

MUSCAT DAILY

AN APEX MEDIA PUBLICATION



MONDAY, JANUARY 06, 2025

Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om To subscribe, call toll free no: 80076000 www.muscatdaily.com

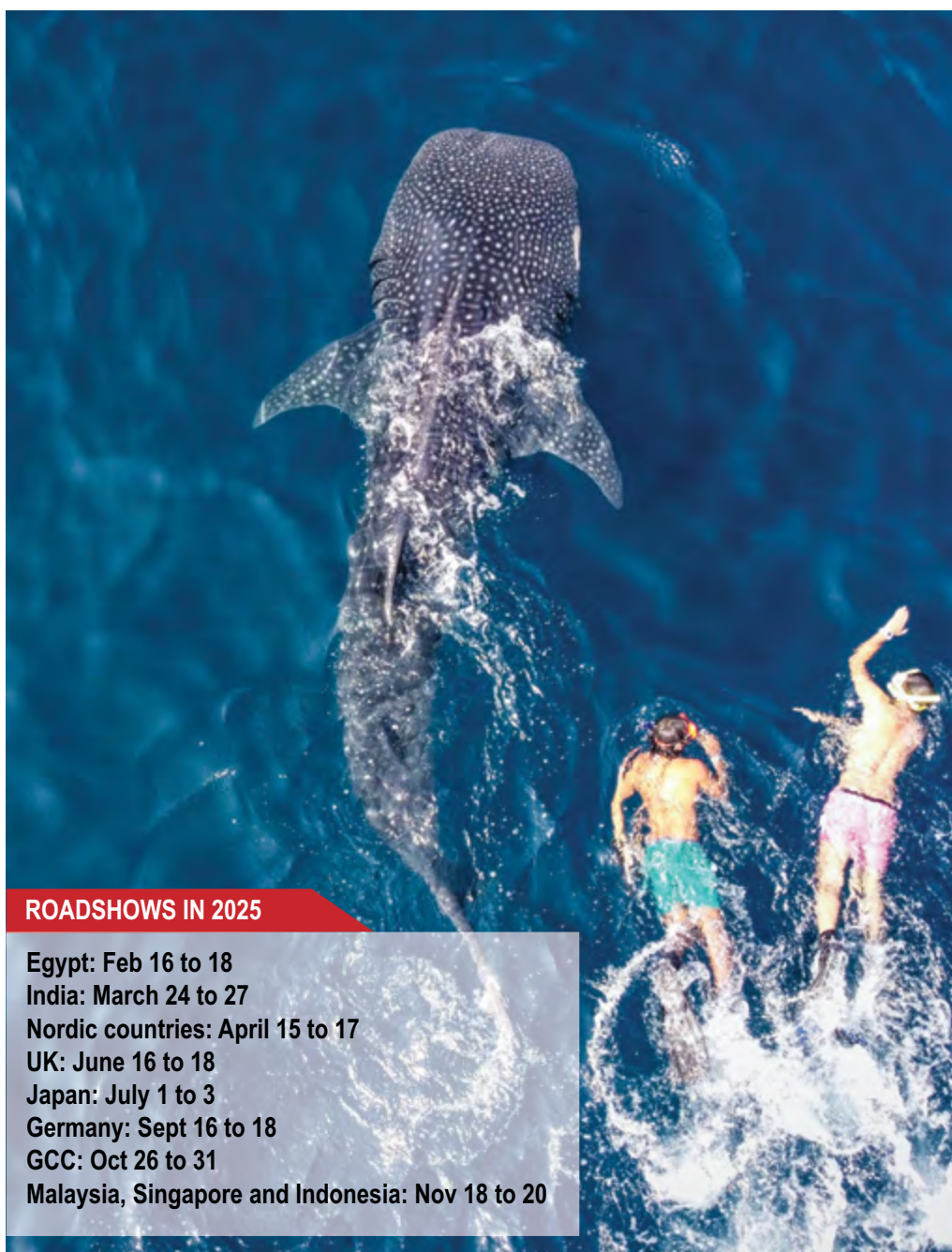
Sights set on global tourism with ambitious strategy

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has unveiled a comprehensive strategy to boost international tourism in the sultanate, aiming to position Oman as a prominent global travel destination. Through targeted campaigns, partnerships and events, the ministry seeks to attract more visitors and increase the tourism sector's contribution to the national economy.

As part of the tourism strategy for 2025, MHT has planned an extensive schedule of roadshows in key markets, showcasing Oman's diverse offerings. The first of these will take place in Egypt from February 16 to 18, followed by India from March 24 to 27. The ministry will then head to the Nordic countries from April 15 to 17, United Kingdom from June 16 to 18, Japan from July 1 to 3, Germany from September 16 to 18, the GCC countries from October 26 to 31, and finally Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia from November 18 to 20.

The ministry will also actively engage with the global travel industry by participating in high-profile travel fairs. Starting with Fitur in Spain in January, Oman will also be represented at ITB Berlin, MITT in Russia, Seatrade in the USA, ATM in the UAE, and several other notable events in



ROADSHOWS IN 2025

Egypt: Feb 16 to 18
India: March 24 to 27
Nordic countries: April 15 to 17
UK: June 16 to 18
Japan: July 1 to 3
Germany: Sept 16 to 18
GCC: Oct 26 to 31
Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia: Nov 18 to 20

Europe and Asia. These platforms will serve as an opportunity to highlight Oman's rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and hospitality to a global audience of travellers and travel professionals.

An MHT official said, "Our 2025 tourism strategy focuses on strengthening Oman's presence in global markets through interactive events and partnerships. We aim to create awareness and connect with travellers by showcasing the unique experiences Oman offers."

Efforts to enhance accessibility are also part of the strategy. The sultanate now offers a ten-day visa-free entry for citizens of over 100 countries making travel to Oman more convenient for international tourists.

MHT has ambitious economic goals for the sector. The aim is to increase tourism's contribution of 2.4% to the GDP in 2021 to 5% by 2030 and 10% by 2040. To support this growth, the ministry is inviting local tourism businesses to register with the Oman Tourism Hub, a platform designed to facilitate participation in promotional initiatives and events.

This multi-pronged approach reflects the sultanate's commitment to fostering sustainable tourism growth, strengthening its global presence, and showcasing Oman's rich heritage and natural beauty to the world.

H M to grace Royal Horse Race Festival

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will preside over the Royal Horse Race Festival, which will be held at Al Adiyat race track in Seeb on Tuesday.

The festival will witness five races for pure Arabian horses including one featuring prominent jockeys competing for the His Majesty's Horse Race Cup.

Shows displaying equestrian skills, as well as Omani folklore

performances and diverse musical pieces will be played between races. The festival will also see participation of the Royal Camel Corps.

Participation of His Majesty the Sultan in the Royal Horse Race Festival reflects his support for equestrian sports. It also shows His Majesty the Sultan's encouragement to preserve this Omani heritage and a deep-rooted equestrian history.

H M congratulates Bahrain, Kuwait

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable congratulating King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of Bahrain on his country's football team winning the 26th Gulf Cup.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan conveyed his heartfelt sentiments to King Hamad and the people of Bahrain on the victory, wishing Bahrain further achievements in all sectors.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham also sent a cable congratulating

Sheikh Mishal al Ahmad al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, on the country's success in hosting the 26th Gulf Cup.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments to Sheikh Mishal and the people of Kuwait, lauding the sincere efforts made by Kuwait in organising this major football event of the Gulf countries.

His Majesty wished Kuwait success in accomplishing further achievements in all spheres.

Accession Day holiday on Jan 12

Muscat - Upon the Royal Orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, it has been decided that Sunday, January 12 will be an official holiday for employees in units of the State's Administrative Apparatus, other legal entities and private sector establishments on

the occasion of His Majesty the Sultan's Accession Day.

Ministry of Labour stated that employers may agree with their respective employees to continue work during the above-mentioned day if deemed necessary, provided workers are compensated for it.



TOYOTA Festival OF JOY

OWN YOUR DREAM TOYOTA TODAY!



RAFFLE^{\$}

iPhone 16 Pro Max

16 Nos

INSURANCE^{*}

1 YEAR

SERVICE^{**}

FROM **3 YEARS / 30,000 KMS**
(whichever is earlier)

UP TO **6 YEARS / 60,000 KMS**
(whichever is earlier)

Campaign Period: 24.11.2024 - 23.01.2025



Campaign Period: 24.11.2024 - 23.01.2025. Benefits applicable for all purchases except Government Organizations & Ministries. *Comprehensive 1 Year Insurance (Oman only, excluding diesel grades) on Yaris, Corolla, Corolla Cross, Camry 2.5, Camry 3.5, Camry HEV, NG Camry, Rize, Urban Cruiser, Velloz, RAV4, RAV4 HEV, Fortuner, Prado, Hilux 4x2, Hilux 4x4, Lite Ace, Innova & Highlander. Insurance benefit under the campaign would be given upto the extent applicable for Private vehicles only. Additional premium as per Insurance norms will have to be paid by the RAC, Taxi & Driving School Company. **3 Years / 30,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier) covering 3 services at 10,000 Kms service interval based on normal operating conditions for LiteAce, Innova & Crown **4 Years / 60,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier) covering 8 services at 7,500 kms service interval based on normal operating conditions for Urban Cruiser **4 Years / 40,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier Excl Dsl Grades) covering 4 services at 10,000 kms service interval based on normal operating conditions for Rize, Velloz, RAV4, RAV4 HEV, LC Wagon & Highlander **5 Years / 50,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier Excl Dsl Grades) covering 5 services at 10,000 kms service interval based on normal operating conditions for Corolla, Corolla Cross, Camry 2.5, Camry 3.5, Camry HEV, NG Camry, Fortuner, Prado, Hilux 4x2, Hilux 4x4 **6 Years / 60,000 Kms Service (whichever is earlier) covering 8 services at 10,000 kms service interval based on normal operating conditions for Yaris. \$ Raffle: 16 units of iPhone 16 Pro Max 256GB as raffle. The raffle will be applicable for all Toyota customers who purchase cars during the campaign period. Vehicles may include dealer-installed items. For further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Toyota showroom. Pictures and colours shown above are for illustrative purposes only. Campaign will not be applicable for ministry and government deals/supplies.

Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC
ISO 9001: 2015 Certified | C. R. No: 1703412

SAUD BAHWAN Group

toyotaoman
@toyotaomanofficial
toyotaoman
www.toyotaoman.com

TAKE THE BUS

Mwasalat has announced a two-year programme offering complimentary rides for students in Muscat and Salalah. What more can be done to encourage people to use public transport? Here's what *Muscat Daily* readers said -

Ali al Harthy
Student

I welcome this move by the authorities. Free rides for students is a great initiative, but expanding bus routes to more residential areas would make public transport more accessible to families. Additionally, there must be dedicated bus lanes that can improve travel time and encourage more people to use the service during rush hours.

Arun Menon
Businessman

To promote public transport, Mwasalat could introduce family weekend passes and expand evening services. Many working parents would appreciate affordable, safe options for their children after school hours, which would encourage the whole family to rely more on buses.



YOUR SAY

Abdullah al Amri
Teacher

Introducing express routes during peak hours and shuttle services from key residential areas to business districts will boost usage. Collaborating with local events like Muscat Nights Festival and those at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre for free shuttle services can also encourage people to leave their cars behind which will reduce traffic congestion.

Aftab Khan
Retiree

One of the best ways is to maintain time of the buses, mainly the airport service. I have seen that the frequency of buses from airport to Ruwi is not good. Also, giving discounts on special days of the year like Eid and Nation Day would be excellent. I also suggest that bus services are provided to different parts of the country at reasonable prices. These

services should be promoted on social media. Let people see and feel the country through the windows of buses rather than cars.

Sanjay Patel
Private sector employee

A good incentive to get more people to use bus services would be to offer weekly or monthly passes like Dubai Metro.

Ayesha al Balushi
Homemaker

This is an excellent decision. I feel that there must also be a promotional programme for housewives so that we don't always need to be dependent on drivers. Public transport can be made more appealing by offering discounted monthly passes for housewives and working individuals. Clean, safe and air-conditioned bus stops will also make the experience more comfortable.

? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

In light of the tragic accident in Nizwa last week that claimed the lives of three and injured nine, what measures must be implemented to enhance road safety and prevent similar collisions in the future?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om You can also log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue.

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

Share your comments in not more than 50 words along with your full name and profession before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp, Facebook or Instagram

SEND US ON OUR NEW WHATSAPP NO 91953774



Sheikh Khalifa receives UN Special Envoy to Yemen

Muscat - H E Sheikh Khalifa Ali al Harthy, Undersecretary for Political Affairs in Foreign Ministry, received Hans Grundberg, UN

Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Yemen, on Sunday. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed regional develop-

ments, as well as the situation in Yemen and efforts made to reach a political solution. The meeting was attended by

members of the delegation accompanying the guest and officials from the Foreign Ministry. ONA

SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES AMBASSADOR OF THAILAND



H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarif al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received H E Warunee Pan-Krajang, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Sultanate of Oman, in his office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison on Sunday. H H Sayyid Shihab wished the ambassador success in carrying out her duties in Oman. The meeting reviewed bilateral relations between Oman and Thailand, in addition to discussing several matters of mutual interest (ONA)

National Museum launches audio guide to enhance visitor experience



Muscat - In an effort to provide a more interactive and enriching experience, National Museum of Oman has launched an audio guide service. It is designed to offer visitors a detailed explanation of the museum's galleries and select artefacts.

The audio guide service includes 395 items and is available in both Arabic and English. Visitors can choose between two tour options - self-guided or group tours. Additionally, the service is

equipped with special features for visitors with disabilities, including audio descriptions for the visually impaired and sign language support for the deaf and mute. It displays both audio and visual instructions to guide users and includes an interactive map to help visitors navigate the galleries and locate key artefacts.

The launch of this service is in line with Oman Vision 2040, which aims to drive digital transformation and enhance visitor ex-

perience. By offering detailed, multi-sensory explanations of the exhibits, the service adds a cognitive and cultural layer to visitors' understanding, encouraging greater engagement with the museum's collections.

This initiative follows introduction of a virtual tour service in December 2024 allowing online visitors to explore the museum's galleries and learn about Oman's rich heritage from the comfort of their own homes.

هيئة تنظيم الخدمات العامة
Authority for Public Services Regulation

NOTICE

The Authority for Public Services Regulation, Oman (The Authority) in exercise of the powers conferred upon it under Article (4) of the Law for the Regulation and Privatisation of the Electricity and Related Water Sector promulgated by Royal Decree (No. 78/2004) (the Sector Law), intends to grant:

- 1.Manah Power Company LLC a Generation Licence (the Licence) to authorize the Licensee to undertake the regulated activity of the Generation of electricity from its Production Facilities located near the village of Izz, in the Wilayat of Manah, Ad Dakhiliyah Governorate, with a maximum Production Capacity of (253.833MW) and to be procured by Oman Power and Water Procurement Company S.A.O.C (OPWP).The Generation Licence to be granted to Manah Power Company LLC shall be effective from the grant date and continue in full force and effect until the expiry of PPA entered into between the Licensee and OPWP or revoked in accordance with the provisions of the Licence conditions or the Sector Law.
- 2.Wadi Noor Solar Power Company SAOC (Prospective Licensee) a Generation Licence (Renewable Energy) (the Licence) to authorize the Prospective Licensee to undertake the regulated activity of the Generation of electricity from its Production Facilities located in Wilayat Manah, Ad Dakhiliyah Governorate, with a maximum Production Capacity of (500 MW) and to be procured by Oman Power and Water Procurement Company S.A.O.C (OPWP). The Generation Licence to be granted to Wadi Noor Solar Power Company SAOC shall be effective from the grant date and continue for a period of twenty-five (25) years, unless revoked in accordance with the provisions of the Licence or the Sector Law.
- 3.Centralized Utilities Company LLC (Marafiq) an Exemption Order to authorize the company to generate electricity from its Production Facilities The maximum authorized capacity will be 91 MW.

The draft Licences and Exemption are available for review at the office of the Authority at the address mentioned below.

Any person who has any objection to the grant of the Licences and Exemption or together may submit details of their objections to the Authority within 28 days from the date of publication of this Notice pursuant to the provisions of Article (102) of the Sector Law.

Any objection submitted after the period stipulated in this Notice will not be considered.

Objections shall be submitted to the following address:

The Authority for Public Services Regulation
Ominvest Business Center | Muscat Hills | Airport Heights | Block No 9993 |
Building No. 95 | First Floor.

Sultanate of Oman, Muscat, Al Khuwair | P.O. Box 954, Postal Code 133
email: enquiries@apsr.om
Tel: +9824609700
Fax: +968 24609701

apsr.om

Terms and conditions apply



We made it easy to get a Credit Card

-  Minimum salary from OMR 250
 -  No need for salary assignment letter
 -  First year annual fee waived
- Apply now



15th Arab Theatre Festival from Jan 9



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Represented by Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY), Oman will host the 15th edition of Arab Theatre Festival from January 9 to 15 in collaboration with Arab Theatre Authority and Omani Theatre Society.

The event will feature more than 15 performances by groups from Oman and abroad, showcasing the diverse and rich traditions of Arab theatre.

The performances will be held at three venues - Al Bustan Palace Theatre, Al Irfan Theatre at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, and College of Banking and Finance.

H E Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Culture in MCSY, and Chairman of the Main Committee of the festival, emphasised the fact that it is an important platform that brings together an elite group of



It is an important platform that brings together an elite group of Arab artists, theatre professionals, writers and directors

H E SAYYID SAID AL BUSAIDI

Arab artists, theatre professionals, writers and directors.

The festival aims to celebrate theatre and strengthen its role in promoting culture and creativity across the Arab world.

According to H E Busaidi, this edition of the festival will include an exhibition of Omani handicrafts and an art exhibition, besides a conference featuring research papers on topics such as 'Theatre and Artificial Intelligence: The Struggle for Control and the Revolution of Human Creativity'.

Additionally, 33 books on Omani, Gulf and Arab theatre will be showcased.

The Arab Theatre Day message will be delivered by Palestinian artist Fathi Abdul Rahman on January 10.

H E Busaidi added that the festival aligns with MCSY's cultural strategy for 2021-2040, which aims to boost Oman's theatre movement. The strategy also aims to provide Omani theatre artists opportunities for international performances, training sessions and discussions that will enrich the country's cultural and arts scene.

Survey documents diversity of reptiles in North Sharqiyah

Our Correspondent
Ibra

Environment Authority has identified seven distinct species of reptiles in North Sharqiyah as part of an ongoing biodiversity survey shedding light on the governorate's ecological richness. The survey will highlight how reptiles have adapted to North Sharqiyah's varied terrains, including mountains, valleys, plains and deserts.

The seven species identified are the yellow-spotted gecko, serpent-tailed lizard with fringed toes, Omani Jayakari lizard, broad-toed rock gecko, Eastern Arabian desert gecko, broad-toed gecko, and Arabian gecko. These reptiles are primarily concentrated in valleys and mountainous habitats where cooler temperatures and more stable conditions prevail; fewer species are found in the plains and deserts.

Saud bin Saif al Busafi, environment inspector, who is overseeing the survey, informed that the project focuses on the wilay-



The findings will also support an atlas of terrestrial reptiles of Oman, which documents over 100 species, including 20 endemic lizards. North Sharqiyah's unique landscapes play a key role in sustaining this biodiversity, highlighting the governorate's ecological significance within Oman's natural heritage.

"Studying reptiles is essential for understanding the challenges wildlife face in different environments," Busafi added. The survey considers factors such as high temperatures and droughts, which influence survival and adaptation of reptiles. Exercises like these reflect Oman's commitment to preserving its natural environment and promoting sustainability.



Royal Oman Police marks Annual Day

Nizwa - Royal Oman Police (ROP) marked its annual day, celebrated on January 5 annually, on Sunday.

On the occasion, a ceremony was held at the military parade grounds of Sultan Qaboos Academy of Police Sciences in Nizwa under the auspices of H E Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of Diwan of Royal Court.

The ceremony witnessed the graduation of the 47th batch of cadet officers (holders of Diploma in Law and Police Sciences), the 11th batch of service system cadet officers, the 55th batch of university cadet officers and the 56th batch of specialised cadet officers. The batches included officers of Internal Security Service and Royal Guard of

Oman, besides officers from Bahrain and Djibouti.

The names of winners of ROP Awards 2024 were announced during the ceremony, which was attended by Royal Family members, ministers, advisers, commanders of Sultan's Armed Forces, security and military units, as well as several senior officials.



Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Nonrefundable) OMR	Tender Purchase deadline	Clarification deadline	Tender Submission Date
TENDER/2025/01/ENG/001	Revamping of Al Museyla Filling Station in Al Khabura in Al Batinah North Governorate	100/-	12.01.2025	15.01.2025	20.01.2025
TENDER/2025/01/ENG/002	Revamping of Saham Souq Filling Station in Al Batinah North Governorate	100/-			

Bank Name & Account Number Bank Muscat (0423005687760617)

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with minimum of 3 years' experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om The tender may be collected on any working day between 08:00 AM – 03:00 PM.
- Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted a sealed envelope and addressed to the Chairman of Tender Committee, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.
- For any enquiry email us at (procurement@almaha.com.om) or by calling 24610289/24610287/24610355

MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,569.70
FOREX RATES	
(RO1 equals)	
India	222.77
Pakistan	728.75
Bangladesh	315.19
Philippines	151.29
Sri Lanka	762.13
*Rates as on January 05 Source: xe.com	

BRIEFS

Egypt's food exports hit \$5.5bn in 2024

Egypt's food industry achieved remarkable growth from January to November 2024, with exports reaching approximately \$5.5bn. This represents a 17% increase compared to the \$4.7bn recorded during the same period in 2023, amounting to an additional \$813mn.

Notably, this marks the highest export value and growth rate ever recorded during this timeframe, exceeding the total exports for all of 2023, which stood at \$5.068bn, with an increase of \$474mn.

The Export Council for Food Industries said in a statement on Wednesday that Arab countries remained Egypt's largest export market, accounting for \$2.936bn or 53% of total food exports, and achieving a 15% growth in value. The European Union followed with \$1.083bn, representing 20% of total exports and an impressive 33% growth rate.

Experts hail Oman's 2025 budget for social focus, fiscal discipline

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Economic and industry experts have commended Oman's general budget for 2025, describing it as balanced while maintaining support for social welfare. They also highlighted a positive step towards reducing the cost of public debt.

In a statement to the Oman News Agency, Hon Dr Dhafer bin Awad al Shanfari, Chairman of the Economic and Financial Committee of the State Council, said, "The key positive aspects of the state's general budget for 2025 include maintaining social support, whether through subsidies for petroleum products, electricity, water, sanitation, and wastewater sectors, or in the social protection system. Furthermore, there has been effective action to reduce the cost of public debt annually, which is being achieved through the restructuring of some lower-cost loans."

He added that there is significant potential to increase investment spending, particularly in projects with high local content, should a financial surplus be achieved during the year. Hon Dr Shanfari emphasised the importance of reinvesting any surplus into initiatives that stimulate the economy, thereby enhancing their contribution to GDP.

He also noted that a portion of



Economic experts have commended the 2025 budget for prioritising investments in education, healthcare, and job creation, while reducing public debt costs. The budget is viewed as a crucial step toward long-term economic growth, diversification and financial stability

the budget spending has been allocated to boosting job opportunities in the private sector, with a focus on supporting the employment and training of Omanis. Hon Dr Shanfari expressed hope that a proactive plan will be developed to use any financial surpluses to stimulate the non-oil economy and address the challenges faced by job seekers. He forecasted that the average oil price could exceed \$70 per barrel, ensuring that there would be no deficit based on the assumption of a \$60 per barrel price.

Hon Dr Mohammed bin Hamid al Wardi, a Member of

year plan."

He explained that the 2025 budget aims to achieve financial and economic balance by focusing on reducing public debt, stimulating the economy, and further enhancing social services, particularly through support for the social protection system and the electricity, water, and petroleum sectors.

Hon Dr Wardi also noted that the 2025 budget stands out for the lowest cost of servicing public debt compared to previous budgets, with debt servicing amounting to RO915mn. According to the Ministry of Finance's budget statement, Oman's public debt reached approximately RO14.4bn by the end of 2024.

Dr Khalid bin Saeed al Amri, Chairman of the Omani Economic Association, stressed that around RO5bn has been allocated to social spending in the 2025 budget, representing 42% of total expenditure. He said, "Investment in social services is critical, whether in the education or health sectors. The establishment of more than 22 new government schools and projects to build additional health institutions have been announced. The oil and gas sector remains vital, contributing significantly to the country's GDP."

Dr Amri also noted that the sultanate's debt-to-GDP ratio

currently stands at 34%, and it is expected to remain within the acceptable range of 35-37% in 2025, following the surplus in the state's general budget for 2024.

"There are clear efforts by the government to diversify the economy, as seen in the 2024 budget. These efforts have led to significant progress in economic diversification, and the government must continue these initiatives in 2025," he said.

Dr Amri further highlighted that Oman's sovereign credit rating improved in 2024, and expressed optimism that the sultanate's rating will continue to improve in 2025.

Dr Yousef bin Ali al Balushi, an economic expert, said, "The 2025 budget strikes a good balance, focusing on social aspects, expanding the social protection network, completing infrastructure projects, and supporting investments in various economic sectors."

He added, "One reassuring aspect of the budget is the reduction in public debt servicing, which has decreased to approximately RO900mn – a significant reduction compared to the previous year. Furthermore, improving Oman's credit rating to a positive investment grade will strengthen the Omani economy, especially by increasing the flow of investments."

MSX registers marginal gain in 2024, ranks as third-best performer in GCC

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) ranked as the third-best performing market in the GCC in 2024, following the steepest decline in the region in 2023. The MSX 30 Index posted a modest yearly gain of 1.4% and closed the year at 4,576.6 points.

GCC markets once again saw one of the smallest equity market gains globally in 2024. The aggregate MSCI GCC Index reported a gain of 0.7% for the year, reflecting mixed performance at the country level, according to a research report by Kuwait-based Kamco Investment.

The Dubai Financial Market saw the largest gains, with a 27.1% surge, followed by a healthy 8.0% rise in Boursa Kuwait. Saudi Arabia also closed the year in the green, with a 0.6% gain after a volatile year, while Oman and Bahrain posted gains of 1.4% and 0.7%, respectively. However, these gains were partially offset by declines

Trading activity on the MSX increased in 2024 compared to the previous year. Total value traded rose 15.1% to reach RO1.2bn, up from RO1.0bn in 2023



in Qatar and Abu Dhabi, which fell 2.4% and 1.7%, respectively.

"The stock market performance in 2024 was shaped by several key global events, particularly in the Middle East, that impacted GCC markets. These included the conflict in Gaza, followed by developments in Lebanon, as well as the sudden change in power in Syria. The attacks in the Red Sea also had a significant impact on sentiment towards the region," Junaid Ansari, Head of Investment Strategy and Research at Kamco Investment, said in the report.

Oman's benchmark MSX30 Index reached its peak for the year at 4,865.33 points in late May, while its lowest point was 4,464.18 at the close of December.

Services sector leads performance

MSX sector performance in 2024 tilted positively, with two out of three sectors recording gains. The services sector index emerged as the top performer, rising 11.3%, buoyed by a large number of constituent stocks posting share price increases.

losses, shedding 45.0% and 39.1%, respectively.

Strong growth in trading activity

Trading activity on the MSX increased in 2024 compared to the previous year. Total value traded rose 15.1% to reach RO1.2bn, up from RO1.0bn in 2023. The total yearly volume also grew by 47.1%, reaching 6.4bn shares, compared to 4.4bn in 2023.

The newly listed OQ Exploration and Production topped the value traded chart, with RO253mn worth of shares changing hands. Abraj Energy Services and Sohar International Bank followed, with value traded of RO139.8mn and RO123.7mn, respectively.

In terms of volume, Sohar International Bank led the way, with nearly 1bn shares traded, compared to 293.9mn shares in 2023. OQ Exploration and Production and OQ Gas Networks followed, with 673.7mn and 525mn shares traded, respectively.



Qatar achieves QR58bn trade surplus in Q3 2024

Doha, Qatar – Qatar recorded a merchandise trade surplus of QR57.7bn in the third quarter of 2024, down from QR60.9bn in Q3 2023.

According to figures released by the Planning and Statistics Authority and reported by Qatar News Agency, the value of Qatar's total exports in Q3 2024 (including exports of domestic goods and re-exports) amounted to QR87.8bn. This marked a decrease of QR2.0bn (or 2.2%) compared to Q3 2023, when total exports were QR89.8bn. However, exports increased by nearly QR2.8bn, or 3.3%, compared to Q2 2024.

The year-on-year decrease in total exports in Q3 2024 was mainly due to lower exports of mineral fuels, lubricants, and related materials by QR5.0bn (6.5%), and miscellaneous manufactured articles by QR0.1bn (22.0%).

On the other hand, increases were recorded in chemicals and related products, which grew by QR1.5bn (24.5%), and machinery and transport equipment, which rose by QR1.2bn (53.3%).

The value of Qatar's imports in Q3 2024 was QR30.1bn, representing an increase of QR1.2bn (4.1%)

compared to Q3 2023, when imports totalled QR28.9bn. However, imports decreased by nearly QR0.3bn, or 1.1%, compared to Q2 2024.

The year-on-year increase in import values in Q3 2024 was mainly due to increases in machinery and transport equipment, which rose by QR0.8bn (6.7%), chemicals and related products, which grew by QR0.4bn (17.2%), mineral fuels, lubricants, and related materials, which increased by QR0.32bn (58.2%), and food and live animals, which rose by QR0.3bn (9.8%).

On the other hand, decreases were recorded mainly in miscellaneous manufactured articles, which fell by QR0.4bn (6.7%), and manufactured goods classified chiefly by material, which dropped by QR0.3bn (7.7%).

During Q3 2024, Asia was the principal destination for Qatar's exports and the main origin of Qatar's imports, accounting for 75.9% and 39.7% respectively. The GCC followed with 11.6% of exports and 11.3% of imports, while the European Union accounted for 7.7% of exports and 26.0% of imports.

WAM

Saudi records SAR20.7bn trade surplus till October

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – Saudi Arabia's trade balance recorded a 30% monthly growth, achieving a surplus of SAR20.769bn in October 2024, according to the kingdom's recently released global trade bulletin. This marks an increase of over SAR4bn from SAR15.999bn in September.

The kingdom's total international trade volume reached SAR164.794bn in October, reflecting a 2% growth (SAR2.594bn) compared to SAR162.2bn in September. Merchandise exports contributed SAR92.782bn to the total trade volume, while imports accounted



for SAR77.012bn. Non-oil exports in October totalled approximately SAR19.413bn, representing 21%

of total exports. Meanwhile, oil exports amounted to SAR67.399bn, constituting 72.6% of total exports, and re-exports totalled SAR5.968bn, making up 6.4%.

Asian countries (excluding Arab and Islamic nations) remained the top destination for Saudi merchandise exports, accounting for 52.2% of the total, valued at SAR48.409bn. GCC countries ranked second with 13.1% of the total (SAR12.157bn), followed by the European Union with 13% (SAR12.071bn).

By individual country, China

was the leading destination for Saudi exports in October 2024, representing 16.1% of total exports. India ranked second with SAR8.793bn (9.5%), and Japan placed third with SAR8.703bn (9.4%).

Non-oil exports, including re-exports, passed through 33 customs ports via sea, land, and air routes, with a total initial value of SAR25.382bn. Notably, King Fahd Industrial Port in Jubail recorded the highest value among all transportation ports, handling SAR3.775bn, or 15% of the total.

SPA

How high could Bitcoin go in 2025?

Tina Teng

Bitcoin experienced a 150% rally in 2024, positioning itself as one of the top market performers in the year. This can be attributed to three bullish factors – regulatory optimism, an improved macro environment, and mounting investor enthusiasm.

Looking ahead, the world's largest cryptocurrency is expected to extend its bullish trend in 2025, with analysts projecting it may reach a price range of between \$200,000 and \$250,000.

Bullish Bitcoin cycle may continue

Bitcoin has historically reached fresh highs every four years during its past two bullish cycles since 2017. Each cycle saw gains of 2300% and 1700% before setbacks of between 70% and 80%.

Since its low of \$16,000 two years ago, Bitcoin has surged approximately 600%, indicating substantial potential for further growth in the coming two years.

Tom Lee from Fundstart Global Advisors predicts Bitcoin could reach \$250,000 in 2025. The Standard Chartered projects the price to hit \$200,000 next year.

Cryptocurrencies generally tend to move in a bullish trend during the easing monetary cycles of central banks. Investors' appetite for risky assets typically grows in environments of in-



US President-elect Donald Trump

creased liquidation and expanding money supply.

With the world's major central banks expected to continue cutting interest rates in 2025, prevailing risk-on sentiment is likely to support further gains for Bitcoin.

The US regulatory tailwind

Regulatory developments were

the primary drivers of Bitcoin's price surge in 2024. Its price saw a substantial rally, surpassing the critical resistance level of \$52,000 in February.

It followed the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)'s approval of a spot Bitcoin ETF in January, ahead of the much-anticipated Bitcoin halving event in April.

Bitcoin traded between

\$52,000 and \$72,000 until November, when Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election catalysed further gains.

Trump's pledge to implement crypto-friendly policies, including his statement that he would make America the "crypto capital of the planet", boosted investor sentiment.

Bitcoin topped the psycholog-

ical threshold of \$100,000 in early December after Trump announced plans to nominate Paul Atkins, a pro-crypto former SEC commissioner, as the next Chair of the SEC.

Prospects for 2025

"That performance is likely to continue in 2025, we will have a clearer regulatory environment and we are seeing institutional

capital come to the table in a more significant manner than we've ever seen," said Josh Gilbert, a markets analyst at eToro Australia.

The Trump administration's policies could continue providing regulatory tailwinds for cryptocurrencies in 2025. The US president reiterated its plan to adopt Bitcoin as part of the US

serves to raise the funds to buy Bitcoins, according to a Reuters report.

Near-term retreat risks

Nonetheless, the long-term view may not alter the near-term correction risk. Bitcoin price has retreated sharply from an all-time high of above \$108,000 in mid-

Bitcoin's stunning gains this year have been attributed to optimism surrounding US regulatory developments. Analysts predict the cryptocurrency may have significantly more room for growth in 2025

strategic reserves in December. The investment firm Charles Schwab expects Bitcoin to reach \$1mn if this happens.

At a July conference, the president-elect said Bitcoin holding would create "a permanent national asset to benefit all Americans." Senator Cynthia Lummis outlined the purchase of not more than 200,000 Bitcoin tokens annually over five years, or approximately 1% of the total supply.

Based on its mining mechanism, Bitcoin has a maximum supply limit of 21mn tokens. Although the proposal did not clarify how it would pass the legal process, the US government could sell some of its gold re-

December to the current \$94,000 level.

This is likely driven by profit-taking and risk-off sentiment. This decline coincides with a pullback in global stock markets over the past two weeks.

Until the incoming Trump Administration implements clear pro-crypto policies, some investors may choose to lock in their 2024 gains.

From a technical perspective, Bitcoin's immediate support level appears to be around \$90,000. A breakdown below this level could see the cryptocurrency testing the next target of approximately \$73,000.

(Source: Euronews.com)

China's manufacturing activity slows in December as trade risks grow

Beijing, China - China's factory activity expanded at a slower pace in December despite recent stimulus measures and in the face of increasing trade risks, official data have revealed.

The Purchasing Managers' Index, based on a survey of factory managers, slipped to 50.1 in December from 50.3 the previous month, the National Bureau of Statistics said.

It was the third straight monthly reading above 50, a level that indicates an expansion of manufacturing activity.

The slowdown in factory activity was due to a "decline in the output component", according to a note by Capital Economics' Gabriel Ng.

"That said, the output price component fell, suggesting downward pressure on prices remains", he said.

Overall, new orders rose to an eight-month high, while the exports order index rose to the highest level in four months, most likely helped by US importers rushing to beat higher tariffs that



incoming US President Donald Trump may impose on Chinese goods, Ng said.

Trump has pledged to impose 10% tariffs on Chinese goods, raising trade risks for China, the world's largest exporter of goods. China is already grappling with a faltering economy, weighed

down by reduced consumption and a property crisis.

A parallel purchasing managers' index for the non-manufacturing sector, which covers construction and services, rose to 52.2 points up from 50 points in November.

The World Bank last week

raised forecasts for China's economy growth to 4.9% but warned that reduced confidence among households and businesses, an aging population as well as issues such as low consumption and high debt will continue to weigh on China's future growth.

Agencies

Fed to deliver next rate cut in March: Goldman

Sam Boughedda

Goldman Sachs predicts that the US Federal Reserve will deliver its next interest rate cut of 25 basis points (bps) in March 2025.

The bank said in a note Friday that the move is expected to be followed by two additional cuts of the same magnitude in June and September.

"We expect the Fed to deliver its next 25bp cut in March followed by two more 25bp cuts in June and September to a terminal rate range of 3.5-3.75%," the bank wrote.

Goldman also anticipates that the Fed will slow its balance sheet runoff in January 2025 and halt it entirely by the second quarter.



Goldman Sachs projects above-consensus US real GDP growth of 2.4% year-over-year in 2025, citing robust real income growth and easing financial conditions as key drivers.

Core personal consumption expenditures (PCE) inflation is expected to decelerate to 2.4% by the end of 2025, aided by cooling shelter inflation and easing wage pressures. However,

tariffs are forecasted to provide a moderate inflationary boost.

Meanwhile, the bank says the unemployment rate in the US is projected to decline gradually, reaching 4.0% by the end of 2025, reflecting continued strength in the labour market despite the economic shifts.

Goldman notes that global growth is expected to reach 2.7% year-over-year in 2025, driven by easing financial conditions and rising disposable incomes.

However, the firm highlights risks from geopolitical developments, particularly US policy shifts, including higher tariffs on China and autos, lower immigration, and new tax cuts under the incoming Trump administration. (Source: Investing.com)

Euro falls to lowest level in 2 years against dollar

Frankfurt, Germany - The euro has declined 0.9% against the US dollar, reaching mid-1.02, its lowest level since 21 November 2022.

The common currency extended weakness against its counterpart at the start of the new year due to concerns about the Eurozone's economic outlook, political instability, and a monetary policy discrepancy between the European Central Bank (ECB) and the Federal Reserve (Fed).

The EUR/USD pair has fallen sharply from the 2024 peak of above 1.12 in September, marking a 9% decline over three months.

The US dollar's strength, bolstered by Donald Trump's presidential victory, has exacerbated the euro's weakness since November.

Parity in sight

Analysts expect the euro-dollar pair to reach parity in 2025, a level last seen in 2022 when Russia launched a full-scale military operation in Ukraine.

Adding to the Eurozone's woes, Ukraine stopped Russian gas transit to Europe following the expiration of a five-year contract on Wednesday.

This development has forced many European countries to rely on costlier heating alternatives during a harsh winter.

Natural gas futures surged to a two-year high of more than \$4 per million British thermal units (MMBtu) last week, before retreating to \$3.66 MMBtu during Friday's Asian session.

Globally, the Eurozone faces mounting risks under Trump's presidency. The US president-elect has pledged to impose higher tariffs on imports from China, Canada, and Mexico.

While no explicit announce-



Analysts expect the euro-dollar pair to reach parity in 2025, a level last seen in 2022 when Russia launched a full-scale military operation in Ukraine

ments have been made, European automakers are particularly vulnerable to potential tariff hikes.

Dominance of the Dollar

The US dollar has been soaring amid a hawkish shift in the Fed's monetary policy and Trump's presidency. The dollar index surged to above 109 on Thursday, the highest since November 2022.

The Fed initiated the easing cycle with a jumbo 50 basis

point rate cut in September. However, the bank shifted to a much more hawkish stance following resilient jobs data and improvement in other economic data.

In December, the Fed cut the interest rate by 25 basis points as expected. However, the bank signalled a much more hawkish stance on its easing cycle in 2025.

The Fed's dot plot, a chart that projects the future path of interest rates, indicated a half-percentage point rate cut in 2025, compared to a full percentage cut projected in September.

In contrast, the ECB is likely to accelerate its rate-cutting cycle in 2025. The ECB reduced its policy rate by a full percentage point in 2024, and analysts expect another percentage-point cut next year as the Eurozone continues to face economic and political headwinds.

(Source: Euronews.com)

Sohar Aluminium, Sohar Hospital sign agreement

Sohar Aluminium Company and Sohar Hospital, an accredited American Heart Association (AHA) Training Center, have signed an agreement to grant accreditation to Sohar Industrial Training Institute (SITI) to conduct AHA courses in full accordance with AHA's esteemed guidelines.

This partnership allows Sohar Aluminium to become an officially recognised AHA Training Site, offering different life-saving courses, including First Aid/Heart Saver and Basic Life Support. These courses will be conducted at the Company's Sohar Industrial Training Institute (SITI). The courses are de-



signed to equip Sohar Aluminium's employees and other trainees with the essential skills needed to respond effectively in emergency situations and in life-threatening conditions.

As occupational health is an essential part of healthcare in industry, Sohar Aluminium has long been committed to the safety and well-being of its workforce. The company established a medical centre on its premises and became operational in November 2008 after due inspection and accreditation/licensing by Ministry of Health with primary focus on Occupational Health. Subsequently, scope of activities was enlarged

to include urgent/acute medical care and strengthen emergency medical response.

Forming this partnership with Sohar Hospital serves to ensure that Sohar Aluminium's employees have access to high-quality, internationally recognized training in life-saving skills, underscoring our commitment to health, safety, and well-being in the workplace and beyond.

By providing essential AHA-certified training, Sohar Aluminium's Medical Centre aims to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills to act confidently in critical moments.

Being a professional institute, Sohar Industrial Training Insti-

tute (SITI) primarily focuses on delivering technical vocational training while also providing safety and soft skills training. It provides various training programmes and courses with competitive international standards in the technical and professional fields and personal skills development for employees, trainees, and contractors from within and outside Sohar Aluminium.

Sohar Aluminium LLC was formed in September 2004 to undertake a landmark Greenfield aluminium smelter project in Oman. It is jointly owned by OQ, Abu Dhabi National Energy Company PJSC (TAQA), and Rio Tinto.



ARA Petroleum declares joint sponsorship of Oman's pavilion in Japan

ARA Petroleum (ARA) is proud to announce its joint sponsorship of Oman's pavilion at Expo 2025 to be held in Osaka, Japan. This collaboration and partnership underscore ARA's commitment to supporting Oman's cultural and economic initiatives on the global stage.

Expo 2025, themed 'Designing Future Society for Our Lives', is scheduled from April 13 to October 13, on Yume Shima Island in Osaka. The event will showcase innovative and technological advancements from around the world.

Oman's pavilion, currently in its final stages of construction, reflects Oman's rich heritage and future aspirations. Inspired by Oman's natural and topographical diversity, the design focuses on three main elements: land, water, and people.

H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth, recently chaired the central committee meeting tasked with preparing Oman for Expo 2025 in Osaka. The meeting, held in Muscat, re-

viewed the latest preparations for the global forum, including the pavilion's readiness and the start of experimental activities. ARA was honoured to participate in this meeting as one of the pavilion's official sponsors.

Our sponsorship aligns with ARA's desire to foster international cooperation and promote sustainable development. By supporting Oman's participation in Expo 2025, ARA aims to contribute to Oman's sustainable development goals and encourage global collaboration.

ARA Petroleum was established in 2014 and is part of the wider Zubair Corporation, one of Oman's oldest and most respected business groups, with broad interests across many sectors throughout the Middle East, Africa and beyond.

ARA is a dynamic member of the Exploration and production industry in Oman and Tanzania. It is a full-cycle E&P company that explores, appraises, develops, and produces oil and gas resources both in Oman and internationally.

OOC Secretary-General receives president of International Shooting Federation

Taha bin Suleiman al Kishry, Secretary-General of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), received Luciano Rossi, President of the International Shooting Federation, at his office on Sunday morning.

During the meeting, the two parties discussed ways to strengthen cooperation in the sports field, in addition to reviewing the International Federation's plans to develop the sport of shooting globally and to expand the base of practitioners. The discussions also addressed future initiatives aimed at supporting athletes and providing opportunities for training and development in this sport.



Kishry commended the significant role played by the International Shooting Federation in the development of shooting sport,

Luciano Rossi expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the warm reception. He reaffirmed the commitment of the federation to providing full support to national Olympic committees in the field of shooting sport

highlighting the importance of establishing a sustainable partnership between OOC and international sports federations to enhance the level of sports performance at both local and international levels. Luciano Rossi expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the warm reception. He reaffirmed the

commitment of the federation to providing full support to national Olympic committees in the field of shooting sport. This includes strengthening cooperation in organising international championships, offering advanced training programmes, and supporting the necessary infrastructure to develop athletes.

Bin Salim CT lift MOCL 7th edition Champions Cup

Bin Salim CT lifted the MOCL Champions cup by defeating Rex Stars Strikers by 43 runs at the Grand final held at the Challengers CC, ground, Amerat.

Winning the toss, Rex Stars Strikers elected to field first. Bin Salim scored 179/5 in the stipulated 16 overs.

In reply, Rex Stars Strikers could only manage 136 losing all wickets in 16 overs.

Bharath from Bin Salim gave a good start as an opener and scored a knock of 41 runs in 32 balls and to finish off with a blistering knock of 61 runs from 24 balls with 7 fours and 3 sixes and he also took 2 wickets.

Rajeev Krishnan from Rex Stars Strikers scored 31 runs from 19 balls hitting 2 fours and 2 sixes.



The man of the match award was presented to Manikandan for his outstanding performance with the bat and the ball.

Best batsman and man of the

series was awarded to Sandeep Komalath from Team Eagles for an overall score of 975 runs.

Best bowler was Sajith from Shooters XI for taking 36 wickets

in the tournament.

Bishir from team SMRC was awarded for hitting the most number of sixes in the tournament with 87 sixes.

Wassim Jamadar from Konkani Warriors had the highest individual score of 193 in a match. Most number of centuries in the tournament was scored by Mohammad Nahid Hussain from the team The Risky Shots. He scored three centuries.

Most 50s in the tournament were scored by Sandeep Komalath from Team Eagles. He hit 10 half centuries.

Muhammad Kabir from India H XI got three fifties - the highest in the tournament.

Player of the tournament was awarded to Hamza Hassan from Black Arrows for his outstanding performance with the bat and the bowl. He scored 810 runs and took 27 wickets in the tournament.

DRIVEWISE



JEREMY FOX IS A BRITISH DRIVING AND ROAD SAFETY EXPERT. SINCE 2009, HE HAS MANAGED THE DRIVER-TRAINING OPERATIONS OF TECHNICAL & ADMINISTRATIVE TRAINING INSTITUTE. HE CONSIDERS IT HIS PRIVILEGE TO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO OMAN'S IMPROVED ROAD SAFETY

Drivers fatigue is a significant problem, contributing to thousands of road accidents worldwide each year. Although it is impossible to calculate the exact number, research suggests that fatigue may be a factor in up to 20% of all crashes and as much as 25% of fatal and serious collisions.

Fatigue-related crashes are particularly severe, often involving high-speed impacts. When a driver falls asleep, they typically fail to brake or steer, resulting in devastating consequences.

Sleepiness substantially reduces reaction times - a critical element of safe driving - by impairing concentration and alertness. This diminishes our ability to make sound decisions behind the wheel, often with tragic results.

Alarmingly, most drivers are aware when they are feeling sleepy but continue driving instead of stopping to rest. Ignoring this common-sense decision often stems from a desire to 'push through' and complete the journey.

However, this behaviour can have dire consequences.

In some countries, including the UK, self-imposed sleep deprivation is now considered reckless driving and carries severe penalties.

When are you most at risk?

Fatigue-related crashes are most likely to occur:

- ▶ During long, monotonous journeys, such as on motorways or other straight, low-traffic roads.

DRIVER FATIGUE: A SILENT KILLER

- ▶ Between 2am and 6am, when the body's natural alertness is at its lowest.
- ▶ Between 2pm and 4pm, particularly after a meal.
- ▶ After insufficient sleep or long working hours, especially following night shifts.
- ▶ When alcohol or certain medications that cause drowsiness have been consumed.

Reducing the risks

To minimise the risk of fatigue-related accidents, consider the following tips:

- Don't start a journey when tired. Ensure you get a good night's sleep before setting off on a long drive.
- Avoid driving between midnight and 6am. This is when your circadian rhythm naturally lowers alertness.
- Plan regular rest stops. Take at least a 15-minute break every two hours of driving.
- Stop if you feel sleepy. Pull over in a safe place - never on the hard shoulder of a highway.
- Be mindful of over-the-counter medicines, especially those for colds, flu, and hay fever, which can cause drowsiness. If the label says 'may cause drowsiness', assume it will!

Signs of fatigue

Recognising the signs of fatigue is vital to preventing accidents. These include:

- ▶ Constant yawning.
- ▶ Drifting between lanes.
- ▶ Sore or heavy eyes.
- ▶ Difficulty keeping your head upright.

- ▶ Delayed reactions.
- ▶ Daydreaming or losing focus.
- ▶ Trouble remembering the last few kilometres driven.
- ▶ Erratic changes in speed.
- ▶ Staying Awake, Staying Alive

To combat driver fatigue:

- Sleep well: Aim for 7-8 hours of uninterrupted sleep before a long journey.
- Take regular breaks: At least 15 minutes every two hours, during which you should stretch and get some fresh air.
- Share driving duties: If possible, alternate with a co-driver who is also well-rested.
- Eat balanced meals: Stick to regular meal-times.
- Avoid sedating medications: Check labels carefully.
- Time your journey wisely: Avoid late-night and early-morning drives when the risk of accidents is highest. By following these simple rules, you can ensure you stay awake, alert, and safe behind the wheel.
- Safe driving!

T10 Bash 2025 - A symphony of camaraderie and friendship on the pitch

Hikvision Oman and GPT Group organised a T10 Cricket Bash at the Oman Cricket Academy Stadium, in Amerat as a team engagement activity for employees along with top System Integrators of Oman. All were invited along with their families.

The tournament began on January 2, with an elegant trophy unveiling ceremony. The prestigious event was graced by Pradeep Kumar Tripathy, the Chairman of GPT Group and his wife, Rashmi Tripathy along with representatives of Hikvision Oman and GPT Group. The unveiling ceremony marked the beginning of what would be a remarkable cricketing and sportsmanship spectacle.

The tournament, which was ceremoniously launched by Oliver Wang, Director, Hikvision Oman, officially began on January 3.

The players were warmly welcomed by Adam al Balushi, Group GM, GPT and Nilabh Singh, GM (Sales & Marketing) GPT Group. The inaugural ceremony was attended by Shibu J Thomas, Head of Finance, GPT, Prateek Parashar and other representatives of Hikvision, GPT and participant companies.

At the inauguration, Oliver Wang stated, "The idea behind this event was that we bring all people on the same platform, in a way that they can enjoy together along with family and we at Hikvision and all our partners here are one big extended family."

Cricket was a unique game for Wang and his family, who were seen enjoying the matches with cheers and support. Wang



added, "As an extended family, all of us along with their families, together in this chilling weather and a heart-warming game of cricket, makes us bond together both personally and professionally."

There were 12 teams battling it out to win the coveted cup. The teams represented big corporate names like Khimji Ramdas, MHD, Mustafa Sultan, Bahwan, OHI, Bishara, Al Khalili, Anzyna, AIS, BIG Group, Al Jassar Group and Hikvision-GPT.

Each team had an average of 15 players each. Round 1 of the matches started with a bang!

AIS had a faceoff with OHI.



Similarly, Bishara faced Al Jassar. Mustafa Sultan played against MHD. Bahwan IT faced Anzyna while Al Khalili faced Khimji Ramdas. Finally, on Day 2, BIG played against hosts Hikvision-GPT Group.

The playoffs were judged with eight overs in the game.

It was in the middle of the playoffs that Nilabh Singh, a poet in his own right, stated, "I think it is an honour for us to join our partners in such an event in today's weather. It is a very good environment and this competition. We are thankful to each and every one of the present teams of Hikvision and GPT Group. I

would like to thank all the members and their partners for such a memorable day in Muscat. We appreciate the partner's efforts in the last year and I am sure that we can have a great future together in 2025 and in the following years to come."

After two days of intense competition between the 12 teams, the grand finale took place on January 4. The day was filled with nail-biting action and unforgettable moments. In an exhilarating finish, Khimji Ram-

We are thankful to each and every one of Hikvision and GPT Group. I would like to thank all the members and their partners for such a memorable day

NILABH SINGH

das emerged as the champions of the tournament, securing the coveted Winners' Trophy, with MSE ending as runners up.

Team captain of Khimji Ramdas Group Venkatesh Prabhu said, "We wanted to be cornerstone in this tournament. We did it with great team effort but there was one exceptional performer in Tushar Hatankar. He was incredible with both ball and bat."

Hatankar won the man of the match and series with an impressive scorecard.

The awards were presented by a special Guest of Honour Jatinder Singh, Captain of Oman Men's Cricket Team.

ISM alumni excels at three long-distance races in UAE

Syed Bilal, an 18-year-old Dubai-based runner and alumnus of the Indian School Muscat (ISM), has achieved an incredible feat by completing and excelling at three long-distance races within just three months. His remarkable performances across these challenging events have positioned him as an inspiring young athlete in the region.

Bilal's journey began in October 2024 at the Skechers Performance Run, where he competed in the 10km event. Demonstrating both speed and endurance, he clinched the gold medal in the under-19 category with a time of 47:44 minutes.

In November, Bilal took on a bigger challenge at the Skechers Performance UAE National Day Half Marathon, powered by Dubai Sports Council. Competing in the 21km race, he secured



the silver medal in the highly competitive 16-to-30 age group with an impressive gun time of 1:34:36 hours.

Capping off this incredible streak, Bilal made his debut in a full marathon at the ADNOC Abu Dhabi Marathon, a world major marathon where almost 35,000 people from several different na-

tionalities from all over the globe took part, on December 14.

The grueling 42.2km race tested his physical and mental limits, but Bilal finished strong with a time of 3:41:12 hours. "Completing a marathon is as much a mental battle as it is a physical one. You have to push through your limits," he said.

ROHM holds Beauty and the Beast on Ice performance

The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) opened the new year of 2025 with a dazzling winter wonderland performance of *Beauty and the Beast on Ice* on January 2, 3 and 4.

The fairy tale performance enchanted audiences with a spectacular blend of elite ice skating and original music composition, all set against the stunning backdrop of a frozen stage. Presented by the renowned UK-based company, International Ice Stars, the world's leading theatrical ice show producers and pioneers of the theatre-based ice show genre, *Beauty and the Beast on Ice* inspired and delighted family audiences of all ages. The performance proved to be nothing short of magical.

A particularly special highlight of the show was the participation of Amani Fancy, who's remark-



able skating journey began in Oman. Amani, a trailblazing Omani-British ice skater, learnt to skate at the age of six on a small ice-rink in Al Khuwair. Returning to Oman to perform as *Beauty* seems a fairy tale in itself.

Amani is a two-time British Pair Skating Champion, ranked 12th in Europe and 16th in the world, and the winner of 'Dancing on Ice' in both the UK and Germany.

Amani's dedication and skill has led her to become a top fig-

ure in the world of ice skating. The elite skater expressed her joy at being back in Oman to perform: "I'm so excited to finally have the opportunity to perform in my home country where my love for ice skating started."

LuLu Exchange marks 14 years of customer-centric service in Oman

LuLu Exchange, the leading provider of cross border payments in the Sultanate of Oman, marked their 14th anniversary with a grand celebration at its Bausher customer engagement center in Oman Avenues Mall.

The event highlighted the company's unwavering commitment to serving Oman with excellence, innovation, and a customer first approach.

As part of the celebrations, the 2025 LuLu Exchange Wall Calendar was unveiled, showcasing 12 stunning winning artworks from the children's LuLu Exchange Art Competition 2024. Organised to

celebrate young artists' creativity, the competition highlighted the rich culture and heritage of Oman through their imaginative expressions. The unveiling was led by Lathish Vichitran, General Manager of LuLu Exchange, in the presence of the team and attendees, marking a vibrant start to the New Year.

Speaking about the occasion, Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings, noted Oman's remarkable economic transformation in recent years, guided by the visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. "LuLu Ex-



change is proud to have been a part of this journey, contributing to its growth and progress. As

we celebrate 14 years of service, I would like to reiterate LuLu Exchange's unwavering commit-

ment to innovation and to placing the customer at the heart of everything we do."

Reflecting on the company's journey, General Manager Vichitran expressed gratitude, saying "this milestone is a testament to the trust and support of our customers, partners, and the people of Oman. We remain committed to delivering innovative solutions and fostering growth together."

"We look forward to an exciting future of continued success."

The anniversary celebrations will continue through January with impactful CSR initiatives at various branches. These activities aim to strengthen relationships with customers and the community while reflecting on

the company's 14 years of achievements and contributions.

As LuLu Exchange celebrates this milestone, it remains steadfast in its mission to connect lives and deliver financial solutions that empower individuals and communities.

Nazish Shoukat Mukhari, Kessavbala Babumon, Sarah Mustafa, Abbas Shakil Ali, Bernice Adrienne L Dador, K S Aadi Srikeshav, Pritisha Bhatnagar, Durvi Soni, Gaurangi, Audrey Arnila, Arun, and Havish Rajesh were adjudged winners of the LuLu Exchange Art Competition 2024.

South Korea: Thousands protest for and against the arrest of Yoon

Seoul, South Korea - Thousands of protesters took to the snowed-in streets of South Korean capital, Seoul, on Sunday to rally both for and against the arrest of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol, as the crisis-hit nation heads toward a high-stakes confrontation.

The arrest warrant for Yoon, issued due to his refusal to comply with summons for investigation, is set to expire at midnight (1500 GMT) on Monday.

On Friday, dozens of the agency's officials and police officers attempted to arrest Yoon at his residence but were thwarted by the South Korean military and presidential security. An intense five-hour standoff ended with the agency officials retreating to figure out their next step.

As the deadline for the arrest warrant approaches, another standoff seems imminent.



Anti-Yoon protestors carried cards reading 'Arrest Yoon Suk Yeol'

Anti-Yoon protests
Hundreds of protesters rallied overnight into Sunday near Yoon's residence, with the temperature dropping to minus 5 degrees Celsius. They called for his ouster and arrest, supporting the authorities' efforts to detain the leader over his martial law debacle.

"We have to reestablish the foundation of our society by punishing the president who has denied the constitution," said Yang Kyung-soo, leader of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, a major labor group that took part in the protests.

"We must bring down the

We have to reestablish the foundation of our society by punishing the president who has denied the constitution. We must bring down the criminal Yoon Suk Yeol and arrest and detain him

YANG KYUNG-SOO

criminal Yoon Suk Yeol and arrest and detain him as soon as possible," he said.

There was no indication that anti-corruption investigators and police were sending officers back into Yoon's residence on Sunday.

Over the weekend, staff from the presidential security team

were seen preparing for another attempt at an arrest, placing barbed wires near the gate and along the hills leading up to the residence.

Pro-Yoon demonstrations
Not far from the anti-Yoon

protests were groups of supporters who held banners reading 'We will fight for President Yoon Suk Yeol'.

Other placards read 'Stop the Steal' - a phrase popularised by US President-elect Donald Trump's supporters after he lost the 2020 election to Joe Biden.

They were denouncing his impeachment and pledging to block any efforts to detain him.

A legal struggle ensues
Behind the scenes of discontent on the streets, authorities on both sides are attempting to legally strong-arm their opponents.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which is leading Yoon's criminal investigation, has asked acting President Choi Sang-mok to order the presidential security service to comply with the arrest warrant.

Choi has not commented on the matter.

Higher officials of the security service ignored summonses on Saturday from police, who planned to question them over Friday's events.

Arresting Yoon while he remains in his official residence under their protection seems 'virtually impossible', according to

the anti-corruption agency.

They are currently weighing charges of rebellion after Yoon briefly imposed martial law on December 3, an order which was overturned within hours.

Meanwhile, Yoon's lawyers have challenged the detention and search warrants, relying on a law that protects locations which may have military secrets from search without the consent of the person in charge - in this case, Yoon.

They also argue that anti-corruption officers do not have the authority to investigate Yoon's rebellion charges and police officers do not have the authority to

assist his arrest.

Meanwhile, a South Korea court on Sunday rejected Yoon's objections to the order to detain him, according to local media.

A local court in Seoul rejected objections raised by Yoon's lawyer to the arrest warrant for the impeached president, the Yonhap News Agency reported.

The decision came days after Yoon's legal team filed the objections in Seoul's Western District Court seeking suspension of its warrant. Yun Gap-geun, Yoon's lawyer, said they are considering appealing the local court ruling to one of the nation's top courts.

Agencies

US: Carter's state funeral begins

Georgia, US - Six carefully choreographed days of funeral events in honour of former US President Jimmy Carter got underway on Saturday, starting in his hometown of Plains, Georgia.

Carter, who died on December 29 aged 100, served as president from 1977 to 1981 and went on to become the United States' longest-lived commander-in-chief. The week-long state funeral began with a procession through the small town of Plains. Secret Service agents from his current and former protective details carried Carter's coffin, draped in an American flag, to a hearse.

Mourners gathered along the roadside to say their goodbyes, many saluting the motorcade as it made its way past Carter's boyhood family peanut farm, where a bell was rung 39 times in honour of the country's 39th presi-



The former president's body will travel from Georgia to Washington for six days worth of commemorations

dent. "He was a man that didn't walk around proud; he was an everyday normal person," local resident William Brown, 71, told the AFP news agency in Plains. "We're going to miss him."

Meanwhile, flags were flown at half-mast across the United States as well as at US embassies around the world, and tributes were paid at major sporting and

cultural events.

From Georgia to Washington
Later on Saturday, Carter's body was set to be driven to Atlanta for a moment of silence at the Georgia State Capitol, where Carter served as a state senator before becoming governor.

After lying in repose at the

Carter Presidential Center overnight, allowing members of the public to pay their respects, Carter's body will be flown to Washington, D.C., and then driven to the US Navy Memorial - a nod to Carter's graduation from the United States Naval Academy in 1946 and his subsequent submarine service.

DW

Mali army claims it arrested leader of IS-linked group

Bamako, Mali - The Mali army, on Saturday, said it arrested the leader of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (EIGS) - an affiliate of the terror organisation in the Sahel region.

The army announced that it arrested two people, Mahamad Ould Erkehile 'alias Abu Rakia', and Abu Hash, describing the latter as 'chief of first order'.

A statement from the General Staff of the Malian Armed Forces said it carried out the operation on Friday in which several of the group's fighters were also killed.

It further claimed to have recovered material intended for the manufacture of improvised explosive devices.

Mali's army said Hash had been responsible for coordinating 'the worst atrocities' against



The Islamist insurgency has been cited as a key reason for the instability that has spread through the Sahel region

civilians in northeastern Menaka and Gao regions and attacks against the army.

"Principal investigations confirm that he collaborated actively with Abu Huzeifa and Osama Madalo, two terrorist leaders who were previously neu-

tralised," it added.

Communities across central and northern Mali have faced instability and violence since groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and so-called 'Islamic State' began launching attacks in 2012.

DW

RED AND MODIFIED



A modified car is exhibited on the final day of the Summernats car festival at the Exhibition Park in Canberra, Australia, on Sunday. The 37th edition of Summernats had begun on January 2 (Xinhua)

Germany: Munich, Frankfurt flights cancelled

Berlin, Germany - Snow and ice have impacted flight operations at three of Germany's major airports, with some flights having to be cancelled.

"Due to the predicted weather conditions, flight operations are expected to be restricted and flights cancelled on Sunday, January 5, especially in the morning," Munich Airport said on its website. Frankfurt Airport warned of similar disruptions and cancellations during the morning hours and advised travellers to check on the status of their flights before making their way to the airport.

Various flights had to be cancelled at Frankfurt, including departures to famous European



Airline Lufthansa had to cancel flights on Sunday due to wintry conditions

destinations such as Paris, Venice and Prague.

Stuttgart Airport in southwestern Germany also reported several delays due to the winter weather, although the runway had been cleared and was ready for operations. Some planes have

to be de-iced before takeoff, delaying departure times.

German news agency DPA cited a spokesperson for Munich Airport as saying that reduced visibility due to snowfall had led to longer intervals between take-offs and landings, while aircraft

also needed to be de-iced. The spokesman said that one runway was being kept open while the other was being cleared.

The German weather service has issued warnings of severe weather conditions, particularly in Bavaria, where freezing rain and black ice was expected.

German rail operator Deutsche Bahn (DB), meanwhile, also warned that the weather conditions were impacting some of its operations. "Winter weather in the area #Frankfurt(M) is causing disruptions to Deutsche Bahn's long-distance services. This is leading to long delays and partial or complete cancellations of trains," DB said.

DW

German interior minister says some Syrians may be sent back

Berlin, Germany - German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser has suggested that some Syrians who have sought refuge in Germany, under certain conditions, may have to return to their country, following the fall of President Bashar Assad.

Faeser's comments follow a decision by Germany taken just days after rebel groups in Syria, led by the Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), overthrew the former president following a decadelong conflict, to put a pause on processing asylum applications for Syrians.

"As our law stipulates, the

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) will review and revoke protection grants if people no longer need this protection in Germany because the situation in Syria has stabilised," Faeser told the Funke Media Group, a major publisher of German newspapers, in a report published on Sunday.

"This will then apply to those who do not have a right of residence for other reasons such as work or training and who do not return to Syria voluntarily," she added. Faeser stressed, however, that "those who are well-integrated, employed, have



Germany is home to almost one million Syrians, many of whom celebrated the fall of Bashar Assad

learned German, and found a new home here should be allowed to stay in Germany'.

She added that Syrians who want to return should be supported, while criminals and Islamists should be deported as quickly as possible. "We have greatly expanded the legal options for this and will use them as soon as the situation in Syria allows," Faeser added.

Currently, around 975,000 Syrians are living in Germany, according to the Interior Ministry. The majority arrived after 2015, fleeing the Syrian civil war. More than 300,000 have been granted subsidiary protection status, meaning authorities recognise they would face serious danger if returned to their homeland.

Despite Faeser's comments, Germany has not yet indicated what stance it will take on Syria's new leadership. So far it has proceeded with caution, stressing the importance of inclusive governance to the former rebels.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock travelled to Damascus on Friday in order to 'discuss whether such an inclusive political process is possible. DW

Cyprus issue: UN chief calls for 'critical look'

New York, US - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said it is important to take 'a critical look at the way forward' in addressing the Cyprus issue.

"It is also important, at this stage and after the findings of my Personal Envoy, to have a critical look at the way forward through an informal broader meeting with the two sides and the guarantor powers," Guterres said in a report on his mission of Good Offices in Cyprus, obtained by Anadolu.

"I call upon all relevant stakeholders to earnestly consider how to ensure that this next engagement, which has raised hope among Cypriots that a mutually acceptable way forward is still possible, is open and constructive," he said.



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

Cyprus has been mired in a decades-long dispute between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots despite a series of diplomatic efforts by the United Nations to achieve a comprehensive settlement

leading to a settlement."

The report also said 'the leaders agreed to have an informal meeting in a broader format in the near future, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, to discuss the way forward'.

"They also agreed to meet in Cyprus to explore the possibility of opening new crossing points. During the period, the two sides have begun discussing this specific issue, under the auspices of the United Nations," it read.

The report recalled that, as Holguin noted, it was agreed to hold an informal meeting in a 'broader format' with the partic-

ipation of the guarantor countries due to the lack of 'common ground' between the parties.

Pushbacks of asylum seekers

Meanwhile, a report by United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) said violations on both sides persisted but showed willingness to engage in more regular dialogue.

The report, obtained by Anadolu, said: "Repeated incidents of Greek Cypriot farmers defying UNFICYP warnings and farming lands too close to the northern ceasefire line created

tensions during the period under review."

It also said pushbacks of asylum seekers by the Greek Cypriot administration across the Green Line, as well as at sea, continued during the reporting period.

"This action led to a total of 142 persons being left stranded in the buffer zone in the period between 15 May and 14 November 2024, including 35 children aged 9 months to 17 years old, sixteen of whom were unaccompanied," it said. "All remaining stranded asylum seekers were admitted to the asylum procedures by 14 November 2024."

The report said in 137 separate instances, 'the Aliens and Immigration' Unit of the Greek Cypriot police committed incursion violations by entering the buffer zone without authorisation, either to drop asylum seekers or to monitor them.

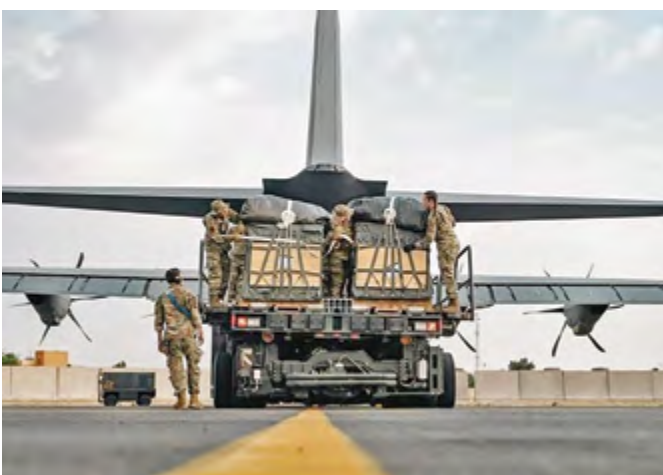
Anadolu Agency

Saudi Arabia sends another relief plane from Riyadh to Syria

Cairo, Egypt - Saudi Arabia on Sunday sent another relief plane to Syria as part of an air bridge launched by the kingdom to assist Syria following last month's fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime.

The Saudi state news agency SPA said the plane is loaded with food, medical supplies, and shelter materials, though specific quantities were not disclosed.

The aid plane, organised by King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, departed King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh for Damascus airport.



The plane is loaded with food, medical supplies, and shelter materials

This marks the sixth Saudi relief plane sent to Damascus in less than a week as part of an air bridge launched by Riyadh for Syria, according to the Saudi state news agency SPA

SPA said the aid plane aims 'to alleviate the difficult conditions faced by the Syrian people and is part of the kingdom's ongoing support for friendly and brotherly nations during crises and hardships'. This marks the sixth Saudi relief plane sent to Damascus in less than a week as part of an air bridge launched by Riyadh for Syria.

According to SPA, the Saudi aid to the Syrian people from 2011 to the end of 2024 reached nearly US\$857mn.

Besides, a plane carrying 34 tonnes of humanitarian aid departed on Sunday from the city of Misrata, Libya, bound for Syria.

According to a statement from the Misrata city government, the aid plane took off from Misrata Airport carrying a delegation from the city and the Libyan Red Crescent.

The delegation was received at Damascus Airport by representatives of the Syrian Red Crescent and officials from Libya's Embassy in Damascus.

Syrian state TV reported that the aid plane delivered 34 tonnes

of food and medical supplies to the capital Damascus.

Syria's FM arrives in Doha

Meanwhile, Syria's new Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani arrived in the Qatari capital Doha on Sunday, marking his first visit to the Gulf country.

Shaibani is accompanied by Defence Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra and intelligence chief Anas Khattab during the visit, the Syrian state news agency SANA reported.

Sunday's visit marks the first official visit to Qatar by officials of Syria's new administration since the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime last month to explore opportunities of cooperation between the two countries, SANA said.

Following his first overseas visit to Saudi Arabia, Shaibani unveiled on Friday his intention to visit Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Jordan.

Qatar was one of the first countries to express support for Damascus after Assad's ouster.

On Saturday, Qatari Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mohammed Al-Khulaifi discussed with Shaibani ways to enhance cooperation between Doha and Damascus during a phone call, according to Qatari authorities.

Khulaifi visited Damascus on December 23, where he met with the leader of Syria's new administration, Ahmed al-Sharaa, to discuss ways to strengthen relations and support Syria's future.

Anadolu Agency

At least 2 Palestinians killed, several injured as Israeli warplanes pound Gaza

Gaza City, Palestine - At least two Palestinians were killed and several others injured in Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, medics said.

The Civil Defence Agency said the body of a Palestinian was recovered and several people were injured after an Israeli strike that reduced a home to rubble in the southern city of Khan Younis.

Another Palestinian was killed in Israeli bombardment in the northern town of Jabalia, a medical source said. Artillery shelling also targeted northwestern Rafah in southern Gaza and the western and northern parts of the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, witnesses said.

No information about casualties was not yet available.

Two Palestinians were also injured when Israeli fighter jets hit a home near a mosque in Al-Tuffah neighbourhood in Gaza

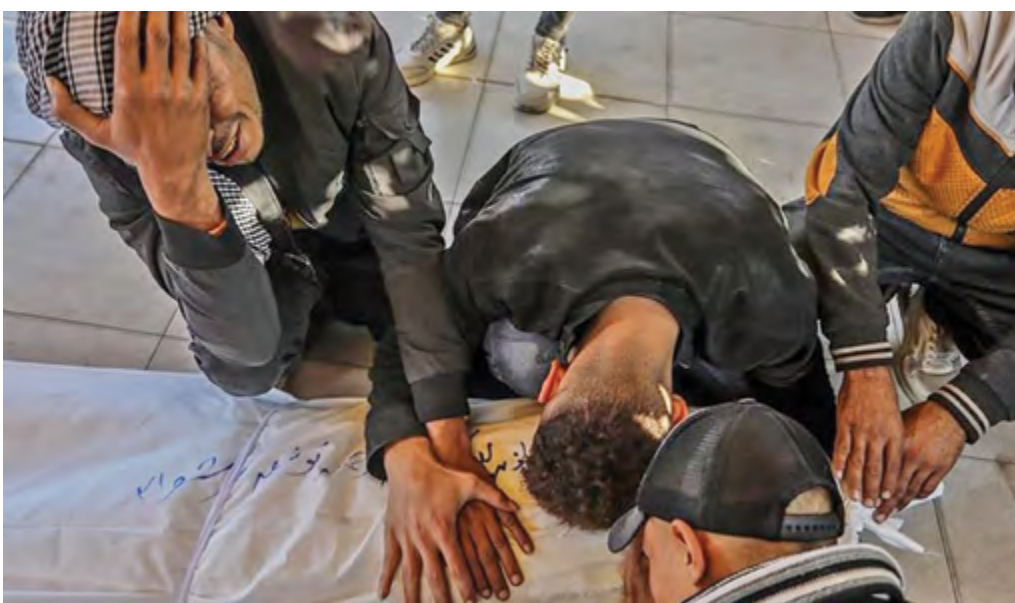
City, another medical source said.

According to witnesses, Israeli army forces demolished several residential buildings in the southern and northern parts of Gaza City. The Israeli army has continued a genocidal war on Gaza that has killed more than 45,700 victims, mostly women and children, since a Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, despite a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire.

In November, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its deadly war on Gaza.

Meanwhile, an Israeli soldier accused of committing war crimes during the Gaza war has



fled Brazil where authorities were pressing for an investigation, local media said on Sunday.

The investigation stems from a complaint filed by the Hind Rajab Foundation (HRF), a Belgium-based group advocating for justice for Palestinian victims, Israeli public broadcaster KAN said. According to Israeli Channel 12, the complaint includes over 500 pages of evidence, including videos, geolocation data, and open-source intelligence, linking the soldier to destruction in Gaza.

Despite a court order, the soldier, a reservist who was in Brazil as a tourist, managed to leave the

country and is reportedly en route back to Israel, KAN said. Details of how he evaded arrest remain unclear.

In a statement, HRF condemned the soldier's escape, accusing Israel of orchestrating his departure to obstruct justice.

The organisation said it has 'verified information that Israel is imminently attempting to smuggle suspected Israeli war criminal Yuval Vagdanian out of Brazil, because of a Brazilian court order for police to take investigative measures against him'. "There are also indications that evidence is being destroyed," it stressed. "This is not only a scandal but an affront to Brazil's sovereignty and rule of law. Israel has employed similar tactics before."

The organisation called on Brazilian authorities 'to fulfil their responsibilities, protect their judicial process, and ensure justice prevails'.

Francesca Albanese, the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, said legal actions against Israelis suspected of crimes in Gaza 'are necessary and overdue'.

"Apartheid Israel will go to great lengths to shield its soldiers since a conviction abroad for crimes against Palestinians is a precedent it cannot afford," she said in a statement, emphasising that 'justice is unstoppable'.

The escape follows a series of similar incidents involving Israeli soldiers abroad. Last month, a Palestinian advocacy group in Sri Lanka called for the arrest of an active-duty Israeli soldier spotted in the country, prompting his immediate evacuation by Israeli authorities, according to Israel's Channel 12.

Anadolu Agency

Donald Trump announces White House appointments

Washington, D.C., US - US President-elect Donald Trump announced key appointments to his White House team, ahead of his inauguration on January 20.

Stanley E Woodward will serve as Assistant to the President and Senior Counsellor, while Robert Gabriel Jr returns as Assistant to the President for Policy. Nicholas F Luna will take on the role of Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Implementation and William Beau Harrison will return as Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations.

"Stanley E Woodward, Jr will join President Donald J Trump's White House and serve as Assistant to the President and Senior Counsellor. Woodward will work closely with the White House Chief of Staff. Woodward is an acclaimed litigator and co-founder of Brand Woodward Law, LP, where he represented numerous high-profile clients in complex, high-stakes litigation, including multiple federal jury trials," Trump in a statement said.

Previously, Woodward worked at a multinational law firm where his experience included the representation of multiple international corporations in defence of alleged violations of the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act as well as serving as coordinating counsel to companies involved in nationwide federal litigation.

Robert Gabriel Jr will return to the White House as Assistant to the President for Policy. Gabriel has served Trump in various roles since his 2015 campaign for the world's most powerful office. He started in Trump Tower as a Policy Advisor on Trump's historic campaign. Gabriel also served in the West Wing, for the entirety of the first Trump Administration, as Special Assistant to the President.

Gabriel later advised the Save



US President-elect Donald Trump announced key appointments to his White House team, ahead of his inauguration on January 20

Stanley Woodward Jr will serve as assistant to the President and senior counsellor, while Robert Gabriel Jr returns as assistant to the President for Policy

America Leadership PAC and helped transform the Mar-a-Lago political operation into a national presidential campaign apparatus. Gabriel was a Senior Advisor at the campaign headquarters in Palm Beach. Gabriel

previously worked in broadcast television as an Associate Producer on Fox News' 'The Ingraham Angle'.

Nicholas F Luna will join the Office of the Chief of Staff as Assistant to the President and Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Implementation. Trump in a statement said: "Luna is a highly respected White House veteran and a Trump-Vance campaign warrior. He previously served in the White House as Presidential Trip Director, Personal Aide to the President, Assistant to the President, and Director of Oval Office Operations. Most recently, he served with great distinction as Director of Operations for Vice President-

elect JD Vance."

In his senior White House role, Luna will oversee Presidential scheduling, and ensure that external White House messaging, outreach, and operations are aligned with the administration's short- and long-term objectives.

This includes, together with an unparalleled team, executing the public-facing aspects of major White House policy, legislative initiatives, and milestone events.

William Beau Harrison will return to the White House as Assistant to the President and Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations. Harrison is a trusted aide to the President and First Family and is a recipient of the Secretary

of Defence Medal for Outstanding Public Service for accomplishments and duties performed across the Executive Branch.

During Trump's first term, Harrison served as the liaison between the operational elements of the Executive Office of the President and was charged with the coordination and execution of all presidential travel, including dozens of complex international visits. He has participated in and led multiple US delegations across the globe in countries such as North Korea, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and played a critical role in planning each of the historic summits with DPRK Leader Kim Jong-Un.

ANI



Maldives FM Abdulla Khaleel meets India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, in New Delhi on Friday (ANI)

Maldives' FM concludes first visit to India

New Delhi, India - Maldives' Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdulla Khaleel, has concluded his first official visit to India, an official press release by the Maldives' Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated.

The visit included high-level discussions and the signing of key agreements to advance development cooperation, marking a significant step in strengthening the bilateral ties between the two nations.

Khaleel met with India's Minister of External Affairs, S Jaishankar, where they reviewed the broad spectrum of bilateral relations. Discussions centred on exploring new areas of collaboration, particularly in development projects, infrastructure, and socio-economic initiatives.

Khaleel expressed his appreciation for India's continued support in addressing the fiscal challenges faced by the Maldives, emphasising the importance of this partnership in promoting economic stability, the press release stated.

One of the visit's key highlights was the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP). This agreement launched the third phase of project-based cooperation between

India and the Maldives, aiming to bring tangible benefits to communities at the grassroots level.

The projects under this phase are expected to enhance local infrastructure and improve livelihoods across the Maldives.

In addition to his diplomatic engagements, Khaleel also visited the High Commission of Maldives in India, underscoring the importance of continued collaboration between the two nations.

India and Maldives share deep-rooted cultural, ethnic, and historical ties that have formed the foundation of their long-standing relationship. India was among the first nations to recognise Maldives' independence in 1965 and has remained a key partner in its development journey.

Over the years, the bilateral relationship has been further solidified through high-profile visits, including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's attendance at President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih's inauguration in 2018.

Discussions during these interactions have consistently focused on addressing Maldives' developmental priorities, particularly in healthcare, human resource development, and connectivity.

ANI



Five people were killed and more than 200 injured in a vehicle attack on a Christmas market in Magdeburg

Christmas market attack suspect involved in 7 cases

Berlin, Germany - Taleb Al-Abdumohsen, the suspect in an attack on the Magdeburg Christmas market in Germany, was already known to German authorities through various investigations, according to a media report on Saturday.

Al-Abdumohsen appeared in seven investigations between April 2023 and October 2024, where he was the complainant in five and the accused in two, the DPA media reported.

The report added that police started an investigation against him on December 1, 2023, after he criticised Germany on X for the treatment of asylum seekers from Saudi Arabia and issued threats.

Abdumohsen was accused of

threatening a lawyer who had previously represented him, as well as the lawyer's family and office staff in another investigation. Police met with Abdumohsen as part of a risk assessment.

It was noted that the assessment interview was conducted to inform him that he was being monitored and to ask him to refrain from certain behaviours.

It also said Abdumohsen, who had been working in the department for addictive criminals at a hospital in Bernburg since 2020, was responsible for the psychiatric care of patients, and that although the risk assessment took place at the hospital where he was employed, there was no exchange of infor-

mation between police and his employer.

Abdumohsen, meanwhile, filed criminal complaints for slander, theft of an external hard drive from a mailbox and sexual harassment against refugee association employees, according to the report.

Five people were killed and more than 200 injured on December 20 in a vehicle attack on a Christmas market in the German city of Magdeburg.

The 50-year-old Saudi-born psychiatrist from Saudi Arabia, who has lived in Germany since 2006, was identified as the attacker. Abdumohsen, who was detained after the attack, was arrested on December 22.

Anadolu Agency

INDIAN PM TRAVELS ON NAMO BHARAT TRAIN

Indian PM Narendra Modi meets staff as he takes a ride in Namo Bharat Train from Sahibabad RRTS Station to New Ashok Nagar RRTS Station, in Sahibabad, India, on Sunday (ANI)



Italian PM visits incoming US President

Florida, US - Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni met with US President-elect Donald Trump at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida on Saturday, in a significant visit ahead of her upcoming meeting with outgoing President Joe Biden in Rome.

The informal meeting, confirmed by sources familiar with the trip, underscores Meloni's aspirations to strengthen ties with the incoming administration, according to *The New York Times*.

Meloni, a prominent conservative leader in Europe, has been vocal in her admiration for Trump. Her visit to his Florida estate places her among a select group of world leaders, including



Italian PM Giorgia Meloni met with US President-elect Donald Trump at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida in a significant visit ahead of her meeting with President Biden in Rome

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Argentina's President Javier Milei, who have sought early engagement with Trump, who is set to take office on January 20. Meloni's boosters see the visit as a strategic move to position her as Trump's primary European ally. Analysts predict she could play a pivotal role in

mediating tensions between Trump and other European leaders, particularly as the president-elect has threatened a trade war with Europe and signalled a reduction in US support for NATO and Ukraine.

Subjects discussed at the Mar-a-Lago meeting remain undisclosed, but observers sug-

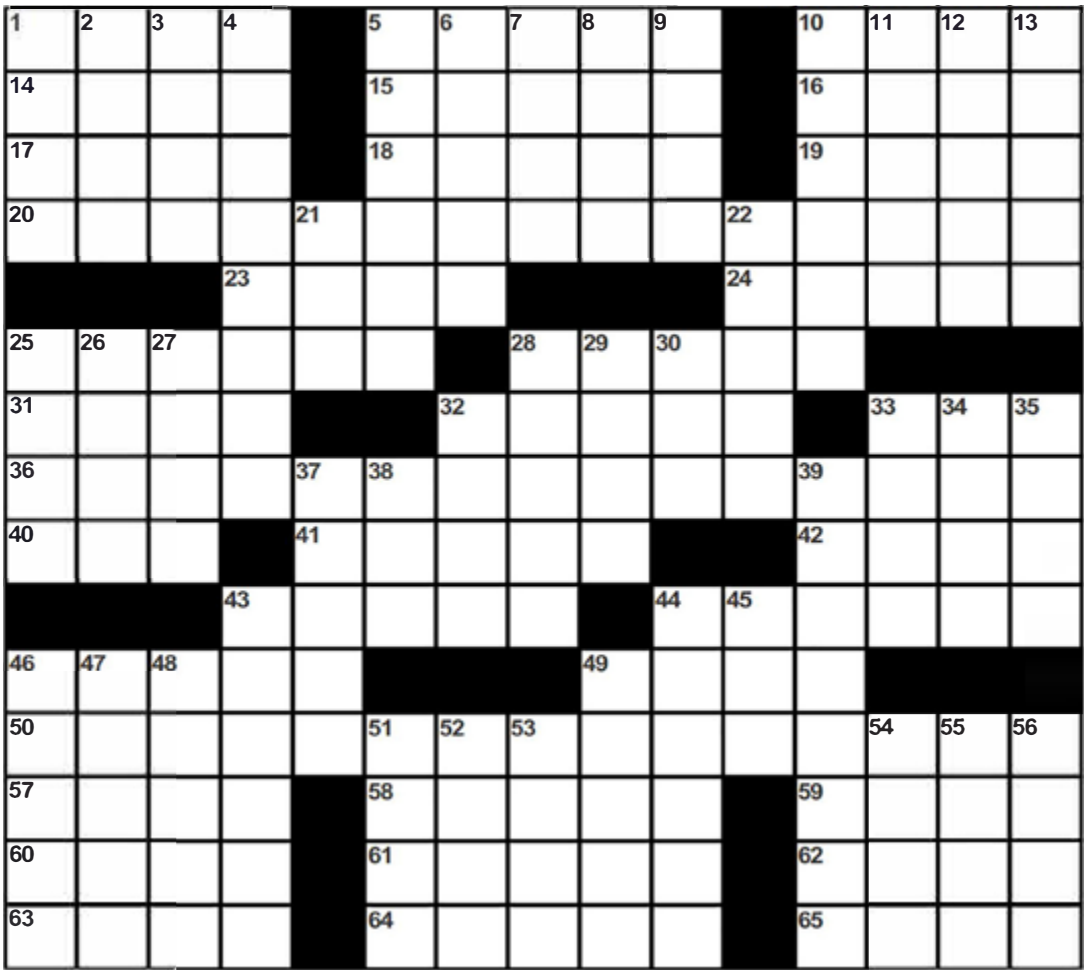
gest they may have included geopolitical issues.

Meloni is expected to have raised concerns about the detention of Italian journalist Cecilia Sala in Iran, which took place shortly after Italy detained an Iranian national accused of supplying drone components to Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

Iran is known for detaining foreign nationals to leverage their release in exchange for concessions. "Meloni's push for this meeting demonstrates her determination to secure a strong relationship with Trump," said a source briefed on the discussions, the *Times* added.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Quint in "Jaws"
5) Defender of Castle Grayskull
10) Drunkards
14) Caesar's garb
15) Deposed leader, perhaps
16) Exclude
17) Poetic collection
18) Extend, in a way
19) Old Chevy
20) Bully's credo
23) Can of worms?
24) Warm up, as left-overs
25) Arrangement
28) Move, as a plant
31) Acknowledge
32) Like granola
33) Drink from a dish
36) Was completely indifferent
40) Pull the plug on
41) Singing duo Hall & _
42) Gadgeteers' concerns
43) Grapevine tidbit
44) Drum sounds
46) Remove a violin string
49) "That hurt!"
50) Middle of a certain

month

- 57) Digestion aid
58) Pay a call on
59) Pink, as a steak
60) Young winged god of the Greeks
61) Slur over a syllable
62) Affirm
63) Blow a gasket
64) Bottle-_ dolphin
65) Requisite
DOWN
1) Check
2) Arizona Native American
3) All excited
4) Basin
5) Type of crab
6) Permission to leave granted by a bishop
7) Stole type
8) Safe, on board
9) Kind of wire
10) Part of USSR
11) Alpha's opposite
12) A size too small
13) Sports figs.
21) St. Anthony's cross
22) Aries' river
25) Curtain material

- 26) Mary Kay competitor
27) "... better watch out ..."
28) Indy entrant
29) Flight data, briefly
30) Part of a price
32) Director Preminger
33) "... we forget"
34) Not on solid ground?
35) "Do you want to hear a secret?"
37) Long green
38) "Platoon" locale, for short
39) Certain Protestant
43) Take back to the lab
44) Furrowed, as a road
45) Point of no return?
46) Color often described as "burnt"
47) Nigerian currency
48) Aircraft race-course tower
49) Nitrous _ (laughing gas)
51) Word after "get" or "break"
52) Fodder holder
53) Horned goddess
54) Church part
55) Sloth's home
56) Range group

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

That interesting person you've been told to expect along shortly? How does today sound? Good? Great. Now for the preparations: First, drag everything you haven't worn in forever out of your closet, because you haven't been in the mood to wear something different, and choose something. You're fishing for interesting, right? So dress interesting. It's not like you're not brave enough to pull it off.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Here's the deal. The way the heavens are arranged at the moment can mean only one of two things for you. An existing relationship will become far more intimate, or a new relationship will take off like a speeding train aimed directly at your heart. Either way, you'll have to excuse the rest of the world if we're not sympathetic about you having to reschedule that meeting. Just grin and bear it.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Words have always been your specialty, but today's astrological additives will actually intensify your already enviable talents in that department. If you have an apology to accept or deliver, an emotion you just can't keep inside any longer, or something you've been waiting to say until the moment was right, clear your throat. The moment is officially right.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

On the one hand, you're totally engrossed in your work, for totally professional reasons. On the other, there's a certain authority figure that's been on your mind lately, for totally unprofessional reasons. Isn't this interesting? There's only one thing to do: your job. Do it well and do it thoroughly. And if you really have to ask an awful lot of extremely detailed questions, just to make sure you're doing everything right.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You have a policy, a personal rule, really, about dating coworkers. You tend to avoid it. There are times, however, in the life of every rule, when exceptions need to be made, and one of those exceptions recently walked by while you were trying to concentrate on your job. Well, first of all, everyone knows that rules were made to be broken.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

For the most part, you're pleased, happy, and extremely proud of yourself when you say or do something that shocks and amazes the crowds. In fact, the more the merrier. So with the stars emphasizing startling modes of communication and playing up your urge to let fly with whatever crosses your mind no matter where you are or who you happen to be with, you ought to be happy.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Sitting still is always a challenge for you. But at the moment, it's going to be darn near impossible. Why fight it? You need a change of scenery, and there's someone you'd like to spend some time with. Whether it's a friend you need to catch up with, a lover you need some quality time alone with, or a family outing you know you can pull together, just do it. Get the show on the road!



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

This is just one of those days. One of those days when it's good to be you no matter how you shake it. That will go double if the person you've spent so much time thinking about is clever enough to pick up on those hints and signals and show up when they're supposed to. Bet they will. Bet you'll have tons of flirtatious fun when they do.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

All those rumors about you being cold, aloof, and detached? Totally untrue. The stuff about you being objective, impartial, and incapable of prejudice? Absolutely true. You're about to prove all that and more to anyone who's willing to listen and even to some who aren't. You're in the mood for romance. And while your style of wooing doesn't usually involve a box of candy or a dozen roses.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Intimacy is the name of game now, and you, of course, being the emotional, sensitive creature that you are, won't mind a bit. Since you're so good at spoiling the ones you love, there's an excellent chance that you won't hear any arguments when you suggest to a certain someone that you two start the fun early. Especially since they've probably been waiting for you to make your move for some time now.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

If you can dream it, you can do it. That's what you've always been told, what you've always believed, and now what you're about to prove. As if your already substantial intellectual prowess weren't enough to get you started, the stars are on your side too. They'll be waking you up this morning with the vivid memory of a dream, the kind that will stay with you all day, constantly making you wonder "what if?"



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

It's fine astrological weather to be you, but no one has to tell you that, do they? You've been confided in by your dearest dears, and you've shared your own secrets with them too. It's not the intrigue that has you so mesmerized, exactly. Although, honestly, that does appeal to you. More than anything, what you're so enjoying is the intimacy you've allowed yourself to give and to receive.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The Haast's eagle is the largest eagle known; where does it live?
A. Nowhere, it is extinct
B. New Zealand
C. Western Canada
D. Kazakhstan

2. Which of these, a landlocked principality, is the smallest German-speaking country in the world?
A. Luxembourg
B. San Marino
C. Andorra
D. Liechtenstein

3. Inspired by lucid dreaming and corporate espionage, it won Academy Awards for Best Visual Effects, Best Sound Editing, Best Sound Mixing, and Best Cinematography. Which film is it?
A. Inception
B. The Matrix
C. In Dreams
D. Electric Dreams

Answers: 1.A 2.D 3.A

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

L	O	O	G
A	N	T	L
V	A	D	T
S	D	S	A

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



Jean-Philippe Mateta celebrates after scoring Crystal Palace's equaliser against Chelsea on Saturday

Chelsea need to be more clinical, says Maresca

London, England - Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca said his side must be more clinical after they conceded a late equaliser in a disappointing 1-1 Premier League draw at Crystal Palace on Saturday.

Cole Palmer gave Chelsea a deserved first-half lead, but he and Nicolas Jackson missed good chances as they failed to kill the game off before Jean-Philippe Mateta's late leveller for the hosts.

Chelsea have picked up just two points in a four-game winless run, leaving them nine points adrift of leaders Liverpool who have two games in hand -- and looking over their shoulders in a close race for the Champions League spots.

Maresca, who had repeatedly talked down Chelsea's title chances, was relatively pleased with a performance he thought should have earned his side all three points.

"Probably we did enough to win the game today," Maresca told reporters. "Between the first half and second half, I think we created chances enough to win the game.

"But in football you need to be clinical, otherwise the game is always open."

Maresca said he was encouraged by the number of chances Chelsea had created, as they also did in the 2-0 defeat at Ipswich Town on Monday.

"I always said that the important thing is to create chances, because if you create chances it means that you are doing the right things," he said.

"Sometimes you create and you score. Sometimes you create one chance and you score one. And sometimes you need to create 10 to score two."

Maresca was also full of praise for 18-year-old defender Joshua Acheampong, who looked assured on his first Premier League start.

"All the players for me, they were good today. But if I have to decide one, I think for sure Josh was our best player because of (his) age, because it was the first game (starting in the league).

"Josh, for me, can be a top player for this club. But he needs the right path, the right moment.

"With young players you have to decide in which moment and we decided today because we saw that he is ready. Today I think he showed how good he is."

SPOT OF BOTHER

'Bizarre' penalty dents Arsenal's title hopes in draw at Brighton

Brighton, England - An early goal from Arsenal teenager Ethan Nwaneri was cancelled out by a penalty from Joao Pedro as Brighton & Hove Albion held the misfiring Gunners to a 1-1 Premier League draw on Saturday that dented the visitors' title hopes.

Arsenal are second in the table on 40 points after 20 games, five behind leaders Liverpool, who host Manchester United on Sunday as one of their two matches in hand on their closest challengers. Brighton are 10th on 28 points.

Nwaneri scored 16 minutes into his second Premier League start, the 17-year-old breaking down the right and cutting inside before confidently drilling a low shot past Bart Verbruggen.

Nwaneri was booked in first-half stoppage time for taking too long over a corner at the end of a comfortable opening period for his side, but that all changed as Brighton came out flying after the interval.

They equalised in the 61st minute after Pedro was awarded a penalty following a clash of heads with William Saliba as he tried to turn in the box, with referee Anthony Taylor having no hesitation in pointing to the spot.

Pedro stepped up and sent



Joao Pedro scores Brighton's equaliser from the penalty spot

David Raya the wrong way to level and despite needing a win to keep the pressure on Liverpool, Arsenal continued to struggle.

The hosts should have claimed a winner in the 77th minute when Yankuba Mineh flashed the ball across the face of the goal but neither Yasin Ayari nor Kaoru Mitoma could steer it into the net.

The closest Arsenal came to scoring was a stoppage-time effort from former Brighton player Le-

Brighton equalised in the 61st minute after Pedro was awarded a penalty following a clash of heads with William Saliba, with referee Anthony Taylor having no hesitation in pointing to the spot

andro Trossard that flew harmlessly over the crossbar as the hosts hung on for their fourth straight draw.

Arsenal's third draw in six Premier League games handed Liverpool a big advantage in the title race.

"We wanted to win and we weren't able to do that. We're very disappointed with the decision (to award a penalty)," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta told Sky Sports. "I've never seen that in my life and Saliba touches the ball. For me, no (penalty)." [It is] bizarre. That means we have probably never seen it before. I haven't in my career. I asked the boys if they have, and no-one has seen this before."

Arteta 'really disappointed with penalty decision'

Brighton, England - Arsenal's costly 1-1 Premier League draw at Brighton & Hove Albion on Saturday was compounded by an injury to 17-year-old goal-scorer Ethan Nwaneri as coach Mikel Arteta blamed simple mistakes for his side dropping points.

Nwaneri did a superb job of replacing the injured Bukayo Saka on the right wing and scored in the 16th minute, but he had to be withdrawn at the interval before the Gunners conceded a penalty to drop two points in the title race.

"Really bad news, because I think we've lost him (Nwaneri).



Mikel Arteta

In the second half, we didn't grab the game or dominate enough to have certain moments and be more of a threat in their half

MIKEL ARTETA

We had to take him off at half-time with some muscular issues," Arteta told the BBC.

Nwaneri's departure coincided with Arsenal losing their

way against a Brighton side that struggled to create chances, and the result left the Gunners second in the table, five points adrift of Liverpool who have two games in hand.

"In the second half, we didn't really grab the game or dominate enough to have certain moments and be more of a threat in their half, but defensively we did not concede much," Arteta said.

"Today was not about fatigue, it was about the simple things that we have to do in ball possession to give chances and dominate the game in the right areas," the Spaniard added.

We are not at our level, says Guardiola after 4-1 win against West Ham

Manchester, England - While Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola said he would sleep better after Saturday's 4-1 Premier League rout of West Ham United, he brushed off suggestions that his team were back to being the "old Manchester City".

Erling Haaland bagged his first double in a league game since September and Savinho set up three goals in City's victory that left them sixth in the table and two points behind fourth-placed Chelsea.

Though City won back-to-back games for the first time since October, Guardiola said it was not a sign that their slump was over.

"No, you judge the results," he told reporters after the crowd-pleasing win at Etihad Stadium. "We saw in many years our level. We are not at our level.

"Don't misunderstand me. I'm so happy. I will sleep better until the FA Cup (City host Salford City on Jan. 11). But you watched



Manchester City's Erling Haaland scores against West Ham United on Saturday

the games for years, we're not at the level, come on. Against Everton we played much better than today. And we draw, big crisis, disaster.

"Of course there are positives. If you ask me the team is playing like the years, of course not."

Often-injured Kevin De Bruyne played the full match, a positive

sign just a day after Guardiola said the Belgian's fitness and form would be assessed before the club decides on a contract extension. De Bruyne's current deal expires in June.

The 33-year-old, who has scored two goals and provided his third assist of the season on Phil Foden's second-half goal on

Saturday, shrugged off questions about his contract status after the win.

"I don't care," De Bruyne told the BBC. "I am just trying to get back to my level. I feel every week I am getting better. I can go for 90 minutes now. It has been an uncomfortable couple of months with the injury."

Neres dazzles as Napoli blank Fiorentina to lead Serie A table

Florence, Italy - Napoli went top of the Serie A standings thanks to a comfortable 3-0 win at Fiorentina on Saturday, the visitors facing few problems as they registered a fourth successive league victory.

With Napoli's main Scudetto rivals not in league action this weekend - Atalanta and Inter Milan are both in Saudi Arabia for the Italian Super Cup - Antonio Conte's side took full advantage.

Napoli are on 44 points, three ahead of Atalanta who have a game in hand, and Inter are a further point back, but with two fewer matches played. Fiorentina dropped to sixth on 32 points.

Matthias Olivera had the ball in the net for Napoli early on but the goal was ruled out for offside, while Leonardo Spinazzola drew a save from Fiorentina keeper David de Gea.

The visitors took the lead in the 29th minute when David Neres went on a mazy dribbling run into the area, going past three players before blasting a power-



Napoli's David Neres scores against Fiorentina on Saturday

ful shot into the roof of the net.

Fiorentina striker Moise Kean finally got his chance to shine, and found the net, but his goal was chalked off for a handball while controlling the ball and Napoli took their lead into the break.

Fiorentina manager Raffaele Palladino had given defender Ma-

tias Moreno his Serie A debut and the Argentine showed his inexperience when hauling down Andre Anguissa in the area.

Romelu Lukaku, who had a penalty saved in Napoli's last game, sent De Gea the wrong way with his low strike straight down the middle to give the visitors a two-goal cushion.

AUSTRALIA WIN SERIES

Cummins and Co win Sydney Test to end India's 10-year domination

Australia held their collective nerve to clinch a blockbuster five-test series against India 3-1 on Sunday and take custody of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in a decade.

In keeping with a pulsating series where momentum swung back and forth by the session, the fifth Test remained on a knife edge until the final hour when Australia eased to a six-wicket triumph.

Perhaps helped by Jasprit Bumrah's inability to bowl because of a back injury, Travis Head and debutant Beau Webster guided Australia to their victory target of 162 runs with an unbroken fifth-wicket stand of 58.

The win in front of a packed house at a Sydney Cricket Ground bathed in pink for Glenn McGrath's cancer charity also ensured Australia will defend their World Test Championship title against South Africa at Lord's in June.

"It felt like it was kind of seeing throughout the whole series so to finish it 3-1, to hold the trophy, is an amazing feeling," said Australia skipper Pat Cummins.

"I'm immensely proud, I absolutely love playing with these guys and it's been a lot of fun



Australia players celebrate with the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after winning the five-Test series against India on Sunday

along the way as well."

The match had been played on fast forward over the first two days with 15 wickets falling on Saturday, and Australia removed four more in the first hour on a sunny Sunday morning to dismiss India for 157.

In the absence of Player of the Series Bumrah, his fellow pace bowlers Prasidh Krishna and Mohammed Siraj kept Australian nerves on edge by remov-

ing four top-order batters on the spicy wicket.

Krishna sent back opener Sam Konstas for 22, Marnus Labuschagne for six and Steve Smith for four before lunch, while Usman Khawaja was caught behind off Siraj for 41 after the break to leave Australia on 104-4.

Smith was particularly forlorn as he trudged back to the dressing room on 9,999 career runs,

having been dismissed one run shy of becoming the fourth Australian to pass the 10,000-run milestone.

Head, who scored 34 not out, and Webster, who was unbeaten on 39, got the job done, however, the latter continuing his nerveless debut by clubbing the winning runs with a straight four.

"It was a little frustrating but sometimes you have to respect

your body," said Bumrah, who took 32 wickets over the five matches before the back spasms struck on Saturday.

"It was a great series. The whole series was well fought and we were still in the match today. Our young players will take a lot of learnings for the future."

Australia's victory was all the more impressive for having been achieved despite a 295-run thumping in the series opener in

It was a little frustrating but sometimes you have to respect your body. It was a great series. The whole series was well fought and we were still in the match today.

JASPRIT BUMRAH

Perth.

What Australia coach Andrew McDonald described as the "generational" bowling talent on both teams ensured that the batters were on the back foot for much of the series with big scores at a premium.

Only five centuries were scored, two of them by Head

years, playing five tests in Australia is tough and the 31-year-old's herculean efforts finally caught up with him in Sydney.

In Rohit's absence, Bumrah had captained the tourists to victory in the series opener in Perth and the momentum seemed to shift to India every time he was bowling.



South Africa's youngest Test debutant Kwena Maphaka, 18, took two Pakistan wickets in the first innings, including that of Babar Azam

Pakistan battle after following on against South Africa at Newlands

Cape Town, South Africa - Pakistan are 80 without loss in their second innings at tea on the third day of the second and final test against hosts South Africa, having been forced follow-on when they were earlier bowled out for 194 and trail by 341 runs at Newlands on Sunday.

Openers Shan Masood (37 not out) and Babar Azam (34 not out) will resume in the evening session, though Pakistan are effectively a wicket down with batter Saim Ayub having fractured his ankle while fielding on the first day. They are responding to

South Africa's massive first innings score of 615, in which Ryan Rickelton (259), Temba Bavuma (106) and Verreynne (100) all scored centuries.

The home side had made light work of bowling Pakistan out in their first innings, with their youngest test debutant Kwena Maphaka, 18, finishing with figures of 2-43.

The fast bowler induced an edge down the leg side from Babar, who was caught by wicketkeeper Verreynne having looked in control with a well-played 58.

Australia-India 'series has lived up to all the hype'

Sydney, Australia - Australia skipper Pat Cummins spoke of his pride in his team after they rebounded from losing the opening Test against India to clinch the series 3-1 on Sunday and win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in a decade.

The six-wicket victory in the fifth Test in Sydney also secured his team the right to defend the World Test Championship (WTC) title against South Africa at Lord's in June.

"It felt like it was kind of seeing throughout the whole series so to finish it 3-1, to hold the trophy, is an amazing feeling," he told reporters.

"It has been an amazing series," said Cummins, 31. "It has been in the calendar for a while and is one you've had your eye on it for a year or two. It has lived up to all the hype."

"And then I think the extra layer is now securing a spot in the World Test Championship final, which was always a huge goal for us in this cycle and we've done it. So really satisfied."

With the Border-Gavaskar Trophy safely in the cabinet, Aus-



Pat Cummins

tralia now hold all the bilateral titles they play for in the longest format as well as the WTC crown they won by beating India in 2023.

"I didn't know that we'd won kind of everything until half an hour ago but that's always the aim," he said. "One of the things I love most about Test cricket is it challenges you in so many different ways. You need more than 11 players, you need an amazing

squad, you need amazing support staff to be able to win everywhere in the world.

"So I think that consistency over a few years to do that with a very similar squad has been massive."

One player who has played only an occasional role in Australia's success is Scott Boland, the back-up pace bowler who was named Player of the Match for his 10-wicket haul in Sydney.



Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli

Rohit and Kohli still have India future if they want it: Gambhir

Sydney, Australia - India coach Gautam Gambhir said veteran batters Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli still have a future in the team if they want it, despite disappointing returns on the Test tour of Australia.

The tourists went down 3-1 in the series after losing the fifth Test by six wickets on Sunday to relinquish the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in a decade.

Regular Test captain Rohit was rested for the match at his own request after poor returns in the second, third and fourth matches, while Kohli made 17 and six in his two innings in Sydney.

"I can't talk about the future of any player, it's up to them as well," Gambhir said.

"What I can say is that they still have the hunger, they still have the passion. They are tough people, and hopefully they can continue to take Indian cricket forward."

"But ultimately, whatever they plan, they will plan for the best interests of Indian

cricket."

Gambhir was loathe to blame the Sydney defeat on stand-in captain Jasprit Bumrah's inability to bowl in the second innings because of a back complaint, even if he said the fast bowler had been "absolutely outstanding" over the rest of the series.

"It would have been nice if he would have been there, but we still had five bowlers, and a good team is one which is not dependent on one individual," he said.

"We didn't get the result, as simple as that. We lost the series."

India managed only two centuries over the five matches and Gambhir said his batters needed to develop better application in the Test arena.

"I think everything boils down to the temperament," he said. "Everything boils down to how much you want to play those tough moments, how much you want to grind in Test cricket."

Lewandowski hits brace as Barca beat Barbastro in Copa del Rey

Madrid, Spain - Barcelona kicked off their Copa del Rey campaign with a 4-0 win at fourth-tier Barbastro on Saturday to progress into the last 16, with striker Robert Lewandowski scoring either side of the break.

Defender Eric Garcia put Barca in front with a bullet header in the 21st minute before Lewandowski nodded home from close range 10 minutes later.

The Poland striker added a third goal two minutes into the



Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski celebrates after scoring against Barbastro in Copa del Rey on Saturday

second half with a simple low finish from near the penalty spot and Pablo Torre made it 4-0 after capitalising on an error by Barbastro goalkeeper Arnau Fabrega.

Elsewhere, a first-half goal from captain Antoine Griezmann gave Atletico Madrid a 1-0 win at third-tier Marbella on Saturday to send them into the Copa del Rey round of 16 with a 13th consecutive victory across all competitions.

That equalled Atletico's best

ever run of victories and coach Diego Simeone's best winning record at the club since the 2012-13 season.

It was a special game for the Argentine manager, who celebrated 13 years in charge of Atletico by returning to the Rosaleda stadium where he made his debut as their coach.

Simeone was not on the bench, however, after his red card for complaining during his team's 2-1 win at Cacereno in the previous round.

GAUFF AND FRITZ SHOW

United States beat Poland to win United Cup

Sydney, Australia - A dominant United States lifted their second United Cup mixed team tournament title in three years after beating Poland 2-0 on Sunday with Coco Gauff and Taylor Fritz winning their singles matches.

The top seeds in the \$10 million tournament that began with 18 nations in contention clinched the trophy when Fritz defeated Hubert Hurkacz 6-4 5-7 7-6(4) after Gauff outclassed Iga Swiatek 6-4 6-4 in Sydney.

The Americans had also won the 2023 title in the inaugural edition of the tournament, which serves as a tune-up event for the Australian Open Grand Slam.

With the second singles contest locked at one set apiece, Fritz raised his level at 3-3 in the tiebreak of the decider to see off Hurkacz and spark huge celebrations.

"Congratulations to Poland on a great week," said Fritz, addressing a dejected Polish side that finished runners-up at the tournament for a second successive year.

"They're an incredibly tough



United States players celebrate with the United Cup trophy

team and the margins were very small. I feel that it could have gone either way.

"I want to thank my team, unbelievable support. The vibes all week were amazing. That's one of the things that makes our team so great and one of the reasons why we've been able to do so well.

"We've just really come together. It's amazing."

Gauff earlier stepped up preparations for the year's first major that begins next Sunday with a second successive win over world number two Swiatek in a blockbuster showdown that gave fans at the Ken Rosewall Arena their money's worth.

The world number three, who beat Swiatek en route to the WTA Finals title last season, squandered a 2-0 lead in the first set but battled back from there to gain the upper hand in the match as her opponent counted the costs of 19 unforced errors.

In another high-octane set that followed, Gauff recovered a break to level at 4-4 and went on to secure the win that ensured she ended her singles campaign at the tournament unbeaten.

"I have the belief that I'm one of the best players in the world. When I play good tennis, I'm hard to beat," said Gauff, who also beat Leylah Fernandez, Donna Vekic, Zhang Shuai and Karolina Muchova in the event.



Aryna Sabalenka with the Brisbane International trophy

Sabalenka beats Kudermetova to win Brisbane title

Brisbane, Australia - Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka geared up for her title defence at the year's opening Grand Slam with a battling 4-6 6-3 6-2 win over Russian qualifier Polina Kudermetova in the final of the Brisbane International on Sunday.

Sabalenka is bidding to become the first woman to lift three straight Australian Open trophies since Swiss Martina Hingis won from 1997 to 1999, and she will head to Melbourne Park brimming with confidence.

"I'm super happy to lift this trophy," said Sabalenka.

"It's a really important tournament before heading into the Australian Open. The final match was a bit tricky, (both of us) were over-hitting."

The world No.1 from Belarus, outclassed in last year's final by Elena Rybakina before going on to win a second straight Melbourne Park crown, appeared off the pace against Kudermetova and lost the first set by dropping her serve for a second time.

Kudermetova came under pressure on serve in the open-

ing game of the next set but the aggressive world number 107 rode out the storm and began to dictate play with more heavy hitting from the baseline to trouble Sabalenka.

"That was really great tennis from her," Sabalenka said.

"It was really aggressive."

It's a really important tournament before heading into the Australian Open. The final was a bit tricky, (both of us) were over-hitting

ARYNA SABALENKA

She has some variations and she was using it really well. She definitely deserved to be in the final. I'm pretty sure if she continues working the way she is, then she will be in the top 50 soon."

A delicate drop shot handed Sabalenka the break, and the 26-year-old appeared much more like her usual dominant self in the rest of the set as she forced a decider, much to the delight of fans at a packed Pat Rafter Arena.

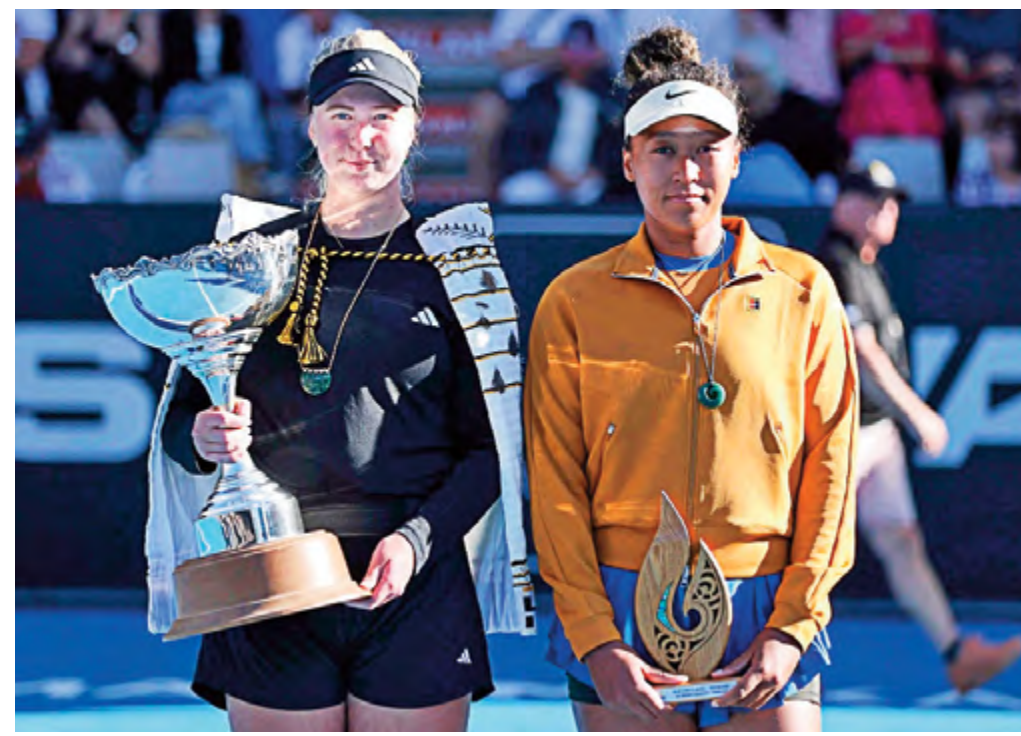
Tauson wins title after Osaka retires

Auckland, New Zealand - Naomi Osaka's quest for a first title in four years ended in heartbreak as the former world number one retired with an injury after winning the opening set of the Auckland Classic final against Denmark's Clara Tauson on Sunday.

It was an anticlimactic finish to the match and Tauson said winning her third WTA Tour title after a similar drought did not gloss over the worst final that she had played.

"I have to say I'm really sorry about this final. Naomi was playing some great tennis. I just feel said about what happened today," Tauson said.

"Of course, when I process this, I'm going to be super happy about my week. I'm happy that I won, but not really."



Clara Tauson with Naomi Osaka

Osaka, who won the last of her four Grand Slam trophies at the Australian Open in 2021, returned to the circuit a year ago after a long maternity break, but struggled for consistency and ended the season ranked outside the top 50.

She showed glimpses of just how devastating she can be in Auckland and grabbed a double break against Tauson with powerful hitting on both flanks in the opening set, which she wrapped up 6-4, despite dropping serve late on.

But the 27-year-old from Japan had tears in her eyes as she had an apparent abdominal issue checked out on court before the start of the next set and threw in the towel, sparking concerns about her fitness for this month's Australian Open.



Barbora Krejcikova

Injured Krejcikova pulls out of Australian Open

Wimbledon champion Barbora Krejcikova pulled out of this month's Australian Open due to a back problem, the Czech said on Sunday, while Caroline Wozniacki and Karolina Pliskova will also miss the year's first Grand Slam.

World number 10 Krejcikova,

a surprise winner at the All England Club last year, sustained the injury in the WTA Tour's Asian swing of tournaments and looked to be affected by it at the season-ending WTA Finals in Riyadh in November.

"I wanted to share a quick update regarding my withdrawal

from the Australian Open," Krejcikova, last year's Australian Open quarter-finalist, said on social media platform X.

"Unfortunately, my back injury, which troubled me at the end of last season, is still not fully healed.

"It's disappointing because I

love playing in Melbourne and have such great memories from reaching the quarter-finals last year ... I'm working hard to get back to full health.

"I can't wait to see you on the court soon."

Nuria Parrizas Diaz will take Krejcikova's spot in the draw.

Former Melbourne champion Wozniacki was replaced in the draw by Yulia Starodubtseva, the Australian Open said.

Pliskova will be replaced by Canada's Rebecca Marino in the Melbourne Park major.

The Australian Open will begin on January 12.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Indian, Production Manager 10 years GCC experience in facade industry with valid Oman driving licence looking for job. Immediate joining. Available in Sohar. Mob: 78026010

SEND YOUR REQUEST FOR

Birthday/ Anniversary wishes to wish@apexmedia.co.om with your resident card copy (it's free of cost)

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي
ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Yoga, Kalari, Panchakarma, Massage, Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Beauty therapy & post Delivery Care

Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-king Tel:24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website:www.siddhayur.com

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease



Hubert Vaz

The fresh fragrances of golden yellow daffodils and the sight of emerald green dragonflies fluttering around tell you that you have left the city far behind... And amid the gentle rustle in the foliage above, punctuated with odd cries of ravens, you soon discover a quiet haven, ideal to spend time for a family picnic or settle down with a book for a few hours.

At Lake Daylesford, which is an hour and a half-long drive away from downtown Melbourne (Australia), you are motivated to look inward, reflect, introspect, as nature gets you in its sway instantly. You wouldn't imagine that about two hours ago you were caught up in the melee of a mall or been in city traffic, and you want to just let time stand still.

Most visitors to this quiet locale opt for the 2.8km stroll around the lake that takes approximately 40 minutes. There are sections of compacted gravel and boardwalks and amid wild plants and bushes, you encounter stretches of blackberries and ivy, as well as holly and non-native trees that make you wonder about nature's pranks.

Lake Daylesford is a man-made lake, originally a site of gold diggings, and later a Chinese market garden. The construction of the lake had begun in 1927 when it was an abode for recreational activities.

A lake had been proposed in 1893 as a way to beautify the township and cover the devastation caused by mining.

Daylesford - a quaint town about a 90-minute drive from Melbourne - holds true to the classic Australian value of respecting the environment. It's a highly recommended road trip when you visit Victoria and want to get away from the humdrum of a metropolis

People residing in the vicinity of the site wanted to develop a recreational lake and mineral springs reserve to complement the area's growing reputation as a 'Spa Centre' of Australia.

The best thing about visiting Daylesford is its close proximity to Melbourne. Driving to the site is the best option - you can enter the region via two main freeways (Follow the National Highway (M8) towards Ballarat and take the C141 exit towards Daylesford, following the Ballan Daylesford Road, or take Calder Freeway and the Woodend exit, and follow the C137 to Daylesford.) Both routes take the same time.

There are a range of activities you can take up at Lake Daylesford, from walking and cycling to kids' frolic around the lake and a dip in shallow waters, or set up a BBQ for a family picnic by the lake. There's

plenty of silence, and great views to encourage the artist/poet/musician in you. Even sitting there in meditation or indulging in outdoor yoga is quite common.

Lake Daylesford is also a good location for birdwatching. You will find Walters 3460 - a hole-in-the-wall coffee shop - and the famous Boat House Restaurant right on the shore of the lake for elegant dining. Also, don't forget to taste the famous mineral water at Wombat Flat Mineral Spring and Central Springs Reserve.

Close by, the leafy Wombat Hill Botanical Gardens sits atop an extinct volcano. On its grounds, a 19th-century mansion is home to the Convent Gallery. The Daylesford Spa Country Railway here winds through farmland and forest and the nearby Wombat State Forest shelters rare wildlife like the spot-tailed quoll.



WOMBAT HILL BOTANIC GARDENS

The Wombat Hill Botanic Gardens is also a favourite haunt of Daylesford locals and visitors. It is perched on the summit of Wombat Hill, an extinct volcano whose summit is close to 700m above sea level, encircled by a carriage drive running under an avenue of elms (part of the original 1880s design). Daylesford's water supply comes from a covered reservoir and the overflow from the original water is designed to flow through a lush fern garden.

In spring, carpets of bluebells cover the lawns under the cedars and elms. Also, the glasshouse contains a much-coveted begonia collection that flowers later in summer and autumn. The pinnacle of the gardens is Pioneer Memorial Tower, a 1930s concrete tower that soars high above the trees and offers superb views of the surrounding forest, and the town of Daylesford itself.

THE SUNDAY MARKET

The Sunday Market, organised by the Daylesford Spa Country Railway, is a popular attraction for locals and visitors alike. Running for over four decades, this market, with wares that include fresh veggies and farm produce to used tools and utensils, has become synonymous with the weekend revelry in Daylesford region, giving people an opportunity to socialise while indulging in snacks and frivolous purchases. It is a dog friendly market and people are allowed to visit with their pet on a leash.

The market opens at 8am and winds up in the afternoon (upto 3pm).



You see mainly two types of stalls in the Daylesford Sunday Market - the licensed vendors and casual sellers who bring something new each Sunday and simply sell them off the boot of their cars. You can grab a range of stuff from fresh honey and vegetables, to garments and bric-a-brac commonly seen in flea markets.

NEW
Bose SoundLink Max Portable Speaker

Whether you're the go-to DJ in your crew or a music lover with the sickest playlists that you can't wait to share, now is your time to shine. The Bose SoundLink Max Speaker combines big-speaker energy, grab-and-go convenience, and lasting power so your favorite songs can turn up the vibe all day and night.

Bose and SoundLink are trademarks of Bose Corporation.

AVAILABLE NOW AT:



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
9231 1039 / 99347243

SILENT TOURISM

Detach and discover

A growing trend for silent tourism, from beaches where talking is prohibited to guides to the quietest spots in a city, is now picking up as globetrotters and casual tourists are getting more conscious about preserving the planet



Following a year marked by unprecedented temperatures and a rising consciousness of the environmental footprint, tourism stakeholders alongside travellers bear the duty not just to lessen their environmental impact during their explorations, but also to actively contribute to the preservation of ecosystems and support for local communities.

In recent years, there has been a growing trend for silent tourism, from beaches where talking is prohibited to guides to the quietest spots in a city. The festive season for many is a time of noisy family gatherings, raucous office parties and explosive New Year's celebrations. It can leave you yearning for some peace and quiet - and luckily the travel industry has been listening.

Hide in a hermitage

Eremito hides deep in a forested 3,000-hectare UNESCO-designated reserve in the central Italian region of Umbria.

Housed in a historic stone hermitage, the resort is envisaged as a contemporary hideout for the solitary traveller. The digital detox is unavoidable - there is no internet, phone signal or TV. The spartan rooms recall the cells of the religious hermits who once lived here with iron beds and stone seating.

Dinner is eaten in silence other than the accompanying Gregorian chants and the dishes are inspired by monastic recipes. The retreat is aimed at anyone who wants to 'detach themselves from daily habits and go back to essential needs,' according to the website.

Without technological distractions and overstimulation, it's the perfect scenario for allowing your mind to wander and reflect.

Stockholm's guide to silence

Stockholm has created a 'guide to silence' which directs visitors to areas and places in the city that offer a combination of sound quality, silence and green experiences. The guide includes 19 parks including 11 nature areas with 65 walking trails.

In the heart of the city is Sinnenas Trädgård - translating as garden of the senses. It is a green oasis which offers calming sensory experiences like flower

scents, the sound of rippling water and the feel of gravel crunching underfoot.

On the Stora Essingen island, visitors can relax in Aluddsparken a small green park protected from the noise of the city with a scenic view of Lake Malaren.

Noise-free beach in Turkey

Turkey's Turquoise Coast has been branded as the new French Riviera and you'll find plenty of resorts with DJ nights, parties and clubs. But for those craving quiet, D Maris Bay offers a calmer retreat.

The resort is fringed by pine forest and olive groves and down by the shore there are coves and sandy beaches. One bay named Silence Beach is for adults only and music and loud noises are prohibited.

Free Walk in England

Silent Walks was set up by a group of people who loved walking in company but wanted the opportunity to cut the chatting some of the time. Taking a break from talking allows you to engage with your own thoughts, contemplate nature or zone out completely.

Although you can do this easily on your own, the organisation emphasises that walking in a group is safer, avoids feelings of loneliness and means you can engage in social interaction afterwards.

The group's walks centre around the south east of England and are easily reachable from London.

Rise of silent tourism

In 2024, the travel industry began moving towards silent tourism, catering to

seekers of tranquility amid modern chaos. This trend offers an escape from bustling tourist activities, allowing travellers to disconnect from daily noise and distractions.

Silent tourism includes peaceful travel like wellness retreats for meditation, quiet hotels for rest and rejuvenation, and nature walks without the interference of digital devices.

The recent surge in popularity of silent walking, highlighted by social media platforms such as TikTok, reflects a collective desire to find peace away from the constant buzz of technology.

Solo travellers, who account for 17% of all global travel, are progressively drawn to silent tourism for its unique blend of solitude and mindfulness. This echoes the Global Wellness Institute's prediction of a 21% increase in wellness tourism by 2025, suggesting that silence could serve as a valuable antidote to the overstimulation prevalent today.

Additionally, silent tourism aligns with efforts toward sustainable travel, emphasising mindful interactions with both, local cultures and natural landscapes.

Also, advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) are changing the way tourism destinations interact with visitors, making travel experiences more personalised and accessible.

For example, AI-driven content management systems enable the creation of tailored guide content and itineraries, catering to the diverse interests of travellers and diverting crowds to lesser-known spots.

The development of text-to-speech technology further enhances the visitors' encounters, providing audio

guides with high-quality narration that respects the serene atmosphere of silent tourism sites.

Slow tourism picks up

Slow tourism, also recognised as slow travel, is another emerging sustainable tourism trend. This approach to travel encourages a more leisurely pace, allowing for deeper connections with local cultures, environments, and communities. This trend is not just gaining popularity but is also forecasted to grow at a compound annual growth rate of approximately 10%.

The essence of slow tourism lies in

its departure from the traditional, often consumerist travel motivations. Instead of rushing through destinations or ticking off attractions, slow travel emphasises experiences that are purposeful, educational, and emotionally enriching.

One of the key advantages of slow tourism is its environmental impact. By favouring slower modes of transport like trains over airplanes and spending more time in each location, travellers can greatly reduce their carbon emissions and also contribute to the preservation of destinations for future generations.

(Courtesy: smartguide.org, euronews.com)

**CHANGAN**

CS95
7 SEATER
4WD SUV

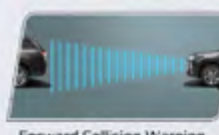
THE ALL-NEW 2025MY CS95
HIGH-PERFORMANCE INTELLIGENT 7 SEATER FAMILY SUV



2.0L Turbo Engine, 224 hp | 8 Speed AT
Manufacturer's Warranty - 6 YEARS / 250,000 KMS*

EMI
OMR 181*
for 6 years

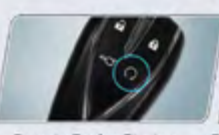


**Forward Collision Warning**

**Adaptive Cruise Control**

**360° HD Panoramic View**

**Easy Open Power Lift Gate**

**Remote Engine Starter**

**Driver Seat Massage Function**

**12.3" Display with SCC Map Navigation, GPS with Voice Command**

**3 ROW, 7 SEATER (Ultra Fiber - Leather Seats)**

*Easy Monthly Installment is calculated based on 20% down payment for 6 years loan tenure. Subject to credit approval from banks only. Images shown are for illustrative purpose only. Specification may vary as per the model variant. To know more, please visit the CHANGAN AUTO Showroom.

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC

Showrooms : Qurum 94641010, Manaleh 97888190, Nizwa 96628940
Sohar 95391200, Salalah 96629050, Ibbi 96628930
Sales Centers: Barka 96629010, Sur 96628920

800 50800
9662 8909
changanoman
www.changanoman.com



The All-New Nissan Patrol

Exclusively at Al Hashar Automotive

BOOK YOUR TEST DRIVE TODAY



For More
Information

-  Visit our showroom in Al Azaiba, Al Maaridh Street 114
-  Call our toll-free number at 800 88088
-  Login to nissan-oman.com


الحشار للسيارات
Al Hashar Automotive

 Nissanomanofficial  Nissanomanofficial
 Nissan Oman  Nissanomanauto