



MHT unveils major plans to promote tourism in 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In an effort to boost the tourism sector, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has unveiled ambitious plans to increase the number of tourists in 2024.

The sultanate is actively engaging with tourists through promotional campaigns and forming alliances with global travel firms. Simultaneously, it is streamlining travel for most tourists by offering a 14-day visa-free entry, a move that underscores Oman's commitment to facilitating and fostering international tourism growth.

"To all partners in the tourism sector," H E Salim Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, posted on 'X' recently, "We will continue to work together to build a diversified sector whose impact extends to all governorates, while the year 2024 is a date with new projects and qualitative investment scopes. The priority will be to provide capabilities and activate a number of initiatives, including the Grand Tour of Oman and integrated attractive tourist destinations."

According to an MHT official, the ambitious plans for 2024 include roadshows, workshops and



international travel fairs.

The official informed that the ministry will organise roadshows in many countries, including the Nordic countries from April 16 to 18, Russia from June 3 to 5, and France from September 30 to October 1.

He added that roadshows will also be held in Saudi Arabia from September 22 to 26, in Germany, Italy and the UK from September 1 to 5, and India from October 14 to 18.

MHT will take part in interna-

tional travel fairs such as ITB Berlin in Germany from March 5 to 7, the Seatrade Cruise Global conference in the US from April 8 to 11, Arabian Travel Market in the UAE from May 6 to 9, IMEX in Germany from May 14 to 16 and Seatrade Europe in Germany from September 11 to 12.

OTDYKH Leisure in Russia from September 17 to 19, Monaco Yacht Show from September 25 to 28, TTG Rimini in Italy from October 9 to 11, ITB Asia in Singapore from October

23 to 25, World Travel Market London from November 5 to 7 and International Luxury Travel Market in France from December 2 to 5 will also see MHT's participation. Additionally, the ministry has invited international companies to establish its tourism representative offices in the UK, Ireland and Russia.

The ministry is working to increase the number of tourists to 11mn by the year 2040, marking a significant stride towards Oman Vision 2040.

MHT is implementing targeted strategies to boost tourism activities in the sultanate. The aim is to augment the tourism sector's contribution to the GDP from a modest 2.4% in 2021 to an ambitious 5% by 2030, ultimately aiming for 10% by 2040.

The ministry has extended an invitation to all Omani tourism enterprises and establishments to register with Oman Tourism Hub via the link <https://www.omantourismhub.com/> to participate in forthcoming events.



H H Sayyid Fahd Mahmoud al Said with Dr Tawfiq Fawzan al Rabiah of KSA on Tuesday (ONA)

Sayyid Fahd lauds Saudi efforts in serving pilgrims

Muscat - H H Sayyid Fahd Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Council of Ministers, received Dr Tawfiq Fawzan al Rabiah, Minister of Hajj and Umrah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), on Tuesday.

At the outset of the meeting, Rabiah conveyed greetings of the leadership in KSA and their best wishes of progress and prosperity to the Omani leadership and people.

H H Sayyid Fahd then reviewed the march of the advance relations between Oman and KSA, as well as means of boosting these relations.

H H Sayyid Fahd also lauded the efforts exerted by KSA in serving pilgrims and providing

the best services to them.

Further, the meeting discussed bilateral cooperation in various sectors, besides matters related to the Islamic world and the stability of its nations.

Additionally, the two sides reviewed regional and international developments and discussed matters of mutual interest.

Rabiah underlined the depth of relations between the two countries and said his visit paves the way for further talks with officials in Oman on all matters that can boost fraternal joint relations.

The meeting was attended by H E Dr Mohammed Said al Maamari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs.

MoCIIP unveils loyalty programme to boost Oman-made products

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), in collaboration with relevant authorities and the private sector, has unveiled a loyalty programme aimed at bolstering locally made products.

The initiative seeks to elevate the profile of Omani products and encourage consumers to actively choose these, thereby fostering the growth of local companies.

MoCIIP underscored the growing demand for local products among both Omani and expatriate consumers, owing to superior quality and adherence to standard specifications.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said, "The loyalty programme for the national product will work towards supporting our local products, increasing the economic prosperity of the sultanate, and enhancing domestic production."

He emphasised the urgency of this loyalty to sustain private sector entities, boost export capabilities, improve the balance of payments, expand the economic foundation, and augment the



Choosing Omani products is a collective responsibility that spans across our society

FAISAL AL RAWAS



contribution of non-oil activities to the gross domestic product. Furthermore, it will stimulate local investments, attract foreign capital and generate employment opportunities.

Rawas added, "Choosing Omani products is a collective responsibility that spans across our society. We must unite in our efforts to bolster our national industries by providing increased support and incentives to Omani industrial establishments, em-

powering them to enhance production and competitiveness in the business landscape."

As the official representative of the private sector in the sultanate, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry is dedicated to meeting the goals of the loyalty programme for the national product, as outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Hilal bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al Hina, Chairman of Board of Directors of Omani

Manufacturers Association, affirmed that promoting local products contributes to fortifying the national industry, fostering job creation, elevating the national economy's added value, and boosting exports. He emphasised the need to enhance the competitiveness of Omani products in both local and international markets with the aim of boosting self-sufficiency and reduce reliance on imported goods.

Hina stressed the potential of Omani factories in achieving these objectives, especially with robust government support for the national industry. Omani Manufacturers Association will collaborate closely with the government to raise awareness, launching campaigns to educate citizens about the significance of prioritising Omani products as their primary choice in purchases.

Dr Rajab bin Ali al Owaisi, an expert on social and educational studies in the State Council, noted that the loyalty programme for Oman-made products will elevate the local product's standing in the local market and correct misconceptions. This, in turn, will enhance the product's market value and competitive pricing compared to other alternatives.

HIS MAJESTY CONFERS ORDER OF ROYAL COMMENDATION ON OUTSTANDING OMANIS



Ahmed Said al Harthi for sports



Dr Jokha Mohammed al Harthi for culture

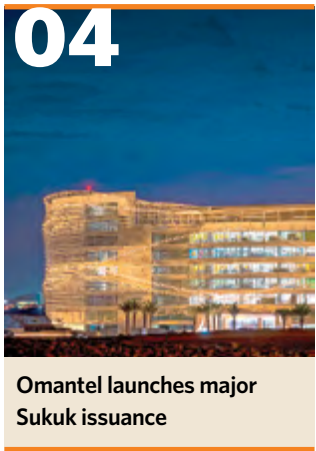


Dr Qassim Saleh al Abri for health (ONA)

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik conferred the Order of Royal Commendation - Second Class on 13 outstanding Omani individuals in appreciation for their remarkable contributions and active role in diverse fields.

The medals were handed over by Sayyid Khalid Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of Diwan of Royal Court, when he received the honourees at his office on Tuesday. Sayyid Khalid said that conferment of Royal commendation reflects His Majesty the Sultan's regular follow up and recognition of efforts exerted by all in serving the nation in all sectors. He hoped that the recognition will inspire more resourceful contribution to the nation-building process.

See also [Page 02](#)



Omantel launches major Sukuk issuance

Oman Across Ages Museum received over 350,000 visitors in 2023

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Across Ages Museum received over 350,000 domestic and international visitors in 2023.

Inaugurated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in March 2023, the museum was built under the Royal orders of the Late Sultan Qaboos bin Said. It is the largest of its kind in the

region, offering visitors an interactive experience of the cultural and geographic diversity of the sultanate and includes galleries, a library, an auditorium, cafés, and social and research spaces.

Al Yaqzan bin Abdullah al Harthi, Director General of Oman Across Ages Museum, said, "The museum takes one on a vast, sweeping journey through time. Starting with the first settlers and

ending in modern-day Oman, you fly through different ages, dynasties and civilisations."

He informed that 95% of the visitors in 2023 were Omanis. "It confirms the community's awareness and the interest of its members in this distinctive cultural edifice."

He added that the museum will soon display a new collection, including a stick which His

Majesty the Sultan gave to the museum upon its inauguration in March 2023. "It is the same stick carried by Sultan Qaboos bin Said when he laid the foundation stone of the museum."

The museum will host an international photographer - who specialises in photographing collectibles - in January to hold a training programme for a group of Omanis engaged in the mu-

seum sector in the sultanate.

At the end of February, it will host the 'Museum Building Conference' - a global event that travels the world.

The museum will also be on the itinerary of a visit by participants of a conference on heritage and tourism, which will soon be organised by German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech).

"The museum currently has one of the largest restoration and preservation laboratories in the sultanate. We have special programmes for restoration and seek the help of experts from around the world for restoration work," said Harthi.

The museum is open to the public Saturday to Thursday from 9am to 5pm and on Friday from 1:30pm to 7pm.

HIS MAJESTY CONFERS ORDER OF ROYAL COMMENDATION



Dr Ahmed Suleiman al Harrasi for research



Dr Khalid Humaid al Rassadi for health



Dr Mohammed Hamdan al Badi for research



Razan Hamad al Kalbani in the youth category



Dr Suleiman Mohammed al Balushi for research



Retired pilot Abdul-Salam Issa al Rawahi for institutional proficiency



Haitham Khamis al Farsi for culture



Said Hamdan al Muqaimi for public initiatives and social responsibility



Mohammed Jameel al Mashaikhi for sports



Zahran Hamdan al Qasmi for culture

Inaugural innovation festival from Feb 5

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) has decided to organise a festival to give a fillip to the country's research activities.

H E Dr Saif al Haddabi, Under-secretary for Research and Innovation in MoHERI, said that the inaugural edition of the Oman Innovation Festival will be held at the Innovation Complex Muscat from February 5 to 10.

The event is expected to draw more than 3,000 visitors daily and benefit over 1,000 individuals through training courses and workshops.

"The festival's objective is to foster collaboration among the research, private, governmental, and community sectors," H E Dr Haddabi said during a press conference in Muscat on Tuesday.

"The festival seeks to bolster the national system for scientific research and innovation, laying the foundation for a sustainable national economy rooted in scientific research. This aligns with the aspirations of the Oman Vision 2040, aiming to position the sultanate among the ranks of developed nations," he said.

Crucially, the festival is expected to promote a culture of scientific research and innovation, spread awareness about its



Its objective is to foster collaboration among the research, private, governmental, and community sectors

H E DR SAIF AL HADDABI

significance to all segments of society.

It will serve as a common platform, uniting innovators and their supporters, while offering specialised training courses across various domains, the ministry expects.

"The festival will organise many specialised training courses in various fields needed by innovators and those interested, and bring together investors and owners of innovation-based startups with the aim of building trade and investment relationships," H E Dr Haddabi further noted.

Najah Mohammed al

Rashidiya, chairperson of the Executive Committee of the festival, underscored the festival's role in fortifying the national innovation system. She disclosed that more than 400 participants will take part in the Innovation and Knowledge-Based Economy Forum, with approximately 200 participants involved in the Energy Hackathon Forum.

The hackathon will address sectors such as industrial zones in the free economic zone, urban planning, architectural design, logistics services, facility efficiency, and mining.

Najah revealed that the festival would feature two dialogue sessions, shedding light on the challenges confronting the innovation system and seeking viable solutions to them.

The ministry will also launch the 'Innovative Consulting' platform during the festival to facilitate consultative meetings between innovators and experts from local, regional, and international governmental, private, and academic entities.

Another significant programme to be launched during the festival is the 'Jisr' geared towards connecting investors with entrepreneurs.

Najah concluded by announcing the 'Governorates Innovation' competition for a wide range of activities at the grassroots level.

Oman, Saudi hold meetings to further improve hajj services

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, met with Dr Tawfiq Fawzan al Rabiah, Minister of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia, in Muscat on Tuesday.

Dr Rabiah is on a visit to the sultanate to discuss arrangements for hajj and umrah, exchange experiences and expertise, and hold workshops among specialists from both sides to identify the scope for improvement in hajj and umrah services.

The two-day visit of the Saudi Minister will feature a pilgrimage exhibition for hajj and umrah companies, as well as a bilateral discussion session between the



officials of the two countries.

Dr Rabiah also met H E Sayyid Hamoud Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, during which, the two sides reviewed several matters of mutual interest.

The meeting highlighted the role of the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah during the hajj period.

H E Busaidi lauded Saudi Arabia's important role and under-

scored the kingdom's keenness to utilise capabilities in service of pilgrims.

The meeting was attended by H E Dr Maamari, H E Eng Khalid Hilal al Busaidi, Under-secretary of the Ministry of Interior, Yousef Mohammed al Awdah, Charge d'Affaires of the Saudi Embassy in Oman and the delegation accompanying the minister.

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Suhar Investment Forum on Feb 26–27

Suhar - The inaugural edition of Suhar Investment Forum, scheduled on February 26 and 27 in Suhar, will be a first-of-its-kind international event in North Batinah that will offer 100 investment opportunities.

The forum has been organised by the branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in the governorate

At a media meet held on Tuesday, the forum's Organising Committee revealed details of the two-day event

The meeting was attended by Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of North Batinah, Saeed bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of OCCI's branch in North Batinah, public and private sector officials, and media personnel.

The forum will focus on the



promising opportunities in North Batinah by showcasing the governorate's favourable investment climate and its vast untapped potential. According to the organisers, it will also train the spotlight on Suhar, a city poised for trans-

formative growth, highlighting its remarkable evolution into a captivating destination for investment.

Forum participants will engage in discussions regarding developments which are shaping the

investment landscape within Oman and across the world.

Abri said, "This forum is woven into the very fabric of our national efforts. We're cultivating the unique strengths of each governorate, nurturing them to

bloom under the sun of Oman Vision 2040 and within the fertile fields laid out by the OCCI branch in North Batinah. Investors will bask in the warm glow of our incentives, and witness 100 investment prospects in our opening session."

He informed that the programme of the forum's inaugural session has been carefully designed to include "insightful dialogue sessions, thought-provoking working papers and direct meetings". These will set the stage for potential partnerships, while an accompanying exhibition will showcase the diverse investment opportunities available in the governorate. "This comprehensive programme will provide participants the essential tools to navigate the investment

opportunities and fuel sustainable economic development."

Abri added, "We eagerly anticipate collaborating with officials, investors and business leaders from across the globe. Together, let us explore the kaleidoscope of investment possibilities and forge partnerships that will propel the governorate towards a future of robust economic growth and flourishing social prosperity."

Describing the forum as a trendsetter, he said, "Foreign investments are a catalyst for innovation, a lifeline for jobs, and a key to unlocking sustainable development. Speakers and panel discussions will illuminate the benefits, incentives and strategic treasures hidden in Suhar."

Over 600 participants, includ-

ing senior government and private sector officials, industry titans and investors from Oman, the MENA region, Europe, Asia and the Americas, are expected.

It will also see the signing of several cooperation and investment agreements to consolidate the position of North Batinah as a key hub for investments.

Several government and private institutions have extended their support to Suhar Investment Forum, including Office of the Governor of North Batinah, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madaysn), Invest Oman, Nazzdahr, and Suhar Port and Free Zone.

S Sharqiyah unveils Tahayim Winter Festival

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a collaborative effort involving government and private entities, South Sharqiyah is gearing up to host the Tahayim Winter Festival in the picturesque wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan from January 25 to February 3.

Mohammed Ali Akak, head of Organising Committee, emphasised the festival's role in promoting tourism and enhancing economic prospects in the governorate. "It is poised to position the region as a prominent economic hub within the sultanate."

The festival derives its name - Tahayim - from a renowned desert village, symbolising the



convergence of shifting sands from diverse directions.

Akak informed that the festival's primary objective is to showcase the governorate's di-

verse landscapes, cultural heritage and historical landmarks.

"Simultaneously, it aims to provide an exceptional platform for both entertainment and tourism."

The festival will have a wide array of activities catering to people of all age groups and backgrounds. These include a dates exhibition, children's competitions, honey market, poetry recitals, jugglers, art shows and captivating theatrical performances.

The festival will have several sections, including a local market showcasing products of handicrafts families, a corner with offerings from small and medium enterprises, a food court, and a creativity and innovation section exhibiting wildlife imagery and exquisite plastic art.

A heritage village at the festival will showcase tradition and culture, featuring folk arts and

bedouin handicrafts, besides desert adventure packages and opportunities for camping enthusiasts.

The festival will include camel races at the Al Seeh al Akhdar Square in Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan and a four-wheel-drive race at Tal Murhab.

Additionally, there will be two sand football and sand volleyball tournaments and a competition for youngsters performing Oman's Al Zafin.

The Tahayim Winter Festival promises to be an exceptional celebration of South Sharqiyah's culture, natural beauty and economic potential, offering a memorable experience for visitors of all ages and background.

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Suhar Nights Winter Camp draws over 6,500 visitors

Our Correspondent
Suhar

The eagerly awaited Suhar Nights Winter Camp, which ran from January 10 to 14, was well attended attracting 6,518 visitors.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) stated that the event, held in the Al Rifaa area of Suhar, concluded on a high note showcasing a tapestry of cultural, entertainment and commercial activities that captivated attendees.

In a statement, MHT said, 'The Suhar Nights festivities

wrapped up with a resounding success in Al Rifaa, marked by a diverse array of events and recreational activities. The camp showcased the cultural vibrancy and recreational potential of Suhar and had 6,518 visitors.'

It was a microcosm of Oman's rich culture, featuring an eclectic mix of cultural showcases, entertainment performances and a bustling marketplace. The festival provided a platform for local artisans, with numerous stalls dedicated to cottage industries run by families, reflecting the vibrant entrepreneurial spirit of the region.

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*Rates as on January 16

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Oil falls with strong dollar, low demand

Oil prices declined on Tuesday with an increase in the US dollar index and with expectations of low demand amid high US stockpiles.

The international benchmark crude Brent traded at \$77.92 per barrel in London, a 0.29% decrease from the closing price of \$78.15 a barrel in the previous trading session on Monday.

The American benchmark, West Texas Intermediate (WTI), traded at the same time at \$72.32 per barrel, down 0.65% from Monday's close of \$72.79 per barrel.

The rise in the US dollar against other currencies aided the fall in oil costs. The US dollar index, which measures the US dollar's value against other currencies, increased 0.53% to 102.695. The strong dollar is expected to lower demand by making oil more expensive for users of foreign currencies.

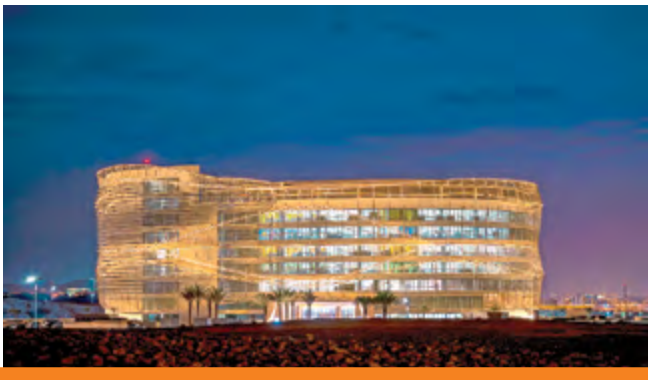
Expectations of a drop in oil production in the US, the world's largest oil-consuming country, due to cold weather gained strength. Harsh weather conditions could stall refinery operations and consequently raise prices amid dwindling supplies.

API data last week showed that US stocks decreased by 5.2mn barrels, signaling a rise in crude demand. However, a combination of low demand and a build in inventories this week could curb this upward price trend.

Omantel launches major Sukuk issuance

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omantel said that the proceeds from the Sukuk issuance would be used to repay the company's bridge loan of \$460mn



Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) has announced the initiation of a series of meetings with qualified fixed-income investors on Tuesday to discuss the anticipated benchmark seven-year Sukuk offering in US dollars.

'After the disclosure on October 23, 2023, regarding the postponement of the Sukuk issuance, Omantel is pleased to announce a series of fixed-income calls with qualified investors starting from January 16, 2024. A benchmark USD-denominated Rule 144A/Reg S

debut seven-year Sukuk offering is expected to follow,' Omantel said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Omantel added that the proceeds from the Sukuk issuance would be used to repay the

company's bridge loan of \$460mn. 'Further updates will be provided upon closing the transaction.'

'Generally, it is expected that this transaction will have a positive impact on Omantel's financial position,' the company noted.

Omantel shares closed 0.93% higher on Tuesday at the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Global credit rating agency Moody's Investor Service as-

signed a Ba2 rating with a positive outlook to Omantel's proposed Sukuk issuance on Tuesday. Moody's assigned a Ba2 rating to the proposed backed senior unsecured Sukuk trust certificates to be issued by OTEL Sukuk Limited, a special-purpose vehicle established in the Cayman Islands by Omantel.

Moody's highlighted that the Ba2 rating assigned to the proposed Sukuk trust certificates is at the same level as the Corporate Family Rating of Omantel.

Omantel had initially announced meetings with qualified fixed-income investors on October 3, 2023, to discuss the

anticipated benchmark seven-year Sukuk offering in US dollars. However, on October 23, 2023, the company postponed the Sukuk issuance to a later date due to 'unfavorable' market conditions.

At that time, the purpose of the sukuk issuance was to refinance Omantel's outstanding notes of \$457mn, which were set to mature on October 24, 2023. With the postponement of the Sukuk issuance, Omantel had secured a bridge loan facility from an international bank with a term not exceeding six months to settle its \$457mn outstanding bonds due on October 24, 2023.

Salalah Mills acquires 50% stake in Yemeni company

Our Correspondent
Muscat



Salalah Mills Company has acquired a 50% stake in a Yemen-based grain mills and silos company with an estimated cost of approximately RO2.5mn, according to a company disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Earlier in August 2023, Salalah Mills Company had announced that it was studying investment opportunities in the grain milling and silos sector in the Republic of Yemen.

'On January 10, 2024, based on legal and financial studies, Salalah Mills Company signed an agreement to enter into a partnership by acquiring 50% of the shares of Al-Rayyan Grain Mills and Silos Company and its assets in Yemen - Hadhramaut Governorate, the city of Mukalla, with an investment estimated at approximately RO2.5mn,' the company said in its disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Previously, on November 10, 2023, Salalah Mills' board of directors had approved the establishment of a limited liability company (LLC) named 'Yemeni-

Omani Food Company LLC,' headquartered in Yemen, for the import and distribution of grains into Yemen.

Yemeni-Omani Food Com-

pany's authorised capital is \$25mn, and the paid-up capital is 50% of the authorised capital. Salalah Mills Company owns a 50% share, and the Yemeni

partner owns the remaining percentage. The partnership will be financed through commercial loans, as Salalah Mills had stated at that time.

In November 2023, Salalah Mills' board of directors had approved the establishment of a limited liability company named 'Yemeni-Omani Food Company,' headquartered in Yemen, for the import and distribution of grains into Yemen

Paymob gets PSP licence from CBO

Our Correspondent
Muscat



Paymob, a leading financial services enabler in the Middle East, North Africa, and Pakistan, announced that it has received the Central Bank of Oman's (CBO) Payment Service Provider (PSP) licence, making it the first international fintech company to be fully licensed in the sultanate.

The PSP licence authorises Paymob to accept and process online and in-store payments in Oman, powered by its local integration with CBO's secure payment infrastructure, OmanNet.

This landmark milestone enables merchants in the sultanate to accept both local and cross-border payments through Paymob's gateway, eliminating the need for multiple gateway integrations. Paymob secured the PSP license upon complying with all the regulatory requirements of CBO's framework.

In a press statement, Islam Shawky, co-founder and CEO of Paymob said, 'It is a proud moment for Paymob to be the first international fintech company to receive PSP licensing in Oman.

We appreciate the vote of confidence that CBO has placed in our technology. We are committed to enabling SME growth in Oman by making cutting-edge payments solutions accessible to all merchants and processing transactions seamlessly and securely through our local gateway.'

With the PSP licence in Oman, Paymob further delivers on its mission of enabling the regional SMEs to thrive in the digital economy via access to a variety of innovative digital payment solutions. Paymob offers 40 payment methods - the most comprehensive suite in the region - which correlates with higher sales, increased conversions, improved customer retention, and appeal to a broader demographic for SMEs.

Paymob, one of the fastest growing fintech companies in the region, launched operations in 2015 and serves 250,000 merchants across MENA and Pakistan. The company is backed by global and regional investors including PayPal Ventures, Kora Capital, Clay Point Capital, Global Ventures, FMO, A15, British International Investment, Helios Digital Ventures and Nclude.

Gulf Islamic Investments acquires stake in Saudi Arabia's Abeer Medical

Dubai, UAE - Gulf Islamic Investments (GII) has signed agreements to acquire a significant equity stake in Abeer Medical Company, the largest affordable healthcare services provider in Saudi Arabia, in a deal valued at an estimated SAR600mn.



GII, a leading Shariah-compliant alternative investment company with \$4bn of assets under management (AUM), identified Abeer as a leading partner to expand GII's healthcare assets in the kingdom - now worth some SAR1.6bn - Including a majority stake in AlMeswak Dental Clinics, Saudi Arabia's largest dental and dermatology network.

GII's growth strategy for Abeer includes expanding the number of hospitals and clinics in addition to the roll-out of additional brands to widen Abeer's scope and geographical footprint of healthcare services to the kingdom's residents and visitors.

In a press release, GII co-founder and co-CEO Mohammed Alhassan said, 'We are delighted to increase our healthcare portfolio in Saudi Arabia, which is part of a wider expansion of GII's activities in the kingdom. Our partnership will accelerate Abeer's growth trajectory to include new cities and segments, supporting the capable leadership of Abeer's founder Mohammed Alungal and his dedicated team of 2,000 staff.'

Mohammed Alungal, Abeer's President and CEO, said, 'GII's investment will enable us to

boost Abeer Medical Company's network of 14 medical centres and two general hospitals - all with clinics - with a blend of organic growth acquisitions and investment in new healthcare facilities. This is a very exciting development for healthcare landscape in Saudi Arabia. Abeer will continue to pioneer its commitment to providing Affordable Quality Healthcare as the group is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.'

GII seeks to achieve superior, sustainable returns and long-term value for its investors and shareholders by investing in curated growth and income-generating opportunities.

S&P projects UAE economy to grow over 5% in 2024

Dubai, UAE - The UAE's GDP is expected to expand by over 5% in 2024, exceeding the 2.8% growth expected for the global economy, according to S&P Global Ratings projections.



Tatiana Leskova, Associate Director of Corporate Ratings at Standard and Poor's Global Ratings, told the Emirates News Agency (WAM) that "While the global economy remained subdued operating at subpar growth levels, we estimate that UAE's GDP expanded at over 3% in 2023, including close to 6% growth for the non-oil sector".

"In Dubai, we expect continued strong momentum in the hospitality, wholesale and retail, and financial services sectors to drive economic growth in 2024-2025," she explained.

Asked about the performance of the UAE's real estate sector in the face of global economic changes, Leskova said, "So far, the UAE and Dubai more specifically have remained relatively immune to the global economic headwinds, thanks to the limited sensitivity to interest rates and contained inflation. Despite higher interest rates, the number of mortgage transactions continued to grow in Dubai, where over 80% of real estate transactions are completed on a cash basis. In contrast, the European real estate market has been marked by weakened purchasing power since 2022 due to high interest rates and relatively higher inflation."

She further said that the China market also remains challenging for its leveraged developers, with margins tightening as prices drop, pressuring profitability. The picture has become a little brighter in the US, where demand picked up at the start of 2023 after a slowdown.

"The profile of buyers evolved slightly since 2022, with a sharp increase in Russian buyers becoming one of the largest investor groups in Dubai," Tatiana explained.

"We expect this to be temporary, with Indians, Europeans and GCC buyers remaining the largest investors as per the historic trend. Dubai still remains far more attractive as an investment opportunity than other emirates despite news of gaming hotels in RAK, and general economic growth in the country overall," she added.

WAM



Emirates plans to recruit 5,000 cabin crew in 2024

Dubai, UAE – Emirates is celebrating the new year and the imminent arrival of its spanking new fleet of Airbus A350s with a global cabin crew recruitment drive with a difference. The 5,000 new joiners will ensure the airline's commitment to offering the world's best inflight experience maintains a steady course.

The recruitment drive is designed primarily for those who will soon or have recently stepped into the world of work. The airline is inviting fresh graduates with internships or part-time jobs on their résumés, those with a year or so of hospitality or customer service experience, and individuals keen to embark on an exciting career travelling the globe. The new recruits will be a part of the world's largest international airline.

In 2024, Emirates' recruitment team will host open days and assessments in more than 460 cities across six continents,

reflecting the span of the airline's network and the diversity of its cabin crew team, while flying the flag for living and working in dynamic Dubai.

In 2023, Emirates hired a staggering 8,000 cabin crew and held recruitment events in 353 cities as the airline ramped up its services post the pandemic. In August 2023, the airline's cabin crew numbers crossed the 20,000 milestone and are now 21,500 strong.

The new cabin crew recruitment drive comes as Emirates begins to take delivery of its eagerly anticipated A350s from mid-year and the Boeing 777-Xs starting in 2025. The airline has 65 A350s and a mix of 205 777-9s and 777-8s in its order book. The new aircraft will expand the airline's reach and provide flexibility to add new routes to its network.

Emirates' multicultural cabin crew team hail from more than 140 nationalities and speak a staggering 130 languages.

Red Sea tensions show importance of trade route for LNG shipments

Istanbul, Turkey – The critical importance of the Red Sea route for liquefied natural gas (LNG) has come to light due to disruptions to shipments from the recent conflict in the region, where between 30 and 40 LNG cargo ships pass through every month.

Since the beginning of this week, at least three LNG ships from Qatar appear to have been halted near the coast of Oman due to attacks on vessels using the Red Sea route.

Information compiled from shipping data shows that the positions of Qatar's Al Ghariya, Al Huwaila and Al Nuaman LNG tankers appear immobile.

Another Qatari LNG carrier, Al Rekayyat, which had not updated its position since January 10, was also observed to have paused in the middle of the Red Sea.

Houthis in Yemen have targeted commercial ships in the Red Sea in retaliation for Israel's attacks on Gaza since late last year. In response, many shipping companies decided to stop their voyages through this route.

In recent weeks, many LNG tankers have opted to sail around the Cape of Good Hope to avoid transit through the Red Sea. Alex Frole, an LNG market analyst at ICIS, the world's largest petrochemical market information provider, told Anadolu Agency that if Qatar has to send cargoes



In recent weeks, many LNG tankers have opted to sail around the Cape of Good Hope to avoid transit through the Red Sea

In recent weeks, many LNG tankers have opted to sail around the Cape of Good Hope to avoid transit through the Red Sea

to Turkey and Europe by circumnavigating Africa rather than through the Suez Canal, journey times could more than double.

'ICIS calculates it could take around 29 days for an LNG tanker to reach Turkey by going

around Africa, compared with only 12 for going through the Suez Canal. This would mean possible delays and Qatar might have to find more ships to make sure it can meet all its deliveries, meaning rising costs,' Frole said.

LNG transit has been subject to disturbances on key trade routes, he said, citing droughts in the Panama Canal that lowered water levels and made it difficult for shipments and the recent disruptions in the Suez Canal on the Red Sea route.

Nonetheless, he said that LNG has come to the rescue amid long disruptions, being a more flexible power source than pipeline gas.

This was borne out when

Japan shut down its nuclear plants following the accident in Fukushima in 2011, when LNG supplies aided Japan's power needs.

Additionally, LNG also assisted Europe's supply shortages after Russia stopped pipeline gas deliveries to the continent.

According to Frole, routes can be re-directed in the medium to long term as ships can start following new sailing routes.

Anadolu Agency

Adani advocates for green hydrogen

Ahmedabad, India – Gautam Adani, Chairman of India's diversified Adani Group, has underscored the pivotal role of green hydrogen in steering countries like India towards achieving net-zero emissions.

In his blog for the 54th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) titled 'Reducing costs', Adani wrote that the key to leveraging green hydrogen on the road to net zero is to delve into the viability and potential of green hydrogen as a crucial alternative to fossil fuels, steering the world towards a cleaner and renewable future.

In the blog, available on the WEF website, Adani articulates the environmental and developmental benefits of green hydrogen, emphasising its viability as a zero-emission clean fuel.

Recognising it as the key to realising global carbon neutrality, Adani points out that hydrogen, a potential energy storage medium, can produce electricity in fuel cells with water being the sole waste product.

Adani said, "For India, the equitable solution is not to replace one fossil fuel with another but to leapfrog to renewables and green hydrogen. The decrease in



Gautam Adani

solar costs can be replicated with green hydrogen. This shift will help India achieve energy security and improve air quality in its cities."

He added, "It will also contribute to food security by eliminating the uncertainties of imported ammonia prices, a crucial component in fertilisers. Most importantly, it will offer the world a chance to avert the adverse impacts of climate change."

To unlock its full potential, the blog advocates broader adoption of green hydrogen, coupled with measures to decrease production costs and optimise through vertical integration, covering the entire supply chain.

The goal is to make green hydrogen not only environmentally friendly but also economically affordable.

Adani emphasised that companies with backward integration will be crucial in providing the world with affordable green molecules. The current production cost of green hydrogen is between \$3-5 per kilogram, and Adani envisions a reduction towards \$1 per kg for widespread adoption.

He calls for various policy support measures and a comprehensive approach to make green hydrogen affordable, addressing the entire supply chain from production to utilization.

In terms of India, Adani em-

phasises that the equitable solution is not merely replacing one fossil fuel with another but leapfrogging to renewables and green hydrogen.

This strategic shift, Adani suggests, will contribute to achieving energy security, improving air quality in cities, and ensuring food security by eliminating uncertainties in imported ammonia prices, a crucial fertiliser component. Most significantly, it offers a global opportunity to avert adverse climate change impacts.

Adani New Industries Limited (ANIL), a part of Adani Enterprises Limited (AEL), is at the forefront of developing end-to-end solutions for globally competitive green hydrogen and its derivatives. ANIL's inaugural project aims to produce 1mn metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) of green hydrogen in Gujarat, with the initial phase expected to commence production by fiscal year 2027.

Depending on market conditions, ANIL aspires to increase capacity to up to 3 MMTPA of green hydrogen in the next decade, involving an investment of approximately \$50bn.

ANI

China aims to foster new growth engines in 2024

Beijing, China – As China's 2023 Central Economic Work Conference emphasised boosting foreign trade, the country plans to promote new growth engines in 2024 amid global headwinds.

"The unstable momentum and insufficient driving force of the global economic recovery have led to sustained weakness in external demand, which is the main factor affecting the trend of foreign trade," People's Daily Online quoted Li Xingqian, Director-General of the Department of Foreign Trade of China's Ministry of Commerce, as saying.

He believes China needs to fully recognise the difficulties



and challenges facing the development of foreign trade, and also see that positive factors of stabilisation and improvement are gathering.

New products like solar panels, lithium batteries and electric

vehicles cater to energy needs. Cross-border e-commerce, overseas warehouses and other new models are thriving. Innovation and supply chain strengths support trade.

WAM

Commodity markets face strong headwinds

Ankara, Turkey – Even though pandemic-driven global supply chain disruptions subsided in 2023, commodity markets struggled with strong headwinds such as heightened geopolitical tensions, China's weaker-than-expected reopening, monetary tightening, a stronger US dollar and an oil supply cut by OPEC+.

As commodities followed a downward course since the beginning of 2023, the World Bank projected a 23.5% year-on-year decline in commodity prices.

Speaking to Anadolu Agency, Sant Manukyan, head of the Investment International Markets Department with Türkiye's biggest private lender, Is Bank,

said both the US Federal Reserve's rate hike and the greenback's gaining ground dampened the upward momentum of commodities, especially precious metals.

The Fed has delivered a total of 11 rate hikes so far since March 2022 to curb persistent inflation, which hit its highest level in more than 40 years.

Having ended its rate hike cycle as of September, it left its policy rate unchanged for the third consecutive meeting at a 22-year-high range of 5.25%-

5.50% in December.

The dollar index, which measures the value of the American dollar against a basket of currencies, rose 2.5% in the first nine months of last year on the back of the Fed's monetary tightening policy.

The price of gold saw an all-time high of \$2,150 per ounce in December as the dollar weakened sharply on estimates that the Fed would start cutting rates in the new year.

Gold gained 14.2% to over \$2,080 and silver rose 2.2% last

year to \$24.60 as of Dec. 28.

Manukyan highlighted that China's reopening story failed to meet expectations of a robust economic recovery and a rise in base metals and oil prices.

"I would not be wrong to say that China withdraw its support on commodity market or (its impact) remained limited," Manukyan said.

Besides, since the Chinese government seemed reluctant to intervene in significant ways to address the economic slowdown and weakness in the property market continued, demand for base metals was limited, he explained.

Anadolu Agency



TOGETHERNESS COMPANY ANNOUNCES SELLING THE FOLLOWING LANDS AND PROPERTIES:

- 1- Residential/commercial Land with an area of 2934 square meters in Ghala Heights
- 2- 5 agricultural plots in Barka, a total area of 84,000 square meters, each plot with an authorized well.
- 3- Residential/commercial Building with an area of 1883 square meters in Saham, with a commercial building on it
- 4- Residential/commercial Building with an area of 547 square meters in Buraimi, a building containing 8 shops and 10 apartments
- 5- Two farms in the state of Bidiya/Ghubra, with an area of 22,619 square meters, the other 45,000 square meters.
- 6- Residential plot for the Wilayat of Bidiya/Al Wasel, total area 96,847 square meters
- 7- Residential/commercial building, with an area of 1,572 square meters, it includes hotel apartments and shops in wilayat bidyah
- 8- Residential/commercial shops, with an area of 1944 square meters, it includes a market consisting of 19 shops in wilayat bidyah
- 9- Residential/commercial Land with an area of 1044 square meters and an existing hotel in the Wilayat of Mahut/Hajj
- 10- 4 industrial plots in Duqm, total area 30,000 square meters
- 11- One residential/commercial plot with an area of 900 square meters and a residential plot with an area of 594 square meters in Al-Qabil
- 12- Residential/commercial Land with an area of 750 square meters in Duqm

Contact at: - +968 92822040, +968 97365897
www.togethernessrealestate.com

Oceanfront Al Mouj Golf to elevate offering with Troon partnership

Oman’s world-class oceanfront golf destination bolsters its status as a top golfing destination with Troon International partnership, focusing on excellence and expansion of world-class services.

In a partnership that highlights its commitment to exceptional golfing experiences, Al Mouj Muscat has appointed Troon, a globally recognised leader in golf and club-related leisure services, to manage Al Mouj Golf (AMG).

Situated in the heart of Muscat, the Greg Norman-designed Al Mouj Golf course stands as a jewel in the Middle East, poised to reach new heights under Troon’s expert stewardship.

The strategic partnership will see Al Mouj Golf utilise Troon’s international division, ‘Troon International’, operating under the renowned Troon Golf brand.

The collaboration encompasses comprehensive management of agronomy, marketing and operations, leveraging Troon’s extensive Middle Eastern market expertise. Troon International, with its rich portfolio of world-class courses such as The Els Club Dubai and Al Zorah Golf Club in the UAE, Royal Golf Club Bahrain, and several Muscat-based golf clubs, brings a wealth of regional knowledge. This partnership offers AMG

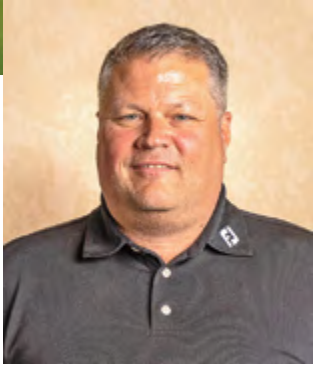


club members access to Troon’s impressive network of regional and international courses, while attracting Troon’s extensive golfer community to AMG, fostering enriched experiences for both communities.

Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Golf,

said, “We are excited to embark on this journey with Troon International. With their unparalleled expertise in golf management and resort excellence, they stand as an ideal partner for Al Mouj Golf’s vision and aspirations. This strategic partnership marks Al Mouj’s ongoing commitment to

further enhance our offerings, providing our members and guests with an extraordinary golfing experience. We are confident that this collaboration will elevate Al Mouj Golf to even greater heights and cement its position as a leader in the world of golf.”



D J Flanders



Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani

D J Flanders, Executive Vice President of Troon International, said, “Utilising our wealth of expertise in golf management and resort excellence, this partnership with Al Mouj Golf is set to unlock the full potential of this remarkable destination. Collaboratively, our goal is to build upon its already esteemed reputation to ensure the club preserves its status as one of the world’s premier golf destinations.”

Al Mouj Golf’s standing as one of the world’s premier golf destinations is well-recognized, as demonstrated by its consecutive inclusion in the Top 100 Courses in the World in Today’s Golfer, a distinction it shares with only one other course in the region. Further showcasing its dedication to excellence, Al Mouj Golf has been re-certified in the industry-leading GEO and Audobon standards for 2023, making it one of only a few golf clubs in the world to maintain both certifications. The course has served as the venue for several prestigious tournaments in recent years, most notably hosting the European Tour’s NBO Open in 2018 and The Asian Tour elevated event the International Series in 2023. Occupying a stunning 2km stretch along the coastline, the golf course enjoys a breathtaking backdrop of the Hajjar mountain range.

Excitement builds over Ooredoo's home raffle draw

Ooredoo’s home raffle draw is offering one lucky customer the chance to win a brand new dream home.

‘Upgrade or subscribe to an Ooredoo 5G or Fibre Home Internet plan of just RO28 and above, and you will automatically be entered into Ooredoo’s home raffle draw to win your dream home and a whole host of other exciting prizes! But be quick, the next draw is in February,’ Ooredoo stated.

The first draw saw winners taking home a new PlayStation 5, a Smart TV, a mesh device, as well as a free 3, 6 and 9 month Home Internet subscription and even a lifetime subscription.

‘Every Ooredoo Home Internet plan comes with generous data allowances to suit every need and budget, from 600GB per month to unlimited, with speeds up to 1024Mbps. Customers can also receive complimentary

access to STARZPLAY, OSN+ and YouTube on selected plans to add even more value to their monthly plan,’ it added.

Ooredoo called upon customers saying, ‘Don’t miss out on this incredible chance to upgrade your world, visit the Ooredoo website, log on to the award-winning App or head to one of the many stores across Oman to find out more to be in with a chance of scooping the grand prize’.

The 1st draw saw winners taking home a new PlayStation 5, a Smart TV, a mesh device, and free internet subscription

Meethaq Islamic takes part in Finance and Insurance Forum

Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat reaffirmed its commitment to advancing the Islamic Banking Industry and various economic sectors in the Sultanate of Oman through a comprehensive suite of banking services and financial solutions.

The recent participation of Meethaq Islamic Banking in the ‘Finance and Insurance Forum’, organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in the wilayat of Sohar, North Batinah, showcased its dedication to supporting SMEs and introducing them to essential services and facilities provided by financing and insurance service providers, banks, and commercial institutions.

The event, was held under the patronage of Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, the CEO of the Capital Market Authority (CMA) and with the presence of esteemed officials and specialists in the insurance and finance sectors.

The forum placed a strategic focus on various areas, designed to offer SMEs diverse services and facilities through a fair that featured 20 insurance and financing service providers. This



initiative aimed to encourage SMEs to develop their businesses while increasing their awareness about risk management and insurance-focused matters.

Agreements and memorandums of understanding were signed between the service providers and SMEs, fostering collaboration and support. The forum also touched upon various

subject matters introduced to the SMEs through the presentations delivered by the service providers.

Those subjects included innovative financing, the importance of consolidated documents for health insurance, key insurance products for business owners, financing services through group financing platforms, financing opportunities across banks, and

the main challenges faced by emerging companies.

During the forum, Meethaq Islamic Banking highlighted the role of Meethaq in supporting Oman’s economy through providing products and financing solutions to individuals, MSME’s and corporate in various sectors through a presentation delivered by Buthaina Salim al Afu, Unit

Head, Meethaq Large Corporates.

Moreover, the forum included interactive discussions with experts and specialists in financing and insurance on enhancing the present and future of the Islamic Banking sector. These conversations served as a platform to explore innovative financing and insurance solutions, empowering SMEs to execute and expand their commercial projects in alignment with their needs and aspirations.

“At Meethaq, we take profound satisfaction in our successful partnership with various institutions from the public and private sectors. Our pivotal role in enhancing Oman’s Islamic Banking landscape contributes significantly to shared objectives aimed at strengthening the Sultanate’s economy,” said Ali bin Ahmed al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Corporate Banking.

He asserted that the Meethaq team consistently emphasises unwavering commitment to excellence in the banking sector, highlighting the institution’s 12-year track record of achievements.

Franco-Omani Centre to celebrate environment month in January

On the occasion of the Omani Environment Day that is celebrated each year on January 8 and as part of France’s environment diplomacy, the Franco-Omani Centre is organising a series of echoing events during the whole month of January in the sultanate.

The protection of the environment is a key priority of French diplomacy. France chaired the breakthrough Climate Change Conference of 2015 where the Paris Agreement was adopted. After organising the One Ocean Summit in Brest in 2022, France was designated to host the United Nations Oceans Conference in 2025.

A conference on ‘Biodiversity



in Oman: A brief overview’ by Maïa Sarrouf Willson from the Environment Society of Oman will be held on Wednesday from 6.30pm to 7.30pm at the Franco-Omani Centre in MSQ, Muscat.

On Thursday, there will be an upcycling workshop for kids at the centre on Thursday from 4pm to 5pm.

‘While discovering/practicing French, let your kids unleash their creativity and learn about the power of sustainability,’ the French Embassy stated, while urging parents to take their children to the workshop.

There will be an hour-long literature reading *The sea and the people* with Philippe Guinet in

French, on Sunday (January 21) from 6.30pm at the same venue.

‘On the occasion of the worldwide celebrated *Nuits de la lecture*, come and listen to selected texts read by Philippe Guinet from *Les passeurs de mots*. The readings will revolve around the sea and its relationship with mankind,’ the embassy stated.

The centre will also organise a clean-up drive in Qantab Beach, together with Move Green Initiative on January 27 (Saturday) from 8am to 9.30am.

‘Calling all beach lovers and eco-warriors! Bring your positive energy and let’s gather in Qantab to clean up the shores and protect marine life,’ the embassy requested.

quested.

The centre will organise the screening of the movie *Animal* by French Director Cyril Dion (in French with English subtitles, family audience) on January 28 (Sunday) to bring to an end the month-long celebration.

The movie will be screened at the Franco-Omani Centre from 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

The movie is based on Bella and Vipulan, two teenagers, who embark on an extraordinary quest: To find another way of living alongside other species, more as roommates than predators.

To do so, they travel and meet with scientists and activities all over the globe.

Mall of Muscat hosts spectacular winter festival with music and magic

Mall of Muscat, leading leisure and entertainment destination recently hosted an array of captivating performances as part of its winter events.

The Magical Nights event, led by the renowned entertainer Mohamed al Mukhaini, provided a mesmerising experience that transcended age barriers, thrilling both children and adults alike. Mukhaini's act, a blend of illusion and wonder, captivated the audience with an array of tricks that ranged from the classic to modern, each performed with a flair that left the spectators in awe.

As a pleasant equivalent to the magic, the winter campaign also featured the celebrated singer Zamzam al Balushi, who is known for her famous song *Am-atiyah*.

Her concert, a showcase of vocal expertise and emotive artistry, enchanted the audience. Zamzam's singing talent, characterised by its depth and versatility, reverberated deeply with the listeners, leaving an unforgettable impression of her musical genius.

These events, forming the cornerstone of the mall's magical winter weekend, were lauded for their dynamic and engaging nature.

A Mall of Muscat spokesperson expressed immense pride in hosting such a diverse array of



Omani talents. He said, "Both artistes epitomised the spirit of Omani talent and cultural diversity. The performances of the artists were a celebration of talent, bringing together people of all ages and backgrounds in a shared experience of cultural richness. Zamzam's concert, marked by a mesmerising vocal

performance, captivated the senses of an eager audience, adding a lyrical charm to the winter festivities. Mukhaini's act was full of fun and entertainment."

Complementing the winter weekend, the mall also offered a variety of engaging activities, catering to a broad spectrum of interests and age groups. This di-



versity underscored the Mall of Muscat's commitment to delivering a comprehensive array of cultural and entertainment experiences to its visitors.

The overwhelming success of these events was reflected in the enthusiastic feedback from attendees and visitors, who commended the mall for organising

such a remarkable blend of musical and magical entertainment.

This series of events highlighted the mall's dedication to high-quality entertainment and reinforced its reputation as a vibrant centre of cultural diversity and artistic innovation.

Located in Mabela, in close proximity to the Muscat Interna-

The performances of the artistes were a celebration of talent, bringing together people of all ages and backgrounds in a shared experience of cultural richness

MALL OF MUSCAT SPOKESPERSON



tional Airport, Mall of Muscat beckons with its charm. Boasting an expansive collection of 240+ brands that span fashion, lifestyle, sports, and electronics, this retail haven occupies an im-

Starbucks, Costa, Gloria Jeans, Cinnabon, Pappa Roti, McDonalds, KFC, and Charleys among others, ensure that visitors can savour an exquisite range of culinary delights.

BMW Motorrad to showcase unique 'authority and protection' motorbikes

AGMC, the official importer of BMW Group vehicles for Dubai, Sharjah, and the Northern Emirates, is making an appearance at the 25th edition of Intersec 2024 which began on Tuesday.

AGMC will showcase the latest generation of BMW Authority and Protection vehicles at the prestigious event with a range of BMW Motorrad bikes, highlighting their commitment to innovation and excellence in security.

Intersec 2024, being held under the patronage of H H Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, marks a significant milestone as the world's leading trade fair for safety, security, and fire protec-

tion. With over 1,000 exhibitors across 12 halls and 8 content features, the event promises to unveil cutting-edge innovations from industry frontrunners.

To continue till Thursday at the Dubai World Trade Centre, attendees of the event can explore state-of-the-art solutions and engage with experts, government officials, and companies to discover the future of security.

AGMC's line-up at the event includes the F 900 GS-P, R 1250 RT-P, the R 18 B Concept, and the electric BMW CE 04-P from BMW Motorrad. These models, with their unique authority and protection capabilities, offer features and specifications that

cater to a wide range of needs and preferences on the road.

Thomas Pasdelou, Head of BMW Motorrad at BMW Group Middle East, said, "At BMW Motorrad, we take immense pride in our role in advancing the safety and innovation through our motorcycles. Our state-of-the-art models are designed with a blend of advanced technology and high-performance features that cater to various on-road requirements. Whether it's the robust power of our F 900 GS-P, the all-round capabilities of our R 1250 RT-P, the raw power encapsulated in our R 18 B Concept, or the urban mobility offered by our electric BMW CE 04-P, each

bike exhibits the highest standards of safety and innovation. We look forward to presenting these leading-edge vehicles to attendees at Intersec 2024 and demonstrating how BMW Motorrad bikes are excellent options for security solutions on the go."

Muhamet Latifi, Brand Manager for BMW Motorrad at AGMC, commented: "The participation of AGMC with BMW Motorrad at Intersec 2024 signifies our dedication to delivering top-tier on-road security solutions. The BMW Motorrad models we will showcase exemplify the perfect amalgamation of power, performance and technological advancement."



Vodafone Oman gains ISO 45001 certificate for occupational health and safety management systems

Vodafone Oman has obtained the international ISO 45001 certificate, further underlining the company's commitment to customer experience and care.

This standard in occupational health and safety management systems provides a framework for organisations to establish, implement, maintain, and continually improve occupational health and safety performance.

Having launched its operations in 2021, Vodafone Oman met the criteria of the ISO 45001 standard in an impressively quick time frame.

Eng Bader al Zidi, CEO, Vodafone Oman, said, "At Vodafone Oman, we continue to strive to set and maintain the highest levels of service that benchmark ourselves against international standards. Achieving the ISO 45001 certificate in such a short period since our inception reflects our strong commitment to operational excellence and our



focus on prioritizing people's wellbeing."

The ISO 45001 certificate was developed to construct a system that safeguards the health and safety of employees as well as enhance a company's reputation and business continuity. Its core

objective is to prevent accidents and injuries that could disrupt workflow and compromise employee wellbeing, reaffirming Vodafone Oman's commitment to upholding industry standards and best practices throughout all of its operations.

Turkish Airlines lauds govt's visa exemption rule for Omanis, Emiratis, Bahrainis, Saudis

Turkish Airlines, a global leader in aviation, has praised a major move made by Türkiye to extend visa-free entry to the nationals of UAE, Oman, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, from December 23, 2023.

Tourists can now spend 90 out of 180 days in Türkiye without a visa. The new visa exemption rule is set to bolster the ties between Türkiye and these countries, and further strengthen the country's tourist numbers from 2024.

The decision, issued through a presidential decree by Tayyip Erdogan, President of Türkiye, is an initiative set to promote cultural exchanges between Türkiye and the respective nations, while most importantly encouraging tourists to explore the country's rich history, ancient wonders and vibrant heritage.

Türkiye is also providing e-visa options to expatriates living in GCC countries. Eligible travellers can apply to the Türkiye electronic visa (e-visa) system.



Nationals of Algeria, Egypt, India, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines and Yemen holding a valid visa or valid residence permit from one of the Schengen countries, USA, UK or Ireland can apply for the e-visa. Ahmet Bolat, Chairman of the

Board and the Executive Committee at Turkish Airlines, commented: "Türkiye is continuing to expand its international relations with the new presidential decree issued to exempt visas for nationals of UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Oman. This move is

applaudable, as the country makes significant strides within its tourism sector to bolster more cultural exchange. Turkish Airlines supports the visa exemptions, making travel even easier through free layover services for our flyers. As the national flag carrier of Türkiye, we're giving our passengers the opportunity to make memories they will never forget in beautiful Istanbul. Post the visa-free initiative, we look forward to people around the world choosing Turkish Airlines for their holiday trips as we offer a mini vacation during their journey."

Passengers choosing Turkish Airlines to travel via Istanbul Airport to anywhere of the world can get a chance to discover Istanbul free of charge. Turkish Airlines' transit passengers are eligible to unlock two destinations with one flight ticket, as the national flag carrier offers two layover services, free hotel stay and free city tour, to explore the city of Istanbul when in transit.

Donald Trump wins Iowa caucuses

Former US President Donald Trump closed in for a 2020 rematch contest with incumbent Joe Biden

Washington DC, US - Former US President Donald Trump registered a huge victory with unprecedented margin at the Iowa caucuses, further demonstrating the hold he maintains over the party as well as its supporters, as he closed in for a 2020 rematch contest with incumbent Joe Biden.

According to the latest figures reported by CNN with 99 per cent results registered, Trump has won 20 out of the 40 delegates from Iowa with 56,250 votes - a whopping difference of around 32,840 votes.

Trump kickstarted his bid to win party's third consecutive presidential nomination despite skipping the GOP (Grand Old Party) primary debates. The results also demonstrated how 'devoted' Republicans remain to Trump amid his highly unusual campaign - one being waged between court appearances, indictments and removal from ballots.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis came a distant second with eight delegates and former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley finishing not much behind with seven delegates as the contest moves to New Hampshire, where the latter enjoys some clout.

Trump who came one step closer to the Republican nomination, deviated from his usual attacking style and congratulated his GOP rivals. He called DeSantis, Haley and Vivek Ramaswamy as 'very smart people, very capable people', CNN reported.

But his message to his primary opponents couldn't have been clearer: It's time to get out



With 99 per cent results registered, former US President Donald Trump has won 20 out of the 40 delegates from Iowa with 56,250 votes (Anadolu Agency)

The Iowa caucus victory is considered the first step in Donald Trump's bid to claim the Republican nomination in a third consecutive election

and get on board.

"It's just so important, and I want to make that a very big part of our message: We're going to come together. It's going to happen soon, too," Trump said.

Another major takeaway was

the contest turning into a three-way race with Ramaswamy dropping out of his White House bid. However, Trump continues to lead with a whopping margin.

The Iowa caucus victory is considered the first step in Don-

ald Trump's bid to claim the Republican nomination in a third consecutive election. Incidentally, Trump had lost in the State eight years ago to Senator Ted Cruz, according to The Hill.

Also, the entrance polls showed the breadth of Trump's support across the GOP's key constituencies

53 per cent of White evangelical Christians backed Trump, to DeSantis' 27 per cent and Haley's 13 per cent - figures that underscore why Trump is the

heavy favourite in South Carolina - where evangelicals make up a huge share of the party's primary electorate - even though it's Haley's home state, according to CNN.

On the other hand, the college graduates split somewhat evenly between Trump, Haley and DeSantis. But Trump dominated those without a college degree, with 67 per cent support. Meanwhile, Haley and DeSantis, while speaking to supporters after Trump had taken his victory lap,

both vowed to continue their campaigns.

Haley, is within a difference of single digits of Trump in New Hampshire, polls show, CNN reported. She's hoping to capitalise on a more moderate primary electorate there - and use it as a launchpad to effectively clear the field and position herself as the party's lone Trump alternative.

"I can safely say, tonight, Iowa made this Republican primary a two-person race," she told sup-

porters. As the race shifts to more favourable territory for Haley, she used her speech on Monday night in Iowa to argue she's the 'antidote' to a Biden-Trump rematch.

Haley argued that the majority of Americans disapprove of both the current and the former president and insisted that her campaign is 'the last best hope of stopping the Trump-Biden nightmare'.

While she congratulated Trump on his win, she argued that the former president and Biden share 'more in common than you think'.

"Trump and Biden both lack a vision for our country's future because both are consumed by the past, by investigations, by vendettas, by grievances. America deserves better," CNN quoted her as saying.

Florida Governor DeSantis, who was declared the second-place finisher in the caucuses told supporters that he had survived having 'everything but the kitchen sink' thrown at him in Iowa, as he vowed to continue his campaign.

DeSantis campaigned very hard in Iowa, completed the 'full Grassley' - visiting all 99 counties. He also had the endorsement of the popular governor, Kim Reynolds.

But, ultimately, he was able to manage a distant second-place finish, behind a former president who hardly campaigned in Iowa and a late-rising rival who has long been much more focused on New Hampshire, CNN reported.

ANI

Drone attack: State of emergency in Russia's southwestern Voronezh

Istanbul, Turkey - Russia declared a state of emergency in southwestern Voronezh on Tuesday after foiling Ukraine's overnight drone attack, which damaged several buildings and injured a child.

Voronezh Mayor Vadim Kstenin announced on Telegram that a state of emergency has been declared to allow for 'speedy decision-making'.

Separately, Voronezh Governor Aleksandr Gusev stated on Telegram that a young girl was injured by fragments from a downed drone, resulting in cut wounds to her arm, leg, and neck.

Both officials reported damage to residential buildings.

"Air defence systems destroyed five and intercepted three Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) over the terri-



tory of the Voronezh region, four UAVs were intercepted over the territory of the Belgorod region," the Russian Defence Ministry said earlier in a statement.

The ministry also claimed that it destroyed three UAVs over the Voronezh region during an attempted attack on Russian territory between 1:50am and

2:50am local time.

Moscow and Kyiv have traded accusations over airstrikes against each other, which have escalated since late December when at least 40 people were killed in various regions of Ukraine in a massive air attack described by President Volodymyr Zelensky as the

'heaviest attack' since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war.

On January 1, Russian President Vladimir Putin said his country would not let 'a single crime of this kind' go unpunished following a subsequent raid on the Russian city of Belgorod, which killed 25 people.

Anadolu Agency

Kenya seeks swift resolution with Tanzania after flight ban

Nairobi, Kenya - Kenya's Foreign Minister Musalia Mudavadi called late on Monday for the swift resolution of a diplomatic dispute over a flight ban by Tanzania on flag carrier Kenya Airways.

Tanzania on Monday imposed a ban that halted passenger flights between Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, raising concerns among citizens of the two countries about escalating tensions between the East African neighbours. "We have jointly agreed that our respective civil aviation authorities will work together to have the matter resolved amicably within the next three days. There should therefore be no cause for alarm," said Mudavadi after discussions with his Tanzanian counterpart January Makamba.



Makamba in a separate statement noted that 'we've (together with the Kenyan foreign minister) resolved to settle this issue, per existing agreements, within three days'. The sudden ban arose from a disagreement over cargo flight operations.

Tanzania sought approval for all cargo flights by Air Tanzania to Nairobi, but Kenyan authori-

ties denied the request, citing technical and logistical concerns. According to a statement by the Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority (TCAA), the denial prompted a reciprocal ban, causing concern among frequent passengers and cargo companies about the uncertainty of their future travels and operations.

Anadolu Agency

UK reiterates commitment to reduce number of migrants arriving by legal routes

London, UK - Britain's home secretary on Monday reiterated the government's policy to reduce the number of migrants arriving by legal routes as well as to stop asylum seekers arriving across the English Channel in small boats.

Responding to lawmakers' questions in parliament, James Cleverly reminded that 92,000 legacy asylum claims were cleared last year and more than 112,000 claims were processed, marking the 'largest volume in two decades'.

Saying the total asylum backlog is decreasing, he noted that they will continue to review and improve processes to accelerate

the decision making in this regard. In response to questions from members of parliament, Cleverly defended the government's migration policy and criticised the opposition for having 'no plan'.

"They have no plan, they have no commitment, and they've even said that if something is working, they would scrap it," he added.

Asked what steps were being taken to reduce the number of legal migrants coming to the UK, Cleverly reminded about the recent government measures to further reduce legal net migration, including limitations on family depen-



dents being brought in by workers and students.

He also vowed to raise the minimum income requirement progressively over the next few

years.

"We want to make sure that this country is able to benefit from the expertise, knowledge and work of the brightest and

best from around the whole world in a manner which is controlled, which is fair, which is predictable and which is well enforced," he said.

He again criticised the Labour Party for opposing 'every single step' that the government is taking to bring the migration figure down.

On housing unaccompanied migrants in hotels, a policy which the government shifted on, Tom Pursglove, minister for legal migration and delivery, said they are making 'significant progress' in closing hotels, with 50 due to be shut by the end of January and more in the coming months.

"We're also working to move asylum seekers into alternative cheaper accommodation and have successfully cleared the legacy backlog by deciding more than 112,000 cases," he noted.

Pursglove added that reducing inflow into the system in the first place is the 'crucial point' and called for support for the government's Safety of Rwanda Bill.

Following the UK Supreme Court's decision, the government introduced the bill, which states that Rwanda is a safe country to remove asylum seekers to.

A majority of British lawmakers last month backed a contro-

versial bill that would allow the government to send asylum seekers to Rwanda.

The bill, which was submitted to parliament in early in December, aims to address the concerns of the Supreme Court, which ruled that the government's original plan to send asylum seekers to the East African country was unlawful.

Nearly 30,000 migrants crossed the English Channel last year, over a third less than in 2022, when over 45,000 made the crossing, and slightly higher than the number in 2021, when more than 28,000 arrived in the UK.

Anadolu Agency

Iran strikes 'terrorist' sites in Syria, Iraq with missiles

Tehran, Iran - Iran fired a barrage of ballistic missiles at positions of 'terrorist groups' in Syria and Iraq late on Monday, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said in a statement.

The IRGC said a 'spy headquarters' and a 'gathering of anti-Iran terrorist groups' in Syria were destroyed with ballistic missiles, as cited by state media.

The statement noted that the attack came in response to 'recent terrorist crimes' of anti-Iran groups, referring to twin bombings in the southeastern city of Kerman earlier this month and an attack on a police station in Sistan-Baluchestan province in December.

It said the 'commanders and main elements' linked to the recent attacks in Kerman and Rask were identified in Syria and targeted with ballistic missiles late on Monday.

At least 93 people were killed after two suicide bombers detonated their explosives in a big gathering in Kerman.

The attack occurred on the fourth anniversary of the death of Iran's former top military commander General Qassem Soleimani.

In a separate incident in mid-December, at least 11 police personnel were killed after a police station came under attack in the city of Rask in southwestern Sistan-Baluchestan province bordering Pakistan.

On Sunday, Iran's police chief Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Radan announced the arrest of perpetrators of the Rask attack. The main accused in the Kerman



Teams carry out search and rescue operations after unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks in Erbil, Iraq on Tuesday (Anadolu Agency)

Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement, warning to pursue legal measures against Iran, including a complaint with the UN Security Council over the Erbil strikes

attack, two Tajik nationals, have also been arrested.

In another part of the statement, the IRGC said it also targeted the Israeli spy agency Mossad's headquarters in the northern Iraq with a barrage of missiles and 'destroyed' it.

The site had been the 'centre for the development of espionage operations and the design of terrorist activities in the region and Iran', the statement noted.

Media reports said the attacks took place in the vicinity of the US consulate in Erbil.

Tensions have been running high between Iran and the US amid Israel's war on Gaza and regional developments, including attacks on ships in the Red Sea by Iran-backed Houthis.

On Tuesday, Iran's Foreign Ministry claimed that the strikes against targets in Iraq and Syria were 'in line with the defence of the country's sovereignty and security, as well as to counter threats'.

Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani in a statement described the attacks as 'a response to

those who act against Iran's national security', adding that Tehran respects other countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity while exercising its 'legitimate and legal right to deter national security threats'.

Iraq to pursue legal measures

Following the attack, Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement, warning to pursue legal measures against Iran, including a complaint with the UN Security Council over the Erbil strikes.

The ministry condemned 'the Iranian aggression' against northern Iraq, which it said resulted in civilian casualties, and called the attack 'a violation' of the Arab country's sovereignty.

Kurdish Regional Government

(KRG) Prime Minister Masrour Barzani also condemned the strikes, describing them as a 'cowardly attack on the people of the Kurdistan region'.

Meanwhile, Iraq's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday summoned Iran's charge d'affaires in Baghdad to lodge an official protest over Monday night's strikes.

Iraq's Erbil Governor Omed Khosnaw said on Tuesday that missile strikes in Erbil are 'inhuman terrorist' attacks.

Governor Khosnaw said in a statement: "An inhuman terrorist attack has been carried out against Erbil."

Local media indicated that some of the missiles used in the attacks hit houses where civilians lived, while others fell near residences.

Anadolu Agency



Israel's opposition leader Yair Lapid (Anadolu Agency)

Yair Lapid says Israel PM unfit to run Gaza war

Jerusalem - The Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is unfit to run the Gaza war, opposition leader Yair Lapid said on Monday. "The State of Israel needs change now, and there is no possibility of waiting any longer," Lapid said on X.

"This government does not know how to manage a war, and it is pushing us into a deep economic crisis that hurts every citizen's pocket, and has landed us in The Hague," he added.

South Africa has filed a lawsuit before the International Court of Justice accusing Israel of perpetrating genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip during its deadly military offensive. It also requested provisional measures from the court to protect the Palestinian people, including by calling upon Israel to immediately halt its military attacks.

"This government is not fit to manage the war, and Netanyahu is not fit to run the country," Lapid said.

The opposition leader said that his party is ready to vote in favour of an alternative gov-

ernment to be led by another prime minister. Calls have grown for holding fresh elections in Israel amid criticism of Netanyahu over his failure to acknowledge responsibility for a cross-border attack by Hamas on October 7.

Opinion polls conducted by Israeli media in the past few days suggested that if early elections were held now, Netanyahu would be unable to form a government, while former defence minister and war cabinet member Benny Gantz is considered the most likely to succeed.

Death toll in Gaza rises to 24,285

At least 24,285 Palestinians have been killed and 61,154 others injured in Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip since October 7, the Health Ministry in the besieged Palestinian enclave said on Tuesday. "The Israeli occupation (forces) committed 15 massacres against families in the Gaza Strip, resulting in 158 casualties and 320 injuries over the past 24 hours."

Anadolu Agency

UK premier defends strikes on Houthis, says it was self-defence

London, UK - British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Monday defended last week's airstrikes on targets linked to Yemen's Houthi group, saying they were 'proportionate' and in 'self-defence'.

In a statement in parliament, Sunak recalled the Iran-backed group's recent targeting of commercial shipping in the Red Sea, saying they also carried out attacks against British and American warships.

"They fired on our ships and our sailors. It was the biggest attack on the Royal Navy for decades, and so we acted," he noted. His statement was the first since last week's strikes were carried out following criticism that parliament was not consulted beforehand.

Defending the strikes, Sunak said they were carried out along with the US with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada and the Netherlands in 'self-defence consistent with the UN Charter'.

"I want to be clear that these were limited strikes. They were carefully targeted at launch sites for drones and ballistic missiles...I can tell the House today that our initial assessment is that all 13 planned targets were destroyed.

"We have seen no evidence thus far of civilian casualties, which we took great care to avoid."

He reiterated that it was 'limited, not escalatory', and claimed that it was a 'necessary and proportionate response to a direct threat to UK vessels and therefore to the UK itself'.

Sunak said the Royal Navy is in the Red Sea as part of Operation Prosperity Guardian, a US-led military operation by a multina-



British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

They (the Houthis) fired on our ships and our sailors. It was the biggest attack on the Royal Navy for decades, and so we acted

RISHI SUNAK

tional coalition formed last month in response to Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea.

Rejecting Houthi statements that the targeting of ships is only in connection with Israel's war on Gaza, Sunak said the group targets ships from around the world.

"We should not fall for the Houthis' malign narrative that this is about Israel and Gaza - they target ships from around the world. We continue to work towards a sustainable ceasefire in

Gaza and to get more aid to civilians. We also continue to support a negotiated settlement in Yemen's civil war, but I want to be very clear that this action is completely unrelated to those issues.

It is a direct response to the Houthis' attacks on international shipping. We should also recognise the risks of inaction," he said, adding the threats to shipping must end and detained vessels and crews must be released.

Keir Starmer, the leader of the main opposition Labour Party, backed the government's action against the Houthi group and condemned the targeting of commercial ships. "The Houthi attacks are unacceptable, illegal, and if left unaddressed, could lead to a devastating rise in the cost of essential food in some of the poorest countries," he said.

However, he said that 'scrutiny is not the enemy of strategy', adding these strikes still do bring risk. Starmer also touched on the situation in the Palestinian territories, including the occupied West Bank, stressing that 'settler violence must stop immediately'. "And in Gaza, we need a humanitarian truce now, not as a short pause...The need for a sustainable cease-fire is clear to stop the killing of innocent civilians, to create the space for the return of all the hostages and to provide urgent humanitarian relief."

"The hope of the two-state solution is fragile, but it is still there. And we must fight for it," he added.

The Scottish National Party's Westminster leader Stephen Flynn said the best way to stop Houthi attacks is for a cease-fire to be called in the Gaza Strip, asking Sunak 'what comes next'?

"How far is he willing to go in relation to military action? Because we cannot have an escalation which leads to further regional instability," he noted.

Sunak replied that they would not hesitate to 'protect our security and our interests where required', adding: "I obviously won't speculate on future action."

Anadolu Agency



Philadelphia Corridor gives Israeli premier pretext to prolong war

Gaza City, Palestine - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu doesn't cease to mention his desire to seize control of the border area between the Gaza Strip and Egypt known as the Philadelphia Corridor.

Netanyahu claims that without controlling this narrow strip of land, the Israeli army won't be able to defeat the Palestinian group Hamas in Gaza.

His comments come as the Philadelphia Corridor is crowded with displaced Palestinians who fled Israel's air and ground operations across the Gaza Strip.

In recent weeks, the Israeli army has intensified its attacks on the southern areas of the Strip, including parts of Rafah city.

However, any Israeli military activity in the Philadelphia Corridor would anger Cairo while dismaying Washington, which seeks to de-escalate the intensity of the war in Gaza.

Any Israeli activity in the area is seen by many political analysts as expanding and pro-

longing the conflict in favour of Netanyahu, who would stay in power for a longer period as long as the war continues.

On Sunday, the US Axios website revealed differences between the US administration and Netanyahu's government over the necessity to de-escalate the conflict in Gaza and to go to a less-intensified stage of fighting, a move that Netanyahu seems not to apply as he seeks to expand the conflict for his own political calculation.

Repeated statements

On Saturday, Netanyahu for the fourth time stressed that without controlling the Philadelphia Corridor, the Israeli army won't be able to defeat Hamas in Gaza.

On December 30, he also stated that the Philadelphia Corridor must be under Israeli control, and any other outcome will not be accepted.

On December 10 while speaking about future plans for Gaza, Netanyahu asserted that the Philadelphia Corridor shall

be under Israeli control, and on December 15, he made similar statements.

Egypt's position

In response to Netanyahu's plans for the Philadelphia Corridor (also known as the Salah al-Din Corridor), Ahmed Abu Zeid, the spokesperson for the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, on Saturday stressed that Egypt controls its borders completely.

"These matters (like the Philadelphia Corridor) are subjected to legal accords...and Egypt will respond to comments accordingly," he said, without further elaborating.

On the same day, *The Wall Street Journal* quoted Israeli officials who said that Tel Aviv informed Cairo about its plans to control Gaza's border with Egypt, in reference to the Philadelphia Corridor.

Israel's Channel 12 reported last week that Egypt rejected a request by Israel to assume security responsibility in the Philadelphia Corridor.

Anadolu Agency

INDIA

CBI-ED-NIA team to visit UK soon to expedite extradition of key fugitives

New Delhi - A high-level team of officers from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate (ED) and National Investigation Agency (NIA) would be heading soon for the UK to expedite extradition of India's most wanted fugitives, including defence dealer Sanjay Bhandari, diamond trader Nirav Modi and Kingfisher Airlines promoter Vijay Mallya, sources said on Tuesday.

It is also learnt that the team heading to London will engage in bilateral discussions regarding the longstanding exchange of information pending with the UK authorities under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT). Being signatories to MLAT, both the UK and India are obligated to legally share information on criminal investigations involving economic offenders and others.

The NIA team is presently investigating multiple terror suspects associated with the Khalistani movement.



Nirav Modi, Sanjay Bhandari and Vijay Mallya

Despite the Union Home Ministry being the designated authority for MLAT matters, the

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is actively engaged in diplomatic interactions with the



UK in this instance, as all requests are channelled through MEA for foreign countries.

It is learnt that the team would include a senior officer from the MEA during the meet-

ing with the UK authorities. The meeting would be arranged in sessions in close supervision of the Indian High Commission in London.

If everything goes as planned, the joint team is expected to depart at any time this month. Besides expediting the process of extradition of the fugitives, the team is learnt to seek outstanding information about assets obtained by them in London, including specifics about their banking transactions.

Officers, privy to the development, told the ANI, the initiatives are underway to identify the properties of the individuals in the UK and other countries with the aim of seizing the 'proceeds of crime'.

The extradition cases of Bhandari, Modi, and Mallya are awaiting resolution in the UK, as they have appealed in higher courts against deportation to India. The ED has already seized their assets in India, and significant funds have been recovered by selling the assets of Mallya

and Modi, amounting to thousands of crores, which were then returned to banks to settle their outstanding dues.

Bhandari, an arms dealer, had fled in 2016 following investigations by income tax and the ED into various defence deals. As per the ED, Bhandari obtained properties in London and Dubai, subsequently transferring them to shell companies.

Nirav Modi faces allegations in a fraud case related to Punjab National Bank funds exceeding Rs 6,500 crore, whereas Mallya's assets, valued at over Rs 5,000 crore, have been attached and seized due to bank defrauding activities.

The ED is investigating Bhandari for alleged payoffs received in various defence deals. The agency has attached Bhandari's properties in India, totalling over Rs 26 crore, and filed charges against him. A special court, similar to the cases of Mallya and Modi, has declared Bhandari as a fugitive economic offender. ANI

Passengers eating on tarmac: Show cause notices issued

New Delhi - After a video of passengers eating on the tarmac at Mumbai Airport went viral on social media, the Union Minister of Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia held a meeting with all ministry officials at midnight on Monday.

In the early hours of Tuesday, MoCA's (Ministry of Civil Aviation) Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) issued show cause notices to Indigo and Mumbai Airport.

According to the notices, 'both Indigo and Mumbai International Airport Limited (MIAL) were not proactive in anticipating the situation and making the appropriate facilitation arrangements for passengers at the airport'.

For instance, 'the aircraft was allotted a remote bay C-33 (instead of a Contact Stand), which further added to passenger woes and deprived them the opportunity to avail basic facilities like restrooms and refreshments at the terminal'.

Concerning Indigo, a show cause notice has been issued for the violation of Rule 51 of



Passengers of a Delhi-bound IndiGo flight are seen eating and sitting on the airport tarmac at Mumbai Airport, in Mumbai on Monday (ANI)

the Aircraft (Security) Rules, 2023, regarding failure to observe due aviation security procedures in respect of Flight no 6E 2195 which landed at Mumbai Airport at 11.20pm on Sunday as a diversion case.

The notice says that Indigo allowed the disembarkation of passengers from flight 6E 2195 onto the apron and then boarded them on to flight 6E

2091 on Monday at Mumbai airport, without following the procedure of security screening, which violates the above-mentioned orders.

Further, the incident was not reported to BCAS by the aircraft operator which is attributed to a violation of Rule 51 of the Aircraft (Security) Rules, 2023.

ANI

Jaishankar, Raisi discuss pacing up of Iran-India agreements

Tehran, Iran - External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Iran President Ebrahim Raisi discussed speeding up the implementation of Iran-India agreements, including the Chabahar Port Development Plan, and further compensating for delays.

During their meeting, Jaishankar expressed interest in concluding a comprehensive and long-term cooperation agreement with Iran, according to the Iranian President's official website.

Taking on social media platform X, the Iran embassy in India stated, "The President stressed the need to follow up and accelerate the implementation of the agreements between Iran and India, including the Chabahar Port Development Plan, and the need to compensate for the delay in the implementation of commitments."

Raisi also highlighted the deep-rooted relations between Iran and India.

He emphasised the efforts to fulfil the will of the high officials



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar calls on the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ebrahim Raisi, on Monday (ANI)

Main areas of discussion included importance of the common view of the two countries in combating terrorism

of the two countries in order to develop and improve the level of relations in various political, economic, science and technology, transportation and energy sectors, the statement published on the Iranian president's website stated.

The main areas of discussion included the importance of the common view of the two countries in the field of com-

bating terrorism and organised crime, the need for cooperation to establish stability and security in Afghanistan, strengthening international trade, especially through national currencies, and the emphasis on maintaining the security of shipping in international waters.

Raisi also highlighted Israel's counter-offensive in Gaza and urged India to help in ending the bombings.

"The President described the crimes committed by the Zionist regime in Gaza as clear examples of war crimes and crimes against humanity and clarified, stopping the attacks on Gaza, punishing the Zionist regime and fulfilling the rights of the Palestinian people is the only way to return stability and security to the region, and it is important for India to play a role in ending the bombings, lifting the blockade of this region and realising the rights of the Palestinian people," the statement added.

ANI

China announces visa-free entry for Swiss citizens

Istanbul, Turkey - China announced on Monday that it will grant Switzerland unilateral visa-free treatment as Premier Li Qiang led a delegation in the first high-level meeting between the two countries since the COVID pandemic.

Beijing has agreed to provide visa-free entry for Swiss citizens while the Swiss said they will 'provide more visa facilitation' for Chinese citizens as well as Chinese enterprises investing in Switzerland, the two sides said after talks between Li and Viola Amherd, the president of the Swiss Confederation.

Li arrived in Zurich on Sun-

day, where he was received by Amherd. "China has always attached great importance to Switzerland's unique role in Europe and on the international stage," Li told Amherd as they took a train ride to Bern.

Li will also attend the World Economic Forum, which kicked off Monday in Davos with the theme 'Rebuilding Trust', before leaving for Ireland for another trip during the week. It marks the Chinese premier's first trip to Europe this year.

Last week, Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo was the first European leader this year to visit China.

Anadolu Agency

Kim seeks constitutional change to re-define ties with S Korea

Istanbul, Turkey - North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has sought changes in the country's constitution to re-define relations with South Korea.

Kim made the proposal during an address to North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly on Monday, according to Pyongyang-based KCNA.

"We cannot go along the road of national restoration and reunification together with the ROK (Republic of Korea) clan that adopted as its state policy the all-out confrontation with our Republic, dreaming of the 'collapse of our government' and 'unification by absorption'," Kim told the country's lawmakers, referring to South Korea by its official name.

Kim is not a deputy of the Assembly.



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un

He said Seoul had 'lost patriotic consciousness, getting more vicious and arrogant in the madcap confrontational racket'.

Kim's high pitch address to

the lawmakers comes amid persistent tensions on Korean Peninsula, which resulted due to reciprocal military activities by the divided Koreas where the US

and Japan have also held joint military drills with Seoul.

"The north-south relations have been completely fixed into the relations between two states hostile to each other and the relations between two belligerent states, not the consanguineous or homogeneous ones anymore," Kim said, proposing 'necessary' revision of North Korea's constitution.

At the ongoing session of the Assembly, Kim said Pyongyang has 'formulated a new stand' on the north-south relations and the policy of reunification and 'dismantled all the organisations' that were established as 'solidarity bodies for peaceful reunification'.

Emphasising that the so-called 'northern limit line' in shared waters can 'never be tol-

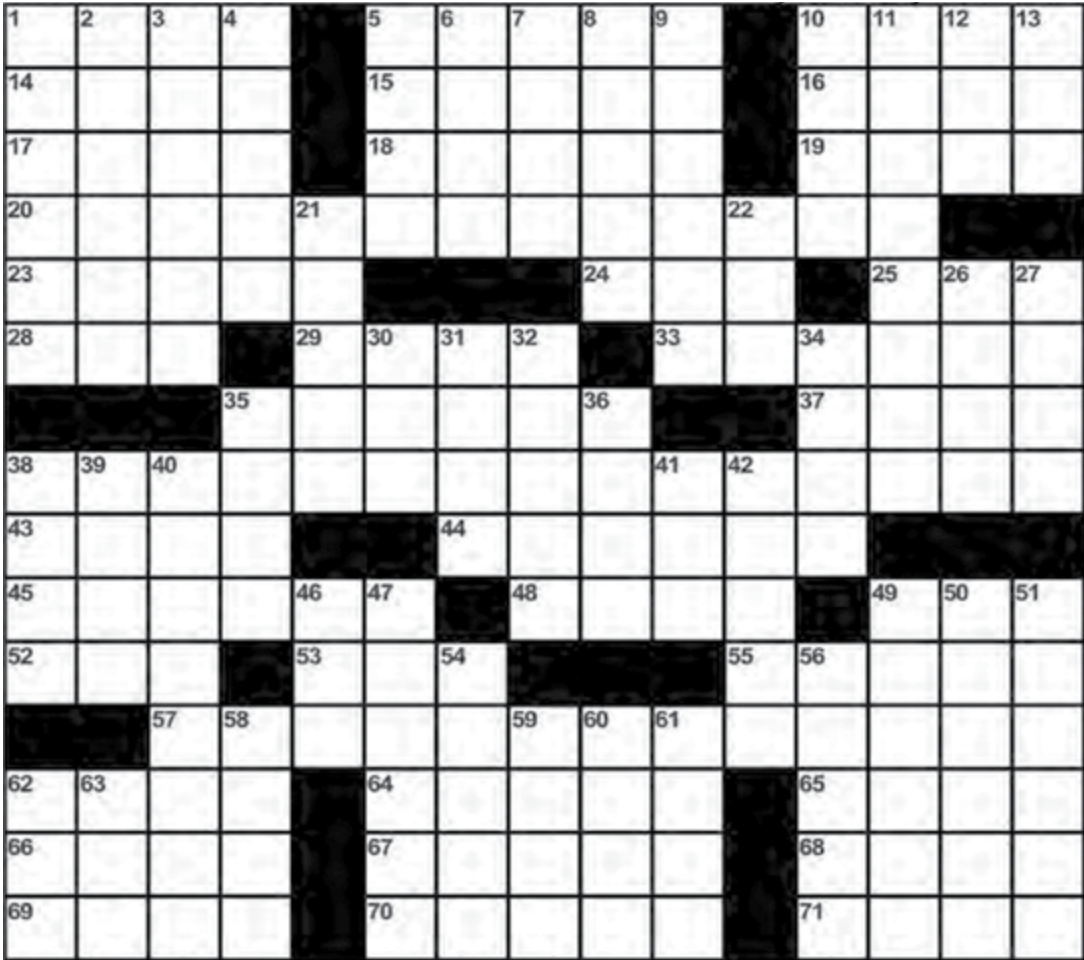
erated', Kim warned any violation of North Korea's territorial land, air and waters, 'will be considered a war provocation'.

"It is necessary to take legal steps to legitimately and correctly define the territorial sphere where the sovereignty of the DPRK as an independent socialist nation is exercised," Kim told the lawmakers, using official name of North Korea.

"We can specify in our constitution the issue of completely occupying, subjugating and reclaiming the ROK and annex it as a part of the territory of our Republic in case of a war breaks out on the Korean peninsula," Kim said, urging the lawmakers to re-define South Korea as 'primary foe and invariable principal enemy'.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Start for "lock" or "iron"
5) Temple VIP
10) Like a useless tire
14) Vegas competitor
15) Milky gems
16) Whip end?
17) Opposing
18) Cowboy Bill of legend
19) Catch a glimpse of
20) Spooky residences
23) "Bud" or "pal" kin
24) Brisk energy
25) _Wan Kenobi
28) Citi Field player
29) Jack of Sgt. Friday fame
33) Fixed portion
35) Fill with enthusiasm
37) Aardvark morsels
38) Dark, spooky place
43) Affirm
44) Agreeable
45) Composed
48) Desperately need a bath
49) Khan's title
52) Rubble maker, big-time
53) Chinese restaurant quaff
55) Consume heartily
57) Spooky thing on the water
62) Ready and willing

go-with

- 64) Bus rider's "coin"
65) Indication of a voice-mail
66) One not using his brain
67) Made mistakes
68) Sign for the superstitious
69) Healthy type of bean (var.)
70) Little darlings
71) Be li terate, in a way

DOWN

- 1) Kind of cracker
2) File menu option
3) Read between the lines
4) Executing
5) Rodeo tool
6) Imitated at a zoo?
7) "Goldberg Variations" composer
8) Softly hit single
9) Producer of magazines or credit cards
10) Run away
11) Activity performed on a dude ranch
12) It could cause a death on the Nile
13) "_ will be done"
21) Namely
22) Place that exists to pamper
26) Not just this one or

that one

- 27) "Meet Me _ Louis" (1944 film)
30) Before, long before now
31) Arctic floating chunk
32) What a seller seeks
34) Shadow, in a who-dunit
35) Common houseplant
36) French door part
38) Boss of a first lieut.
39) What one definitely isn't
40) Intellectually
41) Make it a new game
42) Emulating a newborn
46) In-flight info, for short
47) Not just dinged
49) Obeying a curfew
50) Kind of pig
51) Add supplementary material to
54) "O come let us_ Him"
56) Noted fur trader John Jacob
58) _ carotene
59) Item of Creole cookery
60) " ... and_ the twain shall meet"
61) Stopping points
62) Showstoppers?
63) "I don't like your performance!"

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You have an incredible energy welling up inside of you, so you need to figure out a great way to use all that enthusiasm! It's a wonderful time to dive headfirst into projects or adventures that involve a lot of other people, and the more diverse the group the better. You are especially well tuned toward people from different cultures, and there are important insights you are ready to absorb from them. This is a day of celebration, education, and revelation!



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Today, you're going to have to accept a few things that you don't really like, whether it's an inconvenient meeting time, the nutty opinions of a coworker, or uncooperative weather. These things are out of your control, and the sooner you come to terms with that the better. You can't be bothered by pettiness when there's nothing you can do to change it. Switch your focus to things you like and things you can change, such as your attitude or your immediate surroundings.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Dates, names, addresses, and similar small details will be a big part of this day for you. Luckily, your mind is so razor sharp that you'll have no trouble organizing them and remembering them right when you need to. This is a great time for planning or traveling. You will be able to handle last-minute delays or rescheduling without a problem. You will stay happy and cheerful at the same time. You'll positively exude calmness and reliability today.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. The cochlea is part of which part of the body?

- A. Ear
B. Eye
C. Nose
D. Throat

02. Which cricket team was accused of being the subject of rigging the result of an international cricket game against England at Lords in August 2010?

- A. Sri Lanka
B. Bangladesh
C. India
D. Pakistan

03. Where is the Afar Triple Junction?

- A. Central southern Asia
B. Birmingham, UK
C. On the African coast of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden
D. The North Island of New Zealand

Answers: 1.A 2.D 3.C



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Someone has a good story to tell you today, so if you've got the time, they've got the tale. Listen to what they have to say with a grain of salt, though. Keep in mind that all that glitters is definitely not gold. If something seems too good to be true, then it probably is. So enjoy being entertained by colorful tales and juicy gossip, but do not get sucked in to anything that doesn't accurately reflect who you are or how you want to live your life.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Some recent extremely good news has you eager to rush ahead on a goal, but slow down. Now is not the time to act in haste and get lazy about covering all the important details. You are capable of soaring to great heights, but first you have to make sure your feet stay planted firmly on the ground. Plan your path and do whatever research is necessary. If your big project is centered around getting a date with someone, first make sure you know what they'd like to do.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Today, the way you react to some shocking news could surprise a few of your friends. They never knew you felt that way about things, and you might have to give them some time to get used to it. Your idealistic tendencies have evolved into a full-fledged philosophy, and you are sick and tired of being vague about where you stand. This is a liberating time for you, and you are ready to ruffle a few feathers for the sake of speaking your truth.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You might be worried about a friend or family member but also afraid to say something because you fear they'll get defensive. Have more faith in them. They are waiting for someone to reach out. So get some quiet alone time with them today and share all your concerns. You know that preaching won't get you anywhere with them, so just state what you think and ask what they have to say about it. This is the best way to start a very productive conversation.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Today, your intellectual energy is extremely strong, and it will be nearly impossible for you to find someone who is smarter than you. But there are different kinds of intelligence, and you will get a big charge out of someone who might not be able to beat you in one area but can run circles around you in another. You have a great chance to learn something from them, so open up your mind and be humble. There is always room in your brain for different types of knowledge.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

The problems you are having with a new member of your circle of friends or a new member of your family are nowhere near as awful as you think they are, so cheer up. Your active imagination, along with a few of your fears, are combining to create a version of reality that is simply not accurate. Interestingly enough, this anxiety does indicate how important this person is to you, and once things are back on track, you two are going to be better than ever.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Your self-nurturing instincts are coming to the forefront today, and while it might send you down an antisocial path for a while, in the end it's a very good thing to start listening to your own needs. Forgive yourself for what you may have done, and think about where you want to take things from here instead of wondering why things don't always end up the way you wanted them. It's a time of reflection, but it's also a time of healing.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Some recent good news has you all excited, but you need to be careful that your enthusiasm doesn't get the best of you today. Not everyone understands why you're in such a good mood, and they could feel left out unless you let them in on your secret. Give them a chance to be happy for you. Getting caught up in the moment is fine, but just make sure that you don't leave others behind. You need to control your image and be more inclusive right now.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Your luck is about to change today, and that could be a good or a bad thing depending on how pleasant your life has been lately. But change is always good, even if it brings some clouds into your sunny day. If things take a turn for the worse, just hang out. You can and will get through any challenges that arrive. And if things take a turn for the better, enjoy it. The good things that you have done in the past are now going to be rewarded.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

I	C	E	I
S	D	C	T
O	T	N	E
I	M	I	A

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.
Solution 20-25 words:
Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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



Lionel Messi

Messi named FIFA player of 2023, Spain’s Bonmati wins women’s award

London, England - Argentine Lionel Messi retained the FIFA men’s player of the year trophy on Monday, beating Manchester City’s treble-winning Norwegian striker Erling Haaland and France’s Paris St Germain forward Kylian Mbappe to the award.

Spain’s 2023 World Cup winner Aitana Bonmati was voted the best women’s player of the year.

Messi, who also secured the men’s award in 2022 after guid-

ing Argentina to World Cup victory, clinched the Ligue 1 title with PSG alongside Mbappe following that success, before moving to Major League Soccer team Inter Miami.

The 36-year-old, voted the best player by national teams coaches, captains, journalists and fans, helped Inter Miami win the 2023 Leagues Cup - a competition between MLS and Mexico’s Liga MX sides - scoring 10 goals.

Messi was not present to col-

lect the trophy.

The award period for the men’s prize ran from December 19, 2022 to August 20, 2023, and started the day after the World Cup final in Qatar.

Haaland, who helped City clinch a treble of Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League titles by scoring 52 goals in 53 matches across all competitions in the 2022-23 season, finished second in the voting.

The 23-year-old had the same points as Messi but lost out by

having fewer first-place votes from national team captains.

City’s Pep Guardiola won the Best Men’s Coach award. The Spaniard, who before winning the treble with City last term had achieved the same feat at Barcelona in 2008-09, dedicated his award to fellow nominees Simone Inzaghi and Luciano Spalletti.

Inzaghi guided Inter Milan to the 2023 Champions League final, where they lost 1-0 to City, while Spalletti won Serie A with

Napoli to end the club’s 33-year wait for the title.

Sarina Wiegman claimed the Best Women’s coach prize after leading England to the World Cup final where they lost 1-0 to Spain.

Seven of her Lionesses were included in the Women’s World XI, including Mary Earps, who also took the Best Women’s Goalkeeper Award.

Brazil’s Manchester City keeper Ederson won the men’s award.



Lionel Scaloni

‘Scaloni to remain as Argentina coach for Copa America’

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Lionel Scaloni will stay on as Argentina’s coach at least until the end of this summer’s Copa America, where the country will defend their title, local media reported on Monday.

The news comes after the Argentina FA (AFA) President Claudio Tapia met with Scaloni to discuss the national team’s upcoming friendlies in China ahead of the June 20-July 14 continental tournament in the United States.

“Lionel Scaloni will remain in the Argentina national team and will coach through to the Copa America,” Gaston Edul, a sports journalist for TyC-Sports in Argentina, said in a social media post.

“Surely, in the next few days, an official voice will confirm it.”

Scaloni had cast doubt over

his future in the post in November, when Argentina beat Brazil in South American World Cup qualifiers, saying: “It’s complicated to keep

It’s complicated to keep going and it’s complicated to keep winning

LIONEL SCALONI

going and it’s complicated to keep winning.”

The 45-year-old took over as coach in 2018 and led Argentina to the Copa America title in 2021 - their first major trophy since the 1986 World Cup - and their third world title in Qatar the following year.

Swiatek overcomes early jitters to edge past Kenin in Melbourne

Melbourne, Australian - Iga Swiatek came through an opening test of fire in her hunt for a first Australian Open title on Tuesday as the world number one battled past 2020 champion Sofia Kenin 7-6(2) 6-2 while blazing heat and blustery conditions made things difficult for players.

Four years after Swiatek won the pair’s only previous meeting in the French Open final, the 22-year-old twice fought back from a break down to claim the opening set in a tie-break on a sweltering Rod Laver Arena.

The four-times major champion had enjoyed a strong build-up to the year’s opening Grand Slam, with five successive singles wins in Poland’s run to the United Cup mixed team event final, and she broke American Kenin for a 3-2 lead in the next set.

Kenin, who has battled injuries, illness as well as off-court issues in recent years, fought on bravely and had the opportunity to hit back but top seed Swiatek stretched her advantage and pulled away for victory.



Poland’s Iga Swiatek hits a return to Sofia Kenin of the US in their Australian Open first-round match on Tuesday

Up next for Swiatek is 2022 finalist Danielle Collins, who beat former champion Angelique Kerber 6-2 3-6 6-1. Russian 14th seed Daria Kasatkina overcame American Peyton Stearns 6-2 3-6 6-2 but she too struggled with the weather.

At least one player was enjoying the weather, Norwegian 11th seed Casper Ruud basking in the

sunshine during a routine 6-1 6-3 6-1 win over Albert Ramos-Vinolas. “It’s minus 20 back home, so it’s quite a change. It’s much nicer to be in the warm summer weather,” said Ruud, who lost in the second round in 2023.

Carlos Alcaraz made a winning return but the Spanish second seed faced some early resistance from French veteran

Richard Gasquet before cruising to a 7-6(5) 6-1 6-2 victory in the opening round.

The muscular 20-year-old, who skipped last year’s tournament with a right leg issue, appeared overly exuberant at times as he sought quick progress at Melbourne Park but composed himself to grind down his seasoned opponent.

Rafael Nadal senses growth opportunity in Saudi Arabia

Melbourne, Australia - Rafael Nadal believes there is a big opportunity to grow tennis in Saudi Arabia after the 22-times Grand Slam champion was named an ambassador for the Saudi Tennis Federation, but Iga Swiatek is on the fence about the women’s game potentially heading there.

Nadal’s role will see the former world number one spend time each year in the desert kingdom to help train children and grow interest in the sport, with plans also in the pipeline for a training academy, the Saudi federation said.

“Everywhere you look in Saudi Arabia, you can see growth and progress and I’m excited to be part of that,” Nadal, who pulled out of the ongoing Australian Open with a muscle injury, said in a statement.

The Spaniard, who recently visited a junior tennis clinic in Riyadh, struggled with a hip problem last year before making his comeback in Brisbane but expects 2024 to be his final season on the professional tour.

“I continue to play tennis as I



Rafael Nadal

love the game,” Nadal said. “But beyond playing I want to help the sport grow far and wide across the world and in Saudi there is real potential.”

The men’s ATP Tour said in August its Next Gen Finals for under-21 players would be held in Jeddah from 2023 to 2027, marking its first official tournament in the Gulf state following

previous exhibition events.

Saudi Arabia also hosted high-profile exhibition matches last year with world number one Novak Djokovic playing Carlos Alcaraz and Aryna Sabalenka taking on Ons Jabeur.

There has also been frequent speculation that the women’s tour will move its season-ending WTA Finals to Saudi Arabia.

India's Nagal upsets Bublik, bags big bucks at Melbourne Park

Melbourne, Australia - Sumit Nagal, India’s top-ranked singles player, was left with less than a thousand dollars in his bank account at one point last year so it was no surprise he was beaming on Tuesday after ensuring a bumper payday at the Australian Open.

The world number 137 had battled his way through three rounds of qualifying and in the first round proper guaranteed himself a cheque for at least A\$180,000 (\$119,016) by stun-

ning 31st seed Alexander Bublik 6-4 6-2 7-6(5) on a rowdy Court Six.

It was the biggest win of his career and he became the first Indian man in 35 years to beat a seeded player in a Grand Slam singles draw, matching Ramesh Krishnan’s feat in ousting defending champion Mats Wilander at Melbourne Park in 1989.

“Obviously, I’m not crying right now but at the same time it hasn’t completely sunk in,” the 26-year-old told reporters.

“These moments you’ll go through as an athlete. Sometimes you have a good year, sometimes a bad one.

“Last year was probably one of the best years ... (from having only) 900 euros, not getting into events for the first few months and relying on wild cards ... to finishing inside the top 130.

“From where I started, I was pretty proud of myself to be able to give myself another chance to be here, to qualify and play a second round. It’s a good feeling.”

Like most children growing up in India, Haryana-born Nagal wanted to be a cricketer but it was his teacher father who insisted he swap bat and ball for a racket. He famously took a set off Roger Federer in a first-round loss at the 2019 U.S. Open on his Grand Slam main draw debut and reached the second round the following year before losing to eventual champion Dominic Thiem.

The Indian, who trains in Germany, endured a tough time with

injury and had hip surgery in 2021 but battled back and captured two challenger titles last year to climb into top 150.

“I’ve worked very hard with my team and I’m proud of myself to be able to handle the things I’m going through and be able to perform the way I want to,” Nagal said.

The eyes of the world’s two most populous nations will be on Nagal when he takes on China’s Shang Juncheng in the next round.



Sumit Nagal

Algeria draw blanks

Former champions’ winless run at Africa Cup of Nations continues

Bouake, Ivory Coast - Former champions Algeria conceded a second-half penalty to allow unfancied Angola to force a 1-1 draw in the opening Group D clash at the Africa Cup of Nations on Monday.

It meant Algeria continued their winless streak at the finals since being crowned champions in 2019.

Baghdad Bounedjah put the Algerians ahead in the 19th minute with a well-taken goal but clumsy defending cost them when Nabil Bentaleb committed a foul and gave away a penalty, converted by Mabululu in the 68th minute.

Algeria have now failed to win in four matches at the Cup of Nations finals since lifting the trophy in Cairo.

They made a shocking attempt to retain the title at the last edition in Cameroon two years ago, going home early with one point from the group games and losing to unassuming Equatorial Guinea.

They looked keen to expunge those memories and dominated the early stages with a crisp passing game and incisive running.

They went ahead when Bounedjah burst between Angola’s two centre backs to collect a long ball over the top of the defence and finish with a powerful shot.

Six minutes later he had the ball in the net with a spectacular bicycle kick, but was marginally offside and the effort was ruled



Baghdad Bounedjah put the Algerians ahead in the 19th minute with a well-taken goal but clumsy defending cost them when Nabil Bentaleb committed a foul and gave away a penalty, converted by Mabululu

Angola’s Mabululu celebrates after scoring against Algeria in their Africa Cup of Nations Group D match on Monday

out. Had it counted, it would have been an early contender for goal of the tournament.

However, Algeria failed to press home their advantage and

gave up their lead 22 minutes from time.

Bentaleb’s clumsy challenge from behind on Mabululu, kicking him on the calf while trying to

clear the ball, brought Angola back into contention and was their only real chance of the game.

Mabululu almost botched the penalty kick as he hit the underside of the bar with the ball just

crossing the goalline.

Algeria made a muted effort to try and restore their advantage and had a real opportunity seven minutes into stoppage time but a free kick from Fares Chaibi was well saved.

Cameroon, Guinea share spoils in Cup of Nations

Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast - Cameroon came from behind to share the points with 10-man Guinea in a 1-1 stalemate in the first game for both teams at the Africa Cup of Nations finals in Ivory Coast on Monday.

Franck Magri equalised early in the second half after Guinea had taken a 10th minute lead through Mohamed Bayo but then had captain Francois Kamano sent off. The draw at the Charles Konan Banny Stadium in the Ivorian capital followed the opening Group C game where holders Senegal easily disposed of Gambia 3-0.

Cameroon were without Andre Onana in goal but he did arrive ahead of the game after featuring for Manchester United in Sunday’s 2-2 draw with Tottenham Hotspur at Old Trafford.

Guinea were handed a fortunate lead following some horror defending from the Indomitable Lions.

After Bayo’s initial shot at goal was parried away by goalkeeper Fabrice Ondoa, there were two chances to clear the ball but under pressure the Cameroon defence botched their efforts and centre back Olivier Kemen ended up kicking the ball back



Cameroon’s Frank Magri celebrates after scoring against Guinea in their Africa Cup of Nations Group C match

towards his goal and into the path of Bayo, who need no second invitation to finish from close range. Cameroon might have had a quick equaliser but Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa missed a good opportunity at the back post from Georges-Kevin Nkoudou’s 13th minute freekick.

But their chances were enhanced on the stroke of halftime when Kamano was sent off for a challenge from behind on Magri, standing first on his heel and then ankle.

Initially he was cautioned but after the referee was advised to review his decision via VAR, it was changed to red.

With the one man advantage, Cameroon dominated the second half attacks with the equaliser coming in the 51st minute after Nkoudou put in a cross to the back post and Magri climbed high to head home despite the attention of Guinea defender Antoine Conte.

Cameroon could have won the game late but a superb save from Ibrahim Kone denied Karl Toko Ekambi.

Besides Onana, Cameroon left out injured skipper Vincent Aboubakar, still recovering from a thigh injury suffered in training,

Bangladesh CC, Jotun Anchery, OCT Al Hail B win

Muscat - Bangladesh CC defeated Team Coorg Muscat by 126 runs in the E Division League 2023-24 powered by Credit Oman at the Municipality Grounds Amerat.

Bangladesh CC posted 216 courtesy of Mohd Saiful Islam’s squash buckling 85 and Miraj Hossain’s 59. Raguvaran Selvam picked three wickets. In response, Team Coorg Muscat was bundled out for a paltry 90 with Alam Mamtaaz and Mohd Saiful Islam picking two wickets each. Prabhakaran R (24) was the top-scorer for Team Coorg Muscat.

In the F Division League, Jotun Anchery Blasters defeated Mazoon Dairy by 30 runs.

Hussan Pambalath top-scored with 31 runs as Jotun Anchery Blasters made 115. Washial Shamas 3/22 beat Mazoon Dairy 85/10 in 15.5 overs (Muhammed Ali Syed 17(33); Manikandhan S 2/10) by 30 runs.

OCT Al Hail B 159/5 in 20 overs (Younis Al Balushi 66(53), Mohammed Haneef Balushi 53(44); Pramod Chellan 1/17) beat Friends XI Muscat 97/10 in 16.5 overs (Franklin Johny 43(44); Asim Qadeer 3/14) by 62 runs.



Mohd Saiful Islam

BRIEF SCORES:

Bangladesh CC 216/5 in 20 overs (Mohd Saiful Islam 85(51); Raguvaran Selvam 3/28) **beat Team Coorg Muscat 90/10 in 18.3 overs** (Prabhakaran R 24(31); Alam Mamtaaz 2/13) by 126 runs.

Jotun Anchery Blasters 115/9 in 20 overs (Hussan Pambalath 31(21); Washial Shamas 3/22) **beat Mazoon Dairy 85/10 in 15.5 overs** (Muhammed Ali Syed 17(33); Manikandhan S 2/10) by 30 runs.

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Senegal’s Lamine Camara celebrates after scoring against Gambia in their Africa Cup of Nations Group C match on Monday

Senegal begin title defence with 3-0 win over 10-man Gambia

Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast - Senegal began their Africa Cup of Nations title defence with a 3-0 victory over 10-man Gambia helped by Lamine Camara’s double in Group C on Monday, bringing an end to a sequence of surprise results at the tournament in the Ivory Coast.

After a shock-filled Sunday where the minnows had the upper hand over heavyweight opponents, Senegal restored faith in the form book as Pape Gueye scored early and Camara added two more to ensure victory in the opening Group C encounter.

Gueye put Senegal ahead in the fourth minute at the Charles Konan Banny Stadium, while 20-year-old Camara, voted Young African Player of the Year in

2023, underlined his promise with a fine finish seven minutes after the break and a sublime second into the top corner four minutes from time.

Gambia were reduced to 10 men when Ebou Adams was sent off for a needless stamp on Camara in stoppage time at the end of the first half, leaving Gambia on the back foot for the second period.

But they were already up against it after conceding early as Gueye swept the ball home after being teed up by Sadio Mane. Adams caught Camara on his heel long after the ball had gone and initially received a caution. But after a VAR check it was changed to red, leaving the Cardiff City defender banned for the next two matches.

Mourinho era at Roma meets abrupt end

Rome, Italy - AS Roma parted ways with manager Jose Mourinho on Tuesday, with the Serie A club’s owners saying the decision was made with the “best interests” of the team in mind.

Roma are ninth in the league after Sunday’s 3-1 loss to AC Milan, and have struggled to overcome the loss of key players due to injury, including striker Paulo Dybala.

They are 22 points behind league leaders Inter Milan.

“AS Roma can confirm that Jose Mourinho and his coaching staff will leave the club with immediate effect,” the club said in a statement.

“Further updates on the new first team coaching staff will follow imminently.”

Roma have taken just four points from their last five league matches, and were eliminated from the Coppa Italia last week in a 1-0 defeat to rivals Lazio.

Following that defeat, Mour-

inho had likened himself to fictional wizard Harry Potter, saying his position at the club was raising fans’ expectations for success. He also hit back at critics, labelling himself as the perfect example of professionalism despite his team suffering recent poor results.

“We would like to thank Jose on behalf of all of us at AS Roma for his passion and efforts since his arrival at the club,” club owners Dan and Ryan Friedkin said in

a statement. “We will always have great memories of his tenure at Roma, but we believe that an immediate change is in the best interests of the club.

“We wish Jose and his assistants all the best in their future endeavours.”

Mourinho, who has coached a host of top European clubs including Porto, Chelsea, Inter Milan, Real Madrid and Manchester United, was appointed coach of Roma in 2021.



Jose Mourinho



Iraq's Mohanad Ali (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Indonesia in their Asian Cup group match on Monday

ROAR OF THE LIONS

Iraq open Asian Cup campaign with 3-1 win over Indonesia

Al Rayyan - Iraq got their AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 Group D campaign off to a strong start with a 3-1 win over Indonesia at Ahmad bin Ali Stadium on Monday.

In a game that marked Indonesia's return to the tournament after 16 years of absence, coach Shin Tae-yong's side exchanged attacks with their opponents, but ultimately lost steam as the game wore on.

Meanwhile, head coach Jesus Casas' men came flying and nearly found themselves ahead after just three minutes when Ali Adnan whipped a free-kick from the right that was headed by Osama Rashid just wide.

Indonesia responded almost instantly, after a cross into the Iraqi box was punched away by goalkeeper Jalal Hassan but only as far as Marselino Ferdinan who

hit it first-time, but watched it strike the top of the crossbar and go behind.

Just as he did in the UAE five years ago, Mohanad Ali opened Iraq's AFC Asian Cup account again.

Iraq's next encounter sees them clash against record-champions Japan at Education City Stadium on Friday, while Indonesia will chase their first AFC Asian Cup win since 2007 when they face Vietnam

The 23-year-old forward was first to snatch a loose ball inside the Indonesian half, advancing into the box before applying a composed finish past the goalkeeper in the 17th minute.

With eight minutes left until the break, Team Garuda restored

parity after young right-back Elkan Baggott showed great skill to dribble past his marker before sending a low cross to serve Ferdinan on a silver plate, allowing the latter to tap-in the equaliser. Seconds before the end of the

made no mistake to make it 2-1.

Amir al Ammari thought he had extended Iraq's lead soon after the restart when he side-footed Jasim's pass into the bottom corner, but the flag had gone up, ruling him offside; a decision that was confirmed by the subsequent VAR check.

The third Iraqi goal arrived in the 75th minute through substitute Aymen Hussein who won an aerial battle inside the Indonesia box before rifling on the half-volley into the roof of the net to extend his country's lead.

Iraq's next encounter sees them clash against record-champions Japan at Education City Stadium on Friday, while Indonesia will chase their first AFC Asian Cup win since 2007 when they face fellow ASEAN side Vietnam later on the same day at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium.

South Korea's Lee cautious despite winning start

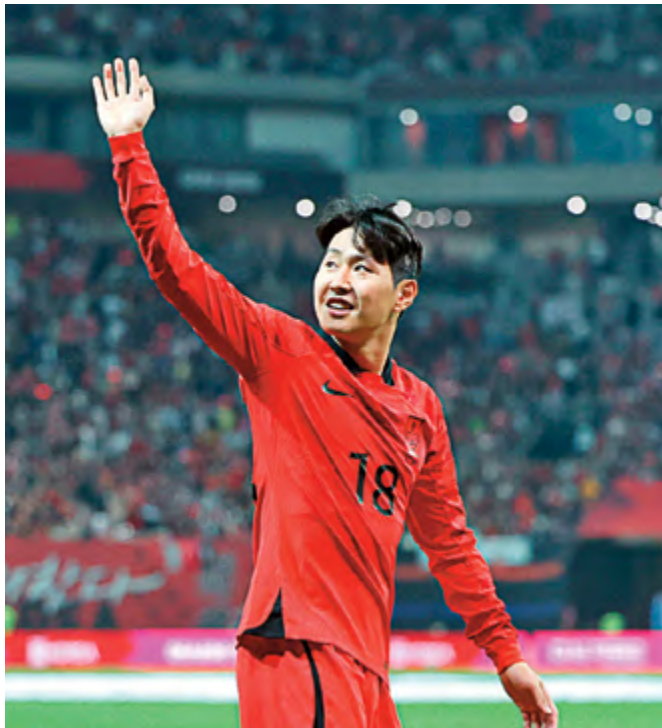
Doha: Lee Kang-in sought to dampen expectations South Korea will finally end their decades-long AFC Asian Cup drought in Qatar 2023 despite steering the Taeguk Warriors to an opening 3-1 victory over Bahrain in Group E with a match-winning brace.

Lee lit up the second half at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium with two well-taken goals to deliver the three points for Jurgen Klinsmann's side as the Koreans kicked off their attempt to win the trophy for the first time since the second of their back-to-back titles in 1960.

"Everyone in the locker room and all the people back home, the whole nation, are waiting for this trophy," said Lee. "We haven't won it for 64 years, so we're all motivated and hungry for this tournament."

"It's us, the players, the coaching staff and everyone in the team, but I think it's a bit too early to speak about the championship."

"We now have five days to prepare for the next game, so we're going to work hard and concentrate on the next game and see what happens."



Lee Kang-in

The Koreans will go into their meeting with Jordan on Friday with maximum points as a result of Lee's display, the winger shaking his team out of an indifferent spell in the 56th minute with a brilliant left-foot finish from distance that gave Ebrahim Lutfalla no chance.

He scored again 13 minutes

later, this time with a coolly taken strike from inside the penalty area, to wrap up a deserved win before seeking to hand the credit for the result to those around him.

"It's not just about my two goals, all the goals that we score are very important for the team," he said.

Jordan storm past hapless Malaysia

Al Wakrah: Jordan got their AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 Group E campaign off to a resounding start with a 4-0 win over Malaysia at the Al Janoub Stadium on Monday.

Jordan richly deserved the victory, taking a 3-0 lead into the break against a Malaysian side who struggled to cope with the high intensity of their opponents.

Meeting in the AFC Asian Cup for the first time, Jordan caused Malaysia early problems with Yazan al Naimat's weighted pass to Mousa Tamari forcing goalkeeper Syihan Hazmi to race off his line to foil the attempt.



Jordan's Musa al Taamari celebrates after scoring against Malaysia

Jordan threatened again in the 12th minute when Mahmoud al Mardi's cross flashed across the face of goal with Malaysia failing

to clear their lines, allowing Al Naimat to set up Al Mardi, whose curling effort floated over Syihan to settle in the top corner.

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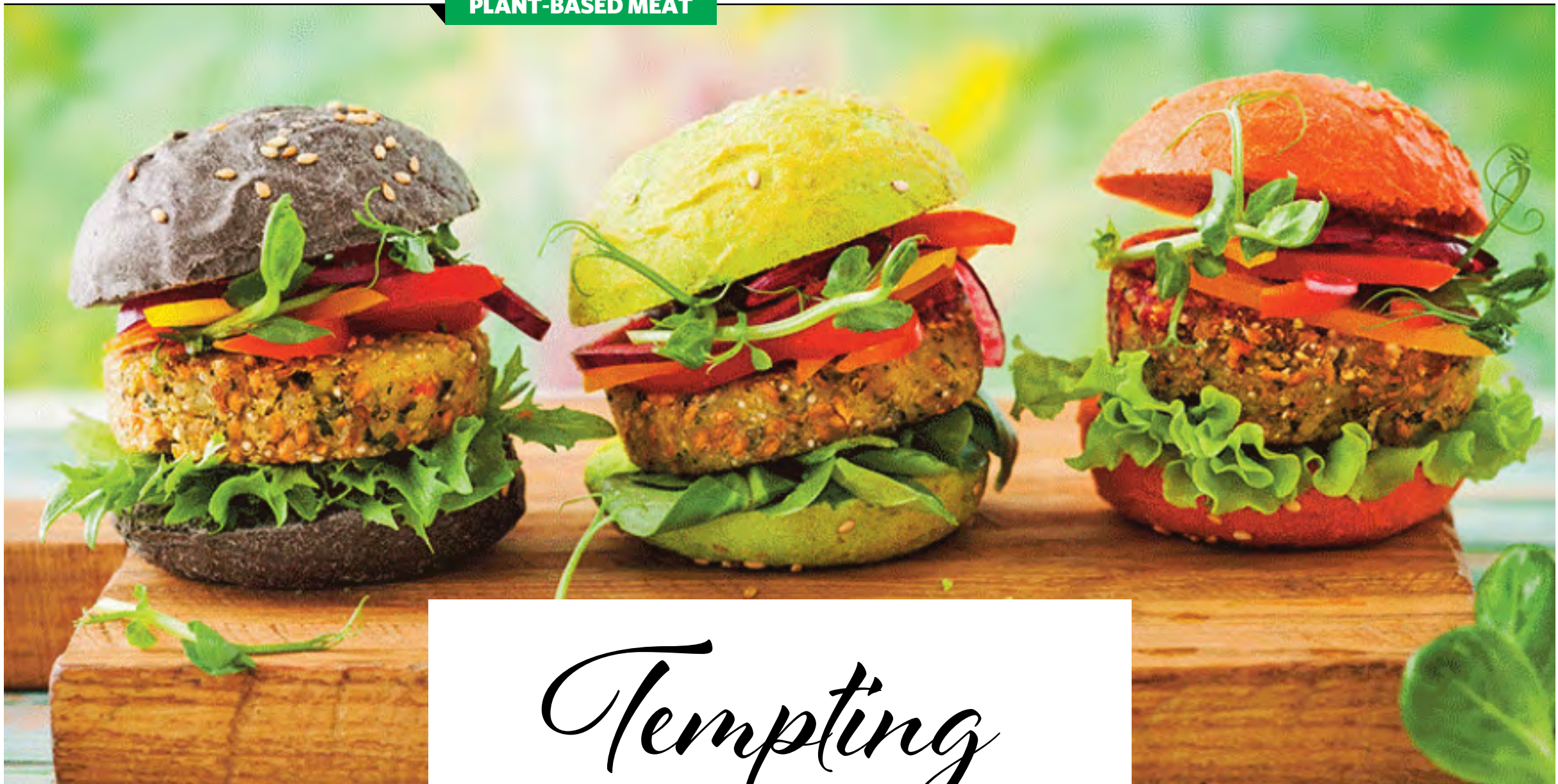
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PLANT-BASED MEAT



Tempting
TEXTURES

Plant-based meat, produced directly from plants, is fast gaining popularity among vegetarians and vegans who can now enjoy the tempting textures of meat without sourcing it from animals

Instead of relying on an animal to convert plants into meat, we can make meat more efficiently by skipping the animal and turning plant ingredients directly into meat.

According to scientific sources, like animal-based meat, plant-based meat is composed of protein, fat, vitamins, minerals, and water. Next-generation plant-based meat looks, cooks, and tastes like conventional meat.

The concept of plant-based meat is not a modern development. The prevalence and variety of plant-based meat has steadily increased for centuries. However, many of the early plant-based meat products were designed with vegetarian consumers in mind. Early plant-based meats, however, did not try to exactly replicate, or biomimic, conventional meat.

Recent concerns about sustainability, food security, and the environmental and public health impacts of industrial animal agriculture have spurred a sense of urgency to develop plant-based meats that appeal to mainstream consumers rather than niche markets. This has led to an explosion of innovation during the last decade.

How is plant-based meat made?

The general method used to produce plant-based meat involves three primary steps. First, we grow crops as a source of raw materials. Second, we process these crops to get rid of the parts of the plants we don't want. At this stage, we end up with the proteins, fats, and fibre ingredients that will become our plant-based meat product. Finally, we put together the desired mixture of ingredients. This ingredient mixture then goes through a manufacturing process to create the muscle-like texture needed for meat.

Why is plant-based meat important?

Like cultivated meat and fermentation-derived products, plant-based meat is better for the planet, people, and animals.

Analyses of the environmental impact of plant-based meat show that plant-based meat production uses 72-99% less water and 47-99% less land. Further, it causes 51-91% less water pollution and emits 30-90% less greenhouse gas emissions. By transitioning to plant-based meat and other alternative pro-

teins, we can use far fewer natural resources and enable entire ecosystems — and the biodiversity those systems support — to recover, function, and thrive, studies state.

No need for antibiotics

Plant-based meat production does not require any antibiotics. This helps address the broad overuse of antibiotics in meat production. According to the New York Times, in the United States, between 70 and 80% of antibiotics sold are consumed by farm animals. By shifting to alternative proteins like plant-based meat, we can significantly decrease antibiotic use in food production and keep antibiotics working for human health and wellbeing.

Hence, by taking animals out of the equation, plant-based meat also significantly lowers the risk of future pandemics.

Crops for plant-based meat

In addition to components like starch, fibre, and oil, plants contain proteins. Different species of plants and the different parts of plants possess different combi-

nations of protein types and structures. The types and amounts of proteins that can be extracted from a plant create different functional properties in plant-based meat, egg, and dairy applications.

These plant-based proteins serve as the primary raw material for plant-based meat. Until recent years, soy and wheat proteins have been predominantly used in plant-based meat. But the breeding, growing, harvesting, and processing considerations for these crops have been optimised for other products rather than plant-based meat. For example, soy has been primarily optimised as an oilseed crop.

Recently, crops like pea and potato have been gaining traction for use in plant-based meat. But these crops have historically been bred and grown with an eye towards starch production. This means that the current commercial strains of soy, wheat, pea, and potato may have sacrificed protein content, composition, ease of isolation, solubility, and flavour in pursuit of maximising desirable traits for oil or starch production.



KEY INGREDIENTS OF PLANT-BASED MEAT

BEANS AND LEGUMES

Black beans, chickpeas, mung beans, lentils - there's an endless array of legumes to create meatless meat.

GRAINS

Similar to beans and legumes, grains can be a great base for many meat alternatives. Millet, oats, quinoa, and brown rice are often found in veggie burgers since they produce a chewy texture that mimics meat.

PEA PROTEIN

Pea protein is one of the most common proteins used in many meat alternatives. It's made from yellow peas and contains all nine essential amino acids.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE JUICES

Beet juice and carrot juice are most commonly used in veggie burgers to produce a colour similar to a typical real meat beef burger.

WHEAT GLUTEN AND SEITAN

Vital wheat gluten is the natural protein found in wheat which gives it a chewy texture. This glutinous texture helps in resembling meat which is why wheat is often used in meatless meat products.

NATURAL FLAVOURS

When creating meat alternatives, it's next to impossible to get by without a little help from some natural flavours sourced from yeast extract, fruit and vegetable juices, besides spices and seasonings.



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Simona Tabasco wore a Marni flower decoupage dress



Lizzy Caplan dazzled in a black vintage Yohji Yamamoto dress



Sarah Snook was seen in a red Vivienne Westwood gown

EMMYS' STYLE

THE 75TH PRIMETIME EMMY AWARDS, AT LA'S PEACOCK THEATRE, WAS THE THIRD MAJOR RED-CARPET EVENT IN A WEEK WHEREIN CELEBRITIES GOT AN OPPORTUNITY TO FLAUNT THE LATEST TRENDS FOR 2024

RED CARPET FLAMBOYANCE

The 75th Primetime Emmy Awards on January 16 saw many stars in attendance while several trends emerged with black and red outfits dominating once again. Actor and producer Katherine Heigl was there for a Grey's Anatomy reunion and kept things classic with a scarlet Reem Acra dress and Marilyn Monroe-esque bob. Succession star Sarah Snook also channeled old Hollywood glamour in an elegant poppy-coloured Vivienne Westwood gown, while British actor and musician Suki Waterhouse showed off her baby bump in a bright red Valentino Haute Couture gown with strategically placed side cut-outs. Those opting for elegant black outfits included Lizzy Caplan (in vintage Yohji Yamamoto), Christina Ricci (in plunging Saint Laurent) and Riley Keough (in Chanel). The Bear star Ayo Edebiri was, meanwhile, among the evening's best-dressed in a black Louis Vuitton leather bustier gown with a structured balloon skirt. It may only be January, but spring was definitely in the air on the Emmys red carpet. Plenty of attendees opted for fresh greens — from Jessica Chastain's eye-catching chartreuse Gucci dress to Ted Lasso star Hannah Waddingham's soft mint beaded Marchesa gown.

Floral detailing was on show as well - On actor and comedian Ali Wong's embroidered satin Louis Vuitton skirt, Simona Tabasco's flower decoupage dress by Marni and her The White Lotus co-star Meghann Fahy's custom Armani Prive dress, one of many to feature rose motifs.

The theme carried over to menswear, too. Donald Glover, nominated as a writer for 'Swarm, wore a velvet top and pants with flower detailing by Bode. Awards host Anthony Anderson also put a fun spin on black-tie tradition in an Etro tuxedo with beaded lily design. (Source: CNN.com)



Taraji P Henson sported a magenta Atelier Versace dress with a soft silken train



Television host Padma Lakshmi arrived in a neon green goddess gown



Jessica Chastain wore a chartreuse Gucci dress with a beaded fringe



Katherine Heigl showed up in a scarlet Reem Acra dress

Meghann Fahy had a custom Armani Prive dress with a rose circlet