacks on domestic animals such as dogs and cats.

However, amid the concern, a heart-warming trend has emerged: a significant increase in responsible pet ownership. Kenyans across Nairobi are taking proactive steps to safeguard their beloved cats and dogs, and in turn, curb the potential spread of rabies.

Free veterinary clinics across Nairobi funded by non-governmental organisations and generous well-wishers are experiencing overwhelming demand as pet owners flood in, seeking rabies vaccinations for their beloved furry companions.

At a clinic set up at the Kayole Community Centre, John Muchai Mbugua Mwangi, a resident, waits patiently with his Jack Russell terrier, Spark.

Spark, a ball of boundless energy, bounces in John's arms, eager to greet everyone.

"This whole hyena situation gave me a real scare," Mwangi confessed to Anadolu.

"I wouldn't dream of anything happening to Spark. He's more



than just a pet; he's family. Getting him vaccinated is the least I can do."

Across the waiting room sits Sarah Wambui, gently stroking her sleek Doberman Pinscher, Max.

"Max is my shadow," Sarah explains. "We go everywhere together. The thought of him getting bitten by a rabid animal is

terrifying. Getting him vaccinated is a no-brainer."

Beyond just vaccinations

Responsible pet owners are also considering additional measures to protect their animals and the wider community.

Spaying and neutering, a procedure that sterilises pets, is

gaining significant traction as it not only helps control pet populations but also reduces the risk of stray animals encountering rabid hyenas, or any other wild animal for that matter.

Ella Stekly, a volunteer veterinarian at the clinic, explained to Anadolu the benefits with a warm smile. "Spaying and neutering is a win-win situation. It

keeps pets healthy, reduces the number of strays on the streets, and ultimately helps control the spread of diseases like rabies."

Many of the volunteers are animal lovers themselves, and the recent events have only strengthened their resolve.

David Njoroge, a veterinary student who volunteers his time at the clinic, said: "These attacks were a wake-up call, but it's also a chance for us to come together and do what's right for our pets and our city."

Njoroge spends his days educating pet owners about rabies and the importance of preventative measures. "The more informed people are, the better equipped they are to protect their animals," he added.

"We're all here to lend a paw," Njoroge said, acknowledging the unique role of animal welfare in community support.

"Normally, it's 'lend a hand,' but in our case, it's about extending a helping paw to our furry friends who rely on us for protec-

tion and care."

The impact of the surge in responsible pet ownership is evident in the clinic itself; previously at such clinics, the waiting area might have had a few scattered pet owners.

Now, it's a vibrant space filled with wagging tails, curious meows, and the concerned chatter of pet parents.

One corner sees Michael Otieno patiently waiting with his two playful kittens, Peaches and Nala. "These little ones are full of mischief," Otieno chuckles, 'but their playful swats won't stand a chance against a rabid hyena. Getting them vaccinated is the responsible thing to do'.

Across from him sits Mary Atieno, her loyal German Shepherd, Kelly, by her side.

"Kelly is my protector," Atieno said firmly. "There's no way I'm letting him outside without proper protection. Vaccination and keeping him leashed are non-negotiable."

Anadolu Agency

Raisi's body to be buried on Thursday in Mashhad

Tehran, Iran - The funeral procession for late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and other officials who died in a helicopter crash started on Tuesday in the north-western city of Tabriz.

Tens of thousands of Iranians, including senior officials and military commanders, gathered in the city's Martyrs Square to witness the funeral rites of the country's late president and other officials who died in the incident.

Their bodies will be flown later in the day to the central Iranian city of Qom, which is home to one of the revered shrines and religious seminaries where Raisi studied.

Following the second funeral in Qom, they will be brought to the capital Tehran, where Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is expected to lead congregational funeral prayers for them. On Thursday, according to the itinerary, Raisi will be taken to his hometown of Mashhad for burial at the revered shrine of Imam Reza.

Raisi, the 8th Iranian president since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, served as the custodian of the Imam Reza shrine for several years before becoming the country's judiciary chief in 2019 and president in 2021.

After a nightlong search operation hampered by bad weather, Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and other top officials were declared dead on Monday morning.

Dozens of emergency rescue teams were dispatched to the



Tens of thousands of Iranians, including senior officials and military commanders, gathered in the city of Tabriz to witness the funeral rites of the country's late president and other officials

mountainous area in East Azerbaijan province, where the accident occurred Sunday afternoon.

According to the Iranian Constitution, First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber will assume

powers of the presidency until new elections are held.

Iranian Vice President for Executive Affairs Mohsen Mansouri said on Monday that the body of Ebrahim Raisi would be buried on

Thursday in the northeastern city of Mashhad. He made the remarks while elaborating on the planned measures for the holding of the mourning ceremonies of Raisi and members of his accompanying team.

He noted that in view of the frequent requests by people in different provinces for attending the mourning ceremonies, the Iranian Education Ministry had cancelled all students' exams from Tuesday to Friday, adding nationwide closure had been announced for

Wednesday to better hold the mourning ceremonies.

The funeral ceremonies would be held for Raisi in Tabriz, Qom, the capital Tehran, Birjand and Mashhad from Tuesday to Thursday, and the president's body would be buried in the holy shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad on Thursday night.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on Monday declared five days of national mourning over the incident.

Agencies

Snap presidential elections on June 28

Tehran, Iran - Following the tragic demise of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash on Sunday afternoon, heads of the three branches of the Iranian government have agreed on a date, June 28 for snap presidential elections in the country, Press TV reported.

The date was confirmed during a meeting held at the Presidency Office in Tehran, Press TV reported citing IRNA news report.

The meeting was attended by Iran's Head of the Executive Branch Mohammad Mokhber, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Judiciary Chief Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i.

This session marked the second meeting between the three officials within hours following President Raisi's tragic death in a helicopter crash incident in East Azerbaijan province. As per Article 131 of the Iranian Constitution, the country's top three officials are mandated to arrange presidential elections within 50 days following the death or incapacitation of the incumbent president.

According to Press TV, the meeting which was held on Monday witnessed the presence of the Iranian deputy president for legal affairs Mohammad Dehghan, deputy chairman of the Guardian Council Siamak Rahpeykand, and deputy interior minister for political affairs Mohammad Taghi Shahcheraghi.

A timetable was set for the

elections, allowing hopefuls to register from May 30 to June 3, with candidates launching their campaigns for 15 days starting June 12.

The helicopter carrying Raisi and his entourage crashed around afternoon on Sunday as it was on its way to Tabriz, the capital of East Azerbaijan, from a location on the border with the Republic of Azerbaijan where the Iranian president had opened a major dam project. Rescuers found the wreckage of the helicopter early on Monday after hours of extensive search, which involved more than 70 teams.

Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and two senior provincial officials along with crew members and bodyguards also died as a result of the crash.

Following this, country's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, has announced five days of national mourning in Iran, according to Press TV.

Khamenei declared the same in a message on Monday, and stated that he received the 'bitter news' of the death of his 'companions with great sorrow.'

"Dear Raisi did not know fatigue," Ayatollah Khamenei said, adding that the Iranian nation lost a sincere and valuable servant in this tragic incident, according to Press TV.

On Monday afternoon, a large number of people gathered in Tehran, mourning the tragic deaths.

ANI



WHO concerned over safety of patients, staff in Al-Awda hospital

Geneva, Switzerland - The World Health Organization (WHO) chief on Tuesday expressed concern over safety of patients and staff in Gaza's besieged Al-Awda hospital.

"Al-Awda Hospital in northern Gaza has been under siege since 19 May, with no one allowed to leave or enter; 148 hospital staff, 22 patients and their companions are still trapped inside," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X. Tedros noted that medical staff inside the hospital reported an attack on Monday, 'with snipers aiming at the building and an artillery rocket hitting the fifth floor, where the administration department is located'.

No injuries were reported, he added.

"We are deeply concerned about the safety of the remaining patients and hospital staff," he said, adding: "We appeal for their protection, for humanitarian access and an immediate ceasefire."

He added a WHO team regularly visited the hospital in late April to deliver medical supplies and fuel, transfer critical patients, and deploy an

emergency medical team to support health workers there. However, he said, the emergency medical team was relocated on May 13 due to intensified hostilities. At least 35,647 Palestinians have been killed in relentless Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip since last October 7, the Health Ministry in the besieged en-

We appeal for their protection, for humanitarian access and an immediate ceasefire

TEDROS GHEBREYESUS

clave said on Tuesday.

The Israeli onslaught has also injured 79,852 people, the ministry added in a statement.

"Israeli attacks killed 85 people and injured 200 others in the last 24 hours," the ministry said.

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

Anadolu Agency

Netanyahu vows to continue onslaught against Gaza

Jerusalem - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that a call for arrest warrants by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against him and his Defence Minister Yoav Gallant will not tie Israel's hands in its war on Gaza.

In video statement, Netanyahu said the ICC's warrants are directed against all of Israel and reiterated that the court's move was antisemitic.

He harshly attacked ICC Public Prosecutor Karim Khan, claiming that seeking to issue arrest warrants against him and Gallant along with three leaders from the Palestinian group Hamas is 'an utter distortion of reality'.

Several Israeli officials including Foreign Minister Israel Katz slammed Khan's announcement made earlier in the day, with all of them accusing the ICC of antisemitism. Hamas earlier called



on Khan to cancel the request for arrest warrants against three of its leaders.

In a statement, it said the ICC's arrest warrants came late after seven months 'during which

the Israeli occupation committed thousands of crimes against Palestinian civilians, including children, women, doctors and journalists'.

Khan applied for arrest war-

rants against Netanyahu, Gallant and Hamas leaders including political chief Ismail Haniyeh, Gaza leader Yahya Sinwar and military chief Mohammed Deif.

Khan said he has reasonable

Assange case shows that 'exposing US' leads to punishment: China

Istanbul, Turkey - China on Tuesday said the extradition case against WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange shows that 'exposing the US leads to punishment', state media reported.

Assange's case shows the world what 'American-style freedom of the press' is, said Wang Wenbin, spokesman of China's Foreign Ministry.

It demonstrates that 'exposing other countries should be rewarded, while exposing the US leads to punishment', Wang told reporters in Beijing.

"To the US, freedom of the press, like democratic human rights, is just a tool the US uses to suppress dissidents and maintain its own hegemony," Wang asserted.

Assange on Monday won a



legal bid to appeal against his extradition to the US from Britain. The journalist and WikiLeaks co-founder, who was to be extradited to the US on espionage charges, will now take his case to a new appeal hearing.

He has been facing 17 charges of espionage, on which he may receive up to 175 years in prison.

Assange, who has been detained in a UK prison since 2019, faces extradition over allegations of leaking classified military documents in 2010-2011.

Assange, who has been detained in a UK prison since 2019, faces extradition over allegations of leaking classified military documents in 2010-2011.

The UK High Court, in a pivotal 2021 ruling, decreed that Assange should be extradited, dismissing assertions over his fragile mental state and the risks he might face in a US correctional facility.

Following the suit, the Supreme Court upheld the decision in 2022, while then-Home Secretary Priti Patel affirmed the extradition order.

In his latest bid for a reprieve, Assange is seeking authorisation to scrutinize Patel's determination and challenge the initial 2021 court verdict.

A UK High Court ruling in March granted Assange the right to appeal his extradition to the US, deciding against the immediate implementation of the decision.

Anadolu Agency

AI able to manipulate elections all around the world, says expert

Istanbul, Turkey - Artificial intelligence (AI) is able to manipulate elections all around the world, said the chairman of the Department of Mass Communication at US-based Stephen F Austin University, noting that as it relates to politics and preserving democracy, it is very important that some regulations are introduced.

The world is in the very early stages of that technology and a lot of mistakes are going to be made in utilising it, John Allen Hendricks told Anadolu at a conference titled Future(s) of Communications: Promises and Predicaments organised last week by the Global Communication Association (GCA).

There have been numerous videos in the US but also in other countries showing politicians saying things that the electorate perceives as sincere but which are actually deepfake videos, he stressed.

People should be very careful about AI in the political context because it is so new and very believable, he stressed.



So it is important that politicians and governments consider regulating to a certain extent social media, he added.

Social media plays a front and centre role in politics in the 21st century, especially in 2024, he said.

“When I look at American politics, social media is the first place that politicians go to reach the electorate,” he noted.

Traditional legacy media in America - television, radio and newspapers - are gatekeepers and frame messaging for the electorate, he stressed.

But the electorate has become very leery toward traditional media, and so they are turning to social media, which allows politicians to communicate directly to them without having to go through elite journalists, he added.

Social media community

“The impact of social media in the 21st century is its immediacy,” Hendricks said, noting that everyone accesses those media outlets in their homes.

People on social media talk about the things they already believe in and so they just sort of perpetuate what is being said, he asserted. “And so there is almost a community of people who all believe the same things to continue discussing those same things, in turn in those same ideas and things, whether they are correct or not,” he said.

There is a problem with social media and there is no regulation of it in the US, he said.

Anadolu Agency

Schengen visa fees increased

New Delhi, India - The European Commission has announced a global increase in short-stay Schengen visa fees, effective from June 11. This decision will see the cost of Schengen visas (visa type C) rise by 12 per cent, impacting travellers planning to visit Europe.

Under the new fee structure, the cost for adult applicants will be 90, up from the current 80. For children aged six to below 12 years, the fee will increase from 40 to 45. This hike applies to visa applications submitted worldwide.

The Schengen visa permits travel across 27 European countries, including popular tourist destinations such as France, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

The fee adjustment aims to align with the increasing costs of processing visas and maintaining the security of the Schengen area.

The last fee update was implemented in February 2020, when the adult visa fee was increased to 80 from 60. The European Commission justified the latest hike by citing inflation and the need to cover administrative costs associated with the visa process, which includes background checks and data processing.

ANI

Severe heatwave push India's power demand to seasonal peak

Demand shot up to 234 GW in the country on Tuesday, government data showed

New Delhi, India - As a considerable part of India experiences severe heatwave, necessitating the need for air conditioners and coolers round the clock, power demand on Tuesday was at its seasonal high at 234 gigawatt (GW).

Power demand shot up to 234 GW in the country on Tuesday, government data showed. The government has expected a power demand of between 225 - 235 GW during May.

In June, power demand is expected to be between 235-240 GW, 235 GW in the evening and 240 GW during the day time.

The extreme heatwave continues to push Delhi's power demand northwards. According to the State Load Despatch Centre (SLDC) data at 3:33pm on Tuesday, Delhi's peak power demand clocked 7717 MW; the highest ever in the history of the national capital.

As per data, this is the fourth day in a row Delhi's peak power demand has crossed 7000 MW and broken the previous all-time May high of 7070 MW, recorded on May 19, 2022.

Heatwave to severe heatwave conditions are most likely to continue over the plains of north-west India and heat-wave conditions over north Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat during the



Visitors cover their heads with umbrellas to protect themselves from the sun on a hot summer day, at India Gate in New Delhi on Monday (ANI)

next five days. On Monday, the highest maximum temperature of 47.4 degrees Celsius was reported at Najafgarh (Delhi).

The heatwave is considered the maximum if the temperature of a place reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius or more for plains

and at least 30 degrees Celsius or more for hilly regions.

The government said it is taking all necessary steps to ensure that the electricity demand in the summer season is met. To ensure this, a series of meetings, emphasising the need for ensur-

ing Zero load shedding during the summer season was held.

In a meeting held in the Ministry in 3rd week of March this year, it was stressed that adequate advance planning should be done by all stakeholders, so as to prevent a situation in which

one state has surplus power while another state faces power shortages.

For this summer season, the Indian Metrological Department (IMD) has projected higher-than-normal maximum and minimum temperatures across the

The government said it is taking all necessary steps to ensure that the electricity demand in the summer season is met

country, except over some isolated areas of Northwest, Northeast, Central and Peninsular India. The electricity demand would also hence be higher than in previous years, which is reflected also in the rising trend of peak demand in recent months, during both solar hours and non-solar hours.

The peak energy demand grew by 12.7 per cent from 2,15,888 MW in 2022-23 to 2,43,271 MW in 2023-24, while the peak demand met grew by 13.9 per cent from 2,10,725 MW in 2022-23 to 2,39,931 MW in 2023-24.

Relative to the year 2022-23, the energy requirement grew by 7.5 per cent in 2023-24 and the energy availability grew by 7.8 per cent, resulting in a reduction in total energy shortfall from 0.5 per cent in 2022-23 to 0.2 per cent in 2023-24.

ANI



Antarctic sea ice level reached 'record lows' in 2023: Study

London, UK - Record-low levels of sea ice were seen in the Antarctic last year as a result of climate change, scientists confirmed in a report published on Monday.

"In 2023, the area of winter Antarctic sea ice fell to the lowest measured since satellite records began in late 1978," according to research released by the British Antarctic Survey (BAS).

Scientists have found that last year's record-breaking low would be a one-in-a-2,000-year event without climate change and four times more likely under its effects. The exceptional low state of Antarctic sea ice indicates that

it may transition to a new and lower state over the next few decades, warned scientists.

"The reduced return period in forced scenarios suggest that winter 2023's extreme low was made more likely by climate change," noted the study.

Rachel Diamond, a lead author of the report, said that while 2023's extreme low sea ice was made more likely by climate change, it was still considered very exceptional according to the models. "This is the first time this large set of climate models has been used to find out how unlikely 2023's low sea ice actually

was," she noted.

Diamond said the only measurements of sea ice are coming from a 45-year-old satellite, making it extremely difficult to evaluate changes in sea ice extent.

"According to the models, the record-breaking minimum sea ice extent would be a one-in-a-2,000-year event without climate change," she added.

Louise Sime, a co-author of the report, pointed out that the impacts of Antarctic sea ice staying low for over 20 years would be profound, including on local and global weather.

Anadolu Agency

S Korea wins the battle against food waste

Seoul, South Korea - When it comes to food, the world is divided, as in many other ways, between the haves and have-nots: hundreds of millions face immense hunger as millions more waste staggering amounts of food.

This glaring contradiction was illustrated in a recent UN report, which showed that households worldwide discarded more than one billion meals every single day in 2022 - at a time when over 783mn people, or one-third of humanity, grappled with food insecurity. Overall, 1.05bn tonnes of food went to waste that year, and the majority of 631mn tonnes - or up to 60 per cent - came from households, according to the UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2024.

While many countries around the world are still struggling to rein in food waste coming from homes, there is one particular nation that could serve as a model for all: South Korea. Over the past three decades, the East Asian nation has shown how change at scale is possible, raising its rate of food recycling from a minimal two per cent to over 95 per cent.

In 2019, there was an average of 14,314 tonnes of food waste in South Korea per day, of which



Over the past three decades, the East Asian nation has shown how change at scale is possible, raising its rate of food recycling from a minimal two per cent to over 95 per cent

13,773 tonnes, or 96.2 per cent, were recycled. This followed a recycling rate of 97 per cent in 2018 and 97.1 per cent in 2017, according to data from the South Korean Environment Ministry.

The transformation began in the 1990s when South Korea enforced a raft of policies to tackle a burgeoning waste crisis, Doun Moon, a policy researcher at the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) based in Seoul, told Anadolu.

By the mid-1990s, as landfills

and incineration facilities became unable to handle the burgeoning waste output driven by urbanisation, South Korea started to develop an overall framework for waste management, starting by becoming 'one of the first countries to implement a volume-based system for food waste nationwide', said Doun.

This was the Volume-Based Waste Fee (VBWF) system that essentially gave people economic incentives to reduce the amount of waste they were throwing out

and increase their recycling.

Under this system, people were given five different kinds of waste bags to sort out their trash into different categories, including domestic and food waste, and pay different fees for each kind.

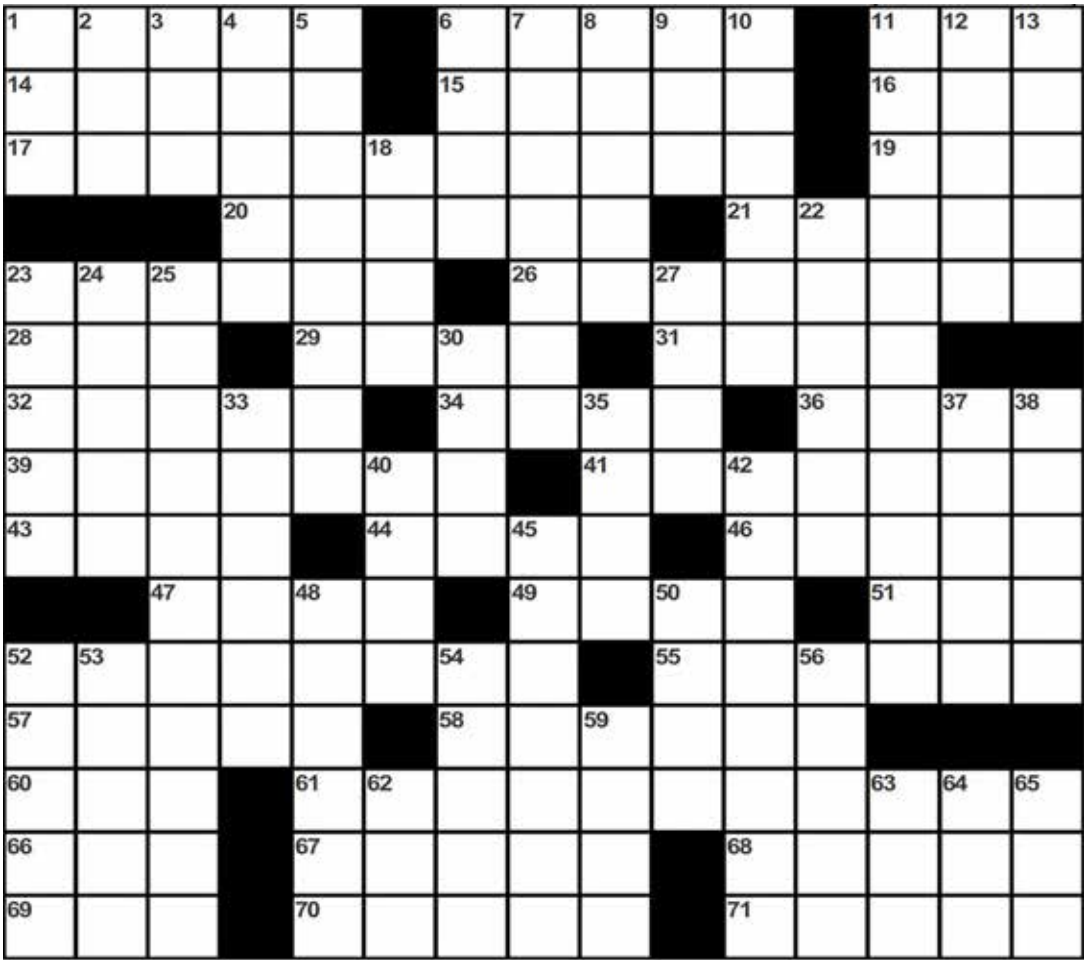
In less than a decade, the VBWF system brought down waste generation by 23 per cent and diverted 53mn tonnes of waste from landfills and incinerators, according to Doun's research, leading to cost savings of some US\$8bn and a 175 per cent spike in recycling.

Building on this success, South Korea pushed ahead with a ban on direct landfilling of food waste in 2005, followed by a 'pay-as-you-throw policy' introduced in 2014, the same year it also started generating biogas from food waste, all of which combined to further increase source separation and recycling of food waste.

Another major step was the implementation of a radio-frequency identification system (RFID), which is a more sophisticated digital ticketing mechanism that allowed for people to be charged monthly based on the weight of their food waste, said Doun.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Certain informal parent
- 6) Wooded valleys
- 11) Female pronoun
- 14) _ of expertise
- 15) Bye-bye, in Burgundy
- 16) Pin number?
- 17) Object on Israel's flag
- 19) Interject
- 20) Burning
- 21) Suitable material?
- 23) Annoying inconvenience
- 26) Professed
- 28) FBI employee, briefly
- 29) Eve's mate
- 31) Jacob's twin
- 32) Unedited version
- 34) Petticoat junction?
- 36) Blueprint detail, in short
- 39) Most spooky
- 41) Brandy cocktail
- 43) Words with "pre-ident"
- 44) Senate helper
- 46) Having an irregular edge
- 4 7) Spot in the distance
- 49) Point to the right
- 51) Harden
- 52) Barnum and Bailey's

business

- 55) Home for an old king
- 57) Guiding beliefs of a group
- 58) In a lively manner
- 60) Doctor in a 1964 movie
- 61) Campus VIP
- 66) Nightmare street of film
- 67) Down provider
- 68) Barbecue leftover
- 69) "Sayonara!"
- 70) Run-down in appearance, as a motel
- 71) Furry weasel cousin

DOWN

- 1) _ de deux
- 2) Dinner scrap
- 3) Ammo in a harmless shooter
- 4) Legal aides, informally
- 5) Recently
- 6) Baby's word for 1-Across
- 7) Japanese protein source
- 8) Cats have nine of them
- 9) Welcoming garland
- 10) Makes soapy bubbles
- 11) Business seed money
- 12) Steeplechase obstacle

13) Called off

- 18) Left the scene
- 22) Desk drawer item
- 23) Hellish place
- 24) See things the same way
- 25) First base?
- 27) Prefix for "circle"
- 30) _ spumante (Italian wine)
- 33) Total disaster
- 35) Sailing the Atlantic
- 37) Renoir's prop
- 38) Minotaur's home
- 40) Verb for Simon
- 42) Unfastens
- 45) Longed for
- 48) Boot-wearing felines?
- 50) Sing "shooby-doo" and such
- 52) Paparazzi target, briefly
- 53) Venice setting
- 54) Dodge
- 56) Historical Alabama march site
- 59) Results may do this, in commercials
- 62) Make a sheepshank
- 63) Flow back
- 64) Business card no.
- 65) Prior, to poets

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

It's a great day for productivity. You can accomplish an awful lot in a little bit of time if you get organized.

First thing this morning, do a quick inventory of what you have and what you need. That will enable you to focus on the most important tasks first. And if you decide to keep yourself busy with routine chores, you'll get a lot done and feel immensely proud of yourself by day's end.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

After a tough defeat, it's perfectly understandable to spend a few days nursing your bruised ego, but today it's time to start shifting back into the swing of things. You have lots of great ideas to offer the group today, and people want to hear them. There is much more interest in what you have to say than may realize. You are missing an amazing opportunity by standing on the sidelines and watching others just because you're afraid they won't like what you have to say.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Wherever your mood takes you today, you should follow it without asking any questions. Getting caught up in a routine can be comforting. Having things on your terms makes this crazy world feel a little bit more manageable. But eventually a routine can come dangerously close to creating too much monotony in your life. Mix things up today and let your whims dictate what you do and how you do it. You're bound to discover something new about yourself in the process.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Sticking a toe in the water is a wise way to get familiar with a new concept, person, or place. Just make sure you don't dive in headfirst as soon as the temperature feels right. A lot is at stake now, and you need to make sure you know how deep the water is and if there are any sharks swimming around! Be thorough when you evaluate situations today, from assessing a coworker to evaluating a new car you have your eye on.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

More than ever, your friends and family are providing you with the inspiration you need to keep yourself motivated and energized. Therefore, it's time you thanked them all for their support and devotion. Why not blend your gratitude with your notorious hospitality skills and throw a dinner party for everyone? Bring your two worlds together and watch all the people you love most in the world make each other laugh. It is high time for everyone to meet each other and know what you know.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You can't be helping other people all the time. Today, it's time to help yourself. Add a few selfish acts into your good deeds and don't feel bad about it. Don't do anything too crazy. Just put yourself first a few times when you usually would not. This isn't an excuse to forget your manners. You should still say please and thank you and be a nice person. But you deserve a day when you treat yourself more like the star you are. There's no harm in that.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

The people you're working with today could be pretty aggressive, so if you are in a competition with them, you'd better kick up your game a notch or two. Winning is suddenly lots more important for you than it's been in a long time, because your ego needs a victory or two to stay feeling good. You should even be prepared to sacrifice harmony to stay in the game if that's what it takes. Now is the time to take things seriously and fight for what you want.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You can expect some vibrant personalities to come into your life today. These people should serve as an inspiration to you. They took some risks and are reaping the benefits of them now, so much so that you might be a bit jealous. Stop thinking that you could never do what they did and start thinking about taking a few more risks in life. Put yourself out there and be more daring. You don't have to step too far from your comfort zone to see progress.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Being diplomatic is nice and all, but you can't let it prevent you from pushing for what you want today. Take control. It's a good day to be assertive, and it's going to feel good to flex your muscles and stand firm for what you want. Not only will people be surprisingly receptive to your power play, but they will probably cheer you on to take even more control of the situation. Folks need a leader right now, and you might be the perfect person for the job.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

The smartest way to handle conflict today is to focus on the relationship behind it, not on the issue itself. Approaching a difficult and deep conversation focused only on what you want to say or on what you want to achieve is too shortsighted. You must keep in mind who you are talking to and what they mean to you. Respect the relationship above your own priorities. When the issue is resolved, the two of you will be closer than ever.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

One of your closest friends is suddenly turning into a different person. Their typical level-headed behavior is gone, and suddenly they're off being wild and wacky. Why they are acting this way is a total mystery to you, but it might have to stay that way. Ask all the questions you want, but if they don't want to answer them, they don't have to. Respect their boundaries and give them some space for now. They will come to you if they need your help.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. English artist Alison Lapper, MBE, who with her son also featured in a BBC documentary series "Child of our Time", has what rare medical condition?

A. Best Disease
B. Fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva
C. Schnitzler Syndrome
D. Phocomelia

2. Which were the last Olympic Games in which East Germany took part as a country?

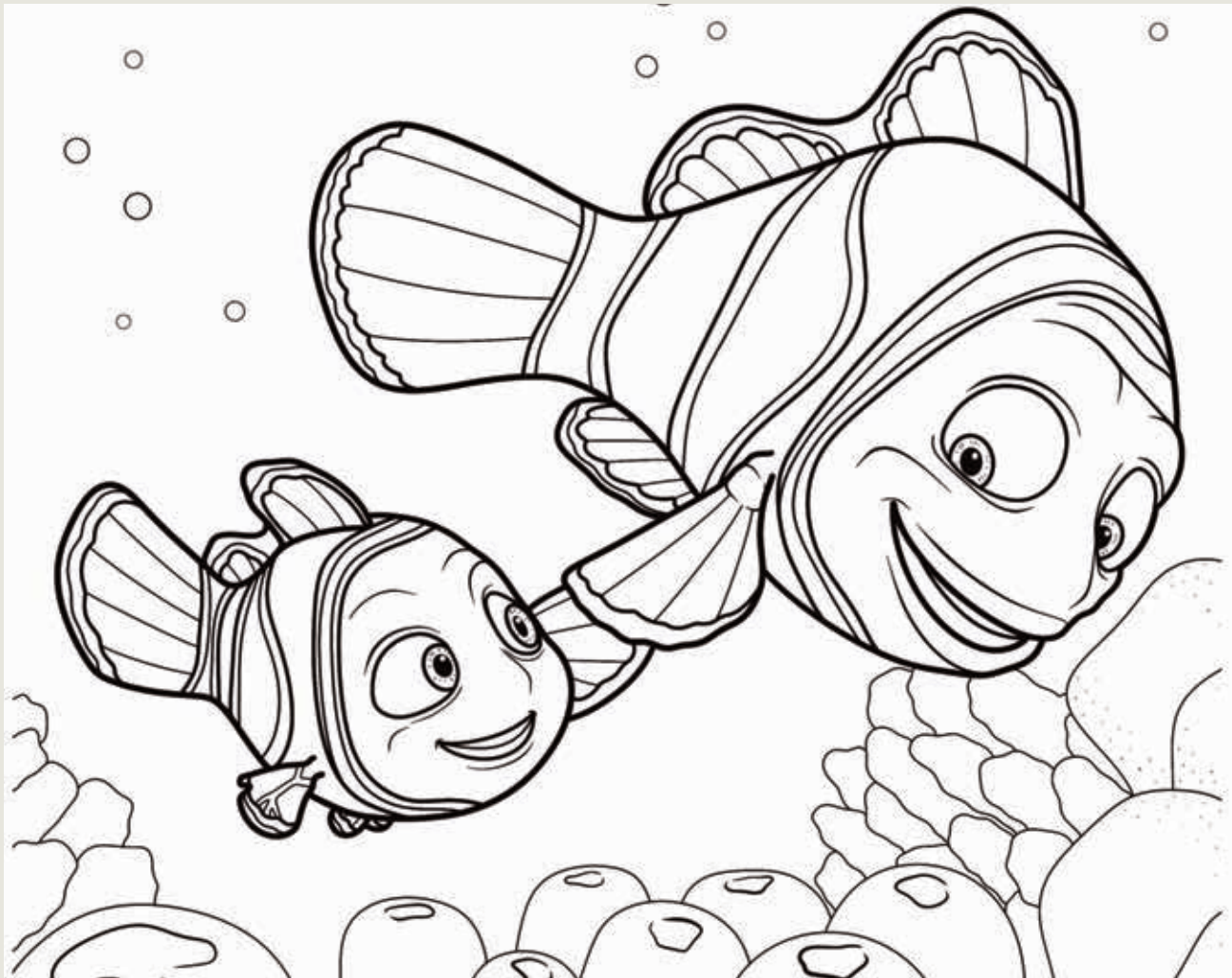
A. 1992
B. 1988
C. 1984
D. 1982

3. What Greek letter is used to denote the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter?

A. Pi
B. Rho
C. Delta
D. Theta

Answers: 1.D 2.B 3.A 4.A

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

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

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

MAGIC WIRTZ

Leverkusen midfielder named Bundesliga player of season

Leverkusen, Germany - Bayer Leverkusen's Florian Wirtz has been voted Player of the Season in the Bundesliga, the German League said on Monday, after the midfielder helped his club in winning their first league title.

Leverkusen are the first team to complete a Bundesliga season unbeaten, and are still undefeated across all competitions this season, a run of 51 matches. Wirtz has contributed 18 goals in 47 games. Wirtz came off the bench to score a hat-trick in the 5-0 win over Werder Bremen in April which clinched the Bundesliga title with five games to spare and Leverkusen still have the Europa League and German Cup finals to come.

The 21-year-old's performances brought him three Player of the Month awards this season. He has also been named in Germany's preliminary squad for Euro 2024. He scored the only goal in Germany's 1-0 win over France in a friendly in March.

The award is decided by votes from fans (40%), clubs (30%) and experts (30%). The attacking midfielder has been a leading figure in all key statistics for Xabi Alonso's still unbeaten side.

Wirtz has registered 11 goals and 11 assists this league campaign, both personal bests for a Bundesliga season. And despite often being rested in the latter

stage of the campaign, he has still come off the bench a number of times to make an impact.

"Flo is a good player even at 70 percent," said Xabi Alonso.

Wirtz has also been denied by the frame of the goal a league-high five times, but it isn't just in his finishing or assists where he makes his mark. He's come to be the complete package at the

Leverkusen are the first team to complete a Bundesliga season unbeaten, and are still undefeated across all competitions this season

heart of the action, capable of dribbling, distributing and covering the ground.

Wirtz has shown this season - his first full campaign since recovering from the ACL injury he suffered in 2022 - that he has it all. That he's enjoying his time playing at this high level was evidenced by his brilliant goal against Freiburg, when he twisted and turned past numerous defenders before scoring what German TV audiences voted the 2023 Goal of the Year on Sportschau.



Florian Wirtz with the Bundesliga Player of the Season trophy



Mohamed Salah

Salah hints he will be at Liverpool next season

Liverpool, England - Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah has suggested he will stay at the Premier League club following the departure of manager Juergen Klopp, the Egypt international said late on Monday.

With Klopp's exit after nearly nine years at the helm and Feyenoord coach Arne Slot officially confirmed as his successor, uncertainties regarding Salah's future at Liverpool had grown, with his contract expiring in June 2025.

Liverpool rejected a £150m offer from Al Ittihad for the 31-year-old last September, and the forward has again been linked with a move to Saudi Arabia.

Liverpool's top scorer this season appeared somewhat out of form, especially towards the end of the campaign when their title charge faltered.

Late on Monday, after Slot was announced as Liverpool's new coach, Salah set forth his side's ambitions for the next season and sent out a parting message for Klopp.

"We know that trophies are what count and we will do everything possible to make that happen next season," Salah wrote in a post on social media. "Our fans deserve it and we will fight like hell."

"It was great sharing all those trophies and experiences with you over the past 7 years," Salah captioned a picture of himself with the former Liverpool manager.

"I wish you the best of luck for the future and hope

Slot to replace Klopp as new manager, confirm Liverpool

Liverpool, England - Liverpool have appointed Feyenoord's Arne Slot as manager to replace departing coach Juergen Klopp next season, the Premier League club announced on Monday.

Slot has been in charge of the Dutch team since 2021, and won the Eredivisie league title in 2022-23 along with the KNVB Cup this season, while Feyenoord also reached the Europa Conference League final in his first season at the club.

"It's certainly not an easy decision to close the door behind you at a club where you've had so many great moments and worked successfully with so many great people," Slot said in a statement on Feyenoord's



Arne Slot

website. "But an opportunity to become a head coach in the Premier League, at one of the biggest clubs in the world, is hard to ignore as a sportsman."

It's certainly not an easy decision to close the door behind you at a club where you've had so many great moments and worked successfully with so many great people

ARNE SLOT

Klopp announced in January that he would leave Liverpool at the end of this season and, after much speculation, Slot confirmed on Friday that he would become Liverpool manager.

"Liverpool Football Club can announce Arne Slot has agreed a deal to become the club's new head coach, formally taking up the position on June 1, 2024,

subject to a work permit," the Anfield club said in a statement on Monday. On Sunday, after Liverpool's final game of the season, a 2-0 home win over Wolverhampton Wanderers,

Klopp led the Anfield crowd in a song for the incoming manager.

Slot was linked with the Tottenham Hotspur job at the end of last season before signing a contract extension at Feyenoord, and his aggressive, attacking style attracted Liverpool to entice the Dutchman to the Premier League.

Liverpool ended the season third in the Premier League, nine points off champions Manchester City, while Feyenoord finished runners-up to PSV Eindhoven in the Eredivisie.

Slot was given a rousing send-off by the Feyenoord fans after their final league game of the season on Sunday, a 4-0 home win over Excelsior.

Juve stage dramatic comeback to draw 3-3 with Bologna

Bologna, Italy - Juventus scored three goals in the last 14 minutes to complete a remarkable comeback and secure a 3-3 draw at Bologna in Serie A on Monday.

The result left third placed Bologna level on 68 points with Juve in fourth before the final matchday. Atalanta, who still have two games to play, sit in fifth with 66 points.

Both teams had already secured Champions League berths for next season and instead were focused on sealing third place in the standings behind AC Milan and champions Inter Milan.

Juve endured a nightmarish start with Bologna going two up after 11 minutes, first with Riccardo Calafiori scoring on a rebound after 90 seconds, followed by Santiago Castro heading in the second goal.

Moments later, Bologna believed they had secured a third goal as Jens Odgaard slotted the ball home, only for the offside flag to be raised.



Kenan Yildiz of Juventus celebrates after scoring against Bologna on Monday

Juventus's misery was compounded eight minutes into the second half as Calafiori scored his second goal, rushing into the box and chipping the ball over

Juve keeper Wojciech Szczesny. Juve appeared to have hit rock bottom following a tumultuous few days. After winning the Italian Cup, the club sacked Massi-

miliano Allegri on Friday for misbehaviour during the final and appointed Paolo Montero as interim coach.

Federico Chiesa kickstarted

Juventus's fightback with a goal in the 76th minute, followed by Arkadiusz Milik's free kick strike in the 83rd minute.

A minute later, substitute Kenan Yildiz sealed the draw with a long shot from outside the box that found the bottom corner.

"In my view, the draw is the fair result," Montero told DAZN.

"The victory on Wednesday (Italian Cup final) was important, mentally it drained them a little bit and to come here against one of the best teams at the moment like Bologna, you are going to struggle.

"After that dip in mentality, they fought back with pride and showed how much they care about the shirt."

Hellas Verona secured their place in Serie A next season with a 2-1 win over already relegated Salernitana. The result moved them to 13th with 37 points, four points clear of 18th placed Empoli.



Roberto De Zerbi

De Zerbi 'hopes to work in the Premier League again'

London, England - Manager Roberto De Zerbi hopes to find work in England's top flight soccer league again following his departure from Brighton & Hove Albion, the Italian coach said after Sunday's 2-0 defeat to Manchester United.

De Zerbi joined Brighton in September 2022, replacing Graham Potter. The 44-year-old made an instant impact when he secured the club's highest Premier League finish (sixth) and helped it qualify for European

competition for the first time.

"It was a tough day but a special day. In terms of relationship, it has been one of the most important experiences of my life," De Zerbi said.

Asked about his future prospects, De Zerbi said, "There isn't any club - no-one offered (anything). At the moment, nothing."

"I hope to work in the Premier League again. I don't know where or when. But it was an honour to work in the Premier League."

ONE LAST HURRAH

Nadal, the greatest player on clay, looks for final fling at French Open

Paris, France - Rafael Nadal hopes to play in the French Open where he would be in the unfamiliar role of underdog but niggling injuries threaten to sour what would likely be the Spaniard's last appearance at the Grand Slam he dominated for nearly two decades.

The 37-year-old, who won 14 of his 22 major titles in Paris to establish himself as one of the greatest ever players on clay, skipped the 2023 edition with a hip injury that required surgery and is still in two minds whether to play this year.

Having already announced that 2024 could be his final sea-



Rafael Nadal at Roland Garros

Nadal's earliest exit from the tournament was in 2016 when a wrist problem forced him to withdraw ahead of his third-round clash with Marcel Granollers and he has only lost three times in 115 matches.

son on the tour, Nadal returned to action in January but sustained a small muscle problem that stalled his progress before he made another comeback during the European claycourt swing.

Following a second-round defeat at Barcelona, Nadal cranked up his level to go on a surprise run to the Madrid fourth round and delight fans but in Rome a crushing loss to Hubert Hurkacz in his second match dampened spirits ahead of Roland Garros.

"Physically I have some issues, but not probably yet enough to say I'm not playing in the most

important event of my tennis career," said Nadal, who won his first French Open in 2005 and last lifted the Musketeers' Cup two years ago.

"If I feel ready, I'm going to try to be there and fight for the things I have been fighting for the last 15 years, (even) if now seems impossible."

Nadal's indomitable spirit despite a plethora of injuries in his glittering career has never been in question, but the former world number one who has plummeted down the rankings risks being dumped out prematurely at his happiest hunting ground.

His earliest exit from the tournament came in 2016 when a wrist problem forced him to withdraw ahead of his third round clash with countryman Marcel Granollers and he has only lost three times in 115 matches.

Despite previously stressing that he would play in Paris only if he felt fully fit and competitive, Nadal understands the importance of going out on his own terms as he did in front of teary fans in Barcelona, Madrid and Rome.

"Probably when the people start to see that there will not be many chances to watch me play again, probably they feel a bit more emotional, more sad because it's in some way the end of an important era in the history of tennis," Nadal said.

"As a player, I want to be remembered for the results that I had. As a person, I hope to be remembered as a positive example of being respectful, well-educated and a good person."



Lionel Messi

Messi leads Argentina for final friendlies before Copa America

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Argentina on Monday named a 29-man squad led by Lionel Messi for their final friendlies before the Copa America but there was no place for forward Paulo Dybala who has struggled with injuries.

Argentina will face Ecuador on June 9 at Soldier Field Stadium in Chicago and five days later play Guatemala at Commanders Field in Washington.

Coach Lionel Scaloni will have to cut three players from the list to meet the limit of 26 allowed by CONMEBOL for the Copa America, which starts on June 20.

In addition to Messi, Angel Di Maria, Nicolas Otamendi and other players who won the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, Scaloni has included youngsters Leonardo Balerdi, Valentin Barco, Alejandro Garnacho and Valentin Carboni.

AS Roma forward Dybala is the big absentee after several injuries that have ruled him out of previous internationals.

Argentina kick off their Copa America campaign against Canada on June 20, face Chile five days later and Peru on June 29. The tournament in the United States runs until July 14.

Molina (Atletico Madrid), Leonardo Balerdi (Olympique de Marseille), Cristian Romero (Tottenham Hotspur), German Pezzella (Real Betis), Lucas Martinez Quarta (Fiorentina), Nicolas Otamendi (Benfica), Lisandro Martinez (Manchester United), Marcos Acuna (Sevilla), Nicolas Tagliafico (Lyon) and Valentin Barco (Brighton)

Midfielders: Guido Rodriguez (Real Betis), Leandro Paredes (Roma), Alexis Mac Allister

Argentina kick off their Copa America campaign against Canada on June 20, face Chile five days later and Peru on June 29.

(Liverpool), Rodrigo De Paul (Atletico Madrid), Exequiel Palacios (Bayern Leverkusen), Enzo Fernandez (Chelsea), Giovanni Lo Celso (Tottenham Hotspur), Angel Di Maria (Benfica) and Valentin Carboni (AC Monza)

Forwards: Lionel Messi (Inter Miami), Angel Correa (Atletico Madrid), Alejandro Garnacho (Manchester United), Nicolas Gonzalez (Fiorentina), Lautaro Martinez (Inter Milan) and Julian Alvarez (Manchester City)

Roland Garros title defence a daunting task for Djokovic

Paris, France - Novak Djokovic will hope to shake off a freak head injury and get his bumpy season back on track at the French Open, where the out-of-form Serb faces a daunting task to defend his title and retain his world number one ranking.

The 24-time Grand Slam champion captured his third Roland Garros title in the absence of the injured Rafa Nadal en route to winning three of the four majors in a spectacular 2023 but has struggled to replicate that dominance this season.

Djokovic's bid for a record-extending 11th Australian Open title

was ended by eventual champion Jannik Sinner in the semi-finals in January, before the 36-year-old fell to lucky loser Luca Nardi early at Indian Wells to send alarm bells ringing.

Having been stunned by Casper Ruud in the Monte Carlo semi-finals, Djokovic was thrashed 6-2 6-3 by Alejandro Tabilo in the third round of

Rome earlier this month, two days after being hit on the head by a fan's water bottle while signing autographs.

"The way I felt on the court was just completely like a different player had entered my shoes. No rhythm, no tempo, no balance whatsoever on any shot," Djokovic said of the defeat that hampered his Roland

Garros preparation.

"It's a bit concerning." Reports in the Serbian media said scans had cleared Djokovic of serious injury ahead of the tournament starting on May 26 and he accepted a late wildcard to compete in Geneva this week.

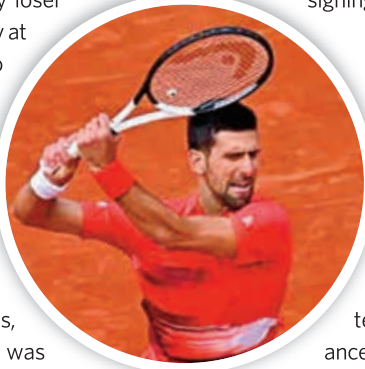
But having skipped Madrid before Rome, Djokovic could still head to Paris slightly undercooked with some fans fearing cracks are finally appearing in his armour.

Although it would be premature to write him off, Djokovic said he would need to improve drastically to win a fourth French

Open trophy and go past Mats Wilander, Ivan Lendl and Gustavo Kuerten into third in the list of Open Era Paris champions.

Adding to Djokovic's headache is the emergence of Italian Sinner as another genuine threat to his Grand Slam ambitions alongside Spain's Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz.

After a flat display in his defeat by Sinner in Melbourne, Djokovic split with long-time coach Goran Ivanisevic and fitness coach Marco Panichi to rediscover his best form for the French Open, Wimbledon and Paris Olympics.



Novak Djokovic

South Korea appoint Kim Do-hoon as interim coach for World Cup qualifiers

Seoul, South Korea - Kim Do-hoon will lead South Korea in World Cup qualifiers against Singapore and China in June after the Korean Football Association (KFA) failed to line up a permanent coach to replace Jurgen Klinsmann in time.

German Klinsmann was sacked in February after his team crashed out in the semi-finals of the Asian Cup, failing to record a single shot on target in the 2-0 loss to Jordan despite having the likes of Son Heung-min and Lee Kang-in in the team.

Under-23 coach Hwang Sun-hong led the senior side to a 1-1 draw and 3-0 win over Thailand in the last round of qualifiers in March and the KFA had hoped to announce a new permanent coach before the June fixtures.

"Negotiations to hire the new national team head coach are still ongoing and it's possible that they won't be finalised before the next matches in June," the KFA



Kim Do-hoon

said in a statement on Monday.

"Our National Teams Committee met earlier today to discuss this scenario and decided to hire Kim Do-hoon as the interim coach to take charge of the two games in June."

Former international striker

Kim steered Ulsan Hyundai to the Asian Champions League title in 2020 and Lions City Sailors to the Singapore Premier League title in 2021.

The 53-year-old quit the Singapore club in August 2022 after being handed a three-match ban

for headbutting the assistant coach of an opposing team.

South Korea, bidding for an 11th straight appearance at the World Cup finals, are three points clear of China at the top of Group C in the second round of qualifying.

Saudi Arabia keen to develop homegrown talent for future

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia will look to homegrown talent to expand its base of elite athletes rather than follow its neighbours down the path of naturalising foreigners, the media chief of the Saudi Olympic Committee told Reuters.

Funding from the country's Public Investment Fund (PIF), which manages more than \$700 billion in assets, has rocketed the country to major-player status in world of sport over a few short years.

Developing talent is a longer-term project not easily accelerated by financial muscle, and Saudi Arabia will need more than the 33 athletes it sent to the Tokyo Olympics if it wants to host the Summer Games.

"Naturalisation is an issue that is ultimately subject to circumstances and the stage you have reached," said Abdulaziz Albaqous, director of corporate communications and international relations at the Saudi



Taekwondo athlete Donia Abu Talib became the first Saudi Arabian woman to qualify for the Olympics earlier this year

Olympic Committee.

"But we prefer to invest in the future, in the generation that already exists to produce champions through a successful sports system," he added.

This year, taekwondo athlete Donia Abu Talib became the first Saudi woman to qualify for the

Olympics rather than be granted a spot through regional or IOC quotas.

"The qualification of a Saudi athlete shortly after activating women's sports project in the kingdom is a great indicator of the competitiveness of sports in Saudi Arabia," Albaqous said.



Royal Challengers Bengaluru players celebrate their victory against Chennai Super Kings

WIN OR BUST

Bengaluru eye title after coming back from the dead to make playoffs

Bengaluru, India - Royal Challengers Bengaluru had finally earned themselves a moment. They had spent the better part of the last four weeks knowing they could not make even a single mistake. Now they could breathe. But after working so hard, day in, day out, trying to be absolutely perfect, the realisation that it had actually been worth it didn't just bring relief. It brought - as it should have - unmitigated joy.

Yash Dayal produced a dot ball on 19.5 to end even a mathematical possibility of defeat and simply leapt into the arms of his nearest teammates, which were Dinesh Karthik and Mohammed Siraj, behind the stumps.

Into the playoffs from 10th place; from two points after eight games. No team had ever made

it from just two points after eight games. At that exact point in time, they needed the release more than they needed a handshake with MS Dhoni.

This was the reality RCB were working towards but also one they probably couldn't spend too much time thinking about. Their focus had to be narrow. On the next game. Only on the next game. Essentially, they were trying to build a complicated jigsaw puzzle, after coming in late, and the only way they were going to do it, even though they were always up against it, was piece by piece. It took until the last second for the picture to finally emerge and when it did, when they realised what they had accomplished, RCB set their discipline aside and celebrated.

Faf du Plessis, who confessed

TODAYS MATCH

ELIMINATOR

6 PM



RAJASTHAN ROYALS VS ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU

a certain amount of helplessness because of the lack of cutting edge in the bowling attack, needed to conjure one. He turned to Swapnil Singh, who seems rather in tune with what batters like to do in T20s, and insists on giving them the opposite. He has six wickets from 13 overs

at an economy rate of 8.76. Du Plessis turned to Lockie Ferguson, who recovered from two difficult outings against the two most dangerous batting units this IPL to string figures of 2 for 29, 2 for 23 and 1 for 39. He turned to Yash Dayal, who went for 50 twice in two nights and then turned up against Sunrisers Hyderabad with 1 for 18 from three overs. He turned and they responded. Their fortunes turned and they went wild.

Virat Kohli, who had already learnt how to be prolific had to learn how to be prolific while also taking risks. He welcomed the moment of their qualification with hip thrusts and double fist pumps. Nobody does catharsis quite like him. Only he probably needn't have turned around and sprayed at the crowd behind

him. And the RCB fans needn't have taunted their CSK counterparts as they were leaving the ground. Going overboard celebrating victory is fine. Going overboard celebrating the opposition's defeat is less so.

Nine wickets and 24 balls remaining. Four wickets and 34 balls remaining. Sixty runs. Forty runs. And finally 27 runs. These aren't margins of victory. They're declarations. They're dying light suddenly deciding to go supernova. RCB are irresistible when they're in this mood. In fact, there's reason to compare them to one of the best in the world. They certainly do the Galacticos part right.

Rajasthan Royals meanwhile, have lost four in four after winning eight of nine. ESPNcricinfo



Mitchell Starc (C) of Kolkata Knight Riders celebrates with teammates after casting Travis Head of Sunrisers Hyderabad on Tuesday. Starc took 3-34 as Kolkata dismissed Hyderabad for 159

Gambhir: Creating early hype around young India players will backfire

Kolkata, India - Gautam Gambhir has said that "creating hype" around young Indian players based on specific criteria such as bowling speeds can "backfire" and "deviate" them from hard work. The Kolkata Knight Riders mentor, who's also one of the frontrunners to take up the India coach job, said team selection in T20s should be based on IPL performances but not solely on batting averages or bowling speeds.

"In India we start creating so much of hype with these young cricketers coming through," Gambhir said on R Ashwin's YouTube channel. "Everyone gets excited if someone is bowling 150 clicks. The point is you need to look at the conditions as well. Going forward in T20 cricket, the average and runs will have no impact. It is the strike rate, when you select a batter, and when you have to select a bowler, it is the kind of tough overs he can bowl. That will be the discussion that will happen in next two or three years."



Gautam Gambhir

"We keep talking about the amount of runs and averages, and all that stuff, someone bowling 150s. Sometimes when you go in conditions like West Indies or Bangladesh, you don't need someone bowling 150. You need someone who bowls cutters as well. That is where the vision lies with the selectors. Sometimes you pick raw talent. But creating so much hype after two or three games, we need to have a balanced approach. "The graph goes [up and down] in India, and it is not

good for a young player. That is where the experts and commentators need to be balanced when it comes to these young players. It is easy for them to get deviated from the hard work and the good things they are doing. Because suddenly when you start talking about a young player doing well, it can backfire for them."

Gambhir emphasised the importance of domestic cricket and added that IPL performances shouldn't influence selection for red-ball cricket.

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In 2022, a pair of Celine sunglasses owned by Joan Didion sold for US\$27,000, in 2023 Levi's once worn by Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain fetched US\$412,750. Last month, Elton John's diamond-encrusted, leopard-print Rolex sold for US\$176,400...Those sums, however, are paltry when compared to the sale of Princess Diana's black sheep sweater, which went for US\$1.14mn last year.

Fashion items, from the sets of TV, film and even commercials can also garner high prices. This year alone, the so-called 'ludicrously capacious' Burberry bag from 'Succession' sold for US\$18,750, the suit Nicole Kidman wore in her viral AMC Theatres ad went for US\$9,525. An auction of costumes and props from The Crown brought in a collective US\$2.1 million.

Over the past decade, fashion has become more of a priority for top auction houses such as Sotheby's, Bonhams and Christie's, playing a key role in their strategy to attract a new generation of customers who can place their bids online.

"Now as long as you have the money — and you have to have the money — anyone can participate," said Lucy Bishop, Sotheby's handbags and fashion specialist.

While selling prices are widely publicised, auction houses maintain something akin to attorney-client privilege when it comes to the identities of their bidders.

Those buyers typically fall into a few buckets - museums and institutions, private collectors, vintage dealers and super fans. Some make their purchases with the hope of a significant return on their investment, for others, that possibility is just a bonus. Most trace their desire to own a piece to some long-held passion - the rare item is only part of the allure.

The more significant the item, the more the pool of potential buyers shrinks. "This world is a very exclusive club where those in the know really know," said Bishop.

The most historically important pieces - whether because of their tie to a particular designer, era in fashion history or because they were worn by the likes of figures such as Audrey Hepburn or Princess Diana - are usually scooped up by institutions like London's Victoria & Albert Museum or New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. Even if they're bought by private collectors, they still may end up in a museum display - on loan.

Celebrities themselves often do the buying - Lady Gaga and Kim Kardashian have bought Michael Jackson's clothing, for example. They help publicise their purchases, too - actress Laverne Cox is known to sport her own Mugler collection on the red carpet. In fact, much of the archival fashion seen on stars today has passed through auction.

"Fashion auctions have been Hollywood stylists' best kept secret for a few decades but that secret is now definitely out," said Bishop. People who pursue iconic items - celebrity-owned or not - do it out of passion.

"All it takes is a certain attachment to a specific designer," said Shannon Hoey, a vintage fashion dealer whose expansive archive was largely acquired through auctions. Hoey works

BIG BIDS

with designers on references for their collections and stylists to place pieces on the red carpet, in editorials and on the big screen.

For others, it's a connection to a notable public figure or cultural asset. Because those items often sell at mark-up — a 2019 Lady Dior handbag carried by Elizabeth Debicki as Princess Diana in *The Crown* went for upwards of US\$12,000 rather than the typical US\$4,000 retail price — it's fans, not fashion purists, who usually do the purchasing, said Meg Randell, head of fashion and handbags at Bonhams.

Leigh Anne Clark - a Dallas-based Valentino, Saint Laurent and Chanel shopper - snagged long-time *Vogue* editor Andre Leon Talley's Birkin at Christie's last year.

"It probably sat next to Anna Wintour on a plane going somewhere cool for a shoot I probably looked at in the magazine," said Clark. "It feels like I understood a part of (Talley), or



Wearing vintage Mugler, Laverne Cox poses on the red carpet at the 2024 People's Choice Awards

THERE'S A LOT OF TALK ABOUT LUXURY'S RISING PRICES, BUT IT'S AT AUCTIONS THAT FASHION IS SELLING FAST FOR WHOPPING SUMS. 'THIS WORLD IS A VERY EXCLUSIVE CLUB WHERE THOSE IN THE KNOW REALLY KNOW,' SAYS SOTHEBY'S LUCY BISHOP



if he had known me he would've understood part of me."

She plans to display it in a closet, rather than use it regularly.

A circa 1990 personalised Hermès Birkin with gold hardware details, from Andre Leon Talley's collection, is show at Christie's in Palm Beach, Florida on January 17, 2023.

California-based teacher Renae Plant, meanwhile, has acquired 89



Princess Diana's iconic black sheep jumper on display at Sotheby's in London on July 17, 2023

Princess Diana pieces — including the Versace dress that featured on the November 1997 cover of Harper's Bazaar as the magazine paid tribute to Diana after her death in Paris, which she acquired in 2015 for US\$200,000. Her love for the late royal began in childhood, when she shook Diana's hand during the royal's 1983 visit to Australia.

The potential for big returns attracted a new sort of fashion buyer to auctions — those who look at the category as an investment. Those buyers are particularly interested in celebrity-linked pieces, which attract press attention, a wide range of buyers and often higher valuations.

When an item is attached to a hit film, it usually makes it easier to sell. Hoey, for example, placed the taxidermy bird Carrie Bradshaw wore to her would-be wedding in the *Sex and the City* movie, and then sold it at Sotheby's for US\$25,400 in 2023.

Meanwhile, the next round of

big ticket items are always being minted — on stages and behind the scenes. Whispers about who will get their hands on the fashions from the *Barbie* film are already swirling, said Martin Nolan, executive director of Julien's Auctions, which focuses on celebrity-owned items and memorabilia.

(Courtesy: cnn.com)



Aishwarya Rai

CANNES 2024

From photo-calls to world premieres, the Cannes Film Festival 2024 red carpet offers all sorts of style as stars descend on the French Riviera for the international film festival

All things bright and beautiful



Demi Moore

The beckoning sandy beaches, luxurious hotels, and cultural bonhomie of Cannes, during the Cannes Film Festival 2024, transforms the city into an international hub with a passion for fashion on all rungs of society.

This year, the Cannes Film Festival 2024 boasts a packed slate with a number of highly anticipated premieres sure to draw actors (in their best red-carpet looks, of course) from around the world to the Croisette.

Yorgos Lanthimos's *Kinds of Kindness*, which had its world premiere at Cannes on May 17 is one film to watch out for. The anthology film stars Emma Stone, Joe Alwyn, Margaret Qualley, Hunter Schafer, Jesse Plemons, Hong Chau, Willem Dafoe, and Mamoudou Athie - a

talented cast whose members are no strangers to award-worthy fashion.

But before that, George Miller's *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* (the prequel to *Mad Max: Fury Road*, which screened out-of-competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 2015) had its premiere on May 15. Anya Taylor-Joy's press-tour style featured indelible standouts like a metal Balmain minidress and a spiked head-dress from Paco Rabanne.

Elsewhere on the Croisette, Francis Ford Coppola's *Megalopolis*, the 85-year-old director's self-financed passion project about an architect who wants to rebuild New York City as a utopia after a catastrophe, premiered on May 16. The cast of the retro-futurist epic includes Adam Driver, Nathalie Emmanuel, Gian-



Cate Blanchett

carlo Esposito, Aubrey Plaza, Shia LaBeouf, Dustin Hoffman, Jon Voight, Laurence Fishburne, Chloe Fineman, Kathryn Hunter, Grace Vander-Waal, James Remar, Talia Shire, and Jason Schwartzman.

The 77th annual Cannes Film Festival began Tuesday, May 14, and runs through Saturday, May 25. See all the best fashion, outfits, ensembles, and accessories from the Cannes Film Festival 2024 red carpet and beyond here.

This year, *Barbie* director Greta Gerwig, *Killers of the Flower Moon* breakout star Lily Gladstone and *James Bond* actor Eva Green are among the jury members, along with

Spanish director Juan Antonion Bayon and Turkish screenwriter Ebru Ceylan.

The south of France is packed to the hilt with film's fashion darlings, many of whom have been out in full force. Demi Moore was seen in a sculptural Schiaparelli gown, Hunter Schafer in a mesmerising liquid satin Armani Privé frock and Naomi Campbell enjoying a full circle moment in vintage shimmering Chanel gown she first wore on the runway in 1996.

The festival is known to be a well-documented history of standout sartorial moments of which fashion is a highlight, and it's clear this year is no exception. Here are some of the celebrity styles on display:

(Inputs from: cnn.com, vanity fair.com)



Julianne Moore



Sienna Miller



Rosie-Huntington



Greta Gerwig