

Oman regains investment grade rating after 7 years

Our Correspondent
Muscat

S&P Global Ratings upgraded its long-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings on Oman to 'BBB-' from 'BB+' with a stable outlook on Friday. This reflects the continued strengthening of Oman government's public finances and marks a significant development in its economic history with the sultanate regaining its investment grade rating after a gap of seven years.

In its rating action commentary, S&P said it could further raise Oman's ratings over the next two years if reforms lead to steady growth in the sultanate's GDP per capita, supported by continued momentum in non-oil growth. Measures to strengthen institutions that support economic diversification and development of domestic capital



The upgrade positions Oman among countries classified as attractive for investment based on their creditworthiness

H E DR NASSER AL MAWALI

markets could positively impact the ratings, the agency added.

'The upgrade reflects the ongoing strengthening of the Omani government's public finances and the external deleveraging of many state-owned enterprises. Following significant deterioration in the balance sheet from 2015 to 2021, the government has implemented structural reforms that will allow it to return to a net asset position starting

this year,' S&P stated.

The stable outlook on Oman's sovereign ratings balances the potential benefits of the government's fiscal and economic reform programme against the economy's structural susceptibility to adverse oil price shocks.

S&P also observed that the sultanate has reorganised its government-related entities (GREs) sector to enhance operational efficiencies and improve financial

positions. This supported a decline in total GRE debt to US\$33.8bn (30% of GDP) in June 2024, compared to a peak of US\$35.9bn (41% of GDP) at the end of 2021.

'We assume the government will continue gradually reducing its footprint in the economy - via asset sales to help develop the non-hydrocarbon private sector and attract foreign direct investment,' the agency said.

S&P expects the momentum of the government's fiscal and economic reforms to continue from 2024 to 2027. It forecasts the government will post fiscal surpluses of 1.9% of GDP during this period, assuming Brent oil prices to remain around US\$80 per barrel from 2025 to 2027. In its view, this places the government in a position to continue reducing external debt levels and

accumulating liquid assets.

Oman's credit ratings were severely affected in 2020 and 2021 due to the twin shocks of declining oil prices and outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Commenting on Oman's ratings upgrade, H E Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Mawali, Undersecretary of Ministry of Economy, said these significant improvements in Oman's sovereign ratings reflect the progress in the country's efforts to ensure financial stability. Regaining investment grade rating represents one of the most important milestones achieved through implementation of Oman Vision 2040.

"S&P's decision to raise Oman's rating from BB+ to BBB- is an important achievement that positions the sultanate among countries classified as attractive for investment based on their creditworthiness," H E Mawali said.

Joint plan to strengthen GCC, Azerbaijan ties

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Gulf Cooperation Council and Azerbaijan have adopted a joint action plan for 2024-2028 and signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance coordination in export and investment promotion.

These developments were announced during the second edition of the GCC-Azerbaijan Economic Forum held in Baku last week. Organised by Federation of GCC Chambers in collaboration with Azerbaijan's Export and Investment Promotion Agency, the forum focused on 'Sustainability, Investments and Partnerships'.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and head of Federation of GCC Chambers, highlighted the importance of unified economic goals. "The GCC's integration programmes aim to develop the private sector and stimulate investment in key opportunities. This has helped Gulf products enter approxi-



Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas

mately 195 global markets, including Azerbaijan," he informed.

According to Khaled al Sunaidi, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Development Affairs at the GCC Secretariat, the action plan seeks to strengthen strategic ties. "This plan will focus on areas that can enhance long-term cooperation between the two sides," he said.

The MoU between the Federation of GCC Chambers and Azerbaijan's Export and Investment Promotion Agency covers various fields and aims to boost collaboration on investment projects. It also includes initiatives for promoting exports, sharing information and supporting joint research and trade activities.

Hezbollah's Nasrallah, IRGC top commander killed in Beirut airstrike



Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah

Beirut, Lebanon - The Hezbollah confirmed on Saturday that its leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah was killed.

The group said in a statement it would continue its battle against Israel "in support of Gaza and Palestine, and in defence of Lebanon and its steadfast and honourable people".

Israel said earlier on Saturday it had killed Nasrallah in an airstrike in Beirut's southern suburbs a day earlier.

Abbas Nilforushan, a senior general in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), was killed alongside Nasrallah in the Israeli strike on Friday, according to Iranian state media.

Nilforushan was 'killed in Israel's attack on Lebanon that assassinated the Hezbollah chief', the government-funded Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

The US has said that Nilforushan was the deputy commander of operations at IRGC. He was involved in backing Syrian

President Bashar Assad in the Syrian civil war and served in the Iran-Iraq war.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called on Muslims to help fight Israel, stating that the Hezbollah would play a major role in deciding the fate of the Middle East. See also Page 09

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Experts warn of dangers posed by children standing out of vehicle sunroofs

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Investments at SOHAR Port and Freezone reach US\$29bn

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S Batinah invites bids to boost urban development, investments

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The South Batinah governorate has floated several tenders aimed at promoting urban development and creating diverse investment opportunities for citizens and investors.

This initiative aligns with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 through collaborations between the public and private sectors.

An official from the governorate stated that the tenders have been called for establishment of parks in residential areas across the wilayats of Nakhal, Wadi al Maawil, Al Awabi, Musannah and Rustaq, with areas ranging from approximately 1,500 to 4,000sqm.

These parks will have shaded seating areas and public facilities, with proper landscaping and green spaces. Designated parking areas for visitors will be created to make these parks easily accessible.



Additionally, the tenders were invited for the development of Wudam al Sahil Park in Musannah, which will encompass projects such as kiosks, shaded seating, barbecue areas, an investment zone, children's play areas, and multiple parking lots and restrooms. There is also a

These tenders aim to diversify local income and effectively utilise available resources to attract investments

tender for consultancy services to prepare designs and tender documents for the Say'a road project in Rustaq, besides the one for re-planning of internal roads in the governorate.

A tender has been called for the supply and installation of decorative items for the beautifi-

cation of roads during the holy month of Ramadan next year.

Badr bin Mohammed bin Saif al Saidi, Director General of the South Batinah Municipality, said that these tenders aim to diversify local income and effectively utilise available resources to attract both local and foreign investments. The governorate is committed to enhancing investment opportunities by increasing contracts awarded to small and medium enterprises, providing avenues for private sector participation in projects, and offering attractive investment sites.

Moreover, the governorate seeks to improve development by implementing service projects, enhancing roads and lighting, and elevating the quality of services. This is part of a broader strategy to achieve comprehensive quality goals through studying and executing proposals and initiatives designed to enhance operational procedures within the governorate.



Oman hosts Middle East roller skate championship

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Open Roller Skate Championship, the first of its kind in the Middle East, has come to an end at the Ibri Club in Al Dhahirah, on Sunday.

The event - which was organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth - had been inaugurated on Thursday under the patronage of Najib bin Ali al Rawas, Governor of Dhahirah. It drew teams from Oman, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

According to Saeed bin Ali al Zaabi, chairman of the Oman Skating Sports Committee, this strong line-up included teams that have previously competed in

World Cup matches. He described the championship as a significant milestone that could pave the way for more international competitions.

Zaabi also noted that the growing popularity of roller skating in Oman, particularly in the Dhahirah governorate, can be attributed to the efforts of the Ibri Roller Skate Team. He commended the team's dedication in promoting the sport locally.

Oman's national roller skate team has participated in several high-profile events, including the first Asian Cup Championship and the recent World Cup in India, where they earned an impressive fifth place finish among 32 competing nations.

Mahdah Honey and Dates Forum showcases agriculture richness of Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Mahdah Honey and Dates Forum 2024, which concludes on Sunday at the Al Nahda Club sports hall in the wilayat of Mahdah, has brought together around 70 exhibitors in a celebration of the wilayat's prized honey and dates.

The five-day event not only promoted these key agricultural products but also provided inter-

active spaces for children and craftsmen, drawing a wide audience till Saturday.

The forum was organised to promote the natural and economic strengths of the area, with a special focus on boosting honey and dates and related products.

The event is being perceived as an opportunity to strengthen the trade relations between the local producers and importers, while encouraging collaborations



between government bodies, private companies, and civil society organisations to support the region's economic growth.

Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Buisaidi, Governor of Buraimi, described the forum as an important step towards bolstering the agricultural sector and supporting local farmers.

"This platform allows producers to share experiences and effectively market their products, while also highlighting the rich

resources of the region," he said. He also stressed the importance of the event in raising awareness about food security and promoting innovation in agriculture.

Zaher bin Mohammed al Kaabi, head of the Oman Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Buraimi branch, noted that the forum demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting key economic sectors, especially in food security.

"The event has opened new

commercial opportunities for the honey and date producers of the region," he said.

The first edition of the forum last year attracted more than 60 exhibitors and generated considerable interest, underlining the importance of food security as a driver of the local economy.

With a bigger participation this year, the forum has become a vital platform for exchanges between the producers, experts and investors, Kaabi added.

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National campaign on climate change, tsunami risks in Dhofar today

Our Correspondent
Salalah

A national campaign to raise awareness on the dangers of climate change and tsunamis will begin on Sunday in Dhofar under the patronage of Governor H H Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said. Organised by the National Emergency Management Committee, the campaign will run till October 7.

The primary goal of the campaign is to inform the local community about the risks posed by extreme weather events and tsunamis. It also aims to introduce residents to Oman's early warning system for multiple hazards, covering all wilayats of Dhofar.

The campaign will focus on four areas - education, the economy, security and community engagement - with a range of activities planned, including seminars, practical exercises, meetings and an exhibition, besides distribution of awareness materials.

Several key organisations are involved in the campaign, including Ministry of Information, Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority. Together, they aim to boost disaster



The campaign includes Ministry of Information, Civil Aviation Authority and Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority working together to boost disaster preparedness

ter preparedness across the country.

Oman has been working on improving its disaster response systems, notably through the National Multi Hazard Early Warning System, which was set up in 2015. This system provides timely alerts for natural hazards like tsunamis, cyclones and flash

floods. The CAA has also implemented several projects to enhance safety, including setting up new meteorological stations and introducing a wireless emergency alert system for tsunami warnings.

The campaign in Dhofar is supported by the 'Muzn' programme, which focuses on im-

proving the quality of alerts and early warning services. A mobile alert service was launched to provide real-time weather updates in 2023 in collaboration with Telecommunications Regulatory Authority.

Efforts like the 'Friends of Meteorology' initiative are encouraging greater community involvement. This programme brings together amateur meteorologists for meetings and training sessions with the goal of promoting interest in weather forecasting and increasing public awareness on weather-related risks.

Experts warn of dangers posed by children standing out of vehicle sunroofs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Despite repeated warnings from authorities, some motorists continue to allow children to stick their heads out of car sunroofs while driving, particularly during weekends. This behaviour has raised serious safety concerns, prompting experts and educators to call for immediate action to prevent potential accidents.

Safety experts warn that children riding with their heads or bodies outside vehicles pose a significant risk. Many are urging authorities to address the issue, stressing the need to protect young passengers.

"This is a highly dangerous trend that needs to be stopped," said Sultan al Rawahy, a safety expert. He explained that sudden braking could lead to catastrophic injuries to children in such vulnerable positions.

Educators are emphasising the importance of awareness campaigns targeted at both parents and children. Ali Hamad, an educator, pointed out that this risky behaviour tends to increase during holidays and special occasions. "Parents often allow their children to stand out of sunroofs or hang out of car windows, not realising the serious dangers," he said. According to Hamad, public messages and educational initiatives are critical in promoting safe practices among families.

The behaviour is particularly



Children need to be taught the importance of road safety from a young age, and we must use every tool available to make this message clear

KHALID AHMED ALI TABOOK

noticeable during weekends, said taxi driver Salem al Badi. He highlighted the fact that children leaning out of cars can be a

distraction to other drivers, creating dangerous situations. "It's not just about the kids' safety; it's also about how they affect other drivers on the road," he warned.

Authorities are being urged to step up efforts to curb this practice. Khalid Ahmed Ali Tabook, head of Ministry of Social Development's Family Counselling and Guidance Department in Dhofar, recommended using educational videos to demonstrate the risks involved and reinforce positive safety behaviour. "Children need to be taught the importance of road safety from a young age, and we must use every tool available to make this message clear," he stressed.

Experts agree that a combination of strict regulations, public awareness campaigns and community involvement is essential to address this disturbing trend and ensure the safety of children on roads.

Facial recognition launched for customs services

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Customs has announced implementation of a facial recognition verification system to access Bayan customs services through the Royal Oman Police electronic application, set to be activated on October 1.

The new system aims to enhance security and privacy of beneficiaries' accounts while improving digital customs services. It will initially be avail-



able only to clearance companies.

To activate the facial recogni-

tion feature, customs brokers should log in to the Royal Oman Police application to verify their

digital identity and then access the Bayan system using their mobile phone number or smart card.

After selecting the customs broker role, users will be directed to the Royal Oman Police page. Brokers can generate a QR code, which must be scanned using the Royal Oman Police application within ten seconds of creation. If the QR code expires, users will need to log in again to regenerate it.

For further details and activation steps, visit customs.gov.om

ROP warns of fraudulent website imitating CPA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Department of Criminal Investigation and Research has notified of a new method of fraud in which criminals are using a counterfeit website resembling the official site of Consumer Protection Author-

ity (CPA).

The scam aims to deceive victims into providing their personal and bank details, which are then used to withdraw money from their accounts.

Royal Oman Police (ROP) has issued a warning, urging the public to verify authenticity of websites before submitting

any personal or financial information.

ROP stressed the fact that the CPA does not request bank card details when processing transactions related to its services.

Authorities are advising both citizens and residents to remain alert and refrain from

sharing sensitive data on suspicious websites, while encouraging the public to report any fraudulent activity to the police.

For additional safety, ROP recommends using official channels for online transactions and carefully checking website URLs to confirm legitimacy.

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Investments at SOHAR reach \$29bn

Sohar Port and Freezone today stands as a beacon of economic prosperity, contributing more than 2.1% to Oman’s gross domestic product and generating nearly 36,000 direct and indirect jobs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Total investment in the Sohar Port and Freezone (SOHAR) has surpassed \$29bn mark to date, demonstrating a remarkable contribution to Oman’s economy and attracting foreign investment since inception two decades ago.

Under the patronage of H E Eng Saeed bin Hamoud al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, SOHAR celebrated two decades of unparalleled achievements. The event, which was attended by key government dignitaries and partners, showcased SOHAR’s legacy and standards of excellence in ports and free zones management.

Leveraging Oman’s strategic location as a gateway between East and West, SOHAR has become a pivotal player in Oman’s integration into the global supply chain, pioneering advancements in the logistics sector while stimulating economic diversification and sustainability.

\$3.4bn investment in H1 2024

Since inception, SOHAR has consistently demonstrated robust economic performance. In the first half of 2024 alone, the port and freezone has secured



\$3.4bn in investment, underscoring its appeal as a premier destination for international trade and commerce.

The infrastructure at the port and freezone has undergone significant enhancements, with the recent expansion of SOHAR Freezone Phase 2, introducing 345 hectares of additional leasable land. This strategic expansion aligns with the increasing demand for industrial and commercial spaces which is poised to facilitate increased connectivity and economic collaboration on a global scale.

“SOHAR plays a crucial role in

the daily lives of people across Oman, as the goods that flow through our facilities ultimately reach the homes of every citizen. Our performance over the past two decades reflects our commitment to excellence and our strategic importance as a global logistics hub. By continuously enhancing our operations and cultivating strong partnerships, we ensure a steady supply of essential goods that bolster the growth and progress of both local industries and the broader national economy,” said Eng Abdullah bin Khalfan al Jabri, Chairman of the Board of Sohar Port and Free-

zone.

Emile Hoogsteden, CEO of Sohar Port, said, “SOHAR has transcended traditional infrastructure; it has become a vital catalyst for commerce and economic growth in Oman. Over the last two decades, we have built a thriving integrated business ecosystem that not only supports local development but also enhances our global competitiveness. As we celebrate our achievements, we remain steadfast in our responsibility to driving innovation and accelerating the discovery of opportunities that will further propel Oman’s

economic advancements on the world stage.”

Strategic collaborations have been instrumental in shaping SOHAR’s success story. The partnership between Asyad Group and the Port of Rotterdam has established SOHAR as a world-class facility, renowned for its operational excellence and leading-edge approach. Alliances with other notable international companies, such as the groundbreaking initiative with United Solar Polysilicon to establish the region’s first polysilicon factory, further exemplify SOHAR’s commitment to fos-

tering progressive-thinking and attracting transformative investments that support its vision as an industrial cluster and manufacturing hub for green products.

Currently, SOHAR stands as a beacon of economic prosperity, contributing more than 2.1% to Oman’s GDP and generating nearly 36,000 direct and indirect jobs. This milestone offers a moment to reflect on the significant achievements that have defined SOHAR’s journey and its profound impact on the region’s economic landscape.

“We extend our deepest ap-

preciation to our stakeholders, whose unwavering trust and support have been the foundation of our success, reflecting our enduring partnerships and shared vision as we celebrate our 20th anniversary,” Hoogsteden added.

Sustainability champion

SOHAR Port and Freezone is also a pioneer in sustainability, championing groundbreaking initiatives that support environmental stewardship. The Marsa LNG project, a \$1.6bn collaboration between Oman’s OQ Group and TotalEnergies, will establish the region’s first LNG bunkering hub powered entirely by solar energy. This initiative aligns with Oman’s Vision 2040 and carbon neutrality goals, while enhancing SOHAR’s maritime service offerings.

Beyond the LNG project, SOHAR’s dedication to sustainability extends through initiatives like the SOHAR Net Zero Alliance, which aims to reduce emissions and promote renewable energy projects across the port.

By embracing clean technologies and sustainable practices, including the integration of solar energy and the exploration of clean hydrogen for manufacturing, SOHAR is leading the way in sustainable port operations.

Oman’s non-oil exports rise 8% to RO3.5bn in first half of 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman’s efforts toward economic diversification are yielding positive results, as evidenced by a notable growth in non-oil exports during the first half of 2024. According to the latest data from the National Center for Statistical Information (NCSI), Oman’s non-oil exports reached RO3.575bn in the first half of 2024, reflecting an 8% rise compared to the same period last year.

This growth indicates the rising global demand for Omani products and the ongoing recovery of markets, setting the stage for potentially record-breaking export levels by the end of the year, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) said in a press statement.

Leading this export growth are metal products, which ac-



Metal products accounted for RO1.304bn in export value, marking a 21.5% increase from last year’s figures. Basic metal products and their manufacturers contributed RO671mn, with a growth rate of 7.3%

counted for RO1.304bn in export value, marking a 21.5% increase from last year’s figures. Basic metal products and their manufacturers followed, contributing RO671mn, with a growth rate of 7.3%. The plastics and rubber

sector also expanded, with exports rising by 11.5% to reach RO473mn, while other product categories collectively contributed RO437mn during the first half of this year.

These numbers reflect a sig-

nificant shift in Oman’s economic landscape. According to MoCIIP, non-oil exports are projected to account for 22% of the sultanate’s GDP by the end of the second quarter of 2024. The total value of these exports is expected to reach RO5.4bn, driving the GDP to an estimated RO21.9bn and further strengthening Oman’s economic position on the global stage.

Lubna al Harthi, Export Development Director at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said, “The increase in Omani non-oil exports highlights the progress Oman has made in economic diversification and enhancing local content. The growth in export volume demonstrates the value and competitiveness of Omani products in international markets. The rising global demand reflects the quality, cost-effectiveness, and competitive standards of our products.”

OQEP organises IPO roadshow in Suhar

Suhar - The second OQEP IPO roadshow took place at the Suhar branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). The company is transitioning from a closed joint-stock company to a public joint-stock company.

The roadshow initiative aims to raise awareness about the importance of the initial public offering (IPO), which plays a crucial role in channeling the savings of citizens, residents, and investors into the IPO.

Eng Ahmed bin Said al Azkawi, CEO of OQEP, delivered a presentation on the offering process, announcing that 25% of the company’s shares are allocated for the IPO, with 40% reserved for individuals. He said that the OQEP shares in the IPO would be priced at maximum 351bz each for Omani individuals and maximum 390bz for non-Omanis, aiming to encourage investment and promote the use of savings in profitable ventures.

Azkawi emphasised that this offering represents the largest of



its kind in Oman and is a groundbreaking initiative in the production and exploration sector.

He highlighted the company’s strong operational and financial performance, showcasing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in revenues of 14% since 2010, along with a 19% CAGR in earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA).

He emphasised that the company’s sharp focus on maintaining a high-quality, low-cost operating asset base has allowed

it to achieve operating costs of \$9.4 per barrel of oil equivalent (boe) in 2023, compared to an average of US\$13.8 boe among peers selected by Wood Mackenzie II.

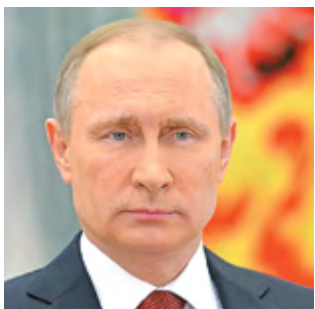
This low operating cost base, combined with a stable and attractive fiscal regime, supported an Adjusted Free Cash Flow generation of \$16.0 per barrel of oil equivalent (boe) in 2023, which is significantly higher than the average of US\$5.9/boe among its selected peer group in the same year.

Russia remains leading energy market players: President Putin

Moscow, Russia - Russia remains among leading participants in the global energy market despite considerable difficulties, Russian President Vladimir Putin said at the plenary session of the Russian Energy Week forum (REW), according to the Russian News Agency (TASS).

“Contrary to objective difficulties; everybody is well aware of them, difficulties, in actual fact, are with everybody, all of us have our considerable difficulties. Russia nevertheless remains one of leading energy market participants globally,” Putin said.

National companies managed to shift deliveries of oil,



Russian President Vladimir Putin

petroleum products and coal over the last two years, he stressed. He said Russia remains a reliable supplier of energy resources to the global market and plays a stabilising role in it.

WAM

Over 100 delegates attend Crowe Oman tax workshop

Muscat - Crowe Oman, a leading audit and business advisory firm in Oman, recently hosted a full day tax workshop, at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Qurum. The event was well attended by CFOs, members from the Tax Authority, banking professionals, finance managers, accountants, and other finance professionals and students.

In his keynote address, Antony Kallukaran, Partner - Tax Advisory Services at Crowe Oman, welcomed the gathering of over 100 participants. He spoke about international taxation and the objectives of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as well as the global and



regional challenges faced by different tax jurisdictions in applying the framework. He commended the steps taken by the Oman Tax Authority as a member of the OECD framework agreement, to align with the objectives of the organisation.

The workshop was divided into multiple sessions, the first of which was the overview of the tax landscape in Oman, pre-

sented in length by Taysir Naseeb al Rawahi, Director - Tax Advisory Services at Crowe Oman. He further explained the new amendments to income tax and value-added tax (VAT) law and its implications on business and how to achieve compliance with various taxes.

The VAT session continued with emphasis on VAT administration by Aastha Rangan, Di-

rector - Indirect Taxes at Crowe Oman. The session covered the efforts from the Tax Authority’s and tax payers’ perspective to reduce the administrative burden of VAT. She also engaged the audience on related topics, including, obligations of the tax payer and the rights of the Tax Authority, industry specific VAT relief and e-invoicing.

The following sessions cover-

ing aspects of Oman Income Tax Law, withholding taxes as well as international taxation was presented by Ramya Annadurai, Director - Direct Taxes. In her session, she covered the concept of Base Erosion Profit Shifting and its action points, Double Tax Avoidance Agreements, transfer pricing and Oman’s economic stimulus plan.

World economy is turning corner as inflation declines, trade grows: OECD

Paris, France – The global economy is turning the corner as growth remained resilient through the first half of 2024, with declining inflation, though significant risks remain, according to the OECD's latest Interim Economic Outlook.

With robust growth in trade, improvements in real incomes and a more accommodative monetary policy in many economies, the OECD projects global growth persevering at 3.2% in 2024 and 2025, after 3.1% in 2023.

Inflation is projected to be back to central bank targets in most G20 economies by the end of 2025. Headline inflation in the G20 economies is projected to ease to 5.4% in 2024 and 3.3% in 2025, down from 6.1% in 2023, with core inflation in the G20 advanced economies easing to 2.7% in 2024 and 2.1% in 2025.

GDP growth in the United States is projected to slow from its recent rapid pace, but to be cushioned by monetary policy easing, with growth projected at 2.6% in 2024 and 1.6% in 2025. In the euro area, growth is projected at 0.7% in 2024, before picking up to 1.3% in 2025, with activity supported by the recovery in real incomes and improvements in credit availability. China's growth is expected to ease to 4.9% in 2024 and 4.5%



Main entrance of the Conference Centre at OECD Headquarters in Paris

OECD projects global economic growth persevering at 3.2% in 2024 and 2025, after 3.1% in 2023. Inflation is projected to be back to central bank targets in most G20 economies by the end of 2025

in 2025, with policy stimulus offset by subdued consumer demand and the ongoing deep correction in the real estate sector.

"The global economy is starting to turn the corner, with declining inflation and robust trade

growth. At 3.2%, we expect global growth to remain resilient both in 2024 and 2025," OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said.

"Declining inflation provides room for an easing of interest rates, though monetary policy

should remain prudent until inflation has returned to central bank targets. Decisive policy action is needed to rebuild fiscal space by improving spending efficiency, reallocating spending to areas that better support opportunities and growth, and optimising tax revenues. To raise medium-term growth prospects, we need to reinvigorate the pace of structural reforms, including through pro-competition policies, for example by reducing regulatory barriers in services and network sectors."

The Outlook highlights a range of risks. The impact of tight monetary policy on demand could be larger than expected, and deviations from the expected smooth disinflation path could trigger disruptions in financial markets. Persisting geopolitical and trade tensions, including from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and evolving conflicts in the Middle East, risk pushing up inflation again and weighing on global activity. On the upside, real wage growth could provide a stronger boost to

consumer confidence and spending, and further weakness in global oil prices would hasten disinflation.

As inflation moderates and labour market pressures ease further, monetary policy rate cuts should continue, even though the timing and the scope of reductions will need to be data-dependent and carefully judged to ensure inflationary pressures are durably contained.

With public debt ratios elevated, rebuilding fiscal space is key to be able to react to future shocks and future spending pressures, including from population ageing and needed investments in the digital transformation and the climate transition. Fiscal policy needs to focus on containing spending growth and optimising revenues, while credible medium-term adjustment paths would help stabilise debt burdens.

"Governments also need to turn the corner on structural reforms," OECD Chief Economist Álvaro Santos Pereira said. "The pace of regulatory reforms in recent years has been stalling, and in important parts of the economy reform progress came to a standstill. Amid sluggish productivity growth and tight fiscal space, product market reforms that promote open markets with healthy competitive dynamics remain a key lever to reinvigorate growth."

Fed's preferred inflation measure falls to 2.2%

Washington, US – An inflation gauge closely watched by Federal Reserve policymakers continued to slow in August as the pace of price growth trended closer to the Fed's target.

The Commerce Department reported Friday that the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index rose 0.1% from the prior month and 2.2% year over year. The annual figure came in cooler than the estimates of economists polled by LSEG.

Core PCE, which excludes volatile food and energy prices, rose 0.1% for the month and increased 2.7% from a year ago, in line with estimates and little changed from a month ago.

The Federal Reserve is focusing on the PCE headline figure as it tries to bring the pace of price increases back to 2%, although policymakers view the core data as a better indicator of inflation. Both the core and headline figures suggest that inflation is continuing to cool.

The headline PCE data showed that prices for goods decreased 0.2% while prices for services increased 0.2% on a monthly basis in August. Food prices rose 0.1% and energy prices decreased 0.8% from a month ago.

Compared with last August, prices for goods are down 0.9% while prices for services are up 3.7%. Food prices are up 1.1% and energy prices are down 5% from a year ago.

Agencies

India lifts ban on exports of non-basmati white rice

New Delhi, India – India's government has amended the export policy for non-Basmati white rice, allowing its export under specific conditions with a minimum export price (MEP) of \$490 per tonne.

According to an official notification, this amendment was made in accordance with the Foreign Trade Act and the changes came into effect immediately. This move ensures that exporters adhere to a minimum price threshold when exporting non-basmati white rice to international markets.

The export of non-Basmati white rice (including, semi-milled, wholly milled, polished, or glazed) was previously prohibited under the existing policy. However, the new notification has shifted the export status of this rice category from "prohibited" to "free." The notification, which comes into force immediately, marks a shift in the government's stance on rice exports. This amendment will allow the export of non-basmati white rice



but with a regulated price condition.

The revised policy is expected to benefit exporters while ensuring price stability in the domestic market, addressing both international demand and local supply concerns.

India banned the export of rice in July 2023 to control inflation and secure food security.

On August 21, India approved the export of 200,000 tonnes of non-basmati white rice to Malaysia. In October

2023, the country also authorised the shipment of 170,000 tonnes of the same rice variety to Malaysia.

Previously, India had allowed the export of this type of rice to nations like Nepal, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, the Republic of Guinea, the Philippines, Seychelles, UAE, Singapore, Comoros, Madagascar, Equatorial Guinea, Egypt, Kenya, and Tanzania, with different quantities allocated to each.

ANI

Europe's answer to Suez Canal breaks ground after 20-year delay in France

Garfield Myrie

Work is finally underway on France's Seine-Nord Europe Canal (SNEC), a major new European trading route that promises to boost the bloc's economic fortunes.

When it is completed in 2030, the massive 107km infrastructure project will significantly increase the capacity for cheaper, faster and less polluting river trade between France, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

As it stands, the smooth flow of commerce between the three nations is being frustrated by the limited capacity of the narrower Canal du Nord.

The antiquated river system struggles to cope with the new generation of super-sized cargo ships powering international trade.

Shipping mishaps and the sheer weight of traffic attempting to navigate a path through the canal create frustrating bottlenecks, costing European businesses valuable time and money.

Despite the urgent need for a new trading route and the canal



When it is completed in 2030, the project will significantly increase the capacity for cheaper, faster and less polluting river trade between France, Belgium, and the Netherlands

project securing the green light in 2003, decades of political wrangling and disagreements around funding and the canal's final route stalled progress, until now.

Investing in Europe's trading future

The SNEC is a 5.1bn euro investment by the French government,

local authorities, and the EU, in the region's economic and environmental future.

Analysts suggest the new route could remove as many as a million heavy goods vehicles from France's roads each year.

The size of the undertaking is staggering, involving as many as sixty bridges, three canal bridges, seven locks, and 700 hectares of environmental plantation.

Nicolas Ledoux, CEO of Arcadis France, which is leading the project, said, "The Seine-Nord Europe Canal will not only enable a modal shift from the roadway

to the river but will also create added economic, logistical, agricultural, and climatic value for the territories it crosses through.

"We are very proud to help promote river transport, a high-performing, environmentally friendly, and economical mode of transport that responds to the challenge of energy transition."

The new 54-metre wide canal will occupy a section of the Seine-Escaut waterway and create Europe's first river network with the capacity to accommodate large ships.

(Source: Eurozone.com)

China leverages central bank's stimulus measures to steer economy

Beijing, China – China's central bank on Friday cut the reserve requirement ratio (RRR) for financial institutions by 0.5 percentage points and lowered the seven-day reverse repo interest rate by 20 basis points, enhancing policy support to solidify economic operations.

From Friday, the weighted average RRR for lenders will be approximately 6.6%, but those that have already implemented a 5% RRR will not be involved, according to a statement from the People's Bank of China. The move followed an RRR cut of 0.5 percentage points in February. The 1-percentage-point RRR reduction

so far this year is expected to provide about 2tn yuan (about \$285.3bn) in long-term liquidity for the financial market.

The seven-day reverse repo interest rate, a key short-term policy rate, was lowered from 1.7% to 1.5% on Friday, according to the central bank. The decrease was the largest in nearly four years. The move aims to intensify the counter-cyclical adjustment of monetary policy and support the country's stable economic growth, according to the central bank.

The seven-day reverse repo interest rate has fallen by a cumulative 30 basis points so far



this year. The simultaneous cuts to the RRR and policy rate reflect the central bank's determination to adhere to a supportive monetary policy with strengthened intensity and more targeted regulation, as well as its concrete efforts to help the country meet major annual economic and social development targets, experts have said.

China seeks to expand its economy by approximately 5% year on year in 2024. The country's GDP expanded by 5% in the first half of the year.

The policy moves followed a crucial meeting convened by the Political Bureau of the Commu-

nist Party of China Central Committee on Thursday, which called for intensified efforts in economic work, including the implementation of substantial interest rate cuts and the promotion of the property market's stabilization.

It was noted at the meeting that the fundamentals of the Chinese economy remain unchanged, as do its favorable conditions, including a vast market, strong economic resilience and great potential.

However, the meeting said it is necessary to take a comprehensive, objective and sober view of the current economic situation, face the difficulties squarely, and

remain confident.

The central bank's Friday announcement maintained policy intensity, consolidated the foundation for the stable, sustained development of the capital market, and provided sufficient impetus for healthy, upward market development, said Dong Ximiao, chief researcher at Merchants Union Consumer Finance Company Limited.

China's stock market has been on an upward streak in recent days, with heavy trading fueled by the broader-than-expected policy package to prop up the economy.

Xinhua

MoH organises symposium on paediatric eye care in Muscat



A national symposium on ophthalmology and paediatric eye care was held at the Intercity Hotel, Muscat on Thursday, under the auspices of H E Dr Saeed Harib al Lamki, Undersecretary for Health Affairs in the Ministry of Health.

The inauguration of the symposium - organised by the Ministry of Health, represented by the Directorate General of Health Services and Programmes, and the Ophthalmology Department of Al Nahda Hospital - was held in the presence of Dr Rashid al Alawi, Director General of Khawla Hospital, along with several officials from the ministry and other health institutions, a release stated.

The event was held in collaboration with the Ophthalmology Department at the University Medical City, and the Medical City for Military and Security Services, the release added.

Several healthcare professionals - mainly ophthalmologists and optometrists - from the Ministry of Health and other health institutions, contributed to the event with their knowledge and experiences highlighting the challenges and difficulties in the field of paediatric ophthalmology.

The deliberations in the symposium sought to propose appropriate solutions, ensuring that participants are well-equipped to effectively manage these cases according to available resources.

Moreover, it sought to provide focal points in the governorates with practical skills and knowledge to handle paediatric ophthalmology cases, providing them with clear guidelines on when and how to refer complex cases to specialised healthcare facilities thereby reducing unnecessary referrals to specialised health institutions and improve the delivery of health services for children with various eye diseases in general.

The national symposium covered several key topics, including children's eyes, modern strategies for managing and treating strabismus using non-invasive methods, and the diagnosis and treatment of eyelid inflammation.

The seminar also addressed common eye disorders and refractive errors such as myopia, hyperopia, astigmatism, strabismus, congenital nasolacrimal duct obstruction, congenital cataracts, and glaucoma.

Tumours affecting children's eyes also found prominence in their discussions with inputs on how to manage them.

Modern methods for measuring and prescribing eyeglasses for children were highlighted by the speakers, the release further informed.

The event included a practical session during which participants were introduced to techniques and skills for visual acuity assessment in children, understanding refractive errors resulting from ciliary muscle paralysis, and to methods for conducting visual assessments in children.



Genetco moves headquarters to new location

Genetco relocated its headquarters to a new setup, equipped with cutting-edge technologies and modern facilities.

This strategic move represents a significant milestone, highlighting Genetco's continued commitment to enhancing services, achieving operational excellence, and fostering innovation across all areas of business.

The new headquarters is situated in a prime, easily accessible location and features advanced amenities designed to elevate client experiences and optimize internal processes.

'This state-of-the-art facility also provides an ideal work environment for Genetco's team, enabling them to continue delivering exceptional services that meet the highest quality standards,' the company stated.

GENETCO aims to reinforce its position as a market leader in providing unparalleled customer experiences.

For over 54 years, Genetco has offered premium brands such as Gree, Canon, Hitachi, JBL, Best, TCL, and many others to consumers in Oman, while delivering top-notch Facility Management Operations and Engineering Services and projects, including end-to-end Air Conditioning solutions, Industrial Kitchens, and a comprehensive range of Cold Chain solutions.

Sur celebrates World Tourism Day with 'White Sails' event

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT), joined countries worldwide in celebrating World Tourism Day on Friday.

This year's theme - Tourism and Peace - emphasises the significance of tourism in promoting global peace and enhancing mutual understanding among nations.

In celebration of the World Tourism Day and as part of the executive programme for Sur as the Arab Capital Tourism for 2024, the ministry organised the White Sails event at the Dhow Factory in Sur, South Sharqiyah governorate, on Friday and Saturday.

The event was inaugurated by H E Talib bin Khamis al Balushi, a member of the Shura Council representing Sur, press communication stated.

The event highlighted the maritime heritage of the region and its pioneering navigational role in promoting a culture of peace through civilizational communication and trade exchanges with various countries over different eras.

It featured various activities aimed at introducing visitors to aspects of the region's heritage and the craft of shipbuilding.

Key highlights included the 'Sails Theatre', which hosted performances of traditional arts, and a seminar titled 'Cultural Tourism Exchange and its Relation to Global Peace'.

Attendees participated in hands-on experiences and workshops on traditional shipbuilding and sail-making.

Additionally, the Dhow Cinema showcased films highlighting the significance of tourism, while the Dhow Gallery displayed artifacts and images narrating the maritime history of the region and its connections with various countries worldwide.

The event was held at the Dhow Factory, located along the shores of Khor Al Batah, which houses the Dhow Gallery. This gallery features different sections dedicated to the craft of traditional ship and boat making.

Visitors to the factory had the opportunity to learn about the construction of Omani ships and boats and view photographs of sailors and shipbuilders from Sur.

The Sultanate of Oman is distinguished by its long coastline from which the white Omani sails, symbolising freedom and peace, have set forth to all other nations with love and goodwill.

The White Sails event focused on a series of activities aimed at introducing the maritime cultural heritage of Sur and its relationship with local and international communities, as well as the cultural and civilisational exchange between countries through the white sails, or 'traditional boats'.

These sails served as a promotion for the Sultanate of Oman and were an important tool for fostering peace and stability.

This year, the celebration of the World Tourism Day, themed Tourism and Peace, reflects the economic, cultural, and social impacts of tourism and its role in enhancing mutual understanding and fruitful cooperation among communities and nations.

The initiatives proposed for this year focus on promoting peace through tourism, viewing it as an effective means to bridge gaps between peoples and cultures, thereby fostering mutual understanding, tolerance, and sustainable development.

This includes utilising tourism as a tool for achieving sustainable economic growth, particularly through supporting youth and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in the tourism sector.



Wizz Air expands payment option with Apple Pay

Wizz Air, the most environmentally sustainable airline globally, is excited to announce the introduction of Apple Pay and Google Pay on its mobile application, further enhancing the convenience of booking and managing travel for its passengers. This new feature is already available on the official Wizz Air app on iOS and Android devices.

With the integration of these popular digital payment tools, Wizz Air continues to prioritise customer experience by providing more flexible payment options.

Travellers can now enjoy a quick and secure checkout process both for tickets and additional services purchases. This initiative complements Wizz Air's recent acceptance of Revolut cards onboard, marking a significant step forward in the airline's commitment to expanding its payment solutions. The addition of Apple Pay and Google Pay underscores Wizz Air's dedication to adapting to the evolving needs of its customers, making travel planning as smooth and efficient as possible.

The new feature allows customers to make quick and seamless payments up to ten days prior to the departure, especially useful to the last-minute customers who need to complete the booking quickly to catch a good deal. Over 30% of travellers prefer to purchase additional services and products at a later stage in the booking process, and nearly half of the customers are doing so via the app. With the introduction of these new payment options, adding additional services to a booking has become easier than ever.

Danube Home reveals new look, outdoor living collection

Danube Home, region's one of the fastest growing furniture and home improvement product retailers, officially launched its new brand identity and introduced an extensive and highly anticipated Outdoor Living collection on September 26.

The new brand identity, rooted in the essence of 'simplicity', is aimed to make the shopping experience simpler, smoother and more enjoyable for the customers like never before. This focus on simplicity allows customers to better create homes that reflect their personal style and comfort.

From this foundation of simplicity, four key pillars emerged: happiness, ease, passion, and innovation. These principles guide Danube Home in enhancing customer service and product development.

Speaking at the launch, Sayed Habib, Director of Danube Home, shared, "We've made it our mission to simplify the shopping experience for our customers. Our goal is to make the process as easy as possible and enjoyable, so they can focus on creating homes they love."

Danube Home is one of the unique brands where customers can find everything for their home, all under one roof. From stylish furniture and home décor, bath and tiles to outdoor essentials and garden accessories, Danube Home offers an unmatched selection of high-quality products sourced from 23+ countries, making it the ultimate destination for complete home solutions.

"Our goal is to be the go-to place for everything home," said Anis Sajan, Group Vice Chairman of Danube Group. "Danube Home stands out for its full range of products that transform homes inside and out. The rebranding highlights our commitment to quality and customer satisfaction."

The event also displayed Danube Home's new Outdoor Living collection, featuring over 1,000 products and an amazing collection with theme 'Sunrise to Sunset' Outdoor Living, designed to enhance your outdoor spaces from dawn to dusk.

The new collection offers everything for your outdoors from dining sets and lounges to BBQ stations, swings, pots, plants, water fountains, kids' playsets and much more. The collection is designed to uplift any outdoor space, making it both functional and beautiful.

A key highlight is the artificial greenery, made from non-toxic materials, specifically designed to endure the harsh Middle Eastern climate while providing long-lasting beauty with minimal upkeep. Made from high-quality materials, these products are designed to endure even the harshest weather conditions. Whether you're hosting lively gatherings or enjoying a quiet moment of relaxation, they provide the perfect blend of durability and comfort.



Oman airports showered with awards in US

Oman Airports celebrated a major national achievement as Muscat International Airport and Salalah Airport were honoured at the 2023 World Customer Service Summit, which brought together the global airport sector under one roof in Atlanta, US.

This recognition comes as a result of the two airports receiving several prestigious awards for customer experience in 2023, acknowledging the significant efforts made in the Sultanate of Oman to enhance the quality of services provided to passengers.

Muscat International Airport received the Best Airport award in the Middle East in the category of those serving 5 to 15 million passengers annually and the award for Best Airport in the Middle East for Quality of Services.

Additionally, the airport earned a distinguished global recognition for its unprecedented achievement of winning multiple awards over five consecutive years under the Airport Service Quality (ASQ) program, joining the ranks of elite global



airports to receive this prestigious honour.

Salalah Airport was also recognised with several awards, including Best Airport in the Middle East in the category of airports serving less than 2mn passengers. It was also awarded for having the Best Airport Staff

Receiving these global recognitions for its airports reinforces the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to achieving excellence and leadership in customer experience

OMAN AIRPORTS

in the Middle East across all categories; Most Seamless Airport in Procedures in the Middle East; Most Enjoyable Airport in the Middle East; and Cleanest Airport in the Middle East Across All Categories.

The awards were presented during a festive ceremony held on the sidelines of the World Customer Service Summit hosted in Atlanta, Georgia, US.

Oman Airports affirmed that

role in enhancing the travel experience on both regional and global levels.

This remarkable achievement reflects Oman Airports' efforts to align with the enablers of Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises innovation and sustainability across all sectors, including aviation. Oman Airports aims to enhance its global standing by providing services that adhere to the best international practices.



Muscat Governorate holds meeting on youth initiatives with UTAS, other companies

Muscat Governorate on Wednesday held a meeting with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences and several leading companies interested in youth initiatives, consultations' offer in science, technology and innovation, innovative capacity programmes, and innovative solutions' offer.

Within the governorate's keenness to involve Omani youth in government programmes that empower their capabilities, and seek to meet the challenges of the labor market's requirements' increase, and enhance the youth

capabilities for changes. It is done via cooperation with relevant bodies to develop the knowledge and skills of the target groups.

On the other hand, the meeting aimed to exchange ideas and initiatives that empower Omani youth via joint programmes' development that contribute to preparing them for the labor market and entrepreneurship. During it, the cooperation between the government and private sectors was highlighted to create an inspiring environment that supports innovative youth projects and initiatives.

Muscat Governorate confirmed the partnership enhancement with the private sector for youth talent.

Indicating these continuous meetings that aim to adopt young people's capabilities and the labour market preparation and entrepreneurship, establish inspiring keystones that support the national economy, contribute to inspiring young people for their successful stories, and enhances social responsibility programmes among sectors that are interested in these societal purposes' achievement.

Vale join forces with MAFWR to deploy 3D artificial reefs

In a groundbreaking initiative aimed at enriching marine ecosystems and boosting local fishery resources, Vale signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources (MAFWR), represented by the Directorate General of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries, and Water Resources in North Batinah governorate, to fund the production and deployment of pioneering 3D Artificial Reefs off the coast of Liwa.

Announced during the Social Investment Forum, the project, a first of its kind in the region, will utilize advanced 3D printing technology to create artificial reefs that closely mimic natural coral reef formations.

Carefully designed to withstand the dynamic marine environment of North Batinah, the reefs will significantly enhance biodiversity and contribute to the sustainable growth of fish populations, providing long-term benefits to local fishing communities.

Abdullah al Hadabi, Director General of the Ministry of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries, and Water Resources commented, "Our collaboration with Vale is a testament to our shared com-



Introducing 3D Artificial Reefs in Liwa is a forward-thinking effort that leverages advanced technology to create real, lasting benefits

ABDULLAH AL SAADI

mitment to protecting and enhancing Oman's natural marine life. By combining our resources and expertise, we are taking a

vital step toward ensuring that our coastal ecosystems remain vibrant and productive, providing a sustainable pathway for improving local livelihoods and preserving our rich biodiversity."

Abdullah al Saadi, Corporate Affairs and Administration Chief at Vale in Oman said, "At Vale, our focus is on finding innovative solutions that address the unique challenges faced by the communities where we operate. Introducing 3D Artificial Reefs in Liwa is one such solution - a forward-thinking effort that leverages advanced technology to create real, lasting benefits. This is not about today; it's about laying the foun-

ation for a sustainable future where local fishermen can thrive, and marine ecosystems are protected."

The project is set to begin within the next month, with the reefs expected to be fully deployed by the end of the year. The reefs are expected to increase local fish catch within the first year, providing a substantial boost to the region's fishery economy.

In the long term, the reefs are anticipated to foster a more diverse and resilient marine ecosystem, contributing to the sustainable management of marine resources in the area.

Kyriad, Tulip Inn Majan of Salalah launch campaign

Kyriad Hotel Salalah and Tulip Inn Majan Salalah launched their 'Count on Me' campaign, an initiative aimed at elevating the guest experience during the Khareef season.

Through this campaign, the management and executive teams of both hotels seek to demonstrate their commitments to ensuring that every guest enjoys a seamless and memorable stay, with no delays or interruptions in service.

The 'Count on Me' campaign is a proactive response to the increased demand for accommodation and services during the Khareef season, a time when Salalah experiences a surge in visitors drawn to its unique weather

and natural beauty.

Understanding the importance of providing top-notch service during this busy period, the management teams at Kyriad Hotel Salalah and Tulip Inn Salalah have taken the initiative to personally oversee all aspects of guest service.

"Our guests are at the heart of everything we do, and the 'Count on Me' campaign is our way of demonstrating our unwavering commitment to their satisfaction," said Mark Abboud, Cluster General Manager of Kyriad Hotel Salalah and Tulip Inn Majan Hotel Salalah.

The campaign emphasises the importance of timely and effective service delivery.

Music band ADG7 showcases friendship on 50th anniversary of Oman-South Korea ties

The South Korean Embassy in Oman hosted a concert with a theme of 'Heritage in Harmony' by the ADG7 (Ak Dan Gwang Chil), a multi-award winning band of Korea at the Oman Auditorium, Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, in Muscat on Wednesday.

The ADG7 event is part of a series of activities that have been lined up to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between South Korea and Oman, a release stated.

The ADG7 has gained increasingly wider popularity and reputation with its performances in international stages including the World Music Expo 2019 and the global FEST 2020 since its debut in 2015. The Oman-Korea



Friendship Association and the Korean Association in Oman supported the concert.

The ADG7 presented tradi-

tional Korean folk music in a modern style to the Omani and international audience. Together with the Korean band, the musi-

cians of the Oman Center for traditional Music joined the concert. Both Korean and Omani performers resonated deeply with

the spirit of friendship through music that echoed the shared sentiments of the two peoples.

H E Salim al Aafi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, graced the concert where Omani dignitaries, representatives from public and private sectors, foreign Ambassadors together with members of the diplomatic corps as well as fans of Korean culture attended.

H E Kim Kiejoo, Ambassador of South Korea, highlighted the significance of this year as a watershed in the five decades of fruitful mutual partnership between Korea and Oman.

He emphasised that cultural exchanges will help promote the already-strong solidarity of the people of both nations and reassured that further exchanges will continue to grow.

Hospital in Ukraine’s Sumy hit by deadly double strike

Kyiv, Ukraine - A hospital in the northeastern Ukrainian city of Sumy, not far from the Russian border, was targeted by two consecutive Russian attacks early on Saturday, according to Ukrainian authorities.

Ukrainian Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said the first attack left one person dead. Then, while evacuations of patients and employees were ongoing, Russia launched another strike.

“As of now, we know that eight people have been killed,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said later after the attack. “Eleven others

have been wounded, and 113 patients have been evacuated from the hospital.”

Zelensky said the Russian attack on the hospital utilised ‘Shahed’ drones, which are designed by Iran.

The method of striking a target once and then hitting it again shortly thereafter as responders arrive is known as a ‘double tap’.

Russia has been accused of carrying out ‘double tap’ strikes not only during its invasion of Ukraine but also earlier during its intervention in the Syrian civil war. The method has been criticised as a war crime as it is



The city of Sumy has been frequently attacked amid Russia’s ongoing invasion of Ukraine

aimed at civilians rushing to help the wounded.

The city of Sumy is close to Russia’s Kursk region, where Ukrainian forces have been carrying out an incursion to distract the Russian military.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government said nine children and a 20-year-old man were returned to Ukraine from Russia.

Ukrainian human rights ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets said Qatar facilitated the return of the children.

“Ukraine is ready for everyone to return and will provide basic humanitarian, medical, psychological and social assistance,” Lubinets said.

Ukraine and the UN have accused Russia of forcibly transferring thousands of Ukrainian children from occupied Ukrainian territory. Russia has claimed that the children were being evacuated with their consent.

The Ukrainian government has accused Russia of implementing new citizenship rules that would force the Russian nationality on the transferred children, stealing their Ukrainian identity.

DW



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken

China’s talk of Ukraine peace ‘doesn’t add up’

New York, US - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Friday expressed strong concerns about China’s support for Russia’s defence industry and questioned Beijing’s sincerity in seeking peace in Ukraine.

He met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Friday.

“When Beijing says that, on the one hand, that it wants peace, it wants to see an end to the conflict, but on the other hand is allowing its companies to take actions that are actually helping Putin continue the aggression, that doesn’t add up,” Blinken said at a media briefing.

Beijing said it has not supplied Russia with weapons for use in Ukraine.

Blinken, however, said China has provided about 70% of machine tools and 90% of micro-electronics that Moscow needs for military production, including rockets and armoured vehicles.

The US diplomat said that China is fuelling the ‘war machine’ of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

US should stop ‘smearing’

Wang told Blinken that Beijing’s position on the war in Ukraine had always stressed the need for peace through dialogue, according to a statement from China’s foreign ministry.

“The United States should stop smearing and planting evidence against China, imposing sanctions indiscriminately, and using this (conflict) ... to create and encourage confrontations between different camps,” he said, according to a statement from China’s Foreign Ministry.

Earlier on Friday, China and Brazil rallied developing countries behind a Ukraine peace plan. Wang and Brazilian foreign policy adviser Celso Amorim chaired a meeting of 17 countries. “Russia and Ukraine are neighbours that cannot be moved away from each other and amity is the only realistic option,” Wang said, adding that the international community should support an international peace conference involving both Russia and Ukraine.

DW

China conducts drills around disputed Scarborough Shoal

Beijing, China - Chinese ships and planes on Saturday conducted patrols around the flashpoint Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea as Beijing continues to assert its claims to almost the entire waterway against the will of several other countries in the region.

The manoeuvres come after several tense maritime confrontations, particularly with the Philippines, in recent months. It also coincided with joint exercises carried out by the United States, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Philippines in Manila’s exclusive economic zone.

They also follow talks between Foreign Minister Wang Yi and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in New York on ways to reduce tensions in the region.

What has China said?

Beijing said the training activities around the shoal included ‘reconnaissance, early warning, and air-sea patrols’.

“Certain countries outside the region are stirring up trouble in the South China Sea, creating instability in the region,” the Southern Theatre Command of the People’s Liberation Army said. “The theatre troops maintain a high degree of vigilance, resolutely defending national sovereignty, security and maritime rights and interests, (and) are firm in maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea,” it said.

“China holds indisputable sovereignty over Huangyan Island and its adjacent waters,” it added, using the Chinese name



Chinese Coast Guard boats seen near the Scarborough Shoal

The manoeuvres come after several tense maritime confrontations in recent months. It also coincided with joint exercises carried out by the United States, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Philippines

for Scarborough Shoal.

That claimed sovereignty has, however, been called into question by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague, which in 2016 ruled that Beijing’s claims were unfounded in international law.

The tribunal did not, however, say who had sovereignty over the Scarborough Shoal, which China seized from Manila in 2012, despite the reef’s location nearly 900km (311 miles) from the nearest Chinese land

mass and within the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone.

The atoll is home to abundant fish life and a picturesque lagoon, making it a coveted asset.

On Friday, Wang and Blinken discussed the problems raised by China’s growing territorial assertion in the region, with the Chinese foreign minister reportedly saying that ‘China insists on resolving differences with countries directly concerned through dialogue and consultation’.

According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Wang also told Blinken that ‘the US should not always stir up trouble in the South China Sea and should not undermine the efforts of regional countries to maintain peace and stability’.

Blinken said he spoke of Beijing’s ‘dangerous and destabilising actions’ in the South China Sea and discussed improving communication between the two nations’ militaries.

Growing tensions

In the past months, China’s claims have led to a number of confrontations with the Philippines, including in waters around the disputed Second Thomas Shoal and Sabina Shoal.

In July, the two sides said they had reached a provisional deal on resupply missions to a Philippine ship, the Sierra Madre, which is grounded on the Second Thomas Shoal.

The vessel hosts a garrison on board that aims to assert Manila’s claims to the reef.

Beijing said on Friday that it had ‘supervised’ a Philippine ship under the deal as it delivered supplies to the vessel.

The Philippine armed forces confirmed that Chinese vessels had been nearby during the mission, but said they posed no threat.

In August, the Philippines filed a diplomatic complaint against China after Chinese aircraft dropped flares in the path of a Philippine air force patrol plane over the Scarborough Shoal.

DW

US: Kamala Harris pledges to revive bipartisan border security bill

Washington, D.C., US - US Vice President Kamala Harris has reaffirmed her commitment to border security, emphasising the need for stronger measures to combat illegal immigration and the fentanyl crisis. Harris criticised former President Donald Trump for blocking a comprehensive border security bill that had bipartisan support in Congress.

“Last December, I helped raise the rate of overtime pay for border agents,” Harris stated. “I strongly supported the comprehensive border security bill, written last year by a bipartisan group of senators, including one of the most conservative members of the United States Congress.”

The bill, which Harris described as ‘the strongest security bill we have seen in

US Vice President Kamala Harris emphasised the need for stronger measures to combat illegal immigration and criticised Donald Trump for blocking a comprehensive border security bill

decades’, aimed to address several critical issues at the US southern border. It would have hired 1,500 more border agents and officers, installed 100 inspection machines to detect fentanyl, and expanded the number of immigration judges and asylum officers. Harris ex-



plained: “It would have allowed us to more quickly and effectively remove those who come here illegally.”

Despite being endorsed by the Border Patrol Union, the bill was ultimately derailed by Trump. “Donald Trump tanked it. He picked up the phone and

called some friends in Congress and said stop the bill, because he prefers to run on a problem instead of fixing a problem,” Harris charged.

As a result of Trump’s interference, Harris contended that the border remains less secure today. “The American people

deserve a President who cares more about border security than playing political games and their personal, political future.”

Harris pledged that, if elected President, she would revive the bill and sign it into law. “Even though Donald Trump tried to sabotage the border security bill, it is my pledge to you, that as President of the United States, I will bring it back up and proudly sign it into law.”

This comes amidst renewed debate on border security, as Trump’s administration previously secured a victory when the US Supreme Court allowed the use of US\$2.5bn from the Department of Defence to construct parts of a border wall. Despite Congress refusing to provide the requested funds, the Supreme Court’s 5-4 ruling allowed Trump to move forward with the controversial wall, a decision that has continued to fuel division on how best to secure the border.

Many lawmakers opposed the move, warning that diverting funds from the Pentagon would harm national security priorities.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump has threatened to prosecute Google if he wins the 2024 election, accusing the tech giant of manipulating search results to favour Kamala Harris.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump alleged that Google operates an ‘illegal’ system that prioritises negative stories about him while highlighting only favourable coverage of Harris.

He did not cite a specific law but warned that, if elected, he would urge the US Department

of Justice to prosecute Google for what he called ‘blatant interference’ in the election.

“This is ILLEGAL ACTIVITY,” Trump said.

“I will request their prosecution, at the maximum levels, when I win the Election and become President of the United States!,” he added.

Trump’s remarks appear to be tied to a study by the conservative Media Research Centre, which claims that Google’s search algorithm disproportionately benefits Harris over Trump, Washington-based USA Today reported.

The study, which was covered by outlets like Fox News and the New York Post, focused on a search conducted on September 6, 2024, for ‘Donald Trump presidential race 2024’.

Agencies

Hezbollah confirms ‘martyrdom’ of Hassan Nasrallah in Israeli airstrike

Beirut, Lebanon - Hezbollah announced on Saturday that its Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah has been ‘martyred’ following what it described as a ‘treacherous Zionist raid’ on the southern suburbs of Beirut.

In a statement, Hezbollah declared: “Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary-General of Hezbollah, has joined his great and immortal martyred comrades, whose path he led for about thirty years, becoming a martyr on the road to Jerusalem and Palestine.”

The statement emphasised Nasrallah’s decades-long leadership in the resistance against Israel, noting that his dedication to the cause of Palestinian liberation defined his life and now his ‘martyrdom’.

Nasrallah, who had been Hezbollah’s secretary-general since 1992, played a key role in the Lebanese resistance movement, particularly in its confrontations with Israeli forces.

His death marks a significant moment in the ongoing conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. The Hezbollah statement concluded by reaffirming the group’s commitment to Nasrallah’s mission, saying: “His martyrdom will only strengthen the resolve of the resistance to continue the struggle against the Zionist enemy and liberate Palestine.”

Earlier in a statement on Saturday, the Israeli army claimed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was ‘liquidated’ during an operation targeting the central command of Hezbollah located beneath a residential building in



Iraq’s Prime Minister Muhammad Shia’ al-Sudani announced on Saturday a three-day period of national mourning over the assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah

the southern suburbs of Beirut. Since Monday, the Israeli army has launched its ‘most intense and wide-reaching’ assault on Lebanon since its confrontations with Hezbollah began about a year ago.

In response, Hezbollah has fired hundreds of rockets at Israeli military sites, settlements, and even the Mossad headquarters in Tel Aviv, with a strict blackout on Israeli casualties and

damage, according to observers. Hezbollah and Israel have been engaged in cross-border warfare since the start of Israel’s onslaught on the Gaza Strip, which has killed nearly 41,600 victims, mostly women and children, following a cross-border attack by Hamas last October 7.

The international community has warned against the strikes on Lebanon, as they raise the spectre of turning the Gaza conflict

into a regional war. Meanwhile, Iraq’s Prime Minister Muhammad Shia’ al-Sudani announced on Saturday a three-day period of national mourning over the assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, his office said.

In a statement, the prime minister’s office said the mourning is in honour of the ‘martyrdom’ of Nasrallah and his companions killed by Israel, which has contin-

ued extensive airstrikes in Lebanon this week, killing hundreds and displacing thousands. Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, issued a strong condemnation of Israel’s actions in Lebanon on Saturday, particularly decrying the ‘mass killing of women and children.’ He warned that Israel ‘will regret’ its recent military operations in the country. Khamenei’s remarks were broadcast by the Iranian

state channel Al-Alam in response after Israel said its forces killed Hassan Nasrallah in an airstrike on Friday.

“The killing of defenceless people in Lebanon once again proves the shortsightedness and foolishness of the Israeli regime’s leaders,” Khamenei said, adding that Israel had failed to learn from its prolonged war on Gaza. He emphasised that the ‘mass killing of women, children, and

civilians cannot break the strong foundations of the resistance movement’.

Khamenei went on to assert that Hezbollah would play a decisive role in determining the future of the region. He recalled Israel’s occupation of southern Lebanon and its eventual with-

His (Hassan Nasrallah’s) martyrdom will only strengthen the resolve of the resistance to continue the struggle against the Zionist enemy and liberate Palestine

HEZBOLLAH

drawal in 2000, crediting Hezbollah for severing Israel’s path to Beirut.

He further cautioned that Lebanon today would make the ‘malicious and wicked aggressor regret its actions’.

The Iranian Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Committee convened an emergency session on Saturday to discuss the recent Israeli attacks in the region.

Committee spokesperson Ebrahim Rezaei said in a statement that the session focused on ‘investigating the recent events in the region, including the crimes committed by the Zionist regime in the southern suburbs of Beirut’. Rezaei added: “The Zionists are witnessing their final days in the occupied territories, and these events in the region will mark the beginning of the end for the cursed and criminal Zionist regime.”

Anadolu Agency

UN ‘alarmed’ by Israel’s airstrike on Beirut’s southern suburb

Hamilton, Canada - The UN on Friday expressed ‘great alarm’ over the developments in Lebanon’s Beirut following latest heavy Israeli bombardment.

“We are watching the developments unfolding in Beirut with great alarm,” UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters during a news conference after Israeli army on Friday evening carried out a heavy and unprecedented airstrike on Beirut’s southern suburb area, claiming to have attacked the main headquarters of Lebanese group Hezbollah.

He expressed the UN’s deep concern about ‘the sharp escalation of hostilities across the Blue Line with strikes in Lebanon’.

Emphasising that the latest developments place both Lebanese and Israeli civilians at risk, Dujarric said they also



threaten regional security and stability. “I can tell you that our peacekeeping mission here, better known as UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), continues to engage actively with the parties to help de-escalate tensions

along the Blue Line and avoid further misunderstandings,” he added.

Dujarric reiterated the UN’s support for diplomatic efforts for ending violence, restore stability and prevent further humanitar-

ian suffering in the region. He also renewed calls for an immediate de-escalation, return to cessation of hostilities and urged for full implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 1701.

Anadolu Agency

Israeli army hacks into control tower of Beirut Airport: Sources

Beirut, Lebanon - The Israeli army on Saturday hacked into the control tower of Beirut’s Rafic Hariri International Airport, issuing threats against an Iranian civilian aircraft attempting to land, according to official sources.

The Lebanese Ministry of Transport instructed airport authorities to prevent the Iranian plane from entering Lebanese airspace following Israeli threats to target the aircraft if it landed at the airport.

Sources within the ministry confirmed to Anadolu that the directive was issued after the Israeli army’s aggressive posturing.

There was no comment from the Israeli side on the reports yet. However, hours earlier, Israeli army spokesman Daniel Hagari warned that the army ‘will not allow any weapons to be transferred to Hezbollah’, including



‘through Beirut International Airport’.

“We will not allow the transfer of weapons to Hezbollah in any form. We are aware of Iranian weapons transfers to Hezbollah, and we will work to thwart them,” he said in a statement.

“We declare that we will not allow hostile aircraft carrying weapons to land at the civilian

airport in Beirut. This is a civilian airport for civilian use, and it must remain that way,” Hagari added.

Lebanese Minister of Public Works and Transport Ali Hamieh denied on Saturday Israeli claims that Beirut International Airport was being used to deliver weapons to Hezbollah.

Anadolu Agency

Thousands of Lebanese, Syrians flee Israeli bombs into war-torn Syria

Beirut, Lebanon - After the first Israeli attack on the southern suburbs of Beirut about a month ago, Mansour Omar thought he should try and find somewhere else to stay.

“I’ve been worried ever since that attack because I was living close to where the first raids took place,” says Omar, a Syrian refugee who’s been living in the Lebanese capital for nine years, after he was driven out of his home by civil war. “This week, after the attacks started, I searched in the suburbs.”

But the rents being asked were ‘terrifying’, he says. “It’s exploitation.” So his family

didn’t move.

Then this week, Israel conducted a wave of air raids on neighbouring Lebanon, saying they were pre-empting attacks by the military wing of the Lebanon-based Hezbollah group.

That’s why Omar left his job and moved with his family to a more remote village in Lebanon. “Whoever is able to, has sent his family back to Syria,” the 32-year-old Syrian told DW. “But I cannot cross into Syria. The regime will kill me if I do.”

Even though Omar didn’t fight against Syrian government forces during the civil war there, he participated in anti-govern-



Lebanese authorities counted 15,600 Syrian citizens and 16,130 Lebanese citizens crossing into Syria

ment demonstrations. As it is, anybody who fled the country during the war is viewed with suspicion, seen as a traitor to the Syrian regime headed by Bashar Assad.

This is why Syrian men who return may be detained, tortured, forcibly conscripted into the Syrian army, or killed, say human rights organisations, who regularly document such cases.

That has not stopped others from seeking shelter in Syria. By Thursday this week, Lebanese authorities say they had counted 15,600 Syrian citizens and 16,130 Lebanese citizens crossing into Syria.

Who’s fleeing to Syria?

It’s been comparatively easy for Lebanese citizens to enter Syria.

The borders between Lebanon and Syria have always been porous and politics and economics in the two countries are intertwined. Travel is visa-free for Lebanese and many have family in Syria as do Syrians, in Lebanon.

As one Lebanese man told news agency AFP this week, he didn’t really want to return to Syria but when family there invited him to stay during the Israeli bombing, he saw no other choice.

DW

INDIA

ECI reviews Maharashtra poll preparedness

Chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar directed SPs to review all cases related to personnel, EVM and social media

Mumbai, Maharashtra - The Election Commission of India (ECI) has sought the status of FIRs related to electoral offences during the Lok Sabha elections 2024 from the superintendent of police of districts in Maharashtra during the review meeting of poll preparedness of Maharashtra Assembly election, sources told ANI.

According to sources, chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar directed SPs to review all cases related to personnel, EVM and social media. CEC strictly conveyed that the swift response and action to be taken on fake news on social media.

State police nodal officers were asked to expedite all LS 2024 cases without any laxity in taking these cases to conclusion, said sources.

During the review meeting,



Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar with Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu hold a review meeting with Maharashtra's top officials, in Mumbai on Saturday

Upcoming polls will see a contest between the Maha Vikas Aghadi coalition - UBT Shiv Sena, NCP (Sharad Pawar faction) and Congress, and Maha Yuti Alliance - BJP, Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde) and NCP (Ajit Pawar faction)

CEC Rajiv Kumar directed all district election officers (DEOs), superintendent of police to ensure minimum facilities and proper management of voter queues at polling stations. CEC directed DEOs to visit polling stations personally to review all arrangements, put up benches for voters in queues, provide drinking water, and take care of parking

in congested areas. It was also said that multiple polling stations in one location should have proper signages and directions for guiding voters, sources said.

ECI team led by CEC Rajiv Kumar is on a two-day visit to Mumbai to review the poll preparedness of the Maharashtra Assembly election. During the review meeting on Friday with

Maharashtra's top officials, CEC asked why more than 100 police inspectors are holding key positions in Mumbai.

According to sources, CEC Rajiv Kumar said that despite a directive issued on July 31, 2024, to relocate officials who have served in their home district or current posting for over three years, the state administration

has not completed the process. Rajiv Kumar asked the chief secretary why, despite clear direction from ECI, the state is reluctant to transfer revenue officers to key posts in the state. EC conveyed displeasure and sought an explanation. Rajiv Kumar has expressed his displeasure over the state administration's non-compliance.

He further reprimanded the excise commissioner of Maharashtra and gave strict instructions to dry up the flow of illicit liquor from neighbouring states ahead of the upcoming elections in the state. "Directed the Excise Commissioner to keep a close

eye on the movement and distribution of any kind of illegal liquor in the state," sources said.

Maharashtra legislative Assembly elections will be held in 288 constituencies. The Election Commission of India has yet to announce the dates for the election.

The upcoming polls will see a contest between the Maha Vikas Aghadi coalition, comprising the UBT Shiv Sena, NCP (Sharad Pawar faction), and Congress, and the Maha Yuti Alliance, which includes the BJP, Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction), and NCP (Ajit Pawar faction).

Rajiv Kumar also said that the

political parties have urged the election commission to schedule the Maharashtra Assembly elections considering upcoming festivals like Diwali and Chhath Puja.

Addressing a press conference in Mumbai on Saturday, Kumar said that they met the leaders of a total of 11 parties, including the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Shiv Sena (UBT), and the Nationalist Congress Party (SP).

The CEC further informed that the total electors in the states are 9.59 crores, with males being 4.59 crores and females being 4.64 crores.

ANI

Fire breaks out at Tata iPhone parts factory in Tamil Nadu

Chennai, Tamil Nadu - A massive fire broke out at the Tata Electronics Private Limited (TEPL) plant in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu on Saturday.

Indian media outlets and Reuters news agency reported that the plant in the village of Uddanapalli manufactures accessories for the Apple iPhone.

A TEPL spokesperson confirmed that was an 'unfortunate incident of fire at our plant in Hosur, Tamil Nadu'.

"Our emergency protocols ensured that all our employees are safe," the spokesperson said. "The cause of the fire is under investigation, and we will take necessary actions to safeguard



Tata Electronics is part of Tata Group of companies headquartered in Mumbai

the interests of our employees and other stakeholders."

India outlet Business Today, however, said that three employees at the site were experiencing respiratory issues and were brought to the hospital.

The three individuals are now in stable condition.

Reuters reported, based on a source with knowledge of the fire, that the incident was 'chemical-related'. Production and operations were suspended at the

facility due to the blaze.

Seven fire extinguishing vehicles reportedly put out the flames at the plant.

Poor workplace safety protocols and building codes are sometimes reasons why fires occur at factories in India.

Last month, an explosion caused a fire at a pharmaceutical plant in southern India, leaving at least 18 people dead.

Fire safety expert Deepak Monga told Indian outlet c&en that the workers weren't wearing adequate safety equipment at the plant, disregarding the law. Monga said companies in charge of these plants often cut corners on the safety issue. DW

Hathras incident: Police register FIR against school

Hathras, Uttar Pradesh - The Hathras Police registered a separate FIR against DL Public School and its owner Dinesh Bhagel for violating school norms, police officials confirmed on Saturday.

The FIR is registered u/s 211/223/318(3)/318(4) of BNS and u/s 17 and 18 of RTE act at Sahpau police station.

The father of the deceased Kishan Kushwaha said that he has not received any updates on the case from the police.

"This incident is of September 23, since then I haven't gotten any information from the police, or any other update. Everything I have got to know

is through the media itself," he said. He also said that according to him this is not a matter of 'black magic'.

"The post mortem report of my child clearly states that he was choked and also a hand was put over his mouth to stop him from breathing. He has been killed mercilessly. We can go, but this report can't go away," Kushwaha said.

The father further demanded that the culprits be given the death penalty.

"My child needs justice, so I want quick justice for my child and want the monsters responsible to be given the death penalty," he added.

Earlier, Hathras Basic Siksha Adhikari (BSA), Swati Bharti, on Friday ordered to close the DL Public School in which an 11-year-old boy was allegedly murdered as part of the 'black magic ritual'.

Hathras Additional Superintendent of Police, Ashok Kumar Singh, said: "On 23rd September, a student was murdered at the hostel of DL Public School under Sahpau PS. A case was registered under relevant sections on the basis of the statement of the complainant. Five accused, including the owner of the school, have been arrested.

ANI

Floods and landslides kill 60 people in Nepal

Kathmandu, Nepal - At least 60 people have died as incessant rainfall batters all across Nepal. The government has deployed more than 20,000 security personnel for the search and rescue operation.

The Kathmandu Valley, comprising Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur alone, recorded 34 deaths in a single day due to water logging and landslides on the slopes. Five different districts of Bagmati Province recorded an additional 19 deaths, while Koshi Province recorded 7 deaths in the past 24 hours.

As per the police, dozens of others are missing across the country, with the rescue operation ongoing with deployment of choppers, motorboats and other possible means.

"In Kathmandu, 11 people

are recorded dead while Lalitpur reported 18 and Bhaktapur reported 5 deaths within 24 hours," SSP Binod Ghimire from Kathmandu Valley Police Office confirmed ANI.

The security agencies- Nepal Army, Armed Police Force (APF) and the Nepal Police rescued 1415 people from various locations of valley.

Nepal's Koshi province CM Hikmat Kumar Karki visited Koshi barrage in Supaul to review the rising water level situation.

A total of 75 workers were in a garage built on the embankments of the Nakhu River in Kusunti of Lalitpur. Security personnel working for hours were able to rescue them using zip-line rescue who are now kept in a school.

ANI

'Friends of Peace' FMs call to end Ukraine war

New York, US - In its first gathering at New York, 'Friends of Peace' group called for an immediate end to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

The meeting, co-chaired by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Brazilian counterpart Mauro Vieira on Friday, was attended by top diplomats and representatives from 17 'Global South' countries, including Egypt, Indonesia, South Africa, Mexico and Zambia, a statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Saturday.

Speaking to the gathering, Wang Yi said that the purpose of this gathering is to seek peace as Ukrainian crisis has entered its third year. "The flames of war are still spreading, the risk of spillover is increasing, the dawn of peace has not yet appeared, and the development of the situation is worrying," he said.

The top Chinese diplomat said that Brazil, China, South Africa, Egypt, Indonesia, Turkey and



The meeting was co-chaired by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Brazilian counterpart Mauro Vieira

other countries, as partners of the Global South, committed to the political solution of the Ukrainian crisis, and agreed to launch the 'Friends of Peace' initiative on the Ukrainian crisis on the UN platform.

Friends of Peace is not about taking sides in the conflict, or replacing the existing platforms, he explained, adding they will gather more countries to raise voice and

Brazil, China, South Africa, Egypt and other nations, as partners of the Global South, committed to the political solution of Ukrainian crisis

create an atmosphere for a ceasefire and restart peace talks.

On Thursday, China and Brazil agreed to form a 'Friend of Peace' platform to work towards ending war in Ukraine that began in February 2022.

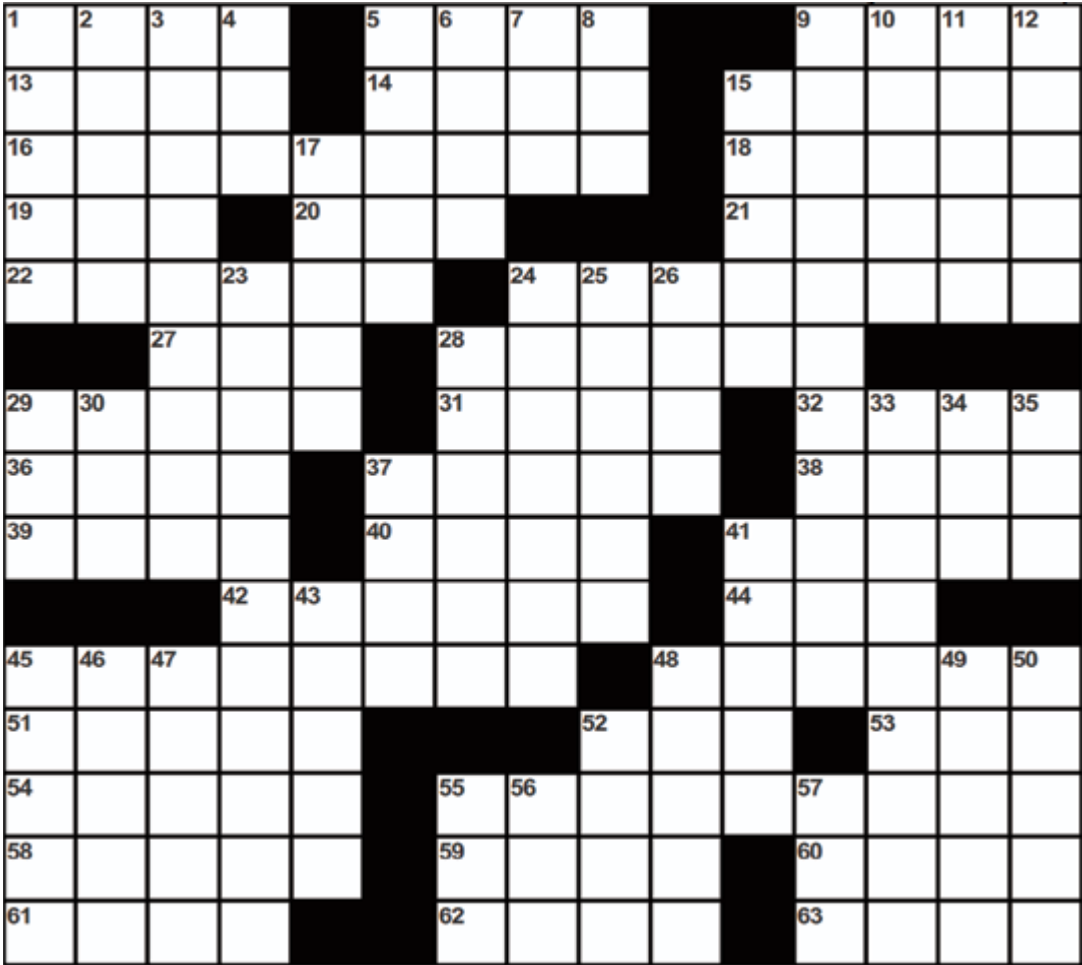
The agreement came during a meeting between Wang Yi and Brazilian president's chief adviser Celso Amorim on the sidelines of the 79th UN General Assembly

in New York.

The two countries issued a six-point consensus, calling on all parties concerned to de-escalate, create conditions for direct talks until the realisation of a ceasefire, increase humanitarian assistance, oppose use of weapons of mass destruction, oppose attacks on nuclear power plants and other peaceful nuclear facilities.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - 1) Cartoonist who lam-pooned Tweed
 - 5) Roe source
 - 9) Night fliers
 - 13) Big Apple tennis venue
 - 14) Glazed square
 - 15) Courage, slangily
 - 16) Foolish talk
 - 18) Deck out
 - 19) Flock leader, for short
 - 20) Helpful connections
 - 21) Units of force
 - 22) Passes, as legislation
 - 24) Generous giving
 - 27) Slum scurrier
 - 28) Elsie's company
 - 29) Some facial treat-ments
 - 31) Meat-grading org.
 - 32) Latch on to
 - 36) Kadett automaker
 - 37) Apportions, with "out"
 - 38) Fallon's predecessor
 - 39) Cookbook amount
 - 40) _ impulse (rashly)
 - 41) Like an innie, maybe
 - 42) Bring in
 - 44) Ballpark fig.
 - 45) Old-fashioned to the max
- 48) Much of North Africa
 - 51) Black-bordered notices
 - 52) Apt. amenity
 - 53) Pres., militarily
 - 54) Deck with pentacles
 - 55) 2000 presidential de-bate phrase
 - 58) Manicurist's material
 - 59) Without a stitch
 - 60) Creme-filled goodie
 - 61) Tramp's partner
 - 62) They may be rolled over

DOWN

 - 1) Mollusk shell liner
 - 2) Visibly shaken
 - 3) Noisy mock serenades to newlyweds
 - 4) Downing Street ad-dress
 - 5) Leaves speechless
 - 6) Serenade the villain
 - 7) Will Smith biopic
 - 8) Boxing Day mo.
 - 9) Golfer's post-shot gyra-tions
 - 10) Nerve cell conductors
 - 11) Runs out of gas
 - 12) Have a feeling
 - 15) Madonna nickname
 - 17) Baker's protectors
 - 23) Some saved iPhone data
 - 24) Penmanship, it's claimed
 - 25) Impassioned, as a plea
 - 26) Dietary figs.
 - 28) _ Aires
 - 29) Okra, essentially
 - 30) Energy Star org.
 - 33) Alamo or Dollar offer-ings
 - 34) Tiny tunneler
 - 35) Any Little Leaguer, once
 - 37) Wear a puss
 - 41) Needing sealant
 - 43) Johnny Mathis classic
 - 45) "Psycho" setting
 - 46) Malia or Sasha
 - 47) Did a stud's work
 - 48) Venti and trenta, at Starbucks
 - 49) Bar mitzvah and bris
 - 50) It may elicit a blessing
 - 52) Cornell of university fame
 - 55) Clarice Starling's org.
 - 56) Onetime Egypt-Syria alliance (Abbr.)
 - 57) Holstein's greeting

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Today is all about the communities you live and work in. Your place in the world will be something you'll be questioning today, and that is totally normal and wonderfully healthy. Do you take the same role in every situation? Are you always the leader, always the follower, or do you take turns in these roles? These are the questions you should address. You need to make sure you're being true to yourself and not compromising for the sake of popularity or politics.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Someone in your life has recently reached a major turning point, and they are starting to make some changes in their life you should find impressive and inspiring. So let go of your current goals and put them on the back burner for a while. Right now you should concentrate on learning more about how this person made the transition they made and why. Even if you have different goals in mind, their experience is something you can learn from now.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

If you have the time today, work on reconnecting with some people from your past. Email is a great way to get back in touch without making too much of a commitment. Even if no one replies, you will feel good knowing you got things out into the ether. Take a stab in the dark and think about who is least likely to reply and then reach out to them. Your generosity is itching to get out and show itself, so let it lead the way in everything you write. Have a giving heart.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What is the country of origin of the cheese called "Monterey Jack"?

A. USA
B. Netherlands
C. Wales
D. Greece

02. Once it is harvested, spelt is usually ...?

A. Pulped and made into wine
B. Used for sandpaper
C. Added to a glass-making process
D. Eaten

03. What was the profession of the person who invented the mechanism of the door lock for London toilets operated by pay-ment of a coin, initially one penny?

A. Fairground operator
B. Engineer
C. Clockmaker
D. Stage magician

Answers: 1.A 2.D 3.D

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Today, you will be the beacon that all others follow. Your leadership potential has slowly but surely been maturing, and now you will be able to step confidently into the role as leader. This is a new beginning, something you can really sink your teeth into. So go ahead and get excited! Your responsibilities might not rival those of world leaders, but they will be important to you and that is all that matters. It is okay to admit you don't know it all.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Recent dramatic events in a friend or family member's life might be causing you to think more about the quality of your own life. You can learn from the choices that other people have been making. In fact, it is one of the wisest ways to get your life lessons. Today is a great time to reflect on what has been going on and figure out how you want to deal with it. Do you have your priorities in the right order? Putting yourself toward the top of the list (if not at the very top) is a good idea.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

The activities throughout the day will create a lot of different possibilities, and it may be hard to decide which opportunity you want to explore. You have so few things limiting your options, and that is a blessing, but it is also a burden. For the first time in a long while, you don't need to ask anyone for permission about what to do. There's no resistance to work against. You'll end up a winner any way you choose as long as you choose with conviction.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Quiet moments throughout this day will give you many opportunities to think about issues surrounding your immediate future. If you can, take a more passive role today. You might not be in the right frame of mind to make tough leadership decisions. Compromise, not dogma, is what will feel most comfortable. Everything is a shade of gray to you now, and that's causing a small amount of confusion in your personal life. Direct your thoughts to this confusion today.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You will be in the middle of all the action today, so be prepared to fight for every inch of the elbow room you need. Take a moment to look around at the people you are working with, and take note of how the company you keep is affecting your reputation. Are they elevating your market value or reducing it? You will soon get an accurate, objective view of what is really going on, and you might find that you need to make a few adjustments. Soften your blows with humor, fairness, and wit.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Your life is a marathon, not a sprint, and you have plenty of ground left to cover. So do things today that help conserve your energy, not use it all up. Physical activity is fine, but just don't go overboard or try to show off. There's a risk of injury or embarrassment (neither of which is very pleasant to consider). Keep working away at a person you're trying to deal with. If they're trying to get the better of you, your perseverance won't let them win.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Your fascination with the finer things in life could be holding you back right now. Are you devoting too much time and money to looking good but ignoring your emotional and physical well-being? Pare down your list of necessities and skip a few indulgences today. Get back to thinking about the things that really matter. Figuring out which of the latest gadgets you want to buy is fine, but it's not going to bring you the happiness or fulfillment you seek.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

The speeding race car that is your life is about to hit a big, blinking red light. Something unexpected is going to happen today that forces you to stop in your tracks and take a long, slow look at where you are in life. Get ready to reassess your goals. It could be something as simple as a new person coming in to your life or as major as a flat tire on the freeway. Whatever it is, it is meant to be, so approach it with flexibility and an open mind. Everything happens for a reason.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Making a sacrifice is never very much fun, but today it will be easy. You will see a clear benefit to making a tiny, painless alteration to your plans. A slight change will also be called for in your romantic life when someone asks you to sacrifice something you want for the sake of your relationship. Only you will know if this is asking too much. But before you decide if this is a deal breaker, ask yourself if they would do the same for you.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	A	U	J
R	G	S	S
U	E	R	U
E	T	P	H

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

SOLUTION

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

NEWCASTLE HOLD MANCHESTER CITY

Gordon’s penalty helps Magpies snatch a point from champions; Palmer hits four in Chelsea win

Newcastle, England - Reigning champions Manchester City were held to a second straight draw in the Premier League after Newcastle United’s Anthony Gordon cancelled out Josko Gvardiol’s opener in a 1-1 draw at St. James’ Park on Saturday.

City, who drew with title rivals Arsenal last weekend, stay provisionally top with 14 points from six games as they wait for Liverpool, Aston Villa and the Gunners to play their games this weekend. Newcastle are fifth with 11 points.

In a scrappy affair where eight yellow cards were handed out, City struggled to maintain a tempo with key midfielders Kevin De Bruyne and Rodri out injured.

Meanwhile, league top scorer Erling Haaland failed to find the net for the first time this season as the Newcastle defence restricted the Norwegian striker to just one shot on target.

Newcastle, meanwhile, looked to counter-attack with winger Gordon leading the line in the absence of the injured



Newcastle United's Anthony Gordon falls to the ground after being tripped by Manchester City goalkeeper Ederson

Alexander Isak and Callum Wilson.

City took the lead in the 35th minute when winger Jack Grealish spotted Gvardiol making a run into the box, and after the full back received the ball he skilfully turned defender Dan Burn before finding the bottom corner.

But Newcastle struck back from the spot in the 58th minute when City goalkeeper Ederson tripped Gordon while reaching for the ball as the England international rounded him.

Ederson was booked, and Gordon stepped up himself to send the Brazilian the wrong way

to score his second goal of the season and level the game at 1-1.

Meanwhile, Chelsea playmaker Cole Palmer became the first player in the 32-year history of the Premier League to score four goals in the first half of a match. The England international’s flurry of goals came in a

20-minute span against Brighton and Hove Albion at Stamford Bridge on Saturday as Chelsea won 4-2.

In another match, Arsenal squandered a two-goal lead but then struck twice in stoppage time to secure a 4-2 victory over Leicester City.



Pep Guardiola with Mikel Arteta

You want a war? Now we war: Guardiola tells rivals Arsenal

Manchester, England - Arsenal wanted to provoke Manchester City into a war during last weekend’s Premier League clash but the champions are ready for the challenge, City manager Pep Guardiola said on Friday.

A stoppage-time equaliser let hosts City hold 10-man Arsenal 2-2 on Sunday in a match where City midfielder Rodri suffered a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament.

Nerves flared during the clash as City’s leading scorer Erling Haaland threw the ball at Arsenal defender Gabriel Magalhaes and directed heated words at Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta after the final whistle, asking him to “stay humble”.

Brazil’s Gabriel said Arsenal were waiting for City to visit them, with the rivalry between last season’s top two teams heating up. “Gabriel said it perfectly in the press after the

match: this is a war, we (are) here to provoke the opponent, push them,” Guardiola said when asked about Haaland’s actions. “And at the end, what can you do? You provoke me? OK, I’m there. You want a war? Now we war... The type of challenge that Arsenal challenges, I understand it.”

Rodri out for season

Guardiola confirmed that Rodri will miss the rest of the season, in a big blow to his team’s quest for a fifth consecutive Premier League title.

Rodri underwent surgery for the injury earlier on Friday, Guardiola said. “Surgery this morning, ACL and some meniscus (cartilage), next season he will be here. This season is over,” Guardiola told reporters. “Unfortunately we got the worst but these things happen. We will be there to support him in his recovery step-by-step.”

Son doubtful for Tottenham’s Manchester United clash

London, England - Tottenham Hotspur captain Son Heung-min is a doubt for their trip to Manchester United after he came off early in their midweek Europa League clash, manager Ange Postecoglou said on Friday.

Son looked in discomfort in the second half of their 3-0 home win over Qarabag on Thursday and was taken off after receiving treatment, with Postecoglou saying after the game that the 32-year-old forward was fatigued.

He has been a key player for Spurs early in the season with two goals and two assists, and Postecoglou said they will assess him ahead of Sunday’s trip to Old Trafford.

“It’s still early days from last night. Fair to say the boys that put in a shift are fairly tired,” Postecoglou said.

“Apart from Sonny, everyone’s ok, but I don’t think it’s too bad (with Son). He wants to train tomorrow so we’ll see how he goes at training and make a decision from there. We have another day up our sleeve to give him every chance.”

Son is in the final year of his contract and Postecoglou said he wants the South Korean forward, who joined the club in 2015, to extend his stay with the north London side with whom he has scored 164 goals.

“I don’t have the final say but my input is significant. The way he’s performing and leading the club I want him to stick around for a while,” the manager said.

Spurs held United to a draw at Old Trafford last season and Postecoglou said he was looking forward to playing there again, adding there was no fear factor of playing at the iconic stadium.

“I’ve never been scared of a



Son Heung-min

venue... What makes venues unique is the atmosphere and when we played there last year it was brilliant,” he said.

“The supporters got behind their club - I’m not sure if that’s changed. It’s a great stadium with the history and tradition behind it. It’s a game players and managers get excited about.”

His United counterpart Erik ten Hag has been under pressure to deliver results but Postecoglou said the Dutchman had done a “great job” despite the criticism.

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“I’ve never been scared of a

Barcola hits double as Paris St Germain ease past Rennes

Paris, France - Paris St Germain’s unbeaten start to their Ligue 1 season continued on Friday with a comfortable 3-1 win over Rennes at the Parc des Princes that saw Bradley Barcola score twice to keep them top of the standings.

After a sizzling start to the league campaign that featured 13 goals in their opening three games, PSG’s attack has misfired of late but on Friday they showed signs of a return to form.

PSG moved to 16 points, three clear of Olympique de Marseille and Monaco at the top of the table.

PSG squandered some decent chances but finally made the breakthrough on the half-hour mark, surging forward through the middle before Ousmane Dembele slipped the ball for Barcola to calmly pick his spot and curl it home.

Barcola’s battle with Rennes defender Leo Ostigard came to define game and the French attacker was also behind PSG’s second in the 58th minute, hitting the woodwork with a rasping shot that South Korean midfielder Lee Kang-in reacted quickest to head home the rebound.



PSG’s Bradley Barcola celebrates with Ousmane Dembele after scoring against Rennes

After a sizzling start to the league campaign, PSG’s attack has misfired of late, but on Friday they showed signs of a return to form

Ten minutes later Barcola’s run to the far post was expertly picked out by Achraf Hakimi’s pinpoint pass, leaving him a simple close-range finish to make it 3-0.

Rennes were thrown a late lifeline through an Arnaud Kalimuendo penalty, who sent Steve Mandanda the wrong way

with his spot kick in the 75th minute, and all of a sudden PSG looked shaky again.

The visitors continued to pour forward and Alidu Seidu lashed the ball into the net from close range after his initial shot was blocked in the 87th minute, but the goal was ruled out as the ball struck his hand in the build up.

That effectively ended their short-lived comeback.



Neymar

We’ll be patient with Neymar, says Brazil coach Dorival

Sao Paulo, Brazil - Coach Dorival Jr said on Friday that he would wait until Neymar is fully fit to bring him back into the Brazil squad as he announced the roster for October’s South American qualifiers.

The Al Hilal forward, who has not played since last year and missed the Copa America, underwent surgery after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and meniscus in his left knee.

“We’ll wait, we’ll be patient, it doesn’t matter if he can’t come back in October, November or even February. He needs to be confident, he needs to play and above all he needs to be completely healed from this injury,” Dorival told a news conference.

“We are starting to realise how important he is. If he returns in the coming years, we will have one of the greatest players in world football at a remarkable moment in his career and in our national team,” he added.

Striker Igor Jesus and centre-backs Abner and Vanderson have been included in Dorival’s squad as he looks to get the five-time world champions back on track.

PSG getting ready for ‘stimulating match’ against Arsenal

Paris, France - Paris St Germain coach Luis Enrique is looking forward to his side taking on Arsenal in the Champions League after a 3-1 Ligue 1 win over Rennes that saw his side rediscover their early-season attacking form and score some cracking goals.

“It was a very complete match from the beginning, we had a lot of chances. We scored three goals but we could have scored

more,” a delighted Luis Enrique told BeIN Sports.

“The Champions League? We are going to play against another favourite (in Arsenal), it will be a stimulating match, we will prepare ourselves.”

Barcola may have grabbed the headlines but it was South Korean striker Lee Kang-in who got the plaudits from his coach after an excellent display in both defence and attack that he capped

off by heading home the rebound from Barcola’s shot off the woodwork.

“He was in the right place to score the goal as a clever striker - I really liked his performance, he gave us consistency, he held the ball up when we needed him to,” he said. “He is very intelligent with his pressing, he wins back a lot of balls and recovers well. I thought he was superb tonight, it’s a pleasure to have players

with that level and mentality,” the coach added.

The 54-year-old Spaniard said that his side were defending well and that their conceding goals from set pieces is not something that he is too worried about.

“Football is not being fair to us, our opponents are creating very few chances against us, far fewer than last season, and they get there (to set pieces) and they score.”



Luis Enrique



Nuri Sahin

Coach Sahin worried about Dortmund's 'poor defending'

Dortmund, Germany - Borussia Dortmund staged a convincing 4-2 comeback win over VfL Bochum in the Bundesliga on Friday, thanks to a brace from Serhou Guirassy, but coach Nuri Sahin insists his side must continue to improve defensively to avoid further setbacks.

Dortmund hosted Bochum on the back of a shock 5-1 defeat at the hands of VfB Stuttgart, and they started on the wrong foot after the visitors took an early 2-0 lead in the first half.

"The supposed scenario of a 3-0, which could have happened, was simply because we defended very, very badly. It was very, very poor defending," the coach told a press conference.

"We have to develop in this area and defending in depth is always a huge topic. I hope that we improve as quickly as

possible because there's no other way," he added.

Sahin praised the performance of new signing Guirassy, who headed home before the break and scored in the second half, as the key to his side's victory.

"We are all very happy that he is with us. And I'm not just happy that he scores goals, but also how he presents himself. I've said that before. And I thought he was also one of those who was clear-headed at half-time.

"That's why we brought him in, so that he can help lead here, so that he's not just on the pitch but also off it."

Dortmund are temporarily second on 10 points, two behind leaders Bayern Munich. They host Celtic in the Champions League on Tuesday before travelling to Union Berlin in the Bundesliga four days later.



Zamalek players celebrate with the African Super Cup in Riyadh on Friday

ZAMALEK CHAMPIONS

Egyptian side edge city rivals Al Ahly 4-3 on penalties to win African Super Cup

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Egypt's Zamalek edged Cairo rivals Al Ahly 4-3 on penalties after a 1-1 draw at the end of 90 minutes to win the African Super Cup in Riyadh on Friday.

Zamalek were successful with all four of their kicks in the shootout while their goalkeeper Mohamed Awad saved from Morocco defender Yahia Attiyat Allah before Wessam Abou Ali missed Al Ahly's last kick at a

The match between last season's African Champions League winners and African Confederation Cup champions was played in Saudi Arabia as CAF court Saudi sponsorship for their competitions

sellout Kingdom Arena in the Saudi capital.

Al Ahly had gone ahead on the stroke of halftime when

Palestine international Abou Ali netted a spotkick, awarded after a VAR review.

The penalty came after a

studs up challenge from Hamza Mathlouthi on Akram Tawfik inside the Zamalek penalty area but despite VAR confirmation, the Zamalek players furiously surrounded the referee in protest and staged a brief walk off the pitch before play resumed.

Zamalek equalised 13 minutes from time through substitute Nasser Mansi as he got ahead of the Ahly defence to tuck away Omar Gaber's cross with his first

touch after coming on.

The match between last season's African Champions League winners and the victors in the African Confederation Cup was played in Saudi Arabia for a second year as the Confederation of African Football court Saudi sponsorship for their competitions.

Zamalek have now won the Super Cup five times, but trail Al Ahly's record of eight.



AC Milan's Theo Hernandez celebrates after scoring against Lecce

Three goals in five minutes help Milan ease past Lecce

Milan, Italy - AC Milan beat Lecce 3-0 in Serie A on Friday as Alvaro Morata, Theo Hernandez and Christian Pulisic sealed the win just before the break, scoring all goals inside five minutes.

Milan, who travel to Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League on Tuesday, provisionally moved up to second in the standings on 11 points, level with leaders Torino who host Lazio on Sunday. A largely uneventful first half sprung to life when Morata gave Milan the lead in the 38th minute with a towering header, nodding home a Hernandez free kick before the ball bounced in off the inside of the bar.

The Spain striker scored his second goal for Milan after he had netted in their season-opening 2-2 draw against Torino.

Hernandez doubled the advantage three minutes later with

a shot into the roof of the net from a precise low cross by Rafael Leao. With 29 goals to his name, the French left-back equalled Paolo Maldini as the defender with the most goals scored for Milan in Serie A history.

Pulisic added a third two minutes from halftime as he got to the rebound and struck into the middle of the net, moments after Tammy Abraham hit the post.

Lecce looked good throughout the game as they searched for chances on counter-attack and had overall 16 attempts compared to 15 by Milan.

The hosts, however, continued to push and Ruben Loftus-Cheek hit the bar in the second half. Milan were left with 10 men in the 80th minute after Davide Bertesaghi was sent off for his tackle on Lameck Banda.

Guirassy brace sparks Dortmund's comeback win against Bochum

Dortmund, Germany - A resilient Borussia Dortmund staged a spectacular comeback to beat VfL Bochum 4-2 in the Bundesliga on Friday thanks to a double from Serhou Guirassy.

The win temporarily lifted Dortmund into second place on 10 points, two behind leaders Bayern Munich who face third-placed Bayer Leverkusen on Saturday. Matus Bero gave Bochum an early lead in the 16th minute, latching onto Philipp Hofmann's incisive pass and slotting home past goalkeeper Gregor Kobel, who five minutes later was guilty of mis-handling a pass to attacker Dani de Wit to double the visitors' advantage.

Nuri Sahin's side looked increasingly desperate for a goal but were denied by a series of fine saves from goalkeeper Patrick Dreweas, until new summer arrival Guirassy headed home from the centre of the area just before the break from midfielder Julian Brandt's cross.

Dortmund put their attacking



Borussia Dortmund's Serhou Guirassy scores against VfL Bochum on Friday

sloppiness behind them in the second half, creating more chances and levelling through Emre Can's second-half penalty after Felix Passlack fouled Guirassy, who later scored his

second in the 75th minute with a powerful finish from Karim Adeyemi's through ball.

"We wanted to get off to a good start in the game, but suddenly we were two goals behind.

But we all knew that if we scored one goal before halftime, we would be in it," said Can.

Substitute Felix Nmecha completed the rout with a long-range strike nine minutes from time.

'It wasn't all perfect but we had good moments'

Milan, Italy - AC Milan coach Paulo Fonseca praised his team for their convincing 3-0 win over Lecce in Serie A on Friday but hoped their game continues to improve as they return to Champions League action next week.

Alvaro Morata, Theo Hernandez and Christian Pulisic sealed the victory with three quick-fire goals just before the break, scoring all of them inside five minutes.

"Today it was too important to win, after the derby there is always a state of euphoria," Fonseca told DAZN.



Paulo Fonseca

"The players played a serious match, it wasn't all perfect but we had good moments and chances, and we didn't concede goals which is always important."

Milan had secured a hard-fought 2-1 win over Inter Milan last weekend and have now won three consecutive league games for the first time since the period between March and April.

"This team has to learn to play this type of game, our positional play has to be different," Fonseca added.



Emiliano Martinez

FIFA suspends Argentina goalkeeper Martinez for two games

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez has been suspended for two matches by FIFA for "offensive behaviour", the Argentine Football Association (AFA) said on Friday.

Martinez will miss Argentina's next South American qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup against Venezuela and Bolivia in October. The Aston Villa goalkeeper has been suspended over incidents in matches against Chile and Colombia earlier this month.

In the Chile game, his first since winning the Copa America in the United States, Martinez celebrated by making a lewd gesture with the trophy, as he did after winning the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

"Damian Emiliano Martinez is being held responsible for his offensive behaviour and violation of the principles of fair play," the AFA said in a statement, adding that it disagreed with the FIFA Disciplinary Committee's decision.

Spinned to the wall

Sri Lanka on verge of innings victory as Jayasuriya and Peiris destroy New Zealand

Galle, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka stood on the verge of a 2-0 series sweep after their spin duo of Prabath Jayasuriya and Nishan Peiris wrecked New Zealand, who also suffered the ignominy of a follow-on, in the second Test in Galle on Saturday.

Having declared their first innings on a mammoth 602-5 on Friday, Sri Lanka bundled out New Zealand for 88 on Saturday, enforced the follow-on and reduced the tourists to 199-5 in their second innings on a frenetic 13-wicket day.

Tom Blundell (47) and Glenn Phillips (32) had raised 78 runs for the sixth wicket when bad light stopped the third day's play, leaving New Zealand 315 behind and facing an innings defeat.

When the visitors resumed on 22-2 on Saturday, spinners Prabath Jayasuriya (6-42) and Nishan Peiris (3-33) wreaked havoc and New Zealand were bundled out inside 40 overs.

Of the three touring batters who crept into double digits, Mitchell Santner's 29 was the highest score by a New Zealander in their first innings capitulation.

Left-arm spinner Jayasuriya registered his ninth five-wicket



Prabath Jayasuriya took 6 for 42 as New Zealand were bundled out for 88 in their first innings

Having declared their first innings on 602-5 on Friday, Sri Lanka bundled out New Zealand for 88, enforced the follow-on and reduced the tourists to 199-5 in their second innings on a frenetic 13-wicket day

haul in Test cricket - eight of which have come in Galle.

Home captain Dhananaya de Silva spent a busy day at slip taking five catches, all off the bowling of Jayasuriya.

Kane Williamson (7) added one run to his overnight score

before perishing in the slips and soon the wheels came off for the New Zealanders.

With a first-innings lead of 514 Sri Lanka saw no need to bat again and enforced the follow-on, offering the Kiwi batters no respite from their trial by spin.

Two major Japanese companies are stepping back from the Olympics and Paralympics.00:0201:00

Tom Latham fell for a duck in the first over of their second innings from Jayasuriya but Devon Conway (61) combined with Williamson (46) in a 98-run stand before the home spinners struck again.

De Silva then removed Conway and Peiris dismissed Williamson, and New Zealand slumped to 121-5 when Peiris bowled Rachin Ravindra for his sixth wicket of his debut Test.

No play on second day in Kanpur

The second day's play was called off in India's weather-plagued second Test against Bangladesh without a ball being bowled, following intermittent rain in Kanpur on Saturday.

Rain and a wet outfield had allowed only 35 overs of play on Friday and Saturday

The on-again, off-again rain-fall kept the covers on and the umpires decided to call off play with Bangladesh, bidding for a series-levelling victory, stuck on 107-3 in their first innings.



Jannik Sinner

WADA appeals against Sinner doping verdict

Montreal, Canada - The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport against an independent tribunal's decision in August to clear tennis world number one Jannik Sinner of wrongdoing after he failed drug tests.

WADA said on Saturday the tribunal's finding of "no fault or negligence" on the Italian's part was incorrect under the applicable rules, and it would seek "a period of ineligibility of between one and two years" for the Australian Open and U.S. Open champion.

The tribunal, organised by the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA), had accepted Sinner's explanation that the anabolic agent clostebol entered his system from a member of his support team through massages and sports therapy.

Sinner, is in the quarter-finals of the China Open, said he was surprised by WADA's decision.

"We cannot control everything, no? Obviously, I'm very disappointed and also surprised of this appeal, to be honest, because we had three hearings. All three hearings came out very positively for me," he said in Beijing. "We always talk about the same thing. Maybe they just want to make sure that everything is in the right position. Yeah, I'm just surprised that they appealed."

The ITIA said in a statement on Saturday: "The process was run according to World Anti-Doping Code guidelines; however, the ITIA acknowledges and respects WADA's right to appeal the independent tribunal's decision."

Sinner said his physio, Giacomo Naldi, applied an over-the-counter spray containing clostebol to his skin to treat a small finger wound and then administered massages between March 5 and 13 without using gloves, according to the ITIA.

England crush Australia to level series

London, England - England annihilated Australia by 186 runs in a rain-shortened ODI at Lord's with Harry Brook and Liam Livingstone laying waste to the visitors attack before Matthew Potts took four wickets as the hosts tied the series at 2-2 on Friday.

Captain Brook scored a dazzling 87 and Livingstone wrought havoc with the fastest ODI fifty at Lord's on the way to 62 in 27 balls as England posted a daunting 312-5 from their 39 overs.

World champions Australia, whose run of 14 successive ODI victories ended in Durham this week, began their reply in menacing fashion but capitulated in the evening chill to 126 all out.

Royal Oman Stallions crowned D10 champions

Muscat - A spirited Royal Oman Stallions emerged as deserving champions in the fourth edition of Oman D10 League, which concluded at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat recently.

The fourth edition was played with six teams competing in three round-robin rounds with the top two playing the finals.

In a thrilling finale at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground, the Royal Oman Stallions emerged victorious, defeating Yalla Shabab Giants by six wickets to claim the Oman D10 League title.

Yalla Shabab Giants, batting first, struggled to gain momentum as key wickets fell early. Mujibur Imran Ali (14 off 14) and



Royal Oman Stallions players celebrate with the trophy

Zohaib Amanat (27* off 19) tried to stabilize the innings, but the standout performance came from Zikria Islam, who hammered an unbeaten 36 off just 14 balls, pushing the Giants to 99/4 in their 10 overs. The Stallions'

bowlers, especially Hasnain Ali Shah (2-17), kept the Giants under pressure, taking crucial wickets at key intervals.

In response, the Royal Oman Stallions started confidently, with Naseem Khushi smashing 18 off

8 balls. Vinayak Shukla (21* off 10) and Karan Sonavale (6* off 5) guided the Stallions to a comfortable chase, reaching 100/1 in just 3.5 overs. The target was made easier by the consistent flow of boundaries, and the Stal-

The fourth edition of the Oman D10 League was played with six teams competing in three round-robin rounds with the top two playing the final

Shabab remarked, "The feeling to win a championship at the start of the season is certainly what we set our goals for. It was a dream come true seeing both Royal Oman Stallions and Yalla Shabab compete for a cup in the finals, which happened for the 1st instance in 3 years this time. I wish much more success and we are hopeful of delivering quality cricket over the season ahead."

lions claimed victory with 6 wickets in hand.

This victory secured the Royal Oman Stallions' place as champions of the Oman D10 League, starting off the season on a high.

Chaitanya Khimji, team owner of Royal Oman Stallions and Yalla

At the post-match presentation ceremony, Madhursinh Jesrani, Secretary - Oman Cricket, presented the honours as Rafiullah bagged the Player of the Match and Mujibur Ali (Yalla Shabab Giants) was adjudged Player of the Tournament for his all-round performance of 348 runs and 22 wickets.

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SOTHEBY'S SALE



Isamu Noguchi marble sculpture *Study for Energy Void* (1971)

Alex Katz's painting *Joan* (1974)



ABRAM'S ART

SOTHEBY'S 'ART WITHOUT BOUNDARIES' SALE YIELDS US\$13.14MN, LED BY NOGUCHI SCULPTURE FOR US\$4.65MN

Amidst an extended downturn, Sotheby's day sale of 27 works from the Abrams Family Collection yielded a hammer total of US\$11.2mn (US\$13.14mn with fees) in the middle of its estimate range of US\$10 -14.1mn.

The top lot from the September 27 auction was the Isamu Noguchi marble sculpture *Study for Energy Void* (1971) which sold for a hammer price of US\$4mn (US\$4.65mn with fees) on an estimate of US\$3.5 - 5mn.

The winning 'phone bid' was placed by Lisa Denison, Sotheby's executive vice president and chairman for the Americas. The only other seven-figure lot was the Alex Katz painting *Joan* (1974), which hammered at US\$1.2mn (US\$1.44mn with fees) below its estimate of US\$1.5-2mn.

The 6-foot by 8-foot oil on linen painting had se-

cured an irrevocable bid by a third party as well as a guaranteed minimum price. The winning bid was placed by Courtney Kremers, Sotheby's senior vice president and head of private sales for the Americas.

The two other works with irrevocable bids and guarantees were Bob Thompson's *Nativity Scene*, which hammered for US\$750,000 (US\$870,000 with fees) on an estimate of US\$500,000-700,000 and Jesús Rafael Soto's *Écriture d'Arras*, which sold for a hammer of US\$190,000 (US\$228,000 with fees) on an estimate of US\$200,000-300,000.

Out of 28 works, the only one that did not sell was a sculpture by Christo, *Package on a Luggage Rack*, which was signed and dated 1963-90. The work had an estimate of US\$100,000 to US\$150,000. A five-foot tall by four-foot wide painting by Robert Indiana titled *Ballyhoo* (1961) was also withdrawn prior to the start of the sale.

Sotheby's Senior Specialist for Contemporary Art Nicole Schloss told *ARTnews* she was 'beyond thrilled' with the sell-through rate of 96.3% and nearly half the works selling for above the high estimates.

"I think they speak for the quality of the works themselves, and the high caliber of provenance is coming from the Abrams family collection, which is such a storied name in art collecting in the art world and art book publishing. And to me, it's just a perfect storm of provenance, quality of work matching up with great collectors who recognise that and really competed to own some of these amazing works."

There were several bidding wars that also led to works selling well above their high estimates. Early in the sale, Mary Bauermeister's painting *Tichter*—relief hammered at US\$220,000 (US\$264,000 with fees) after more than three and half minutes on an estimate of US\$100,000-150,000.

After more than two minutes, the 86-inch-tall George Segal sculpture *Man Leaving a Bus* (1967) hammered at US\$380,000 (US\$456,000 with fees) on an estimate of US\$200,000-300,000.

"George Segal, we have seen a pretty stagnant market for him, but this is far and away, the most complex environment of Segals to come to auction from the 60s, proper plaster cast within found object," Schloss told *ARTnews*. "And that's exciting. That was exciting for us."

Allan D'Arcangelo's mixed media oil painting *Guard Rail* (1964) sold for a hammer of US\$320,000 (US\$384,000 with fees) on an estimate of US\$100,000-150,000. Sotheby's senior vice president and head of contemporary art David Galperin placed the winning bid from the phones.



George Segal sculpture *Man Leaving a Bus* (1967)

Yaacov Agam's large oil painting *Evening* (1976) also hammered at US\$320,000 (US\$384,000 with fees) on an estimate of US\$150,000-200,000. The work sold after more than five and half minutes of bidding, including split increments, between three bidders on the phones.

"Yaacov Agam is such an unsung hero in kinetic art and op art," Schloss said in reference to optical art. "We really don't see his works come to auction that frequently, and it's sort of a marker for how the entire collection really was received by the entire market."

Komar and Melamid's *Portrait of Medved* (from

Nostalgic Social Realism Series) was the second-last lot of the sale, but it also prompted the longest bidding war, at 5 minutes and 44 seconds between an online bidder and a phone bidder. It sold for a hammer of US\$220,000 (US\$264,000 with fees) on an estimate of US\$100,000-150,000.

The Abrams family were major players in the fine art and illustrated book publishing industries for seven decades. In addition to the September 27 live auction, Sotheby's will hold an online sale of 66 items from the art collection of Harry N Abram's and his son Robert on September 30.

(Courtesy: artnews.com)

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MAGGIE SMITH

Death of a dowager

DAME MAGGIE SMITH, ACTING LEGEND OF 'HARRY POTTER' AND 'DOWNTON ABBEY' FAME, WHO HAD AN ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER SPANNING SEVEN DECADES, DIES AT 89

Dame Maggie Smith, the two-time Oscar-winning actor best known for playing the stern Professor McGonagall in the *Harry Potter* movie franchise and the tart-tongued dowager countess on *Downton Abbey*, died on Friday. She was 89.

Smith's sons, Chris Larkin and Toby Stephens, paid tribute to their mother in a joint statement. "It is with great sadness we have to announce the death of Dame Maggie Smith. She passed away peacefully in hospital early this morning."

They further wrote, "She was with friends and family at the end. She leaves two sons and five loving grandchildren who are devastated by the loss of their extraordinary mother and grandmother."

In a career spanning nearly seven decades, Smith established herself as one of the most towering and beloved

British actors of her generation, revered for her witty line deliveries and self-possession.

She was frequently honoured by her peers. She won Academy Awards for her performances in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969) and *California Suite* (1978). She earned four Emmy Awards, including three for her role as Violet Crawley on *Downton*.

She received Tony nominations for her performances in Noel Coward's *Private Lives* and Tom Stoppard's *Night and Day* before winning the best actress prize for Lettice and Lovage in 1990 — the same year she was made a dame by Queen Elizabeth II.

Prolific performer

Margaret Natalie Smith was born December 28, 1934, in the town of Ilford in East London. She studied acting at the Oxford Playhouse School and made her professional acting debut in a production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* in 1952. She quickly proved herself to be a prolific performer in theatrical productions in both the UK and the US.

In 1966, Smith played Desdemona in Laurence Olivier's film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello* and picked up her first Oscar nomination. She won her second Oscar for her supporting turn in *California Suite*, an adaptation of a Neil Simon play about the private lives of guests at a luxury hotel in Los Angeles.

Rowling's rollercoaster

She arguably reached the height of her international fame when she was cast in the big-screen versions of J K Rowling's *Harry Potter* series as Professor Minerva McGonagall, the steely and sharp-witted Hogwarts professor.

When the British newspaper *The Telegraph* asked Smith why she took the role, she quipped, "Harry Potter is my pension." She further cemented her celebrity status with *Downton Abbey*, playing an aristocratic earl's mother - a stubborn and fiercely judgmental Dowager Countess - for all six seasons of the show and two films.

TRIBUTES



Daniel Radcliffe

Harry Potter actor

Fierce intellect

"The first time I met Maggie Smith I was 9 years old and we were reading through scenes for *David Copperfield*, which was my first job. I was lucky enough to go on working with her for another 10 years on the *Harry Potter* films. She was a fierce intellect, a gloriously sharp tongue, could intimidate and charm in the same instant and extremely funny. The word legend is overused but if it applies to anyone in our industry, then it applies to her."



Julian Fellowes

Downton Abbey creator

Many layered

"Smith was a truly great actress and we were more than fortunate to be part of the last act in her stellar career. She was a joy to write for, subtle, many-layered, intelligent, funny and heart-breaking. Working with her has been the greatest privilege of my career."



Hugh Bonneville

Downton Abbey co-star

True legend

"Anyone who ever shared a scene with Maggie will attest to her sharp eye, sharp wit, and formidable talent. She was a true legend of her generation and thankfully will live on in so many magnificent screen performances. My condolences to her boys and wider family."



Rob Lowe

Suddenly, Last Summer co-star

Great company

"Saddened to hear Dame Maggie Smith has passed. I had the unforgettable experience of working with her; sharing a two-shot was like being paired with a lion. She could eat anyone alive, and often did. But funny, and great company. And suffered no fools. We will never see

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