

Air traffic up 106% of pre-pandemic levels

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has collaborated with over 70 entities to prepare the National Civil Aviation Strategy 2040, which is expected to be launched mid-year.

Naif bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of CAA, made the announcement in an interview with Oman TV, emphasising that the strategy is set to reinforce the sultanate's strategic aviation position, leveraging its geographical advantage as a link between East and West. "A significant focus of the strategy is augmentation of air cargo facilities at Muscat and Salalah airports, which are envisioned to become pivotal hubs in the region," he said.

Abri informed that the aviation sector in Oman has begun to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic; air traffic in the sultanate increased 106% in 2023 compared to 2019. "More than 465,000 aircraft crossed the sultanate's airspace in 2023, averaging about 1,800 aircraft per day, while Muscat International Airport handled over 12.5mn passengers last year."

He added that CAA earned RO110mn in revenues in 2023, making it one of the largest government contributors to the state treasury. "The aviation strategy aims to ensure the financial sustainability of the authority."

Abri revealed that there are



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NAIF AL ABRI

plans to convert the old Muscat International Airport into an aviation museum in the near future.

Oman-Saudi civil aviation collaboration

CAA held a meeting with the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Muscat on Thursday to boost bilateral relations and enhance regional and international cooperation in civil aviation.

The two sides discussed opportunities to increase air transport rights and ways to optimally activate the Saudi and Omani airspaces to raise their efficiency and capacity in line with the steady growth in air traffic regionally and globally.

This aligns with the two side's efforts directed at exploring a joint tourism calendar and facilitating tourism between the two countries.

Meteorology sector

Abri also informed that the authority is not currently considering privatisation of the meteorology sector, as the department is considered a regional centre.

The authority also launched an initiative called Friends of Meteorology last year for amateur meteorologists. Its programme aims to facilitate meetings and training sessions focused on weather forecasting.

CAA held the first gathering of weather enthusiasts in 2023 in which 150 participated. It was aimed to help improve weather enthusiasts' skills and support their growth in this field.

The authority launched its new identity and also that of the Civil Aviation Club last week.

Call for emergency conference to establish Palestinian State

Oxford, UK - H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, has stated that the creation of a Palestinian State at the earliest is essential to save the Palestinian people from destitution, annihilation and death.

In a speech in Oxford in the United Kingdom on Thursday, H E Sayyid Badr said an emergency international conference must be convened urgently to agree on arrangements for implementing a two-state solution.

"The creation of a Palestinian State is an existential necessity," he said. "It is quite clear that only with the rights that sovereignty confers can the Palestinian people even hope to survive. Without a state, they are condemned to a perpetual threat of destitution, annihilation and death."

His comments were made in an hour-long lecture - titled 'Talking to Anyone for the Good of Everyone' - delivered at Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

H E Sayyid Badr also said representatives of Hamas must be included in the emergency international conference to fast-track the establishment of a Palestinian State.

"We have to deal with the reality we inhabit. And that reality includes Hamas. The international conference will have to include them too. Hamas cannot be eradicated. So, if there is ever to be peace, the peacemakers will have to find a way to talk to them. And to listen.

"This will require a change in thinking, and the development of forms of practical diplomacy that are suitable for a multipolar world in which we all have to learn to talk to anyone, for the good of everyone.

"Far too many talk mainly to their friends, and make it a point of principle to refuse to talk to those people they define as their enemies. Confronted with the horrifying human catastrophe in Gaza, there's a refusal to do the one thing that might open up a pathway to peace," H E Sayyid Badr elaborated.

He argued that new thinking is needed to adapt to the realities of the modern multipolar world. "History has moved on faster than we

have. We need to catch up with history."

Calling for an end to the "poisonous sectarian logic that defines identity in religious terms", he said it is time for the people of the Middle East "to see ourselves (and to be seen) as people with complex social and cultural identities, rather than defined entirely in terms of religious affiliations".

He added, "I am not saying that the people represented in Western media as the bad guys are really the good guys. That's just the same kind of binary thinking. What I am saying is that bad and good just aren't helpful categories when trying to make sense of a complex and dynamic situation and act responsibly within it. There are all kinds of different players with different interests and different perspectives. Only if you talk to them and listen to them, can you find out what their interests and perspectives really are and start to work out how to work with them. This has to be the basis on which we halt the catastrophe in Palestine.

And it has to be the basis for diplomacy in a multipolar world."

H E Sayyid Badr concluded his lecture with a series of practical proposals. He said the emergency international conference charged with agreeing arrangements for Palestinian statehood must be convened by

leaders of a number of countries properly representative of the global majority.

"I am concerned that the present crisis is deepening divisions between the Global South and the Global North. The last thing we need is to construct another false global division of the kind we suffered during the Cold War."

He also called for reform of the United Nations Security Council, arguing that its voting structure is a relic of the Cold War. "It is not properly multilateral. The veto is part of a zero-sum logic and should be removed," he said.

Following the lecture, H E Sayyid Badr was the guest of honour at a dinner in the centre's Oman Hall, made possible by a generous gift from the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

The lecture and dinner were attended by diplomats, academics and distinguished foreign policy experts.



H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi

School holiday on Feb 25 for Teacher's Day

Muscat - Ministry of Education has declared Sunday, February 25 a holiday for all educational institutions, including public and private schools in celebration of Omani Teacher's Day.

This announcement follows Royal Orders issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik designating February 24 as a day off for educators and administrative staff in the educational sector.

The ministry further stated that if February 24 falls on a weekend or any scheduled day off, the holiday will be observed on an alternative day. Consequently, February 25 has been chosen as the holiday this year.

AL BASHAYER CAMEL FESTIVAL CONCLUDES



The seventh annual Al Bashayer Arabian Camel Festival ended on Saturday in Adam under the patronage of Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan. The six-day festival saw wide participation of camel owners and groomers from Oman and other GCC states. The Al Bashayer Gold Sword was presented to the owner of the horse Samha from UAE (ONA)

UN calls for investigation into Navalny's death

Washington, US - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is "shocked" by the death of Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny and calls for a "full, credible and transparent investigation," said his spokesman on Friday.

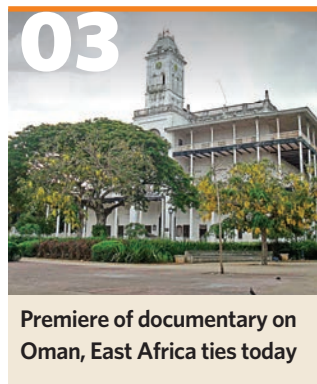
"The Secretary-General is shocked by the reported death and detention of opposition figure Alexei Navalny," Stéphane Dujarric told reporters.

The Russian penitentiary service said on Friday that Navalny had died in a prison colony where he was serving his sentence. The service said in a statement that Navalny lost consciousness after a walk in the Arctic Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District, where the colony is located.

Navalny's team has claimed his body is purposely being withheld by the Russian government.

His spokesperson, Kira Yarmysh, told the BBC, "We know for sure that it wasn't just a death; it was a murder. They are trying to cover traces. This is why they are not giving the body to his family and this is why they are just hiding him from them."

Kira said Navalny's mother and lawyer went to the morgue where officials said his body was being kept, but it was not there. Agencies



Premiere of documentary on Oman, East Africa ties today



That sinking feeling... Titanic: The Exhibition

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a move towards realising its urban and real estate ambitions, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) has unveiled plans for a new tourism city project, Al High, nestled in the scenic Western Hajar mountains.

This was announced at a media briefing held by the ministry on Wednesday, underscoring the government's commitment to bolstering tourism and urban growth.

The Al High project is set to feature a host of attractions, including a dedicated tourism city, a hotel, museum, cable car and an adventure centre. The initiative is part of a broader strategy

The Al High project is set to feature a host of attractions, including a hotel, museum, cable car and an adventure centre

for 2024, which includes about 130 initiatives aimed at enhancing competencies, accelerating digital transformation, improving governance and legislation, and fostering a unique identity and communication framework.

Among other notable initiatives is the design phase of the Al Khuwair Downtown project and selection of nine real estate de-



velopers for Sultan Haitham City. In the context of MHUP's agenda in urban planning, plans are in place to implement structural blueprints for Greater Muscat City and 14 other cities, including Greater Sohar, Greater Salalah and Greater Nizwa. Urban renewal efforts are set to be launched in five governorates, with Masirah and North Batinah

already having detailed plans approved.

The ministry has laid out plans to build housing projects in various locations, including mountainous regions and islands, aimed at delivering modern housing units and infrastructure. Projects in the pipeline include construction of 1,200 housing units for the housing assistance

programme and signing of 800 usufruct contracts through the Tatweer platform.

At the briefing, H E Dr Khalfan bin Saeed al Shuali, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, highlighted the ministry's plans to issue the Urban Planning Law and its executive regulations, which will encompass policies regulating real estate valuation and bro-

kerage, along with provisions of laws related to expropriation, housing and external documentation of the real estate registry.

MHUP's social housing programme has significantly benefited the community, assisting 1,382 families and marking a 6% increase in the total value of real estate transactions, reaching RO2.6bn in 2023. Moreover, the distribution of over 25,000 plots of land through various programmes has benefited thousands of citizens.

Projects under the Sorouh programme have played a crucial role in developing housing units in different regions. MHUP's Amlak and Tatweer platforms have successfully completed over 133,000 transactions and served more than 1,500 users.

Public invited to suggest names for Sultan Haitham City suspension bridge

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said has invited the public to suggest names for a suspension bridge proposed in Sultan Haitham City.

The announcement was made at a ceremony held on Wednesday to sign several agreements dealing with engineering consulting services, real estate development, technical cooperation and layout projects for Sultan Haitham



City.

Gracing the ceremony, H H Sayyid Theyazin stated that naming the bridge in Sultan Haitham City will be left to members of the Omani community.

The 500m bridge will be constructed in the middle of a central park in the city over a wadi.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, H H Sayyid Theyazin received a model of the iconic bridge being built in Sultan Haitham City as a gift.

Al Khuwair Downtown project

The ceremony also witnessed signing of an agreement for the Al Khuwair Downtown project. The agreement with Zaha Hadid and CBRE entails drafting a detailed plan and engineering designs for the city centre and to develop a waterfront.

Zaha Hadid will prepare an integrated plan for Al Khuwair Downtown featuring 40 towers of 35 to 40 floors.

An initial cooperation agree-

ment to develop a mixed-use tower in Al Khuwair Downtown was also signed with Al Tawoos Company.

Additionally, at the ceremony the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning announced that a 4km street within Sultan Haitham City will be named Singapore Street. It will be characterised by a large number of trees as it passes the College of Advanced Technology and courses through the central park and wadi.

Sayyid Badr meets CEO of BMW to explore investment opportunities

Munich, Germany - H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, met Oliver Zipse, CEO of German automobile manufacturer BMW, on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference on Friday.

They discussed opportunities for partnership and cooperation in the transport sector, the exchange of manufacturing and technological knowledge and ways to develop smart infrastructure.

The Foreign Minister expressed his appreciation for the strong and friendly relations between Oman and Germany and the importance of developing economic cooperation and knowledge exchange in various fields.

Zipse said BMW is eager to expand its global presence and enhance cooperation with leading companies and governments in the automotive and logistics sectors, and that it is ready to explore investment opportunities in Oman and provide its expertise and advanced technologies in the field of luxury and sustainable cars.

The meeting came in the context of Oman's efforts to enhance economic cooperation with various countries to develop the



The meeting came in the context of Oman's efforts to enhance economic cooperation with various countries to develop the industrial sector

industrial sector.

FM meets Saudi, Kuwaiti counterparts

H E Sayyid Badr met Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.

The ministers discussed relations between Oman and Saudi

Arabia and ways to enhance and support these, and the latest regional developments, besides exchanging views on international issues of common interest.

H E Sayyid Badr also met Abdullah Ali al Yahya, Foreign Minister of Kuwait. The meeting saw an exchange of views on issues of regional and global concern, most notably the Palestinian issue and

the ongoing Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip.

The meeting was attended by H E Maitha Saif al Mahrouqi, Oman's Ambassador to Germany, as well as Omani and Kuwait officials.

Additionally, H E Sayyid Badr met Jassem Mohamed al Budaïwi, Secretary-General of Gulf Cooperation Council, and discussed the progress of the GCC in a number of areas of joint Gulf action. They deliberated on the situation in the region, agreeing to support the peace process and efforts to immediately stop Israel's war in the Gaza Strip.

Premiere of documentary on Oman, East Africa ties today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Information, represented by Nizwa Magazine, will premiere the documentary *House of Wonders* at House of Musical Arts in Royal Opera House Muscat on Sunday.

A three-episode series - each of 50 minutes - it documents Oman's presence in Zanzibar and East Africa, in addition to focusing on a book on the role of Omani culture in this area.

Produced in three languages - Arabic, English and Swahili - the documentary is a Omani-German coproduction investigating the historical relations between Oman and East Africa while taking the arrival of European colonial powers into account.

Narrated by Beit al Ajaib (House of Wonders) as a witness to this relationship, the films follow the biographies of three pivotal characters covering a span of 150 years. They are *Episode 1: A Trader's Empire - Sayyid Said bin Sultan*; *Episode 2: The Age of Caravans - Tippu Tip*; and *Episode 3: The Voice of Mombasa - Mubarak al Hinawy*.

Local experts as well as international scholars contribute to a multi-perspective approach



seeking to bridge the differences that resulted from fractured identities on all sides.

The documentary highlights the pioneering contribution of Omanis in the political, commercial, social and cultural fields, represented by the spread of Islam and Arab culture in East Africa.

The documentary was filmed in various locations around the world, including Zanzibar, several African, Asian, European and American locations, besides Oman.

Beit al Ajaib is a landmark in Stone Town, Zanzibar. It is the largest and tallest building of

Stone Town occupying a prominent place facing the Forodhani Gardens on the old town's seafloor in Mizingani Road.

The palace was built in 1883 for Barghash bin Said, second Sultan of Zanzibar. It was intended as a ceremonial palace and official reception hall, celebrating modernity, and named 'House of Wonders' because it was the first building in Zanzibar to have electricity, and also the first building in East Africa to have an elevator.

On December 25, 2020, a section of the iconic structure collapsed with the tragic loss of two lives.

Al Nawadr Festival to celebrate Omani goats, sheep

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR), in collaboration with Oman Flour Mills and Oman India Fertiliser Company (OMIFCO), will organise an event called Al Nawadr Festival of Omani goats and sheep. Scheduled for March 1 to 3 in Barka, the festival aims to bolster the livestock sector in the sultanate.

A key feature of the festival is a competition to identify the best goats and sheep within breeds, offering financial rewards to winners - RO500, RO300, and RO200 for the first, second and



third places, respectively.

An MAFWR official highlighted the festival's objectives: "The event is designed to de-

velop, diversify and expand Omani goat and sheep breeds, contributing towards achieving self-sufficiency in meat produc-

tion."

The festival also seeks to encourage investment in the sultanate's food security projects, and will include an array of activities, such as exhibitions showcasing unique local and international goat and sheep breeds, breed beauty contests, and stalls featuring leather and wool products.

The event will also host exhibitions of the sponsors of the festival and companies engaged in the livestock sector. Attendees can look forward to guided activities, mobile veterinary services and live performances during the festival.

Participants in the breed beauty contest must meet specific criteria set by the ministry. They should be Omani nationals with experience in goat raising and provide a photograph of the animal they wish to enter. To be eligible, animals must be aged between one and five years and belong to one of the following breeds: mountain goats, Batinah goats, Dhofari goats, Jabal Akhdar goats, desert goats or local sheep.

In 2022, MAFWR launched a project to further genetic diversity of Omani goats. This initiative is focused on establishing small and medium enterprises for mountain goat breeding in North Sharqiyah and Dakhliyah, targeting specific wilayats to enhance local breeding capabilities.

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Bank credit grows 4.3% to RO30.4bn in 2023; deposits surge 12.4% to RO29bn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's banking sector recorded a modest credit growth of 4.3% last year but deposits sharply jumped by more than 12% year-on-year in 2023, the latest data from the Central Bank of Oman showed.

Total outstanding credit extended by the banking sector (both conventional and Islamic banks) grew 4.3% to RO30.4bn at the end of December 2023 against the same month of the previous year, the CBO said in its monthly statistical bulletin.

Of the total outstanding credit, bank credit to the private sector demonstrated a growth of 4.7% year-on-year to reach RO25.5bn. Household sector received the highest share of the total private sector credit at approximately 45.2% at end-December 2023, followed by non-financial corporations at 45%. The share of financial corporations was 6.0% in private sector credit, while other sectors received the remaining 3.8% of total private sector credit as at end-December 2023.

Conventional banks' total outstanding credit grew 2.5% year-on-year in December 2023. While conventional banks' credit to the private sec-



While conventional banks' total outstanding credit grew by 2.5% year-on-year in December 2023, Islamic banking entities provided financing worth RO6bn at the end of December 2023, recording a robust growth of 11.8%

tor increased 2.9% to RO20bn, their overall investments in securities increased by 16.6% to RO5bn, the CBO data showed.

Banks' investment in government development bonds decreased by 12.9% year-on-year to RO1.9bn in December 2023, while their investments in foreign securities dramatically rose

by 98% to RO1.7bn over the same period.

Deposits surge

In contrast to a modest credit growth last year, total banking sector deposits in Oman sharply grew by 12.4% to RO29.1bn at the end of December 2023 from RO25.9bn recorded a year ago.

Total private sector deposits rose by 10.6% to RO19.2bn. In terms of sector-wise composition of private sector deposits, the biggest contribution was from household deposits at 49.3%, followed by non-financial corporations at 32.4%, financial corporations at 15.4% and other sectors at 2.9%.

Aggregate deposits held with the conventional banks increased by 12.2% year-on-year to RO23.5bn at end-December 2023.

Government deposits with conventional banks witnessed an increase of 2.5% at RO5bn, and deposits of public enter-

prises increased by 57.8% to RO2.2bn. On the other hand, private sector deposits, which accounted for 66.2% of total deposits with conventional banks, increased by 9.5% as of December 2023 to reach RO15.6bn.

As per the CBO data, the weighted average interest rate on Omani rial deposits with conventional banks witnessed an increase from 1.993% at end-December 2022 to 2.636% at end-December 2023. The weighted average Omani rial lending rate decreased from 5.379% to 5.513% over the same period.

Meanwhile, the overnight Omani rial domestic inter-bank lending rate rose to 5.417% in December 2023 from 4.271% a year ago. This increase in interest rates, as per the CBO, is an outcome of the increase in the average repo rate for liquidity injection by the CBO to 6.00% from 4.774% a year ago, moving with US Federal Reserve.

Islamic assets grow 14.7%

Oman's Islamic banking sector continued to witness a robust growth in 2023, recording double digit growth in both credit and deposits.

Total assets of Islamic banks and windows increased by 14.7% on a year-on-year basis to reach RO7.3bn at the end of December 2023 as compared to RO6.4bn at the end of December 2022. Islamic assets now constitute about 17.5% of the total banking system assets in Oman as of the end-December 2023.

Islamic banking entities provided financing worth RO6bn at the end of December 2023, recording a growth of 11.8% over that a year ago. Total deposits held with Islamic banks and windows increased by 12.8% to RO5.5bn at the end of last year against RO4.9bn recorded in December 2022.

CBO releases Economic Stability Report 2023

Muscat - As part of its efforts to increase transparency and public disclosure in the Omani banking sector, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) last week released its highly anticipated Macroeconomic Stability Report for the year 2023.

The report meticulously analyses the economic landscape using the latest available data, shedding light on recent macroeconomic developments within Oman while emphasising strengths, weaknesses, and potential risks.

The report highlights a notable upswing in both real and nominal GDP during 2022, primarily attributed to the surge in oil prices. This surge not only spurred growth in both oil and non-oil sectors in an unprecedented manner but also bolstered control over public financial conditions, resulting in a surplus in the public finance balance.

The report indicates a shift in the current account balance to a surplus in 2022, propelled by an improvement in the trade balance. Additionally, the sovereign ratings upgrade by major rating agencies throughout the year signifies a decrease in perceived systemic risks, marking a testament to the resilience and stability of Oman's economic foundations.

OPEC Fund commits \$27bn for 4,000 development projects

Dubai, UAE - The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) has committed a \$27bn to support 4,000 development projects in over 125 countries since its inception, according to Dr Abdulhamid Alkhalifa, OFID Director-General.

In 2023, OFID's funding reached a record \$1.7bn through 55 projects worldwide, bolstering initiatives promoting social and economic resilience and sustainable growth.

"The UAE has played a significant role in supporting the fund since its establishment in 1976, contributing as an OPEC member state in the fund's initiatives and projects aimed at promoting sustainable development globally," Alkhalifa said in a statement to the Emirates News Agency (WAM) during the World Governments Summit (WGS) last week.

The OPEC Fund for International Development, founded in 1976, is a multilateral development finance institution. Its membership comprises 12 countries: the UAE, Algeria,



Dr Abdulhamid Alkhalifa

Regarding the role of the World Governments Summit in stimulating international cooperation and envisioning the future of governments and governmental work, the OFID Director-General said that the summit seeks to enhance international cooperation, serving as an ideal platform to enhance partnerships by bringing together international organisations, decision-makers, experts, and innovators.

Ecuador, Gabon, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.

The organisation collaborates with the global community to stimulate economic growth and social progress in low- and middle-income countries worldwide.

Alkhalifa lauded the UAE's unwavering commitment to mobilising significant funding and its focus on energy transition aligns with efforts to support sustainable development and other strategic alliances.

Underscoring the WGS' crucial role in fostering international cooperation and envisioning the future of governance, Alkhalifa lauded the platform's ability to convene international organisations, decision-makers, experts, and innovators to strengthen partnerships.

He recognised the summit's immense value in facilitating discussions on governmental processes, policies, and future trends, aiming for concerted efforts towards achieving comprehensive and sustainable development.

Samail Industrial City attracts 24 new investment projects in 2023

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Samail Industrial City, managed by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), witnessed substantial progress in its performance indicators throughout 2023.

The city last year saw successful attraction and localisation of 24 new projects, bringing the total number of projects to 157 and total investment surpassing RO155mn.

The projects in the industrial city are spread over an area exceeding 2.2mn sqm, out of the total area of the industrial city, which exceeds 11mn sqm.

Eng Yasser bin Ibrahim al Ajmi, Director-General of Samail Industrial City, highlighted Madayn's ongoing efforts in implementing key projects within the industrial hub. Notable among these is the water connection project with Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company.

Ajmi also emphasised the array of investment opportunities in the industrial city, including the management and operation of



The new projects in the Samail Industrial City are spread over an area exceeding 2.2mn sqm

the medical fitness examination center, aimed at delivering top-tier healthcare services to the workforce in Samail Industrial City and the surrounding population.

The prime location of the center facilitates easy access, thanks

to its proximity to the entrance gate and the highway. The center covers an area of 1,100sqm and comprises various facilities, including laboratories, clinics, X-ray facilities, offices, among others.

Ajmi also informed of an investment opportunity to develop, operate and manage a residential city for the workforce on a 100,000sqm area within Samail Industrial City.

Additionally, Ajmi highlighted that Madayn has divided the industrial city into several sectors. Notably, the food sector currently boasts an occupancy rate exceeding 17%, while the logistics

sector surpasses 34%. The construction materials sector sees an occupancy rate of over 26%, while the steel and wood sector shows remarkable demand with an occupancy rate exceeding 60%. The plastic and paper sector registers a high occupancy rate of over 85%, the marble sector stands at over 78%, and the space dedicated to the SMEs currently sees an occupancy rate exceeding 34%.

Significant investment opportunities are available in Samail Industrial City, each supported by preliminary feasibility studies. These opportunities encompass diverse sectors including dairy and juice production, date products manufacturing and packaging, breakfast cereal production, dolomite processing, water leakage prevention solutions, copper bars and sheets manufacturing, gypsum production, electrical conductors manufacturing, glossy ceramics production, HVAC equipment manufacturing, electrical switch manufacturing, marble product manufacturing, and prefabricated building production.

Oil prices hold steady amid economic concerns, Middle East tensions

Muscat - Oil prices saw marginal changes during last week as bearish US macroeconomic data countered escalating supply fears driven by the ongoing tensions in the Middle East.

Global benchmark Brent crude traded at \$82.11 per barrel on Friday, decreasing by around 0.09% relative to the closing price of \$82.19 a barrel a week ago.

US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$77.48 a barrel at the same time on Friday, for a rise of around 0.83% from last Friday's session

that closed at \$76.84 per barrel.

Oil markets started the week on a bearish sentiment over reports that Israel had conducted a 'series of strikes' on southern Gaza that have now concluded. However, worrisome reports from the region have continued throughout the week as Israel intensified attacks and Netanyahu rejected Hamas's offer of a three-stage plan, which constituted a major obstacle for efforts made by Egypt and Qatar to mediate a ceasefire.

The Yemeni Houthi group's attacks in the Red Sea also put upward pressure on prices.



The Houthis have been targeting cargo ships in the Red Sea owned or operated by Israeli

companies or those transporting goods to and from Israel in solidarity with Gaza, which has

been under an Israeli onslaught since October 7.

A coalition led by the US has conducted intermittent airstrikes since January 12 that have targeted 'Houthi locations' in parts of Yemen in response to the attacks in the Red Sea.

The US response has been occasionally met with counter-responses from the group.

Recent data from the US Commerce Department has sparked concerns about a shift in the Federal Reserve's approach to interest rates, as January's retail sales figures showed a significant downturn,

dropping 0.8% to \$700.3bn, a stark contrast to the anticipated 0.2% decline.

This unexpected downturn in consumer spending, a key driver of economic activity, has led to speculation that the Federal Reserve may delay any planned interest rate cuts.

Adding to the economic data mix, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported a surprising increase in crude oil inventories, with a jump of 12mn barrels to 439.4mn barrels last week.

Far exceeding analysts' forecasts of an 8.5mn-barrel rise,

the figures indicated a potential oversupply in the market to exert downward pressure on oil prices.

Furthermore, the International Energy Agency (IEA) released its oil market report, forecasting a continued supply glut into 2024.

According to the IEA, global oil demand is expected to increase by 1.2mn barrels per day to 103mn barrels per day this year. However, the global oil supply is projected to outpace demand, reaching 103.8mn barrels per day in 2024. Agencies



Enjoy the road with all-new Kia Seltos

Kia’s popular all-new Seltos SUV is making waves with its stylish design and impressive features and technology. The Seltos SUV is a perfect choice for those looking to make even the most routine journeys exciting.

The Seltos is designed with a long hood, a strong, character line on the front bumper, and sharp lines pressed into the bodywork. Adding to its eye-catching appeal is a diamond

pattern radiator grille garnish, body colour outside mirror, side repeater lamp in outside mirror, electric folding mirrors, 2-tone colour bumper, body colour door handles, halogen lamps, daytime running lights, front and rear fog lamp, roof rack and alloy wheel, a press release said.

The Seltos boldly takes you places with its power-packed 1.5ltr gasoline engine that dishes out 113 HP and which is paired

to a CVT transmission. To further elevate the driving experience, the Seltos is equipped with a Drive Mode Select system that lets drivers adapt the car to their preferred style or the road conditions. Drivers can choose from ‘Normal’, ‘Eco’ and ‘Sport’ mode.

The Eco mode is tuned to maximise vehicle range by using fuel-saving measures, while Sport mode increases responses from the steering and electric

motor to maximize the dynamic driving feel of the car. Normal mode provides a careful balance between the two.

The Seltos has an impressive interior equipped with a range of features to maximize convenience, connectivity and ease of use. They include power windows, driver’s seat height adjuster, split folding rear seats, auto AC, rear AC vent, steering audio control, rear view camera, 8” audio display and more.

In terms of safety, the Seltos SUV impresses on all fronts. The features include engine immobiliser, driver and front passenger airbags, anti-lock braking system, electronic stability program, tyre pressure monitoring system, keyless entry system and rear parking system.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers.



ahli islamic opens first Al Shumookh centre

Ahli Islamic officially inaugurated a brand-new Al Shumookh centre exclusively crafted to cater to its esteemed clientele under the patronage of H E Azzan Qasim al Busaidi - Undersecretary of Tourism at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in the presence of the bank’s officials.

Strategically located at Shatti Al Qurm in Muscat, this state-of-the-art centre embodies Ahli Islamic’s commitment to providing unparalleled banking services adhering to Sharia-compliant principles, offering a luxurious haven for its discerning patrons, a press release said.

Al Shumookh, Ahli Islamic’s bespoke offering, presents a comprehensive banking solution tailored for those seeking an extraordinary financial experience. It offers a range of exclusive products and services to enhance the everyday banking experience for the bank’s premium, private and wealth management clients. The meticulously designed Al Shumookh Centre integrates cutting-edge technology with top-tier products and services, epitomising a new era of exclusive banking.

Noora Sultan, AGM - head of Retail Banking at Ahli Islamic, said, “Innovation fuels progress, and the culmination of our efforts at the new Al Shumookh Centre

reflects our dedication to serving customer’s every need. Al Shumookh caters to financially astute, high-net-worth individuals, who seek prudent investment avenues. Our focus lies in providing tailored advice that safeguards and augments their hard-earned wealth within a comfortable and discreet setting. This falls within our strategic plans to enhance our presence in the country with newer branch networks and to meet everyday banking needs of our growing customer base with relevant and timely products.”

Al Shumookh offers a personalised relationship manager to address specific customer requirements. Exclusive branded cheque books and debit/credit cards, accompanied by discounts at select premium merchants, are among the privileges extended to Al Shumookh customers. Additionally, a 24x7 concierge service and complimentary chauffeur services further enhance the premium experience.

The segment distinguishes itself by offering redeemable pearl points, along with a remarkable 1% cash back on credit card expenditures. Moreover, customers gain access to over 1,000 airport lounges worldwide up to 12 times annually, coupled with comprehensive multi-travel insurance coverage.

BESTUNE B70 premium sedan offers peak performance



The mid-size sedan Bestune B70 impresses with its stunning design, cutting-edge technology, radar safety features and top-notch performance.

Available in 2 variants -

1.5Turbo engine and 2.0Turbo engine - the 1.5 Turbo engine delivers 165 HP and 258 torque paired with 7-Speed Dual Clutch Transmission whereas 2.0T engine produces 220 HP and 340

HP is mated with 6-Speed automatic transmission, a press release said.

In line with Bestune’s design ethos, the B70 features a hexagonal grille at the front, adorned

with the distinctive raindrop pattern. Its Y-shaped headlights incorporate downward-pointing, boomerang-style LED daytime running lights, and the lower bumper enhances the car’s



sporty appearance.

The B70 boasts a sloping roofline that lends it a coupe-like aesthetic, complemented by a straight waistline that accentuates the sedan’s streamlined look. Adding to its allure are the flush-mounted hidden door handles, which enhance the overall appeal of the Bestune B70.

The interior features a driver-oriented dashboard that enhances accessibility and overall

driving experience. A 12-inch display, comprising an LCD instrument panel linked to the central screen, showcases a newly designed user interface.

A spokesperson for GGS said, “The Bestune B70 luxury sedan makes an instant and lasting impression. This remarkable car distinguishes itself with its luxurious appointments, sumptuous interior and enjoyable driving experience.”

Al Maha offers new prize scheme

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company has launched its new petrol promotion from February 15 to April 1 to reward their loyal customers.

The draw promises a chance to win a range of exciting prizes, including 5g gold for 5 winners, 5 iPhone 15s for 5 winners, RO5 of free fuel for 20 winners, and one Jetour Dashing SUV car as the grand prize for one lucky winner, a press release said.

Customers can enter this promotion by informing and registering their phone number with the station’s staff while filling petrol. The promotion does not include non-fuel or diesel purchases. Each RO5 spent on petrol enables buyers to enter a raffle.

Indian School Muladha celebrates 33rd Annual Day

Indian School Muladha hosted its 33rd Annual Day celebration on February 15, bringing together students, parents, faculty, and esteemed guests in a vibrant showcase of cultural diversity and academic excellence.

The chief guest of the function was H E Abdullah Saeed al Saadi, member of parliament from Wilayat Musannah. The special guests included Sirajudeen Nhelat, director, Board of Directors, A Anilkumar, president of the School Management Committee, M T Musthafa, convenor, Dileep Kumar, treasurer and other distinguished guests, a press release said.

The ceremonial lighting of the lamp marked the auspicious beginning of the evening, while



Anilkumar’s warm welcome address set the tone for the festivities before the annual report of the school was presented by Parveen Kumar, principal.

Nhelat also addressed the gathering, emphasising the importance of education in shaping the future of the youth and promoting cultural harmony and

understanding.

After a prize distribution ceremony for varied toppers, teachers who have completed service ranging from 10 to 30

years were felicitated. This was followed by the release of the school newsletter AURORA and department bulletin SPEC-TRUM.

ISM class 12 graduation held

Indian School Muscat conducted its Annual Graduation Ceremony to honour the outgoing batch of Grade XII students February 3 in the school’s Multipurpose Hall.

Dr Maha Kobeil, Dean and CEO, Majan University, was the chief guest while the function was attended by members of the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman - Dr Syed Ziaur Rahman, vice president, School Management Committee, Sharafdeen Yoosaf, convenor, Mohammed Imran Khan, treasurer, Zulfikar Hussain Desai, co-convenor and Dr Subramanian Muthuraman, academic chair, School Management Committee - besides other esteemed guests.

The ceremony commenced with a fine rendition of the national anthems of Oman and India led by the school choir. This

was followed by the ceremonial lighting of the lamp, and an invocation dance, after which the Head Boy Annirudh Menon accorded a cordial welcome to the distinguished gathering.

The students had the privilege of receiving the mementoes from the chief guest and other dignitaries while the chief guest was presented with an artwork depicting ‘Power of Ambition and Freedom’ done by a class 9 student, Liya Reji.

Dr Kobeil reminded the students that challenges provide opportunities to grow. Hence, they should embrace the unknown with courage and let their passion guide them. She said, students should take time to appreciate the wonders of technology as it is the force that connects, empowers, transforms lives.

IntercityHotel Bawshar opens

The opening of the vibrant IntercityHotel Bawshar in Muscat marks Deutsche Hospitality's fourth IntercityHotel branded property in the Sultanate of Oman, and the sixth IntercityHotel branded property in the Middle East.

Situated in close proximity to the Mall of Oman, the hotel boasts 96 cozy guest rooms and state-of-the-art amenities that offer business and leisure travellers an urban and lively experience, a press release said.

Adorning the new CityNest design concept, each room category is designed with large floor-to-ceiling windows for abundant natural light, while the décor connects travellers to Oman's local heritage. It offers four room categories - the Deluxe Suite, Accessible King Room, Standard Twin Room, and Standard King Room, which include state-of-the-art amenities including fully equipped kitchenettes in the Deluxe Suites and more.

Siegfried Nierhaus, vice president Middle East, Africa, India and Tunisia at Deutsche Hospitality says, "At Deutsche Hospitality, our commitment to innovation and guest-centric design takes center stage, offering



a seamless blend of the next generation of IntercityHotels and cutting-edge technology. Focusing on the evolving needs of our discerning guests, IntercityHotels embody a harmonious fusion

of young and fresh aesthetics and unparalleled functionality.

"As part of our planned growth strategy and the successful opening of the IntercityHotels in Salalah, Nizwa and

Muscat, we are thrilled to introduce the fourth IntercityHotel branded hotel in the Sultanate of Oman, marking a significant milestone as we continue to grow our presence across the

Middle East. We look forward to welcoming guests to a new era of hospitality, where the future meets comfort, redefining their travel experience at IntercityHotels."

Administrative training programme underway



The Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Office, in partnership with the Legal Department and the Planning and Investment Department, organised a training programme on administrative concepts in Muscat last week. The programme, which began on February 13, continues till March 6.

The training program aims to familiarise employees in all administrative divisions of Muscat Governorate with administrative concepts in the light of Muscat Governorate's plans and programmes for the current year and indicators of Oman Vision 2040, a press release said.

The programme highlights some themes, the most prominent being introduction of the governorate system issued by Royal Decree No (37/2022), the general competencies of the governorate, and the rights and

duties of employees.

In addition, it will touch upon explaining the implementation of plans and objectives forms and implementation systems, monitoring achievements and most prominent projects in Muscat Governorate's wilayats and presenting standards and indicators of institutional excellence and their monitoring methods.

In addition to introducing the customer satisfaction index according to service outlets in the governorate, the priorities of Oman Vision 2040 and national programmes. It will also emphasise the systematic planning approach and joint implementation of programmes, projects and initiatives in cooperation with various sectors that aim to serve the state's general orientations, and its purposes to achieve sustainable development in accordance with Oman Vision 2040.

Bank Muscat gets North Batinah Award for Entrepreneurship

In recognition of its pioneering and remarkable role in supporting the SME sector, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has recently been bestowed the North Batinah Award for Entrepreneurship in the award's 2023 inaugural edition.

The Bank has won the award for the categories Best Financing Service Provider and Best Banking Institution from the Public Perspective during an award ceremony organised by North Al Batinah Governor's Office in Sohar. The ceremony was held under the patronage of H E Dr Said bin Mohammeda al Saqri, Minister of Economy.

During the event, Ibrahim bin Khamis al Balushi, senior assistant general manager, SMEs, Bank Muscat, received the award trophy on behalf of the bank. In essence, Bank Muscat's recognition with the NBA, in both categories, came based on the public views and reviews set forth by the award evaluation committee.

Balushi said, "The first version of the North Batinah Award for Entrepreneurship can be said to be a representation of the progress and development seen in the SME sector in Al Batinah North. Therefore, this recogni-



tion signifies a testament of the bank's contribution to the entire sector in the country through the wide range of banking services and facilities offered to the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The bank is constantly committed to financial inclusion and the development of the SMEs and entrepreneurs, aiming to go beyond banking and become a major driver of sustainable growth in the country.

"In line with Oman's vision2040, the SME sector is a wide field where potential opportunities can be utilised to foster a market of economic competitiveness. Hence, the bank will uphold its commitment to being a contributory and supportive partner for the success of various

businesses and economic sectors."

Positioning itself as a leading institution in supporting the SME sector, Bank Muscat has established a specialised department to offer customised products and services tailored specifically for SMEs, aiming to address the needs of entrepreneurs and facilitate the growth of the SMEs by effectively managing challenges through strategic planning and prudent financial management. Over the past twenty years, Bank Muscat has prioritised the development of this pivotal sector by recognising both, its opportunities and challenges, to develop its products and services to businesses and bolster the Sultanate's economy.

Crowe seminar focuses on CBO's cyber security guidelines

The CBO circular on cyber security and resilience framework and the CMA's Information system guidelines were at center-stage of the cyber security seminar hosted by Crowe Oman, a leading audit and advisory firm in Oman.

Addressing the participants at the seminar, Davis Kallukaran, managing partner of Crowe, said, "In 2020, the global cost of cybercrime was estimated to be US\$1tn and this figure is expected to rise to US\$10.5tn by 2025. The cost of cybercrime includes not only the direct financial losses but also the indirect costs, such as lost productivity, legal fees, and reputational damage."

The impact can be significant and far-reaching. It can cause

physical damage to infrastructure, such as power grids, transportation systems, and telecommunications networks, a press release said.

The 2015 cyber-attack on Ukraine's power grid caused widespread power outages that affected over 225,000 people. The 2017 Equifax data breach resulted in the theft of personal information, including Social Security numbers, birth dates, and addresses, of over 143 million people. They can also disrupt critical services, such as healthcare, financial systems, and emergency services, he pointed out.

State-sponsored cyber warfare can also have political consequences and can be used to influence elections, undermine

political institutions, and spread disinformation. The US dept of justice has announced a US\$10mn reward for information on threat actors targeting US critical infrastructure.

"If at all a world war breaks out, the weaponry will not be arms and ammunitions, but, a cyber war," Davis concluded.

"Crowe Oman aims to enhance the defence and resilience of organisations by launching the Security operation centre services in Oman to address the compliance requirements of CBO framework on Cybersecurity and Resilience, which are to be implemented by July 2024 while the external audit is to be completed by September 2024 and reported to CBO by December 2024.

صناعة قرطاسية الكمبيوتر (ش.م.ع.) وشركتها التابعة Computer Stationery Industry SAOG and its Subsidiary		HMF's Cup 2008	
AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023			
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT		CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 st DECEMBER 2023	
Dear Shareholders			
On behalf of the Board of Directors of Computer Stationery Industry Company SAOG, I am pleased to present to you the annual report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2023.			
Economic environment			
The Omani economy showed good progress in 2023, seen in improved public finance, a better credit rating, and positive growth indicators. The focus on diversifying the economy and boosting the private sector is ongoing, which we believe will benefit our company as we expand our business.			
Financial Performance			
In 2023, the company's revenues reached OMR 1.270 million, marking a 27.51% decrease from the previous year's OMR 1.752 million. The operating loss for 2023 amounted to RO 541 k, contrasting with the previous year's loss of RO 265 k. Additionally, The Group's net loss for 2023 amounted to RO 541 k, surpassing the previous year's net loss of RO 271 k.			
The reported increase in the net loss is primarily a result of the increase in operating costs, which includes the sale of a residential building below its market value. It is important to understand that this transaction was undertaken with the intention of fulfilling obligations owed to local bank, as clearly communicated to our esteemed shareholders on 28 Nov 2023.			
However, should we exclude this particular transaction, the net loss incurred would be reduced to RO 362 k.			
Future outlook			
While the printing industry contends with digital transformation challenges, political issues in the Red Sea, rising raw material costs, and persistent cash flow problems, your company's expansion into packaging printing is yielding positive business improvements.			
Further to the Company's earlier disclosure related to option of merger to improve company's financial position, the Board of Director continues to explore various options of merger or offer to acquire the Company.			
Corporate Social Responsibility and Human Resources Development			
By the end of 2023, Omanisation is at 49%, with ongoing efforts to empower Omani employees through training and skill development for seamless workforce transitions.			
The group has rendered assistance by printing leaflets to Ministry of Education in Oman as a CSR activity.			
Dividend Policy			
Considering the financial performance of the preceding year, the Board does not recommend the distribution of dividends for the year 2023.			
Corporate Governance and Internal Control			
Your company diligently complies with corporate governance and relevant laws, with the Board of Directors and committees demonstrating professionalism. Regular policy reviews ensure effective internal controls.			
Gratitude and Appreciation			
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend my sincere tWe thank shareholders, customers, banks, and suppliers for unwavering support. Special thanks to the management team and employees.			
We extend special gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for his visionary leadership, which has brought stability and prosperity to Oman. We pray for His Majesty's long life, health, and continued success in advancing Oman's prosperity and development.			
Ammar Maqbool Hameed Al Saleh Chairman			
P.O. Box 13, P.C. 124, Rusayl, Sultanate of Oman Tel : 24446160, Fax : 24446277 / 24446775 Email : info@cslops.com - Website : www.cslops.com		Note : The complete accounts are available with Capital Market Authority. However, the same will be sent by mail to any shareholder, who requests them at the address, in either Arabic or English, as requested within 7 days of receipt of such request.	

NATO chief calls for ‘quick’ US decision on Ukraine aid

Ankara, Turkey - After months of waiting for US lawmakers to extend more aid, the NATO chief on Saturday stressed the need for a quick decision by the US Congress to support Ukraine.

Admitting that NATO allies the US and Europe must effectively share the burden, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told the Munich Security Conference: “It’s not for me to give advice on how to pass legislation to the US Congress. But what I can say is the vital and urgent need for US to decide on a package for Ukraine because we need that support. And we have burden-sharing between Europe, and Canada, and the United States. Now it’s for the US to deliver what they promised.”

Stoltenberg also stressed that the European allies plus Canada ‘have provided more support to Ukraine in total than the United States’.

“This is not only about making the right decisions, but it’s about making the right decision early, as quickly as possible, because it’s urgent. Every week we wait means that there will be more people killed on the front line in Ukraine,” he warned.

The alliance chief added that ‘NATO is the strongest military power in the world’, representing roughly half of the ‘world’s total military might’.

“We are stronger than Russia,” he said.

This week, after many false starts, the US Senate finally passed a bill containing security aid for Taiwan, Israel, and Ukraine, but House Speaker Mike Johnson has vowed to block any consideration of the measure, effectively killing it for now.

Also at the three-day gathering, Estonian Prime Minister



NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg

It’s about making right decision early, as quickly as possible... Every week we wait means that there will be more people killed on the front line in Ukraine

JENS STOLTENBERG

Kaja Kallas that the focus should ‘not drift from helping Ukraine militarily’, adding that the most important thing should be to stop Russian President Vladimir Putin in Ukraine.

“If Putin wins in Ukraine, he won’t stop there. He’s a dictator. ... There’s no doubt that the Baltic states are going to be at risk or Poland if we don’t stop him in Ukraine,” US Senator Pete Ricketts remarked.

The tiny Baltic state of Estonia, population 1.3mn, sits on the border with Russia, population

143mn, and was a Soviet republic for over 50 years, until 1991.

France pledges \$3.2bn aid to Ukraine

Meanwhile, France and Ukraine have signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement, French President Emmanuel Macron announced on Friday.

The agreement will remain valid unless Ukraine joins NATO, Macron told a joint news conference in Paris with his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelensky.

tensified cyberattacks and disinformation activities.

He also expressed concern over its alleged plans to deploy nuclear weapons in space, and said Moscow must ‘justify (itself) without delay’.

Macron also said he would visit Ukraine by mid-March.

Alexey Navalny’s death

On reports of the death of Russian opposition figure Alexey Navalny, Macron blamed the Kremlin and said the incident was a show of its ‘weakness’.

Macron also demanded that Russia clarify the circumstances of Navalny’s death.

Zelensky, for his part, urged ‘all the leaders of the world’ not to remain silent against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Russian penitentiary service said earlier that Navalny, 47, died in a prison colony while serving his sentence. The service said in a statement that Navalny lost consciousness after a walk in the Arctic Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District, where the prison is located.

Meanwhile, Muscovites are leaving flowers at the Solovetsky Stone monument for Navalny.

Security forces have taken security measures around the monument which is dedicated to political repression victims.

Mourners formed a queue to leave flowers at the monument.

Navalny was arrested in January 2021 after being treated for poisoning in a German hospital. Western countries and Navalny blamed Russia for the poisoning, a claim the Kremlin denies.

In August, he was sentenced to 19 years in prison for extremism and other crimes. He was already serving an 11-year and five-month sentence for fraud.

Anadolu Agency



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

Zelensky: Troops left eastern city to avoid losses

Moscow, Russia - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Saturday that this weekend’s decision to retreat from the eastern city of Avdiivka was taken to avoid human losses and due to a lack of ammunition.

“It was a professional decision that will save many Ukrainian lives ... It is important for us to save the lives of our soldiers,” he stressed about the withdrawal from the city in Donetsk, speaking at the Munich Security Conference in Germany

Zelensky also pushed for countries to give Ukraine longer-range weapons, saying when Ukraine is given these it will depend less on the actions of the troops.

Zelensky urged more air-defence systems, saying that ‘once Ukraine unblocks the sky’ it will not only push Russia back but this will also allow it repatriate ‘millions of Ukrainians’. He also promised ‘to surprise Russia’ later this year with new drone systems and electronic warfare.

Zelensky declined to answer directly about the new military draft, lowering the

conscription age from 25 to 27, saying that if some people are tired of the battlefield, ‘they may have rest whenever they want’.

The Ukrainian president also invited US presidential hopeful Donald Trump to visit Ukraine, adding that if Trump wants, he can even take him to the frontline.

Asked about his expecta-

It was a professional decision that will save many Ukrainian lives... It is important for us to save the lives of soldiers

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

tions on Ukraine’s NATO accession, Zelensky said ‘it would be a fair thing to do’, but added that a series of bilateral security guarantees with countries such as the UK, Germany and France would also help.

Anadolu Agency

US: Trump imposed with hefty fines in NY business fraud case

New York, US - US former President Donald Trump and his business organisations were ordered to pay as much as US\$355mn of penalties on Friday in a business fraud case lodged by New York State Attorney General Letitia James.

In order to borrow more money and at lower rates, Donald Trump and the entities he controls submitted blatantly false financial data to the accountants, resulting in fraudulent financial statements, said a decision and order by Arthur F Engoron, a judge of New York County Supreme Court.

‘Defendants’ fact and expert witnesses simply denied reality, and defendants failed to accept responsibility or to impose internal controls to prevent future recurrences’ at trial, said Engoron in summary of a 92-page document.

The judge continued the ap-



Donald Trump

pointment of an independent monitor, ordered the installation of an independent director of compliance and limited defendants’ right to conduct business in New York for a few years.

In particular, Donald Trump, Allen Weisselberg, former chief financial officer of the Trump Organization, and Jeffrey McConney, former Trump Organization controller, were banned from serving as an officer or director of any New York corpo-

ration or other legal entity in New York for three years.

Weisselberg and McConney were permanently banned from serving in the financial control function of any New York corporation or similar business entity in the state. Moreover, Weisselberg as well as Donald Trump, Jr. and Eric Trump, the sons of Donald Trump, were fined US\$1mn, US\$4.01mn and US\$4.01mn, respectively.

Eric Trump and Donald Trump Jr criticised the judgment and Donald Trump’s lawyer Chris Kise also indicated a plan to appeal.

Letitia James is scheduled to deliver remarks on the judgment later on Friday.

The trial for the case began on October 2, 2023 and concluded on January 11, 2024 with Donald Trump appearing in the court multiple times.

Xinhua

THE GREAT ILLUSION



A visitor uses a VR headset during the press preview of an exhibition entitled ‘The Great Illusion - 200 Years of Virtual Realities’ at the Teylers Museum in Haarlem, the Netherlands, on Friday. The exhibition is open to public till September 1 (Xinhua)

Japan successfully launches new H3 rocket after failed attempt last year

Ankara, Turkey - Japan successfully launched its flagship new H3 rocket on Saturday after a failed attempt last year.

According to the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, the second H3 was launched from Tanegashima Space Center in southwestern Japan at 9.22am local time (0022GMT).

“It was confirmed that the

rocket flew as planned, injecting the second stage vehicle into the designated orbit, and separating CE-SAT-IE approximately 16 minutes and 43 seconds after launch,” said the agency in a statement.

Last March, Japan’s flagship H3 rocket No1 was ordered to self-destruct minutes after launch due to its second-stage



engine failing to ignite.

“Data from the second stage vehicle after its orbit around the Earth confirmed the sending of a separation signal to TIRSAT, the execution of a controlled re-entry of the second stage vehicle, and the separation of the rocket performance verification payload (VEP-4),” said the agency.

Last September, Japan’s lunar lander was also successfully launched into space after several delays. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida praised the successful launch of the domestically produced rocket.

“We are very happy to see such great achievements in the space field following the successful SLIM moon landing. I

would like to express my respect for the efforts of everyone involved over the years, and hope that Japan’s core rockets will continue to steadily accumulate achievements,” he said on X.

The H3 was developed by Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

Anadolu Agency

UN official for arms embargo against Israel

Geneva, Switzerland - The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders proposed imposing an 'arms embargo' on Israel in response to attacks in the Gaza Strip.

"We have to allow humanitarian aid in there and also there has to be an arms embargo," Mary Lawlor told Anadolu about the situation in Gaza, rights violations and steps countries should take to stop Israel's bombardment.

"In my view, any of the states that are fuelling this conflict by supplying arms to Israel just have to stop because Israel is not seeing any sense at the moment," she said.

Lawlor said she has been closely monitoring the situation in Gaza since October 7 and condemned attacks carried out by the Palestinian resistance group, Hamas.

She stated that there are 'exhausted, besieged and helpless' people in Gaza. "It is very terrible that Gazans have been repeatedly told to go to a safe place. This ended in the city of Rafah. Now people have been told to go elsewhere and they have nowhere to go. They're living in the most horrendous conditions, but they don't have enough food. They don't have the medicine they need. Half of Gaza's population is currently in Rafah. Now how is that ever right? No matter what your position is, where you come from, or your strategic or political interests, how can you justify the killing the mothers of so many little children and women?"

Following developments in Rafah, Lawlor said there is a need to 'ensure a cease-fire', and humanitarian aid should be allowed to enter Gaza.

"(In Gaza) Technically, Israel as an occupying power shouldn't



In my view, any of the states that are fuelling this conflict by supplying arms to Israel just have to stop because Israel is not seeing any sense at the moment

MARY LAWLOR

be waging a war against an occupied territory," said Lawlor.

She pointed out that while the world is aware of what is going on in Gaza, countries are unable or unwilling to intervene.

Stressing that the UN Relief and Public Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is the only or-

ganisation serving Gazans, schools and hospitals in the enclave, Lawlor said Israel is 'reversing the funding to UNRWA'. "It's madness."

"The investigation into the allegations against UNRWA is ongoing. Such desperate people should not be allowed to become victims of the political

mass between states," she said, referencing Israeli allegations that staffers at the UN agency were involved in a Hamas attack against Israel on October 7.

Noting that the decision on genocide is made by courts and experts, Lawlor said it is determined based on behaviour, war crimes and genocidal intent, while the situation in Gaza is currently being examined by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Lawlor stressed that the UN court will decide on the situation in Gaza.

"Whether (the decision) is genocide or not, but I am saying

there is a risk of genocide (in Gaza)," she said.

Noting that countries bear a great responsibility for stopping Israel's attacks on Gaza, she said: "States such as the United States, EU countries and the United Kingdom, which influence Israel, have a very important role. It is unacceptable for countries to abstain or veto resolutions at the UN Security Council. To me, this cannot be forgiven."

Gaza death toll climbs to 28,858

At least 83 Palestinians were killed and 125 others injured in

the last 24 hours as Israel continues its onslaught on the besieged Gaza Strip, the territory's Health Ministry said on Saturday. "The Israeli occupation committed nine massacres against families in the Gaza Strip, leaving 83 martyrs and 125 injured during the past 24 hours," the ministry said in a statement.

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

Flouting a provisional ruling by the International Court of Justice last month, Israel has continued its onslaught on the Gaza

Strip, where at least 28,858 Palestinians have been killed, mostly women and children, and 68,677 injured since October 7, according to Palestinian health authorities.

Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip since a cross-border attack by Hamas, which Tel Aviv says killed nearly 1,200 people.

The Israeli war on Gaza has pushed 85 per cent of the territory's population into internal displacement amid shortages of food, clean water and medicine, while 60 per cent of the infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN.

Anadolu Agency

Iran unveils new missile defence system

Tehran, Iran - The Iranian Defence Ministry on Saturday unveiled an anti-ballistic missile defence system and a low-altitude air defence system, the official news agency IRNA reported.

The domestically-developed 'Arman' anti-ballistic missile system and 'Azarakhsh' air defence system were unveiled in a ceremony in the Iranian capital Tehran attended by Defence Minister Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani.

Describing the two systems as great 'defence industry achievements', the Iranian defence minister said the medium-range, high-altitude tactical Arman system could detect targets at a distance of 180km and destroy them within a range of 120km. The Arman system can be ready for operation in less than three minutes, he added.

The Azarakhsh system, as noted by Ashtiani, is capable of safeguarding the nation's critical and vital facilities from drone and micro air vehicle threats.

It uses an advanced three-dimensional radar system, an optical search system and very nimble cutting-edge seekers and is capable of destroying targets in the shortest time possible, he said.

Xinhua

Support increases for worldwide boycott of Israeli products: Activist

Istanbul, Turkey - A global boycott movement against Israeli products has gained significant traction with the recent conflict in Gaza, according to activist and spokesperson for Palestine Initiative, Tulay Gokcimen.

"The oppression Israel has been inflicting on Palestine for 75 years before the massacres in Gaza was not fully described, but now everyone wants to do something as much as they can," Gokcimen told Anadolu. "Gaza has created awareness against the Israeli occupation in people. Individual reactions have evolved into a mass movement over time."

Gokcimen said she believes the movement can be an effective weapon to pressure Israel and end its attacks, highlighting the surge in public awareness



and individual action triggered by the violence in Gaza. She said people worldwide are refusing to buy Israeli products, fuelled by a desire to stand with Palestinians.

The momentum for the group that seeks to be a voice for Palestinians has transformed into a global movement, encompassing diverse communities and religions, she said.

"They made the whole world Palestinian. Demonstrations are being held in front of food and beverage chains supporting Israel in different countries every day, raising awareness among the public," she noted.

Gokcimen emphasised that Israel relies heavily on international trade for resources and weapons. That is why boy-

cotting Israeli products and individuals can disrupt the financial system and put pressure on Israel. "If I don't buy, if you don't buy, this financial system won't run," said Gokcimen.

She pointed to instances where companies supporting Israel faced losses due to the boycott. "All the bombs and weapons that Israel uses to attack our brothers and sisters are actually produced with the money coming from trade in other countries. People cannot stop those who make the bombs, but they do not buy Israeli products to avoid contributing to this financial system," she said.

Gokcimen added that the boycott has also led to a shift in consumer preferences.

Anadolu Agency

Germany's Scholz urges Israel to abide by international law

Munich, Germany - Amid growing concerns over Israel's planned ground operation in the city of Rafah, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Saturday urged Tel Aviv to abide by international law.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference, Scholz reaffirmed Germany's support for Israel's security, but also underlined that they expect the Israeli government to respect international law.

"Israel has the right to defend their own country, and this is what the United States, and what Germany, and many others are just stating," Scholz told an audience of international political and military leaders.

"We are also very clear on the things that are important to be said. So first that humanitarian aid has to get to Gaza, and more as we see today. Second, that the way the war is handled is according to international law," he stressed.

Scholz made the remarks when he was asked by the moderator about the Western response to the Gaza conflict, and criticisms of hypocrisy and double standards for its failure to stop Israeli military's war crimes.

Scholz said his government has been conveying its concerns to the Israeli government and reminding them of their responsibility to abide by international law.

"We are asking that they do so, and we are constantly discussing this question, and there's good reason for doing so, and it is something which is so important



We are very clear on the things that are important to be said. So first that humanitarian aid has to get to Gaza, and more as we see today

OLAF SCHOLZ

for all of us," the chancellor said.

"We are very clear in this that obeying international law and the rules is something which is not just something we do because we subscribed (to) some agreements globally, it is something which is coming out of our perspective of humankind and how we want to be, and how we want to see ourselves," he added.

Some 1.5mn Palestinians previously displaced by Israel's offensive on Gaza are holed up in Rafah, seeking refuge from hostilities that have laid waste to wide swathes of Palestinian territory.

Israel's reported plans for an offensive on the city have sounded international alarm bells, with many countries urging restraint or calling off the operation altogether.

Anadolu Agency

'G-7 FMs support creation of Palestinian state'

Rome, Italy - The Group of Seven (G-7) nations support the creation of a Palestinian state, Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said on Saturday, underlining that the process for this must begin with the suspension of the fighting in Gaza.

"The G-7 document talks about the will to reach the objective of two people, two states, through an interruption of the conflict now, which will allow the unconditional liberation of the Israeli hostages and help the Palestinian civilian population who needs humanitarian aid," Tajani told reporters after a meeting with his counterparts in the G-7 at the Munich Security



Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani

Conference in Germany.

"Then, negotiations would start that I hope will lead to peace," he said.

Tajani said foreign ministers of the G-7 condemned Palestinian group Hamas and ruled out any political role for it in Gaza

after the war. The Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank, on the other hand, has the support of the seven-nation group, he said, but adding that the body had to be renovated for it to be a 'protagonist' in Gaza.

"Our position aims at guaranteeing the security of the state of Israel, we ask for the immediate liberation of hostages and work for a de-escalation to help civilians in Gaza," Tajani said.

He also added that the ministers condemn acts of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, which have been on the rise since October 7.

Anadolu Agency

Muslim women face exclusion in France

Lack of social acceptance forces Muslim women to seek job opportunities beyond borders of France

Istanbul, Turkey - Increasing Islamophobia at the political and societal levels leads to the exclusion of veiled women from society, despite them being born and raised in France, being highly educated and possessing professional skills that would contribute to the country.

Interviews by Anadolu with 20 Muslim women who left or planned to leave France revealed workplace discrimination.

The report showed that discrimination and lack of social acceptance often force Muslim women to seek job opportunities beyond the borders of France.

The report, aimed at examining the extent of Islamophobia toward women in France and provided a list of recommendations to combat the discrimination, highlighted how 'coercive policies' completely restrict veiled women from working in the public sector, reinforce discrimination against the headscarf in the private sector and increase Islamophobia at the societal level.

In addition to facing discrimination in the workplace, Muslim women in France also experience discrimination in education and in civil society. The ban on headscarves in France keeps veiled women from schools and negatively affects their careers and general well-being.

Despite their motivation to contribute to French society, Muslim women are not allowed to share their skills and experiences in educational environments. The prevention of the



In addition to facing discrimination in the workplace, Muslim women in France also experience discrimination in education and in civil society (Anadolu Agency)

participation of Muslim women in civil society activities emerges as another area where they feel

excluded. French Muslim women, whose views were consulted for

the report, shared that they chose to leave the country and continue their careers abroad

due to the prevalence of Islamophobia.

Muslim women who choose

to stay in France are forced to make difficult decisions such as removing their headscarves to

conform to societal pressure or withdrawing from the workforce in the face of discrimination.

Islamophobic state policies and society's discriminatory attitude in France exacerbate the problems faced by Muslim women, who make up about seven million, or 10 per cent of the population.

Islamophobic state policies and society's discriminatory attitude in France exacerbate the problems faced by Muslim women, who make up about 7mn, or 10 per cent of the population

The report highlights the lack of solution-oriented policies for the Muslim community in France, where religious symbols, including headscarves, were banned in schools in 2004 and expanded in 2010 to include veils covering the face entirely in public spaces.

In the recommendations section of the report, policymakers are advised to develop inclusive and participatory policies, recognise Islamophobic attitudes as hate crimes, and implement deterrent sanctions against actions stemming from Islamophobia.

Anadolu Agency

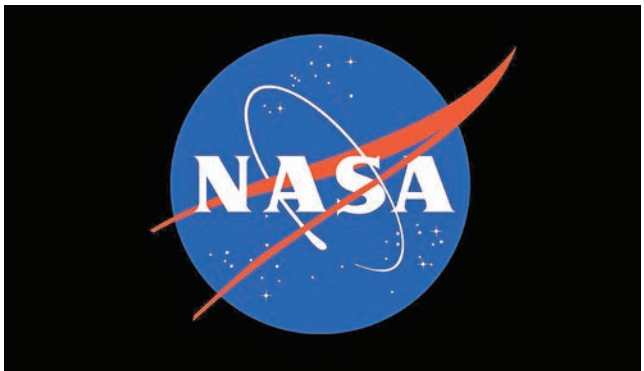
NASA looking for volunteers to live in isolation, simulating Mars mission

Washington, US - NASA is searching for volunteers to take part in an isolation experiment simulating what it would be like to be alone on Mars.

The four volunteers selected will participate in the agency's next simulated one-year Mars surface mission, which NASA says is designed to help them gather data for their plans to one day have humans explore the red planet.

This is the second year-long Mars experiment NASA is conducting. The first one kicked off in June 2023 (meaning the applicants are still in isolation for a few more months).

The second of three planned ground-based missions called



CHAPEA (Crew Health and Performance Exploration Analog) is scheduled to kick off in spring 2025. The missions involve a four-person crew working and living together in a 3D-printed, 1,700-square-foot base at NASA's Johnson Space

Center in Houston.

The base, called Mars Dune Alpha, is designed to simulate the challenges that will be faced by the first people on the actual planet: resource shortages, equipment failures, communication delays and other stressful

situations.

Applications are open for the second CHAPEA mission until April 2. The mission itself is scheduled to begin sometime in 2025.

They're looking for healthy, non-smoking US citizens between the ages of 30 and 55, who are proficient in English, with a strong desire for 'unique, rewarding adventures and interest in contributing to NASA's work to prepare for the first human journey to Mars.

Crew members must have a master's degree in a STEM field such as engineering, mathematics, biological, physical or computer science.

WAM

Call for global measures against climate change

Bogota, Colombia - Global, not national, measures, are urgently needed in the climate change fight, the president of Colombia said on Friday.

"We propose a democratic agreement," said Gustavo Petro as he emphasised the importance of facing the climate crisis when he arrived in Germany to attend the 60th Munich Security Conference.

"The climate crisis is politically turning into barbarism, fascism and total destruction," said the Colombian leader.

Stating that democratic values have been destroyed due to ongoing wars Petro said: "If we want to continue as we are today, that is, if brute force is measured by bombs dropped from airplanes, this is an indication that humanity is going through a dire



Colombian President Gustavo Petro

situation."

He stressed that fossil fuel consumption causes 'serious' damage to water and other natural resources. "There is no other way out. Countries that produce CO2 emissions must now realise the importance of switching to clean energy," he said.

Anadolu Agency

Support for Japan's Kishida cabinet sinks to new low: Poll

Tokyo, Japan - The support rate for the cabinet led by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida plunged to 16.9 per cent in February, marking a record low for the administration, according to the latest Jiji Press opinion poll.

The reading, which dropped by 1.7 percentage points from the previous month, is now at the lowest level since the return of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to power in December 2012. It remained below the critical 'danger zone' marked by 20 per cent for the seventh straight month.

Meanwhile, the disapproval rate for the cabinet increased by 6.4 percentage points to 60.4 per cent, crossing the 60 per cent threshold for the first time since May 2020 during the Abe cabinet, amid a fund scandal within the LDP factions, the survey showed.

In a breakdown of reasons for not supporting the cabinet, 36.9 per cent of the respondents said they simply had no expectations for it, followed by 26.8 per cent who found the policies ineffective and 25.1 per cent who did not trust the prime minister.

The survey was conducted from last Friday to Monday through interviews with 2,000 people who are aged 18 years and older nationwide.

Xinhua

Australia hopes China to be its top tourism market again

Sydney, Australia - China is expected to reclaim the top spot in Australia's international tourism industry 'in the very near future', chief of the Australian government's tourism promoting agency has said.

"We certainly know that Australia has a lot to offer Chinese travellers and our industry and the Australian public love to welcome Chinese guests to Australia," Phillipa Harrison, managing director of Tourism Australia, told Xinhua in a recent interview. "So we know that we will rebuild the market and it will be our number one market again sometime in the very near future," she said.

In 2019, China was already the top market in Australia's international tourism sector, with 1.4mn Chinese tourists visiting Australia each year, Harrison said, adding that the number of Chinese tourists has increased month by

We certainly know that Australia has a lot to offer Chinese travellers and our industry and the Australian public love to welcome Chinese guests to Australia

PHILLIPA HARRISON



Phillipa Harrison, the managing director of Tourism Australia, speaks during an interview in Sydney (Xinhua)

aviation capacity, but it was different this year, Harrison said. "This is really the first New

Year where we've been fully open, and there is really good aviation capacity into Australia," she

said. "So we're excited to see more Chinese arriving."

Harrison said that Chinese

tourists are welcome to Australia for the Spring Festival, and there are many celebrations around Australia. "There are lots and lots of local celebrations and certainly Australians love getting involved with the lunar new year festival," she said.

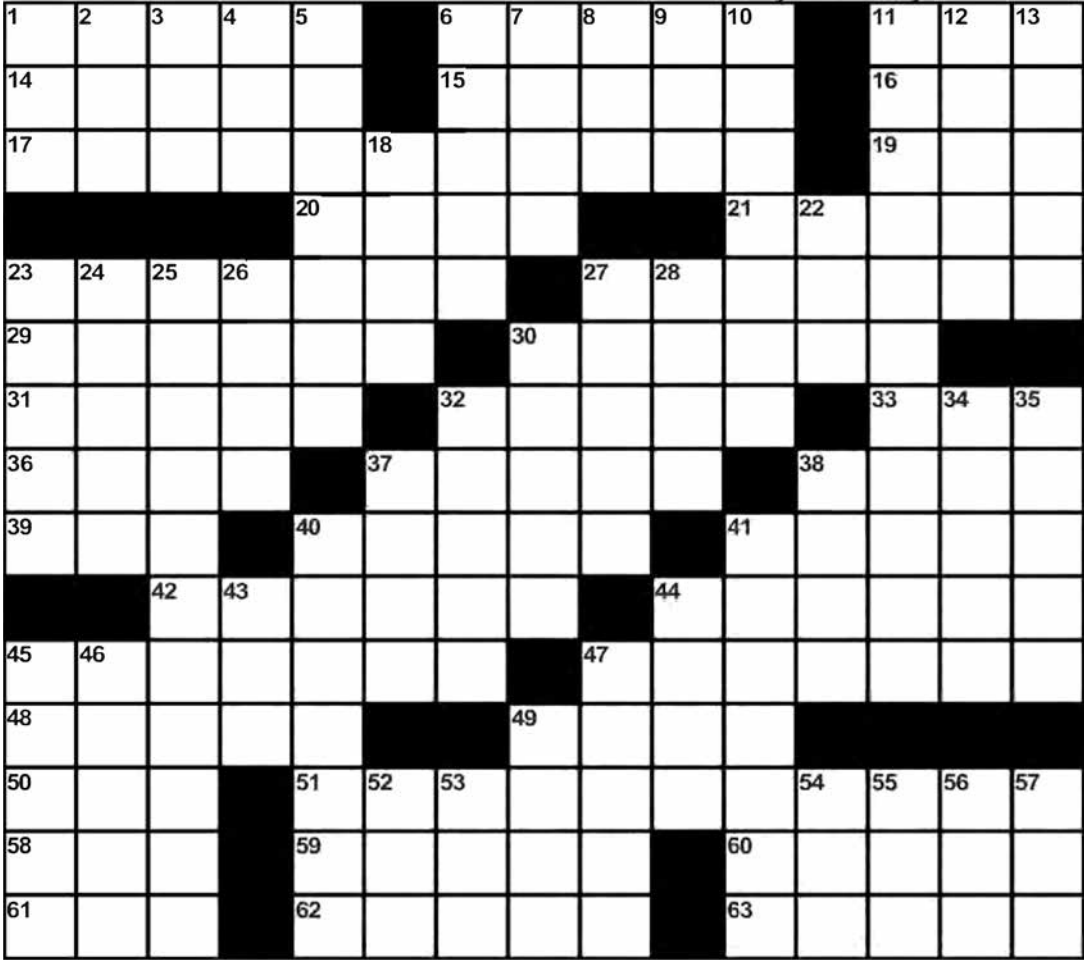
Tourism Australia has a very long-term view with China and has been there for more than 20 years, Harrison said. "It is a very important market for us. We're working very hard on re-growing our numbers."

"So we have marketing promotions going. We have our big 'Come and Say G'day' campaign which we launched in Chengdu in June," Harrison said.

She said she was very positive about the Chinese market and was 'really delighted to see that more and more Chinese are coming back to enjoy everything that Australia has to offer'.

Xinhua

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) It precedes an important delivery
 - 6) Certain construction girder
 - 11) Director's shout
 - 14) Obviously shocked
 - 15) Woman on uncle?
 - 16) A wee hour
 - 17) They make waves
 - 19) Noshed
 - 20) A Great Lake
 - 21) Kind of campus protest
 - 23) Primary color, to a printer
 - 27) Grinds together, as teeth
 - 29) Calls out, as a mission
 - 30) Puzzle that's a stumper
 - 31) Absolute bedlam
 - 32) Thing to shift
 - 33) Negative vote
 - 36) Has the r (is attracted)
 - 37) Castle ditches
 - 38) Eye with desire
 - 39) "The Lord of the Rings" creature
 - 40) Performers of plays, collectively
 - 41) Edible freshwater fish
 - 42) Raspy
 - 44) "Goodness!"
 - 45) How inferior goods are
 - 47) Snitches
 - 48) Some court hearings
 - 49) Song performed singly
 - 51) Downs counterparts
 - 51) Words after "sanp," "bring" or "call"
 - 58) "Aw" follower
 - 59) Bicker
 - 60) Romance or deama, e.g.
 - 61) Spans of 60 mins.
 - 62) Not just wants
 - 63) Domingo
- DOWN**
- 1) Experimental place?
 - 2) Long time follower?
 - 3) Ewe can say that again?
 - 4) Get on the fence
 - 5) Takes the advice of a sidewalk preacher
 - 6) Home of the Taj Mahal
 - 7) It may be one's time?
 - 8) Electric fish
 - 9) Starpitcher
 - 10) Underlying theme
 - 11) Things in many closets
 - 12) Loosen, as laces
 - 13) Adults-to-be
 - 18) Partner of crafts
 - 22) "Liberal" attachment
 - 23) Man Randy Savage
 - 24) Dislike, and then some
 - 25) Some dairy products
 - 26) Winged god of love
 - 27) Pesky little biters
 - 28) Steals, old-style
 - 30) Fill with happiness
 - 32) Likely to make stem orders
 - 34) "The Cradle of Texas Liberty"
 - 35) Aden's land
 - 37) A soil fertilizer
 - 38) Face-to-face exam
 - 40) Part of a tape recorder
 - 41) Fits in
 - 43) Relative of 17-Across
 - 44) Editor's "remove it"
 - 45) Do as the doctor says
 - 46) Abnormally active
 - 47) Lugs
 - 49) Thing behind a dial, typically
 - 52) Valuable rock
 - 53) Display longevity?
 - 54) Oolong, for one
 - 55) Quaint motel
 - 56) Food crumb
 - 57) "The Matrix" moniker

NOTE PAD

H	O	M	O		C	L	A	P		S	P	E	A	R
A	L	U	M		R	E	D	O		U	L	T	R	A
D	I	C	E		O	V	E	N		D	O	N	U	T
J	O	H	N		Q	U	I	N	C	Y	A	D	A	M
S	U	P			E	O	N							
E	T	A			A	I	D	E		N	E	T	T	L
D	E	L	E		E	E	L	S		S	I	R	E	N
G	R	O	V	E	R	C	L	E		V	E	L	A	N
A	S	H	E	N		K	I	T	E		L	I	T	E
R	E	A	R	M	S		S	A	R	I		N	O	D
E	E	N			A	R	T							
J	A	M	E	S	E	A	R	L		C	A	R	T	E
U	R	I	A	H		V	I	I		A	R	G	O	
M	I	N	C	E		E	A	S		T		W	I	G
P	A	T	H	S		S	L	A	Y		L	O	S	E

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Once you achieve a goal, do you realize that you need to take some time to appreciate your achievement? Slow down today and appreciate the view. You've worked hard to get to where you are, and you deserve some time to gloat a little. Call up a friend and do something fun with them tonight or one night soon. They've got some fun news to share, and they are eager to hear your take on what's going on in the world. You can't always be totally focused on working toward a goal all of the time.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Everyone around you has a different idea about how to solve a problem today, but only you have the right idea! You have a wonderful ability to compromise and have everyone come up with solutions together, so don't leave this skill by the wayside because you're afraid to ruffle a few feathers. Speak up. Offer your plan. The people you're with today are in a flexible and positive mood, so you should find a warmer reception for your thoughts than you expected.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

A troubled friend may need some cheering up today, and you should make yourself available to them as best you can. There has been a lot of drama recently, and you can provide them with the normalcy that will help them regain their equilibrium. Spending some mellow time with them is ideal. Go out for a movie or meal or long hike. Give them a chance to share their thoughts and work through what they are going through.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

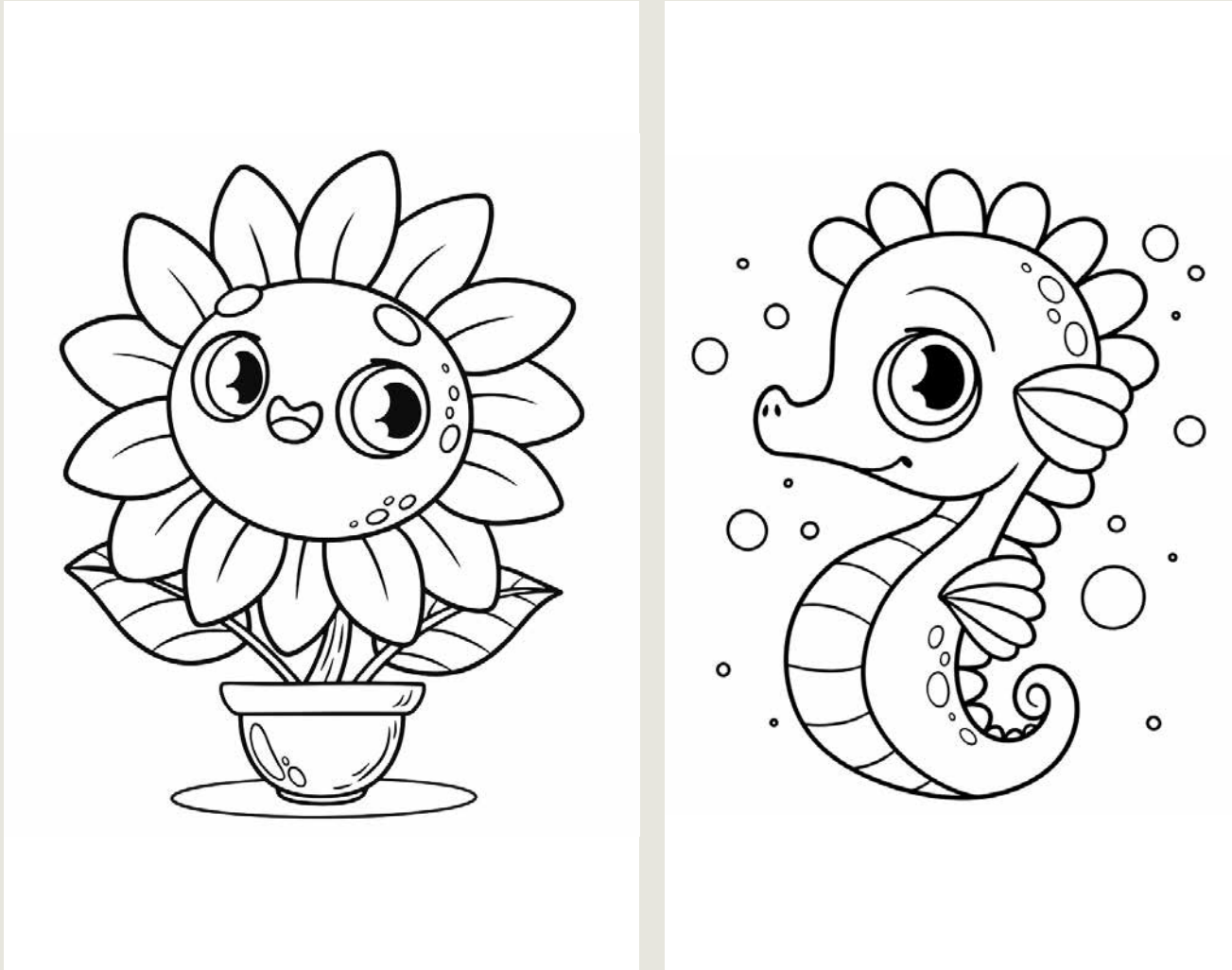
1. Which of these was an important part in the car that travelled in time in the "Back to the Future" series of films?
- A. Warp drive
 - B. Flux capacitor
 - C. Difference engine
 - D. Nuclear fribulator

2. Which of these is a form of alternative medicine, first proposed by German physician Samuel Hahnemann in 1796, which uses reference books known as "reperatories"?
- A. Abroadopathy
 - B. Awayopathy
 - C. Homeopathy
 - D. Houseopathy

3. Which US President has figured on the cover of the magazine Sports Illustrated, twice?
- A. George W Bush
 - B. Ronald Reagan
 - C. Dwight Eisenhower
 - D. Donald Trump

Answers: 1.B 2.C 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

L	L	O	E
E	C	A	S
R	L	T	A
A	R	E	C

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

X FACTOR OF XABI

Klopp praises Alonso's exceptional job at Leverkusen

Liverpool, England - Xabi Alonso is an incredible talent from the new generation of managers given his impressive run at Bayer Leverkusen, soon to depart Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp said.

The former Liverpool and Real Madrid midfielder has been linked to the upcoming opening at Anfield after Klopp announced last month that he will step down at the end of season.

Alonso guided Leverkusen from near the bottom of the Bundesliga to a five-point lead at the top within 16 months. The 42-year-old coach secured a spot at the German Cup semi-finals and notably defeated serial champions Bayern Munich 3-0 last weekend.

"Xabi is doing an incredible job," Klopp said. "If there would not be the rumours around, that's completely independent. If you would have asked me eight weeks ago about Xabi Alonso I would have gone: 'Oh my God.' The dinosaurs if you want - Ancelotti, Mourinho, Guardiola, maybe me - we will not do it for the next 20 years. OK, maybe Mourinho will. The next generation is already there and I would say Xabi is standout in that department."

"Former world-class player, from a coaching family as well which helps a little, he was like a coach already when he was playing. The football he is playing, the teams he sets up, the transfers he did, it is absolutely exceptional. I played a long time in the Bundesliga and it is super impressive."

"Not only the points tally but the way they play. Leverkusen was clearly the better side in the first game against Bayern and that is rare. To be honest when we beat Bayern at Dortmund it was a bit of very well defended, counterattack and taking the momentum. Especially at the beginning. But Leverkusen were better. That was probably the real surprise given the short time he was there and it's a young team. He has super signings for this team, exactly what they needed, and that's really a very special job."

"Leverkusen has a very good chance to win the cup. When you look through the Europa League, Leverkusen is one of the



Xabi Alonso



Former world-class player, from a coaching family as well which helps a little, he was like a coach already when he was playing

JURGEN KLOPP

favourites there as well so it could be the season for Leverkusen. Really crazy."

Klopp identified Alonso's immediate impact at Leverkusen as his most impressive managerial trait so far.

"How quick his team is that well tuned," he said. "For the time

it's taken, he's put his proper stamp on it."

"Nobody knows if that is always the way he wants to play or if it's the way this team specifically plays, he is not long enough in the business to tell, but obviously the coaching part is exceptional. That is clear."

Salah scores in Liverpool's win

Brentford, England - Mohamed Salah scored on his return from injury as Liverpool kept their foot on the throttle in the Premier League title race with a 4-1 win at Brentford on Saturday to go provisionally five points clear at the summit.

Darwin Nunez opened the scoring with an exquisite first-half chip, and goals after the break from Alexis Mac Allister and Salah, who was playing his first game for Liverpool in over six weeks after suffering a hamstring injury at the Africa Cup of Nations, effectively ended the contest.

Ivan Toney pulled one back for Brentford, but Cody Gakpo grabbed Liverpool's fourth to wrap up a comfortable win for the visitors.

The victory lifted Liverpool to 57 points and put the ball back in the court of chasers Manchester City in second and third-placed Arsenal, who are both on 52 but can reduce the deficit later on Saturday.

In what is shaping up to be one of the tightest title races in years, Pep Guardiola's City side, arguably still in the box seat with two games in hand, host Chelsea in Saturday's late game after Arsenal visit Burnley.

While his side cruised to a sixth win in their last seven league games, there was a sour note for Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp, who was already dealing with a lengthy injury list before Curtis Jones and Diogo Jota were taken off in the first half and Nunez failed to emerge after



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah celebrates after scoring against Brentford

halftime. The Liverpool manager was already without a number of key players through injury including goalkeeper Alisson Becker, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Dominik Szoboszlai.

"That's really not good. But we

can't change that anymore," Klopp told reporters when asked about the latest injuries.

"In these situations the performance level could have dropped, but it was the other way around. We played an exceptional game."

South Korea sack Klinsmann after Asian Cup exit

Seoul, South Korea - The Korea Football Association (KFA) said on Friday it had sacked national team coach Juergen Klinsmann after their semi-final exit at the Asian Cup and amid criticism of his leadership.

The National Team Committee, a KFA advisory body, had recommended the sacking of Klinsmann on Thursday, with KFA Technical Director Hwangbo Kwan saying there were "various reasons" to doubt



Juergen Klinsmann

his ability to exercise leadership over the team. South Korea's exit from the Asian Cup following a

2-0 loss to Jordan in the semi-finals this month, which extended their 64-year wait for a third title, led to calls from fans for the 59-year-old's dismissal.

KFA President Chung Mong-gyu said Klinsmann's tenure fell short of expectations. "Coach Klinsmann failed to demonstrate leadership that we expected from the national team coach, including game management, player management and work attitude..."



Al Shabab's Ivan Rakitic in action against Damac

Rakitic scores winner on Al Shabab debut

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Al Shabab midfielder Ivan Rakitic scored on his debut to secure a 1-0 win over 10-man Damac in the Saudi Pro League on Friday.

Former Croatia international Rakitic, who moved from Sevilla last month, struck from outside the area in the 82nd minute.

Damac were reduced to 10

players when Sanusi Hawsawi was dismissed for a second yellow card in the 67th.

Tenth-placed Al-Shabab have 24 points from 20 matches, while Damac are sixth with 30.

The 35-year-old Rakitic won over 100 caps from 2007-2019, helping Croatia finish runners-up at the 2018 World Cup.

Inter ease to victory against bottom-placed Salernitana

Milan, Italy - Leaders Inter Milan lived up to expectations as they cruised to a 4-0 home win over bottom-placed Salernitana on Friday to strengthen their grip on top of Serie A.

Goals from Marcus Thuram, Lautaro Martinez, Denzel Dumfries and Marko Arnautovic sealed the win that lifted Simone Inzaghi's side to 63 points, 10 clear of second-placed Juventus, who were shocked by Udinese on Monday.

"The lads did very well. It was a solid match, approached in the best possible way. Salernitana had created problems for many teams," coach Inzaghi told reporters.

"We still have a long way to go. We must stay focused even when we sleep. We are looking only at the next game, our goal is to reach the end of all competitions."

The hosts grabbed the lead in the 17th minute thanks to Thuram's powerful strike from the centre of the box off Carlos Augusto's cross.

Serie A top scorer Martinez doubled the lead just two minutes later as he scored his 20th



Inter Milan's Marko Arnautovic (R) celebrates after scoring against Salernitana on Friday

league goal of the season, curling a superb long-range shot from Augusto's second assist of the night.

The Argentina international became only the third player to score at least 20 goals in three consecutive Italian league seasons after Giuseppe Meazza and Stefano Nyers.

"We approach every game the same way, sometimes it works from the start and sometimes it gets tougher," Martinez told Sky Sport Italia. "We always try to press high, recover the ball quickly and score lots of goals."

"We always have our destiny in our hands, we worked so hard on gaining maturity, and now we step onto the field aware of our own strength, eager to show it in every game."

Dumfries made it 3-0 in the 40th minute, pouncing on a rebound from goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa, while substitute Arnautovic's tap-in sealed the rout in the final seconds of the game.

Inter next host Atletico Madrid in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie on Tuesday.

Torn ACL rules Aston Villa's Kamara out for rest of the season



Boubacar Kamara

Birmingham, England - Aston Villa midfielder Boubacar Kamara will miss the remainder of the season with a torn anterior cruciate ligament, manager Unai Emery said on Friday, a blow to the team's push for a top-four Premier League finish.

The 24-year-old Frenchman suffered the knee injury on Sunday against Manchester United, leaving the game

in the 65th minute of the 2-1 loss at Villa Park.

Villa are fifth in the table, a point behind Tottenham Hotspur.

"When they are injured for a long time, it's the worst in football," Emery told reporters. "It's more difficult for the player, as a person, when they are injured ... more or less, in September or October he is coming back."

INDIA ON TOP

Jaiswal's attacking hundred puts hosts in charge against England

Rajkot, India - Opener Yashasvi Jaiswal smashed a rapid hundred before retiring hurt as India stretched their overall lead to 322 with eight wickets in hand to take control of the third Test against England on Saturday.

The hosts are left with 10 players for the rest of the match after Ravichandran Ashwin withdrew on Friday night due to a family emergency.

Mohammed Siraj (4-84) and Kuldeep Yadav (2-77) made up for the off-spinner's absence as they combined to skittle out England - who had started the day on a solid 207-2 - for 319 in reply to India's first innings total of 445.

India finished day three on 196-2 but Jaiswal, struggling with a back spasm, retired hurt after his scintillating 104, which included five sixes and nine fours.

Shubman Gill was batting on 65 with nightwatchman Kuldeep on three at the other end.

"Since Ashwin is not available, the responsibility was on other bowlers to deliver," Siraj said afterwards.

"Initially they went after us but we waited for them to make mistakes and did not try anything extraordinary."

There was no inkling of Eng-



Yashasvi Jaiswal (R) smashed a quickfire hundred before retiring hurt while Shubman Gill is unbeaten on 65

land's batting meltdown when they resumed play with eight wickets left at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium.

For many it was Joe Root's debatable reverse scoop when on

hosts' favour.

Root has not been in great form in this series, and his lean run continued as Jaiswal took the tricky catch at second slip.

It was the ninth time in 21 Test innings that Root has fallen to his Indian nemesis.

Kuldeep bowled a terrific spell that had not just the English batters but even India wicketkeeper Dhruv Jurel guessing which way the ball would turn.

The left-arm wrist spinner trapped Jonny Bairstow lbw for a duck and was pleasantly surprised when his ordinary delivery ended Duckett's blistering 153, which contained two sixes and 23 fours.

Spilled by Rohit in the slip before he completed 150, Duckett slapped a half-tracker from Kuldeep to Gill at cover.

England were pushed further on to the back foot after the lunch break when they lost two wickets in two balls.

Skipper Ben Stokes (41) slog-swept Ravindra Jadeja to Bumrah, while Ben Foakes (13) was snapped up at mid-on by Rohit.

Siraj (4-84) went on to york Rehan Ahmed and James Anderson as England gave up their last five wickets for a paltry 20 runs.

Root dismissed Rohit for 19 when India came out to bat in their second innings but Jaiswal tore into the England attack to swell India's lead.

The left-hander brought up his hundred with a four off Mark Wood and then dropped his bat, removed his gloves and stood in the middle blowing kisses and looking skywards in celebration.

Gill brought up his fifty soon after that with a six off Wood as India threatened to bat England out of the contest.



Ashwin leaves India Test squad mid-match due to family emergency

Rajkot, India - India all-rounder Ravichandran Ashwin has withdrawn from the ongoing third Test against England due to a family emergency, the Indian cricket board (BCCI) said on Friday.

The Test in Rajkot, third in a series of five, concluded its second day of play on Friday.

"Ravichandran Ashwin has withdrawn from the Test squad, effective immediately due to a family medical emergency," the BCCI said in a statement.

"The BCCI extends its heartfelt support to (Ashwin) and his family. The health and well-being of the players and their loved ones are of utmost importance."

BCCI vice president Rajeev Shukla posted on X, formerly Twitter: "Wishing speedy recovery of mother of @ashwin-ravi99. He has to rush and leave Rajkot Test to Chennai to be with his mother."

India will play the remainder of the match with 10 men and four specialist bowlers as the hosts will not be allowed to replace Ashwin's batting or bowling, but will be permitted a substitute fielder.

Ravichandran Ashwin has withdrawn from the Test squad, effective immediately due to a family medical emergency

BCCI

Ashwin claimed his 500th Test wicket earlier on Friday, becoming the second Indian bowler after Anil Kumble to reach the milestone.

He also scored 37 runs as India put on a total of 445 in the first innings.



Kyle Jamieson (R) with Tim Southee

Jamieson ruled out for rest of season with stress fracture

Christchurch, New Zealand - Fast bowler Kyle Jamieson has been ruled out for the rest of the season after scans revealed a stress fracture in his back, New Zealand Cricket announced on Saturday.

The 29-year-old is not expected to play again until next summer, meaning he will miss New Zealand's two-test series against Australia when it starts later this month.

"The last few days have been some of my most challenging but I am hugely grateful for the support I've received from my partner, family, teammates, support staff and medical professionals," said Jamieson.

"I know injuries are part of life as a cricketer and at my age I am hopeful I still have many more playing days ahead of me."

Jamieson had complained of back pain after New Zealand's win over South Africa in their first Test earlier this month and did not feature in the second Test.

The Black Caps won in Hamilton by seven wickets on Friday to complete a series victory.

Jamieson had surgery last year to treat an injury in the same location, but NZC say he will only require "rest and rehabilitation to give the injury the best chance to heal".

De Minaur upsets Rublev in Rotterdam quarterfinals

Rotterdam, Netherlands - No. 5 seed Alex de Minaur of Australia smashed 10 aces, saved five of six break points and knocked out No. 2 seed Andrey Rublev of Russia 7-6 (5), 4-6, 6-3 in a quarterfinal showdown at the ABN AMRO Open on Friday in Rotterdam, Netherlands.

While he committed twice as many unforced errors as Rublev (22 to 11), de Minaur still controlled most aspects of the match. Down 4-2 in the first-set tiebreaker, he ran off four straight points before winning his second set point. In the third set, he won 17 of 22 first-serve points and saved all three break points he faced. The Australian will play No. 6 seed Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria in the semifinals after Dimitrov outlasted Kazakhstan's Alexander Shevchenko 7-6 (2), 3-6, 6-4.

Top-seeded Italian Jannik Sinner won his 200th career tour-level match when Canadian opponent Milos Raonic retired due to a right hip injury, down 7-6 (4), 1-1. Sinner's opponent will be Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor, a 7-5, 7-6 (4) victor over Fin-



Alex de Minaur was in top form against Andrey Rublev

land's Emil Ruusuvuori.

Coria enters last four in Buenos Aires

In an all-Argentine quarterfinal battle, Federico Coria upset No. 5 seed Sebastian Baez 6-1, 6-4 in Buenos Aires.

Coria served three aces without a double fault and converted five of nine break-point chances against Baez. His semifinal foe

will be countryman and wild card Facundo Diaz Acosta, who beat Serbia's Dusan Lajovic 6-4, 6-3.

The other semifinal will see No. 1 seed Carlos Alcaraz of Spain face No. 3 seed Nicolas Jarry of Chile. Alcaraz got past Italian qualifier Andrea Vavassori 7-6 (1), 6-1, while Jarry advanced after No. 6 seed Tomas Martin Etcheverry of Argentina retired with the score at one set apiece.

Tiafoe in semis

No. 2 seed Frances Tiafoe eased into the semifinals by beating Italian lucky loser Flavio Cobolli 6-4, 6-2 in Florida.

While Cobolli amassed a 7-4 edge in aces and saved seven of 11 break points, Tiafoe was too strong. He won not only 23 of 29 first-serve points (79.3 percent), but also 13 of 18 second-serve points (72.2 percent). Tiafoe set up an all-American semifinal showdown with No. 3 seed Tommy Paul, who beat Australia's Jordan Thompson 6-4, 6-3. No. 1 seed Taylor Fritz defeated Australian Rinky Hijikata 6-3, 6-3, and Marcos Giron beat Patrick Kypson 6-4, 6-4.

Rybakina meets Swiatek in Qatar Open final

Doha, Qatar - Third seed Elena Rybakina is into the final of the Qatar Open after a 6-2, 6-4 win over Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in Friday's semi-final and will now meet world number one Iga Swiatek in the decider.

Defending champion Swiatek will be well rested as she bids to win the tournament for a third consecutive year, after she received a walkover in her semi-final when Karolina Pliskova withdrew because of a lower back injury.

Rybakina, with wins in Brisbane and Abu Dhabi already this year, looked to be easing to victory before the unseeded Russian put in a brave finish, and will now meet Swiatek in a final for the first time.

After an even opening, Rybakina served to love to make it 2-2 before going on to break the Russian's serve twice in the first set.

The second set saw Rybakina break serve straight away, and after that, it looked a formality despite Pavlyuchenkova having six break points before Rybakina rallied to hold serve to make it 3-1 and followed up with another break.

Rybakina served the match at 5-2, but Pavlyuchenkova was-



Defending champion Iga Swiatek will meet Elena Rybakina in the final of Qatar Open

n't beaten just yet and broke serve for the first time to push her opponent all the way, but Rybakina held her nerve, and her serve, to foil any chance of a comeback.

Swiatek and Rybakina have met on four occasions before now, with Rybakina winning the last three, which includes their quarter-final last year in Rome when the Pole retired through injury with the match tied at one set each and 2-2 in the third.

Top seed Swiatek will bid to become the first player to win a WTA event three straight times since Serena Williams won the Miami title from 2013-15, when she goes up against Rybakina in Saturday's final.

UNLEASHING THE BEAST

Rivals fear another dominant season as Red Bull unveils new car

London, England - Formula One teams will go testing with some trepidation in Bahrain next week amid fears Red Bull may have again stolen a march with an aggressive evolution of the most dominant car of all time.

The champions' launch of their 2024 challenger, the RB20, on Thursday will not have provided much comfort for rivals still playing catch up from last season when Red Bull won 21 of 22 races.

Red Bull's triple world champion Max Verstappen said his reaction on seeing the first drawings at the end of last season was "Wow, that's quite different".

The main focus concerned the new-look Red Bull sidepods, now with tall and slim vertical radiator inlets that looked similar to those attempted and abandoned by former champions Mercedes last season.



Max Verstappen (L) and Sergio Perez with the new Red Bull car

'Absolutely exquisite'

Team principal Christian Horner said the car was an evolution of the RB19 but acknowledged it was not conservative and contained real innovation.

He said the changes were driven by performance based on simulation tools.

"You can see they've been quite aggressive in certain areas and still pushing the boundaries, conscious that our opponents are still going to be pushing very hard," he said at the presentation.

"Some of the detail on the car is absolutely exquisite."

Star designer Adrian Newey said the team had made im-

provements to all areas -- mechanical, vehicle dynamics and aerodynamics.

"Is that enough? Who knows. That's the thing about Formula One," he said.

"We know roughly what we've done from the shakedown at Silverstone, from what we can tell it's behaved as we expect it

to but that's no guarantee of anything. It could be that some other team has made a bigger jump than us.

"Last year's car really was a total surprise in terms of its dominance."

The fear is that Red Bull may have moved to another level of development while rivals, some of whom have said openly that they consider the champions to be beatable, launched cars clearly influenced by the RB19.

"I believe we've made some good steps in the right direction so it should be another great season for the team," said Red Bull's Mexican Sergio Perez.

Teams have three days of testing in Bahrain from Feb 21-23 before the opening race on March 2.

"It's a bit like waiting for Christmas. It is exciting," said Mercedes technical director James Allison of the pre-season 'phony war' period and the uneasy mix of anticipation and trepidation.

"You want it to arrive, and you want the days to fly by. You also know that the Christmas Day opening of those presents might not bring you all the good fortune you wish for.

"It's not a relaxing time of year, but it is very exhilarating."



Abdullah al Rawahi in action at the FIA Junior World Rally Championship in Sweden

Oman Rally Team's Al Rawahi forges ahead after setback in Rally Sweden

Umea, Sweden - The Oman Rally Team duo of Abdullah al Rawahi and Ata al Hmoud overcame their lack of experience of winter rallying conditions and the additional difficulties of heavy snowfall to make an impressive start to their FIA Junior World Rally Championship (JWRC) campaign at Rally Sweden.

After Saturday morning's ninth of the event's 18 special stages at Vannas, the crew were progressing well in their M-Sport Poland Ford Fiesta Rally3 on the opening round of the five-event JWRC. They recovered strongly from hitting a banking on SS7 on Friday evening and incurring time penalties that pushed them down to 16th position by setting the 12th quickest time.

Al Rawahi said: "It was tough and so many changes with the weather and the conditions. It was pretty new to me and a new challenge. We had a lot of moments and we lost so much time. The good thing was that we did all the stages until the last one (Friday) when we hit a bank and we broke the radiator. We had to stop. Otherwise, I was happy with the day."

Co-driver Al Hmoud added: "We stopped five kilometres from the finish of the seventh stage when we hit a snow bank. It was a tough experience coming to a WRC and starting with Sweden. This was tough and driving at night was also new to Abdullah and for me as well. Anyway, we hope to gain more experience over the weekend. The pace has been okay."

Al Rawahi started strongly on Thursday's shakedown stage and carded a couple of impressive runs on a section of track where he was able to adjust his driving style to pushing hard between snow banks on studded tyres. Even before the event had begun in earnest, his Bolivian rival Bruno Bulacia succumbed to an accident.

After finishing the opening 5.16km sprint stage in Umea on Thursday evening in 16th position,

It was tough and so many changes with the weather and the conditions. It was pretty new to me

ABDULLAH AL RAWAHI

Kanaya to defend International Series Oman title

Muscat - Reigning International Series Oman champion Takumi Kanaya will return to Al Mouj Golf to defend his title against a stellar field from February 22.

Kanaya, who won by four shots last season to claim his first professional trophy outside of Japan, faces a stiff challenge with major winners, LIV Golf stars and the cream of the Asian Tour set to tee it up for the season opener on The International Series, the pathway series to the LIV Golf League, sanctioned by the Asian Tour.

The 25-year-old from Hiroshima, said: "In 2023, I lined up against some of the best players in the world and proved that I could win. This year I want to do exactly the same. Defending my title will not be easy against this strong field, but I know I have what it takes on a truly challenging course."

The Japanese star's sentiments on the course were echoed by his peers on the Asian Tour as they voted the venue, Al Mouj Golf, the Players' Choice Course of the Year for 2023. His victory also meant he became



Takumi Kanaya

the first player from the Land of the Rising Sun to win an International Series event.

Joaquin Niemann could well be one of Kanaya's biggest challengers after shooting an incredible round of 59 on his way to victory at LIV Golf Mayakoba

earlier this month. The Torque GC captain finished T5 last year at International Series Oman.

A number of other players on the LIV Golf roster will be looking for a big performance in Oman, in preparation for LIV Golf Jeddah the following week.

The Fireballs GC duo of Eugenio Chacarra and David Puig both know that winning feeling on The International Series, having triumphed in Scotland and Singapore respectively last season, while RangeGoats GC big hitters Matthew Wolff and Peter Uihlein will also feature.

The cream of the Asian Tour will also provide a stern test, with global golfing talent including Australia's Wade Ormsby, Ben Campbell of New Zealand, and India's Gaganjeet Bhullar. All three won on The International Series last season.

The US\$2 million event is the first opportunity for the field to earn points on the season-long race for the top of the rankings and a coveted spot on the LIV Golf League.

For the past two seasons, the leader of The International Series rankings has secured a place on the LIV Golf roster, with Scott Vincent joining Iron Heads GC in 2023 and Andy Ogletree claiming a place on the HyFlyers GC for this season.

Vincent's younger brother Kieran also won one of three golden tickets at the LIV Golf Promotions event in December, an innovative qualifying tournament where over 30 places were available to players on The International Series.

International Series Oman is the first of 10 elevated events on the Asian Tour.

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SCULPTURES

RUSSIAN ARTIST
KIRILL SAVCHENKOV
REEMERGES WITH
ETHEREAL SCULPTURES
IN PARIS

A tall tale of a horse named Varvar is the link between two historic political opponents explored in Kirill Savchenkov's ethereal sculptures. Tsar Alexander II was assassinated in a carriage bombing in 1881, and carried away by Varvar.

According to the 36-year-old Russian artist and myth-maker, that horse was also the means of escape from political prison for the influential, anti-imperial theoretician Peter Kropotkin, who rode Varvar to freedom a few years earlier in 1876.

With floor-to-ceiling silhouette-string sculptures made out of horsehair and other materials, Savchenkov threads along the stories of these men and other 19th and 20th-century revolutionaries, in the moving exhibition, 'The Stranded Horse and The Riderless Night', on view at Galerie Allen in Paris until February 24.

Pin-pricked and laced together with weaver bird-like precision, these bouquet sculptures are made of found cicada wings, leaf skeletons, dried flowers, and shriveled, charred matches, along with burnt "tears of plastic," and miniature silicone mask-portraits. Their web-thin parts flicker in and out of view, ready to float away, as easily as a shifting, forgotten memory. The installation is accompanied by a soundtrack that combines the sounds of a horse breathing and a violin being played with a horsehair bow (a double reference to the violin signal used for Kropotkin's prison break).

It is impossible not to see a connection between Savchenkov's escapist meditations and his own story. He withdrew from Russia's pavilion planned for the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022, to protest the invasion of Ukraine beginning on February 24 that year.

On February 27, he posted on Instagram - 'There is no place for art when civilians are dying under the fire of missiles, when citizens of Ukraine are hiding in shelters when Russian protesters are getting silenced.' Curator Raimundas Malasuskas, who wrote the Galerie Allen exhibit text, was also part of the pavilion artistic team who withdrew.

Around the same time, Savchenkov left Russia, his wife joined him soon after, and they made their way to France, thanks to a series of coincidences and chance meetings. Savchenkov doesn't like to dramatise his situation, preferring to call himself an 'immigrant for political reasons', rather than an exile, because he is not under the kind of direct threat that Russian President Vladimir Putin's political opponents face.

In fact, Savchenkov doesn't actually know what kind of danger he may be in, which the artist argues is precisely how the Russian government exercises control. It's a concept the artist explores in his practice around 'hidden political narratives', and what he describes as 'a new form of informal dictatorship' (which Savchenkov points out is not limited to Russia).

"My artistic practice focuses on a specific kind



Essay D: Vera's
Herbarium (2023)

My artistic practice focuses on a specific kind of political regime, which uses your emotions and uncertainty about social life
KIRILL SAVCHENKOV



13th March 1881: Tsar Alexander II travelling in a horse-drawn carriage at St Petersburg moments before he was mortally wounded

of political regime, which uses your emotions and uncertainty about social life," he says, and explains that doubts about factual information and fake news are used as currency to control society.

Savchenkov is now living out the historic tradition of immigrant artists coming to Paris, often as political refugees - though he says he is not a refugee. He must remain demure, however, about mentioning artists in his circle out of concern for their safety. "It's one of the results of this manipulation," he said. "You don't know if you'll be arrested if you go back to Russia."

Savchenkov uses varied mediums to suggest how we can perceive one thing, only to notice it is in the process of becoming something else, not unlike those hidden political narratives mentioned. Some works, for instance, include small, burned bits of plastic he calls 'shapeshifting', which look like insect waste or cocoons and are a reminder of the burned plastic remains of street protests and riots. "I try to find pinpoints," that mark social experiences, he said, as well as where those points of contact tip into new forms.

Savchenkov's past performances and sculptures have been shown in Le Commun, Geneva, the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, and the 12th Gwangju Biennale, to name a few. But his previous work tended to be more

massive than these recent, lighter pieces, made last year during a local artist residency run by Art Explora and before that, at the Cité des Arts. One reason is that their storage is a lot easier while on the move.

Though he feels a responsibility to address Russian politics and the invasion of Ukraine, Savchenkov stresses that his work has a more universal message in mind. "It's a question of how we can struggle against dictatorship - not only Russian - and how we can understand our possibilities and our agency."

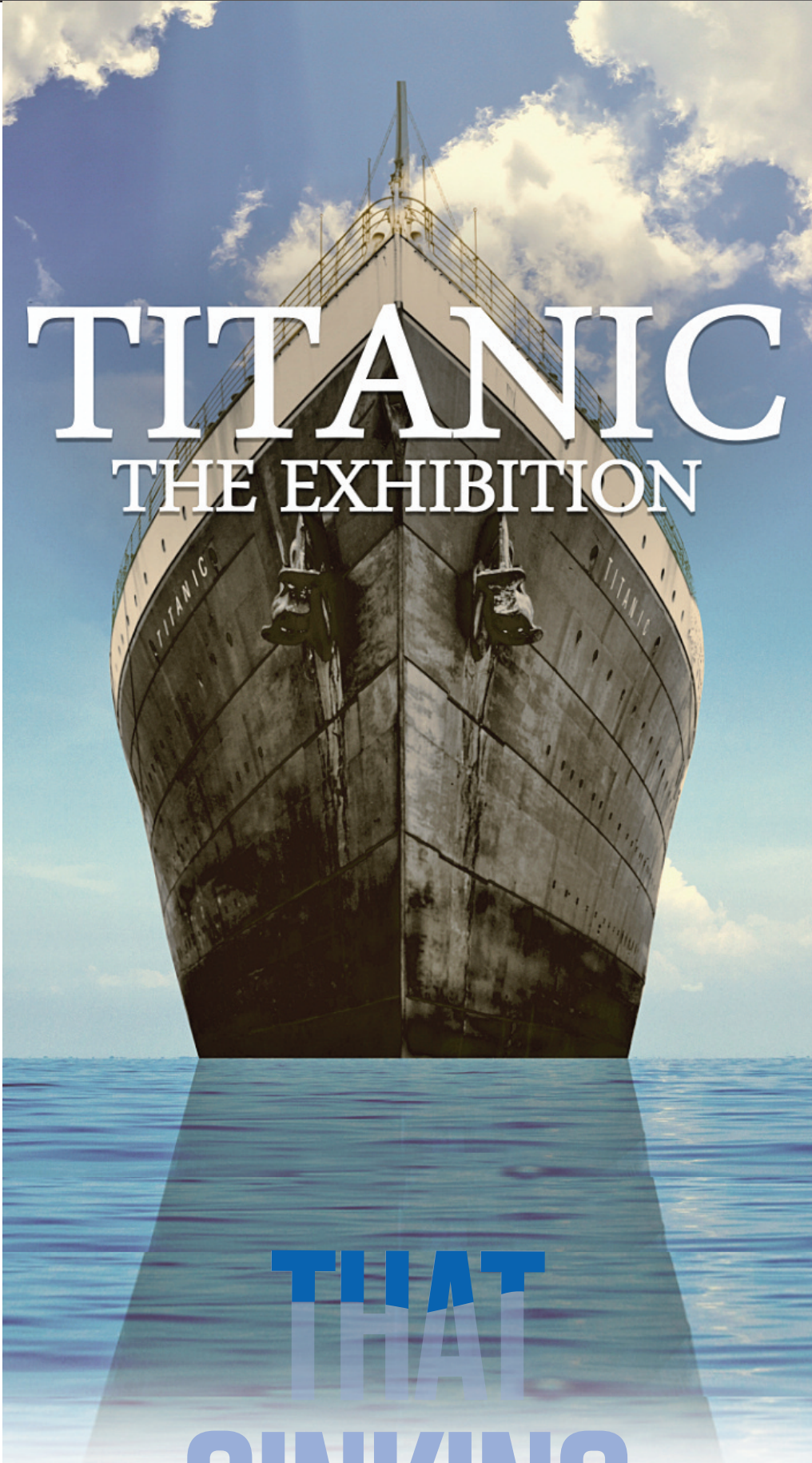
The Russian revolutionary Vera Figner (1852 - 1942), is an example. In one sculpture dedicated to her 'wordless diary', called Essay D: Vera's Herbarium (2023), the artist draws inspiration from her collection of plants while imprisoned in Russia's Shlisselburg Fortress.

Savchenkov threaded a silicone portrait of Figner into the piece, modelled from photographs of the revolutionary, who was also among the group who plotted Tsar Alexander II's assassination. Like him, she eventually left Russia and settled in Paris.

"There are different kinds of agency," Savchenkov said and pointed to Figner's herbarium. "Your very existence, also, can be part of your agency."



Essay B: Escape (2023)



THAT
SINKING
FEELING...



Now open in Chicago, Imagine Exhibitions' 'Titanic: The Exhibition' promises to take visitors on quite the voyage.

The show unfolds a journey through the design, creation, launch, and ill-fated sinking of the luxury cruise ship - then the largest in the world. The dramatic narrative will be told through more than 300 artefacts and interactive elements.

The show stretches between 10,000 and 20,000sqft and has had sold-out runs in Macau, Moscow, Riga, Perth, Sydney, and LA. It follows Imagine Exhibitions' other offerings such as 'Harry Potter: The Exhibition', 'Angry Birds Universe', and 'Downton Abbey: The Exhibition'.

The RMS Titanic, made by the Belfast-based shipbuilders Harland and Wolff, set off on its maiden voyage from Southampton on April 10, 1912, and infamously sank around 400 nautical miles away from its final destination of New York in the

early hours of April 15. Of the ship's 2,200 passengers and crew members, 1,517 died in the maritime accident. The last survivor of the Titanic, Eliza Gladys Dean, died in 2009 - she was the youngest passenger aboard in 1912, aged just two months.

In 1997, James Cameron directed the movie *Titanic*, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet as fictional lovers aboard the doomed vessel. The film was the first to reach an initial worldwide gross of over US\$1bn. Imagine Exhibitions's show includes several items from the blockbuster's set.

As part of its interactive experience, visitors entering the show will first receive a boarding pass corresponding with a passenger on the ship. The organisers say, this system will allow the visitors to relate to the individual story of their passenger. Other immersive elements include music from the era, the use of VR headsets, and the opportunity to view historically accurate recreations of the ship's interiors and promenade deck.

Artefacts included in the exhibition are said to tell the latest details of her sinking and discovery and

include personal effects of those aboard the ship.

The show's Discovery Gallery features a raised glass floor, mimicking the bottom of the ocean as part of a recreation of the Titanic's wreck site, which lies at 12,500 feet below sea level. This is accompanied by a film narrated by Cameron who has visited the Titanic wreckage on more than 30 occasions.

Tom Zaller, the president and CEO of Imagine Exhibitions, also went on a dive mission to the wreck site in the late 1990s. "Since that firsthand experience, I've presented hundreds of exhibitions about the ship, her people, and her stories," he said.

Zaller explained that the continued public fascination with the Titanic is because "it's every man's story - the story of hopes and dreams," and that this exhibition is "designed to immerse the visitor in the history of the Titanic in a new way, with incredible media experiences and recreated environments that bring the story to life."

