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H M RECEIVES MESSAGE FROM COMOROS PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from President Othman Ghazali of the Union of the Comoros dealing with relations between the two countries. It was received by Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, when he received Mbae Mohamed, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Envoy of the President of the Union of the Comoros, on Wednesday (ONA)

Digital curricula rolled out for grades 1 to 12

Our Correspondent Muscat

A national initiative has been launched to digitise school curricula of grades 1 to 12 as part of broader efforts to modernise the country's education system and equip students with digital skills.

Spearheaded by Ministry of Education (MoE), in collaboration with BP Oman, the initiative was unveiled on Wednesday at a ceremony held under the patronage of H E Saeed bin Hamood al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, in the presence of H E Dr Madiha bint Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education.

The school curricula digitisation project aims to convert textbooks and learning resources into interactive digital formats to enhance accessibility, promote self-learning and provide both students and teachers with up-



The school curricula digitisation project is central to MoE's strategy to build an integrated, technology-based education system

H E DR ABDULLAH AMBUSAI

dated educational tools.

"The curricula digitisation project provides teachers with modern educational tools and supports students with a more interactive, flexible, and comprehensive learning experience that suits their individual needs and

Secure waterways vital to trade, stability: Oman at UN

New York, USA – Oman has reaffirmed its commitment to safeguarding regional and international maritime navigation, describing secure sea routes as critical to the global movement of trade and energy supplies.

Addressing a high-level session on maritime security at the United Nations Security Council in New York, H E Omar bin Saeed al Kathiri, Oman's Permanent Representative to the UN, said the sultanate recognises the legal, humanitarian and security responsibilities linked to protecting international shipping lanes.

"Oman has consistently aligned its national laws with international legal frameworks, especially the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea," he said. "This ensures the freedom of navigation, clarifies the responsibilities of coastal and transit states, and supports the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes."

He referenced Oman's recent mediation in the region, which led to a ceasefire agreement announced on May 6 to allow safe passage through the Red Sea and Bab al Mandab Strait. "The mediation reflects Oman's wider efforts to de-escalate regional tensions and promote maritime stability."

02

Over 2,000 migratory birds recorded in Musandam

13

From hiking to gemology - Luqman Saeed al Hooti

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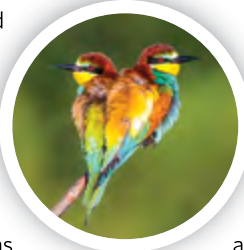


Over 2,000 migratory birds recorded in Musandam this year

Our Correspondent Muscat

More than 2,000 migratory birds were recorded in Musandam in the first three months of 2025, highlighting the governorate's increasing importance as a stopover on global bird migration routes.

According to Environment Authority (EA), its specialists documented 2,183 birds between January and March across various locations in the northernmost governorate. Known for its coastal creeks, agricultural plains and rugged mountains, Musandam's varied terrain and favourable climate offer vital feeding and resting grounds for birds flying between continents.



"Through periodic monitoring and environmental analysis, the authority's specialists recorded a number of sightings of migratory birds in the first quarter of 2025," an EA official said. "Environmental diversity has significantly contributed to preserving the

passage and migration route of these bird species."

Among the birds observed were the European lapwing, European bee-eater, hooded cuckoo shrike and red-tailed shrike. The official said Musandam continues to play a significant role in the preservation of regional biodiversity, with its landscape supporting a wide variety of flora and fauna.

"Based on the principle of preserving and protecting the environment, conserving its resources, and achieving ecological balance, the monitoring efforts are focused on observing migratory birds, identifying their species and maintaining periodic statistics," the official added.

Musandam's environmental significance was formally recognised with establishment of the Musandam National Park Reserve under Royal Decree No 54/2022. The reserve aims to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable use of the gover-

norate's ecological resources.

EA is also working to raise environmental awareness through educational initiatives targeting local communities and schools. "Educational awareness is one of the most important ways to contribute directly and effectively to raising scientific knowledge in environmental fields," the official said.

Oman lies along one of the world's major bird migration corridors, with flocks from East Africa and Central Asia making stopovers in the sultanate. Currently, Oman has designated 70 such stopover sites, reflecting its strategic role in avian migration.

"Oman's environment, especially the marine environment, is fertile and provides abundant food for these birds," the EA official said. To protect its wildlife, the country has enacted national legislation and is party to regional and international agreements aimed at safeguarding flora and fauna.

There are 31 officially declared nature reserves in the country, covering coastal, desert, mountainous and valley ecosystems.

Sustainable development plans for governorates outlined by MoE

Our Correspondent Muscat

Ministry of Economy (MoE) convened a high-level meeting on Wednesday to present proposed frameworks and programmes for sustainable development of cities and governorates as part of the sultanate's 11th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030).

Held under the patronage of H E Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, the meeting included members of central technical teams drafting the plan, alongside representatives from government bodies and the private sector.

It reviewed mechanisms and priorities designed to promote balanced urban and regional development aligned with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Participants engaged in discussions to propose recommendations for specific developmental needs of each governorate.

In his opening remarks, H E Saqri said the plan builds on lessons from past development



Directing investments towards projects that reflect actual needs and leveraging each governorate's comparative advantages to build a sustainable local economy are at the heart of the new plan

H E DR SAID BIN MOHAMMED AL SAQRI

cycles and aims to adopt more integrated and effective strategies. "It aims to enhance the competitiveness of governorates by empowering decentralisation and strengthening local governance."

He noted that one of the key objectives of the new plan is development of infrastructure and services to improve quality of life

and position cities as centres of economic and cultural activity. H E Saqri added that empowering local administrations and supporting the autonomy of governorates in economic decisions are central to achieving regional development.

"Directing investments towards projects that reflect actual

needs and leveraging each governorate's comparative advantages to build a sustainable local economy are at the heart of the new plan."

The meeting allowed exchange of ideas and experiences to ensure development initiatives are rooted in local realities.

The 11th Five-Year Plan was formulated using a scientific approach based on international best practices, past experiences and data-driven assessments. It incorporates national sectoral strategies and aligns with findings of national programmes and studies to identify key challenges and priorities.

Registration for Falling Walls Lab 2025 opens

Muscat - Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) has announced the opening of registration for the Falling Walls Lab Oman 2025 being held in collaboration with Germany's Falling Walls Foundation. Registration is open till June 19.

MoHERI described the Falling Walls Lab as a global platform dedicated to showcasing innovative ideas and research

across a wide range of disciplines. The competition aims to connect researchers, academics, entrepreneurs, professionals and investors while promoting cultural and scientific exchange.

Falling Walls Lab is open to individuals from all academic and professional backgrounds - bachelor's degree holders who graduated in the last ten years, master's degree holders who

completed their studies in the past seven years, and PhD holders who earned their degrees in the last five years. Current undergraduate, master's and doctoral students are also encouraged to apply. All applications must be submitted in English.

Participants are required to present their research projects, innovative ideas, social initiatives or entrepreneurial ven-

tures in a concise three-minute presentation. A panel of judges comprising experts from academia, research institutions and the business sector, will assess presentations based on originality, impact and feasibility.

The winner of the local lab will go on to represent Oman at the Falling Walls Lab global finals which will take place in Berlin from November 5 to 9, 2025.

CONDOLENCES

Apex Media (Muscat Daily)
extends its sincere condolences
to His Majesty
Sultan Haitham bin Tarik,
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Sayyida Ahad bint Abdullah al Busaidi
and the Royal Family on the sad demise of
the Honourable Lady's beloved mother
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Mandatory digital tax stamp on imported beverages from June 1

Our Correspondent
Muscat

From June 1, Oman will enforce digital tax stamps (DTS) on imported beverages, including carbonated drinks, energy drinks, and other special beverages.

The Tax Authority (TA) stipulated the rules, terms and conditions for implementation of the DTS scheme for excise goods in Oman through a ministerial decision (No 21/2022). As part of the initial phase, the scheme focused on cigarettes and was later expanded to include shisha and other tobacco products.



The authority now intends to further expand the requirement to implement DTS to include carbonated drinks, energy drinks

and other special drinks. The authority requires affixing digital tax stamps on these excise products to enhance the

control and compliance of these specific products in Oman and enhance market transparency.

"The goal is to build a sustainable tax system while ensuring accountability from all stakeholders in the supply chain," an official from authority said.

According to TA, a 'customs obligation' will apply from June 1, meaning excisable beverages imported into Oman without the digital stamp will not be permitted entry. A 'commercial obligation' will come into effect from August 1, under which the sale of unstamped products will be banned within the local market.

To support the implementation, TA launched a series of awareness workshops, field inspections, and media campaigns on May 18 and running until May 22 in Musandam, North and South Batinah.

The outreach is aimed at educating importers, distributors, and retailers about the new regulations and ensuring a smooth transition.

The initiative is part of Oman's ongoing efforts to align with international best practices in tax administration, particularly in sectors with high consumption and public health impact.

Khasab Hospital over 85% complete, to be ready in 2025

Our Correspondent
Khasab

The Ministry of Health (MoH) has announced that construction of the new Khasab Hospital in Musandam governorate has surpassed 85% completion. The project, being developed on a 100,000sqm site with a built-up area of 36,000sqm, is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

With a total investment exceeding RO48mn, the hospital will offer 164 beds and a wide range of specialised medical services aimed at strengthening healthcare provision in the governorate.

Eng Youssef bin Yaqoub Ambu Ali, Director General of Projects and Engineering Services at

MoH, described the hospital as a key health development project in Musandam.

Facilities at the new hospital will include an accident and emergency unit, radiology department, nephrology unit, outpatient clinics, rehabilitation centre, and intensive care units for adults, children, and cardiac patients.

Additional departments will cater to gynaecology and obstetrics, neonatal care, daily operations, and central sterilisation. Administrative offices, a meeting hall, and general support services are also part of the project.

Once operational, the hospital is expected to significantly reduce the need for patients to travel to other governorates for specialised treatment.

Lux Collective unveils project in Haitham City

Muscat - Mauritius-based luxury hotel group The Lux Collective, in partnership with Adanté Realty, has announced the launch of SOCIO By The Lux Collective, the first hotel and branded residences project in Sultan Haitham City.

The signing ceremony took place at the Oman Real Estate Expo, marking a key step in the city's development as Oman's first smart urban hub.

The agreement will see the development of 219 branded residence units and 170 hotel rooms on Plots 97 to 99 within Yenaier Residences - the flagship sustainable project of Sultan Haitham City, located in Phase 1 of the new development.

The project is being positioned as a mixed-use lifestyle destination combining hospitality, design, and residential investment potential. Residents will have access to premium hotel services, smart home technology and proximity to retail, wellness and green spaces.



Dr Aadil Alexander, CEO of Adanté Realty, said the signing marked the formal launch of a new approach to residential living in the country. "This partnership reflects our shared vision to create elevated living experiences grounded in purpose, sustainability and global design."

Olivier Chavy, CEO of The Lux Collective, described the agreement as a continuation of the group's regional growth. "We are truly honoured to embark on this like-minded partnership with Adanté Realty - one that is built on creativity and a shared belief in future living," he said. "This milestone marks a continuation

of our group's journey, grounded in shared history and cultural resonance - from the recent opening of LUX Marijani in Zanzibar, once part of the Sultanate of Oman, to this significant step into Muscat."

The SOCIO development will feature 389 units in total, including 170 hotel rooms, 123 branded serviced apartments and 96 branded non-serviced apartments. These form part of the wider Yenaier Residences masterplan, which includes over 780 residential units and supports the government's long-term vision for urban development and housing diversification.

MTCIT backs 55 tech startups under Nomu

Muscat - Fifty-five technology startups have been accepted into the second edition of the Nomu Programme, an initiative by Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MTCIT) aimed at accelerating the growth of promising early-stage companies.

At an introductory meeting held by the ministry on Wednesday, participating startups were briefed on the programme's services, including workshops, one-on-one consultations, marketing support, and business development opportunities.

Representatives from key



partner organisations - including the 'Madar' platform and the Capital Market Incentive Programme - gave presentations outlining the tools and resources available to participants.

The event also featured dia-

logue sessions with startups from the first edition of the programme, offering an opportunity to share experiences and insights. Ministry officials said the initiative is designed to build an ecosystem where startups in the initial and accelerated growth stages can thrive.

"The programme provides participating companies with the necessary knowledge and skills to grow and expand, both locally and regionally," a ministry official said. Nomu targets startups with a functioning prototype and a proven user base, as well as those that have secured early-stage funding.

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BRIEFS

Oil prices rise amid supply concerns

Oil prices increased on Wednesday amid concern of supply disruptions after reports suggested Israel is preparing a possible strike on Iranian nuclear facilities.

International benchmark Brent crude rose by around 0.67%, trading at \$65.55 per barrel at 0723 GMT, up from \$65.11 at the previous session's close. Similarly, US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) increased by about 0.75%, settling at \$62.64 per barrel, compared to \$62.17 in the prior session.

The US has obtained new intelligence indicating that Israel is preparing to strike Iranian nuclear facilities, even as negotiations continue between Tehran and Washington over Iran's nuclear program, according to a report on Tuesday.

Experts say rising geopolitical tensions are likely to push oil prices higher due to fears of supply disruptions from a major OPEC producer.

Oman inflation contained despite global trade shocks

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Inflationary pressures in Oman and across the GCC region remained contained during the first quarter of 2025, highlighting a broader regional trend of price stability amid global trade tensions.

Oman's annual inflation rate - based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) - rose by a modest 0.5% year-on-year in March, down from 0.9% in February. The subdued inflation reflects overall price stability across consumer categories, according to the latest CPI data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

'Oman continues to record one of the lowest inflation rates in the GCC, supported by sound fiscal discipline and rising non-oil exports. On a month-on-month basis, Oman's inflation declined by 0.4% in March 2025 compared to February 2025,' Kamco Investment stated in its GCC Inflation Report released on Wednesday.

According to NCSI data, the largest price increases in March were recorded in miscellaneous goods and services (up 6.1%), followed by health (up 3.2%) and transport (up 1.8%). Conversely, the index for food and non-alcoholic beverages fell by 0.7%, driven largely by a 10.2% decline in vegetable prices and a 7.0% drop in seafood prices.



Oman continues to record one of the lowest inflation rates in the GCC. The sultanate's annual inflation rate rose by a modest 0.5% year-on-year in March, down from 0.9% in February

Among the six GCC member states, only Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates registered annual inflation rates exceeding 2% in March, reflecting an overall muted inflationary environment, the Kamco Investment report noted.

'In comparison with inflationary trends across the wider Middle East and North Africa

(MENA) region, the GCC continues to perform favourably, with price levels remaining well below the regional average. This divergence is expected to persist through the remainder of the year, supported by moderating energy prices, expectations of relatively stable global exchange rates following recent volatility, and prudent monetary policy,' the report said.

However, the report also warned that 'downside risks - particularly uncertainties surrounding evolving global trade dynamics, including recently imposed tariff measures - could potentially disrupt this disinflationary momentum and reignite upward pressure on prices, especially within more vulnerable MENA economies.'

'GCC inflation, across the board, has remained well-anchored, supported by stable currencies pegged to the US dollar and continued government subsidies in sectors such as energy, food, and housing.'

Bdeir named as Visa's new country manager for Oman

Muscat - Visa, a global leader in digital payments, has announced the appointment of Nasser Bdeir as country manager for Oman, effective May 25. He is based out of Visa's Riyadh office, the company's regional headquarters for Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Bahrain.

Bdeir succeeds Manish Gautam, who was in the role since 2019 and has now transitioned to Visa's regional headquarters in Riyadh to manage Visa Commercial Solutions - one of Visa's strategically important business across Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman.



Nasser Bdeir

With Visa since 2013, Bdeir assumes his new role after leading key markets and functions in the GCC - including Head of Financial Institutions and managing leading banks, driving growth and innovation for merchants and fintechs, and market development. Before Visa, he spent five years with Banque Saudi Fransi.

In a press release, Bdeir said, "I am thrilled to have the opportunity to lead our operations in an exciting market such as Oman. I am looking forward to working closely with our clients to introduce new payment innovations that benefit Omani consumers and businesses. We are deeply committed to supporting the Oman government's cashless agenda and creating an inclusive, resilient digital economy where everyone, everywhere in

Oman can participate and be empowered by the benefits digital commerce offers."

Ali Bailoun, Visa's Regional General Manager for Saudi Arabia, Oman and Bahrain, said, "We are excited about Nasser's appointment as Visa's Oman Country Manager. He brings proven leadership skills as well as a strong understanding of Visa's business in Oman and deep experience from the wider region. I am confident Nasser will further deepen our local partnerships to deliver more value for our clients and partners, and make significant contributions to the Oman government's digital commerce agenda."

The Oman government has established a progressive regulatory framework to enable the growth of the sultanate's digital economy. Despite progress with the economy's digital transformation, around 25% of Oman consumer transactions are still in cash, according to Visa's recent Where Cash Hides research.

Fitch Ratings revises its outlook on Oman Reinsurance to 'positive'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Fitch Ratings has revised the outlook on Oman Reinsurance Company's Insurer Financial Strength (IFS) rating to 'positive' from 'stable', while affirming the IFS rating at 'BBB-'. 'The revision of the outlook to positive reflects improvements in the company's investment and asset risk, which is closely linked to the sovereign credit quality, as well as the strengthening of its capitalisation and financial performance,' Fitch said in a statement.

Fitch currently maintains a positive outlook on Oman's sovereign rating. The agency stated that the affirmation of the rating reflects



Oman Re's solid position in its core markets, limited operating scale, sound capitalisation and earnings, and its cautious approach to reserving and reinsurance.

'Oman Re has developed its business franchise over the past five years. Its core markets include the Middle East, Türkiye, Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent

States, Asia and Africa. Its largest market is Türkiye, which accounted for 14% of gross written premiums in 2024. However, Oman Re remains a small-scale operator, as evidenced by gross reinsurance revenue of RO50mn in 2024,' Fitch noted.

Fitch considers Oman Re's capital position to be supportive of its rating. The reinsurer's financial performance is viewed as

strong, demonstrated by a return on equity of 8.9% in 2024 (2023: 8.4%).

The agency also highlighted that Oman Re's investment and asset risk is closely linked to the credit quality of the Omani sovereign. The company's investments, which primarily consist of government bonds and term deposits with Omani banks, represented 57% of total invested assets at the end of 2024 (2023: 60%, 2022: 68%).

'Oman Re has been gradually reducing its exposure to domestic investments; however, its capacity to significantly rebalance its investment portfolio is constrained by local regulations, which require that at least 50% of investments be held within Oman,' Fitch added.

Development Bank CEO highlights climate financing leadership

Muscat - Development banks are evolving from project financiers to strategic climate partners, fundamentally reshaping sustainable finance. Development Bank CEO Hussain al Lawati explored these changes during a panel discussion at the Islamic Development Bank Group's (IDB) annual meeting in Algiers, Algeria on Wednesday, sharing insights from his institution's experience.

For Oman, this evolution means moving beyond traditional project funding. Lawati highlighted Development Bank's commitment to key industries including manufacturing, fisheries, agriculture, mining, logistics and tourism with a focus on projects that will help achieve Oman's 2050 Net Zero target.

"We serve as a catalyst for



Hussain al Lawati

sustainable development by providing tailored financing solutions that support Oman Vision 2040 and drive economic diversification," he said.

This approach is clear in the bank's response to national priorities. Lawati explained how Development Bank's work connects local and global climate goals, saying, "We aren't just financing projects, we're enabling Oman's

transition to a low-carbon, resilient economy that can thrive despite climate challenges."

Lawati noted how the global investment landscape has changed since November's COP29, where countries committed to providing at least \$300bn annually for climate action in emerging economies by 2035, with developed nations leading the charge. This historic climate finance deal marks a turning point in worldwide environmental efforts.

Development Bank is funding renewable projects and working with partners to attract private investment into the country's climate transition. "We're expanding beyond traditional lending to become a strategic partner in Oman's green economy," commented Lawati.

FORESIGHT



SYED ADIL ABBAS

Abbas, an MBA graduate from Cardiff Metropolitan University (UK), is currently based in Muscat, and has over 20 years of international experience working with the public and private sectors in the Middle East, Far East, Africa and India

The world in 2025 is witnessing an intense technological rivalry, often described as a global tech war, primarily between the United States and China. This competition focuses on semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI), cyber capabilities, and digital infrastructure, reshaping global power and affecting countries worldwide.

At the centre is the semiconductor industry. Taiwan Semiconductor

Manufacturing Company (TSMC) is vital, with the US investing heavily to reshore chip production by building a TSMC plant in Arizona to reduce dependence on Asian supply chains. China is rapidly developing its semiconductor capabilities to bypass Western restrictions. US export controls on advanced chips have pushed China to accelerate domestic innovation. This rivalry risks fragmenting the global semiconductor market and increasing tensions.

China's progress in AI and quantum computing has further intensified competition. The Chinese AI system DeepSeek reportedly by-

DIGITAL DECOUPLING: THE NEW TECH DIVIDE

passed US chip bans, while Huawei produced advanced 7nm chips despite restrictions. In electric vehicle market, Chinese manufacturer BYD

sold 24% more cars than Tesla in Q1 2025 - highlighting China's growing technological strength. In response to the broader race for technological leadership, the US enacted the CHIPS Act in 2022, allocating \$280bn to boost domestic innovation and reduce dependence on foreign supply chains.

Cyber warfare and espionage have surged. In February 2025, North Korean hackers reportedly stole \$1.5bn in Ethereum from Dubai-based exchange ByBit, the largest cryptocurrency heist to date. According to CrowdStrike's 2025 Global Threat Report, Chinese cyber espionage increased 150% in 2024, targeting financial, media, and industrial sectors worldwide. Taiwan faces about 2.4mn daily cyberattacks threatening critical infrastructure. Disinformation campaigns on platforms like WeChat

show how digital tools are weaponised for influence.

Several factors drive this rivalry. Countries see control over AI, semiconductors, and quantum computing as key to their security and economy. Economic competition fuels the race to dominate emerging technologies, shaping global influence. The world is fragmenting into competing technology ecosystems, forcing countries to align with either US or Chinese blocs. This "digital decoupling" threatens cooperation and raises conflict risks.

The consequences could be severe. Fragmented supply chains may increase costs and impede innovation. Cyberattacks targeting civilian infrastructure such as healthcare, finance, and utilities are likely to grow, disrupting daily life. Technology-centred alliances may heighten tensions and increase risks of miscalculation.

As Oman pursues technological progress and economic diversification, it faces a complex environment shaped by global technological competition. By broadening its technology partnerships, Oman can unlock new avenues for growth and strengthen its innovation ecosystem. Vulnerabilities linked to reliance on external tech supply chains and the growing threat of cyberattacks call for continued investment in cybersecurity infrastructure and skills, supported by programs such as 'Flag the Hack 2025.'

Building on this, Oman's emphasis on innovation, through support for startups, research, and digital education, can enhance adaptability. With strategic focus on sectors like smart cities, fintech, and AI, Oman is well placed to respond effectively to shifting international dynamics.

EU races to secure trade pact with Trump after China, UK strike deals

Nik Martin

Eager to avoid a looming 20% tariff on its trans-Atlantic exports, the European Union has agreed to "intensify" trade talks with the United States after being accused of moving too slowly. EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic gave the update last Thursday before a meeting of EU trade ministers in Brussels, adding that he and his US counterpart Howard Lutnick were due to meet "very soon."

The EU summit was expected to solidify the bloc's position in negotiations to avoid the additional levies that kick in from July, after US President Donald Trump sealed his first deals since announcing so-called reciprocal tariffs on most global imports last month.

Following a tense standoff, Washington and Beijing reached a temporary deal last week, slashing punitive tariffs from over 100% to more sustainable levels. As negotiations for a long-term deal intensify, for the next 90 days Chinese goods entering the US will incur a 30% tariff, while exports from the US to China will face a 10% levy.

Days earlier, Trump secured

the first outline of a trade deal since proclaiming April 2 as "Liberation Day," when he announced stiff worldwide tariffs. The broad pact with the United Kingdom reduces tariffs on British carmakers exporting to the US and grants American exporters, including farmers and ethanol producers, enhanced access to the UK market.

Trump under pressure to secure EU deal

While Trump continues to play hardball with Brussels, claiming earlier this week that the "European Union is in many ways nastier than China," Andrew Kenningham, chief Europe economist for the London-based Capital Economics research house, thinks economic pressures will prevent him from pushing Brussels too far.

"The two new deals will make EU negotiators more confident that they can stick broadly to the policy already set out, which is to try to avoid escalation, threaten some retaliation but with a delay, while at the same time be willing to negotiate," Kenningham told DW.

Even so, Capital Economics



Last year, the US had a \$235.6bn trade deficit in goods with the EU, a 12.9% increase on the previous year

EU has threatened new tariffs on \$107bn of US goods in response to Trump's earlier tariffs on aluminum, steel and European automakers, but paused them to allow negotiations to proceed. Brussels is also considering curbs on scrap steel and chemical exports to the US

warned in a research note that an EU-US deal "appears harder to reach," pointing to the bloc's large goods trade surplus with the US and the challenge of reaching consensus among the 27 EU member states.

The EU has already threat-

ened new tariffs on \$107bn of US goods in response to Trump's earlier tariffs on aluminum, steel and European automakers, but paused them to allow negotiations to proceed. Brussels is also considering curbs on scrap steel and chemical exports to the US.

Trump vague on demands from EU

Claudia Schmucker, head of the Center for Geopolitics, Geo-economics, and Technology at the German Council on Foreign Relations, doesn't think the China and UK deals really "change

anything."

"Trump is still expecting that the EU will offer something he feels is valuable enough," Schmucker told DW, adding that the president's demands from Europe remain a "mystery," but are likely to include more agriculture and energy imports.

The EU has so far offered to boost imports of US liquefied natural gas, advanced AI technology and soybeans, while proposing zero-for-zero tariffs on all industrial goods. Brussels has, however, ruled out lowering other US irritants - from sales tax (VAT) and regulations, which Trump perceives as giving the bloc an unfair advantage in trade.

Last year, the US had a \$235.6bn trade deficit in goods with the EU, a 12.9% increase on the previous year, according to the Office of the US Trade Representative. The latest 2023 data from Eurostat, the EU's statistics agency, puts the EU goods surplus at 157bn euro.

Schmucker thinks the president's negative rhetoric, which included an unfounded claim that the EU was created to "rip off" the US, plays into Brussels' hands as EU states try to reach

consensus on how to proceed, even as Hungary, Italy and some others push for bilateral deals.

"Even though some EU states are not fully on board with Brussels' negotiating position, Trump's antagonism is enough to help boost EU unity," she said.

Ahead of Thursday's talks in Brussels, Swedish Trade Minister Benjamin Dousa was doubtful about a speedy US-EU deal, saying he didn't think it was likely in the "coming weeks." If Trump keeps the baseline 10% tariff imposed on all imports as announced last month, as it did for the UK, Dousa said: "The US can expect countermeasures from us."

Miguel Otero, senior fellow for international political economy at Spain's Elcano Royal Institute, believes the US "has a lot to lose" from any Trump misstep.

"The EU has a big deficit when it comes to services, especially financial and digital services and entertainment platforms," Otero told DW. "The US cannot afford to lose the European market. If we act as a single entity, then the EU has as much leverage as China." DW

China cuts key lending rates to record lows to counter impact of US tariffs

Tina Teng

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) has lowered its benchmark lending rates for the first time in seven months as part of ongoing efforts to mitigate the impact of US tariffs on its economy.

China's central bank has cut its key lending rates to record lows to bolster the economy and cushion the impact of escalating trade tensions with the United States. The move follows a sweeping stimulus package announced earlier this month.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) has lowered its benchmark lending rates for the first time in seven months as part of ongoing efforts to mitigate the impact of US tariffs on its economy.

The central bank cut the 1-year and 5-year loan prime rates (LPR) by 10 basis points to 3.0% and 3.5%, respectively, both record lows. These are key lending benchmarks based on monthly submissions from 20 major Chinese commercial banks. The 1-year LPR is a reference for corporate and household loans, while the 5-year LPR is typically used as the benchmark for mortgage rates.

The rate reduction had been widely anticipated as part of the



broader stimulus package unveiled earlier in the month. Just ahead of trade talks between Beijing and Washington in Switzerland, the PBOC also lowered the seven-day reverse repurchase rate by 10 basis points and cut the reserve requirement ratio (RRR), the amount of capital banks must hold in reserve, by 50 basis points.

"At the margin, the rate cuts may provide a minor tailwind for stocks, but it was widely expected and it's obvious that credit access is not the thing holding borrowers back right now. Confidence remains weak, and the government needs to do more to improve that via the fiscal channel," David Scutt, APAC market analyst at StoneX, Australia, said.

Mixed economic data

China's economy grew by 5.4% in the first quarter of the year, exceeding expectations. However, trade uncertainties threaten to derail its 5% annual growth target. Recent economic indicators paint a mixed picture of the world's second-largest economy.

On Monday, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that industrial output rose by 6.1% year-on-year in April, beating forecasts of 5.5%, reflecting resilient business activity despite mounting trade pressures. In addition, exports surged 8.1% year-on-year in April, though shipments to the US plunged 21%. Customs data showed that increased exports to Southeast Asia and the EU

helped offset the decline in trade with the US.

However, retail sales rose by just 5.1%, falling short of expectations for a 5.5% increase. This underscores continued weakness in domestic consumption, as households remain cautious amid ongoing economic uncertainty.

Fixed asset investment grew by 4% in the first four months of the year, though property investment fell sharply by 10.3%, highlighting continued fragility in the housing sector. On a more positive note, the unemployment rate fell to 5.0% in April, down from 5.2% in March and 5.4% in February.

Several global investment banks have upgraded their forecasts for China's economic growth this year following the agreement between Beijing and Washington to pause tariffs for 90 days over the weekend. Nonetheless, most analysts believe China is unlikely to meet its 5% growth target set earlier this year.

Goldman Sachs revised its full-year growth forecast for China up to 4.6% from 4%. Nomura also upgraded its forecast for second-quarter GDP growth to 4.8% from 3.7%, citing the resumption of shipments to the US.

(Source: Euronews.com)



Metro Hospital Barka Holds Soft Launch Ceremony

Barka, May 16, 2025 — Metro Hospital Barka marked its soft launch on May 16, 2025, by the Chief Guest His Excellency Mr. Tariq bin Mahmoud bin Ali Al Busaidi, Wali of Barka. This occasion celebrates the Soft Launch of Metro Hospital's second branch in the Sultanate of Oman and the 15th in the Metro Group of Hospitals.

Founded in 1996 in India by Padma Vibhushan Dr. B.C. Roy National Awardee Dr. Purshotam Lal, the Metro Group has grown into one of India's leading healthcare providers. With a legacy of 27 years in delivering healthcare excellence, the group now operates more than 15 branches across three countries, offering 35+ specialties, staffed by over 600 doctors and 3,500 trained healthcare professionals.

Metro Hospitals is renowned for its super-specialty services in cardiology, oncology, organ transplant, gastroenterology, neurology, joint replacement, as well as general, laparoscopic, and gastrointestinal surgeries etc. The

group is recognized for setting world records and introducing innovative treatment techniques that serve both Indian nationals and international patients.

His Excellency Mr. Waleed Al Malki, Member of Majlis Al Shura, Barka, extended his congratulations to Metro Hospital and expressed his full support for its mission in Barka.

Dr. Jasimul Haque, Joint Director, highlighted the success of Metro Premier Medical Center in Al Khoudh 6 and expressed the group's commitment to replicating the same standards of excellence at the Barka branch. He extended his gratitude to the Ministry of Health, Wali's Office of Barka, Ministry of Labour, and Ministry of Municipality for their prompt support in the reopening of the formerly closed hospital. Dr. Jasim further stated that a highly qualified and experienced team of doctors and paramedical professionals has been appointed in the Barka branch. New specialties and advanced medical facilities are being introduced, along with

additional beds and equipment.

These services will be made available progressively, ensuring comprehensive healthcare delivery to the people of Barka.

Dr. Sahil Lal, Director of Metro Group, spoke about the group's future expansion plans in Oman and the wider Gulf region, emphasizing their commitment to growth and excellence in healthcare.

His Excellency Dr. Salim Khalfan Al Rushaidi, Member Majlis Ad-Dawla, Dr. Nasser Al shukaili DG- Ministry of Health Rustaq, Dr. Abdullah Said Alyahmedi, Director of Private Health Establishment South Al Batinah, Mr. Salim Saed Al Malki, Mr. Maqbool Al Riyami, Manager Manpower, Barka, Mr. Hilal Al Filaiti- Manager Municipality, Barka have shared best wishes to Metro Hospital, Barka.

The launch event was celebrated with enthusiasm by doctors, staff, and suppliers, all of whom expressed their excitement and commitment to delivering world-class healthcare services to the community of Barka.

Advertisorial

New York, London, Paris top Oxford Economics' Global Cities Index

New York, London and Paris were the top three cities in the Oxford Economics' Global Cities Index, which analysed 1,000 cities in different categories.

The Global Cities Index analyses the world's 1,000 largest cities in 163 countries through 27 indicators in five main categories. The main categories are economy, human capital, quality of life, environment and governance.

These cities account for 60% of global GDP and host one-third of the world's population.

New York topped the list with



an economy worth \$2.5tn and a population of 20.7mn. With an overall score of 100 in these categories, it was followed by Lon-

don with its \$1tn economy. These two cities topped the list for the second time in a row.

New York had the world's

largest metropolitan economy, while London ranked fourth. Similarly, both cities have a high number of universities and corporate headquarters.

Paris ranked third in the index, followed by US' San Jose in the state of California and Seattle in the state of Washington.

These three cities scored highly in the economy category and slightly lower than New York and London in human capital.

Tokyo was the closest city to New York among the top 10 cities with an economic size of \$1.3tn.

Anadolu Agency

SARCO LLC named sole distributor for Samsung consumer electronics in Oman

With a broader aim to reshape the consumer electronics landscape in Oman, Al Seeb Technical Establishment (SARCO) LLC has been appointed the sole authorised distributor for Samsung consumer electronics across all retail and business channels in the sultanate.

The announcement, effective from April 1, marks a significant upgrade in the partnership between SARCO and Samsung, one that spans over four decades. This was announced during a press conference at the Sheraton Oman Hotel on Monday.

This new designation entrusts SARCO with full distribution responsibilities for Samsung's entire lineup of consumer electronics - including refrigerators, washing machines, televisions, audio systems, air conditioners and commercial B2B solutions. It also signals a complete transition from Samsung's earlier Fulfillment Distribution model to a more dynamic Full Distribution model in Oman.

Speaking during the press conference, Sanjeev Awasthi, CEO of SARCO said, "This is a



milestone moment in our journey with Samsung. The trust that Samsung has placed in SARCO speaks volumes about our market capability and commitment. This new chapter enables us to bring Samsung's cutting-edge innovations closer to consumers across the country.

"With this full distribution model, SARCO now has the operational flexibility to offer en-

This new designation entrusts SARCO with full distribution responsibilities for Samsung's entire lineup of consumer electronics - including refrigerators, washing machines, televisions, audio systems, air conditioners and commercial B2B solutions

hanced services, tighter supply chain integration, and more impactful engagement with retail-

ers and end-users. This will help raise the bar for consumer experience and support."

This new latest decision also brings clarity to the distribution landscape: All previous distribu-

tion arrangements with other entities for consumer electronics in Oman have been terminated, consolidating Samsung's representation exclusively under SARCO. The announcement event was attended by prominent figures from Oman's retail sector, government ministries, banking institutions, corporate clients.

Awasthi further said, "Samsung is a pioneer in smart, user-centric

technology. With the passion and expertise of the SARCO team, we are confident in deepening Samsung's presence and delivering a seamless experience for every Omani household and business." With SARCO at the helm, he believed Samsung's distribution and service ecosystem in Oman is expected to become more responsive, integrated and locally empowered.



Toyota Fortuner continues to be true icon in SUV world

The Toyota Fortuner, a true icon in the SUV world, continues to elevate expectations and captivate hearts with its unmatched blend of strength, elegance and off-road prowess. Engineered for those who demand more from every drive the Fortuner is designed to conquer with confidence and inspire every journey.

At the heart of the Fortuner's powerful performance lies a choice between two dynamic petrol engines. The 2.7-litre four-cylinder engine delivers a solid 164HP and 25.0Kg-m of torque, offering smooth, responsive driving ideal for everyday city commutes and weekend escapes alike. For those who crave greater exhilaration, the mighty 4.0-litre V6 engine powers forward with an impressive 235HP and 38.3Kg-m of torque, unleashing the full potential of the Fortuner on highways and harsher terrain.

Both powertrains are paired to a sophisticated 6-speed automatic transmission, providing seamless gear shifts, optimal fuel efficiency and complete command across every terrain. Whether it is a regular city drive, a desert drive, or a coastal road trip, the Fortuner is built to perform, without compromise.

Step inside the Fortuner and you will discover a refined cabin. Every detail is crafted for comfort, style and practicality. Seat yourself in the plush leather seats and grip the leather-wood finished steering wheel with paddle shifters, designed to put control and sophistication right at your fingertips. From the cool

glove box to keep beverages chilled to the power back door system that makes loading a breeze, every feature enhances your experience on the road. Cruise control adds ease to long-distance drives, while smart ergonomics and premium materials ensure every ride feels

The 2.7-litre 4-cylinder engine delivers a solid 164HP and 25.0Kg-m of torque, offering smooth, responsive driving ideal for everyday city commutes and weekend escapes

first-class.

Packed with innovative technology, the Fortuner keeps you connected and in control wherever you go. The intuitive navigation system helps you find your way with ease, while a rear-view camera ensures you park and reverse with confidence. The 6-speaker audio system fills the cabin with rich, immersive sound, setting the perfect mood for every adventure.

Toyota's unwavering commitment to safety is evident in the Fortuner's robust suite of advanced safety systems. From the anti-lock braking system (ABS) and vehicle stability control (VSC) to the comprehensive SRS airbag system (including driver, passenger, side, curtain and knee airbags), every aspect of the Fortuner is designed to protect.

District 105 Toastmasters organises exclusive corporate summit in Oman

District 105 Toastmasters successfully conducted an exclusive Toastmasters Corporate Summit on May 13, at Hotel Mercure, Muscat, with a focused theme 'Empowering Employees, Elevating Organisations'.

The summit brought together professionals including senior executives, HR leaders, communication specialists from organisations across Oman.

Organised by the District 105 team, the summit aimed to showcase how Toastmasters' proven framework for leadership and communication development can empower employees at all levels and contribute to long-term organisational success. The event opened with an inspiring keynote address on 'Unlocking Leadership Potential' by Dr Saleh al Khamyasi, a coach, speaker and author (DTM - Distinguished Toastmaster), who explored how organisations can nurture leaders



from within by creating an environment of trust, mentorship, and communication excellence. The keynote struck a powerful chord with attendees, many of whom were HR leaders, senior executives and business leaders.

Following the keynote, participants engaged in an introductory session titled 'What is Toastmasters?' by Yasser Shalwani, former district director of

TM, designed to provide insights into how Toastmasters International supports personal and professional growth through structured, experiential learning. This session helped demystify the Toastmasters journey and emphasised how corporate clubs can enhance employee confidence, public speaking, and leadership effectiveness.

The summit also had live tes-

timonials from the existing corporate Toastmasters club who shared how Toastmasters has positively influenced employee morale, communication confidence, and team dynamics within their organizations.

District Director Saiju Victor and Club Growth Director Rammanujam Raghavan were also present to share insights and engage with corporate stakehold-

ers, underlining Toastmasters' commitment to organisational excellence across the region.

The summit concluded with a networking session, providing attendees with the opportunity to collaborate, share initiatives, and explore future partnerships. District 105 is part of Toastmasters International, a nonprofit educational organisation with presence in more than 150 countries.

Muscat governorate conducts training on financial awareness



The Human Resources Department in Muscat governorate conducted a training programme entitled 'Financial Awareness, Step by Step' on Tuesday, targeting several employees in the meeting room of the Governorate's headquarters in Al Bustan.

This programme reflects the governorate's commitment to enable its employees to manage money wisely and appropriately.

Thus avoiding burdensome debts, enhancing the financial resources efficiently, and using funds optimally.

This training programme included interactive, practical activities to help participants prioritise their salaries between essentials and luxuries and saving money for emergencies.

It focused on promoting financial awareness concepts as a basis to achieve better personal

and financial stability, reflecting positively on improving focus in work performance.

This initiative is part of the programmes that the Department of Human Resources in Muscat governorate implemented to support the personal and professional development of staff and promote awareness and financial management in the government work environment.

ISWK opens new horizon with Business & Entrepreneurship Club

May 8, 2025, stood as a proud and pivotal milestone for the Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir (ISWK) and its Business & Entrepreneurship Club, as it hosted a celebration of leadership, innovation, and community spirit. The B&E Club invested the 21 club officials by conferring them with their badge of office and job profiles.

The club hierarchy includes the president, vice presidents, senior managers, and junior managers of the four departments: Accounting and finance, operations, marketing and design and Public relations and editorial.

Kanan Khimji, Director at Khimji Ramdas, graced the occasion as the chief guest, accompanied by Manoj Ranade, General Manager at Mitsubishi and Fuso, Zubair group

as the Guest of Honour. Their address served as a powerful reminder of the values of curiosity, creativity, and collaboration.

The B&E Club has released Volume II of 'The Business Communique', the first student-led school business magazine in the Sultanate of Oman. The magazine features insightful articles written by the students. It is a go-to read for everything business, from student perspectives to industry trends, put together with passion and intent.

The B&E club also took a heartfelt initiative to honour the unseen heroes of ISWK, the support staff. This segment, filled with warmth and gratitude, served as a tribute to those working behind the scenes.

Will Thailand's conflict-hit deep south ever see lasting peace?

Bangkok, Thailand - Since January 2004, Thailand's deep south has seen ongoing conflict between Thai military forces and separatist groups seeking greater autonomy.

The violence is largely confined to the country's three southernmost provinces, Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala - home to a Muslim Malay majority in the predominantly Buddhist nation.

The region, located along the Thai-Malaysia border, has seen over 23,000 violent incidents, leading to more than 7,000 deaths, according to Deep South Watch, a local think tank.

The Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), the dominant separatist group, has been implicated in attacks targeting civilians, including Buddhist monks and schoolteachers, according to Human Rights Watch.

Deadly attacks escalate conflict

Between January and early May this year, 38 violent incidents were recorded - almost as many as in all of 2024. Don Pathan, a Thailand-based security analyst, points to two attacks as key escalations.

The first came after Thailand's National Security Council and the BRN failed to reach a Ramadan ceasefire agreement in March, after which Thai Deputy Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai insisted that all violence must stop before talks resume.

The BRN responded with a March 9 attack on Narathiwat's Sungai Kolok District Office, wounding 12 people and killing two volunteer defence officers.

The second major incident came after the April 18 killing of



A March 9 attack on Narathiwat's Sungai Kolok district office wounded 12 people and killed two volunteer defense officers

Conflict in Thailand's deep south has persisted for more than two decades. With violence surging, can lasting peace be achieved?

senior BRN member Abdulroning Lateh, which saw the insurgents escalate beyond the rules of engagement in conflict by targeting civilians. A brutal attack came on May 2 when a gunman shot dead at least three people in a residential area of Narathiwat province, including a 9-year-old girl, a 75-year-old man and a 76-year-old blind woman.

In response, Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra deployed more troops to the region to bolster security.

Last week, Deputy PM Phumtham Wechayachai said that the Thai government is willing to engage in peace talks.

Thaksin vows to achieve peace

Tita Sanglee, an associate fellow at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, believes both politicians' efforts are symbolic rather than practical.

"Paetongtarn and Phumtham's peace efforts are more symbolic than substantive. We all know that the situation on the ground is not really conducive to peace," she told DW.

"Phumtham's stance, at least early on, was quite tough. He was basically saying, 'we won't engage in talks unless the BRN proves its legitimacy by ending violence on the ground.'"

"I see this largely as a way to shift scrutiny onto the insurgents - and ultimately to shield the young and inexperienced prime minister," Sanglee said, suggesting that controlling the narrative seems to be the government's priority.

Thaksin Shinawatra, who was Thai PM when the insurgency renewed in 2004, has also become involved to help find a solution. He visited the region in February and said that he expects to see a complete end to the unrest by next year.

Thailand's ruling Pheu Thai party, which is strongly influenced by Thaksin, has since faced

pressure to act.

Tita said the former PM's pledge has pushed the government to respond.

"In light of Thaksin's public pledge to end the Deep South's unrest by next year, there's a real need for the Pheu Thai government to demonstrate that it is taking the issue seriously and is actually doing something," she told DW.

Thaksin is an informal adviser to ASEAN chair Anwar Ibrahim, who is also the prime minister of Malaysia, which has been urged to take a greater role in peace efforts.

The last official meeting about a peace solution between Thai government representatives and the BRN was in June 2024.

But in a post on social media this month, Paetongtarn said

Malaysia is now crucial for any upcoming rounds of peace talks.

Anthony Davis, a Bangkok-based security analyst, said Malaysia could have more of an impact on reducing the hostilities.

"The Malaysians could arguably be doing more in terms of reining in BRN. Some elements almost certainly knew in advance that a Ramadan offensive was coming and apparently did nothing to head it off," he told DW, adding that Malaysia's role as 'facilitator' limits its actions.

"There are also questions as to how far PM Anwar is focused on the Patani issue and whether he could afford the domestic political blowback of hard-knuckle moves against BRN leadership inside Malaysia when ultimately this is a Thai problem," he added. DW

Japan minister quits over rice gaffe

Tokyo, Japan - Japan's Agriculture Minister Taku Eto announced his resignation on Wednesday following backlash over an inappropriate comment about rice.

Eto came under fire earlier this week after stating that he had 'never had to buy rice' because supporters gave it to him, a remark that sparked public outrage amid a national rice shortage and soaring prices.

Rice is a staple food in Japan, and Eto's comment struck a nerve in a country where retail rice prices have doubled since last year.

"I made an extremely inappropriate remark at a time when citizens are suffering from soaring rice prices," Eto told reporters after submitting his resignation at the prime minister's office.

The government has implemented measures since March to curb rising prices, including releasing tonnes of rice from its emergency stockpile, but these efforts have so far failed to yield results.

Public support for Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has also declined sharply. According to a Kyodo News poll released on Sunday, his approval rating has dropped to 27.4%, down from 32.6% the previous month.

The same poll revealed that 87.1% of respondents viewed the government's response to rising rice prices as inadequate.

DW

A WALK THROUGH JORDAN'S PETRA



Tourists walk at the archaeological site of Petra, Jordan, on Tuesday. Jordan's Petra is a unique archaeological Nabataean city carved into rock, and is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985 (Xinhua)

Former DR Congo PM gets 10 years for embezzlement

Kinshasa, DRC - A former prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo was sentenced on Tuesday to 10 years of hard labour for embezzling public funds.

Augustin Matata Ponyo's co-defendants - Deogratias Mutombo Mwana Nyembo, a former central bank governor, and Christo Grobler, a South African businessman and the CEO of Africom Commodities - each got five-year sentences.

The charges relate to misappropriation involving US\$285mn in public funds allocated to the Bukangalanzo Agro-Industrial Park, a flagship project initiated under former President Joseph Kabila.

Despite Matata Ponyo's current position as a member of par-



Augustin Matata Ponyo

liament, the Constitutional Court ruled that it had jurisdiction over the case.

The court's president argued that immunity applies to the function of office, not the individual, emphasising that Matata Ponyo's parliamentary election occurred after the legal proceedings had already begun. This po-

sition dismissed the defence's arguments regarding parliamentary immunity. The court's stance stirred institutional tensions. National Assembly President Vital Kamerhe condemned the ruling as a constitutional violation, asserting that no member of parliament can be tried without the prior lifting of their immunity. Kamerhe proposed a meeting with the Constitutional Court's leadership to resolve the disagreement and realign their interpretations of the law.

In response, the Constitutional Court's president, Dieudonne Kamuleta Badibanga, reaffirmed judicial independence by citing Article 151 of the Constitution, which bars the legislature from interfering in judicial matters.

Anadolu Agency

Five suspected members of far-right terror group arrested in Germany

Berlin, Germany - German authorities arrested five suspected members of a far-right terrorist group, called 'Last Wave of Defence', in coordinated raids across several cities, federal prosecutors said on Wednesday.

The suspects, identified only by their first names due to German privacy laws, were arrested in the states of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Brandenburg and Hesse. The group's alleged leaders - Benjamin H, Lenny M and Jason R - are accused of planning violent attacks against migrants and political opponents.

"The members of this group see themselves as the last line of defence for the German nation," federal prosecutors said in a statement. "Their goal was to cause the collapse of the democratic system in Germany through violent acts, particularly targeting migrants and political opponents."

Prosecutors detailed several attacks carried out by the group, including an arson attack on a cultural centre in Altdoborn in October 2024. The building was occupied by several people who escaped injury by chance.



Prosecutors detailed several attacks carried out by the group, including an arson attack on a cultural centre in Altdoborn in October 2024

In another incident in January 2025, two members attempted to set fire to a refugee shelter in Schmolln, according to prosecu-

tors, spraying Nazi symbols and slogans including 'foreigners out' and 'Germany for Germans' on the walls.

The group was also suspected of planning an attack on another refugee shelter in Senftenberg, with members procuring explosive devices from the neighbouring Czech Republic before their arrests.

More than 220 police officers participated in Wednesday's operation, which included searches at 13 locations across five German states.

Anadolu Agency

Trump rolls out plan to build Golden Dome missile defence system

Washington, D.C., US - US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that he has selected the ‘architecture’ for his long-promised ‘Golden Dome’ missile defence programme, which he estimated will cost US\$175bn during the next three years to create.

“The golden dome will integrate with our existing defence capabilities and should be fully operational before the end of my term, so we will have it done in about three years,” he said. “Once fully constructed, the Golden Dome will be capable of

intercepting missiles, even if they are launched from other sides of the world, and even if they are launched from space, and we will have the best system ever built.”

The programme will see an initial investment of US\$25bn that will be included in the sweeping ‘big, beautiful’ spending and tax cut bill that Trump is seeking to shepherd through Congress despite complex opposition from within his own ranks.

The exact details on the programme remain sparse, but



US President Donald Trump

The golden dome will integrate with our existing defence capabilities and should be fully operational before the end of my term

DONALD TRUMP

Trump said it will ‘deploy next generation technologies across the land, sea and space, includ-

ing space-based sensors and interceptors’. The president tapped Space Force General Michael Guetlein to oversee the programme’s development.

Asked if military commanders have asked for the programme to be created, Trump said he ‘suggested it, and they all said, ‘we love the idea, sir’.

It is unclear if the ‘Golden Dome’ will be designed to cover the entire nation or will instead be focused on protecting major population hubs or other areas of strategic value, but Trump said Canada has expressed an

interest in joining the programme. “Canada wants to be a part of it, which would be fairly small expansion, but we’ll work with them on pricing. We’re dealing with them on pricing. They know about it very much. They’ve asked to be a part of it, actually.”

Asked if he has addressed Russia’s ventures into space-based nuclear weapons during his conversations with President Vladimir Putin, Trump said he had not yet discussed the matter.

Anadolu Agency

British Army veterans summit Mt Everest using xenon gas therapy

London, UK - Four British Army veterans, known as the ‘Xenon Climbers’, became the first to summit Mount Everest on Wednesday with the help of xenon gas therapy.

The team, including Alastair Carns, parliament member and minister for veterans and people at the Defense Ministry, along with Garth Miller, Anthony Stazicker and Kev Godlington, began their mission last week to summit Everest and return to London within seven days.

They want to accelerate acclimatisation by using xenon gas to boost red blood cell production.

Austrian mountaineer Lukas Furtenbach, who leads the expedition through his company, Lukas Adventures, wrote on Instagram: “Mission Everest 7days team on the the summit!! Safe descent.”

Unlike traditional methods involving lower peaks or multiple rotations, the team from

the UK flew directly to Kathmandu, took a helicopter to Everest Base Camp, and immediately began their ascent.

The team completed more than 500 hours of hypoxic training, including sleeping in a hypoxic tent and training with a mask.

Special regulators on the mountain were used to enhance their oxygen intake. They also used a controversial technique, breathing xenon gas before their ascent, according to a report by ExplorersWeb.

Miller, a two-time Everest summiteer, said the team underwent 30-minute xenon therapy at a hospital in Germany. He noted that xenon’s neuroprotective properties reduce the risk of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), allowing the team to ascend faster without the dangers of AMS, despite not speeding up the climb.

Anadolu Agency



US: Asian immigrants deported to South Sudan, say lawyers

Houston, US - Two Asian immigrants that were being held at an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centre in the US state of Texas have been deported to South Sudan in violation of a federal court order, their attorneys said on Tuesday.

The two men are originally from Myanmar and Vietnam and were awaiting immigration hearings until their lawyers were told of their deportation to the war-torn East African nation after receiving an abrupt notice on Monday evening.

By Tuesday morning, their attorneys said the two men were already on a plane to South Sudan with as many as 10 other deportees.

“Today, I checked the online ICE detainee locator and saw that (my client) was no longer in the ICE detainee locator,” said one of the detainees’ attorneys, Jacqueline Brown, in her court filing. “I then emailed the Port Isabel Detention Center Law Visit

email address to confirm whether N M was located at the facility...a Port Isabel Detention Center Detention Officer responded that (he) had been removed ‘this morning’. I emailed to ask to which country (he) was removed, and the officer responded... ‘South Sudan’.”

The deportation of the two Asian men violates an emergency motion handed down by a federal judge in Boston, Massachusetts which barred the Trump administration from sending foreign nationals to so-called ‘third-party countries’ rather than their country of origin without providing ‘meaningful’ notice and a chance to raise concern about the possibility of torture in those countries.

In that case, deportees were being sent to the ‘third-party’ country of Libya, which like South Sudan, is mired in a humanitarian crisis when it comes to human rights abuses.

Anadolu Agency

US: New sanctions if Russia not interested in peace deal

Washington is awaiting steps from Russia for peace in the Ukraine conflict, said Marco Rubio



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said President Donald Trump is ‘very committed’ to ending the war

It’s our understanding that the Russians are going to write up terms for what they would require in order to reach a ceasefire that then would allow broader negotiations

MARCO RUBIO

that Trump ‘wants to preserve as long as he possibly can, the opportunity to influence both sides towards peace’.

On Friday, the Turkish metropolis of Istanbul hosted high-level peace talks between Russia and Ukraine facilitated by Türkiye, where both sides agreed to exchange 1,000 prisoners of war each and continue with negotiations for a truce.

On Monday, Trump said his telephone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin ‘went very well’, and that Moscow and Kyiv are slated to ‘immediately’ begin negotiations over a ceasefire.

“It’s our understanding that the Russians are going to write up terms for what they would require in order to reach a ceasefire that then would allow broader negotiations,” Rubio told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

“We await those terms, and then I’ll have a much better understanding about Mr Putin’s calculation once we see what those terms look like,” he said.

Asked about potential new sanctions, Rubio said if ‘it is clear that the Russians are not interested in a peace deal, and they just want to keep fighting a war, it may very well come to that point’.

He noted the administration has already issued warnings to Moscow of ‘what would happen if there was no progress made’.

However, he stressed that US President Donald Trump’s current approach is to avoid such moves.

“The president believes that right now, if you start threatening sanctions, the Russians will stop talking,” Rubio said.

He said Trump is ‘very committed’ to ending the war, adding

Visa policies

Meanwhile, a fiery exchange erupted on Tuesday between Rubio and a senator during a Senate hearing on visa policies, as Maryland Senator Chris Van Hollen criticised the cancellation of student visas for individuals critical of Israel - specifically citing the case of a Turkish graduate student who was detained for more than six weeks.

‘I have to tell you directly and personally that I regret voting for you for secretary of state’ as nominated by US President Donald Trump, Van Hollen said, referring to Rubio’s confirmation

by the Senate this January in a 99-0 vote.

Rubio fired back: “Your regret for voting for me confirms I’m doing a good job.”

The exchange came as Rubio appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on the State Department’s proposed 2026 budget.

Van Hollen criticised cuts to US foreign aid as well as the Trump administration’s crack-down on immigration, including the revocation of visas for students critical of Israel - among them Turkish doctoral student Rumeysa Ozturk, whose visa was revoked after she wrote an op-ed in the Tufts student newspaper calling on the university to divest from Israel and recognise the ‘genocide’ of Palestinians.

Rubio defended the decision, saying: “A visa - it is not a right, it is a privilege. If you’re coming to the US to lead campus crusades, to take over libraries, to

try to burn down buildings, and (commit) acts of violence, we are not going to give you a visa.”

Van Hollen pushed back, incredulously asking: “Is that what Ms Ozturk did? Is that what she did? C’mon, Mr Secretary, you’re just blowing smoke now.”

There is no record that Ozturk incited or committed any acts of violence. Rubio responded: “The bottom line is if you’re here to stir up trouble on our campuses, we will deny you a visa.”

Van Hollen pressed, citing the Constitution’s section on free speech: “Does the First Amendment apply to people living in the United States?”

But Rubio, defiantly, said the administration would continue to act: “We’re going to do more. There are more coming. We’re going to revoke the visas of people who are here as guests and are disrupting our higher education facilities.”

Anadolu Agency

What is China’s space mission Tianwen-2?

Beijing, China - China’s Tianwen-2 mission will mark the country’s first attempt to survey and sample an asteroid and put it in league with the US, Russia and Japan.

Tianwen-2 will investigate a nearby asteroid called Kamo’oalewa, which orbits the sun at a distance relatively close to Earth.

The entire mission could last a decade. If it successfully retrieves and returns samples from the asteroid, it will continue to explore the solar system with a second trip to the main asteroid belt.

When will Tianwen-2 launch?

Tianwen-2 will launch at the end



of May 2025 on a Long March 3B rocket from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in

Sichuan province, according to a statement published by the China National Space Adminis-

tration (CNSA). CNSA has yet to confirm an exact launch date. The first target for Tianwen-2 will be the asteroid Kamo’oalewa. If successful, it will mark the first time China has collected samples from an ‘interplanetary’ body in the solar system. China has, however, previously returned samples from the moon.

Interplanetary bodies - literally natural space objects between planets, including asteroids, comets and meteors - are common near Earth and have been explored for years by other space agencies, such as NASA, Roscosmos and JAXA.

After Kamo’oalewa, Tianwen-2’s next destination is the comet 311P/PANSTARRS.

Comet 311P/PANSTARRS in the solar system’s main ‘asteroid belt’ between Mars and Jupiter. The probe won’t gather samples from the comet but will instead orbit and analyse its composition.

Kamo’oalewa is an unusual asteroid, estimated to be between 40-100 metres (131-328 feet) in diameter.

It’s described as a ‘quasi-satellite’ because, while it orbits the sun, its current location near Earth means it also loops around our planet in the process.

Astronomers think Kamo’oalewa may be a boulder that was blasted off the surface of our moon following an impact with another space object.

DW

Gaza: Conflicting reports emerge on entry of humanitarian aid amid fears of famine

Despite the Israeli army’s claims, the UN did not confirm delivery of humanitarian aid into the territory

Gaza City/Istanbul - Conflicting reports emerged on Wednesday about the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip amid a weeks-long Israeli siege on the Palestinian enclave.

While the Israeli army claimed that it allowed 93 UN trucks loaded with flour, baby food, medical equipment, and medicine to enter Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing, the UN did not confirm delivery of humanitarian aid into the territory.

Gaza’s government media office, for its part, denied the entry of aid into the blockaded seaside enclave.

“Israel didn’t allow the entry of any humanitarian aid for more than 80 days,” Ismail Thawabteh, who heads the media office, told Anadolu.

“The trucks are still waiting at the border and have not been delivered to any humanitarian agency,” he said

“Aid has not entered Gaza amid a systematic starvation that threatens the lives of more than 2.4mn Palestinians.”

The Israeli army claimed that the aid trucks are currently under security checks before being allowed into Gaza.

On Tuesday, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said Israel has approved the entry of around 100 aid trucks into Gaza.

The announcement came a day after just nine aid trucks were cleared for entry into Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing on Monday - a number that



Since March 2, Israel has kept Gaza crossings closed to food, medical, and humanitarian aid, deepening an already severe humanitarian crisis in the enclave

OCHA and other aid groups have repeatedly said is far below what is needed to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of Gaza’s population.

“Out of those nine, five of them actually crossed into Gaza ... for logistical reasons. Four of them were not able to enter,” said Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the UN humanitarian affairs office.

Laerke said the trucks that en-

tered so far were not enough to cover even 1% of the needed amount in the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, OCHA chief Tom Fletcher told BBC’s Radio 4 Today programme on Tuesday that 14,000 babies in Gaza could die in the next 48 hours if aid trucks did not reach communities in the enclave.

Since March 2, Israel has kept Gaza crossings closed to food, medical, and humanitarian aid,

deepening an already severe humanitarian crisis in the enclave.

Targeting power generators

Meanwhile, Gaza’s Health Ministry accused Israel on Wednesday of deliberately targeting power generators to paralyse hospitals in the war-torn territory.

A ministry statement said that Israeli forces bombed three gen-

erators and fuel tanks at the Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza.

“The health situation in northern Gaza is now catastrophic after the Indonesian Hospital went out of service,” the ministry said.

“The (Israeli) occupation aims to destroy electromechanical systems to put more hospitals out of service,” it warned.

The ministry said that all hos-

I renew my appeal to allow the entry of dignified humanitarian aid and to put an end to the hostilities, whose heartbreaking price is paid by the children, elderly, and the sick

POPE LEO XIV

care services in the enclave.

Since launching its assault on Gaza on October 7, 2023, the Israeli army has repeatedly targeted hospitals, rendering most facilities nonfunctional, according to Palestinian and UN reports.

Out of 38 hospitals in Gaza, only 19 are still operating, albeit partially, including eight public and 11 private hospitals, the Gaza Health Ministry said. In addition, nine field hospitals provide

emergency services amid the Israeli onslaught.

Pope renews appeal to end war

Pope Leo XIV on Wednesday renewed his appeal for an immediate end to the war in Gaza and entrance of humanitarian aid to the besieged Palestinian enclave.

“I renew my appeal to allow the entry of dignified humanitarian aid and to put an end to the hostilities, whose heartbreaking price is paid by the children, elderly, and the sick,” pontiff said during his first general audience at the Vatican’s St Peter’s Square, according to Vatican News Agency.

Anadolu Agency

Israeli airstrikes kill 31 more across Gaza

Gaza City, Palestine - The Israeli army killed at least 31 more Palestinians in relentless attacks on homes across the war-devastated Gaza Strip on Wednesday, medics said.

A medical source told Anadolu that 12 Palestinians lost their lives when fighter jets struck two homes in the northern town of Jabalia.

Five others were killed, including three children, in an Israeli airstrike on another home in Deir al-Balah city in central Gaza, the source added.

Two children were also killed in another strike in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, Al-Awda Hospital said in a statement.

In the southern Gaza Strip, four Palestinians were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a home in Abasan town in the southern city of Khan Younis, while three oth-



ers were killed in another attack on a home in the city’s southern Maen area.

A medical source said the bodies of five people were removed from the rubble of homes

struck by the Israeli army in different areas across the enclave.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army continued its operation of blowing up homes and buildings in the western area of the northern Beit

Lahia town.

On Sunday, the Israeli army launched a broad ground offensive in the Gaza Strip.

At least 53,655 Palestinians have been killed in Israel’s geno-

cidal war on the Gaza Strip since October 2023, the Health Ministry said on Wednesday.

A ministry statement said that 82 bodies were brought to hospitals in the last 24 hours, while 262 people were injured, taking the number of injuries to 121,950 in the Israeli onslaught.

Meanwhile, one Palestinian was injured and 20 others were detained in Israeli military raids in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, medics and rights groups said.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said that a young Palestinian was shot in the abdomen in the northern town of Qabatiya and was hospitalised for medical attention.

According to the witnesses, Israeli forces raided the town and began to destroy streets and infrastructure in the area.

Anadolu Agency

‘Israel preparing strike on Iranian nuclear facilities’

Washington, D.C., US - The US has obtained new intelligence indicating that Israel is preparing to strike Iranian nuclear facilities, even as negotiations continue between Tehran and Washington over Iran’s nuclear programme, according to a report on Tuesday.

Such a move would mark a ‘brazen break’ from President Donald Trump’s diplomatic push, US officials told CNN.

While no final decision has been made by Israeli leaders, ‘intercepted Israeli communications and observations of Israeli military movements’ suggest an imminent strike, CNN reported, citing multiple sources familiar with the intelligence. One person familiar with the intelligence said ‘the

chance of an Israeli strike on an Iranian nuclear facility has gone up significantly in recent months’.

“And the prospect of a Trump-negotiated US-Iran deal that doesn’t remove all of Iran’s uranium makes the chance of a strike more likely,” the source told CNN.

The US has observed military activity in Israel, including the movement of air munitions and the completion of an air exercise, CNN reported, citing two of the sources.

However, a source familiar with the Trump administration’s thinking said that Washington is unlikely to support an Israeli operation against Iranian nuclear sites unless provoked by Tehran.

Social change: Iranian women’s resistance to compulsory hijab is growing

Tehran, Iran - “The state’s current policy on the issue of the hijab is not to follow strict rules,” Ali Motehary, a conservative Iranian politician, told journalists last week on the fringes of the International Book Fair in Tehran.

He added that the police should only intervene in the event of gross violations.

“You have to know that even at the time of the Shah, before the 1979 revolution, women were arrested if they did not dress decently in public,” he said. Wearing a hijab, or headscarf, remains mandatory in Iran.

However, even before the nationwide protests following the death of Jina Mahsa Amini in police custody in September 2022, Motehary was one of those con-

servative politicians who repeatedly called for a crackdown on women who dared to deviate even slightly from the strict dress code.

In 2014, he asked, “Why are women allowed to wear trousers under their coats?” He called on the authorities to take more rigorous action against the women concerned.

‘A changed country’

“What we have achieved in the last three years can no longer be taken away by the state,” a gender researcher and journalist from Tehran told DW. She asked DW not to publish her name as the authorities regularly reprimand her for her stance, and she even receives death threats from



anonymous callers.

She is one of the women who not only refuse to wear a headscarf in public, but also encourages other women to decide for themselves whether they want to.

“They can no longer force us to follow their rules and automatically wear a headscarf every time we leave the house,” she says.

She also emphasises that Iran has changed after the death of

Jina Mahsa Amini. For example, on May 12, the coffin of Shiva Aristoui, an Iranian writer and poet, was carried by women without the mandatory hijab. Traditionally, carrying the coffin has long been a matter for men

in accordance with religious and social norms. However, since the ‘Women, Life, Freedom’ movement, more and more women attend funerals without the compulsory hijab and carry the coffins of their loved ones.

Yet, many women deliberately stay away from international media and avoid public attention to continue on their path without additional repression. Any exchange with international media could be considered ‘propaganda against the system’, ‘cooperation with a hostile government’ or could be prosecuted as following an ‘order from abroad’.

Niloufar Hamed, an award-winning journalist, is a recent example of the state’s crackdown.

Her reporting on the death of Jina Mahsa Amini in 2022 brought her international fame.

Among other pieces, she published a photo of Amini’s grieving parents. It quickly went viral on social media and became a symbol of the nationwide protests, which became the largest protest movement in Iran since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Hamed was arrested and charged with alleged ‘collaboration with an enemy government’, ‘propaganda against the system’ among other charges. She was sentenced to a total of 13 years in prison. However, after 17 months, she was released on bail in January 2024. DW

'AN UNBELIEVABLE RIDE'



Manchester City players throw Kevin De Bruyne in the air after their win against Bournemouth in his final appearance at Etihad Stadium on Tuesday

Manchester City honour De Bruyne with vintage win in Etihad farewell

Manchester, England - Manchester City gave Kevin De Bruyne a victory in his final appearance at Etihad Stadium, as Omar Marmoush scored a stunner in a 3-1 Premier League win over Bournemouth on Tuesday that saw them climb to third in the table.

City have 68 points with one game remaining, two points above Newcastle United, Chelsea and Aston Villa in the nervy chase for a top-five finish and Champions League qualification. Bournemouth are 11th, with the loss ending their chances of playing European

football next season.

Both sides finished the game with 10 men after City's Mateo Kovacic was shown a red card in the 67th minute for pulling back Evanilson when he was through on goal, followed by Lewis Cook for the visitors in the 73rd for his reckless challenge on Nico Gonzalez.

City were on the front foot from the first whistle and Marmoush scored in the 14th minute when he drifted forward before unleashing a scorching shot from 30 yards out that dipped just inside the top-left corner.

Bernardo Silva doubled their

lead in the 38th when Ilkay Gundogan cut the ball back for the Portuguese who slotted it in at the near post and Gonzalez struck in the 89th with a run from deep before whipping the ball past goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga.

Daniel Jebbison pulled one back for Bournemouth seconds before the final whistle when he pounced on a careless pass to Ruben Dias before slotting the ball through goalkeeper Edereson's legs.

The visitors had squandered a terrific chance to equalise on the break in the first half, but a

stretching Evanilson hit Marcus Tavernier's cross off the upright.

"The beginning of the game, you could see straight away they started with a lot of intensity," Bournemouth manager Andoni Iraola said. "They scored probably one of their best goals of the season and it cost us."

City midfielder Rodri saw his first action in eight months as a late substitute, entering the game to a standing ovation. The 2024 Ballon D'Or winner had not played since tearing his anterior cruciate ligament in September.

The night, however, belonged to captain De Bruyne, who played an emotional final home game after an illustrious 10-year career for City.

"(It feels) a bit weird. It's been an unbelievable ride," he said. "I

I want to bring joy to people, play offensive football, creative, that is what I am on the pitch and I want to have fun

KEVIN DE BRUYNE

want to bring joy to people, play offensive football, creative, that is what I am on the pitch and I want to have fun. It was a joy working really hard and creating something for this club. I'm super proud."

The only thing missing was a goal for the Belgian, who had a ridiculous first-half miss, hammering Marmoush's cross off the underside of the crossbar from close range and then holding his head in disbelief.

Outpouring for De Bruyne shows 'how much love was there', says Guardiola



Pep Guardiola embraces Kevin De Bruyne

Manchester, England - Tears streamed down Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola's face during an emotional farewell to his captain Kevin De Bruyne, who closed the curtains on an illustrious 10-year career at the Etihad Stadium on Tuesday.

City had just beaten Bournemouth 3-1, but the night was all about De Bruyne, whose game was his last at the Etihad in a sky-blue City shirt.

A post-game video tribute featured former City teammates including Sergio Aguero, Raheem Sterling, Riyad Mahrez, Fernandinho, Vincent Kompany, Joe Hart and Leroy Sane.

"Congratulations for your career, it was an honour to play with you, I wish you all the best my friend, of course you are a legend at Manchester City. And me too. See you bro," Aguero said.

"Everyone was there, it was so, so nice," Guardiola said. "Ten years is a lot of games, a lot of titles, a lot of moments. Today summarised a little bit

how much love was there."

De Bruyne announced last month he would leave the club when his contract expires at the end of the season, but also said he was surprised they did not offer him a new deal.

"It's a sad day. He will be missed," Guardiola said. "On the other side, I think it was a lovely day for him to make again a contribution to achieve that victory that is of massive importance."

The Belgian, who won 16 trophies in his 10 seasons at City, also matched a Premier League record for chances created, topping the standings alongside former Arsenal and Chelsea midfielder Cesc Fabregas on 846.

Asked if he is irreplaceable, Guardiola said: "There are players who are irreplaceable, of course, so difficult to do. It's not about how much they provide in goals or assists or incredible steals. (It's) the connection, the way you play, and year by year, provide for this club that the people love."

Rodri back in action after eight months out

Manchester, England - Manchester City midfielder Rodri made a surprise return as a late substitute in their crucial 3-1 victory over Bournemouth in the Premier League on Tuesday after eight months out of action due to a knee ligament injury.

The return of the 2024 Ballon d'Or winner could be a big boost in City's push for a Champions League spot next season with one game remaining in what has been a very disap-



pointing campaign for Pep Guardiola's team.

Spain international Rodri suffered the injury during City's 2-2 draw with Arsenal at Etihad Stadium in September.

He entered Tuesday's game at the Etihad in the 83rd minute to a standing ovation.

City climbed three places to

third in the Premier League table with 68 points in their chase for a top-five finish and Champions League qualification. Newcastle United, Chelsea and Aston Villa all have 66 points.

City, who won the Premier League title four years in a row from 2021-24, finish the season on Sunday at Fulham. They will then play in the FIFA Club World Cup starting on June 14 in the United States.

Rodri made return on Tuesday after eight months out of action due to a knee ligament injury

Doucoure to leave Everton



Abdoulaye Doucoure

London, England - Everton midfielder Abdoulaye Doucoure will leave the club when his contract expires at the end of next month, the 32-year-old confirmed on Tuesday.

"Hi Evertonians, I just wanted to share this message with you that I'm going to leave the football club at the end of the season. After five wonderful years, my time at Everton has come to an

end," he said on his Instagram account.

Doucoure, who has made 165 appearances for Everton since joining them from Watford for 20 million pounds (\$26.71 million) in 2020, had been expected to sign a one-year extension to his deal.

He was substituted during the final Everton game at Goodison Park on Sunday and was clearly emotional as he left the field.

Palace celebrate FA Cup triumph with win against Wolves

London, England - Eddie Nketiah scored twice on Crystal Palace's party night as they celebrated their FA Cup triumph in style with a 4-2 victory over Wolverhampton Wanderers in the Premier League on Tuesday.

Palace's last home game of the season came three days after they beat Manchester City at Wembley to claim the first major silverware in the south London club's history and there were euphoric scenes as they hit back to take the three points.

The carnival atmosphere was interrupted briefly when Wolves took the lead through Emmanuel Agbadou's 24th-minute header but Selhurst Park was really rocking when Nketiah struck twice in the space of five minutes before halftime.

Ben Chilwell's free kick deflected off of Agbadou's head to make it 3-1 in the 50th minute and the noise in the stadium barely diminished when Wolves reduced the deficit with a glanc-



Crystal Palace's Eddie Nketiah celebrates his goal against Wolverhampton Wanderers on Tuesday

We're buzzing, we're happy and it's a massive day for us. Our manager was keen to keep it going and keep the celebrations going. Everyone was firing and we got the win

EDDIE NKETIAH

ing header from Jorgen Strand Larsen.

Twelfth-placed Palace brought on Cup final goal hero Eberechi Eze in the 81st minute and he put the icing on the cake with a clinical angled finish after a jinking run.

Oliver Glasner's side have 52 points, the highest total Palace have collected in the Premier League, and they will end a momentous season at champions Liverpool on Sunday. After the historic events of Saturday it looked like Palace might be suffering an FA Cup hangover when Agbadou's header from a corner just about crossed the line.

Nketiah came off the bench at

Wembley and had been on the fringes at Palace but he was given a start and took full advantage to score his first league goals for three months.

Three minutes after Palace fell behind, former Arsenal forward Nketiah received a cut back from Romain Esse and fired a shot past Wolves keeper Dan Bentley who could have done better. Nketiah was at it again soon after, guiding in a low cross by Ismaila Sarr for his 50th senior career goal.

"We're buzzing, we're happy and it's a massive day for us. Our manager was keen to keep it going and keep the celebrations going. Everyone was firing and we got the win," Nketiah said.

SHOW OF CHARACTER

All-Omani team go down fighting to Bahrain in closely contested T20 series

Muscat - A determined All-Omani Development Team came close to pulling off a remarkable series win against the visiting Bahraini National Team in a recently concluded three-match T20 series at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat.

Despite losing the series 2-1, the all-Omani side earned praise for their resilience, growing maturity, and ability to compete until the very last ball.

For a team built entirely around domestic talent, the performances were a sign of exciting progress in Oman's cricketing pipeline.

Head coach of the team, Prashanth Chandran said: "As the coach of the All-Omani Development Team, I'm incredibly proud of the players' mindset and their eagerness to learn."

"Despite their limited cricketing experience and match practice, they showed tremendous grit and competed hard in all three games against Bahrain."

"The final match, taken down to the very last ball, was a true display of their fighting spirit and desire to win. With structured training and consistent match exposure, I firmly believe this team has the potential to develop into a highly competitive unit that can make Oman proud on the regional and continental stage."

The three-match series offered a range of challenges for the Omani side, but they responded with character.

The opening game was a close-fought contest, with



All-Omani team players acknowledge the fans at the Oman Cricket Academy ground

Bahrain setting a modest target of 144/8, thanks to tight bowling spells from Faris Khalid Al Balushi (2/12) and Shoaib Ismail Al Balushi (2/18). Oman fell just short in the chase, finishing at 135/7 despite a well-constructed 56 from Sufyan Mehmood and a steady 34 from Shoaib.

The second match saw the hosts come roaring back with a high-scoring win. Batting first, Oman posted a commanding 188/4, led by a fluent 61 from Shoaib and a powerful 50 from Mohammed Al Balushi. Bahrain responded with a spirited chase but were stopped at 185/7, with

I'm incredibly proud of the players' mindset and eagerness to learn. Despite their limited experience and match practice, they showed tremendous grit and competed hard

PRASHANTH CHANDRAN

Faris once again impressing with the ball, claiming four crucial wickets.

With the series level at 1-1, the decider turned out to be a nail-biter. Oman put up 165/6 on the board, built around Majid Al Balushi's 40 and another solid knock by Mohammed (27).

Defending the total, Rashad al Balushi nearly turned the tide with a devastating spell of 5/12. However, Bahrain's Abdulla Parvej played a match-winning hand, scoring 97 runs and steering his team to victory by just one wicket off the final delivery.

While the result may not have

gone in Oman's favour, the series featured a number of standout performances.

Bahrain's Abdulla Parvej topped the run charts with 127 runs, including his match-winning 97 in the final encounter.

For Oman, Shoaib Ismail al Balushi impressed with a total of 118 runs across the three games, closely followed by Sufyan Mehmood, who amassed 115 runs. On the bowling front, Faris Khalid al Balushi led the charge for Oman with seven wickets, while Rashad al Balushi made a major impact with his five-wicket haul in the final game.

BRIEF SCORES:

1st T20 match: Bahraini National Team 144/8 (Faris Khalid al Balushi 2/12, Shoaib Ismail al Balushi 2/18) beat Oman Development Team 135/7 (Sufyan Mehmood 56 (47), Shoaib Ismail al Balushi 34 (31)).

2nd T20 match: Oman Development Team 188/4 (Shoaib Ismail al Balushi 61 (39), Mohammed al Balushi 50 (30)) beat Bahrain National Team 185/7 (Faris Khalid al Balushi 4/38, Sufyan Mehmood 0/26).

3rd T20 match: Oman Development Team: 165/6 (Majid al Balushi 40 (35), Mohammed al Balushi 27 (23)) lost to Bahraini National Team: 166/9 (Abdulla Parvej 97; Rashad al Balushi 5/12, Abbas al Balushi 1/22).

Maresca unhappy as Betis get more time to prepare for final

London, England - Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca said on Tuesday that he was unhappy after LaLiga accepted a request from Real Betis to move their final league game forward two days to Friday, giving the club more time to prepare for the Conference League final.

Chelsea visit fellow Champions League hopefuls Nottingham Forest for their final Premier League game of the season on Sunday, two days after Conference League final opponents Betis play Valencia. "I'm not happy, 100%, you cannot allow another team 48 hours more when you play a European final," Maresca told reporters.

"(Either we play Friday) or they play Sunday like us. I don't know if it is from LaLiga, the Premier League or UEFA, but if you ask people in this room if it is normal to play a final where another team has 48 hours more to prepare, it is not normal."

Maresca also confirmed that Filip Jorgensen would start in goal for Chelsea in the Conference League final. The 23-year-old Swedish-Danish keeper has started all but one game in the competition. Spaniard Robert Sanchez has been Chelsea's first-choice keeper in the Premier League, playing 31 games this season.

Juve icon Del Piero obtains coaching licence

Turin, Italy - Former Italy forward and World Cup winner Alessandro Del Piero had fans of Juventus dreaming that he may one day coach the club when he announced on Tuesday that he had obtained his UEFA Pro Licence.

Del Piero, who spent 19 seasons at Juventus winning six Serie A titles and the Champions League, completed the course run by the Italian football federation (FIGC) at Coverciano in Florence.



Alessandro Del Piero

"Starting today, you can call me 'Mister'," Del Piero said in a social media post.

"Thanks to FIGC and all the teachers who accompanied me on this course, I am grateful to all the people who collaborated and shared with me this important training journey."

Del Piero is still a hero at the club he left in 2012, and the 50-year-old's announcement was greeted with plenty of comments from Juventus fans looking for their idol to return home.

When Del Piero left Juventus the club wanted to retire his number 10 jersey, but the player turned down the offer.

Platense stun River Plate in Argentinian thriller

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Platense pulled off a stunning 4-2 shootout win over River Plate in the quarter-finals of the Argentine Apertura tournament on Tuesday following a dramatic 1-1 draw at the Estadio Monumental.

The hosts, who had won five games in a row, dominated the early exchanges but it was Platense who broke the deadlock just before the half-hour mark with Vicente Taborda firing home a low shot following a well-weighted pass from Ronaldo Martinez.

"There is frustration at not having been able to reach the final, which was our goal," River coach Marcelo Gallardo said.

"I have to admit that the team didn't play as well as it had been doing, but I also have to acknowledge the work done by our opponents, who I think deserved to win because they prevented us from playing as a team."

River's 17-year-old sensation Franco Mastantuono came closest to responding before halftime with a curling effort that narrowly



Platense players celebrate after their win against River Plate

missed the target, and he continued to trouble the visitors with a pair of dangerous free-kicks after the break.

Platense almost extended their lead late on when a poor clearance by River defender Lucas Martinez Quarta nearly resulted in an own goal, with goalkeeper Franco Armani producing a terrific save to keep his team in the game. Platense were seconds away from securing the win when River were awarded a penalty after Oscar Salomon tripped Miguel Borja in the box. Mastantuono stepped up and coolly converted from the spot 12 minutes into added time.

With both teams having failed to convert once in the shootout, River looked to have the advantage when Armani saved from Franco Zapiola.

However, the effort was ordered to be retaken due to goalkeeper encroachment and the Platense substitute made no mistake the second time.

Things went from bad to worse for River when Sebastian Driussi's effort was saved, and Ignacio Schor then stepped up to seal an unlikely victory for Platense, who will face San Lorenzo in the semi-finals.

"I believe justice was served because we deserved to win during the 90 minutes," Platense goalkeeper Juan Pablo Cozzani told TNT Sports.

"I don't think they had any clear chances to score. We are a team that doesn't mind not having possession, and we will keep pushing. We don't feel inferior to anyone."

River now turn their attention to their final Copa Libertadores group-stage match against Universitario, before kicking off their Club World Cup campaign next month in the United States.



Enzo Maresca

Djokovic appoints former doubles partner Vemic as coach

Geneva, Switzerland - Novak Djokovic has appointed longtime friend and former doubles partner Dusan Vemic as his coach for both this week's Geneva Open and the upcoming French Open.

"Dusan Vemic, the captain of the Serbian BJK Cup team, he was in my team a few years ago (and is my coach)," Djokovic told reporters in Geneva on Tuesday. "He's here, and will be at Roland (Garros)."

"Boris Bosnjakovic, who has been an analyst in the team and assistant coach, shares the upcoming tournaments with Dusan. And then we'll see. I'm

not in a hurry to choose, or to know if I'll have someone else by my side or not. I don't know. I feel good with them."

Djokovic's announcement comes on the heels of the Serbian splitting with Wimbledon champion Andy Murray on May 13, less than six months after hiring the three-time Grand Slam winner as his coach.

Djokovic, the men's record-holder with 24 Grand Slam singles titles, brought on his longtime rival as a coach in late November. Murray had retired from his playing career following the 2024 Summer Olympics.

The partnership did not pro-



Dusan Vemic

duce a title for the Serbian this season.

He lost in his only finals appearance of the year - in Miami, to Czech opponent Jakub Mensik - and he was knocked out in his opening matches at Monte Carlo and Madrid.

"He sees the game in an incredible way," Djokovic said of Murray. "But, how could I say it, we did not achieve together what we hoped to achieve in terms of results. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. We tried."

Djokovic, who celebrates his 38th birthday on Thursday, and Vemic have experience in both the Davis Cup and ATP Tour.

Vemic, 48, has worked with the Bryan brothers, Andrea Petkovic and Brandon Nakashima, among others.

Rybakina in quarters

Fourth-seeded Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan cruised into the quarterfinals with a 6-1, 6-3 win Tuesday over China's Xinyu Wang at the Internationaux de Strasbourg in France.

Rybakina struck six aces and saved both break points she faced in the 65-minute match to set up a meeting with Poland's Magda Linette, a 6-4, 6-3 winner over Rebecca Sramkova of Slovakia.

Ahmedabad to host IPL final on June 3

Mumbai, India - Ahmedabad will host the Indian Premier League (IPL) final on June 3, organisers said on Tuesday in their revised schedule for the tournament which was briefly suspended due to armed conflict between India and Pakistan.

The IPL was halted on May 9 and resumed on Saturday following a ceasefire. However, the restart match between Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) and Kolkata Knight Riders was abandoned due to rain without a ball being bowled.

Ahmedabad will host the final at the Narendra Modi Stadium after staging qualifier two on June 1. The first qualifier (May 29) and the eliminator (May 30) will be held at the New PCA Stadium, New Chandigarh.

The playoffs, initially slated for Hyderabad and Kolkata, have been relocated due to adverse weather conditions in the southern part of India.

RCB's final home fixture against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) has been moved to Lucknow where they will also play their final away game against Lucknow Super Giants.

ROYALS SIGN OFF IN STYLE

Madhwal, Vaibhav, Samson shine in win against Chennai

New Delhi, India - Despite losing eight matches chasing out of nine, Rajasthan Royals (RR) decided to chase one last time and came out victors with 17 balls to spare. Unlike earlier games, though, their bowlers did well against fellow laggards Chennai Super Kings (CSK), leaving them just 188 to chase on a good batting pitch. Akash Madhwal reversed the ball to restrict CSK in the end to just 17 runs off the last three overs, and Vaibhav Suryavanshi then aced the chase with a measured 57 off 33 deliveries.

R Ashwin took two wickets in the 14th over to remind observers of RR's poor chasing record, but it proved to be nothing more than a stutter. Dhruv Jurel made sure it never got close with a sparkling 31 from 12 balls. The unbeaten batters at the wicket were Jurel and Shimron Hetmyer, who have been in the middle in some of the past fluffed chases.

As a result of the win, RR were



Akash Madhwal of Rajasthan Royals celebrates after taking a Chennai Super Kings wicket

TODAY'S MATCH

MATCH 64

6 PM

GUJARAT TITANS

VS

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS

momentarily off the bottom of the table, but their season was done. CSK were left needing a big win in their last match to avoid finishing at the bottom for the first time in their history.

The start of the game was action-packed, but not easily explained. CSK lost five wickets in 7.4 overs to length balls that didn't swing or seam. They were not off-pace deliveries either. Of these, one was not even an attacking shot. It was just one of those days when the risks were not coming off, and Yuvraj Singh ended with a haul of three wickets.

For a while in between, the risks did come off for a 56-run stand between Ayush Mhatre and the new No. 4 Ashwin. Mhatre scored 43 off 20 balls, mostly just clearing the infield for eight fours and one six. This meant CSK were going at over 10 runs an over even though they lost five early wickets.

The second half of CSK's sea-

son has been all about identifying a core for the next IPL. Two triumphs in that regard have been their replacement batters, Mhatre and Dewald Brevis. Both shone in Delhi. Brevis scored 42 off 25 deliveries as he and Shivam Dube added 59 runs for the sixth wicket.

In three of their five tight losses, RR have had to contend with the reversing ball. This time, though, they got the ball reversing themselves. Madhwal, who started bowling as late as the 12th over and went for ten runs in his first two balls, quickly realised that the ball was ready for reverse swing, and started going for the yorker.

In his four overs, Madhwal nailed at least eight of them to go with plenty of low full tosses that were difficult to get away. The one that got Brevis off the inside edge was a half volley, but it did tail away, thus causing the mishit.

Dube, meanwhile, took care of the spin threat that was reserved for MS Dhoni, thus maintaining the run rate of 10 till the 17th over. But Madhwal and Tushar Deshpande were excellent in the last three overs. For once the RR batters were not going to have to chase an above-par total.

The target this time was exactly what RR scored to tie the game against Delhi Capitals at the same venue, but this was a better batting pitch.

'There is some amount of maturity already' with Vaibhav Suryavanshi

New Delhi, India - Rajasthan Royals' campaign never really took off in IPL 2025, where they won just four out of 14 games and finished second last on the table. But one of the brightest sparks of this season - across teams - came from the RR camp: Vaibhav Suryavanshi.

On Tuesday, Suryavanshi signed off with 57 off 33 balls against Chennai Super Kings (CSK). In the seven matches he played this season, 14-year-old Suryavanshi accumulated 252 runs at an impressive strike rate of 206.55. This included his hundred off just 35 balls in his third IPL game.

"Initially when you saw him - and I've seen a lot of his clips and the clips that you end up seeing before the guy actually plays the IPL - [the videos] were all of him hitting sixes, just standing and just delivering, fast bowlers,



Vaibhav Suryavanshi was happy to rotate the strike against Chennai Super Kings but still made 57 off 33 balls

spinners alike," Aakash Chopra said on ESPNcricinfo's Time Out show.

"And then you start thinking maybe he's a bit of a slogger, who just sees the ball and hits the ball and he's got no other gear. He has scored a lot of runs, but again, let's say it's [age] group cricket and all of that.

"And then he scored that century, takes centre stage and in that century also, he was just hitting.

"But now when you see him waiting patiently at the non-striker's end and that's exactly what happened today. When Yashasvi Jaiswal was hitting every ball for a four, he was patiently at the other end. He was, okay, 37-run partnership where he contributed only one. And then he waited and then he batted and he's happy to now rotate strike as well.



Suryakumar Yadav of Mumbai Indians plays a shot during his 43-ball 73 against Delhi Capitals. Yadav's knock helped Mumbai make 180 for 5 in a must-win game for Delhi

Late redemption can't erase Rajasthan's so near, yet so far season

New Delhi, India - There is a feeling that Rajasthan Royals (RR) have been terrible chasers in IPL 2025. Until the very last game of their season, they were able to run down a target only once in eight attempts. And that needed a 14-year-old to perform a miracle.

On that basis, there is a temptation to say that RR kept betting against themselves this season. They won the toss seven times and chose to bat second each time. There are much more private ways to explore masochism. Sanju Samson admitted to second thoughts at the toss in the Chennai Super Kings game.

"To be very honest, we were thinking, should we set a score

and try and defend because that's what was not happening," he said on the broadcast. "And then I felt like there's no hiding in this game. Let's go out and face it and prove that we can still chase down a score."

A franchise that made it to the final in 2022 and fell just one step short of that in 2024 isn't in the business of making mistakes. Least of all the same one over and over. Over this three-year period, RR had a win-loss ratio of 1.63 as a chasing unit, the second-best of all the teams in the IPL.

They could have improved on that this year. Three of those seven defeats were looking a lot like wins. Two of them saw inspired performances from their



We have to accept our mistakes and come back with a positive mindset next season, feels Sanju Samson

We need to sit back after the season, After a couple of weeks, we need to do a review and understand where we went wrong

SANJU SAMSON

young Indian batting core that had totals in excess of 200 well within their grasp. One run. Two runs. Ten. Eleven. A Super Over. So slim were the margins. Most royals are defined by excess. These guys were left forever reaching for parity. Reverse-

swing played a big part in their undoing. No other team suffered as badly as RR did to the old ball's whims.

RR made another big call ahead of the auction. Samson had become a regular member of the India T20I side now. He was opening the batting and was having considerable success. With that in mind, perhaps, they let go of Jos Buttler. He is the quality of player who could have helped problem-solve many of the situations they found themselves in.

Samson, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Riyan Parag make up a solid batting group but they all play high-risk cricket. Asking them to do anything else will diminish their match-winning ability. RR could

get the best out of them if they could bolster their middle order.

Their arrival becomes all the more essential because Vaibhav Suryavanshi has added to their top-order riches. RR need a dependable opening bowler and possibly a bankable Indian spinner so that they can stop conceding 200-plus totals.

"We need to sit back after the season, I think after a couple of weeks, we need to do a proper review and understand where we went wrong. Definitely we could have done much better. There are some mistakes we have done. We have to accept it and move on with it and come back with a better positive mindset next season," said Samson.



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SPROUTS FOR LUNCH

Just juggle with bean sprouts/Brussels sprouts for a light lunch in summer



15

IN TOWN

2nd annual art exhibition of Sarh Al Jaameah Private School - Resonance



16

ENTERTAINMENT

A peek into tinsel town, in Hollywood and Bollywood

GEOLOGICAL GOLD



ROCKS
TO
RICHES

FROM MOUNTAIN TRAILS
TO GEMSTONE TALES, OMANI
EXPLORER UNEARTHS
HIDDEN TREASURES BENEATH
QURIYAT'S PEAKS



Mohammed Taha

A deep love for hiking and the rugged mountains of Quriyat led Luqman Saeed al Hooti down a path few in Oman have walked - one that didn't just traverse winding trails, but delved into the rich, untapped world beneath them - the world of gemstones.

"While hiking, I used to wonder whether there were precious stones beneath our feet," Luqman told Muscat Daily. "And if they did exist, why hadn't anyone studied or spoken about them seriously?"

That question marked the beginning of a journey that would transform Luqman's life. Fuelled by curiosity, he immersed himself in the science of gemology, poring over texts, learning how gemstones form, and how to identify them in nature. In 2015, he set off on his first exploratory expedition in the Wilayat of Quriyat - and struck geological gold.

"Thanks to my research and preparation, I was able to locate and document several types of gemstones and semi-precious stones," he said. Among his early discoveries were varieties of agate, citrine, amethyst, tourmaline, aquamarine, opal, and turquoise.

Luqman is quick to clarify the distinction, "Precious stones are emeralds, sapphires, diamonds, and rubies. The rest, like amethyst, turquoise, malachite, lapis lazuli, opal, and tourmaline are classified as semi-precious, most of which are forms of quartz."

But for Luqman, the allure went far beyond classifica-

tion. "People are naturally drawn to gemstones for their colour and shine," he said. "But for me, it was the thrill of discovery - finding them with my own hands - that made me fall in love with this world."

One moment remains etched in his memory - the discovery of his first semi-precious stone. "It was a hexagonal quartz crystal, clear, gleaming, perfect. That single find validated all my study and effort. It was my first real success."

Soon after, Luqman began sharing his finds on Instagram, posting photos and insights about each stone. To his surprise, the audience grew, and so did the demand. "People started asking to buy the stones I posted. At first, I sold them as raw stones. Then I thought - why not turn them into something more?"

That thought sparked the next phase of his journey - jewellery design.

"I began designing jewellery using silver and gold, incorporating the gemstones I found in Oman," he said. "The response was overwhelming. It was the first initiative of its kind in the country."

Luqman says, "Before I begin crafting any gemstone, I sketch the design I have in mind with a pencil and imagine how it will look in its final form. Every piece starts with a simple line, but it carries a complete story."

What began as a passion project evolved into a full-fledged business. Luqman established his own workshop, taught himself digital design, and began crafting bespoke pieces that combine Omani gemstones with artistic flair.

"Through my experience, I've seen growing local in-

“

My ambition is to show the world that Oman has its own treasures - not just oil and history, but stunning stones shaped by nature and brought to life through design

”

LUQMAN SAEED AL HOOTI

terest in Omani gemstones. But awareness is still limited - largely due to a lack of gem hunters and minimal media coverage of these natural treasures," he noted.

Beyond Oman, he's received growing interest from buyers in the Gulf and wider Arab world. "There's global potential, but again, awareness is key. Countries like India and Thailand promote their stones through exhibitions and scientific publications. We need similar initiatives to build a gemstone industry that contributes to our economy."

Luqman uses his Instagram account as an educational platform, posting videos that document his explorations, identify stone types, and explain their handling. His content has attracted followers from around the world and helped raise awareness of Oman's geological richness.

"So far, I haven't faced major challenges," he said. "I rely on myself -conducting my own research, doing lab tests, and recording everything in a book I hope will one day become a reference for Omani gemstones."

His advice for aspiring gem enthusiasts? "Start by learning about gemology, geological conditions, and rock types. And most importantly, respect nature - don't tamper with or damage exploration sites."

Luqman dreams of discovering precious stones such as rubies, emeralds, and diamonds in Oman. He also hopes to launch a luxury jewellery brand that promotes Omani gemstones globally.

"My ambition is to show the world that Oman has its own treasures -not just oil and history, but stunning stones shaped by nature and brought to life through design," he said.

cook-up



Healthy Sprouts Salad

- Ingredients**
 - 1½ cup moong bean sprouts
 - 2 cups water, hot
 - ¼ cup onion, finely chopped
 - ¼ cup tomato (discard seeds) - finely chopped
 - ¼ cup cucumber - finely chopped
 - ¼ cup carrot - shredded
 - ¼ cup parsley or cilantro - chopped
 - ¼ cup pomegranate arils
 - 2tbsp roasted peanuts**For salad dressing**
 - ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
 - 1tsp roasted cumin powder (jeera powder)
 - 1tsp Himalayan pink salt
 - 1tsp red chilli powder
 - 1½tbsp lemon or lime juice

Method

First, blanch the sprouts - add sprouts to a bowl, pour hot water over the sprouts, cover and let it sit in hot water for 5 minutes. After 5 minutes, transfer them to a colander. Allow to cool down completely before using for the salad.

To prepare the salad, combine sprouts, onion, tomato, cucumber, parsley, and carrot in a mixing bowl and mix well. For the dressing, mix olive oil, cumin powder, salt, red chilli powder, and lemon juice. Stir to combine. Pour the dressing over the salad and mix gently. Add pomegranate arils, roasted peanuts, and fresh parsley. Toss the salad and serve as a snack or a fulfilling meal.

SPROUTS

TOSSEdTreats

On a hot sunny day, opt for a light snack instead of lunch, prepared with sprouts and other colourful ingredients, that uplifts your mood

Brussels Sprouts Pakoras



Bean Sprouts Stir-fry

- Ingredients**
 - 400g bean sprouts
 - 2tbsp peanut oil
 - 4 cloves garlic - finely chopped
 - 2 green onions - sliced
 - ½tsp salt
 - ¼tsp ground black pepper
 - 1tsp sugar
 - 2tsp sesame seeds/sunflower seeds
 - 1tbsp soy sauce

Method

Heat the peanut oil over medium-high

heat until hot. Add the chopped garlic and fry until the garlic just begins to brown, but don't let it burn. Add the green onions (save a little for garnish), stir a few times to release the fragrance. Add the salt, pepper, sugar, sesame seeds, and bean sprouts, and bring the heat up to high. Cook for 1 minute, stirring frequently. Add the soy sauce and continue to cook until the bean sprouts are cooked through but still crunchy, another 2-3 minutes. Serve warm immediately, garnished with more sesame seeds and diced scallions.

CLASSIFIEDS

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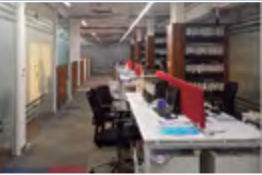
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take a break

IN TOWN

Resonance



The 2nd annual art exhibition of Sarh Al Jaameah Private School – Resonance - was opened by H H Sayyida Dr Basma al Said at Marsam Art, Al Araiimi Boulevard on May 18

Photos: V K Shafeer

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Your passion for travel is rekindling. If you can't just grab your passport and take off for parts unknown, go ahead and explore your inner space. That could include watching a foreign film, enjoying a food festival, or reading about a place that has interested you for ages. You could also strike up a conversation with someone from a place very far away from your hometown.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Are you in the mood for something a little risky? You may want to reconsider for the moment, as the odds are somewhat against you. There's no need for you to push things too far. That's like watching a rerun of an old TV episode that you didn't really enjoy that much the first time around. Make sure that you keep your social life strictly safe.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
You know that with a little luck you can work it out. Some good fortune comes your way, though you don't really need it, but don't send it out to the lab. Pick it up and run with it, instead. Looking for logical explanations would only frustrate you. For now, take it as a sign that the Universe thinks you're on the right track.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
You need to toss anything that doesn't fit and hasn't in a while, including clothes, relationships, and ideas. Keeping something around simply because it used to be a good fit just clutters up your house and mind. How can you introduce anything new and energizing into your life if your head or personal space is clogged with remnants of your past?



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
It may feel as if you've got more problems than you should today. A recent streak of good fortune might bring a few hidden thorns that you weren't expecting. If you keep calm, you should be able to nip any incipient problems in the bud. If you think about it, these are just the essential complications that success usually brings.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Making tough decisions has never been your idea of a good time, but it's much worse when you second-guess your instincts. While the number of possibilities over the horizon may feel overwhelming, the fact still remains that you have to just choose something and take your chances. Your energy is pushing you to take a chance, and the greater the risk, the greater the reward!



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Remember that haste makes waste now, especially if you're tempted to rush into something just to feel like you're making progress. You could actually cause delays and setbacks by jumping into a new project without thinking it through, especially at work or taking care of home improvement. These matters need your full, patient attention.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
You're a seeker of knowledge of all kinds, from the physical to the emotional and mental. You need to realize that you're still a student in many ways, no matter how much you may know or how old you (or your soul) may be. This humble attitude serves you well when it comes to facing a new challenge in your life.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Your schedule is just a little overloaded! Old friends and new contacts are booking you left and right, because no social event is complete without your winning smile and fantastic presence. It's not that you put on a big show wherever you go, far from it. It's just that every person who sees and talks to you feels so much better afterward.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You need to strike a balance between your cravings and your fears, and it might not be easy. Wake up from your dream life and try to figure out what's actually necessary as opposed to what is merely desired. No amount of money can purchase inner security, so try to make sure that your purchases are more sensible.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
If you're feeling somewhat pessimistic when it comes to love, you shouldn't be. Things are just about to change. However, if you want to take advantage of these great new opportunities, you need to toss out all the junk that's been cluttering your heart (and mind). Stop obsessing about the past!



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
If you just can't make your current situation work, don't try and force it, no matter how awesome it seems in principle. One crucial detail might be missing from a partnership or work situation, so no matter what you do, don't keep trying to make it work if you see a deal-breaking aspect that isn't going anywhere. Sometimes when you hold out for the best, that's exactly what you get.

BOGGLER

H	A	N	I
T	G	W	N
B	R	W	L
A	S	A	O

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

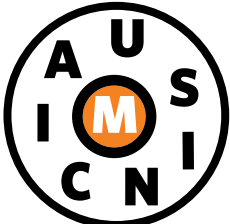
DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS

1. What is agar agar?
A. A tiny breed of squirrels
B. An island off Croatia
C. A plant-based gelatin substitute
D. A Spanish term which means 'to grab'

2. Maithili is a language spoken in which country, besides India?
A. Nepal
B. Bangladesh
C. Myanmar
D. Sri Lanka

3. HM Sultan Haitham bin Tarik is currently on a visit to which country?



A. Russia
B. Morocco
C. Italy
D. Spain

Answers
1. C
2. A
3. D

entertainment



CORSAGE' DIRECTOR WINS INVESTORS CIRCLE PRIZE

Gentle Monster, the new feature project from Austrian director Marie Kreutzer (Corsage), has won the 2025 ArteKino International Prize at this year's Investors Circle in Cannes. Producers Alexander Glehr and Johanna Scherz of Film AG Produktions received the 20,000 euro (\$22,000) award during a private pitching session that capped the third edition of the Marché du Film's curated investment platform.

I'm surprised in the most positive way," said Kreutzer, about her win. "Filmmaking is a really big mountain, and what happens before the premiere — to get a film made — is a very long climb. So we really need people who want to support cinema and have love for cinema — that's why meeting investors is extremely important."

BIEBER SEEMS TO TORCH HIS PAST

For the millions around the world wondering what Justin Bieber has been up to these past few years — since music seemingly took a back seat to his life as a full-time husband (he married Hailey Baldwin in 2018) and father (son Jack Blues was born in August) — it may be surprising to learn that the pop sensation did release something new this month.

On April 3, the 31-year-old revealed his fashion brand, Skylrk, with a video directed by 3D artist Gal Yosef that shows an animated Bieber riding an electric scooter to a house that he then promptly burns. Strewn about inside are relics of his past life, including the smiley face logo of the Drew House clothing line he started in 2019 with former friend Ryan Good (Drew is Bieber's middle name).



Mariana Donnelly, a 12-year-old dancer training out of Step by Step Dance Studio in San Benito, known by her stage name, "That's So Mariana," recently traded the studio floor for the Hollywood red carpet as standout performance in the short film, White and Black Canvas, directed by Luis Antonio Rodriguez, earned her the Best Performance Award at LA WEBFEST.

"The night I received photos of her on the red carpet, I was nearly in tears. She looked stunning!" said Dr. Kimberly Banda, owner and director of Step by Step Dance Studio. "She was getting interviewed by the press, sitting in her seat, anxiously waiting for her category to come up. I'll never forget the moment I got the text from her mom while closing up the studio. I screamed to my assistant director, 'Mariana just won!'"

Donnelly TAKES HOLLYWOOD BY STORM

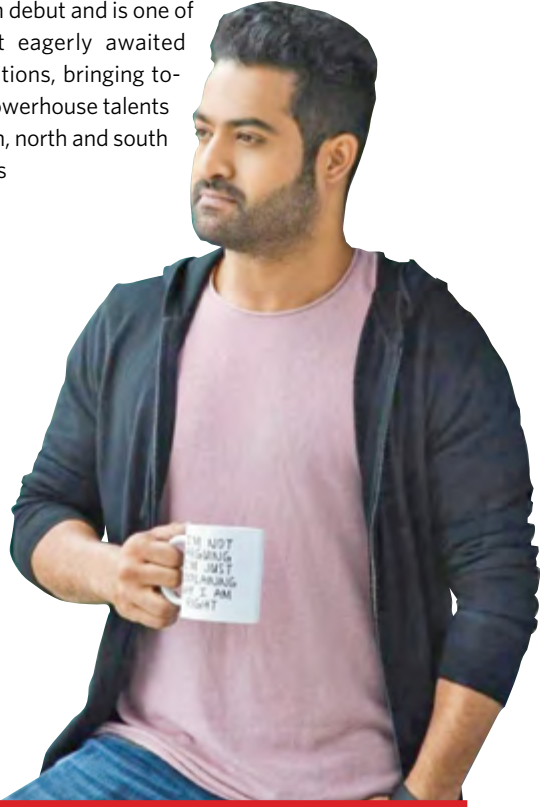


PARESH RAWAL WALKS OUT OF HERA PHERI 3

Paresh Rawal, who played the unforgettable Baburao, shocked everyone last week by announcing that he would no longer be part of Hera Pheri 3. He walked out of the film mid-shoot due to the reasons best known to him. In response, Akshay Kumar has reportedly taken legal action through his production house, Cape of Good Films, suing Rawal for Rs25 crore over alleged unprofessional behaviour. Rawal reportedly left due to a lack of interest, not money or creative differences.

NTR JR SET FOR BOLLYWOOD DEBUT WITH WAR 2

After the roaring success of RRR and Devara Part 1, NTR Jr is all set to storm Bollywood with one of the biggest action spectacles in the making — War 2. The film, directed by Ayan Mukherji and backed by Aditya Chopra also stars Hrithik Roshan reprising his role as Agent Kabir and Kiara Advani. It marks NRT Jr's official Hindi film debut and is one of the most eagerly awaited collaborations, bringing together powerhouse talents from both, north and south industries



GWYNETH PALTROW ON MEGHAN MARKLE'S NETFLIX SHOW?

Gwyneth Paltrow gave a surprising answer on whether or not she will be appearing on her rumoured rival Meghan Markle's Netflix show.

The Goop founder, 52, opened up about her 'text friendship' with the Duchess of Sussex and revealed whether she would appear in season two of the latter's show With Love, Meghan.

She said she doesn't 'bake very well' in a People interview published on Sunday before adding that she would potentially be open to the idea.

'Sure! Why not? You never know,' Paltrow answered. 'I don't bake that well, but I can always try.'



Tablo & Simon Pegg! Tom Cruise Too? What in the Crossover!



Just when I thought my heart couldn't take more — Tablo (yes, the Tablo from Epik High) pops up in photo booth pics with Simon Pegg and Greg

Tarzan Davis, looking like long-lost besties! The photos, shared by Pegg while in Korea promoting Mission Impossible: The Final Reckoning (out on May 17th), have sent fans — including me — into full meltdown mode.

But wait, there's more: Tom Cruise also promoted the film on 'Run Jin', even talked to Jin's mum (!) and hosted a private screening just for Jin and his staff. I'm not crying, you are, cause cuteness.

Epik High, meanwhile, just hit 1mn subscribers on YouTube (Yay!), and their mix of music, humour, and deep talks just relates.

I swear, this is the most chaotic, wholesome, star-studded timeline. And Jin? Still the love of my life!

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: MISSION IMPOSSIBLE – THE FINAL RECKONING Genre: Action Starring: Tom Cruise, Hayley Atwell, Simon Pegg, Ving Rhames, Henry Czerny

Tom Cruise's Ethan Hunt returns for one last mission in Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning, delivering a spectacle brimming with adrenaline-pumping stunts and high-stakes action.

Directed by Christopher McQuarrie, this installment aims to conclude the franchise with grandeur, featuring Cruise performing audacious feats like hanging from an airplane and leaping off an aircraft carrier.

Early reactions highlight the



High octane action and drama

film's exhilarating action sequences, with some scenes that are indeed exhilarating adrenaline rush. However, the film's sprawling narrative and extended runtime have drawn criticism for pacing issues and a convoluted plot. The editing

is crisp though at times the action scenes look monotonous.

The ensemble cast, including Hayley Atwell, Ving Rhames, and Simon Pegg, adds depth and camaraderie, reflecting the franchise's emphasis on teamwork. Yet, some

viewers feel the film's ambition overshadows character development, leaving emotional arcs underexplored.

The Final Reckoning offers a thrilling conclusion with its high-octane action and Cruise's unwaver-

ing commitment to performing his own stunts. While it may not satisfy all narrative expectations, it stands as a testament to the franchise's legacy of pushing cinematic boundaries.

The festivities kick off with a bonafide supercut of Ethan Hunt's greatest hits from the saga's previous seven installments, neatly divided into subcategories like 'love interest' and 'villain'. And it would be a massive understatement to say that The Final Reckoning only leans harder into its everything has led to this ethos after that.

To a certain extent, that's to be expected from the culmination of a franchise that's grown more self-referential towards its own past at roughly the same rate as it's become more freighted with the responsibility of fighting against Hollywood's future.

Rating ★★★★★

The background of the advertisement is a photograph of a dining table. It features several dark, rustic-style ceramic plates and bowls. In the foreground, a gold-colored butter knife and a gold-colored spoon are placed diagonally across a dark plate. The lighting is soft, creating a warm and elegant atmosphere. A large white circle is positioned in the upper half of the image, containing the brand name and sale details.

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