

Oman among top cyber secure countries: ITU

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate has been ranked among the world's most prepared countries in cybersecurity, according to the 2024 Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) released by International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Oman secured a place in the top Tier 1 category, with a score of 97.02 out of 100, highlighting its strong commitment to cybersecurity across various key areas.

The index assesses countries based on their performance in five key pillars - legal, technical, organisational, capacity development and cooperation measures.

Out of maximum 20 points per pillar, Oman excelled in cooperation and organisational efforts, receiving full marks in these areas, while scoring 19.59 points in legal measure, 19.03 in capacity development and 18.39 points in technical measure.

As per the report, Oman's cybersecurity strengths lie in its organisational structure and international cooperation. However, there is room for growth in legal, technical and capacity-building areas, ensuring continued improvement in future rankings.

In the Arab region, Oman is joined in Tier 1 by Bahrain, Egypt,



Our ministry has prioritised global standards in communications and cybersecurity, ensuring that Oman remains one of the leading countries in cyber readiness

H E DR ALI AL SHIDHANI

Jordan, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, reaffirming the Middle East's growing commitment to strengthening cybersecurity.

H E Dr Ali bin Amer al Shidhani, Undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology in the Ministry of

Transport, Communications and Information Technology, emphasised the importance of this ranking. "Our ministry has prioritised global standards in communications and cybersecurity, ensuring that Oman remains one of the leading countries in cyber readiness."

He also highlighted the success of Oman's Hadatha Cybersecurity Programme, which was developed under the National Programme for the Digital Economy. "This programme aims to position Oman as a global leader in cybersecurity preparedness, and our ranking in the GCI aligns perfectly with these objectives," he added.

According to the report, countries around the globe are improving cybersecurity efforts, but stronger actions are needed to meet evolving cyberthreats.

On average, countries have taken more cybersecurity-related actions and improved their cybersecurity commitments since the last index was released in 2021.

Worrisome threats highlighted in the report include ransomware attacks targeting government services and other sectors, cyber breaches affecting core industries, costly system outages, and breaches of privacy for individuals and organisations.

Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Secretary-General of ITU, stated, "Building trust in the digital world is paramount. The progress seen in the index is a sign that we must continue to focus efforts to ensure everyone can safely and securely navigate today's complex digital landscape."

Public revenues drop, oil income increases 9%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's public revenues fell slightly to RO7.154bn this year till the end of July, marking a decrease of RO29mn compared to the same period in 2023, when revenues stood at RO7.183bn. This decline is attributed to a drop in gas and current revenues, according to the latest fiscal performance bulletin of the Ministry of Finance.

Despite overall dip in revenues, Oman's net oil income saw a 9% increase, rising to RO4.038bn from RO3.714bn in the same period last year. The average price of oil reached US\$83 per barrel, while daily production averaged 1,002,000 barrels.

In contrast, gas revenues saw a significant drop. By July this year, net gas revenue stood at RO1.09bn, down 18% from RO1.329bn in 2023. This decrease is largely due to changes in the methodology adopted for collecting gas revenue.

Current revenues also declined amounting to RO2.012bn by July this year, down from RO1.20mn from the previous year.

Public spending, however, rose to RO6.754bn this year till the end of July, reflecting a 4% increase from RO6.481bn spent during the same period in 2023.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

PUBLIC REVENUES	CURRENT REVENUE	DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE
RO7.154bn	RO2.012bn	RO653mn
OIL REVENUE	PUBLIC SPENDING	SUBSIDIES
RO4.038bn	RO6.754bn	RO786mn



This increase is mainly due to higher development spending and contributions to various budget items.

Civil ministries' current expenditure decreased slightly to RO4.808bn, down by RO28mn compared to the previous year. Development expenditure for ministries and government units amounted to RO653mn, representing 73% of the total

RO900mn allocated for development in 2024.

Total contributions and other expenses rose sharply to RO1.243bn, a 46% increase from RO854mn in 2023. Subsidies for social protection, the electricity sector and oil products amounted to RO326mn, RO286mn and RO174mn, respectively, this year till the end of July.

Work begins on Space Accelerator Programme

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In alignment with Oman Vision 2040, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) has floated a tender for the Space Accelerator Programme. This initiative is aimed at supporting and accelerating the development of local companies engaged in Oman's space sector.

Managed by National Centre for Space, Advanced Technology and Artificial Intelligence, the programme is designed to enhance the sector's economic contribution, support emerging local entrepreneurs and promote the adoption of modern technologies.

It will focus on areas such as communications, earth observation, spatial data analysis, unmanned aerial vehicles, artificial intelligence, big data processing,

spacecraft simulation and the Internet of Things.

The programme will provide resources, funding, and mentorship to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to help them innovate and expand both locally and globally. Both local and international companies with expertise in space exploration are invited to participate. The deadline for obtaining tender documents is September 22.

Oman's National Programme for the Digital Economy has identified the space sector as a crucial focus area, guided by MTCIT's National Centre for Space, Advanced Technology and Artificial Intelligence. Over the next decade, there will be strong emphasis on ground applications, activities and attracting investment in space-related ventures, reflecting Oman's unique capabilities and potential for development.

MHT-Resorts World Cruises tie-up to boost tourism; 69 port calls scheduled

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has signed an agreement with Singapore-based Resorts World Cruises to boost cruise tourism to Oman in the coming winter season. The partnership is expected to significantly enhance the sector's economic returns, while also strengthening ties with the Asian market. The deal includes 46 scheduled visits to Sultan Qaboos Port in Muscat and 23 visits to Khasab Port.

The first cruise visit will take place on November 4, 2024 at Khasab Port, followed by a stop at Sultan Qaboos Port on November 5. Each ship will carry about 2,000 passengers, highlighting the growing importance of cruise tourism for Oman's economy.



Earlier this month, Resorts World Cruises announced the launch of its ship called Resorts World One in Gulf waters. Beginning November 1, the ship will homeport in Dubai, offering three weekly departures - a two-night Sir Bani Yas Weekend Cruise, a three-night Oman (Khasab-Muscat) Cruise, and a two-night Doha Cruise. Passengers can extend these trips to

longer cruises, ranging from four to seven nights.

MHT continues to play a key role in the development of the cruise tourism sector, working closely with international operators and the private sector. Its aim is to position Oman's ports as attractive destinations for cruise ships of all sizes, making these essential stops on global cruise itineraries. By improving

facilities and offering more services, the sultanate aims to grow the sector as a pillar of its tourism industry, contributing to increased income and economic diversification.

MHT is also working with a leading consultancy to further develop the cruise ship and yacht sector. The study will provide a roadmap for attracting vessels of various sizes, with plans to im-

prove port services to cater to cruise passengers from diverse international markets.

In 2023, Oman welcomed 321,012 cruise tourists arriving on 202 ships at Sultan Qaboos, Salalah and Khasab ports. This year, with 102 visits recorded between January and May alone, the number of tourists arriving by cruise ships is expected to reach 380,000.

03
Self-reliance key to early learners' future success: Educators

16
Matti Sirvio to present his first solo exhibition - Green Pastures - in Milan

Dhofar gears up for World Theatre Festival amid record tourist influx

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dhofar is experiencing a cultural and tourism surge with visitor numbers during the ongoing khareef season surpassing 1mn. The governorate is also gearing up to host the World Theatre Festival in October, marking a significant cultural milestone as the largest event of its kind being held in the Arab world. In addition, the 'Marhaba Dhofar' initiative, aimed at boosting tourism cooperation with Saudi Arabia, is set to begin on Monday.

Visitor data from National Centre for Statistics and Information shows that 1,006,635 tourists had arrived in Dhofar by the end of August, a 9% increase

over the previous year. Omanis represented the majority of visitors (713,105), followed by tourists from GCC countries (171,762). Dhofar's scenic landscapes and cool weather during khareef continue to attract large numbers of tourists, most of whom arrive by land.

World Theatre Festival

Dhofar is currently preparing to host the World Theatre Festival in October. The festival, described as the largest in the Arab world and the fifth-largest globally, is expected to draw participants from several countries. According to Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, the event



will enhance Dhofar's cultural profile and promote global cultural exchange.

Ghassani made the comments at the conclusion of the inaugural Dhofar International Film Festival

on Wednesday. He highlighted the festival's role in showcasing Omani cinematic achievements and supporting young filmmakers.

The first edition of the festival featured 200 films from 18 coun-

tries, with 41 films advancing to the final competition.

The municipality chairman emphasised the significance of film festivals in promoting cultural awareness, noting that

Oman has made notable strides in documentary filmmaking with several international awards this year. He also pointed out that the sultanate is experiencing a cultural renaissance with strong ongoing support for art and cinema.

Marhaba Dhofar

In addition, the 'Marhaba Dhofar' initiative will kick off with participation of 40 Saudi tourism companies and 13 media professionals on Monday. Organised by Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the event will showcase Dhofar's main tourist attractions, including Salalah's beaches, the green mountains and archaeological sites, while promoting closer tourism ties between Oman and Saudi Arabia.



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CHIEF GUEST
H.E. Nasser Bin Khamis Al Jashmi
Chairman, Tax Authority of Oman



KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Saif Al Harthi
Finance Functional Director
Petroleum Development Oman (PDO)

Panel Discussion II - Strategic Responses & Compliance: Navigating the Evolving Tax Landscape & Emerging Trends

PANELISTS



Said Ahmed Al-Shanfari
Director General of the Second Department of Taxes
(Large Taxpayer), Tax Authority of Oman



Fatick Al Balushi
CFO, Oman Cement Company



Aabha Lekhak
Tax Partner, KPMG Oman



Ghalia Al Sharji
Tax Director, PwC



Manjot Singh Chug
Tax Partner, Deloitte Middle East



Asrujit Mandal
Tax Partner, BDO Oman



Unmesh Bhome
Vice Chairman of the Muscat Chapter of the Institute of
Chartered Accountants of India
Moderator

SPEAKERS



Gaurav Kapoor
Chairman of the Muscat
Chapter of the Institute of
Chartered Accountants of India



Rashad Al Musafir
Founder & Managing Partner,
FinScope

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Panel Discussion I Leading Through Change - Redefining the CFO's Role in Business Transformation

PANELISTS



Ali Hassan Moosa
Advisor, Estidamah, Ministry of Finance and Member of the
Finance and Insurance Committee, Oman Chamber of
Commerce & Industry



Muhsin Al Rustom
Group CFO, Asyad



Lamees Al Lawati
CFO, Shell Oman Marketing Company



Khamis Al Hashmi
CFO, Oman LNG



Ahmed Al Shuaili
CFO, Vodafone Oman



Diren Dorai Raj
Group CFO, Towell Group



Hiriyanna Narayanaswamy
CFO, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing



Paul Callaghan
Partner, Risk Advisory & Consulting, Moore Stephens
Moderator

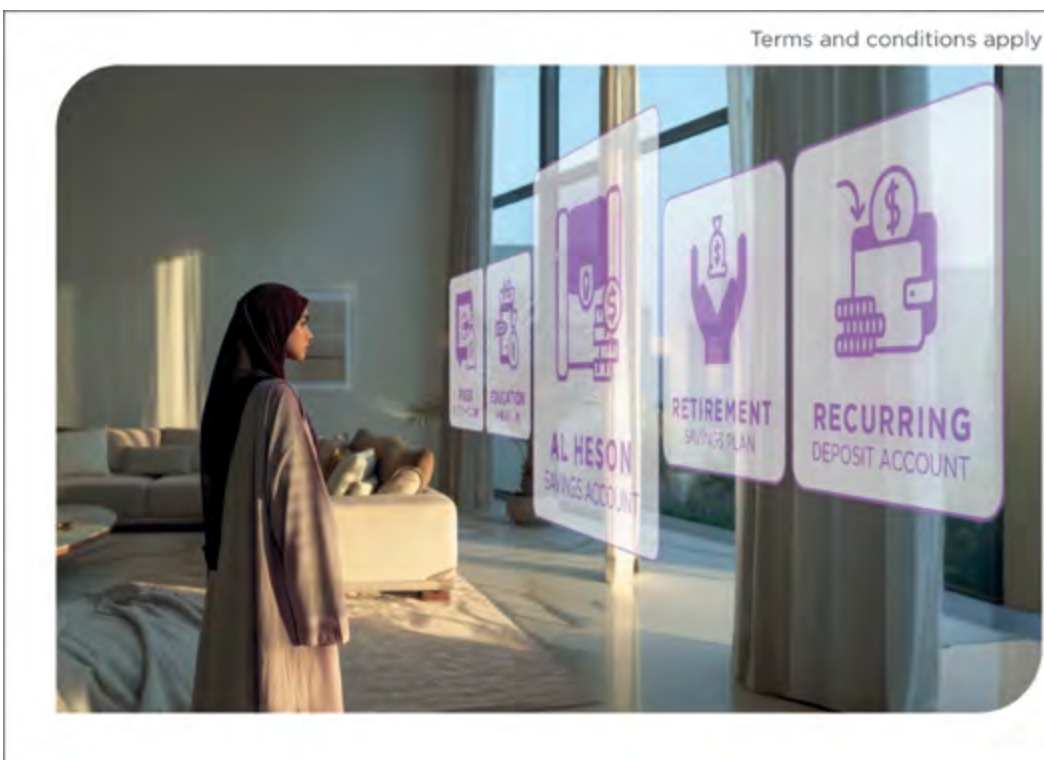


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Self-reliance key to early learners' future success: Educators

Our Correspondent Muscat

With the 2024-2025 academic year now in session, experts are urging parents to help their children, particularly those in grades one to four, develop self-reliance in their studies.

This guidance comes at a time when 811,679 students are settling into their new classes which started earlier this month, according to the Ministry of Education. Of the total, 307,765 students are in grades one to four, with an almost equal split between boys and girls. In grades five to eight, there are 275,953 students - 138,621 male and 137,332 female. Grades nine to 12 have 227,961 students - 115,052 male and 112,909 female. Additionally, 74,078 new students joined this year in grade one.

Educator Ali Hamad al Shayadi stressed the importance of encouraging students to take charge of their learning. "When students in early grades learn to manage their own studies, they build independence and problem-solving skills," he explained. Creating an environment where children are motivated to explore on their own helps develop life-long learning habits. This approach not only improves academic performance but prepares children for future challenges by fostering proactive behaviour and resourcefulness.

Shayadi, however, acknowledged the fact that guiding children towards self-reliance can be challenging for families. "With rising academic pressure, parents must find ways to help their children become independent without doing their tasks for them," he said. He advised parents to provide a quiet study space, assist in creating task lists and offer continuous support. "Effective study



skills like time management and task organisation are key," he added.

Social researcher Khalid al Balushi pointed out that children may sometimes struggle with concentration or attention. He encouraged parents to be patient and try to understand the reason behind their child's difficulties. "It's crucial to determine if the child is facing challenges with a subject, feeling pressure or deal-

Encouragement is key. Let children know that mistakes are part of the learning process, and improvement comes with time

ABDUL HADI MUSTAFA

ing with external factors," Balushi said. He suggested making learning enjoyable through educational games and activities while avoiding too much pressure.

Balushi also believes that self-reliance should be introduced gradually. "There's no fixed age for when a child should become fully independent in studying," he explained, adding that it depends on the child's personality and the complexity of the subject matter. He recommended starting with

simple tasks, such as organising study materials, and progressively increasing the level of difficulty.

According to teacher Abdul Hadi Mustafa, fostering self-reliance starts with open communication. "Effective dialogue is essential," he noted. "Talking to children at the right time, using a calm tone and allowing them to express their concerns can help identify any fears they may have about becoming independent." He emphasised the need for parents to understand their child's nature and tolerance for responsibility. Some children may be quick to embrace independence, while others might need more time and support.

Mustafa also advised parents to give children simple tasks and responsibilities, even if they make mistakes. "Encouragement is key," he said. "Let them know that mistakes are part of the learning process, and improvement comes with time." He added that the process of helping children become self-reliant should start around second grade, with the goal of full independence by fourth or fifth grade.

As children continue their educational journey, the focus on building self-reliance remains essential for fostering not only academic growth but also confidence and problem-solving skills that will benefit them for years to come.



70 bikers add thrill to Jabal Akhdar festival

Our Correspondent Muscat

With the objective of raising awareness on the culture and tourism potential of Jabal Akhdar, a group of 70 bikers from Oman Riders took part in a ride to Jabal Akhdar Summer Festival on Thursday and Friday.

The riders were invited by Ministry of Interior and the Wali of Jabal Akhdar to participate, marking another significant milestone for the club, which has maintained its tradition of attending the festival every year.

The riders departed from

Muscat on Thursday, taking a scenic route to the green mountain, and returned on Friday evening. As the first and largest motorcycle group of the sultanate to attend the festival, Oman Riders' presence at the event was highly anticipated. Its participation became the main highlight of the festival.

Known for showcasing the unique beauty and culture of the region, Jabal Akhdar Summer Festival provided the perfect setting for the riders to represent their club.

Speaking about the event, Khalid al Azri, a member of

Oman Riders, said, "Attending the Jabal Akhdar Summer Festival has become a tradition for us. It's not just about riding; it's about promoting Omani tourism and enjoying the camaraderie with fellow riders. We are proud to be part of this annual event and had another great experience this year. Oman Riders continues to contribute to local tourism through its participation in such events, thus making it one of the most active motorcycle groups in the sultanate."

The festival started on July 18 and concluded on Saturday, September 15.

This year's activities were held at various locations, encompassing cultural, entertainment and sports events aimed at serving all segments of society.

The event saw participation of numerous public and private sector entities. Some of the activities at the festival included equestrian competitions, archery, a mountain running race, motorcycle rides, and an artificial intelligence competition.

Additionally, there were training workshops for entrepreneurs, a symposium focused on water resources, a poetry forum, and traditional games.

Large turnout for pomegranate harvest season in Jabal Akhdar

Jabal Akhdar - The pomegranate harvest season kicked off in Jabal Akhdar on Friday. It is part of the 'Rummana' agritourism event, which began on July 4 and will continue till September 28.

Organised by Teepee Oman in collaboration with Agritourism Development Company (Janaen), a joint venture between Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) and Oman Food Investment Holding Company (Nitaj), the event has become a major annual attraction.


Khalid bin Hamad al Aghbari,

Head of Field Work Team at Janaen, said, "The first day of the harvest season saw a large turnout of visitors from Oman and abroad."

Since the time Rummana started this year, over 41,600 people have attended, and with pomegranate harvesting now in full swing, Aghbari expects even more visitors in the coming weeks. "The harvest season in Jabal Akhdar is one of the best times to visit," he noted, emphasising the event's appeal for tourists and locals alike. Rummana is a key agritourism

initiative in Jabal Akhdar designed to promote eco-friendly tourism while offering visitors a unique experience. According to Aghbari, the event helps boost local tourism and also supports small and medium enterprises. "Visitors can enjoy a one-of-a-kind experience among the pomegranate trees with several activities offered by local businesses."

This year's pomegranate harvest is expected to produce over 8.5 tonnes from approximately 667 trees, making the season a highlight for both farmers and tourists in Jabal Akhdar.



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MTCIT 224/2024	Maintenance Of Damaged Hafuf - Dulkut - Khadrafi Asphalt Roads At Wilayat Dulkut And Anetuk Escarmint At Wilayat Rukhyut In (Governorate Of Dhofar)	15-09-2024	25-09-2024	23-10-2024	Experienced Companies And Registered With The Secretariat General Of Tender Board (First & Excellent) Calss	(200/-) Two Hundred Omani Rial For Local Companies (20/-) Twenty Omani Rial (For Sme) Non-Refundable

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Islamic banking will continue to outpace conventional peers: Moody's Ratings

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sustained economic growth, governments' commitment to promoting the broader Islamic finance industry, and growing demand for sharia'a-compliant products across the GCC region will continue to drive Islamic financing growth, which will outpace that of conventional banks, according to Moody's Ratings.

Islamic banking has the highest market penetration in Saudi Arabia at 85%, with significant potential for growth in the UAE, Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar, Moody's said in a sector comment report. Saudi Arabia, the rating agency added, is poised to benefit the most from growth opportunities given the financing needs of the government's Vision 2030 program.

Moody's has forecasted that the profitability of Islamic banks in the GCC countries will remain strong over the next 12 to 18 months. The agency attributed the robust profitability of Gulf Islamic banks to increased commercial activity driven by government efforts to diversify economies across the GCC.

The report noted that Islamic financing will continue to out-



Moody's has forecasted that the profitability of Islamic banks in the GCC countries will remain strong over the next 12 to 18 months

perform its conventional counterpart, with rising demand for sharia'a-compliant products. It also predicted further growth through mergers, as the sector seeks to enhance revenue generation and reduce costs.

Moody's highlighted that Islamic banks in GCC countries will continue to maintain strong capital and liquidity, enabling them to capitalise on the growing demand for sharia'a-compli-

ant financial services in the Gulf region.

'Islamic banks across most of the region have ample liquidity to support their expansion, thanks to strong deposit inflows. However, Islamic banks will continue to hold relatively lower levels of liquid assets than their conventional peers, reflecting a lack of liquid sharia'a-compliant financial instruments for liquidity management,' Moody's said.

The agency expects non-oil economic growth in GCC countries to remain strong in 2025, driven by ambitious government economic diversification plans and strong business confidence.

Badis Shubailat, Assistant Vice President and Analyst at Moody's, said, "Sustained economic growth, government commitment to bolstering the broader Islamic finance industry, and increasing demand for

sharia'a-compliant products in the GCC region will continue to drive Islamic finance growth, outpacing its conventional peers."

Asset quality will remain stable

The asset quality of GCC Islamic banks is expected to remain stable over the next 12 to 18 months, supported by continued economic growth across the region, backed by infrastructure spending and strong business sentiment, particularly in Saudi Arabia.

'This is because Islamic banks' lending is concentrated in large-scale, low-risk projects backed by the sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund. Islamic banks' non-performing financing ratios have remained broadly stable since the onset of the pandemic, comparable to those of conventional peers,' Moody's said.

The rating agency stated that GCC Islamic banks will also benefit from government-led initiatives to promote home ownership and increase private sector employment, presenting opportunities for retail lending growth.

'A key structural feature of

GCC Islamic banks remains their focus on household financing. This type of financing is typically spread across a diverse range of customers, backed by collateral, and has historically performed well. A large proportion of GCC retail banking customers are public-sector employees who have had stable employment through various credit cycles,' Moody's said.

Corporate financing, according to Moody's, remains a significant component of Islamic banks' credit exposure, particularly to the historically cyclical and confidence-sensitive construction, contracting, and real estate sectors.

'This brings high concentrations to single corporate borrowers, and this is typically more pronounced for smaller Islamic banks with narrower retail franchises. However, the asset risk of Islamic financing for large corporations will be mitigated by lending to low-risk government-backed projects. This is especially the case in Saudi Arabia, where the government is supporting the contracting sector, historically the largest contributor to problem loans, in an effort to ensure minimal disruption to its gigaprojects,' Moody's said.

India removes minimum export price on onion

New Delhi, India - India has removed the minimum export price imposed on onion, according to a notification from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).

The decision comes on the heels of robust kharif crop production prospects and favourable monsoon, coupled with stable market conditions both at the wholesale and retail levels.

Earlier, the government lifted the onion export ban on May 4, 2024, and allowed the export with the minimum export price of \$550 per tonne and an export duty of 40%.

Initially, India had in early December 2023 prohibited the export of onions till March 2024. Later, it restricted the export until further orders.

While the restriction was on, the exports of onions were, however, allowed based on permission granted by the central government to other countries based on the request made by the countries.

ANI

S&P Global revises outlook on Saudi Arabia to 'positive'

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - S&P Global Ratings has affirmed Saudi Arabia's credit rating in local and foreign currency at "A/A-1" with an improvement in outlook from "stable" to "positive," according to its recently issued report.

In its report, S&P Global Ratings explained that its affirmation of the kingdom's strong credit rating results from Saudi Arabia's continued efforts in comprehensive reforms and investments, which will contribute to supporting the development of the non-oil economy and the sustainability of public finances.

S&P indicated its expectation of increasing growth in the non-oil sector in the kingdom in the medium term as a result of its continued implementation of the initiatives of Saudi Vision 2030, with the prioritisation of accelerating major infrastructure projects with the aim of easing pressure on public finances.

S&P expected that Saudi Arabia's gross domestic product (GDP) will continue to grow during the years 2024-2027, helped



S&P expects that Saudi Arabia will emerge as a more diversified economy in the long-term, with more job opportunities for young people

by the remarkable growth in investments in the non-oil sector and the rise in consumption rates.

The rating agency expects that Saudi Arabia will emerge in the long term as a more diversified economy, with more job opportunities for young people.

SPA

Oman to host GCC Airports CEOs Forum

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman, represented by Oman Airports, will host the first GCC Airports CEOs Forum on Wednesday at the St Regis, Al Mouj Muscat, with the participation of the CEOs of airports from across the GCC.

This forum, in its inaugural edition, is part of ongoing efforts to deepen cooperation between the airports of GCC countries. It aims to drive economic growth, develop the region's aviation and air transport sectors, benefit the people of the GCC, and enhance economic integration.

The forum supports the shared goals of GCC countries by fostering bilateral coordination between their institutions, in line with the aspirations of GCC leaders to achieve comprehensive and sustainable economic development. It aligns with the Gulf region's strategic focus on investing in infrastructure and improving services to accommodate the expected growth in air travel and aviation.

Sheikh Aimen bin Ahmed al Hosni, CEO of Oman Airports, affirmed that the forum reflects the commitment of the aviation



sector in Oman and the Gulf countries to joint efforts within a comprehensive vision for developing services and infrastructure, thus driving sustainable development in the region.

Hosni said, "The GCC Airports CEOs Forum will provide an important opportunity to explore cooperation in areas such as innovation, digital transformation, and the exchange of expertise in human resources and talent development. The forum will also discuss ways to enhance safety and security at airports, as well as tap into the potential of young people in areas of innova-

tion and institutional excellence."

Hosni, who served as Chairman of Airports Council International (ACI) from 2020 to 2023, added, "The airports of the GCC have seen remarkable progress in recent years and have demonstrated their ability to overcome challenges. They have managed to return to pre-pandemic levels quickly, even surpassing them, reflecting the strength of strategic planning and continuous investment in this vital sector."

He also noted that reports from international institutions, such as Fitch Ratings, confirm that the aviation sector in the

GCC continues to grow, supported by massive investments and ambitious infrastructure plans. This enhances financing opportunities and accelerates development.

Hosni further explained that air travel across GCC airports increased by 20% in 2023 compared to the previous year, surpassing pre-COVID-19 levels by 8%. The GCC countries' plans aim to double air traffic by 2030 through infrastructure development and enhanced operational capacities.

He also praised Oman's plans to add six new airports by 2028-

2029, which will increase airport capacity to around 50mn passengers annually. He highlighted that this plan aligns with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, aimed at enhancing infrastructure and developing the transport sector to support sustainable development and strengthen the Sultanate's position as a regional air transport hub.

He added that Muscat and Salalah airports have witnessed significant growth in passenger numbers, noting that the government is investing millions of Omani riyals in developing the infrastructure of the transport and aviation sectors to ensure the sustainability of this growth.

GCC airports are among the most strategically important hubs in global aviation due to their unique geographical locations, connecting continents and serving as key links in international air traffic. The expected GCC aviation bloc, which may be formalised during this forum, is expected to strengthen the global standing of these airports by consolidating joint cooperation and developing infrastructure, thereby opening the door to broader economic and investment opportunities.

Lulu Group roped in to promote Indian organic products globally

New Delhi, India - The Indian government's agricultural export facilitation arm, Agricultural and Processed Food Export Development Authority (APEDA), has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Lulu Group International, the leading retail chain in the Middle East and Asia.

This strategic partnership aims to promote Indian organic products in international markets through LuLu Group's expansive network of hypermarkets and retail outlets.

As part of the agreement, LuLu Group will showcase a wide range of certified Indian

organic products in its stores across the UAE. APEDA will support these efforts by facilitating connections between organic growers in India including Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) and cooperatives, and the LuLu Group.

The Indian government said this arrangement will ensure that organic products reach a wider global audience.

The MoU, which was signed in Mumbai last week, outlines several key initiatives, including dedicated shelf space in LuLu hypermarkets for Indian organic products certified under the



National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP), promotional campaigns such as product sampling, interactive events, and consumer feedback drives, Buyer-Seller Meets (BSM), B2B meetings, and trade fairs to further boost organic exports and create greater awareness about the benefits of Indian organic products, and exposure visits for Indian FPOs/FPCs/Cooperatives to LuLu Group's infrastructure in the UAE to enhance understanding of international retail markets.

"This partnership is expected to significantly expand the

global reach of Indian organic products and contribute to the growth of organic farming in India by creating stronger linkages between Indian producers and global consumers," India's commerce ministry said in a statement.

Lulu Group, headquartered in Abu Dhabi, has been known as a trendsetter in the retail industry in the Middle East and North Africa region. It operates over 250 hypermarkets and supermarkets and is immensely popular with discerning shoppers across the GCC, Egypt, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

ANI

Markets eye likely Fed rate cut this week for fresh cues

New Delhi, India - Investors across financial markets will look for fresh cues from the outcomes of the upcoming US monetary policy review meeting this week, particularly the extent of interest rate cut, if any. The US Federal Reserve's next meeting is scheduled for September 17-18, 2024.

US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell recently indicated that it was time for the US central bank to reduce interest rates as inflation rates aligned with its target. Addressing the much-awaited Jackson Hole Symposium last month, Powell said that "the time has come for policy to adjust" but stopped short of hinting at the quantum of interest rate cut.

It is most likely that the US central bank will loosen its monetary policy, but investors are monitoring the extent of the cut - shallow or deep.

"The September Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting is expected to be when the US Fed will start lowering rates, though uncertainty persists over how much the Fed will lower rates this year," S&P Global Market Intelligence said in a weekly note.

Investors remained mixed with equal proportions of US equity investors seeing the likeli-



US Federal Reserve headquarters in Washington, DC

hood for just 50 or 75 basis points worth of cuts in 2024, said S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Inflation has been a pain point for the policymakers in the US, who wish to bring retail inflation to 2% on a sustainable basis. The silver lining is that the latest inflation data (for August) showed that the inflation rate is steadily moderating towards the intended target.

It is most likely that the US central bank will loosen its monetary policy and cut interest rate, but investors are monitoring the extent of the cut - shallow or deep

"Going ahead, market focus will be on the upcoming FOMC meeting next week, while domestic market direction will also be influenced by domestic corporate earnings, which are forecasted to improve in Q2 on a quarter-on-quarter basis," said Geojit Financial Services.

Foreign portfolio investors seemed to have upped their investments in India, hoping for a better return on investments

amid high chances of interest rate cuts in the US.

Indian markets surged strongly last week, reclaiming record highs, largely supported by positive global cues.

According to Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking, "Looking ahead, the coming week will be critical with the US Fed meeting scheduled, and its outcome expected on September 18. With a 25 bps rate cut already priced in, a significant market reaction is unlikely. The Fed's guidance on inflation, growth, and future rate cuts will be key in shaping broader market sentiment, particularly regarding global liquidity and risk appetite.

"A 50 bps cut could spark a positive reaction, especially in emerging markets like India. However, this effect may be short-lived as it could also raise concerns about the underlying strength of the U.S. Economy."

Domestically, participants in Indian markets will also be closely monitoring wholesale inflation data. Mishra advised that along with banking and financials, investors must focus on IT, real estate, and metals for long trades while being selective in other sectors.

ANI

IMF sees Fed to begin rate cuts as inflation falls

Washington, US - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects the US Federal Reserve to begin interest rate cuts next week as inflation is falling in the world's biggest economy.

IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack told a press briefing Thursday that inflation in the US has declined in response to the Fed's actions, and the IMF sees inflation on a path to the Fed's 2% target.

"The Fed's efforts were aided by important supply side gains and strong productivity growth. We expect core PCE inflation to end this year around 2.5 percent and be back to target by mid 2025," she said. "There is less upside risk to this path than we saw earlier this year."

"With this recent data, it shows that the balance of risks has clearly shifted with labour markets cooling and upside risks to inflation, as I just noted, less pronounced. And that means that we see the imminent start of a loosening cycle as telegraphed by the Fed as appropriate," she added.

Kozack said the performance of American economy has been

remarkably strong over the past few years, and the disinflation process has proven less costly than most had feared.

"The US is the only G-20 economy whose GDP level now exceeds the pre-pandemic trend. And this is not only good for the United States, but also good for the global economy," she added.

Meanwhile, the United States posted a federal budget deficit of \$380bn in August, according to Treasury Department figures released Thursday.

For August, total receipts, or income, were around \$307bn against total outlays, or spending, of \$687bn.

For receipts, social insurance and retirement were at \$131bn, while individual income taxes came in at \$137bn.

For outlays, social security was at \$124bn, while Medicare stood at \$129bn.

For the 2024 fiscal year, which runs from October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024, the budget deficit stands at almost \$1.9tn, with nearly \$4.4tn in income against just short of \$6.3tn in spending.

Anadolu Agency



Saudi Arabia's annual inflation steady at 1.6%

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia's General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT) released the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for August 2024. The index shows Saudi Arabia's annual inflation rate held steady at 1.6% in August 2024.

Inflation slightly ticked up from 1.5% in both June and July, following a three-month period of stability at that rate. This marginal increase was driven by an 8.9% rise in the prices of the housing, water, electricity, gas, and other fuels sector, and a 0.9% increase in the prices of food and beverages. In contrast, the prices in the transportation sector decreased by 3.4%.

The stable inflation rate indicates consistent stability over the year, and Saudi Arabia's robust economic resilience.

It also underscores the efficacy of Saudi Arabia's economic strategies and timely decisions in addressing global inflation and price surges.

According to GASTAT, CPI measures the price of a fixed basket of 490 goods and services paid by consumers. The basket is selected based on a 2018 household income and expenditure survey, which determined the items and their respective weights.

Prices are collected through on-site visits to sales points.

SPA

ECB chief reaffirms data-driven approach to rate decisions

Frankfurt, Germany - European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde reaffirmed a cautious, data-dependent approach to monetary policy, stressing that decisions would be made "meeting by meeting" based on economic data, without committing to a fixed rate path.

At its September meeting, the ECB cut its deposit facility rate by 25 basis points to 3.5%, as expected, stating that "it is now appropriate to take another step in moderating the degree of monetary policy restriction."

However, Lagarde underscored that future policy moves remain uncertain and will depend on incoming economic indicators.

"Our interest rate decisions will be guided by the inflation outlook, incoming data, and the transmission strength of our monetary policy."

Lagarde stated that the decision to lower the deposit facility rate by 25 basis points to 3.5%



ECB President Christine Lagarde

was taken unanimously.

Other key rates were adjusted as part of broader changes to the monetary policy framework, effective from 18 September.

Notably, the main refinancing operations rate was cut by 60

basis points to 3.65%, narrowing its spread to the deposit facility rate to 15 basis points. The marginal lending facility rate was similarly reduced by 60 basis points to 3.9%, preserving a 25-basis-point spread over the refi-

nancing rate.

Regarding the economic outlook, recent inflation data has come in as expected, with ECB's new staff projections aligning with earlier forecasts.

Headline inflation is forecast

to average 2.5% in 2024, 2.2% in 2025, and 1.9% in 2026, consistent with June's projections.

"Inflation is expected to rise again in the latter part of this year, partly because previous sharp falls in energy prices will drop out of the annual rates. It should then decline towards our target over the second half of next year," Lagarde explained.

On the growth side, the eurozone economy is expected to grow by 0.8% in 2024, rising to 1.3% in 2025 and 1.5% in 2026, a slight downward revision due to weaker domestic demand over the coming quarters.

"The risks to economic growth remain tilted to the downside," Lagarde said, adding that "credit growth remains sluggish amid weak demand."

The ECB will meet again on 17 October, but Lagarde clearly refrained from making any speculations about future interest rate moves.

The core message of La-

garde's press conference, however, was the need for European structural reforms to boost growth and productivity.

She praised Mario Draghi's report on European competitiveness and Enrico Letta's report on strengthening the single market, both of which underscore the urgency for reform and offer concrete proposals.

"It's a formidable report" that presents "a diagnosis which is severe, but which is just in our view," she said.

She added that it "points to structural reforms, practical proposals to achieve such structural reforms that could be extremely helpful for Europe to be stronger, but also for us as a central bank, to achieve better results in our monetary policy if productivity can rise as a result of the structural reforms."

"Structural reforms are the responsibility of the governments," she remarked.

(Source: Euronews.com)

China firmly opposes US tariff hikes on Chinese goods

Beijing, China - China is strongly dissatisfied with and firmly opposes US abuse of Section 301 to hike tariffs on some Chinese goods, the Ministry of Commerce said Saturday.

The Office of the United States Trade Representative on Friday announced final modifications concerning the statutory review of the tariff actions toward China under Section 301.

China has repeatedly lodged solemn representations with the U.S. side concerning the Section 301 tariffs, said a spokesperson for the ministry.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has already ruled that the Section 301 tariffs violate WTO rules. However, instead of rectifying its wrongdoings, the US side further increases tariffs on Chinese products, adding one mistake to

another, said the spokesperson.

The move is a typical practice of unilateralism and trade protectionism, said the spokesperson, adding that it seriously undermines the international trade order, as well as the security and stability of global industrial and supply chains.

Moreover, the move not only fails to solve the United States' own problems concerning trade deficits and industrial competitiveness, but also pushes up prices of US imports and forces US companies and consumers to bear the additional costs.

The 2024 Report on WTO Compliance of the United States, which was released Thursday by the ministry, once again expressed serious concern over the US abuse of Section 301, and pointed out that the United States is a "disrupter of global in-



US Trade Representative on Friday announced final modifications concerning the statutory review of the tariff actions toward China under Section 301

dustrial and supply chains."

The US side had previously sought public opinions on the results of the Section 301 tariff review. The majority of opinions either opposed the imposition of additional tariffs or requested broader tariff exemptions.

"This shows the Section 301 tariffs are unpopular among the U.S. public," said the spokesperson.

The United States should rectify its wrongdoings immediately and remove all additional tariffs on Chinese goods, the spokesperson said, adding that China will take necessary measures to firmly safeguard the interests of Chinese enterprises.

Also on Saturday, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) said that the unilateral measures, which are clearly against the

WTO rules, will seriously undermine the confidence of relevant Chinese and U.S. industries in long-term stable cooperation, and have a negative impact on global industrial and supply chain cooperation.

China's business community strongly opposes such actions, said a CCPIT spokesperson.

The CCPIT and the China Chamber of International Commerce have always advocated for cooperation among business communities around the world. Once again, they called on the United States to respect the laws of the market economy and the principles of fair competition, immediately cease its wrongdoing, and resolutely uphold the multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core, the spokesperson said.

Xinhua

Sanad centres cleared 2,433 jobs till Aug

Mohammed bin Salem al Mushaikhi, Director of Sanad Service Centres in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), said that the Sanad Service Centres in the country have achieved their desired goals in recent months, successfully completing numerous services that simplify and expedite processes for customers.

"These centers have also provided 2,433 job opportunities by the end of August," he said.

The 'Sanad Services' portal received around 6.7mn visitors seeking information and electronic services. These centres, affiliated with MoCIIP, witnessed increasing demand for transaction processing, completing more than 900,000 transactions and electronic services within the first eight months of 2024, he informed.

A total of 608,907 transactions were completed through the Sanad Services electronic portal, while 292,132 services were processed through the centres' access to the Oman Business Platform, the official further stated.

Till the end of August, 913 centres were providing around 370 electronic services.

Trusted platform

"From January to August 2024, Sanad Service Centres completed 901,039 transactions and



Mohammed al Mushaikhi

services," Mushaikhi said.

According to the statistics of the Sanad Services electronic portal, Muscat Governorate accounted for the largest share of completed services, representing 48% of the total services, followed by North Batinah governorate with 13%, and Dhofar governorate with 7%.

Mushaikhi noted that approximately 23 governmental and private institutions offer their services through Sanad Service Centres.

These services vary according to customer needs and include over 370 different offerings, such as medical examination forms, business registration, work permits, contracts, technical and health services, water services, vehicle registration, taxi plate registration, and more.



The centres also collaborate with newspapers to provide advertisement services.

Moreover, sanad centres cooperate with electricity and water companies to expedite customer transactions with high accuracy. They collaborate with Nama Group for tasks such as service requests, customer data updates, meter inspections, and billing issues.

Mushaikhi highlighted the growing demand for the Sanad Services electronic portal, which has seen approximately 6.7mn visitors seeking information and services across various centers in the Sultanate of Oman.

He emphasised that this reflects trust in the sanad centres' employees, who strive to provide the best service and expedite transaction completion. Some

centres have even increased their workforce to up to 18 employees to extend working hours and reduce waiting times.

Supporting e-governance

Mushaikhi explained that significant efforts are being made through Sanad Service Centres to achieve excellence in providing electronic services, both govern-

mental and private, in line with Oman's e-government strategy.

With 913 centres currently spread across the governorates, Muscat leads with 265 centres, followed by North Batinah with 144, and Dhofar with 119.

Other governorates also have numerous centres, such as South Batinah, Dakhliyah and North Sharqiyah. He underlined that sanad centres are managed by a

highly trained national workforce, facilitating transactions for individuals and private enterprises with governmental entities.

This contributes to the national e-government strategy and supports the economy by promoting small and medium enterprises, while also providing more job opportunities for Omanis.

Mushaikhi mentioned that MoCIIP continuously monitors customer feedback on Sanad services and works to simplify procedures and introduce new transactions. In recent months, the ministry has conducted workshops to explore expanding electronic services for citizens, residents, and investors. The ministry also seeks to support Sanad Service Centres by overcoming challenges, ensuring their sustainability, and involving centre owners in future ministry plans.

Regarding the identity of Sanad centres, Mushaikhi stated that it is part of a continuous development initiative aimed at enhancing the centres' leadership in electronic services.

The identity is a key step toward achieving the desired development, with the ministry ensuring that customers feel they are dealing with a large, well-organised institution, delivering consistent, high-quality services.

ISM hosts CBSE Oman Cluster TT Tournament 2024

Indian School Muscat (ISM) hosted the spectacular CBSE Oman Cluster Table Tennis Tournament 2024-25 on September 9 at the premises where 184 students in different age categories from 11 Indian Schools in Oman participated.

The Chief Guest for the inaugural ceremony was Shameer P T K, Director, Board of Directors, Indian Schools Oman and Mitul Asher, Chair, Co-curricular Subcommittee, Indian School Muscat Management Committee, graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour. Other dignitaries, Principal Rakesh Joshi, Senior Vice Principal Administration, Vice Principals, Assistant Vice Principals, participating teams, umpires, coaches, teachers, parents and sports enthusiasts were present for this Inaugural Ceremony. Coordinator Sports, Nandana Vinesh welcomed the gathering.

The Chief Guest Shameer P T K addressed the audience and declared the meet open. In his



speech he encouraged the participants to pursue success with determination and stressed on the importance of participation more than winning. He further added that every rally they play is a step towards mastering their

craft. Captain of Indian School Muscat Table Tennis Team Swarna Ramasubramaniyam administered the Oath. The Chief Guest, Guest of Honour and the Principal of Indian School Muscat

played a few rallies in the presence of the audience to initiate the tournament.

The daylong event concluded with a valedictory ceremony, with Abdullah Mohamed Said Bamakhalif, president of the Oman Table Tennis Association, present as the chief guest. Sajad Mohammed Baqir, vice-chairman of the Oman Table Tennis Association and treasurer of the Asian Table Tennis Union (ATTU), was a special guest, while Dr Abdul Rahim Kalathil, vice chair of ISM's academic subcommittee, was the guest of honour. Bamakhalif congratulated the students for their stupendous performance.

The chief guest, the special guest and the guest of honour felicitated the winners in different categories.

The following students won the Individual Championship in different categories:

Under 14 Boys Rishab from Indian School Sohar, Under 14 Girls Lakshya Sree from Indian School

Buaimi, Under 17 Boys Immanuel from Indian School Al Ghubra, Under 17 Girls Zara Zabil from Indian School Sohar, Under 19 Boys Swayam Sharma from Indian School Al Ghubra and Under 19 Girls Veda Prasanth from Indian School Al Mabela.

The schools, which won the Team Championship in different categories, are Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir (Under 14 Girls), Indian School Buraimi (Under 17 Girls), Indian School Al Mabela (Under 19 Girls), Indian School Sohar (Under 14 Boys), Indian School Al Ghubra (Under 17 Boys) and Indian School Al Ghubra (Under 19 Boys).

Christine Danti, assistant coordinator, Sports proposed a vote of thanks.

The first and second position winners of the CBSE Oman Cluster Table Tennis Tournament will represent their schools at the CBSE Nationals to be held from October 2 to 4 at Kangra, in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh.

NBO launches 10% cashback on EPP for Lulu shoppers

In partnership with Lulu Hypermarket, National Bank of Oman (NBO) introduced a special offer, providing customers with a 10% cashback in the form of rewards when they use their NBO credit cards for Easy Payment Plan (EPP) transactions.

This limited-time offer, available only from September 15 to 21, is a unique opportunity for NBO customers to earn significant rewards on their electronics purchases at all Lulu Hypermarket stores across Oman, the bank stated.

Maha al Raisi, Assistant General Manager and Head of Products at NBO, said that this partnership "highlights our commitment to providing value and convenience to our credit cardholders".

"We are pleased to collaborate with Lulu Hypermarket to offer an exciting deal to our customers. We encourage them to use our hassle-free Easy Payment Plan when purchasing electronics. This is another way we are continually working to enhance the customer experience and recognise their loyalty."

This offer is designed to provide significant value and convenience to NBO customers, allowing them to spread their payments over time while earning substantial rewards.

The cashback is capped at a maximum of RO50 per customer, making it an attractive proposition for those purchasing electronics during this period.

All-new Prado features striking retro design, exhilarating performance

Own an all-new Toyota Prado and enjoy exclusive Akeed benefits, so invites a release from the Toyota distributors in Oman, while announcing several offers valid till October 31.

"Get free service from 2 years/20,000km up to 10 years/100,000km (whichever is earlier), insurance 1 year and chance to win 1 grand raffle - All-new Toyota Prado," it stated.

"Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom for exact details," it further added.

Toyota Prado is a legend in its own right. Its legacy, which began over seven decades ago with the introduction of the Toyota BJ, is marked by outstanding rough-road driving performance and ruggedness, famously demonstrated by reaching



Mount Fuji's sixth station at an altitude of 2,700 metres. Since then, Prado has become synonymous with unparalleled off-road

capability, inspiring performance, and legendary dependability.

In Oman, its popularity continues to soar. With each new in-

roduction, Prado not only proves its prowess but also solidifies its place among true off-road enthusiasts. "Today, the all-new

Prado features a striking retro design, exhilarating performance and unmatched capability," the company stated.

The all-new Prado builds on its legacy of strength and reliability, blending the legendary Land Cruiser DNA with modern technologies to enhance both off-road and everyday performance. The vehicle continues to uphold Toyota's global reputation for providing dependable transportation capable of tackling the toughest conditions.

Toyota's mission for Prado has been to ensure safety and reliability in even the harshest environments. "Customer experiences worldwide have contributed to refining the Prado's reliability, durability, and rough-road capabilities," it added.

The all-new Prado retains its robust body-on-frame construction and adopts Toyota's GA-F platform, significantly enhancing off-road performance. It is also designed for easy manoeuvrability and comfort in conventional on-road driving, showcasing Toyota's commitment to practi-

cality and customer needs.

This is the first Prado to feature an electric power steering (EPS) system, reducing kickback on rough surfaces and providing smoother, more direct steering and easier manoeuvrability at all speeds. The all-new Prado will be available with a choice of 2.4 Litre Turbo Petrol and 2.8 Litre Turbo Diesel engines, paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission.

The interior offers seven-seat configurations, designed to evoke the strength and functionality of a true off-roader. The all-new Prado is equipped with the latest Toyota Safety Sense systems within a comprehensive Toyota T-Mate package of advanced safety features and technologies, reducing the burden on the driver.

Specifications of vehicle imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade.

MoH holds health management meeting



The Healthcare Management and Organisation Committee (HMOC) of Oman has held its second meeting at the headquarters of the Ministry of Health, in Muscat on Thursday.

The meeting was chaired by H E Dr Hilal Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health and Chairman of the committee, with the attendance

of the Committee's high-profile members.

The committee, which is responsible for developing strategies, programmes, and national policies for integrating civil and military health units in the Sultanate of Oman, discussed various efforts that the ministry executed through it.

The focus was on organising and coordinating the smooth and seamless transfer of human resources between various units functioning under the ministry, a release stated.

They discussed ways to enhance various forms of cooperation, opportunities, and capabilities in this area, the re-

lease added.

During the meeting, the committee addressed the importance of interactions with pharmaceutical factories and health product suppliers for the purpose of regulating the distribution of unauthorised medicines in the country.

Additionally, the committee

reviewed modern medications, emphasising their quality and prioritising Omani national factories and institutions for the promotion of local manufacturing.

Within the meeting agenda, the Director General of Private Health Establishments gave a presentation on the regulations for permitting government

health professionals to work in private health institutions, according to updated guidelines.

The Director of the Treatment Abroad Department presented an overview of the current challenges and discussed possible solutions related to treatments abroad.

Furthermore, the Healthcare

Management and Organization Committee recommended the governance of certain practices and the issuance of ministerial decisions to regulate the handling of blood samples sent abroad, ensuring that these samples are sent to medical laboratories accredited by the Sultanate of Oman.

New service added in Shifa app



The Ministry of Health (MoH) represented by the Quality Assurance Centre in collaboration with the Directorate General of Information Technology and Digital Health launched a new service in Shifa app at a ceremony on Thursday.

The new service has been added for the optimal use of appointments, an official release stated. The launch event was held under the patronage of H E Dr Ahmed Salem al Mandhari,

The aim of this service is to investigate the reasons behind missed appointments at healthcare institutions and to reduce the number of wasted appointments

Undersecretary for Planning and Health Regulation in MoH.

The aim of this service is to investigate the reasons behind missed appointments at healthcare institutions and to reduce the number of wasted appointments.

A text message is sent to the phone of the patients who missed their appointment, allowing them to access Shifa app. The app then prompts the patient to complete a specific survey to

identify the reasons for their absence.

Based on this information, the Ministry of Health can analyse the root causes of missed appointments and utilise this data more effectively, the official statement explained.

This initiative also empowers patients to actively contribute to reducing appointment wastage and improving the quality of the provided healthcare services, it added.

MoE symposium witnesses signing of agreements on school financial education

H E Prof Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary for Education in the Ministry of Education, patronised the closing ceremony of the symposium, in presence of H E Majid bin Said al Bahri, Undersecretary of Administrative and Financial Affairs and Chairman of the Main Committee for Khazna Project.

The closing ceremony of the two-day symposium included a visual presentation of the symposium activities, a recommendation reading, and honouring Khazna project partners.

On the sidelines of the symposium, the Ministry of Education signed a number of memoranda of cooperation with a number of private institutions. H E Majid bin Said al Bahri, Undersecretary of for Administrative and Financial Affairs in MoE, signed a cooperation agreement with Bank Muscat to implement a training programme for school students titled 'Finances Academy' signed on behalf of Bank Muscat by Sheikha al Farsi, Chief Operating Officer at Bank Muscat.

H E Bahri also signed a memorandum of cooperation with Oman Arab Bank (OAB) to implement a training programme for school students.

The agreement for holding the 'Adventures of Young Savers' programme, was signed by Sulaiman al Harthi, the bank's CEO.

The Undersecretary signed the third agreement with Sohar International to implement a training programme in financial planning for school students. This deal was signed by Khalil al Hedaifi, Head of the Government and Private Banking Group, on behalf of Sohar International.

The Financial Culture Symposium recommended to build a strategy for school financial education in the Sultanate of Oman; aiming to empower students with financial planning, saving and investment skills, include the principles of financial culture and education in various curricula, employ artificial intelligence tools and digital financial technology to spread financial culture among students, create qualitative training programmes for



teachers and career guidance specialists in the field of financial education, and strengthen partnerships with banking sector institutions within Oman; to adopt several initiatives that contribute to instilling financial dealing skills in various aspects of life.

The symposium also recommended in its closing statement the adoption of student companies and business incubators for school students by government and private sector institutions

viding them with the necessary skills and competencies, and studying the possibility of creating an optional subject called: Introduction to Financial Education for students in grades 9-12.

The final day of the symposium included three sessions, the first of which discussed the topic of financial culture and integrating it into school education programmes.

Dr Alya al Fori, Assistant Professor at the Collage of Economy

On the sidelines of the symposium, H E Prof Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary for Education in MoE signed a number of memoranda of cooperation with a number of private institutions

and enabling the Khazna project to implement a group of various educational activities, programmes and events in order to raise the level of awareness of financial culture among school students, through the implementation of winter and summer student camps and gatherings.

The final statement also stressed the need to review the most prominent international educational practices that enhance the roles of educational institutions in educating and raising students' awareness of financial transactions, and involving civil society institutions and parents in educating students about financial culture and pro-

and Political Sciences at SQU, presented the first paper titled 'Importance of Integrating Financial Culture Concepts in School Education Programmes'.

The second paper - 'Reality of Integrating Financial Culture into School Education Programs in the Countries of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States' - was presented by Prof Dr Abdulaziz al Ruwais, Advisor at the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States.

Dr Khalid al Saadi, Associate Professor at Sohar University, presented the third paper entitled - 'Financial Culture and the Importance of Integrating it into Curricula'.

Indian School Muscat begins afternoon shift for Class I and II calling it 'new beginning'

As a forerunner in innovative approaches, Indian school Muscat is welcoming students, teachers and the community to its vibrant and modern learning spaces during the afternoon shift.

To address the issue of students not getting admissions due to lack of vacancies in the morning shift and to enhance the learning environment, Indian School Muscat has introduced the afternoon shift for students of Classes I and II in the main campus in Darsait.

Under the new schedule, students of Classes I and II in the afternoon section will have classes from 1.30pm to 5.45pm.

Parents seeking admission of their wards at Indian School



Muscat in Classes I and II (afternoon section) may complete the online registration through the BoD admission portal <https://indianschoolsoman.com> and submit the application at the school office between 7.30am and

2.30pm during the regular working days.

For any query related to admissions at Indian School Muscat, parents can contact the admission cell of Indian School Muscat through email: admis-

sions@ismoman.com, the school informed.

The school offers a comprehensive range of facilities during both shifts, supporting both academic and extracurricular activities. This new phase promises an exciting journey of discovery and growth, led by passionate educators who value the impact of learning.

With thoughtfully designed classrooms and pioneering facilities, the environment is crafted to encourage curiosity, collaboration, and creativity.

The school's mission extends beyond education to inspire and prepare students for a future full of opportunities and challenges, the authorities said.

SpaceX's Polaris Dawn mission capsule returns to Earth

Washington, D.C., US - SpaceX's Polaris Dawn mission capsule, carrying tech entrepreneur Jared Isaacman, two SpaceX engineers and a former Air Force Thunderbird pilot, splashed down off the coast of Florida early on Sunday.

The Dragon spacecraft splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico at 3:37am local time (0737 GMT/UTC), a webcast of the splashdown showed, with a recovery team deploying to retrieve the capsule and four crew

members.

"We are mission complete," Isaacman radioed as the capsule bobbed in the water in anticipation of the recovery team.

The spacecraft reached a peak altitude of 875 miles (1,408km), taking the crew to the farthest point humans have ever travelled from Earth since the Apollo missions to the Moon. During a five-day journey, the crew conducted the first private spacewalk while orbiting nearly 740km (460 miles)



above Earth, higher than the International Space Station and the Hubble Space Telescope.

Isaacman became just the 264th person to complete a spacewalk, and SpaceX's Sarah Gillis became the 265th. Until now, all spacewalks have been performed by professional astronauts. During Thursday's commercial spacewalk, the Dragon capsule's hatch was open for just under half an hour. Isaacman emerged in space only to his waist to briefly test

SpaceX's brand-new spacesuit, followed by Gillis, who was knee-high as she bent her arms and legs for several minutes.

The spacewalk lasted less than two hours, significantly shorter than spacewalks on the International Space Station. Most of that time was spent depressurising the entire capsule and then re-pressurising the cabin. Even SpaceX engineer Anna Menon and mission pilot Scott 'Kidd' Poteet, who remained strapped in, wore

spacesuits. This was the 41-year-old Isaacman's second charter flight with SpaceX, with two more to come under his personally-funded space exploration programme called Polaris, after the North Star.

Polaris Dawn was the first of three missions under the programme. The founder and CEO of credit card processing company Shift4 split the cost with SpaceX. Isaacman won't reveal how much he spent.

Heavy rainfall devastates Central Europe

Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, southern Germany and parts of Austria are expected to see more heavy rain

Berlin, Germany - Emergency responders in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Austria struggled to manage rising waters even as Romania reported four flood-related deaths on Saturday amid unprecedented heavy rainfall.

Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, southern Germany and parts of Austria are expected to see more heavy rain.

Some areas in Austria have been declared disaster zones and residents evacuated from there.

In Czech Republic, the north-western administrative region of Usti and Labem bordering Germany is worst affected, with more than 20,000 households without power.

The highest flood alert level has been issued in approximately 35 locations across the Czech Republic. Authorities also suspended all shipping traffic.

Krakow in Poland was hit hard, with residents being evacuated and public transport disrupted.

On Friday, when authorities appealed to residents to stock up on supplies, Polish Interior Minister Tomasz Siemoniak had warned that 'the worst is yet to come'.

One person drowned and 1,600 people were evacuated in the Klodzko district of south-western Poland as local rivers rose to record levels after days of heavy rainfall.



Krakow in Poland was hit hard, with residents being evacuated and public transport disrupted

"The situation is very dramatic, it's most dramatic in Klodzko county," Prime Minister Donald Tusk told reporters on Sunday after meeting with the crisis management team in the town of Klodzko.

Some 17,000 households in

the district were left without power, and cellphone service was down in some areas. Road access to the towns of Ladek Zdroj and Stronie Slaskie was virtually cut off, Tusk said.

Klodzko, a town of 25,000, was partially submerged as the

local river rose nearly 7 metres (about 22 feet), well above the alert level of 240 and surpassing a record set during heavy flooding in 1997 that partially damaged the town and claimed 56 lives in Poland.

Meanwhile, authorities de-

clared the state of Lower Austria, surrounding Vienna, a disaster zone due to severe flooding from continuous heavy rain on Sunday.

Lower Austria Deputy Governor Stephan Pernkopf warned of 'massive floods' and potential

landslides in some places, according to the APA news agency, adding that 'the situation is worsening due to the massive rainfall across the country'.

Around Vienna, roads are flooded and emergency services had to step in to rescue people

trapped in their homes overnight. One person was rescued from floodwaters of the Pielach River, west of Vienna.

Several municipalities issued evacuation orders, with rubber dinghies pressed into use.

In Vienna, parts of the underground lines were suspended.

A dam in southwest Poland overflowed late on Saturday. Despite efforts to drain water and prevent the surge the dam in Mi dzygórze overflowed, leading to evacuations from nearby villages. The dam, built in the early 20th century, is near the

The highest flood alert level has been issued in approximately 35 locations across the Czech Republic. Authorities also suspended all shipping traffic

Czech border.

Since Friday morning, southwest Poland has received more rain than during the 1997 millennium flood, with alert levels surpassed at 47 gauging stations nationwide.

DW



Nicolas Maduro

Venezuela: 6 held for plotting to kill Maduro

Caracas, Venezuela - Venezuela announced on Saturday the arrests of six foreign nationals for allegedly plotting to assassinate President Nicolas Maduro.

Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello confirmed the arrests at a news conference in Caracas and said the three suspects from the US, two from Spain and a Czech national were planning to assassinate Maduro and organise 'terrorist acts' within the country.

Cabello said 400 rifles and pistols, allegedly sent from the US, were seized during an intelligence operation, which he said would be used to 'cause violence' in Venezuela. He claimed that the two Spanish nationals who were arrested were linked to Spain's National Intelligence Centre (CNI).

Anadolu Agency

Eight migrants die in English Channel off northern France

Paris, France - Eight migrants died while crossing the English Channel off northern France, French media reported on Sunday.

French media and several international outlets reported that the incident off Ambleteuse in the Pas-de-Calais region took place overnight, leading to a rescue operation that brought survivors to a local sports hall.

This incident coincided with a busy period for French authorities, who rescued around 200 people from distressed boats over 24 hours.



The migrants rescued included 55 individuals from Le Portel and 61 from La Becque d'Hardelot, according to the media.

UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy lamented the incident, noting the dangerous conditions faced by irregular migrants.

"It's awful. It's a further loss of life," he told a BBC programme.

The government has been 'discussing how we go after those (human smuggling) gangs, in co-operation upstream with other European partners', he added.

He also called for more coor-

ordinated efforts to combat human trafficking.

But Steve Valdez-Symonds from Amnesty International UK criticised the lack of safe asylum routes, saying: "The government's 'smash the gangs' slogan ... contributes to the death toll."

He also called for shared responsibility between the UK and France to prevent future tragedies.

These deaths follow a similar incident less than two weeks ago where 12 people died after a boat broke apart in the channel.

Anadolu Agency

Germany's Scholz heads to Central Asia in bid to expand relations

Berlin, Germany - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is to kick off a three-day trip to Central Asia on Sunday with a visit to Samarkand in Uzbekistan, where migration is likely to be the focus of talks with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Scholz's trip will also take him to Kazakhstan, where he will join a summit with all five former Soviet republics in the region.

The tour comes as Germany seeks closer ties with Central Asian nations, which are heavily under the influence of Russia and China.

Migration on the agenda

In Uzbekistan, Scholz is expected to sign several migration agreements with the Uzbek leader.

Among them is a deal making it easier for skilled Uzbek workers to immigrate to Germany, while also facilitating the return of Uzbeks to their homeland if they are required to leave.

There could also be an agreement on making it possible to deport rejected Afghan asylum-seekers in Germany back to Afghanistan via Uzbekistan.



Regional summit

On Monday and Tuesday, Scholz will visit Kazakhstan, the biggest economic power in the region.

The visit will include a sum-

mit on Tuesday with all five former Soviet republics in the region - Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Germany entered into a strategic partnership with the countries last year that encompasses economic issues, energy, climate and the environment.

Talks in Kazakhstan are also likely to centre on oil and gas supplies to Germany, as well as sanctions on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine.

Kazakhstan has been accused of helping Moscow bypass some of those sanctions.

Meanwhile, Scholz on Saturday ruled out the delivery of long-range precision to Ukraine in the future regardless of deci-

sions made by NATO allies.

He made the comments while responding to questions at a citizen's dialogue event in the town of Prenzlau in Germany's eastern state of Brandenburg.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has been requesting long-range weapons so that Ukrainian forces can attack Russian logistics and military airfields far behind the front line. Scholz said that the delivery of Taurus cruise missiles would entail 'a great risk of escalation' of the Ukraine conflict.

DW

Missile from Yemen lands in central Israel, 9 injured

Jerusalem - Nine Israelis were injured on Sunday with minor wounds as they rushed to shelters following the launch of a surface-to-surface missile from Yemen towards central Israel.

In a brief statement, the Israeli army said that 'following the alerts activated in central Israel, a surface-to-surface missile was detected entering the country from the east and landed in an open area without causing any injuries'.

The army added that the missile was launched from Yemen, and the explosive sounds heard moments earlier were due to the interceptor missiles. The Israeli army also said the results of the interception are under investigation.

Daily Haaretz reported that the missile landed in an open area in central Israel on Sunday morning. Following its detection, numerous alarms were activated in illegal settlements across central Israel, and interceptor missiles were launched from both the Arrow and Iron Dome systems. The army is still determining whether the interception was fully successful.

Haaretz also said fragments from the interceptor missiles landed at a train station on the outskirts of Modi'in in central Israel, causing damage.

Additionally, a fire broke out in an open area in Kfar Daniel near the city of Lod in central Israel due to more falling debris.

Israeli Army Radio reported that 'the ballistic missile launched from Yemen travelled a distance of approximately 2,000km (1,243 miles), taking



The Houthis in Yemen have been targeting ships that are Israeli-owned, flagged, operated or headed to Israeli ports in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden

The ballistic missile launched from Yemen travelled a distance of approximately 2,000km taking around 15 minutes of flight time

ISRAELI ARMY RADIO

around 15 minutes of flight time, and the air force is investigating why the missile was not intercepted before reaching Israel'.

The radio added that the air force is considering the possibility that one of the Arrow interceptor missiles partially hit the incoming missile from Yemen.

Israel's emergency medical services confirmed in a statement that nine people were in-

jured with minor injuries in various locations across central Israel as they scrambled to shelters during the sounding of the alarms. They were transported to several hospitals for treatment.

Separately, a fire erupted at a cement factory in Ramla at the time of the missile attack.

According to Israeli Channel 14, the fire started on a conveyor

belt at the Nesher plant. The fire was reported at 6:30am local time (0430GMT), just as missile defence systems across the country were activated. The cause of the blaze is being investigated by the fire department.

The Houthis in Yemen have been targeting ships that are Israeli-owned, flagged, operated or headed to Israeli ports in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden with missiles and drones in solidarity with Gaza, which has been under a devastating Israeli onslaught since October 7.

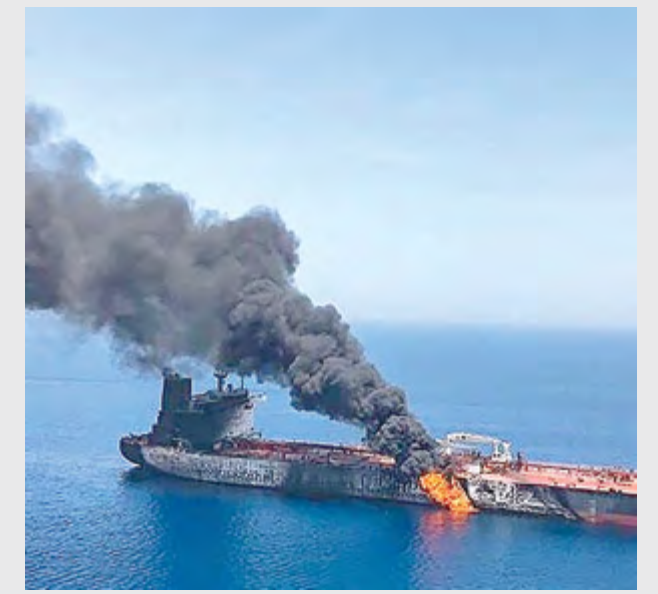
Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed on Sunday to 'exact a

heavy price' on the Houthi group in Yemen.

"This morning, the Houthis launched a surface-to-surface missile from Yemen into our territory. They should have known by now that we charge a heavy price for any attempt to harm us," Netanyahu said at the start of a cabinet meeting as cited by a statement from his office.

"Those who need a reminder in this matter are invited to visit the port of Al Hudaydah," he added, referring to the western Yemeni city that Israeli warplanes bombed in July after a Houthi drone attack killed one Israeli in Tel Aviv.

Anadolu Agency



The oil tanker has been burning in the Red Sea for almost a month now

EU naval mission starts Red Sea oil tanker salvage

Athens, Greece - An operation trying to salvage a stricken oil tanker, burning in the Red Sea for almost a month now after attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels, has begun, according to a European Union naval mission on Saturday.

The EU's Operation Aspides released images showing its vessels escorting three ships making their way toward the Greek-flagged oil tanker Sounion.

The operation aims to prevent an environmental disaster in the region.

Second salvage attempt

A Greek defence ministry source told AFP news agency that Aigaion Pelagos, a Greek-flagged tugboat, 'has begun to gradually tow the tanker northwards, escorted by military vessels'.

Satellite images analysed by the Associated Press confirmed the presence of three salvage vessels near the Sounion, with a warship nearby. According to the Greek state news agency ANA-MPA, 'three frigates, helicopters and a special forces unit' were involved in the salvage operation, including the Aigaion Pelagos.

"Despite challenging conditions, with temperatures reaching up to 400 degrees Celsius (roughly 750 degrees Fahrenheit) due to the fire, the specialised salvage team successfully secured the tanker to the Aigaion Pelagos," ANA-MPA reported.

A previous salvage attempt was aborted earlier this month because of the unsafe conditions.

The Sounion was attacked by Iran-backed Houthis on August 21 while carrying

150,000 tonnes of crude oil.

The crew of 25 Filipinos and Russians, along with four private security personnel, were rescued by a French vessel and taken to Djibouti.

The Houthis later detonated explosives on the ship, raising fears of the potential for a massive oil spill in the Red Sea - with the ship carrying more than three times more oil than was spilled in the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster off Alaska.

Since the war in Gaza began in October, Houthis

The EU's Operation Aspides released images showing its vessels escorting three ships making their way toward Greek-flagged oil tanker Sounion

have targeted over 80 vessels in the Red Sea, killing at least four sailors. They say this is a response to Israel's military actions in Gaza.

The Houthis claim their missiles and drones are targeting ships linked to Israel, the US, or Britain. However, many ships that have come under fire have little or no apparent connection to the conflict and observers question how the Houthis could possibly claim to know this, given how international and opaque the commercial shipping industry is.

An EU naval force was formed in February to protect merchant vessels in the Red Sea from Houthi attacks.

DW

Evacuation orders in southern Lebanon

Beirut, Lebanon - Israeli aircraft dropped leaflets in southern Lebanon on Sunday urging residents to evacuate, according to local media.

The leaflets called on residents of the town of al-Wazzani town and its surroundings to leave, the state-run National News Agency reported.

The warning came as four people were injured in Israeli artillery shelling in Kfar Kila and Odaisseh in southern Lebanon as they evacuated their homes, the broadcaster said.

The Israeli army said early on Sunday that around 40 rockets were fired from southern Lebanon towards northern Israel, causing several fires.

Lebanese group Hezbollah confirmed that it had targeted



Tensions have spiked along Lebanon's border with Israel amid attacks between Hezbollah and Israeli forces

three Israeli military sites near the border with southern Lebanon. Tensions have spiked along Lebanon's border with Israel amid cross-border attacks

between Hezbollah and Israeli forces as Tel Aviv pressed ahead with an offensive against Gaza.

Meanwhile, relentless Israeli

attacks claimed 24 more lives in the Gaza Strip, taking the overall death toll since last October 7 to 41,206, the Health Ministry in the enclave said on Sunday.

A ministry statement added that some 95,337 other people have been injured in the assault.

"Israeli forces killed 24 people and injured 57 others in three 'massacres' of families in the last 24 hours," the ministry said. "Many people are still trapped under the rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them," it added.

Israel has continued its brutal offensive on the Gaza Strip following an attack by the Palestinian group Hamas last October 7.

The Israeli onslaught has displaced almost the entire population of the territory amid an ongoing blockade that has led to severe shortages of food, clean water and medicine.

Anadolu Agency

Will Turkey's bid to join BRICS speed up progress in EU accession talks?

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey has decided to officially bid to join BRICS, a grouping of some of the world's emerging economies, originally comprised of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - but largely dominated by Moscow and Beijing.

Omer Celik, spokesperson for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), confirmed Turkey's application and said that the request was 'pending'.

"Our president has already expressed multiple times that we wish to become a member of BRICS," he said in early September. "Our request in this matter is clear, and the process is proceeding within this framework."

Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomed Turkey's aspiration, according to Turkish media reports, and said that he will 'fully support' Turkey's inclusion in the gathering.

If Turkey indeed becomes a member of BRICS, often described as a counterbalance to a Western-led global order, it could move further away from joining the European Union (EU) - and from deriving benefits of the 27-member bloc's single market.

Turkey has the right to decide on its own international partnerships, the EU, however, expects candidate country to support EU values, according to Peter Stano, a spokesperson of the EU's diplomatic service.

"We expect all EU candidate



This file photo shows Turkish FM Hakan Fidan and other participants at a two-day BRICS FMs' summit held in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia on June 11

countries to support EU values firmly and unequivocally, to respect obligations deriving from relevant trade agreements, and align with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy,"

Stano told DW.

"These are significant signals of shared values and interests, and of countries' strategic orientation," he added.

Some see Turkey's aim to

join the BRICS group as a reaction to its lagging progress in EU accession talks.

In an annual report last year, European parliamentarians concluded that Turkey's 'align-

ment rate with the EU's Common foreign and security policy has slipped to an all-time low of 7%, making it by far the lowest of all enlargement countries'.

Nacho Sanchez Amor, a par-

liamentarian with the Socialists and Democrats group in the European Parliament, said Turkey's path to the EU is through reforms. "We have recently seen a renewed interest from the Turkish government in reviving the EU accession process," he noted in the 2023 statement.

"This will not happen because of geopolitical bargaining, but only when the Turkish authorities show real interest in stopping the continuing backsliding in fundamental freedoms and rule of law in the country."

Turkey's accession process started in 2005, but ground to a standstill in 2018 over several issues.

DW

INDIA

Manipur: Why peace remains elusive?

The latest flare-up of violence occurred on September 1, after months of relative calm

New Delhi - More than a year after deadly ethnic violence broke out between the majority Meitei community and the minority Kuki in India's northeastern state of Manipur, tensions continue to rage.

Peace has remained elusive and - according to many in the state - so has a concrete action from the government.

The latest flare-up of violence occurred on September 1, after months of relative calm.

According to authorities, several people have been killed in drone and rocket attacks.

The use of such aerial weapons is a first for the restive state and the government called it a 'significant escalation' of violence.

The police in Manipur claim that Kuki groups carried out the drone attacks on Meitei-dominated areas. Kuki organisations, however, refute the allegations, saying that it was the Meiteis who used drones.

Last year was the first time that the Meitei, who are predominantly Hindu, live mostly in and around the state's capital city Imphal, and the Kuki - who



CRPF personnel are seen deployed at Gamgiphai, the Interstate check post border after the recent violence in different areas and districts, in Kangpokpi/Imphal West on September 11 (ANI)

We have about 60,000-70,000 troops of the Indian security forces flown in just to ensure that the conflict is calmed down. The tragic part is that they have done nothing

BINALAKSHMI NEPRAM

are mainly Christian and inhabit the surrounding hills - clashed against each other.

It came on the heels of a demand by the Meitei community to be officially accorded tribal

status, which the Kukis protested.

The conflict has since claimed the lives of 225 people, according to official data. More than 60,000 people remain

displaced.

State inaction?

Activists have questioned the response of the authorities to quell the violence. Many have pointed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is yet to visit the state or make a comprehensive statement.

"There is a total abdication of the responsibility to protect the lives and the properties of the people in Manipur and that's why the anger of Manipuris is going very deep," a Manipuri ac-

tivist, who asked not to be named, told DW.

Binalakshmi Nepram, a prominent human rights advocate focusing particularly on gender rights and female-led disarmament movements, calls it the 'darkest period' in the history of Manipur. She says it is the prerogative of the state to ensure the security of the citizens.

"We have about 60,000-70,000 troops of the Indian security forces flown in just to ensure that the conflict is calmed down. The tragic part is that they

have done nothing," she told DW.

"People of Manipur are absolutely flabbergasted. How come India, with its sophisticated weaponry, intelligence and technology, is not able to control the situation in a tiny part of the country? It has been going on for 16 months. This is what every Manipuri is asking," she added.

What's behind ethnic tensions?

Tellang Letminlen Haokip, a Kuki student leader from Chu-

rachandpur, said his community has been discriminated against for decades and that the ethnic tensions run deep.

"We have been economically and politically exploited. There is a huge mistrust between those living in the hills and those in the valley. There is hardly any development work in the hills. All good infrastructure is in the valley and we are denied sources of development and opportunities," he said.

40-year-old Surjit, from the Meitei ethnic group, described the ethnic divisions as 'a ticking time bomb that has exploded'.

He noted that the Meiteis have been deprived of buying land in the hills, and that illegal migration of Kukis from Myanmar over the years has added to the strife.

"We want a scheduled tribe status, so that we can buy land in the hills, which currently we cannot," he said, referring to an official designation which would grant privileges and affirmative action benefits under India's constitution.

"Then there is also the problem of illegal migration from Myanmar," he stressed, accusing the Kukis coming illegally from Myanmar of poppy cultivation and drug trafficking.

"After attempts from Imphal to destroy these plantations as part of a war on drugs, they (the Kukis) feel that they have been wronged by the Meiteis staying in the valley. But in my view, it's not wrong to destroy something that could lead to people of the state falling prey to drugs," he said. DW

Kejriwal to resign as CM in two days

New Delhi - In a major move, Delhi Chief Minister and AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday that he will resign from the position of Chief Minister after two days and won't sit on the chair of CM, until the public of Delhi declares him 'honest'.

Kejriwal further said that if the public votes for him, it will give him a certificate for his honesty. He also said he would ask for early polls along with the state of Maharashtra.

Addressing the party workers at the AAP office, CM Arvind Kejriwal said: "I am going to resign from the CM position after two days. I will not sit on the CM chair until the people give their verdict. I will go to every house and street and not sit on the CM chair till I get a verdict from the



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal addresses the party supporters, in the presence of party leaders, at party office in New Delhi on Sunday (ANI)

people. I will not sit on the CM post until the public announces its decision. Elections are after a few months. If you think Kejriwal is honest, then vote for me, I will take over as CM after the elections. If you think I am not, don't vote. Your vote will be a certificate for my honesty, then only I

will sit on the post of CM."

"The elections are supposed to be held in February. I demand elections to be held in November with Maharashtra elections... Till elections are held, someone else from the party will be the Chief Minister. In the next 2-3 days, a meeting of the MLAs will be

held, where the next CM will be decided," Kejriwal further said.

Kejriwal also accused the central government of adopting a formula of filing cases against CM's of states where the BJP has lost elections.

"People ask why Kejriwal did not resign from jail. He did not resign because I wanted to save democracy... They have a new formula now; they file cases against the CM of opposition parties in the states where they lost elections.

"They have filed cases against Siddaramaiah, and Pinarayi Vijayan... The Supreme Court has asked why the government cannot be run from jail... I appeal to all non-BJP CMs that if there is a case against you, do not resign," he said. ANI

SUBMERGED IN GANGA



A statue is seen submerged in the swollen Ganga River, at Namoo Ghat, in Varanasi on Sunday (ANI)

China issues warning as Typhoon Bebinca approaches

Beijing, China - China has issued an emergency response to flooding as strong rainfall as the approaching Typhoon Bebinca is expected to impact southeastern regions of the country, state media reported on Sunday.

The warning comes as Bebinca moved away from Japan's southwestern island region of Amami early on Sunday and headed northwest across the East China Sea, Tokyo-based Kyodo News reported.

The Japan Meteorological Agency reported that the typhoon was located about 230km (143 miles) west-

northwest of the city of Amami and was moving northwest at around 25km per hour.

Bebinca, the 13th storm this year, packed winds of up to 180kph (112mph) with an atmospheric pressure of 965 hectopascals at its centre.

It is expected to weaken to a tropical storm on Monday or later.

China's Water Resources Ministry has issued a Level-IV emergency response to flooding for Shanghai and the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui, state-run broadcaster CGTN reported.

Anadolu Agency

Bangladesh: US pledges support for renewed growth

Dhaka, Bangladesh - A visiting US delegation, the first from the West since Bangladesh's transitional government took office in August, has pledged to support the country's path towards renewed growth and expanded economic opportunities.

The delegation made the pledge after meeting with Muhammad Yunus, the transitional government head, on Sunday in the capital Dhaka, according to a US Embassy social media post.

The US affirms its 'dedication to fostering inclusive economic growth, institution building, and development to benefit the people of Bangladesh', said the post, adding: "As Bangladesh looks to chart a more equitable and inclusive future, the US stands ready



to support those efforts."

Brent Neiman, assistant Treasury secretary for international finance, is leading the US delegation, which also includes Assis-

tant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu. The team arrived on Saturday for a three-day official visit.

The visiting team also met

foreign affairs adviser Md Touhid Hossain. "We are committed to helping expand economic opportunities, build institutional capacity, uphold human rights, and

mitigate climate risks with our partner, Bangladesh," said the US Embassy following their meeting.

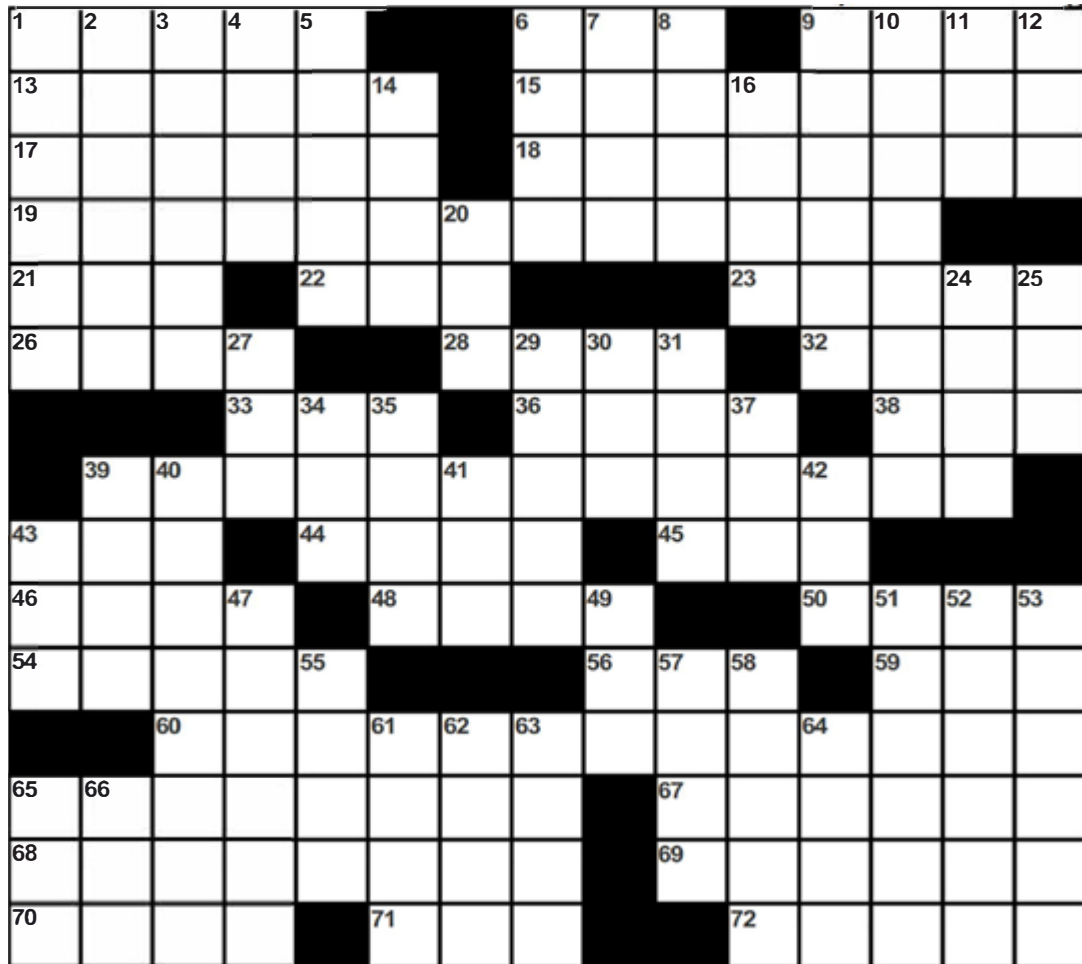
The embassy also said that they support Bangladesh's path towards renewed dynamism and growth.

"With the right economic reforms in place, the American private sector can help unlock Bangladesh's growth potential through trade and investment," said the embassy following a meeting with Bangladeshi businesspeople on Saturday.

Nobel laureate Yunus took charge on August 8 after former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled in the face of a student-civilian uprising. In an interview, she later claimed the US was behind her ouster.

Anadolu Agency

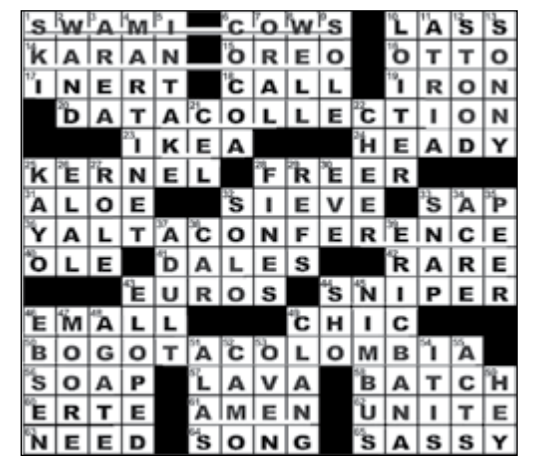
DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
 1) Cream-filled pastries
 6) Snaky shape
 9) Way out there
 13) Product demonstrators' pitches
 15) Sinks
 17) Playground rejoinder
 18) Views of the future
 19) Suffer a huge financial loss
 21) Clever comment
 22) Masters org.
 23) Hardly long-winded
 26) Hang in there
 28) Remove, as fat
 32) Spinnaker or spanker
 33) Make public
 36) Numbered work
 38) Boo-hoo
 39) Prudish sort
 43) Cleveland hoopster, briefly
 44) "For pity's..."
 45) _ Locks (Huron-Superior link)
 46) Pub orders
 48) Court plea, for short
 50) Free TV ads, for short
 54) Repair bill component
 56) Nile slitherer
 59) Guinness suffix
 60) President's protectors

- 65) Judge, as a coin dealer
 67) Loose oomph
 68) Interior designer's container
 69) Words that can precede the last words of 19-, 39- and 60-Across
 70) Daly of "Cagney & Lacey"
 71) Crude home
 72) Flies, roaches and such
DOWN
 1) Book after Job
 2) Yank out of the ground
 3) Big bash
 4) Wine and dine
 5) The John B. of song, e.g.
 6) They may be inflated
 7) Old French coins
 8) Green of "Austin Powers" movies
 9) Really goes for
 10) 1 OK or marathon
 11) Parrot's word, in comics
 12) TLC specialists
 14) Karaoke selection
 16) Open, as an envelope
 20) "Mangia!"
 24) "Dear" addressees
 25) English cathedral site
 27) Former NBA star_

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
 You show up ready to play. Whether that means your company softball team jersey is pressed and ready to go or that you're sporting your most serious ready-for-business suit, anybody who doesn't see you're a force to be reckoned with is making a big, big mistake. It'll cost them in the long run, and the scoreboard will show it. Yes it will. So get out there and take a swing!

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
 You can get a lot done if you feel like it. The real question is if you feel like it. Chances are you do. But if you don't, maybe you should spend these super-productive hours on yourself. Sometimes doing less is really doing more. So if that's the space you're in, take a long hard look at how you really feel. Sit quietly. Try not to push away frustration, anger, or any other less than harmonious feelings.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
 Your work is a source of real energy for you. At least it should be. You're somebody who needs to love work. And if you don't, it's a good day to start making changes. Are you in the right career but the wrong job? Do you need to switch tracks altogether? Maybe you're happy with what you've got and what you're doing and how you're doing it. Think about it anyhow.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. ho is the "moi" to whom the quote "Après moi, le déluge" is attributed?
 A. King Louis XV of France
 B. Maximilien Robespierre
 C. Charlemagne
 D. René Descartes

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
 You're like a shark in the deep waters of the working world. You are slick. You are sleek. You are good looking, but those good looks belie razor-sharp, highly effective tools for getting what you want. The little fishies had better watch out, because you are on the hunt. Go ahead and chase those fishies. But don't go tracking any new business projects down. They'll come to you. If they don't, spend the day studying the weather conditions.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
 Sometimes one of the hardest things of all is seeing things as they really are. Working through the various illusions is the first step toward accepting things as they are. It could also be the most difficult. And why is it important to accept things as they are? Only then can you engage with the real world, which is the only way to really make any necessary changes.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
 You are like an effective pool shark when it comes to your work. You cruise the pool hall. You check out the competition. You rub that little chalk thing on the tip of your cue. You even know why you're supposed to do that. Then you pick an opponent and you win! You pick another opponent and you win! Then you win some more! Sounds like a pretty good day at the office, doesn't it?

02. The sum of the internal angles of a pentagon are how many degrees more than that of a triangle?
 A. 180
 B. 540
 C. 360
 D. 270

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
 In your private life, you can chat for hours about this and that and who did what to whom and why, when you're in the mood. But in all things business, you are nothing if not direct. You get right to the point without any preliminaries. This is something that your work partners appreciate enormously. It saves a lot of time that would be better spent networking or having a coffee break.

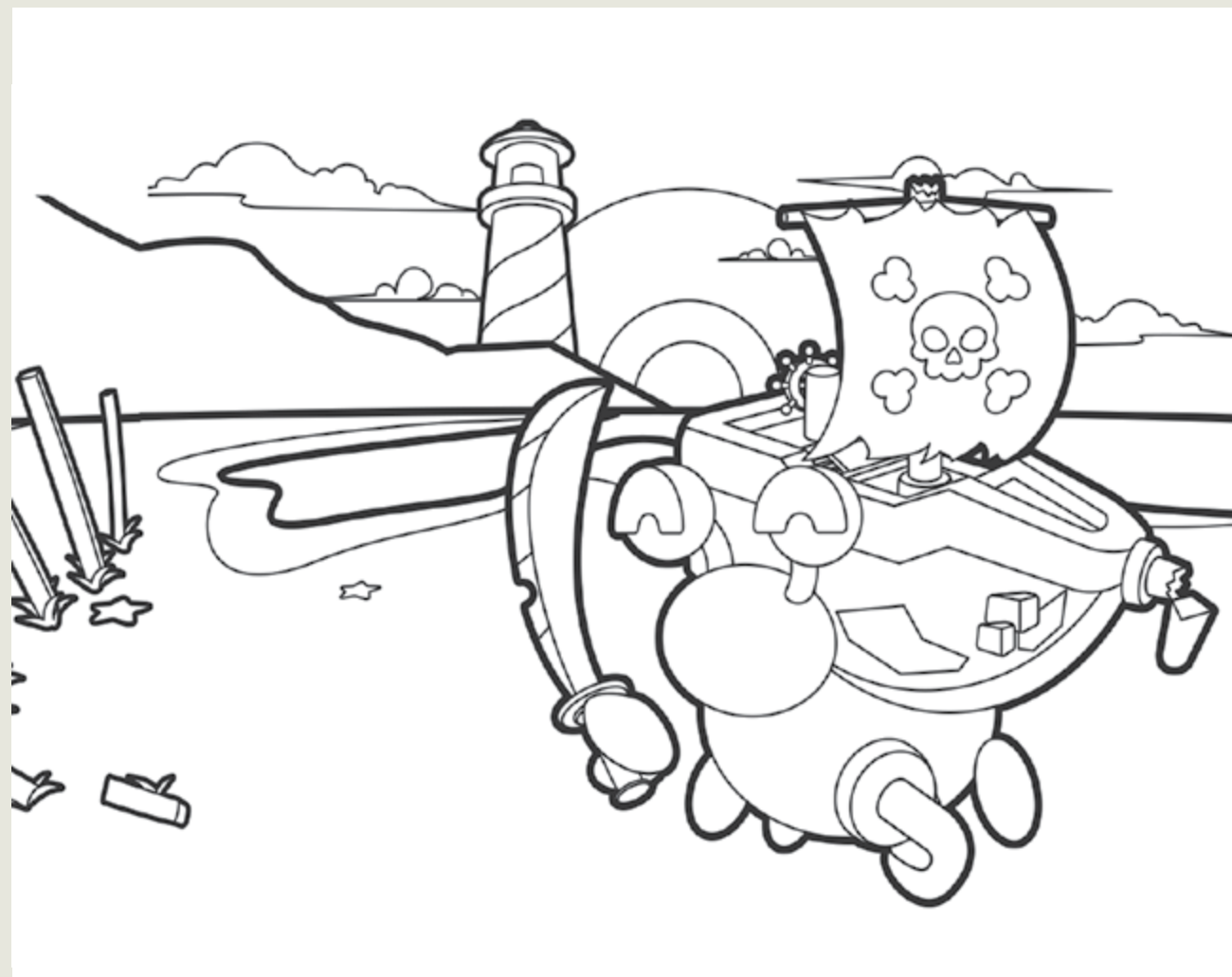
LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
 When it comes to work, you take a real nuts-and-bolts approach. First you ask if all the nuts are in place. Then you ask about those bolts. Then you check and see if any of them are loose. Then you tighten the ones that need it. This thorough approach has gotten you lots of accolades. You could encounter a few hidden bolts and nuts that need tightening. Don't be daunted. You'll uncover them all eventually.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
 You're not one for sloppiness. Sure, you're a relaxed, easygoing person, but that doesn't mean you suffer fools gladly or suffer foolishness gladly, especially when it comes to your work. You want things a certain way, and as soon as you make this clear to the people you work with, the better it will be for everybody. Communicate well and lead by example, and sloppiness will be a thing of the past.

03. At the end of March 1949, Newfoundland did what?
 A. Joined the United Nations
 B. Declared full independence from the UK
 C. Joined Canada as a province
 D. Declared itself nuclear-free

Answers: 1. A 2. C 3. C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

M	L	I	A
N	U	I	T
L	E	N	P
U	S	E	E

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

GUNNERS SHOW STEEL

Gabriel's goal hands Arsenal derby win at Tottenham

London, England - Gabriel Magalhaes' second-half header earned Arsenal a crucial 1-0 win at Tottenham Hotspur in a feisty north London derby on Sunday to keep pace with early Premier League leaders Manchester City.

Spurs started sharper and David Raya was forced into early saves, turning Dejan Kulusevski's first-time effort behind before he clawed away a dangerous cross from the Sweden winger.

Record signing Dominic Solanke, making his home debut, squandered a good opening in the 14th minute after Arsenal lost possession deep in their own half, taking too long on the ball and allowing William Saliba to recover.

Arsenal fought their way into the contest, with Guglielmo Vicario tested by a Kai Havertz header before Gabriel Martinelli scuffed his shot with Bukayo



Arsenal's Gabriel Magalhaes celebrates with teammates after scoring against Tottenham Hotspur

After the international break, we had a few blows. The resilience we showed. How the team reacted was magnificent. It showed a lot of maturity from the team.

MIKEL ARTETA

Saka waiting centrally.

Jurrien Timber was perhaps fortunate to avoid a straight red card in the first half for a reckless

challenge on Pedro Porro as he tried to retain possession.

His studs landed on Porro's ankle but referee Jarrod Gillett

deemed the incident was not serious foul play and VAR declined to intervene, much to the Spurs fans' anger.

The second half started in similar fashion to the first, with the hosts on top as Micky van de Ven tested Raya with a glancing header, before Arsenal again got a foothold in the game.

The game had been breathless but low on quality in front of goal until Arsenal punished Spurs from a corner, having done

so twice in last season's 3-2 away win in April.

Gabriel escaped far too easily from Cristian Romero, who pleaded for a foul in vain, and powered a header past Vicario from close range in the 64th minute.

"After the international break, we had a few blows. How the team reacted was magnificent. It showed a lot of maturity from the team," said Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta.

"The resilience we showed. We knew it was going to be a really tough match, a great atmosphere but we knew we had a big threat on set-plays."

Arsenal withstood some late pressure from Spurs, who created few real chances and were left shooting from range as the Gunners seemed happy with a one-goal lead.

The win, their third in a row away to their bitter rivals, puts Arsenal on 10 points from four

games, two behind champions Manchester City ahead of their trip to the Etihad next Sunday.

Spurs, once again left to rue missed chances, have four points from four games.

"I thought it was a tight game all the way along. We controlled it for the most part and got off to a good start. We didn't capitalise on the opportunities and we were unable to get on top of them," said Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou.

'England could face Euros ban over regulator plans'

London, England - UEFA has warned the UK government that England risk a ban from the Euro 2028 tournament they are co-hosting if Prime Minister Keir Starmer goes ahead with existing plans for a men's football regulator, British media reported.

In a letter to Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy, obtained by The Times and the BBC, European soccer governing body UEFA's General Secretary Theodore Theodoridis said there should be "no government interference in the running of football."

According to the letter, Theodoridis cautioned against plans outlined in the King's Speech to give the new regulator the power to oversee clubs in England's top five leagues, saying the game's independence was a "fundamental requirement". "One particular area of concern stems from one of UEFA's fundamental requirements, which is that there should be no government interference in the running of football," Theodoridis wrote. "We have specific rules that guard against this in order to guarantee the autonomy of sport and fairness of sporting competition; the ultimate sanction for which would be excluding the federation from UEFA and teams from competition."

Forest stun Liverpool; Man City's Haaland continues scoring spree

London, England - New Liverpool manager Arne Slot suffered his first setback as his side surprisingly lost 1-0 at home to Nottingham Forest in the Premier League on Saturday but Manchester City maintained their perfect start to the season.

Forest had not tasted victory at Anfield since 1969 but Callum Hudson-Odoi's 72nd minute curler beyond Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson secured the three points as Nuno Espirito Santo's side moved into the Premier League's top five.

Erling Haaland, whose place in Manchester City's side was in doubt after being granted compassionate leave this week, continued his incredible start to the season with two goals as City recovered from conceding after 22 seconds to win 2-1.

Reigning champions City are top with a maximum 12 points from four games, with Liverpool second on nine along with third-



Nottingham Forest's Callum Hudson-Odoi celebrates after scoring against Liverpool on Saturday

placed Aston Villa who hit back from 2-0 down to beat Everton 3-2 thanks to an Ollie Watkins double and a stunning Jhon Duran winner that left the visitors still without a point. Fourth-placed Brighton & Hove Albion, who drew 0-0 at home to promoted Ipswich Town, are on eight points along with Forest.

Manchester United's new signing Matthijs de Ligt grabbed his first goal of the campaign and Marcus Rashford scored for the first time since March as Erik Ten Hag's side cruised to a 3-0 victory at Southampton who are yet to earn a point.

Chelsea rode their luck at Bournemouth in the late kickoff but earned their second league success of the season with the substitute poking home in the 86th minute for a 1-0 victory.

Bournemouth twice hit the woodwork and had an Evanilson penalty saved by Robert Sanchez in the first half.

Proud of the way we played as a team, says Forest manager Espirito Santo

Liverpool, England - Nottingham Forest manager Nuno Espirito Santo said he was proud of the way his team played, despite injuries to key players, to clinch their first win at Anfield since 1969 by beating Liverpool 1-0 in the Premier League on Saturday.

Callum Hudson-Odoi came off the bench to score the only goal of the match and bolster the squad's unbeaten record in the league so far this year, at two wins and two draws.

"Very happy. Many of our fans today in the stadium, they were not even born (in 1969). So that says how hard it is to play here," Espirito Santo told reporters.

"Proud of the way we played as a team ... it's all about taking your chances in the right moment and we did it."

Forest were without their two starting midfielders, after Danilo broke his ankle last month against Bournemouth and Ibrahim Sangare was taken out by a hamstring injury.

Centre-back Willy Boly was



Nuno Espirito Santo with Arne Slot

also absent with a calf injury.

"Unfortunately, Ibrahim Sangare is going to be a while," Espirito Santo said. "I wish we could have everybody ready. Unfortunately we don't have three players with us ... we have to be ready for everything."

Forest also played central mid-

fielders Nicolas Dominguez and Elliott Anderson as wingers to track Liverpool's full-backs, he said. "It is about building and believing in this idea that you can develop," he added.

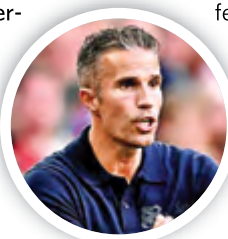
Forest, who finished 17th last season, will visit Brighton next Sunday.

Van Persie's Heerenveen concede nine goals in Dutch League thrashing

Amsterdam, Netherlands -

Fledgling Heerenveen coach Robin van Persie said he learnt more lessons than expected as his side suffered a record 9-1 loss in the Dutch league on Saturday but has no plans to change his approach.

The former Arsenal and Manchester United forward is in his first season as a coach of a top flight club and in his fourth match in charge saw his side suf-



Robin van Persie

fer their biggest defeat ever at AZ Alkmaar.

"This is tough. You'll encounter a number of bumps in your career. This was a very big bump. We learned a few more lessons from this match than we normally would," said van Persie,

who has won one game, drawn one and now lost two matches in the new league season after being appointed as coach of the club.



Aston Villa's Jhon Duran scores against Everton

Emery delighted with Villa's poise and strikers

London, England - A confident Aston Villa remained patient and made no changes in their game plan after going 2-0 down to Everton, manager Unai Emery said after his side pulled off a 3-2 victory at home.

Emery, who last season led Villa to their first top-four finish in the league since 1995-96, was happy with his players' response under pressure, as Ollie Watkins scored a brace and substitute Jhon Duran sealed the win with a long range left-footer.

"Losing 2-0, we were playing well and we were dominating, imposing our positioning and creating chances. We didn't score and we conceded two op-

Jhon Duran did it last year. I remember a goal against Liverpool and Ajax. His shooting is fantastic...

UNAI EMERY

portunities to them and they scored," he told reporters. "The supporters were really, really understanding of how we could come back the result by being patient, playing with our structure and not changing anything."

The former Arsenal and Paris St Germain manager said

Colombia forward Duran, who has come off the bench to score the decisive goal for Villa in three out of four league games this season, has a habit of scoring spectacular long-rangers.

"Jhon Duran did it last year. I remember a goal against Liverpool and Ajax. His shooting is fantastic... when he is trying, we have confidence that he can score a goal like that," Emery said. He also praised Watkins. "We have to be proud of our two strikers."

Villa will play their first European top-tier match since 1983 on Tuesday, when they visit Swiss side BSC Young Boys in the Champions League.

We didn't deserve to win, says Ancelotti

San Sebastian, Spain - Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti said his side were not dominant enough to deserve a 2-0 win at Real Sociedad secured with second-half penalties by Vinicius Junior and Kylian Mbappe.

However, Ancelotti praised his players' resilience and was proud of how they were able to endure the home side's pressure and claim three valuable points.

"It was a complicated match. We didn't deserve to win, because Real Sociedad pushed us really hard," he told a press conference.

"We held on and suffered, showed character and a lot of commitment. I value that a lot because it's not easy to find commitment in a team with so much talent and quality and today we did it.

"I leave very satisfied and then we have to be self-critical in order to improve. It's a great opportunity for us to assess what we didn't do well, but with three more points in the table."

Real remain second but now have 11 points, one behind Barcelona who visit fifth-placed Girona on Sunday.

Ancelotti acknowledged his side were struggling with fatigue and poor form, but said it was to be expected due to a busy calendar and coming off the back of the international break.

The Italian said he saw improvement in Mbappe's performance as the France captain settles in at his new



We can talk about all the problems in the world with this match, but the important thing was to get out with a win

CARLO ANCELOTTI

club, having scored his third goal for Real on Saturday.

"We can talk about all the problems in the world with this match, but the important thing was to get out with a win," added Ancelotti, who was without midfielders Jude Bellingham, Eduardo Camavinga, Dani Ceballos and Aurelien Tchouameni.

"We have to take into account that we are not at 100 percent. It's normal, we don't have four midfielders who are injured. I value a lot the work of those who have played.

"I see Mbappe fresher, more active. He's very dangerous and combines well with Vinicius and the other forwards. He is improving a lot. I liked his game a lot."

SQUEAKY WIN

Vinicius, Mbappe convert penalties as Madrid edge Sociedad

San Sebastian, Spain - Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior and Kylian Mbappe converted second-half penalties to give the champions a hard-fought 2-0 win at Real Sociedad in LaLiga on Saturday.

Carlo Ancelotti's side took the lead in the 58th minute with Vinicius netting a penalty after an Arda Guler shot from the edge of the box hit the hand of midfielder Sergio Gomez, who raised both arms in a reflex move to protect his face.

Mbappe secured the three points by putting away his spot kick in the 75th after Vinicius was stomped on by a defender in a late challenge that was not spotted by the referee but was penalised after a VAR review.

Real remain second but now have 11 points, one behind Barcelona who visit fifth-placed Girona on Sunday. They must now rally their players with only three days before their Champions League opener at home to Stuttgart on Tuesday.

It was a high-paced, entertaining affair in the Basque Country with both sides missing a string of chances, including three strikes off the woodwork by the hosts.

Facing a selection headache with defender David Alaba and midfielders Jude Bellingham, Eduardo Camavinga, Dani Ceballos and Aurelien Tchouameni still recovering from injuries, Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti made three changes from the



Vinicius Junior and Kylian Mbappe were both on target but Real Madrid still struggled to find their mojo against Real Sociedad

team that beat Real Betis before the international break.

But the Italian was hit with another injury to one of his key players early in Saturday's game when Morocco attacking midfielder Brahim Diaz had to come off with what looked like a right leg muscle injury in the 24th

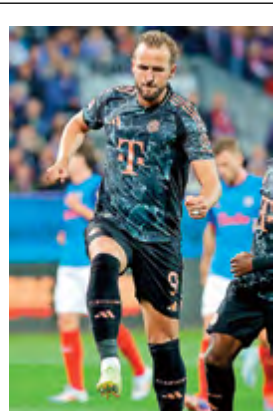
minute. Brahim had been one of their best players, feeding balls to Mbappe who almost scored on three occasions running the right channel, denied by keeper Alex Remiro who also made a stunning one-handed save from Antonio Ruediger's header in the 29th.

The home side were often dangerous on the counter and almost scored with strikes by Luka Sucic and Seraldo Becker that rocked off the crossbar in the 25th and 39th minutes.

Sucic hit the post again in the first move of the second-half while trying to angle a strike from

inside the box out of reach of keeper Thibaut Courtois, who made a brilliant one-handed save to stop a close-range header by Igor Zubeldia.

It eventually took two penalties to decide the outcome with Vinicius Jr and Mbappe calmly tucking away their spot kicks.



Bayern Munich's Harry Kane celebrates after scoring against Holstein Kiel

Kane hits hattrick as Bayern maul Kiel

Kiel, Germany - Bayern Munich's Harry Kane scored a hat-trick as they crushed promoted Holstein Kiel 6-1 away on Saturday to lead the Bundesliga after three matches with a maximum nine points.

It was a fourth straight win in all competitions this season under new coach Vincent Kompany and with Bayern eager to reclaim top spot. Bayern are first on nine points, two clear of Borussia Dortmund and RB Leipzig.

The Bavarians, who welcome Dinamo Zagreb in the Champions League on Tuesday, enjoyed an explosive opening to the match, netting three times in the first 13 minutes.

Jamal Musiala slotted home after the hosts repeatedly failed to clear the ball in the first minute and England forward Kane doubled their lead six minutes later following a mistake by Lewis Holtby, whose pass was intercepted by Serge Gnabry.

Empoli hold lacklustre Juventus to goalless draw

Empoli, Italy - Juventus were held to another 0-0 draw at Empoli in Serie A on Saturday as Thiago Motta's side dropped more points after their home stalemate against AS Roma before the international break.

Juve, who started the campaign strongly with two 3-0 wins, moved provisionally top of the table with eight points from four games. Empoli are seventh on six points. Both sides, watched from the stands by Italy coach Luciano Spalletti, remain unbeaten so far in the campaign.

Thiago Motta made five changes to the Juventus side who started against Roma two weeks ago as Douglas Luiz, Nico Gonzalez and Teun Koopmeiners made their first lineups. But Juve still struggled and often resembled the side who managed one shot on target against Roma, while Empoli pressed high and did not allow them to take control.

Federico Gatti was close to netting with a header for Juve following a corner late in an even first half but Empoli's Devis Vasquez pulled off a great save, parrying the ball away.



Kenan Yildiz on Juventus tries a shot at goal in the match against Empoli

He then kept out attempts by Dusan Vlahovic and Koopmeiners after the break.

Vlahovic received a brilliant long-range pass from Gonzalez and attempted a low strike from the edge of the box in the 50th minute, while Koopmeiners struck a first-time shot from a tight angle three minutes later.

Juventus looked better after

half-time but still lacked creativity in the centre of the pitch and Motta changed his midfield almost entirely midway through the second half. The Italian-Brazilian coach introduced Khephren Thuram, Timothy Weah and Nicolò Fagioli, as well as Samuel Mbangula for Kenan Yildiz.

However, Empoli continued to hold firm and Gatti saved Juve from a last-gasp defeat when he blocked a shot by Emmanuel Gyasi in stoppage time.

Juve had won six of their previous seven away games against Empoli in Serie A, scoring 16 goals. Empoli, meanwhile, are now unbeaten in two consecutive games against the Bianconeri in Serie A for only the second time after 1998-99.



AC Milan's Theo Hernandez scores against Venezia

Milan's opening blitz floors Venezia

Milan, Italy - Four goals before the half-hour mark helped AC Milan to thrash Venezia 4-0 for a resounding Serie A home win on Saturday.

Milan had a disappointing start to the season, with two draws and a loss, but they delivered an impressive performance on Saturday to secure their first win of the campaign.

Theo Hernandez gave Milan the lead just two minutes in with a shot from a tight angle which deflected off Venezia keeper Jesse Joronen's legs and into the net. The hosts doubled their lead 14 minutes later when a low corner reached Youssouf Fofana, who flicked it past the near post and into the net. Things got worse for Venezia when Joronen brought down Tammy Abraham after spilling the ball in the box, allowing Christian Pulisic to convert the penalty in the 25th minute.

Four minutes later, it was Abraham's turn to convert from the penalty spot after a VAR-re-

view confirmed Joel Schingtjennes' foul on Rafael Leao.

It was the first time since October 1958 that Milan scored four goals within the opening 30 minutes of a Serie A match, a feat they last achieved against Alessandria. This was also the first time Venezia had conceded four goals so quickly in a match since 1949, when they were defeated by Inter Milan.

Venezia thought they had pulled one back in the 72nd minute when Francesco Zamparo scored, but the goal was ruled out after a VAR review revealed Hans Nicolussi Caviglia's reckless challenge on Ruben Loftus-Cheek in the build-up. Caviglia was shown his second yellow card within six minutes and was dismissed. "It's the start of hopefully some good momentum from us," Pulisic told Sky Sports Italia.

"It's a good win, but we have some important games coming up and hopefully it's just the start."

PSG beat Brest to reclaim top spot

Paris, France - Paris St Germain moved back to the top of Ligue 1 with a 3-1 home win over Brest thanks to an Ousmane Dembele double and Fabian Ruiz's brilliant strike on Saturday.

Fabian and Dembele scored in an 80-second spell late in the second half to help reigning champions PSG reach a perfect 12 points from four games, two clear of Olympique de Marseille and AS Monaco, who both won earlier on Saturday.

"Brest are a good team, with some very good players. It's al-



PSG's Fabian Ruiz (R) celebrates with Ousmane Dembele after scoring against Brest

ways difficult against them. It's a good feeling to win in front of our fans," PSG coach Luis Enrique told DAZN.

"We try this every day and it's a pleasure to watch my team. At halftime I told them they were playing well, that they shouldn't look at the score. I told them to keep going."

Romain Del Castillo had put Brest in front with a penalty just before the half hour mark after a foul by Nuno Mendes on Ludovic Ajorque. PSG equalised in the 42nd minute with a header

from the unmarked Dembele off Marco Asensio's pinpoint cross before Fabian put the hosts ahead with a superb long-range effort in the 73rd.

Dembele sealed the points seconds later by scoring his second after pouncing on a loose ball following a counter-attack.

"I hope I can play some good games, be consistent and help PSG win," the 27-year-old Dembele said. "It was important to win because the other (title hopefuls) won."



Ahmad al Harthy

Sixth-row start for Team WRT's Al Harthy in 6 Hours of Fuji

Muscat - Fuji Speedway in Japan delivered a very close qualifying session on Saturday ahead of the penultimate race of the FIA World Endurance Championships season - Oman's Ahmad al Harthy concluding the run 12th fastest.

Taking a sixth-row start for the 6 Hours of Fuji, the Team WRT squad opted to utilise two sets of tyres during the session to maximise the performance available to them - Fuji is not the most favourable of circuits for the BMW M4 LMGT3.

Following the mid-session pit-stop, Al Harthy emerged to produce his quickest lap as the clock counted down but unfortunately missed out on the cut-off for progression into the top 10 Hyperpole shoot-off by little more than two-tenths of a second.

The OQ, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omantel, Experience Oman and BMW Oman supported driver was among the first to join the track as soon as the green light came on for the 12-minute session to begin. Setting a time of 1m44.981 seconds on his first lap as he started to build up speed and tyre temperature, on his first

true flyer the Omani improved to 1m42.141 seconds. With five minutes of the short-sharp session to run, the Team WRT driver was on the bubble of the top 10 cut-off for progression into Hyperpole with just a couple

Fuji is one of the toughest tracks for us. In terms of our strategy, we always decided we wanted to do two flyers with two sets of tyres

AHMAD AL HARTHY

of tenths of a second making the difference. He then made a swift pit stop to fit a fresh set of Goodyear tyres.

"Qualifying was the best we could do, Fuji is one of the toughest tracks for us. In terms of our strategy, we always decided we wanted to do two flyers with two sets of tyres," said Al Harthy.

Our strategy did work for us, and we're happy with that decision as we moved up to P12 in the end."

OSCAR'S WINNING SHOW

Piastri triumphs in Azerbaijan as McLaren take charge of constructors' standings

Baku, Azerbaijan - Oscar Piastri won the Azerbaijan Grand Prix as McLaren went top of the constructors' standings in a race that finished with a virtual safety car after a penultimate lap collision between Ferrari's Carlos Sainz and Red Bull's Sergio Perez.

Ferrari's pole-sitter Charles Leclerc, who was overtaken by Piastri on the 20th of 51 laps and then battled nose-to-tail before his tyres faded, came second with George Russell inheriting third for Mercedes after the Sainz-Perez collision.

Red Bull's Formula One leader Max Verstappen finished fifth, just behind his closest title rival Lando Norris, who started 15th for McLaren and ended up fourth with a bonus point for fastest lap.

"That was probably the most stressful afternoon in my life," said Piastri, after soaking up relentless pressure from Leclerc to take his second career win.

"It definitely goes down as one of the better races of my career."

Triple champion Verstappen's lead over Norris, who went long on his first stint with hard tyres and then reeled in a 15 second gap



McLaren's Oscar Piastri celebrates after winning the Azerbaijan GP

to pass the Dutch driver on lap 49 thanks to his fresher mediums, was cut from 62 points to 59. McLaren are now 20 points clear of Red Bull in the standings with seven grands prix and three sprint races remaining.

Leclerc led away from the start, and was six seconds clear before the first pitstops, but his fourth successive pole in Baku

was destined to end in defeat like the previous three.

Piastri was first of the two to change tyres, on lap 16 with Norris crucially preventing Perez from getting an advantage from an earlier stop, and Leclerc followed him down the pit lane a lap later.

The Australian then made a great passing move on Leclerc at turn one but the battle was just

That was probably the most stressful afternoon in my life. It definitely goes down as one of the better races of my career.

OSCAR PIASTRINI

heating up.

The top two duelled for lap after lap, with the Ferrari driver trying in vain to use the DRS drag reduction to get past Piastri who had the benefit of clean air as he defended tenaciously but fairly.

Time and again Leclerc tried but just fell short on a circuit with

long and fast straights along the shores of the Caspian Sea but tight and twisty turns through the old town.

"I couldn't get as close as I wanted and eventually we lost the race when I didn't defend as well as I could have at the end of the straight," said Leclerc.

Champions Al Ain meet Al Sadd in Asian Champions League

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates launch the defence of their continental title against Qatar's Al Sadd on Monday as Hernan Crespo's side usher in a new higher-stakes era of regional club football with the revamped Asian Champions League Elite.

Crespo's team defeated Yokohama F Marinos in May in the last final played under the

previous format, with the new edition featuring a field trimmed to 24 participants from 40 and chasing a potential first prize that has tripled to \$12 million.

The long-standing group phase, used in various forms since 2002, has been abandoned in favour of a new Swiss League system which splits the clubs into 12-team east and west Asian leagues, with each to play

eight group games starting from Monday.

The league phase will continue until early February, with schedules determined by a computer-assisted draw held in Kuala Lumpur last month.

The first eight finishers in each league will advance to the knockout rounds, which will be played in March before the action moves into a centralised

phase in Saudi Arabia for the quarter-finals, semi-finals and final, which will be held on May 4.

Al Ain overcame the odds to win last year's competition ahead of the newly enriched club sides of Saudi Arabia, with Crespo masterminding victories over big-spending Al Nassr - home to Cristiano Ronaldo - and Al Hilal in their run to the final.

The Emiratis will meet both of those clubs again in the league phase of the 2024-25 edition, as well as a third Saudi side, Al Ahli, and Qatar's Al Gharafa and Al Rayyan, Pakhtakor of Uzbekistan and Iraq's Al Shorta.

Al Ain's hopes of becoming only the fifth club to retain the title were boosted by retaining the services of Moroccan striker Soufiane Rahimi.

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SCULPTURE CRITIQUE

SOME LIKE IT NOT

A new sculpture of late Queen Elizabeth II and the late Prince Philip – plus corgis – attracts a mixed response



A newly unveiled sculpture of Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Philip and two corgis in Northern Ireland, intended to pay tribute to the late monarch, has received somewhat mixed reviews from the public.

While the local council said the bronze statue of the Queen 'has been warmly received by most who have seen it in person,' some on social media have ridiculed it for not looking like her.

"Could be anyone," wrote one commenter on a Facebook post from the council announcing the work's unveiling. Another wrote that the sculpture was 'beautiful but didn't look like our late queen or represent how she always dressed'.

Although the council limited comments on its original post, the debate spread to X, where pictures of the sculpture gathered hundreds of thousands of views and several users compared it to the

infamous bust of Cristiano Ronaldo. "Even the corgi is confused," another user wrote.

Online commentators were delighted by the chance to mock and deride the statue. Some questioned whether it was an accurate likeness of her majesty, with one suggesting that it more closely resembled the film character Mrs. Doubtfire, played by Robin Williams. Even a local politician Vera McWilliam told the BBC, "we have to be honest, it does not resemble the Queen in any shape or form."

The Queen, has been portrayed frequently throughout her reign, but some took to the internet to accuse this latest homage of being "offensive" while another said "it's actually an insult to Her Majesty's memory."

The sculpture, among the first work commemorating the late Queen in the United Kingdom, was created by artist Anto Brennan as a commission from Antrim and Newtonabbey Borough Council. It was installed in Antrim Castle Gardens, about 30km north of Belfast, and

unveiled on Friday.

It depicts Elizabeth, gazing into the distance, dressed in a tweed skirt, rubber boots, checked vest and headscarf, with a handbag hanging from her left arm, and two of her famous corgis at her feet. Behind her stands a likeness of her husband, Philip, his hands behind his back.

The council acknowledged that art can sometimes spark diverse opinions but said that it was 'particularly pleased with how the (Elizabeth) sculpture complements its surroundings, standing adjacent

to the statue of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and accompanied by two lovingly crafted corgis'.

Elizabeth, who died in 2022, was one of the most photographed people in the world, and was the subject of thousands of paintings and sculptures. As such, there have been several controversial depictions of her and other members of the British royal family over the years.

A portrait of Catherine, Princess of Wales, that featured on the cover of Tatler magazine earlier this year, similarly split

opinion in the media and online, with one critic describing it as 'intolerably bad', and others calling it 'beautiful'.

Meanwhile, the first official portrait of King Charles III since his coronation also proved divisive, with its depiction of the monarch against a fiery red background that appears to almost swallow him whole. And in 2000, Lucian Freud had painted a portrait of the Queen that seemed the antithesis of earlier, romanticised depictions, and invited divided opinion. (courtesy: cnn.com, artnet.com)



Artist Anto Brennan



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MATTI IN MILAN

Matti Sirvio



'VISIBLE INVISIBLE'



Stefania Carrozzini

Finnish resident artist in Oman, **Matti Sirvio** will present his first solo exhibition – Green Pastures – in Milan (Italy), curated by Stefania Carrozzini, at MyMicroGallery, on September 18

Hubert Vaz

'He leads me besides still waters, in the paths of righteousness... I will fear no evil, your rod and your staff, they comfort me... It is like flicking through the biblical Psalms and reliving what they stand for.

Shades of green, blue, amber, magenta, purple and grey - cleverly manipulated using chiaroscuro (a technique of using 'light and dark' hues) - create an illusory space... And you see the Psalms come alive in essence, each with a distinct mandate.

Proprietor of Matti Sirvio Art Galleria, Matti Sirvio, who has been propagating contemporary abstract art in Oman and providing a formidable platform for established as well as budding artists in Oman for the past seven years, now has a new shimmering feather in his cap - he showcases his first solo exhibition in Milan, Italy this week.

'Green Pastures', curated by Stefania Carrozzini, will be showcased at MyMicroGallery, in Via Giovanni Boccaccio 24, Milan (Italy), between September 18 and October 3. MyMicroGallery, an exhibition space founded by Carrozzini, is available for artists from all over the world and intended to welcome ideas without borders.

This "bonsai gallery" is a physical and virtual place for projects and comparisons where artists are the absolute protagonists. In fact, this gallery is similar to Matti Sirvio Art Galleria in Jawharat al Shatti which offers very limited space for solo/joint exhibitions though international artists in Omani consider it a prestigious platform to showcase their work amid that of artists from all over the world.

This exhibition by Sirvio consists of twelve abstract works executed in oil on canvas, large in size, inspired by the biblical Psalms and the question of the representation of the divine. The narrative development of his works unfolds through a pictorial language based on colour and signs, such as mnemonic traces, ancient symbols that represent the search for truth, the path of life, and the encounter with the divine.

Duality of perception
Matti explores the concept of the 'visible invisible', a theme that plays with the duality of what can be physically perceived and what escapes sight, but is felt or intuited spiritually. The Psalms, with their deep and meditative lyricism, reflect this tension between the tangible and intangible presence of God.

Matti Sirvio's works are a crossroads - a synthesis between geometric and organic forms that emerge from an indefinite background, as if they were in continuous movement between light and shadow, as a symbol of the divine presence that illuminates without being directly perceptible. They are a combination of forms suspended in ethereal space that recall natural elements, often mentioned in the Psalms with oscillations between dark tones in contrast to the light and intense shades of green, fresh, vibrant and meditative.

In his work, you encounter water, a symbol of purification and renewal, the earth, and the mountains as a symbol of majesty and stability, hints of ancient writings, signs that recall flowers and plants, symbols of beauty and fragility until everything becomes sky, a symbol of infinity.

The titles chosen from the 150 psalms reveal the desire to offer a contemplative and spiritual experience, inviting the observer to reflect on the mystery of the divine presence which, as in the Psalms, is deeply felt, but never fully grasped.

Bridge between two worlds
Matti Sirvio's research has moved since his artistic debut along the path of abstraction, the most immediate and direct one that allows him to express and communicate the essence of the soul's movements, encountering the biblical message, giving it greater inspirational force.

For Matti Sirvio, the Bible is an inexhaustible creative source. His work becomes a bridge between the material and immaterial worlds, a way to express the infinite, the eternal and the mystery of God.

"The 'visible invisible' is in each one of us. Feelings, values, beliefs, convictions are all recognised by their influence. DNA may be visualised by digital symbols and blueprints but, in reality, it remains invisible. The most significant operator of our inner man continues to be hidden. God is present, invisibly," Matti said explaining the essence of his collection.

"Abstract, in my understanding, refers to everything non-material. True spirituality cannot be captured by man-made rituals and ceremonies. The spirit claims its freedom like a wind (John 3:8). For an artist, the expression of this spirit in colours, shapes, and composition is

not a professional performance. It's an act of worship," he asserts.

Visible and invisible elements

The 'invisible element' of this exhibition is Carrozzini - the curator of this exhibition - an artist, art critic, journalist, artist's coach and independent curator. She had earlier been a correspondent and special envoy to United States of America for the cultural and visual communications D'Ars Magazine and has also worked for many years with Pierre Restany, a well know art critic and founder of Nouveau Realisme.

The 'visible element' is the



Green Pastures

He Brought Me to a Large Place



"He leads me to green pastures"

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