

Population increases 2% to 5.268mn in 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's population grew 2% in 2024, reaching 5,268,072, compared to 5,165,602 in 2023, according to National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Omani citizens made up 56.6% of the total population –

2,984,793 - while expatriates accounted for 43.3% - 2,283,279.

Muscat governorate recorded a population growth of 3% to 1,499,549 by the end of 2024, compared to 1,455,680 in 2023. Citizens comprised 39% of the governorate's population, totalling 584,092, a slight de-

cline from 585,016 in 2023. Expatriates in Muscat numbered 915,457.

Other governorates showed mixed population trends. Buraimi had the highest growth rate of 4.1% reaching 135,879 in 2024 from 130,576 in 2023. South Batinah followed with a 4% increase, with its population

Total population	5,268,072
Omani citizens	2,984,793
Expatriates	2,283,279
Muscat (+3%)	1,499,549
Musandam (-2.9%)	55,148
Highest number of Omanis	
North Batinah	597,608
Highest number of expats	
Muscat	915,457

growing to 567,455 in 2024 from 545,449 in 2023.

Dhofar and North Sharqiyah both saw population growths of 1.6% increasing to 529,625 in the former and 320,510 in the latter.

North Batinah recorded a 0.9% increase to 925,802, while Dakhliyah recorded a

modest increase of 0.6% to 558,373.

Conversely, Musandam saw a 2.9% decline, with its population dropping to 55,148 from 56,800 in 2023.

North Batinah led in the number of citizens with 597,608, followed by Muscat at 584,092 and Dakhliyah 403,825.

In the context of expatriates, Muscat topped the list with 915,457, followed by North Batinah with 328,194 and Dhofar 290,782.

The figures reflect steady growth in several governorates and continued concentration of expatriates in urban centres like Muscat.

Sayyid Theyazin leads RAFO Annual Day celebrations

Muscat - H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presided over Royal Air Force of Oman's (RAFO) annual day celebrations on Sunday observed annually on January 25.

The event included a graduation ceremony of officer cadets, limited service officer cadets and university officers who successfully completed their training programmes. The ceremony was held at the military parade ground at Ghala Base and Sultan Qaboos Air Academy.

RAFO performed a military parade showcasing the skill of its personnel and underscoring the attention accorded to it by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander.

Upon H H Sayyid Theyazin's arrival at the celebration ground, the graduates rendered a military salute as the RAFO band



played the Royal Anthem. Following this, H H Sayyid Theyazin inspected the front column of the graduates who

performed an infantry parade, led by the Sultan Qaboos Air Academy's banner, passing before the dais to the accompani-

ment of military music played by the band.

H H Sayyid Theyazin presented the Sword of Honour to

Flt Lt Al Waleed Khalid al Maamari, who achieved overall first place in the Basic Officer Candidates Course. He also honoured Air Lt Yaqoub Khalfan al Riyami for securing first place in the Course for Limited Service and University Officer Recruits.

This was followed by an airshow featuring RAFO fighter aircraft demonstrating advanced capabilities in armament, training and personnel development. The display highlighted the significant modernisation efforts and attention given to RAFO by His Majesty the Sultan.

The RAFO band concluded the proceedings by playing the Royal Anthem and a variety of military tunes.

To mark the occasion, H H Sayyid Theyazin posed for a commemorative photograph with the graduates.

ONA

Emir of Qatar to visit Oman on Tuesday

Muscat - Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of State of Qatar, will pay a state visit to the Sultanate of Oman on Tuesday.

Diwan of Royal Court issued a statement as follows:

'Based on the Royal keenness of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of State of Qatar, to expand areas of cooperation between Oman and Qatar in a manner that brings about more prosperity and development for the two countries and further benefit their two peoples, Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim, will pay a state visit to Oman starting



Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani

Tuesday, January 28.

'The two countries will discuss matters of common interest, with the primary aim of realising aspirations for a brighter and more prosperous future. The two countries will also engage in consultations on various issues of relevance to developments in the regional and international arenas.'

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Oman-tagged sooty falcon completes 9,200km migration to Madagascar

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Trump's plan for Gaza Strip is to 'clean out the whole thing'

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Haitham City showcased at sports car meet

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning hosted a luxury sports car gathering at Royal Opera House Muscat last week in collaboration with Oman Automobile Association and Super Cars Majlis.

The event, which showcased over 55 high-end sports cars, brought together car enthusiasts and luxury lifestyle admirers from

the UAE and Saudi Arabia, besides Oman.

The gathering served as a platform to promote Sultan Haitham City, a visionary urban development project.

Highlighting the event's dual focus on innovation and technology, Saif al Jahouri, Vice-President of Sports Car Majlis, said, "This unique event - celebrated under the slogan 'Join a world that is renewed every moment' - showcased the latest advance-



(Supplied photo)

ments in sports cars while introducing Sultan Haitham City as a hub of luxury, innovation and sustainability."

The event allowed attendees to explore cutting-edge automotive technology and engage with industry experts, while underscoring Sultan Haitham City's vision of integrating luxury living with a sustainable and modern urban lifestyle.

Jamal bin Nasser al Hadi, Media Advisor to Minister of

Housing and Urban Planning, described Sultan Haitham City as a pioneering urban model. "It is more than a residential development. The city harmonises modernity with the authentic Omani character, making it a dynamic and attractive destination for all, particularly the youth," he said.

He added that the city's design reflects the energy and creativity of young people, who are integral to its development. "Events

linked to Sultan Haitham City are part of a broader strategy to empower the younger generation and involve them in the city's sustainable development journey."

Sultan Haitham City is envisioned as an integrated urban space where technology, sustainability and social interaction co-exist. With its vibrant environment and forward-looking infrastructure, the city aims to inspire future generations while fostering sustainable growth.

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Jalan Bani Bu Hassan to host Tahaim Winter Season 2025



Our Correspondent
Muscat

South Sharqiyah is set to host the second edition of Tahaim Winter Season, which will officially commence on Wednesday in Jalan Bani Bu Hassan.

The festival will run till February 15, offering a blend of entertainment, cultural and social activities to attract visitors of all ages.

Mohammed bin Ali Akaak, Wali of Jalan Bani Bu Hassan, emphasised the festival's importance and described this edition as a continuation of the success of the first. "It is part of our ongoing efforts to promote social and economic development in the wilayat," he said. "We aim to highlight the area's rich cultural and environmental heritage, support small businesses and artisan families, and promote the tourism and investment opportunities that Jalan Bani Bu Hassan offers."

Tahaim Winter Season 2025 will feature a range of activities, including a local market show-

casing products from small businesses and artisan families, and a heritage village dedicated to traditional crafts and folk arts. Sports enthusiasts can enjoy camel races, four-wheel drive challenges and other sports competitions. Cultural events such as poetry evenings, theatrical performances and fine art and photography exhibitions will also be held. A dedicated space for creativity and innovation will highlight talents of young people.

According to Akaak, the event is a bridge between Oman's heritage and its aspirations for sustainable development. "Tahaim Winter Season strengthens community ties and boosts economic activity, positioning Jalan Bani Bu Hassan as an ideal destination for visitors, both from Oman and abroad," he said.

The first edition of the festival in 2024 drew significant attention with 300,000 visitors. This year's event is expected to build on that success, further establishing Jalan Bani Bu Hassan as a key tourist destination in Oman.



(Supplied photo)

MoL deported 361 expats from N Sharqiyah in 2024

Ibra - Ministry of Labour (MoL) conducted extensive inspection campaigns throughout 2024 in North Sharqiyah through its Directorate General of Labour in the governorate to regulate the labour market and uphold workplace laws.

The year-long initiative from January 1 to December 31 saw inspections at 605 establishments, addressing complaints and enforcing compliance.

As part of the campaign, 131 complaints related to labour violations were investigated.

Of these, 75 cases led to apprehension of offenders, highlighting MoL's efforts to crack down on illegal employment. A total of 428 expatriate workers were arrested for violating labour laws, with 361 subsequently deported.

In addition to the arrests, 100 workers were assisted in regularising their residency status, ensuring compliance with regulations, and 163 workers either voluntarily surrendered or were handed over by their employers for further legal procedures.

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ALL IN THE GENES

Ministry of Health has announced that premarital medical screening will be mandatory starting 2026. What additional measures could Oman implement to prevent the spread of genetic diseases in future generations? Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers said -

Ahmed al Balushi
Engineer

Mandatory premarital screening is a great step, but Oman should also introduce awareness programmes in schools and universities to educate young people about genetic diseases and their impact. Additionally, genetic counselling services should be easily accessible across the country to guide couples in making informed decisions about their future.

Syed Zaid
Private sector employee

Oman should develop a national genetic registry to track and monitor hereditary diseases across genera-

tions. This data can help policymakers create targeted interventions. Collaboration with international genetic research institutes could also bring in advanced screening technologies and treatments. Providing free genetic counselling services, particularly in rural areas, will benefit all.

Aisha al Busaidi
Student

Introducing genetic education as part of the school curriculum could help students understand the importance of genetic health from a young age. Special support groups and online platforms should also be created where individuals can seek guidance and share their experiences. The govern-



ment should also invest in AI-driven health applications to help people assess their genetic risks and take preventive measures.

Salim al Balushi
Businessman

In addition to mandatory premarital

tests, Oman should consider implementing genetic screening at an earlier stage, such as during high school health check-ups. Raising awareness through social media campaigns and community engagement programmes can also help change societal perceptions and encourage proactive health choices.

Fatma al Harthy
Teacher

To further prevent genetic diseases, the government could promote genetic testing for newborns to detect potential disorders early. It's also important to incorporate family health history checks into regular medical consultations. Encouraging awareness campaigns and offering incentives for genetic research is also good.

Anil Kumar Pal
IT specialist

Public health initiatives should include educational programmes to destigmatise genetic disorders and promote healthy marriage choices. Employers could also be encouraged to offer health packages that include genetic

screenings for employees and their families.

Noor al Kindi
Homemaker

The government should introduce community-based genetic awareness workshops in different regions to ensure that people in remote areas are well-informed. Partnering with local influencers and media outlets to promote genetic health awareness in an engaging way would also be beneficial. Free testing camps in public spaces could encourage more people to get tested without fear of stigma or financial burden.

Salim Khan
Businessman

Oman should enhance collaboration between the healthcare and religious sectors to encourage premarital screening within the context of Islamic teachings. Many people respect religious leaders, and their support in spreading awareness can have a significant impact. Additionally, genetic therapies and screenings should be made more affordable and accessible to everyone.



? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

A year-long nationwide campaign to combat tobacco use was launched recently. What other steps should be implemented to reduce smoking among teenagers?

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

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

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Qatar Emir's visit to strengthen ties

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar continue to strengthen bilateral relations, focusing on expanding cooperation in trade, investment and cultural ties for mutual benefit.

On Tuesday, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar, will arrive in Oman for a state visit, marking an important moment in the history of Oman-Qatar relations. To be hosted at Al Alam Palace, the visit underscores the commitment of both nations to deepen partnership and explore new avenues of collaboration.

Trade between Oman and Qatar has grown steadily with data from National Centre for Statistics and Information showing bilateral trade reached RO1.113bn in 2023. Of this, RO284.7mn were Omani exports to Qatar, while imports from Qatar stood at RO828.6mn. In 2024 by November, trade volume had reached approximately RO950.8mn, including RO205.9mn in Omani exports and RO754.9mn in imports from Qatar.

Qatari investments in Oman have also seen a notable increase, rising 12% to RO730mn



The emir's visit is a vital step in reinforcing the long-standing relations between the two countries. It will enhance cooperation across political, economic and cultural sectors, further cementing our partnership

H E SAYYID AMMAR AL BUSAIDI



at the end of 2023, compared to RO651.9mn in 2022.

H E Sayyid Ammar bin Abdullah al Busaidi, Oman's Ambassador to Qatar, described the emir's visit as a vital step in reinforcing the long-standing relations between the two countries. "This visit will enhance cooperation across political, economic and cultural sectors, further cementing our partnership," he said.

H E Busaidi highlighted Oman-Qatar Businessmen Council's role in fostering trade

relations. Operating under Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the council facilitates trade delegations, joint exhibitions and investment opportunities, serving as a key driver of economic collaboration.

The growing partnership between Oman and Qatar reflects their shared vision to promote development and prosperity for their peoples, with both nations committed to exploring broader horizons for cooperation.

Oman-tagged sooty falcon completes 9,200km migration to Madagascar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

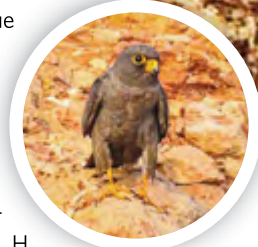
A young sooty falcon, tagged in Oman in October 2024, has completed an extraordinary journey of 9,200km to reach its wintering grounds in Madagascar. The migration, tracked over two and a half months using satellite technology, offers a rare insight into the life cycle of this elusive bird.

Its journey began on October 3, 2024 when a satellite tracker was installed in Oman. The bird then winged through Saudi Arabia, Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya and Mozambique before arriving in Madagascar on December 14, 2024. "Plans are in place to track its return route to Oman during the summer months," said H H Taimur bin Abdullah al Said, Director of Environmental Affairs at the Office of Conservation of Environment.

A study conducted by the office has highlighted positive trends for sooty falcons in Oman. A survey conducted by its research team recorded 32 sooty falcons in 2024, up from 21 in 2023. "This increase underscores the importance of conservation



(Supplied photos)



efforts," H H Sayyid Taimur noted. Field surveys were carried out on islands in Muscat and South Batinah in two phases - August 13 to 20 and September 22 to October 3, 2024. These surveys aimed to update data on sooty falcons' nesting sites, while training local personnel. The findings are set to be published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. The sooty falcon (*Falco concolor*) is classified as 'near threat-

ened' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature due to declining global populations. Medium-sized and known for its agility, the bird breeds in the Middle East and northeastern Africa, migrating to the southeastern coast of Africa and Madagascar during winter. Highlighting Oman's critical role in the bird's conservation, H H Sayyid Taimur said, "The islands in Muscat and South Batinah are among the most significant breeding sites for sooty falcons worldwide."

Indian delegation to visit Oman; FTA talks to gain further impetus

New Delhi, India – India’s Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, will visit Muscat for the 11th Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) with his counterpart, H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Oman’s Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, from January 27-28 2025.

A business delegation will accompany the minister for the Joint Business Council meeting between India’s FICCI and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

This visit underscores the importance India attaches to its trade and investment relations with Oman, one of its key trading partners in the GCC, with bilateral trade estimated at over \$8.94bn in the Indian fiscal year 2023-2024.

During the visit, the two leaders are expected to hold wide-ranging discussions on trade and investment, as well as the global economic situation, India’s Ministry of Commerce said in a statement.

Talks on the India-Oman free trade agreement, referred to as the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which



Piyush Goyal

are already at an advanced stage, are likely to receive further impetus during the visit, the ministry added. Both sides are negotiating and exploring a commercially significant, balanced, equitable, ambitious, and mutually beneficial CEPA.

On the sidelines, the minister is also expected to meet H E Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Oman’s Minister of Finance and Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee for CEPA, H E Sheikh Dr. Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, President of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), as well as hold discussions with representatives from Omani industry and the Indian community.

ANI

87% of Omani CEOs confident of revenue growth in 2025: Survey

Our Correspondent
Muscat

CEOs in the GCC countries, including Oman, are among the most confident globally about revenue growth in 2025, as revealed in PwC’s 28th Annual CEO Survey. However, the survey also finds that regional chief executives are acutely aware of the enormous wave of disruptive change, primarily driven by AI, climate challenges, and intensifying competition over new areas of growth as industry boundaries blur.

The survey reveals that the region’s CEOs are striking a difficult balance – seizing significant market opportunities today while also reinventing their businesses for tomorrow.

PwC’s annual survey of CEOs globally and across the Middle East reflects the collective voice of business leaders, offering valuable insights into the opportunities they see, the challenges they face, and the path forward.

The survey revealed that 87% of CEOs in Oman are confident of revenue growth in 2025. Regional findings show strong confidence among CEOs in their companies’ revenue growth, with 90% of GCC CEOs particularly optimistic about revenue growth in 2025.

Around 69% of Omani CEOs expect to increase headcount within the next 12 months. This is higher than the GCC average, as



Around 69% of Omani CEOs expect to increase headcount within the next 12 months. This is higher than the GCC average, as 61% of GCC CEOs expect to increase headcount this year, compared to just 42% of their global peers, and up from 55% in 2024. However, one-third of GCC CEOs (34%) cited skills shortages as a major concern.

Hani Ashkar, PwC Middle East Senior Partner, said, “The Middle East’s optimism reflects a remarkable ability to adapt and innovate in the face of global challenges. CEOs in the region are adopting bold strategies to drive growth and competitiveness, advance sustainability, and

integrate AI into their businesses. These efforts are reinforcing the region’s role as a dynamic hub for business and investment, ensuring long-term value creation for stakeholders and communities alike.”

For GCC CEOs, the urgency to reinvent is clear. A striking 60% of regional CEOs now believe their businesses will not survive ‘within the next 10 years or less’ without significant adaptation – a notable increase from last year, when fewer than half expressed similar concerns.

CEOs in the Middle East recognise that traditional business models are increasingly unsustainable in the face of transformative shifts, primarily driven by AI, the climate crisis, and industry convergence.

A notable 88% of GCC CEOs have adopted GenAI in the last 12 months, exceeding global averages and reflecting greater confidence in the technology’s potential. Seventy per cent of GCC CEOs also believe that GenAI will increase profitability in 2025. In Oman, 87% of CEOs

have adopted AI in the last 12 months, according to the survey findings.

On climate, 79% of regional CEOs have initiated climate-friendly investments in the last five years. CEOs also recognise that there is fierce competition over new areas of growth as industry boundaries blur. This is highlighted by 43% of regional CEOs indicating that they are already competing in new sectors or industries, 53% have targeted a new customer base within the last five years, and 72% expect to do a deal outside their industry or sector in the next three years.

Stephen Anderson, Partner and Middle East Strategy Leader at PwC Middle East, said, “Middle East CEOs are more confident than their global peers, capturing significant market opportunities in our region, while also proactively reinventing their businesses. Our confident CEOs are embracing AI, adapting their businesses for the opportunities and threats associated with climate change, and fiercely competing outside their industry to capture new value domains.”

Alongside growth and reinvention, regional CEOs remain vigilant over the increasing threat landscape. GCC CEOs cited cybersecurity as their main concern, closely followed by geopolitical risk, macroeconomic volatility, and technological disruption.

Global sukuk to cross \$1tn in 2025: Fitch

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Global outstanding sukuk volumes will likely cross \$1tn mark in 2025, Fitch Ratings said.

Sukuk will remain a key part of the debt capital markets (DCM) in a number of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries, and stay significant in emerging markets (EM), after representing 12% of all EM US dollar debt issued in 2024 (excluding China), the rating agency said in a statement.

Fitch expects the overall funding environment to be favourable, with the US Federal Reserve expected to cut rates to 3.5% by fourth quarter of 2025. However, issuers’ credit profiles could affect market access.

“With over 80% of the Fitch-rated US dollar sukuk being investment grade, the market has a robust credit profile, with growth supported by strong Islamic investor demand and strategic diversification goals,” said Bashar al Nator, Global Head of Islamic Finance at Fitch Ratings.

“Global sukuk is set to surpass \$1tn in 2025, solidifying its



role in the debt capital markets of OIC countries and emerging markets. However, growth could be affected by risks including sharia-compliance complexities, geopolitical events, rising rates, and higher oil prices.”

Global outstanding sukuk crossed \$930bn at end-2024, up 10% year-on-year, despite geopolitical escalations, with

26% in US dollars, and the majority by sovereigns. Sukuk were 25% of total dollar DCM issuance in the core markets of GCC countries, Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkiye, and Pakistan.

In the GCC, the DCM is about \$1tn outstanding, with about 40% sukuk. Market diversity increased, with debut sukuk by number of sovereign wealth

funds, aircraft lessors, and government-related entities. ESG sukuk reached \$44.5bn outstanding, up 23% year-on-year.

Fitch expects lower oil prices in 2025, which will support issuance. While not their key funding source, Islamic banks and corporates could opportunistically diversify through sukuk.

Global outstanding sukuk crossed \$930bn at end-2024, up 10% year-on-year, despite geopolitical escalations, with 26% in US dollars, and the majority by sovereigns

The AAOIFI Sharia Board has made amendments and additions to the Sharia Standard No. 62 following comments received, and will hold two final hearings in the coming months to present the draft developments.

Fitch noted that the impact will depend on the final standard, which jurisdictions and entities adopt it, and how it is incorporated in the sukuk documentation. “These factors will determine impact on sukuk credit profiles, debt rankings, obligor issuer default ratings, sukuk issuance trends, issuer willingness, and market appetite.



Saudi Arabia to host global WEF meeting

Davos, Switzerland – Saudi Arabia will host a regular high-level World Economic Forum (WEF) global meeting in Riyadh, with the first slated for the Spring of 2026, it was announced on Saturday.

The announcement was made by the Saudi Minister of Economy and Planning Faisal Alibrahim and WEF President Børge Brende, on the final day of the 55th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

The global WEF meeting in Riyadh will serve as a vital platform for global leaders, experts, policy- and decision-makers from diverse fields including the public and private sectors, academia, international organizations, and civil society to convene and address the challenges defining our world.

Alibrahim said, “Hosting a regular global World Economic Forum meeting in the kingdom is a testament to the global platform for dialogue, collaboration and innovation that Saudi Arabia has become, and that the World Economic Forum continues to be. This meeting represents a significant opportunity to further unite the world in capturing the immense potential that lies ahead.”

He added, “In this critical juncture for the global economy, we are not only inspired by the opportunities before us, but also deeply confident that our collective efforts will forge a brighter, more inclusive and more prosperous future for all. We look forward to welcoming the global community again in Saudi Arabia in the spring of 2026.”

Brende said, “The World Economic Forum is looking forward to coming back to the Kingdom in 2026. To close the 55th World Economic Forum with this announcement puts us on a strong course for the years ahead. Years that will have immense consequences. Because the progress we make over the coming months will not only deliver results in the near term, but will shape our course for years to come.”

Building on the success of the World Economic Forum Special Meeting held in Riyadh in April 2024, this new development solidifies Saudi Arabia’s position as a central player in shaping the global agenda. The kingdom’s bold leadership and determination to foster global dialogues between developed and developing economies and drive inclusive global growth make it an ideal host to address complex global challenges with the WEF community.

The World Economic Forum Global Meeting in Riyadh is set to become a cornerstone event in the global calendar, reflecting the Kingdom’s position as a key bridge between the north and south, east and west, and a beacon for constructive dialogue and action.

SPA

Massive fire at Iraqi oilfield brought under control

Baghdad, Iraq – Iraqi Ministry of Oil announced that it has managed to control the massive fire that broke out in an oil field in the south of the country on Friday.

A fire broke out in a tank at the fifth station at the giant North Rumaila Oil Field in the southern Iraqi province of Basra, injuring three people.

The Basra Oil Company, which manages the facility, stated that a fire broke out at storage tank in the fifth gas station of north Rumaila, Basra,

Basra Oil, which manages the facility, stated that a fire broke out at storage tank in the fifth gas station of north Rumaila in Basra

where maintenance work was recently completed.

It reported, “The fire broke out due to technical reasons that have yet to be determined.



As soon as the fire was reported, emergency teams were dispatched to the scene and succeeded in extinguishing it.”

The plant will be restored to operation after safety measures are confirmed and damage is assessed, the company said.

The Rumaila field, located in Basra province in southern Iraq, specifically near the border with Kuwait, is one of the largest oil fields in the world, with estimated oil reserves of 17 billion barrels.

WAM

Global gas market to remain fragile in 2025 amid tight supply, IEA says

Paris, France – Global natural gas markets are set to remain tight in 2025 as demand continues to rise and supply expands more slowly than before the pandemic and energy crisis, according to the International Energy Agency's (IEA) latest quarterly Gas Market Report published last week.

The report, which provides a thorough review of market developments in 2024 and an outlook for 2025, finds that markets moved towards a gradual rebalancing last year after the supply shock that followed Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Still, the global gas balance has remained fragile, highlighting the need for greater international cooperation to enhance gas supply security.

Driven by fast-growing markets in Asia, global gas demand rose by 2.8%, or 115bn cubic metres (bcm), in 2024 – well above the 2% average growth rate between 2010 and 2020. At the same time, below-average growth in liquefied natural gas (LNG) output kept supply tight, while extreme weather events added to market strains.

According to the report, similar dynamics are expected to persist in 2025 before the arrival of a wave of new LNG export capacity, led by the United States and Qatar, that is set to come online over the course of the second half of this decade.

Geopolitical tensions have continued to fuel price volatility in gas markets. Though the halt



Global gas demand rose by 2.8%, or 115bn cubic metres, in 2024

While halt of Russian piped gas transit via Ukraine does not pose imminent supply risk for European Union, it could add to near-term LNG market pressures, according to International Energy Agency

of Russian piped gas transit via Ukraine on January 1, 2025 does not pose an imminent supply security risk for the European

Union, it could increase European LNG import requirements and further tighten global market fundamentals in 2025, the

report noted.

It warned that the vulnerability of Moldova is significantly greater than that of the EU, re-

quiring close coordination between Moldova and its regional and international partners to ensure energy supply security through the winter.

Tighter market

Due to tighter market fundamentals, growth in global gas demand is forecast to slow to below 2% this year. As in 2024,

the growth is set to be largely underpinned by markets in Asia, with the region expected to account for over half of the rise in global gas demand.

"Gas market fundamentals have improved over the past year, but for now, we are still seeing significant tightness due to rising demand and muted growth in LNG capacity. Heightened geopolitical uncertainty adds to the risks," said Keisuke Sadamori, the IEA's Director of Energy Markets and Security.

"While international cooperation on gas supply security has expanded since the recent energy crisis began, greater efforts are needed from responsible producers and consumers, who should strengthen their collective efforts to reinforce the architecture for safe and secure global gas supplies."

Building on the IEA's longstanding work on gas supply security, the IEA established a permanent Working Party on Natural Gas and Sustainable Gases Security (GWPS) under the Standing Group on Emergency Questions, which aims to facilitate data and information exchange among its members and promote dialogue between producers and consumers.

In April 2025, the IEA will convene an International Summit on the Future of Energy Security, hosted by the UK government. The summit will address traditional and emerging risks related to energy security, including for natural gas.

India's forex reserves fall 10% below its peak

New Delhi, India – India's foreign exchange reserves continue to decline, extending their slump for about four months now. The country's forex reserves have fallen in 15 of the past 16 weeks, hitting an 11-month low.

In the week ending January 17, India's foreign exchange reserves declined by \$1.88bn to \$623.983bn, according to the latest data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The reserves have been falling ever since they touched an all-time high of \$704.89bn in September, and they are now over 10% lower than the peak. The decline in reserves is likely due to RBI intervention, aimed at preventing a sharp depreciation of the Rupee. The Indian rupee is now at or near its all-time low against the US dollar.

The latest RBI data showed that India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the largest component of forex reserves, stood at \$533.133bn. Gold reserves currently amount to \$68.947bn, with a \$1.06bn jump in the past week, according to RBI data.

Estimates suggest that India's foreign exchange reserves are sufficient to cover approximately one year of projected imports.

ANI

China's gas consumption to increase by 6.5% in 2025

Beijing, China – China's natural gas consumption is expected to increase by 6.5% this year compared to last year, reaching around 456bn cubic meters (bcm), according to data released by Shanghai Petroleum and Gas Trading Center.

With the influence of economic stability and growth policies, China's natural gas consumption has been on an upward trajectory, alongside an increase in domestic gas production.

One of the most populated countries of the world, China imports the largest amount of natural gas via pipeline and as LNG for industrial production and residential heating. The energy hungry Chinese economy pushes Beijing to secure more energy imports, mostly LNG.

With accelerated infrastructure investments like pipelines and LNG terminals, significant advances have been made in natural gas supply security, with China's dependency on foreign gas in 2024 estimated at 40.9%.

LNG imports from US

China's total natural gas consumption in 2024 was 428bcm, with an increase of 8.4% from the previous year.

In China, where a significant portion of gas supply comes from domestic production, the natural gas output in 2024 increased by approximately 6% from the previous year to 246.4bcm. Imports during the same period rose by 9.9%, reaching around 182bcm.

The share of pipeline gas imports was 76.6bcm, while LNG imports stood at 105.6bcm.

Key suppliers for LNG imports included Australia, Qatar, Russia, Malaysia, Indonesia, the United States, and Papua New Guinea. Notably, LNG imports from the



United States increased by 53.2% in 2024 compared to the previous year.

The increase in residential and commercial usage, along with the rise in the number of LNG-fueled vehicles, is a significant factor in the demand surge.

China's total natural gas consumption in 2024 was 428bn cubic meters, with an increase of 8.4% from the previous year

Of the 246.4bcm produced in China, 205.3bcm were from conventional natural gas, with the remainder coming from shale gas, coalbed methane, and coal-to-gas. 2024 marks the sixth consecutive year where China's domestic gas production increased by approximately 13bcm

annually.

In gas production, the Tarim Basin in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the Ordos Basin in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and Sichuan Province stood out. New production projects are underway across various provinces to enhance reserve development and production capacity.

In 2025, an increase in China's natural gas consumption is expected, particularly in urban gas and industrial sectors. Alongside domestic production, securing supply through imports is targeted, with natural gas expected to play a larger role in China's new energy system.

Natural gas consumption is projected to rise by 6.5% from the previous year, reaching 456bcm, with domestic production expected to contribute approximately 261.9bcm.

Furthermore, in 2025, imports via pipeline are expected to be around 84.9bcm, with LNG imports surpassing 100bcm.

Anadolu Agency



NATIONAL BISCUIT INDUSTRIES LTD. SAOG

DIRECTORS REPORT

Company performance from 1st April 2024 to 31st December 2024

The Company has achieved sales of RO 14,831,173/- for the nine months' period ending 31st December 2024 as against RO 12,582,904/- in the corresponding period of last year thereby registering growth of 18%.

The gross profit earned during the period of nine months' period ending 31st December 2024 is RO 2,378,250/- against RO 1,930,593/- in the corresponding period of last year thereby registering growth of 23%.

The net profit for the nine months' period ending 31st December 2024 stood at RO 679,950/- as against net profit of RO 409,365/- for the corresponding period in the previous year thereby registering healthy growth of 66%.

Future Outlook

The company is expanding its geographical coverage along with new product launches in the premium segment which should enhance our sales and margins in the coming quarters. However, the freight cost of Saudi Arabia is expected to increase due to rise in fuel cost which is going to negatively impact the profits of the company.

Nooh Bin Mohammed Al Zidjaly
Chairman
23rd January, 2025

UNAUDITED BALANCE SHEET AS ON 31ST DEC 2024

	31-Dec-24 RO	31-Dec-23 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	6,139,856	6,484,466
Intangible Assets	136,192	164,539
Right of Use assets	622,291	250,349
Advance for Capital Goods	191,400	43,436
Total non-current assets	7,089,739	6,942,790
Current assets		
Inventories	2,945,560	2,411,665
Trade and other receivables	5,633,560	5,292,300
Wakala deposits	400,000	0
Bank balances and cash	707,958	217,512
Total current assets	9,687,078	7,921,477
Total assets	16,776,817	14,864,267

EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity attributable to equity holders of the Company		
Share capital	1,000,000	1,000,000
Legal reserve	333,333	333,333
Retained earnings	7,086,856	6,343,435
Total Shareholders' equity	8,420,189	7,676,768
Non-current liabilities		
End of Service Benefits	529,553	507,358
Deferred tax liability	104,678	88,948
Lease Liabilities	722,229	285,881
Total non-current liabilities	1,356,460	882,187
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	6,676,126	5,955,165
Provision for Income tax	131,866	83,667
Current Portion of Lease Liabilities	2,077	19,693
Bank Borrowings	190,099	246,787
Total current liabilities	7,000,168	6,305,312
Total liabilities	8,356,628	7,187,499
Total equity and liabilities	16,776,817	14,864,267
Net assets per share	8.420	7.677

UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31ST DEC 2024

	9 Months 31-Dec-24 RO	9 Months 31-Dec-23 RO
INCOME		
Sales	14,831,173	12,582,904
Cost of sales	(12,452,923)	(10,652,311)
Gross profit	2,378,250	1,930,593
Other income	25,638	23,449
Total income	2,403,888	1,954,042
EXPENSES		
Selling and distribution	(896,314)	(846,846)
General and administration	(650,162)	(583,277)
Directors' meeting attendance fees	(11,100)	(12,700)
Finance costs	(46,412)	(29,904)
Total expenses	(1,603,988)	(1,472,727)
Profit/(Loss) before tax	799,900	481,315
Income Tax	(120,150)	(71,950)
Profit/(Loss) for the Period	679,750	409,365
Attributable to:		
Equity shareholders of the Company	679,750	409,365
Earnings/(Loss) per share	0.680	0.409

Special Olympics Oman signs MoU with Snow Oman to train athletes

Special Olympics Oman has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Snow Oman to train and prepare Special Olympics Oman athletes participating in the Special Olympics World Winter Games, scheduled to take place in Turin, Italy, in March.

The agreement, signed by Olivier Saez, vice president of Global Snow, and Nabila Bint Yaqoob Alharthia, national director of Special Olympics Oman, aims to provide specialised training programmes and comprehensive technical support for the athletes, enhancing their readiness for international competitions. Snow Oman will also handle logistical support and provide the necessary resources to ensure the delegation achieves the best possible performance in the championship, a press release said.

The signing ceremony was held under the patronage of H E Bassel bin Ahmed al Rawas, undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth, and highlighted the collaboration's focus on empowering athletes with intellectual disabilities and fostering inclusivity through sports.

Officials from Special Olympics Oman and Snow Oman expressed their happiness with this partnership, emphasising the importance of



This initiative is part of ongoing efforts to support athletes with intellectual disabilities and reflects the sultanate's commitment to providing them opportunities for active participation in global sports

sports in promoting social inclusion and developing athletes' skills. This initiative is part of ongoing efforts to support athletes with intellectual disabilities and reflects the sultanate's commitment to providing them opportunities for active participation in global sporting events.

Saez said, "Snow Oman is proud to start on this journey with the Special Olympics Oman and work together to prepare the national team for the Special Olympics World Winter Games. Through sport, we can foster inclusivity, celebrate diversity, and provide a platform where athletes of all abilities can showcase their talent, determination, and resilience."

Majid Al Futtaim Entertainment has a portfolio of world-class entertainment experiences across the region including Ski Dubai, Ski Egypt, Snow Oman, Dreamscape, Magic Planet, Little Explorers and iFLY Dubai.



Embassy of India celebrates 76th Republic Day

The Embassy of India in Muscat celebrated the 76th Republic Day of India with patriotic fervour and enthusiasm. The event was attended by more than 500 members of the Indian community and friends of India in Oman.

H E Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, accompanied by his spouse, Divya Narang, began the celebrations by laying a floral tribute at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, honouring his legacy of peace and non-violence, a press release said.

The National Flag was unfurled by the ambassador, followed by the singing of the National Anthem by students from the Indian School Al

Ghubra. The Ambassador also read excerpts from the President of India's Republic Day address, highlighting India's progress, democratic values, and aspirations for the future.

Patriotic songs performed by the students from the Indian School Al Ghubra further enhanced the festive atmosphere. Beautiful tricolour sashes were distributed to all attendees, who wore them with pride as a symbol of their love for India.

The event included the felicitation of winners of the 'Bharat Ko Janiye' Quiz from Oman, a Government of India initiative designed to connect the diaspora youth with India's rich culture, history, and achievements.

Walkathon on January 31 to promote walking

The World Malayalee Federation Middle East region (WMFME), in association with KIMS Health Group, has organised a Walkathon in all Middle East Countries simultaneously on January 31 to create awareness on the importance of walking as a way of life.

The event will commence at

7am from the beach near Water Front shopping mall, Qurm, and is open to individuals of all ages, and nationalities reflecting WMF & KIMS' commitment to fostering a health conscious society.

Participants can enjoy a morning of fitness and connect with like-minded individuals. (To register: 99871660/99225978)

OABC elects new board, celebrates growth

The Oman American Business Council (OABC, AmCham Oman) held its Biennial General Meeting (BGM) on January 21 at the Hormuz Grand Hotel, celebrating significant milestones, unveiling new initiatives, and introducing its newly elected Board of Directors.

Since the last BGM, OABC, the official affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce in Oman, has hosted an impressive 109 events. In 2024 alone, the organisation welcomed 100 new members. These achievements underscore OABC's role as a critical hub for business, trade, and investment in Oman, driving engagement across sectors and fostering valuable connections.

Rebecca Olson, CEO of OABC, said, "This year's BGM



reflects OABC's momentum and the growing impact of our community. Together, we're creating opportunities for businesses to thrive, building connections, and fostering partnerships that benefit both Oman and the United States."

The BGM also saw the election of OABC's new Board of Directors, who will lead the organisation into its next chapter. The elected members are Ali Daud (chairman), Fouad Eid (vice chairman), Talal al Subhi (Em-

daad Petroleum), Nourah Mehyar (Nafith Logistics), Samir Messaoudi (Sheraton Hotel), Khaled Kassar (Better Medical Solutions), Ahmed al Barwani (Al Tamimi Law Firm), Davis Kallukaran (Crowe Oman), and Faissal al Nabhani (State Street).

The outgoing board members, including Matt Olson, Marla Valdez, Dr Mohab al Hinai, and Shayan Sumar, were felicitated for their invaluable contributions and dedication.

The BGM highlighted OABC's commitment to empowering businesses with new tools and opportunities. The organisation introduced three signature trade programmes - US Import Easy, US Export Compass, and Gateway Oman - designed to simplify trade processes.

Bank Muscat launches new mBanking app

In a move aimed at enhancing customer experience and improving the quality of services offered, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the launch of a new version of its mobile application.

This update includes a comprehensive development of over 200 features and services, with an interface designed to ensure easy navigation and quick access to different functionalities. The redesign aims to provide an integrated user experience that reflects the Bank's commitment to innovation and excellence in serving its customers, a press release said.

The update features a redesigned application interface that offers smooth and flexible navigation, providing users with a distinguished experience based on each customer's usage. Additionally, the login

page will save the user ID after the first login to simplify the process, offering an extra option to facilitate access alongside other available methods such as the Face and Touch ID.

After accessing their account, customers will enjoy an improved home screen with a sleek interface that prioritises simplicity of navigation. Cards have been segregated based on card type for ease of review and management. Customers can choose to show or hide the account balance, share the account details such as name, account number, SWIFT and IBAN. The new interface offers a customisable dashboard through Quick Links for users to personalise their experience by selecting to save their most used functionalities for direct access.

Additionally, customers will also benefit from a further sim-

plified registration process using NFC reader for android phones, the ability to apply for supplementary credit card, change credit card repayment account, create a standing order for prepaid card transfers, carry out fund transfer from prepaid card to current account or savings account, view a monthly bill payment comparison chart and accept or reject e-man-dates which simplify the payment process for regular payments.

Customers can also renew their debit card with the option to select delivery by courier or at branch, customers can also benefit from the enhancements made to the mutual funds dashboard that now facilitates the investment and redemption of Bank Muscat Al Tharwa Fund and Meethaq Equity Fund.

Abdullah Hamood al Jufaili, assistant general manager -

Digital Banking, Bank Muscat, said, "The consistent rise in active customers on our e-channels reflects the popularity of the services provided which are developed in line with our customer-centric vision. We are pleased to launch our improved application interface, designed to enhance user experience and further empower our customers with a seamless access to our services. This upgrade not only addresses valuable feedback but also reaffirms our commitment to innovation and excellence in service delivery. I would like to invite our valued customers to explore the new mBanking and enjoy its enhanced features, making their experience more intuitive and efficient."

Bank Muscat Mobile Banking provides over 200 features and services to customers, making their banking needs accessible

on the go. The list of services available include: tokenization of cards through mobile banking, instant account opening for children, online generation of debit, credit, prepaid card PIN, Themaar deposit account opening, application for Shukran prepaid card, initiate mobile payment via QR code through Mobile Shake, guardians are able to view and perform transactions in minors account and open a Themaar Savings plan on children's account, retrieve stamped account statements, delivery request to collect cards by courier, stop cheque requests, ROP fine payment, and update mobile numbers or email IDs associated with credit and prepaid cards.

The Bank's mBanking and Internet Banking services also include speed transfers to India, Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Egypt and Bangladesh.



ISG holds 76th R-Day celebrations

Indian School Al Ghubra celebrated the 76th Republic Day of India on January 26, honouring India's journey as a Republic, reflecting on 75 years of progress and embracing the theme 'Swarnim Bharat- Virasat aur Vikas'.

The audience was reminded of the significance of the day, marking the adoption of India's Constitution in 1950, and encouraged to step into the 76th year of the Republic with renewed pride and hope, a press release said.

The day's programme was filled with soulful tributes, starting with a rendition of the National Anthem by the school band. Following this, the band played two iconic patriotic songs - 'Vande Mataram' and 'Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja,' which resonated deeply with the spirit of the nation.

Srihari K Syam of class 9, then mesmerised the audience with his keyboard performance, setting the stage for the next act. The school choir performed 'Three Colours,' a heartfelt tribute to the values of the Indian flag, evoking unity and pride in the hearts of the listeners. It was followed by an interlude based on a fusion of Indo-Spanish music on the guitar and the tabla by Jash and Vedant of class 11.

The Department of English presented a skit titled 'A Nation's Strength,' based on the theme that the true strength of a nation lies in the integrity and character of its people.

The cultural diversity of India was further showcased by students from classes 6 to 9, who performed a medley of five different traditional dance forms, each representing a unique region of the country. The graceful dances embodied the rich cultural heritage and unity of India, leaving the audience in awe.



ARA Petroleum wins first place in OPAL Awards 2024

ARA Petroleum, the energy arm of The Zubair Corporation, announced that it has been awarded First Place in the 'Operator' category for Health and Safety at the prestigious OPAL Awards for Best Practices 2024.

The award highlights the success of ARA Petroleum's Integrated QHSSE Digital AI Solution (Mfano), a platform developed in-house to enhance the management of QHSSE processes, a press release said.

Mfano serves as a key tool for tracking QHSSE-related activities with complete traceability and visibility across all operations. Available on all computers and mobile phones, the platform ensures transparency and accountability, empowering every individual within the company to prioritize safety.

Mfano embodies ARA's philosophy of creating a culture of openness, where employees are not only encouraged but also have the authority to stop work and ensure that it is performed safely. This approach reinforces commitment to continuous improvement and is central to achieving organisational goals.

The platform integrates multiple modules to streamline various aspects of Q&HSSSE management. It supports the reporting of unsafe or safe acts, incident management, and corrective actions, while also ensuring compliance through training, certifications, and the management of permits. Additionally, Mfano helps track personnel, monitor key performance indicators, manage risk assessments, and organize critical documentation, all contributing to a safer and more efficient work environment.

MoE organises financial workshop

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Department of Educational Studies and International Cooperation, organised a training workshop titled 'Financial Culture', targeting employees of the department and the Legal Affairs Department.

The training workshop was held at the technical laboratory in the Ministry's General Diwan, a press release said. It was presented by Yousef al Hasani, a systems analyst at the department, covering several topics like defining financial culture and its importance, basic financial concepts, managing personal income and expenses, saving, and investing, managing debt and financial risks, long-term financial planning, and financial technology (FinTech).

The workshop also explained the role of financial institutions and financial education, future trends in financial culture in the Sultanate of Oman, challenges, and opportunities in spreading financial culture, and instilling the principles of culture among school students.

The workshop aimed to increase financial awareness by enabling individuals to understand basic financial issues, enhancing the ability to make informed financial decisions, encouraging savings and investment by promoting a culture of saving and investment.



NBO named Best Bank for Digital Banking

National Bank of Oman (NBO) has been named Best Bank for Digital Banking Services in Oman 2024 by the Global Banking and Finance Review.

This prestigious accolade highlights NBO's commitment to delivering pioneering digital banking solutions and underscores its dedication to enhancing customer experiences through innovation, advanced technologies, and a customer-centric approach, a press release said.

To simplify the customer experience digitally, NBO has introduced a range of innovative digital services. These include digital onboarding, allowing customers to open accounts seamlessly through the app, and a hassle-free digital credit card application service available to both NBO and non-NBO customers. This service complies with KYC requirements, eligibility criteria, and utilizes digital signatures in line with Central Bank of Oman guidelines.

Additionally, NBO has enhanced its app with e-KYC functionality, enabling existing customers to update their Know Your Customer (KYC) details directly, improving efficiency and eliminating the need for branch visits.

Another notable addition to NBO's digital offerings is the introduction of Apple Pay, Samsung Wallet, and Garmin Pay.

Indian School Sur celebrates its 36th Annual Day on January 20

Indian School Sur (ISS) hosted its 36th Annual Day Celebration with grandeur and enthusiasm at the Royal Hall, Sur, on January 20. The event showcased the school's achievements and vibrant cultural heritage.

The chief guest for the evening was Ali Mohammed Salim al Masruri, director, Administrative and Financial Affairs, Sur Municipality. The guests of Honour included Krishnendhu S, director, Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman and director in-charge of Indian School Sur, Mohammed Ali Musallam al Alawi, section head, Department of Lands, Ministry of Education, and Dr Kiran G R, senior Quality Assurance expert, Oman Authority of Academic Accredita-



tion and Quality Assurance of Education.

The school's Annual Report for the academic year 2024-25 was presented by Dr S Srinivasan, Principal of ISS, while Dr Kiran G R delivered the keynote address emphasising the importance of fostering global competencies while retaining cultural roots. He further stated that a school's success lies not just in academic excellence but in the holistic development of its students, preparing them to be global citizens with strong ethical foundations.

A highlight of the event was the release of the School Anthem, written by Dr Pradeep R V, academic supervisor, with music by B Unnikrishnan, music teacher.

Sudan attack on hospital kills 70, injures 19: WHO chief

Khartoum, Sudan - A drone attack on the only functional hospital in the western Sudanese city of El Fasher has killed about 70 people and injured 19, World Health Organization (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Sunday.

"The attack comes at a time when access to health care is already severely constrained in the state due to the closure of health facilities following intense bombardments," he said in a post on X.

"Above all, Sudan's people need peace. The best medicine is peace," he added.

Local officials reported the attack on the Saudi Teaching Maternal Hospital in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state, on Saturday, citing a similar death toll. Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry denounced the attack as 'a violation of international law'.

Who was behind the attack?

Local authorities blamed the strike on the rebel Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which is fighting



the Sudanese military and allied forces. The paramilitary group has seized nearly the entire vast

The attack comes at a time when access to health care is already severely constrained in the state due to the closure of health facilities following intense bombardments. Above all, Sudan's people need peace

TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS

western region of Darfur since April 2023. UN official Clementine Nkweta-Salami, who coordi-

nates humanitarian efforts in Sudan, said that the RSF had given a 48-hour ultimatum to the Sudanese Armed Forces to

vacate El Fasher.

The city has been under siege by the RSF since May 2024, but groups aligned with the Sudanese military had recently pushed back.

The army, under chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan has made significant progress against the RSF in recent months.

Earlier this month, the United States announced sanctions against Burhan and also against his rival, Mohamed Hamdan Dalgalo, who heads the RSF.

Civil war in Sudan

Sudan has been embroiled in a war since April 2023.

The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people, displaced more than 12mn and driven hundreds of thousands into famine.

More than 24.6mn people - around half of Sudan's population - face 'high levels of acute food insecurity', according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification initiative, backed by the United Nations.

DW

Trump's Jan 6 pardons 'undermined rule of law'

Trump issued pardons to almost all the 1,600 criminal defendants charged for storming the US Capitol

Washington, D.C., US - As one of his first official acts following his inauguration on January 20, US President Donald Trump issued pardons to almost all the 1,600 criminal defendants charged over their involvement in the storming of the US Capitol in Washington, DC, on January 6, 2021.

Trump had previously taken to calling them the 'J6 hostages'.

Among the individuals pardoned are hundreds who admitted to crimes they committed on January 6. Many others have been convicted because they acted violently toward police and other security personnel.

The sweeping pardons at the very start of Trump's second term in office were an extraordinary move on his part, according to legal experts.

"Pardons are typically thought of as something that happens towards the end of an administration," said Aimee Ghosh, partner at the public policy practice of international law firm Pillsbury and a government law expert.

"Historically, you don't see pardons being a huge focus of



The sweeping pardons at the very start of Trump's second term in office were an extraordinary move on his part

day one actions, although sometimes presidents sign pardons throughout their term, especially in connection with legislation that decriminalises a certain action," she told DW.

This was not the case with those convicted in connection with the January 6 riot. Attacking police officers remains a grave offense under US law.

So why did Trump sign a 'full, complete and unconditional pardon', as it is worded in his decree, for almost all participants in the attack on the Capitol?

Typical Trump style

Trump has always maintained that the criminal defendants

were simply victims of a campaign by his opponents.

In the first TV interview in his second term - with the Trump-friendly broadcaster Fox News - the president spoke of unnecessarily harsh prison conditions suffered by those convicted. He also asserted that they had just been 'protesting the vote, and you should be allowed to protest the vote'.

When the host suggested that demonstrators should not be allowed to enter the Capitol, Trump said most of the people 'were absolutely innocent'.

Joseph Margulies, a politics professor at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, said it's impos-

sible to work out whether Trump really believes that, whether the pardons are an act of political calculation or whether they are a mixture of both.

But, Margulies said, the pardons fit in well with Trump's overall style. "Trump's particular brand of muscular populism and in-your-face nationalism thrives on taking positions that thumb their nose at certain conventions," he said.

"That narrative of not just ignoring conventions but smashing them is his brand. And doing it in a way that attempts to rewrite history in a manner that's congenial to his base. And this (the pardons) is of a piece with that,"

he added.

Partisan amnesty?

Bernadette Meyler, law professor at Stanford University and a scholar of British and American constitutional law, argues the pardons granted by Trump to the convicts 'was more like an amnesty than an individual pardon'.

"This is because it was collective in nature and did not specify particular crimes for which the individuals were pardoned," she wrote in an email to DW.

"The exceptional nature of this amnesty consists in how it furnished support for those on Trump's own side politically," Meyler wrote.

Who was pardoned?

The convicts were mostly Trump supporters who believed his lie - which has been confirmed as such by several courts - that the Democrats had 'stolen' the 2020 election and that he, Trump, had been the true winner.

On January 6, 2021, Congress lawmakers were involved in certifying the election victory of Joe Biden when a furious mob fought its way into the Capitol building. Shortly before, Trump had given a speech nearby in which he reiterated that he was the winner and called on his supporters to march on the Capitol.

Four Trump supporters died during or ahead of the attack. One police officer suffered two strokes in the wake of the events and died a short time afterward.

DW



CIA Director approved the declassification of the agency's assessment

CIA suggests lab leak likely origin of COVID-19: Report

Istanbul, Turkey - The CIA now supports the theory that the coronavirus pandemic may have originated from an accidental lab leak in China, rather than a natural transmission from a wet market, according to a *New York Times* report on Saturday.

The CIA's shift toward favouring the lab leak theory as the origin of the pandemic is not based on new intelligence but on a re-assessment of existing evidence, the *Times* reported.

The report indicated that the agency's analysis includes a closer examination of conditions at high-security laboratories in Wuhan, China, prior to the outbreak. A CIA spokesperson noted that other theories remain plausible and emphasised that the agency continues to evaluate any credible new intelligence, according to the report.

The CIA has long maintained uncertainty about whether the pandemic originated from human exposure to an infected animal or a potential incident at a research lab in China.

New CIA Director John Ratcliffe, who was nominated by President Donald Trump and confirmed by the US Senate earlier this week, approved the declassification of the agency's new assessment.

A CIA spokesperson noted that other theories remain plausible and emphasised that the agency continues to evaluate any credible new intelligence

Ratcliffe has long maintained that the virus likely emerged from a leak at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

After his confirmation on Friday, he said that one of his initial priorities was having the agency release a public assessment of the pandemic's origins.

Anadolu Agency

North Korea tests strategic cruise missile: State media

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea has conducted a test of a strategic cruise missile, state media KCNA reported on Sunday. It is the first missile test by Pyongyang since the return of Donald Trump to the White House on Monday.

The test, overseen by the country's leader, Kim Jong Un, aims to enhance the nation's defence capabilities, said the South Korean news agency, Yonhap News, citing KCNA.

Details of the missile's specifications or the exact location of the test were not disclosed.

The launch also marked North Korea's third missile test in 2025, following several short-range ballistic missiles into the East Sea on Jan 14 and an intermediate-range hypersonic ballistic missile on Jan 6.

The test comes as Trump

began his second non-consecutive term and signalled an openness to reviving dialogue with Pyongyang.

Trump and Kim met three times during the US president's first term, including two summits. Last week, North Korea's parliament had pledged to maintain spending for a stronger defence despite facing economic challenges.

A two-day parliamentary meeting, held on Wednesday and Thursday in the capital Pyongyang, focused on the 2025 state budget, according to KCNA. Premier Pak Thae-song, Parliament Speaker Choe Ryong-hae, and other high-ranking officials took part in the meeting.

The session acknowledged that the 2025 state budget was structured to support a five-

year economic development plan by 'concentrating investment on accelerating significant changes in the national defence capabilities' and 'displaying the might of the self-supporting economy in major sectors of the national economy', KCNA had reported.

It did not say if North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attended the session.

Pak said although the country faced numerous challenges last year, the 'grand construction campaign' for the people continued without interruption.

He acknowledged that shortages and difficulties were more severe than ever, but emphasised that the state had established a well-regulated system for controlling the quality of products.

Anadolu Agency

Sarkozy trial shows nobody is untouchable

Paris, France - At a small cinema in Paris on a recent Wednesday afternoon, journalist Fabrice Arfi was talking to dozens of spectators after the viewing of his latest documentary on an affair that's now at the centre of a court case involving former French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

"There were tens of thousands of documents, bank statements, handwritten notes, etc. We realised we could be dealing with the biggest state scandal in French history," Arfi recalled after a showing of the documentary called 'Personne n'y comprend rien' ('No one understands anything').

Arfi works for investigative website Mediapart, which was key to launching the decadelong investigation.

Sarkozy, France's president from 2007 to 2012, is accused of receiving unregistered donations for his successful 2007 presidential campaign from Libya's former dictator, Moammar Gadhafi.



Sarkozy allegedly agreed to whitewash Gadhafi's reputation in the West

In return, Sarkozy allegedly agreed to whitewash Gadhafi's reputation in the West. Gadhafi, Libya's ruler from 1969 until his assassination in 2011, was accused of human rights violations and financing international terrorism.

Sarkozy, 69, and 12 others are now standing trial in Paris for corruption and violating French campaign finance laws. The defendants could face up to 10

years in prison and fines of up to 750,000 (about US\$785,000).

The Sarkozy corruption case

In 2012, Mediapart published a confidential document that read that Gadhafi would be willing to give Sarkozy 50mn (then around US\$66mn) for his election campaign. The document was signed by Libyan secret service chief Moussa Koussa. Mediapart

apart has published more than 160 articles on the case since.

French courts have confirmed the authenticity of the confidential document, but Sarkozy has dismissed it as a 'crude forgery'.

Throughout their inquiry, investigative judges, who, in France, gather evidence before cases go to trial, put together a 557-page indictment. It reads like a spy thriller, detailing trips by some of Sarkozy's close collaborators to Libya, meetings with middlemen, suspicious money transfers and alleged suitcases filled with banknotes.

Christophe Ingrain, one of Sarkozy's lawyers, is having none of what the investigative judges have called a 'bundle of indicators'.

"That's just another way of saying there's no evidence. There are neither conclusive traces of bank transfers or payments nor how much money is alleged to have been passed on," he told DW.

DW

Trump's plan for Gaza Strip is to 'clean out the whole thing'

Washington, D.C., US - US President Donald Trump on Saturday proposed relocating Palestinians from Gaza to neighbouring countries like Egypt and Jordan - an unusual proposal that was opposed by the former administration of Joe Biden.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One towards Miami, the president said he raised the matter during a telephone call with King Abdullah II of Jordan, and he might talk with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi on Sunday.

"I said to him (Jordan's king) that I'd love you to take on more because I'm looking at the whole Gaza Strip right now and it's a mess, it's a real mess," said Trump. "I'd like him (Jordan's king) to take people."

"I'd like Egypt to take people. I'm talking to Gen Al Sisi tomorrow sometime I believe. I'd like Egypt to take people. And I'd like Jordan to take people," Trump continued.

"You're talking about a million and a half people, and we just clean out that whole thing. You know over the centuries it's had many, many conflicts. And I don't know, something has to happen," he added.

Describing Gaza as 'a demolition site', the US president said: "Almost everything is demolished and people are dying there. So I'd rather get involved with some of the Arab nations and build housing at a different location where they can maybe live in peace for a change."

He added that the move 'could be temporary or could be long-term'.



Trump asks Jordan's king that he'd love Jordan to take on more because the Gaza Strip right now is a mess

You're talking about a million and a half people, and we just clean out that whole thing. And I don't know, something has to happen

DONALD TRUMP

The Biden administration opposed relocating Gaza residents outside the enclave, advocating a return of Gazans to their homes in the aftermath of a potential peace and a two-state solution.

Israel's genocidal war has killed more than 47,000 Palestinians, most of them women

and children, and injured over 111,000 since October 7, 2023.

Since January 19, a ceasefire is in place to bring respite to civilians in the Palestinian enclave, but Trump said last week he is not confident that the truce will hold. "It's not our war. It's their war. I think they are very weak-

ened on the other side," Trump

told reporters in the Oval Office. "I looked at a picture of Gaza. Gaza is like a massive demolition site. That place is... It's really got to be rebuilt in a different way," he said.

"Gaza is interesting. It's a phenomenal location on the sea, best weather, you know, everything's good. It's like some beautiful things could be done with it, but it's very interesting, but some fantastic things could be done with Gaza," Trump added.

Delivery of bombs to Israel

Trump also confirmed on Saturday that 'a lot of things ordered

and paid for by Israel, but have not been sent by Biden, are now on their way."

That includes the delivery of 1,800 MK-84 bombs, a shipment that had been delayed for months.

Trump's statement on Truth Social follows the Pentagon's decision to lift a hold on the munitions, which had been imposed last May by the Biden administration. Axios reported that the hold was lifted after Israeli officials were notified on Friday by the Pentagon.

The 2,000-pound bombs had been stored in the US and are expected to be delivered in the

coming days.

The hold, which Biden put in place to protest Israel's military actions in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah, triggered one of the most significant crises in US-Israel relations during the Israeli onslaught against the enclave.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had used the delay as a political tool, rallying support from American Republican lawmakers who criticised Biden's stance, even as the hold was in response to concerns about the potential for civilian casualties in Gaza.

Anadolu Agency

Trump may reconsider joining WHO

Washington, D.C., US - US President Donald Trump said on Saturday that he may consider rejoining the World Health Organization (WHO).

"I withdrew from the WHO, where we paid US\$500mn a year, and China paid US\$39mn, despite a much larger population... but maybe we would consider doing it again," Trump said at 'No tax on tips' rally in Las Vegas.

After Trump was sworn in Monday for a second term, he signed an executive order to withdraw the US from the WHO.

"World Health ripped us off. Everybody rips off the United States, and that's it. It's not going to happen anymore," Trump told reporters Monday while signing executive orders. He said the US paid US\$500mn to the UN agency. "Seemed a little unfair to me, so that wasn't the reason, but I dropped out... China pays US\$39mn, and we pay US\$500mn, and China's a bigger country."

Turning to Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's plan to expand investments and trade with the US by US\$600bn in the next four years, Trump said he would ask the Saudis for more investment. "I believe they'll make it a trillion. I'm going to ask him to make it one trillion. What the hell the money means? Nothing. You know, where they made their money from liquid gold, right?"



Israeli authorities have refused to allow the return of Palestinian residents to northern Gaza

Violation of ceasefire in Gaza: 1 killed, 5 injured

Gaza City, Palestine - One Palestinian was killed and five others, including a child, were injured on Sunday by Israeli gunfire in the Gaza Strip despite a ceasefire agreement in the enclave, medics said.

A young man was shot and killed by Israeli forces in central Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, a medical source said.

Israeli army forces also opened fire on a group of displaced civilians waiting to be allowed to return to northern Gaza, injuring five people, including a child, another medical source said.

According to witnesses, hundreds of displaced civilians had spent the night in the open in the cold winter as they waited an Israeli permission to return to their areas in northern Gaza.

Witnesses said Israeli military vehicles positioned along the Netzarim Corridor, which separates northern and southern Gaza, opened fire on a group of

displaced people as they waited for the army to withdraw and allow them to return to the north under the ceasefire agreement.

Israeli authorities have refused to allow the return of Palestinian residents to northern Gaza until Israeli captive Arbel Yehud is released. Hamas confirmed that the hostage would be released in the next swap.

The first six-week phase of the agreement took effect Jan 19, suspending Israel's genocidal war. Seven Israeli captives, including four soldiers, have so far been released in return for 290 Palestinian prisoners since the deal came into force.

Another Palestinian killed in Jenin

Meanwhile, another Palestinian died from Israeli army fire in the West Bank city of Jenin on Sunday, taking the death toll from a military operation in the area to 16, the Health Ministry said.

A ministry statement said that

a 26-year-old man breathed his last to serious injuries sustained on Tuesday from Israeli fire in the Jenin refugee camp.

According to Palestinian figures, at least 16 Palestinians have been killed and 50 others injured in an Israeli military operation in the Jenin camp since Tuesday.

Israeli media said the Jenin assault is part of a political manoeuvre by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to appease far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who opposed a recent Gaza ceasefire. Reports suggest that Netanyahu promised the attack to prevent Smotrich from resigning, which could collapse the government.

Tensions have been running high across the occupied West Bank due to Israel's war on Gaza.

At least 876 Palestinians have been killed and more than 6,700 injured by Israeli forces in the occupied territory, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

Anadolu Agency

Macron supports Lebanon ceasefire

Beirut, Lebanon - French President Emmanuel Macron told Lebanese President Joseph Aoun on Saturday that he is working to uphold a ceasefire deal between Hezbollah and Israel.

The Lebanese presidency said Aoun received a telephone call from Macron to discuss 'developments in the south'.

The leaders addressed efforts to de-escalate tensions and ensure the full implementation of the deal. Macron emphasised his diplomatic efforts 'to maintain the ceasefire and complete the implementation of the agreement'. Aoun highlighted the 'need to oblige Israel to implement the agreement to preserve stability in the south'.

He also urged an end to 'Is-



Emmanuel Macron

rael's ongoing violations, particularly the destruction of border villages and land levelling, which hinder the return of residents to their areas', according to the statement.

The discussion occurred hours before a deadline for the

Israeli army to withdraw from southern Lebanon, set for 0200GMT Sunday as outlined in the agreement.

The ceasefire deal, reached on November 27, ended more than 14 months of fighting between the Israeli military and the Lebanese resistance group, Hezbollah, which escalated alongside the war in the Gaza Strip.

At least 4,068 people have been killed, including women, children and health workers, while 16,670 have been injured since the Israeli offensive against Lebanon began October 8, 2023, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry.

Meanwhile, Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdul-

rahman discussed developments in the Gaza Strip, Syria and the Russia-Ukraine crisis with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Saturday.

The Qatari Foreign Ministry said bin Abdulrahman received a telephone call from Lavrov during which they 'focused on cooperation relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them'.

The ministers discussed 'regional and international issues, primarily the developments of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, and the efforts of Qatar to reunite children with their families, within its ongoing mediation aimed at reuniting families separated by the crisis'.

Anadolu Agency

DR Congo: Peacekeepers killed in fighting

Johannesburg, South Africa - South Africa, Malawi and Uruguay on Saturday announced that soldiers from their respective armies were killed as they battled to halt the advance of M23 rebel fighters in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) said that nine of its soldiers were killed during a battle with M23 fighters as they attempted to advance on the city of Goma, the key city in the mineral-rich east.

'M23 advance halted'

"The M23 hostile forces had launched a full-scale attack on our troops with the intention of taking over Goma but were unable to advance due to the heroic resistance put up by our gallant



SANDF said that nine of its soldiers were killed fighting M23

fighters," the SANDF said in a statement.

South Africa's military said its forces were able to halt the advance and push the M23 rebels back. The SANDF said that the number of injured had yet to be confirmed and some had varying degrees of injuries.

Two of the dead South African soldiers were part of the

UN peacekeeping force, while the other seven South Africans were part of the Southern African Development Community Mission, also known as SAMIDRC.

"The rebel group M23 attacked the SAMIDRC in Goma to which SAMIDRC retaliated and successfully repelled the armed group," the Southern African De-

velopment Community (SADC) Secretariat posted on X.

"SADC commends the actions of the brave men and women from SAMIDRC who sacrificed their lives for the Region," it added.

Before South Africa's military confirmed the number of its dead, the Malawi Defence Force (MDF) said that three of its peacekeepers were killed.

"We confirm the loss of three of our courageous soldiers who were part of the SADC Mission in the DRC," spokesman Emmanuel Mlelemba said.

"These soldiers fell in the line of duty during an encounter with the M23 rebel group operating in eastern DRC. As the situation remains volatile, further details will be shared later," he added.

DW

INDIA CELEBRATES REPUBLIC DAY

Parade showcases military might

New Delhi - The vibrant traditional parade was the centre-piece of the India's Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi on Sunday.

Thousands gathered in the capital to watch the choreographed spectacle featuring the country's missile systems, fighter jet fly pasts, motorbike stunts and floats representing different Indian states.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Droupadi Murmu and other government officials and leaders attended the event.

"May this occasion strengthen our efforts towards preserving the ideals of our Constitution and working towards a stronger and prosperous India," Modi wrote on social media platform X.

IAF soars high with dazzling display

The Indian Air Force (IAF) put on a breathtaking show at the celebrations with a dazzling air display that left the audience in awe.

Three MiG-29 aircraft in 'Baaz Formation' flypast in 'Vic' formation along with IAF Marching Contingent on Kartavya Path, captivating the audience. The flypast featured 40



Republic Day celebrations mark the anniversary of the official adoption of India's Constitution on January 26, 1950

aircraft/helicopters - 22 fighter jets, 11 transport aircraft and seven helicopters of IAF. These included Rafale, Su-30, Jaguar, C-130, C-295, C-17, AEWACS, Dornier-228 & An-32 aircraft and Apache & Mi-17 helicopters. These aircraft are operating from 10 different bases.

They displayed a variety of formations including Dhvaj, Ajay, Satluj, Rakshak, Arjan, Netra, Bheem, Amrit, Vajrang, Trishul and Vijay. The concluding Vertical Charlie manoeuvre was performed by a Rafale fighter aircraft.

The first aerial formation of

the day, the 'Dhwaj Formation', proudly carried the National Ensign along with the respective service ensigns of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Flying in from the skies, Mi-17 IV helicopters from the 129 Helicopter Unit.

Leading this spectacular fly-

past was the Group Captain Alok Ahlawat, trooping the National Flag. Following closely was Deputy formation leader Wing Commander Shailendra Kumar Singh, trooping the Indian Army Ensign, with Wing Commander Rohit Tiwari to his left, representing the Indian

Navy Ensign and to the right was Wing Commander Vinay trooping the Indian Air Force flag.

As these helicopters glided above, they showered vibrant petals upon the gathering, offering a beautiful and heartfelt tribute to the spectators below, making the moment even more memorable.

specialised training to execute drill manoeuvres synchronised with music.

Their first public performance at India Gate on Kargil Vijay Diwas, 26th July 2024, was a testament to their discipline and skill, achieved after just five months of rigorous training.

India has a tradition of invit-

May this occasion strengthen our efforts towards preserving the ideals of our Constitution and working towards a stronger and prosperous India

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

The ceremony culminated with the national anthem and the release of balloons carrying banners with the official logo depicting 76 years of enactment of the Constitution in both English and Hindi.

Notably, a landmark moment in IAF's history was the participation of Agniveervayu Women in the Tri-Services Contingent at the Republic Day Parade 2024.

Forty-eight IAF Agniveervayu women formed part of this prestigious contingent, with thirty of them receiving

ing foreign heads of state to witness the parade with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto being welcomed this year as the chief guest. French President Emmanuel Macron attended last year, and former US President Barack Obama attended in 2015.

Republic Day celebrations mark the anniversary of the official adoption of India's Constitution on January 26, 1950, nearly three years after independence from British colonial rule.

Agencies

Indian embassies across world extend warm wishes

New Delhi - As India marked its 76th Republic Day with celebrations, embassies from across the world extended their warm wishes, emphasising the significance of India's democratic journey and its role in global partnerships.

Notable messages poured in from the United States, France, Brazil, South Africa, the UAE, Nepal, Russia, China, and several other nations, underscoring the global recognition of India's achievements.

The French Embassy in India expressed its heartfelt greetings through a post on X stating: "France joins you in celebrating your rich heritage and the path forward to greater progress and prosperity."

The Embassy of Brazil in India and Bhutan shared their greetings via X, while the High Commission of India in Pretoria (South Africa) posted on X: "On the eve of 76th Republic Day of India, a traditional folk dance 'Bhangra' event organised at the University of South Africa. Dignitaries from the South African Government, members of Diplomatic Corps, Indian com-



The spirit of celebration was seen in Indian embassies worldwide

munity enthralled by stunning performances."

The Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi, UAE, shared their greetings for the Republic Day by posting: "Honouring National Values - Republic Day reflects our devotion to the Constitution's principles and reminds us of the sacrifices that built a progressive, inclusive nation."

Similarly, Nepal's Embassy conveyed its felicitations to the Indian government and its people, posting: "We extend warm felicitations to the Government and the friendly people of India on the 76th Republic Day."

The Russian Embassy echoed these sentiments, stat-

ing: "The Russian Embassy in India cordially congratulates all Indian friends on the Republic Day!"

China's Ambassador to India, Xu Feihong, also joined the chorus of global well-wishers, posting: "The Chinese Embassy in India congratulates all Indian friends on the Republic Day."

Meanwhile, the Embassy of India in Beijing celebrated the occasion with a flag-unfurling ceremony, cultural performances, and a reading of the President's Republic Day message.

A similar spirit of celebration was seen in Indian embassies worldwide.

ANI

Indonesia makes its presence felt

New Delhi - Indonesia made its presence felt at India's 76th Republic Day celebrations on Sunday, with a 152-strong contingent from the Indonesian National Armed Forces participating in the grand parade at Kartavya Path in New Delhi.

The Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) marching contingent showcased Indonesia's unity and strength, with personnel from the Army, Navy, and Air Force marching together in perfect synchrony.

Dressed in honour guard uniforms, the personnel executed precise marching movements, reflecting military readiness and national cohesion.

Their performance was a testament to the nation's motto, 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika' or 'Unity in Diversity', reflecting Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and commitment to national integrity. The contingent's meticulous training was evident in their precise marching movements, highlighting military readiness.

These parades, a long-established tradition in the Southeast Asian nation, take place during major events like the country's Independence Day and National Forces anniversaries.



The Indonesian Forces displayed their country's national identity, incorporating national symbols

The Indonesian National Armed Forces contingent showcased Indonesia's unity and strength

The Indonesian National Armed Forces also displayed their country's strength and national identity, incorporating national symbols like the Garuda

emblem and the Indonesian flag into their formations.

Additionally, a 190-member military band from Indonesia's Military Academy, 'Genderang Suling Canka Lokananta', participated in the parade, serving as a powerful symbol of Indonesian national unity and military prowess.

As the chief guest, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto's two-day state visit to India was his first to the country since becoming president in 2024. India and Indonesia

signed a series of agreements on cooperation in health, maritime security and digital technology. Indonesia was the guest nation at India's very first Republic Day in 1950, PM Narendra Modi said on Saturday. Back then, Sukarno, Indonesia's first president and leader of the country's struggle for independence, attended as the guest of honour.

Modi said it was a matter of 'great pride' that Indonesia was part of the parade again.

Agencies

How immigrant voters could determine the German election in February

Berlin, Germany - In Germany, political parties have less than a month to convince voters to support their platform in February's federal election. There's one electoral group in particular that might offer lagging parties an opportunity to make up lost ground: people with an immigration background.

An estimated 7.1mn eligible voters, or one in eight German voters, have an immigrant background - meaning they, or at least one of their parents, migrated to Germany.

This demographic tends to vote less frequently than people who do not have an immigration background. And sociologist Friederike Römer said they're

also less committed to voting for a particular party than they used to be.

Römer is an expert at the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM) and co-authored a study for the institute that investigates the everyday worries and party preferences of citizens with a history of migration.

"Among all the groups examined, the party with the highest potential is the (center-left Social Democratic Party)," she said. "About 20% of the voters who have a migrant background could see themselves voting for the (far-right Alternative for Germany). But when we ask immigrant voters which party they



An estimated 7.1mn eligible voters, or one in eight German voters, have an immigrant background

believe has the expertise to solve current problems, they answer 'none' more frequently than people without an immigrant back-

ground."

Another trend she's found is that the newly formed populist Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance

(BSW) and the Left Party commonly have higher approval ratings among this demographic, while the Green Party does not

fare as well.

Appealing issues

For eligible voters with a history of immigration, inflation and the economy are high on their list of concerns.

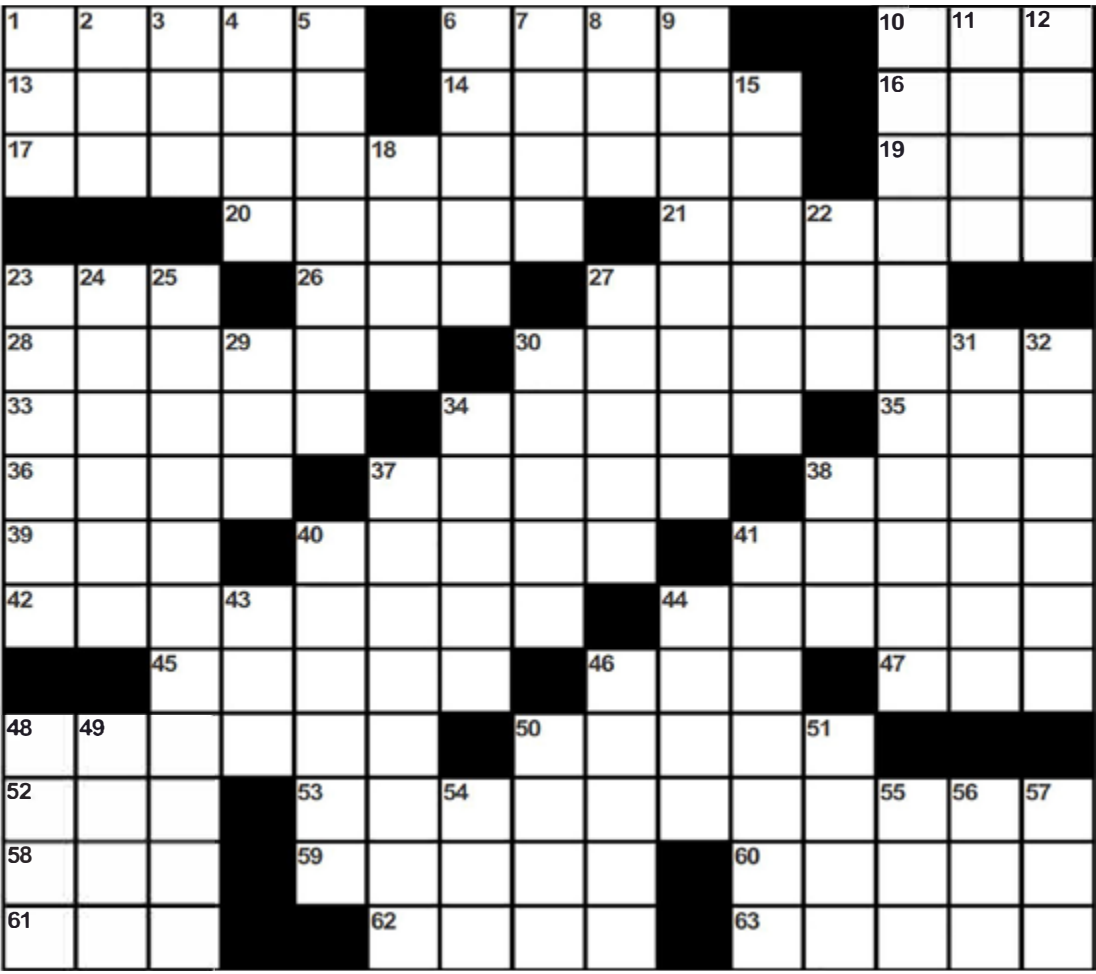
"When it comes to material concerns, problems with their retirement plans or with their living situation, people with a migrant background often report that they are more concerned than people without a migrant background," said Römer.

"We also see that people without a migrant background are often more concerned of falling victim to crime." Concerns like these have fuelled the far-right Alternative for Germany

(AfD) party, which has been campaigning on a xenophobic platform and railing against migrants but also visibly straining to reach new voters. Römer has observed that this strategy can be quite successful with immigrants.

"(The AfD) is very good at addressing certain subpopulations with immigrant roots and convincing them of their politics. To immigrants who have been living in Germany for a long while now, especially those from the (Middle East and North Africa) region or from Turkey, they offer: "You're not the problem. The new ones are the problem. That's been very catchy, especially on social media." DW

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - 1) Book of maps
 - 6) "You_ a mouthful!"
 - 10) Scoundrel
 - 13) New moon, e.g.
 - 14) Chips in
 - 16) Mine find
 - 17) Swiss soldier's do-all
 - 19) Time div.
 - 20) They may be clear or threatening
 - 21) Blocks for metalwork-ers
 - 23) Dash
 - 26) Begley and Sullivan
 - 27) Not at all emotional
 - 28) Solar-system mobile
 - 30) Verse makers
 - 33) Brighton baby buggies
 - 34) Euripidean tragedy
 - 35) Letter after sigma
 - 36) "_ who?"
 - 37) Exposed
 - 38) Film crew member
 - 39) One for the off-road
 - 40) More pure, as silver
 - 41) Straight-billed game bird
 - 42) Incomplete compo-nents
 - 44) Evening repast
 - 45) Backside
 - 46) Newspaper div.
- 4 7) Bro, for one
 - 48) Connect to electricity, as an appliance
 - 50) Pelt hunter's tools
 - 52) Unagi, at a sushi bar
 - 53) Lovers of high-fidelity sound
 - 58) Guy's opposite
 - 59) Hideouts
 - 60) Dickens' Heep
 - 61) CIA employee
 - 62) Cleaning cabinet sup-plies
 - 63) Make a new attempt

DOWN

 - 1) Smartphone software, briefly
 - 2) Even if, briefly
 - 3) Lancelot du_ of "Camelot"
 - 4) Does something ap-pealing?
 - 5) Hiders' companions
 - 6) "Land_!"
 - 7) Coulter and Curry
 - 8) "Lord, is _?" (Last Sup- per question)
 - 9) Like skim milk
 - 10) Newspaper features
 - 11) Husk
 - 12) Animal shelters
 - 15) Mexican missus
 - 18) Like a neatnik
 - 22) Seven, on a grandfa- ther clock
 - 23) Comes to light
 - 24) Text mistakes
 - 25) How some approach big decisions
 - 27) Exodus commemora- tion
 - 29) Ambulance initials
 - 30) French mothers
 - 31) Taiwan's capital
 - 32) "Outstanding!"
 - 34) Hairy-chested
 - 37) Occurring twice a year
 - 38) Econ. measure for a country
 - 40) Decorative knob
 - 41) Gunpowder ingredient (Var.)
 - 43) Children's game
 - 44) Bathroom bar
 - 46) Anti-vampire device
 - 48) Coatrack parts
 - 49) Move like a kangaroo
 - 50) Get bushed
 - 51) "Your majesty"
 - 54) Handyman's letters
 - 55) On, as an old lamp
 - 56) Ring bearer, often
 - 57) Not outgoing

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You're the person everyone comes to when they need advice, counsel, or a couple of dollars. Does that mean it's the only type of relationship you're capable of having? Hardly. In fact, a long-distance lover could well be making plans to tiptoe subtly back into your life. If you're game, don't be afraid to make the first move and issue the invitation, but be sure they pay for the ticket. Just this once.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

After what seems like months of dealing with cranky, unfriendly people who aren't at all open to seeing things your way, you've finally arrived at a better way of doing things. You're going to ignore them, and better still, you're going to ignore them long distance. You have the brochures, you've talked to the travel agents and you've chosen a location. But do you really want to go alone? Perhaps!

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You didn't choose your family like you did your friends, but you still have some responsibility when it comes to their well-being. Try to be as helpful as possible. Apologize for your mistakes, admit when you're wrong, and accept any apologies made to you. Taking the first step toward reconciliation isn't as difficult as you think. This is your chance to set things straight between you and an estranged relative.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. In various English-speaking countries, a flag is flown at what is said to be half mast as a mark of respect or mourning; in the U.S. (on land) the gesture is known as half what?
- A. Trunk
B. Pole
C. Pile
D. Staff
02. What was the first of a suc- cession of Soviet state security organisations, created by a de- cree issued on 20 December 1917 by Vladimir Lenin and sub- sequently led by Felix Dzerzhin- sky?
- A. The Cheka
B. SPECTRE
C. SMERSH
D. Tass
03. Which of these sports has an event called the "omnium"?
- A. Shooting
B. Fencing
C. Cycling
D. Swimming

Answers: 1.D 2.A 3.C

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Okay, you're done. It's finally time to let go of all those intense feelings you've been dealing with. If you have some free time, you can actually spend it having some fun. Bet you're feeling better already just thinking about how wonderful it will be to let go and stop worrying. Of course, if you really want to feel better, you'll plan some quality time alone with a loved one. Really alone.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Changes are on the way for you, so be open to any possibilities that come along. You may have to deal with some old issues to make room for new opportunities, but taking care of past business shouldn't be too hard. There is one person who stands in your way right now, and it's someone who can be of great help. It's up to you to figure out who's on your team and who isn't, but when you look at all the facts, the answer will be obvious.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You have a firm grip on all your things, and you don't want to let any of them go. What's causing you to be so possessive? Chances are there's plenty to go around. Loosen your grip and think about sharing what you have with other people. Try not to keep such close tabs on trivial things like whose food is whose or who bought the last round of drinks. Sometimes the more you give, the more you get in return.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

With any luck, you have gotten over the urge to exact revenge, because with the kind of conscience you're toting around, it wouldn't work for long anyway. You'd have to turn yourself in and apologize. You may be fiery, but you know when to call it quits on the anger thing, and it's time. Besides, it's time to have fun, and whoever or whatever got in between you and that all-encompassing objective? They're history.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Half of life is just showing up, so don't sit this one out. The events that are about to take place are too important miss. Find a way to deal with whatever is bothering you and move on. Try not to let your emotions rule the rest of your body. You have enough inner strength to get through these circumstances, but you may not know it yet.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You know what you want, so don't be afraid to go after it. Now it's your turn to watch your dreams come true. The stars are on your side, which should provide you with the assertiveness you need to go after the things that are important to you. Use your intuition if you get stuck on which way to go next. It is shouting directions at you, but you have to be willing to listen if you want to benefit from it.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

This is a great time to brainstorm, collaborate, and form new partnerships with people who have something interesting to say. You aren't in the same mood as all your friends, but that doesn't mean you can't hang out together. Your differences complement each other, which makes get-togethers all the more energetic. If someone expresses an idea or opinion you don't understand or agree with, question it.

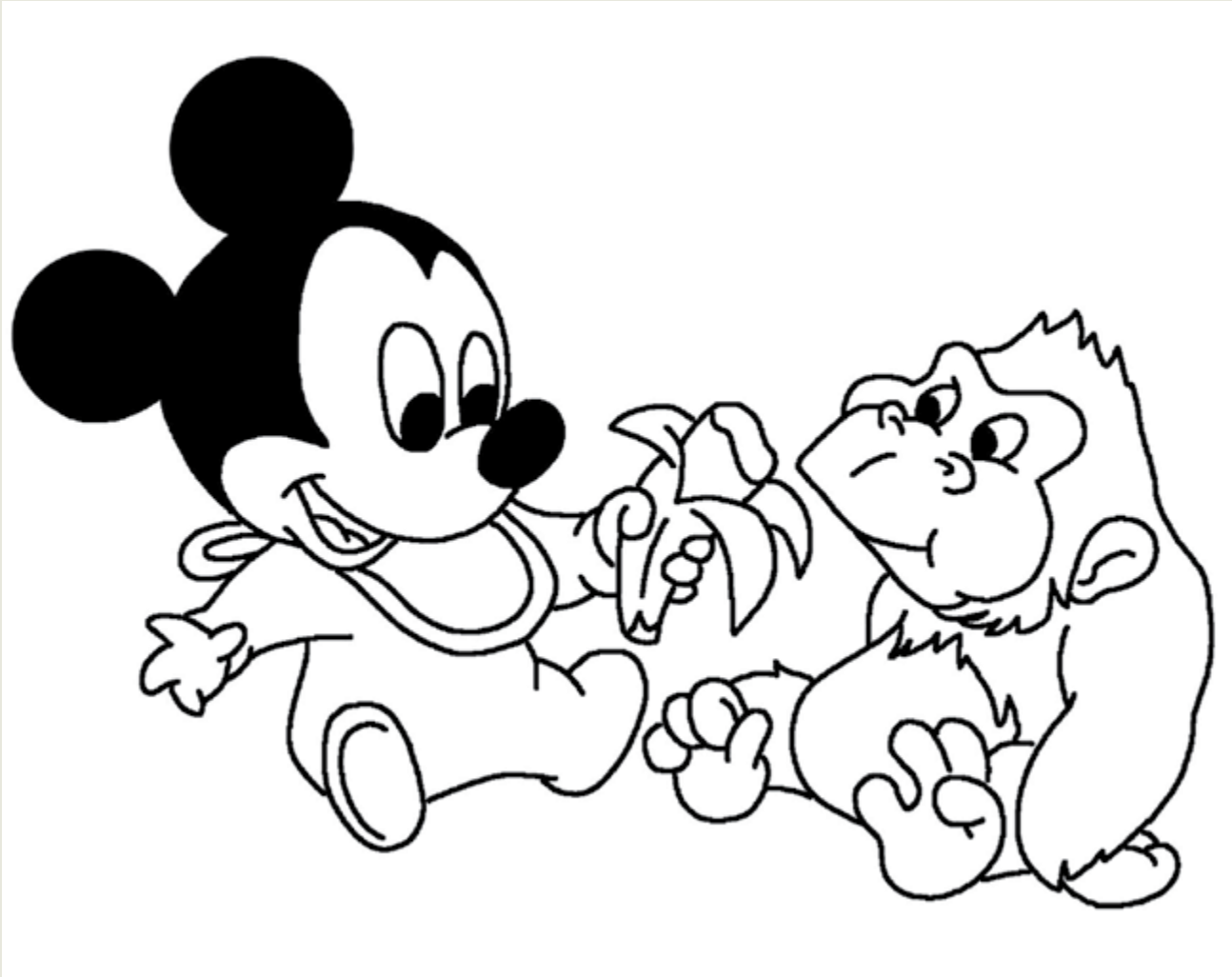
CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

One-on-one relationships are your specialty. You absolutely live for them. For the next month or so, that's going to be even more true. You'll want to spoil your partner rotten, thus they'll be tickled pink and very proud of themselves for choosing you. Of course, getting together with them on at least one occasion may be a bit tricky because of their schedule. If you're patient and persistent, and heaven knows you can be, it will all work out.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You can come out now. It's safe. That means whatever you've been trying to forget about will finally be no more than a distant memory. In the meantime, you can do yourself a tremendous favor by simply letting go of the anger and resentment you've been feeling, and what finer way to do that than by taking yourself out? Go to the home of someone who appreciates you.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

M	U	C	S
N	O	G	D
O	E	S	G
O	U	I	I

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

SOLUTION

20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER

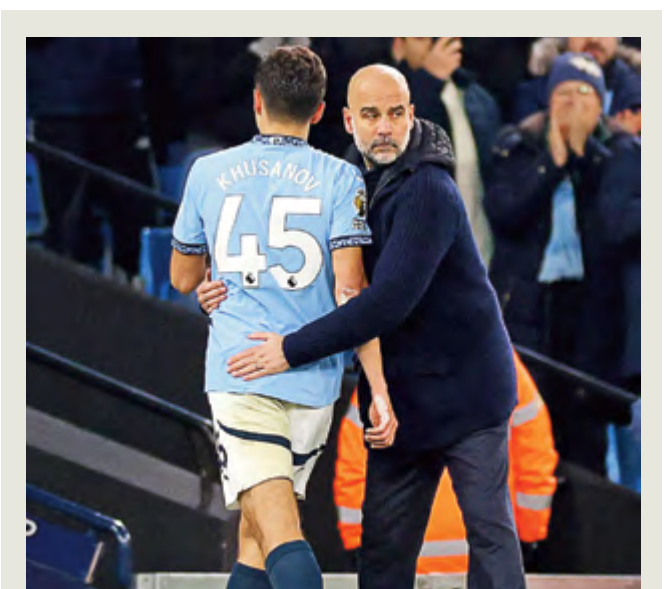


You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola with Abdulkodir Khusanov

Guardiola backs new signing Khusanov despite error on debut

MANCHESTER, England - Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola expressed confidence in defender Abdulkodir Khusanov, despite the 20-year-old giving away a goal in his Premier League debut against Chelsea before being rescued by his teammates as they came back to win 3-1.

Signed from French side Lens earlier in the week, the 20-year-old from Uzbekistan looked overwhelmed at times at the Etihad Stadium, and his nerves were not helped by gifting Chelsea the opener in the third minute.

"It is not easy for him. He trains once, and then to play against (Nicolas) Jackson and Cole (Palmer) and (Noni) Madueke and (Jadon) Sancho, it is a process when you buy a player this young. He will learn," Guardiola said.

The Spanish coach has endured a turbulent time in recent months, with the loss of key players to injury and the rest of the Premier League stepping up to pose a sterner

challenge to his side's previous dominance.

"We struggled lately and it has been a tough, tough season. Most players have been here eight or nine years and I am not going to change my opinion in two months," Guardiola explained.

"We have to realise it is not enough, what we are doing - I ask them to step up, and we did it.

"We created enough chances to score goals and in the end I am really pleased for the victory," he added.

Guardiola also handed a debut to 25-year-old Egyptian striker Omar Marmoush, who immediately gelled with the rest of the team despite only joining from German Bundesliga side Eintracht Frankfurt in midweek.

"Really good. That connection with other players and incredible movement. It is the first game, and he deals with the change and he makes unbelievable movements," Guardiola said.

PHILGOOD FACTOR IS BACK FOR ERLING AND COMPANY



Erling Haaland chips Chelsea goalkeeper Robert Sanchez to score Manchester City's second goal on Saturday

Haaland, Foden on target as Man City rally to beat Chelsea

Manchester, England - Manchester City bounced back after conceding an early goal to beat Chelsea 3-1 on Saturday, sparing the blushes of their debutant defender Abdulkodir Khusanov whose error gifted the visitors the lead at the Etihad Stadium.

The win lifts Pep Guardiola's side to fourth in the table on 41 points, 12 adrift of leaders Liverpool,

who have a game in hand, and one point ahead of Chelsea, who slip to sixth.

The 20-year-old Khusanov, signed this week from Lens, got his City career off to the worst possible start, first letting the ball bounce over him and then underhitting his header back to goalkeeper Ederson, allowing Nicolas Jackson to nip in and square the

ball for Noni Madueke to score.

A minute later Uzbekistan international Khusanov was booked for a challenge on Cole Palmer and after struggling to find his feet in English football was eventually replaced early in the second half by John Stones.

Fellow new signing Omar Marmoush fared better up front as he too made his debut. The Egypt striker caused plenty of trouble for the Chelsea back line in the opening 45 minutes, and his industry up front helped peg the visitors back.

The equaliser came through defender Josko Gvardiol, who reacted quickest to slot home a rebound three minutes before the break to turn the tide.

The home side took the lead in the 68th minute as Erling Haaland latched onto a long ball and looked up to see Robert Sanchez way off his line, lifting the ball over the stranded Chelsea keeper to make it 2-1.

Haaland then turned provider, expertly holding the ball up near the halfway line before releasing Phil Foden, who galloped through

the centre and slotted it past Sanchez to wrap up the three points.

"When we had the start like we did it is difficult, but we played really well and we kept on going and kept on going," Haaland told the BBC.

"We kept pushing and second half was the same. In the end it is what we need to do. We need to lock it in the back and keep going attacking-wise."

Pep Guardiola declined to criticise Khusanov despite the defender's rocky start.

'Outstanding' Isak right in hunt for golden boot

London, England - Newcastle United manager Eddie Howe called striker Alexander Isak outstanding on Saturday after his two goals against Southampton put the Sweden international firmly in the race for the Premier League golden boot.

Isak won and scored a penalty in the 26th minute before bagging a second goal four minutes later as he linked up with winger Jacob Murphy once again.

The two goals put Isak on 17 for the season in the league, one behind Manchester City's Erling Haaland and two off Liverpool's Mohamed Salah.

Not since Alan Shearer in the 1996-97 season has a Newcastle player finished as the league's top scorer, but Isak shows few signs of slowing down.

He became the first Newcastle player to find the net in five consecutive away league games at St Mary's on Saturday.

"He's been outstanding this year," Howe said. "Pretty much since day one he's been a regular scorer for us and that's no doubt helped his self belief.

"His general confidence when he enters the pitch seems really high at the moment and that's not a given. You have to earn that through your training."

Isak's penalty on Saturday was coolly dispatched into the bottom left corner, but it was the second goal that showed his real class.

In-form winger Murphy had pushed into midfield and with a laser-guided pass found Isak, whose first touch shifted the ball onto his right foot while his second slotted it into the net off the far post from the middle of the



Newcastle United's Alexander Isak celebrates his goal against Southampton

His (Alexander Isak) general confidence when he enters the pitch seems really high at the moment and that's not a given. You have to earn that through your training

EDDIE HOWE

area.

Isak faces stiff competition in the form of Salah, however, whose strike against Ipswich Town on Saturday took him above Thierry Henry to seventh in the list of all-time Premier

League scorers on 176.

No one would write off Haaland, who has consistently found the net despite City's poor form this season and added to his tally with a goal against Chelsea in Saturday's late game.

Arteta 'fuming' after Lewis-Skelly's controversial red against Wolves

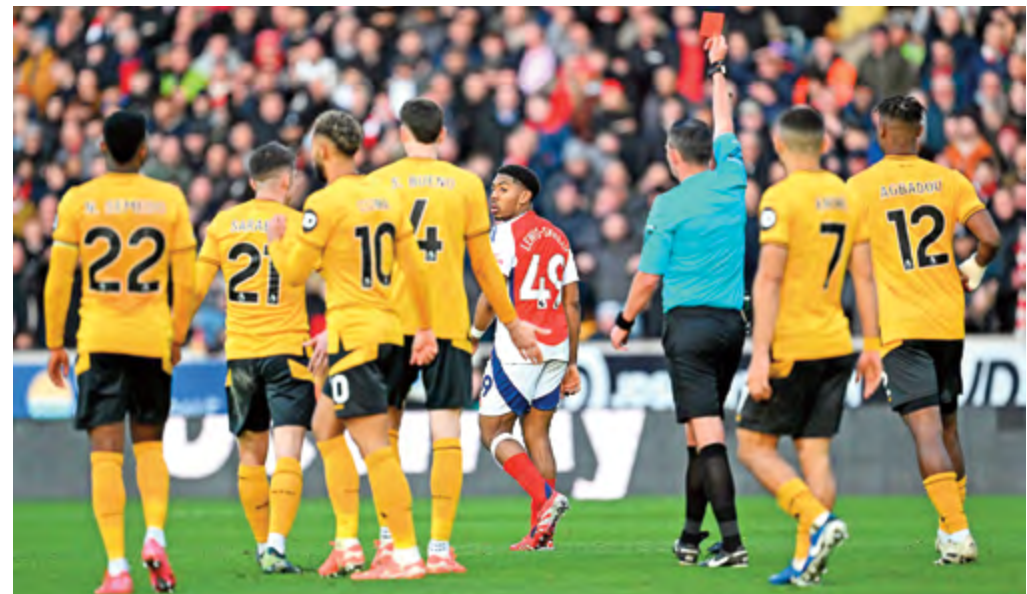
Wolverhampton, England - Arsenal defender Myles Lewis-Skelly's controversial red card in Saturday's 1-0 win away at Wolverhampton Wanderers left manager Mikel Arteta "fuming" while television pundits reacted with shock and surprise at referee Michael Oliver's decision.

The red card was Arsenal's fourth of the season when Lewis-Skelly was sent off for tripping Matt Doherty on the edge of the Wolves box as the home side attempted a counterattack just before halftime.

Oliver produced a straight red card, a decision upheld by the video assistant referee, with Lewis-Skelly suspended for Arsenal's next three games.

"I am absolutely fuming but I leave it with you. Because it is that obvious, I don't think my words are going to help," Arteta told Sky Sports after the game.

Arteta later told reporters that he did not receive an explanation



Referee Michael Oliver flashes the red card at Arsenal defender Myles Lewis-Skelly

for the red card but hoped it would be overturned the same way Bruno Fernandes' red card against Tottenham Hotspur was rescinded earlier this season.

"Hopefully we don't need to" appeal the red card, he said. "If we have to, it's a really good precedent with what happened with Bruno this season. Hopefully."

The Premier League said in a statement the red card was "checked and confirmed by VAR who deemed his challenge to

have been serious foul play."

But former Premier League referee Mike Dean said a yellow card would have been sufficient.

"I thought it was harsh. I've seen the still (image)... I just think there's not a lot of force in it."

Man United's Antony joins Real Betis on loan

Manchester, England - Manchester United Brazil winger Antony has joined Real Betis on loan for the rest of the season, both clubs said on Saturday.

Details of the deal were not disclosed but local media reported that LaLiga side Betis do not have an option to buy, with United covering a minimum 84% of his salary plus bonuses.

"Everybody at United would like to wish Antony the best of luck for his spell in Seville," the Premier League club said in a



Antony in Real Betis colours

statement.

Antony signed for United from Ajax Amsterdam in 2022 for a reported initial fee of 80.75 million pounds (\$100.77 million), making him the club's second-most expensive signing.

However, the 24-year-old has failed to impress at Old Trafford, scoring only 12 goals in 96 appearances.

The forward, who has played in 13 of United's 32 games in all competitions this season, is under contract until 2027.

MBAPPE HITS FIRST REAL HATTRICK

Holders
Madrid beat
Valladolid
to extend
LaLiga lead

Valladolid, Spain - Kylian Mbappe bagged his first hattrick for Real Madrid as the LaLiga champions easily beat bottom-club Real Valladolid 3-0 on Saturday to extend their lead on top of the standings.

Real opened the scoring in the 30th minute when Mbappe played a neat one-two with Jude Bellingham, bursting into the box to collect the Englishman's pass to beat the offside trap before firing in past goalkeeper Karl Hein.

He extended their lead in a quick counter in the 56th minute, bursting up the left channel to receive a pass from Rodrygo before curling a low strike just inside the far post. Mbappe wrapped the win from the penalty spot after Mario Martin was sent off for a studs up tackle on Bellingham inside the box in added time.

Real top the LaLiga standings with 49 points, four ahead second-placed Atletico Madrid who dropped two points at home earlier on Saturday in a 1-1 draw against Villarreal. They are followed by Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao, level on 39 points, both with a game in hand.

"Happy for the hat-trick but more for the win, I say it every week but it was important to win today after Atletico's draw," Mbappe told Real Madrid TV.



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe celebrates his goal against Real Valladolid on Saturday

We had to play well, we scored the first goal in a collective action. In the second half we could have played better, but we scored the second, managed well and scored the third

KYLIAN MBAPPE

"We had to play well, we scored the first goal in a collective action. In the second half we could have played better, but we scored the second, managed well and scored the third."

It was not the most inspired performance by Carlo Ancelotti's team who struggled to create many scoring opportunities despite controlling the action with almost 70% of ball possession, finishing the game with only four shots on target.

Missing Vinicius Jr due to suspension after his red card against Valencia, Real once again relied on Mbappe to score the goals on a cold night.

Ancelotti said he was delighted about the France striker's inspired form, with eight goals in their last five games in all competitions and finally looking like his old self, giving Real even more firepower.

"Mbappe is bringing a lot to the team, he's been getting into a rhythm for a couple of months and today, for the first time, he scored a hat-trick for us. Obviously that's a plus for our team, he's a player of great quality," Ancelotti told a press conference.

"Little by little we've got into a good rhythm, we've got into a good dynamic and that's great to see. As I have been saying, we are improving in the aspects that undermined us in previous games. And we must continue as we try to improve and correct some of the problems we still have."

After a slow start in the Spanish capital, the former Paris St Germain player has found his groove in the last two months, scoring 15 LaLiga goals and 21 overall.

Atletico pegged back after draw against Villarreal

Madrid, Spain - Atletico Madrid salvaged a 1-1 draw against visiting Villarreal in LaLiga on Saturday after Samuel Lino's close-range effort in the second half cancelled out a controversial penalty converted by Gerard Moreno.

Diego Simeone's Atleti, now without a victory in their last two league games after a 15-game winning run in all competitions, have lost top spot to Real Madrid, who have 49 points. They are second with 45 followed by Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao, level on 39 points.

Atletico dominated against Villarreal but it was the visitors who took the lead in the 29th minute, with Moreno converting a spot kick after he was fouled from behind.

Atletico's players complained



Villarreal's Gerard Moreno (2L) celebrates with teammates after slotting home a penalty against Atletico Madrid

Diego Simeone's Atletico Madrid are now without a victory in their last two league games after a 15-game winning run in all competitions

to the referee, arguing that defender Reinildo Mandava touched the ball first before making contact with Moreno, but Jose Maria Sanchez Martinez considered the challenge was an infringement and stuck to his decision.

Moreno made the most of Villarreal's only shot on target in the game before Atleti piled on the

pressure, mainly through forward Julian Alvarez who forced goalkeeper Luiz Junior to make two fine saves to keep out his efforts from the edge of the box.

Atletico manager Diego Simeone tried to shake things up with halftime substitutions and his side equalised in the 58th minute after a spell of pressure when Lino tapped home a rebound after the goalkeeper failed to hold Angel Correa's close-range strike.

Villarreal wasted chances on the counter but the hosts came closer to scoring as Junior had to make a stunning one-handed save to stop Pablo Barrios' thunderous strike from outside the box in the 85th, with Antoine Griezmann just missing with a close-range header in added time.



Napoli's Andre Frank Anguissa celebrates his goal against Juventus

Napoli end Juve's unbeaten run

Naples, Italy - Napoli staged a rousing comeback to secure a 2-1 victory over Juventus in Saturday's action-packed clash, handing the visitors their first Serie A defeat of the season.

On-loan Randal Kolo Muani scored on his debut to give Juve the lead two minutes before the break but Napoli fought back through Andre Frank Zambo Anguissa's equaliser after 57 minutes and Romelu Lukaku's penalty in the 69th to secure the win.

Napoli are top on 53 points, six ahead of Inter Milan, who have two games in hand, while Juve are fifth with 37 points.

The defeat means Juventus' frustrating season continues, with Thiago Motta's side having been held to 13 draws before finally suffering their first loss of the campaign to Napoli, who are now on a seven-match winning streak in the league.

The first half began at a frantic pace as Juve's Kenan Yildiz broke free in the box but Napoli goalkeeper Alex Meret produced a stunning point-blank save and Teun Koopmeiners missed the target as he followed up on the rebound.

Juve's aggression meant they dominated much of the first half, catching Napoli off guard as the hosts struggled to settle into a defensive rhythm.

Newly-acquired Kolo Muani, who on Thursday joined Juve from French Paris St Germain until the end of the season, had a notable impact when the forward capitalised on a rebound to volley past Meret and break the deadlock.

Roared on by a packed stadium, Napoli levelled after the break when Politano's cross found the unmarked Zambo Anguissa, whose thundering header gave Juventus goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio no chance.

We must stay grounded, says Conte

Naples, Italy - Napoli manager Antonio Conte hailed his side's 2-1 comeback win over Juventus in Serie A on Saturday but stressed the importance of staying grounded despite his side keeping pace with their title-winning season of two years ago.

Conte's side recovered from a goal down at home as Andre Frank Zambo Anguissa and Romelu Lukaku sealed the victory against a Juve side that were unbeaten in the league.

Napoli now have 53 points, the same total that Luciano Spalletti's side had at this stage on their way to winning the Scudetto in 2023, and sit atop Serie A, six points ahead of Inter Milan, who have two games in hand.

"We must never extinguish the enthusiasm because it's our lifeblood. However, we must stay grounded because what we've done so far is extraordinary," Conte told reporters.



Antonio Conte with Thiago Motta

"We have already matched last year's points, and this is without (Victor) Osimhen, Kvara (Khvicha Kvaratskhelia), and Piotr (Zielinski)," he added, referring to three key players who have left the club this season.

"It's nice to see that, despite the difficulties with the (transfer) market and injuries, nothing

changes.

"We need to stay humble and keep working. Today, though, we beat a great team that had left us far behind last year."

Juve finished third last season on 71 points while Napoli languished in 10th with 53.

Conte added that his side performed well above expectations against Juventus.

"The intensity today was like a European match, with very high rhythms and full-field pressure," he said. "We took some risks and yet some still say we play with a low defensive line and on the counter-attack. Sometimes it feels like I'm dreaming."

Despite the good run Napoli are on, Conte is still holding his cards close to his chest regarding the transfer window. "It's not just about bringing someone in ... Everyone is good at saying who is missing and I could easily say what we need too," he added.

PSG held to draw by Reims

Paris, France - Paris St Germain had to settle for a 1-1 draw at home to mid-table Stade de Reims on Saturday after Ousmane Dembele's second-half strike was cancelled out by Keito Nakamura's although they stretched their lead at the top of Ligue 1 to 10 points.

PSG started brightly with Lee Kang-in and Goncalo Ramos looking to open the scoring although Reims also threatened with Nakamura's shot saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma as both sides created chances in a lively first half.

The hosts broke the deadlock two minutes after the break with a left-foot shot by Dembele assisted by new signing Khvicha Kvaratskhelia in his first game under Luis Enrique.

Reims continued to press and Nakamura equalised in the 56th after a quick counter-attack by Marshall Munetsi.

The French champions failed to find a winner despite efforts by Bradley Barcola and Vitinha in the dying minutes.

"It was a complicated game. Reims are a good team," said Kvaratskhelia. "We could have won, we had a lot of chances, but we have to keep working and the results will follow."

PSG next visit Stuttgart in their final first phase game of Champions League as they look to secure a playoff spot.

Ousmane Dembele put Paris St Germain ahead but Keito Nakamura equalised for Stade de Reims



THE ITALIAN JOB

World No 1 Sinner dismantles Zverev to retain Australian Open title

Melbourne, Australia - Jannik Sinner retained his Australian Open title with an emphatic 6-3 7-6(4) 6-3 win over Alexander Zverev on Sunday, breaking new ground for Italian tennis and leaving his German rival smarting after a third Grand Slam final defeat.

The world number one became Italy's first player to win three Grand Slam crowns, moving past Nicola Pietrangeli who won back-to-back men's titles at Roland Garros in 1959-60.

A year after mowing down Daniil Medvedev in five sets for his first major trophy, Sinner sapped his second Melbourne Park final of all drama as he wore down Zverev with suffocating pressure and claimed the match with clinical execution.

The one-sided win in the floodlit Rod Laver Arena underlined the 23-year-old's status as the game's pre-eminent hard-court player, if robbing fans of a proper contest.

"I want to enjoy this one. This one has a different feeling (and) means so much to me," Sinner said.

For all Sinner's joy, a long-standing doping case continues to hang over his head.

Though cleared to play by tennis authorities, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is seeking a ban which could derail his French Open plans. A hearing



Jannik Sinner was in a class of his own in the Australian Open final against Alexander Zverev on Sunday

Congrats to Jannik, you're the best player in the world by far. I was hoping I could be more of a competitor today but you're too good

ALEXANDER ZVEREV

is set for April.

For Zverev, the result is another bitter blow, his third defeat in three Grand Slam finals. Left in tears, his miserable night was compounded by a heckler in the crowd who made reference to domestic violence allegations he faced in recent years.

"First of all, it sucks standing here next to this thing and not being able to touch it," the red-eyed German said of the winner's Norman Brookes Challenge Cup.

"Congrats to Jannik, you're the best player in the world by far. I was hoping I could be more of a competitor today but you're too good. I don't know if I'll ever be able to lift the trophy but I'll keep coming back, I'll keep trying."

Zverev gave up the decisive break in the sixth game of the third set but, arguably, the German's spirit had already been broken by an unlucky net cord that turned the second-set tiebreak in Sinner's favour.



Katerina Siniakova and Taylor Townsend celebrate with the trophy

'Super special' win for Siniakova and Townsend duo

Melbourne, Australia - Top seeds Katerina Siniakova and Taylor Townsend claimed the women's doubles crown at the Australian Open on Sunday after beating Jelena Ostapenko and Hsieh Su-wei 6-2 6-7(4) 6-3 in a gruelling final.

The victory at Rod Laver Arena gave Siniakova and Townsend their second Grand Slam title after their Wimbledon triumph last year while it was the 10th major title for Czech Siniakova, the doubles world number one.

"Big thanks goes to Taylor, we are having fun and that's the most important, so thank you for playing with me. I'm really enjoying it," Siniakova said after lifting the trophy.

For Townsend, the win was a full-circle moment in her career after she won the title as a junior in Melbourne in 2012.

"This is super special to me, the last time I played on this court I was 15," she said.

"This tournament was the start of me being able to live out my dream. I honestly didn't think that it was possible for me to be playing on this stage."

Heliovaara, Patten triumph

Finland's Harri Heliovaara and Briton Henry Patten fought back from a set down to win the Australian Open men's doubles title on Sunday, defeating Italians Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavasori 6-7(16) 7-6(5) 6-3.

The victory gave Heliovaara and Patten their second Grand Slam crown after they triumphed at Wimbledon last year, while for the Italians it was more heart-break after losing both the Australian and the French Open finals last year.

Pakistan spinner Noman stars again but Multan Test in no man's land

Multan, Pakistan - Pakistan needed 178 runs to win the second test and sweep the series, while West Indies were six wickets short of levelling the two-match series after the second day at Multan on Sunday.

West Indies ended their second innings on 244 as spinners Noman Ali and Sajid Khan took four wickets each. The visitors set a target of 254 for Pakistan, who trailed by nine runs after the first innings.

Hosts Pakistan, who won the first test by 127 runs at the same venue, were 76-4 at stumps, with



Noman Ali took 10 wickets for Pakistan but the West Indies are still very much in the game

Kevin Sinclair taking the crucial wickets of Shan Masood and Babar Azam, giving West Indies a fighting chance to win their first test in Pakistan since November 1990. West Indies captain Kraigg

Brathwaite (52) gave the visitors a strong start in the second innings with a 50-run opening partnership before Mikyle Louis (7) fell to Noman.

Brathwaite hit four boundaries and two sixes on his way to a half-century in 57 balls before getting beaten by Noman's spin as Mohammad Rizwan stumped him out.

West Indies were struggling at 145-6 as Noman surrounded the newly-arrived Sinclair with two short slips and a silly point, hunting for an edge as the ball turned heavily and kept low.

Varma stars as India win second T20I against England

Chennai, India - Tilak Varma's brilliant 72 not out guided India to a thrilling two-wicket victory over England on Saturday, handing the hosts a 2-0 lead in the five-match Twenty20 International series.

India successfully chased down 166 with four balls to spare after the visitors set a competitive total of 165-9.

Varma single-handedly guided India to 166-8 after they were reduced to 78-5. He hit five sixes and four fours, while Abhishek Sharma (12) and Washington Sundar (26) provided brief resistance. Suryakumar Yadav added some quick boundaries before falling for 12 in the sixth over.



Tilak Varma celebrates after steering India home

Brydon Carse took three wickets, dismissing Dhruv Jurel, Yadav and Sundar, while Jofra Archer's costly spell, in which he conceded 60 runs from four

overs, did not help England's cause.

Openers Sanju Samson and Sharma were dismissed cheaply within the first three overs.

Sharma was trapped lbw for 12, while Samson was caught by Carse at deep square leg for five after being sent back by Archer.

Varma combined with Sundar to add 38 before Sundar was bowled by Carse. When Liam Livingstone dismissed Axar Patel to leave India on 126-7 at the close of the 15th over, it raised England's hopes of snatching victory. Arshdeep Singh then carelessly lost his wicket to Adil Rashid.

Ravi Bishnoi's boundary brought India close in the penultimate over and with six needed from the final over, Varma sealed the win with a drive through the covers.

CLASSIFIEDS

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They call it the Freedom Trail. A line that snakes through Boston, a walking tour that takes in all the must-see locations where modern America began. Sure, at just two and a half miles it sounds short, but with so many ‘firsts’ to see, you’ll need more than a day to do it justice.

One of those ‘firsts’ is where the Freedom Trail begins.

Boston Common is America’s very first public park. It was first set aside in 1640 for military training and grazing cattle before it became what it is today - a place to while away time and get acquainted with Boston’s rich history. This place is, after all, where you’ll find the story of America on every corner, where revolutionary zeal led to the fight for independence from the British.

One of the Freedom Trail’s most important stop-offs is the Old South Meeting House, where many of the assemblies of those revolutionaries took place, including one before the Boston Tea Party — a 1773 taxation protest



orn. I have a lot of English ancestry, a lot of American ancestry. So perhaps I’d be on the shore watching!”

History at every turn

There is, of course, a need to stop and eat too. An apt place is the Union Oyster House, which is claimed as the oldest continually operating restaurant in the United States.

Here you can eat what are claimed as the best oysters in the world, straight from Duxbury Bay, a place with a deep, long history, about 35 miles south of Boston. Duxbury is a location that’s also pioneering the way towards a more sustainable future.

Shellfish farmer Skip Bennett grew up on these waters and has become the go-to guy for all things oyster. The delicious shellfish he trades in are a cornerstone of the Boston and New England culinary scene and go back way before the colonists decided they wanted a piece of the Massachusetts pie in the 17th century. Native Americans harvested the oysters here for centuries.



Boston harbour

The Freedom Trail

EXPLORING THE CITY WHERE MODERN AMERICA WAS BORN



The Paul Revere House on the Freedom Trail.

that saw chests of tea dumped in Boston’s harbor, triggering a series of events that would turbocharge American independence.

Today you can even head down to the water for a full-scale reenactment, with actors channeling their inner revolutionary and delivering word-for-word speeches. It’s stirring stuff and reveals why it was no surprise that it all kicked off here in Boston.

After all, this was one of the first English settlements in the American colonies, founded in 1630. And 140 years later, when parliament back home tried to impose a tea tax and a trading monopoly, let’s just say things didn’t go as the British had planned.

“We look at the Boston Tea Party as the single most important event that led up to the American Revolution,” says Evan O’Brien, creative director of the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum. He isn’t wrong. The British viewed the Boston Tea Party as an act of treason and retaliated with punitive measures that would ultimately lead to conflict.

“We were the catalyst which then propelled America into actual war. There were about a thousand people that night watching the destruction of the tea along the shores,” says O’Brien. “As for my personal family history. I’m



Old South Meeting House

For Bennett, his farming operation is all part of something bigger. He has previously dubbed Duxbury Bay as the Napa Valley of oysters and his harvest sells to the very best restaurants in the city. But, as he points out, his oysters act as a vital filter for water which has been polluted by nitrogen.

The presence of oysters helps to prevent algal blooms and create cleaner, clearer water. And that’s before the economic benefits of having his own hatchery and nursery, as well as staff whose dollars remain in the local area, creating a stronger economy.

This whole place is personal for Bennett, too. From his oyster farm, you can see where the first pilgrims arrived in ‘New England’ in 1620.

“This is Clark’s Island. It’s part of Plymouth. It’s in the middle of Duxbury, in Plymouth Bay. And it’s actually where the pilgrims spent their first Sabbath. So, they came ashore and spent a few days in late December, 1620. My family settled here and never left, they’ve been here ever since the Mayflower,” he says.

Hang on a moment, is Bennett saying he’s a direct descendant of those famous Mayflower pilgrims?

“Pretty much everybody on the Mayflower!” he affirms.

Courtesy: cnn.com



The next frontier

Space tourism might not be as far-fetched as you think – in the years to come, it is poised to become something all will enjoy



Virgin Galactic founder Richard Branson enjoys a trip to edge of space onboard VSS Unity

SPACE TOURISM

As companies like SpaceX and Virgin Galactic make waves in space tourism, how long does the rest of the world have to wait before we can all become astronauts?

At his inauguration last week, US President Donald Trump pledged to plant a flag on Mars. “We will pursue our manifest destiny into the stars,” he said on Monday, “launching American astronauts to plant the stars and stripes on the planet Mars.”

The comment elicited a big thumbs-up from Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, who hasn’t been shy about his ambition to not only reach but also colonise the red planet.

In a speech following the inauguration, which included that salute, Musk said, “Can you imagine how awesome it will be to have American astronauts plant the flag on another planet for the first time?”

But how close are we really to being able to take a person to Mars, and what are the hopes for the man on the street of taking a trip into space? Is it possible to take a holiday into space?

Reality check

Space tourism is a reality. In fact, the first space tourist took his trip nearly a quarter of a century ago, when Dennis Tito joined the Soyuz TM-32 mission in April 2001.

Since then, around 60 tourists have already travelled into ‘space,’ although most of these have been on suborbital joyrides, only briefly leaving the atmosphere before returning to Earth.

Leading the way is Richard Branson’s Virgin Galactic, launched back in 2004. Although the company has had some setbacks over the years, it has successfully completed seven commercial flights over the past two years with its VSS Unity space plane.

But these flights aren’t exactly reaching the moon. The VSS Unity travels to around 90km above the Earth’s surface, which reaches the definition of space in

NASA’s book, defined as 80 km above sea level. However, the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) defines space as beginning at 100 km.

Accessible to civilians

Alongside Virgin Galactic, Amazon billionaire Jeff Bezos created the Blue Origin project to take paying passengers into space. The New Shepard, his reusable passenger rocket, has flown eight crewed space flights since 2021.

Then there’s Musk’s own bid for interplanetary exploration, conducted under his SpaceX company. There are a lot of moving parts to this business, from the huge (and regularly exploding) Starship to the incredible Falcon 9 launchers that bizarrely guide themselves back down to the launch pad for reuse.

The tourism part of SpaceX is undertaken by its Crew Dragon spacecraft, a highly automated spaceship designed to be accessible to civilians with little to no training.

This spaceship most definitely goes into space, docking with the International Space Station (ISS) and free-flying orbital trips. Fifteen crewed launches have taken place, 10 on behalf of NASA and five purely commercial.

Although SpaceX draws attention for its rocket launches and Starlink constellation, the founding ethos of the company was to make human life multi-planetary.



Space Development is planning a gigantic space hotel



ELON MUSK

History is going to bifurcate along two directions. One path is we stay on Earth forever, and then there will be some eventual extinction event. The alternative is to become a spacefaring civilisation and a multi-planet species, which I hope you would agree is the right way to go

Specifically, its goal is to colonise Mars. “History is going to bifurcate along two directions. One path is we stay on Earth forever, and then there will be some eventual extinction event,” Musk said in 2016. “The alternative is to become a spacefaring civilisation and a multi-planet species, which I hope you would agree is the right way to go.”

How will space tourism evolve over the coming years?

When it comes to making space tourism more accessible to the masses, technology is key. And thanks to having both President Trump and his sidekick Elon Musk making the rules, things could start moving a lot faster.

“There is a new supportive attitude for developments coming from America,” Dr Annette Toivonen, space tourism expert

from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, told Euronews Travel. “That will bring with it good things and bad.”

“The technology will rapidly evolve because legislation on space will be kept as minimal as possible,” she adds. “But at the same time there are some big questions to answer, such as is it ethical, is it environmentally friendly?”

Not much about rocket launches could be considered sustainable, although companies are working hard to improve propulsion systems and develop reusable launchers. Nevertheless, Dr Toivonen believes there is an environmental benefit to sending billionaires into space.

“When people go to space and see how fragile we are, and they see this very thin layer of ozone, it’s a scary experience for them,” she explained. “For some people, to see this with their own eyes and to know how we are polluting the planet, it could be a life-changing experience for them.”

When people who are having these life-changing experiences are the wealthiest and most powerful people on Earth, the consequences could be positive.

Manned flight to Mars

How feasible are manned flights to Mars? “The technology is not present at the moment,” says Dr Toivonen, “not to get there in four years anyway. Right now, it seems like mission impossible.”

Cost is a major factor. When the USA went to the moon in 1969, it cost the na-

tion US\$25.8bn. In today’s money, that would equate to almost US\$320bn – that’s around 4 per cent of the total federal budget, and a big indicator of why we haven’t been back since.

Technological and financial restrictions aside, there are some fundamental problems with travelling to space that humanity just hasn’t solved yet. Cosmic radiation remains one of the most significant challenges for human space exploration, particularly when thinking about long missions to Mars or other planets.

Would there be demand for space tourism to Mars?

Right now, space tourism is the preserve of Ultra-High-Net-Worth individuals (UHNWI). These are people with a net worth of at least US\$30mn, of which there are 626,619 in the world today.

But that could change as spaceflight becomes more developed and successful. Efficiency improvements, cheaper materials and technology breakthroughs are likely to bring the cost down, letting space travel companies reduce ticket prices.

At present, Virgin Galactic sells seats on its flights for \$250,000 to \$500,000 per person, depending on the mission. SpaceX keeps the details of ticket prices for Blue Origin under wraps, but they’re rumoured to cost around US\$1bn.

Until the cost comes down, demand is likely to be minimal, and space will remain accessible only to those with the deepest pockets. But there’s another problem too, and one which could even take the UHNWIs out of contention.

Research by the Chicago Society for Space Studies evaluated holidaymakers, who would need to stay until the planet was at a suitable location to fly back to Earth, would reside on Mars for a minimum of 112 days to a maximum of 1,328 days. Given the time it takes to fly to Mars from Earth, the total trip would last at least 2.5 years, and could be as long as five years.

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