



Green Alliance formed to accelerate carbon credit investments, afforestation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a significant move towards environmental sustainability, Environment Authority (EA) has signed a cooperation agreement with Oman Energy Association (OPAL) to implement an initiative called Green Alliance.

The agreement was signed at a ceremony attended by Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of Environment Authority, and Mohammed bin Hamoud al Naabi, CEO of OPAL.

The Green Alliance initiative aims to foster collaboration between private sector companies, particularly those in the energy sector, under the leadership of OPAL and EA. It focuses on investing in afforestation by planting wild trees and capitalising on carbon credit returns.

Green Alliance is aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and supports the country's long-term goals of achieving zero carbon neutrality by 2050. It underscores the optimal utilisation of natural resources, enhances the economic value of environmental resources and promotes community awareness on environmental sustainability.

One of the key objectives of the initiative is to increase green cover across Oman, which will be carried out through afforestation projects in various governorates. These projects are expected to not only bolster the country's environmental credentials but also generate economic benefits



The Green Alliance initiative aims to foster collaboration between private sector companies, particularly those in the energy sector

through carbon credits.

Emphasising the importance of this cooperation, EA stated that it would play a crucial role in protecting and sustaining natural resources while helping the private sector meet its environmental responsibilities.

The partnership is seen as a significant step in Oman's efforts to enhance environmental protection and sustainability, as it brings together key stakeholders from both the public and private sectors in the shared mission of safeguarding the nation's ecological wealth.

The authority has been working towards generating carbon credits through new projects. In October last year, EA and MSA Green Projects inked an agreement to launch Oman Blue Carbon, a project for cultivation of

100mn mangrove trees in Al Wusta.

Marking a first for Oman, the project aims to generate carbon credits through mangrove cultivation. It anticipates an investment of US\$100mn to transform 20,000 hectares of land in Al Wusta into suitable habitat for over 100mn mangrove trees.

Scheduled for completion in four years, the project seeks to eliminate 14mn tonnes of carbon dioxide and forecasts an estimated financial return of US\$150mn through blue carbon credit certificates.

Mangrove and tidal marsh ecosystems are notable for their ability to capture and store significant volumes of coastal blue carbon, contributing to climate change mitigation. Mangroves play an essential role in regional ecosystems, offering vital protection against beach erosion, maintaining ecological balance and nurturing the growth of commercially significant fish and other marine species.

Another major project running since January 2020 is planting 10mn wild tree saplings in the next ten years.

MoCIIP pushes for smart factories, production efficiency

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a move towards modernising Oman's industrial sector and developing smart factories, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has launched an initiative aimed at addressing key challenges faced by local factories.

The initiative, aligned with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, seeks to enhance the adoption of advanced technologies and improve manufacturing and production efficiency across the country.

MoCIIP identified five critical challenges currently hindering the industrial sector's growth. These include low adoption of advanced technologies, absence of clear standards for foundational transformation, limited availability of development solutions for factories, shortage of specialists to assess factory status, and a workforce that is largely unskilled in modern technologies.

To tackle these issues, MoCIIP has outlined a series of planned actions. These include evaluation of both new and existing factories, training and qualifying workers for relevant jobs, raising awareness and highlighting success stories within the sector, and establishing regulations and incentives to foster growth.



Aligned with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the initiative aims to enhance adoption of advanced technologies and improve manufacturing and production efficiency

Furthermore, the initiative aims to create a supportive technical and knowledge-based environment to ensure sustainable development.

The initiative is a crucial component of Oman's broader strategy to support local supply chains and boost the nation's industrial capabilities. By integrating advanced technologies and setting high standards, the ministry aims to propel Oman's factories towards becoming smart factories, which will not only enhance production efficiency but also contribute significantly to the country's economic diversification efforts.

Over 8.4mn passengers fly through Oman airports

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The total number of passengers travelling through Oman's airports - Muscat, Salalah, Sohar and Duqm - reached 8,478,548 at the end of July 2024.

This represents a 9.2% increase compared to the 7,757,629 passengers recorded during the same period in 2023. The number of flights also rose to 63,219 - 5.7% more compared to 59,778 last year.

At Muscat International Airport, passenger numbers increased to 7,571,148, marking an 8.9% increase from 6,949,202 passengers in July 2023.

Flights in Muscat increased 5.8%, with 56,498 international and domestic flights, up from 53,386 flights a year earlier.

Omani citizens led passenger numbers at Muscat International

Airport in July with 115,800 departures and 100,800 arrivals. Indians followed with 82,900 departing and 99,900 arriving, while Pakistani passengers recorded 19,300 departures and 27,500 arrivals.

Salalah Airport saw a 10.3% increase in passenger traffic, reaching 827,486 by the end of July 2024, up from 750,251 passengers in the same period last year. The number of flights at Salalah Airport increased 3.6%, totalling 5,975 international and domestic flights.

Sohar Airport experienced a substantial 114.4% increase in passenger numbers, reaching 45,126 by the end of July 2024.

Flights at Sohar rose 46.6%, with 384 international and domestic flights. Conversely, Duqm Airport saw a 6.3% decrease in passenger traffic, with 34,788 recorded by the end of July 2024.

National team announced for World Cup qualifiers

Our Correspondent
Muscat

National football team coach Jaroslav Silhavy has announced the squad for the 2026 World Cup qualifiers. The team is set to face Iraq and South Korea in the third stage of the Asian qualifiers for the World Cup.

The first match will see Oman take on Iraq at Basra International Stadium on September 5. Following this, it will host South Korea at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex Bausher on September 10.

The squad includes goalkeeper



ers Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Faiz al Rashidi and Ibrahim al Rajhi. The defensive lineup features Ahmed

al Khamsi, Mohammed al Musalmi, Khaled al Buraiki, Ghanem al Habsi, Ali al Busaidi,

Ahmed al Kaabi, Abdulaziz al Shamousi and Amjad al Harthi.

The midfielders selected are Arshad al Alawi, Harb al Saadi, Abdullah Fawaz, Salah al Yahyaei, Zaher al Aghbari, Jameel al Yahmadi and Omar al Maliki. The attacking positions will be covered by Sultan al Marzouq, Nasser al Rawahi, Essam al Subhi, Abdulrahman al Mishfri, Mohsen al Ghassani, Mohammed Mubarak al Ghafri and Mohammed Hamid al Ghafri.

The Red Warriors will commence preparations with an internal training camp starting on

August 28 before departing for Basra on September 3.

Oman will also face Kuwait in Muscat on October 10, Jordan in Amman on October 15, and Palestine in Muscat on November 14.

The second round of fixtures include a home match against Iraq on November 19, an away game against South Korea in Seoul on March 20, 2025, an away fixture against Kuwait on March 25, a home game against Jordan on June 5, and a final home match against Palestine on June 10, 2025.

MoH warns of health risks from heavy school bags as new term begins

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As students gear up for the new school year starting on September 1, Ministry of Health (MoH) has issued a warning about the health risks associated with carrying heavy school bags.

Dr Abdulrahman bin Ali al Subhi, Consultant Orthopaedic Spine Surgeon at MoH, highlighted the often-overlooked dangers that heavy bags pose to students' health. "The weight of school bags is not just a physical issue but one that can impact students psychologically and academically," he said, noting that the issue has drawn the attention of medical professionals.

Studies have shown the potential harm heavy school bags can cause. One study in Malta involving students aged eight to 13 found that over 70% of participants carried bags exceeding the recommended limit of 10% of their body weight. As a result, 32% of these students reported back pain. A similar situation was observed in Uganda, where nearly 31% of students carried bags heavier than the recommended limit, leading to widespread musculoskeletal pain and, in some cases, long-term health issues such as spinal deformities.

Carrying heavy school bags, Dr Subhi explained, can lead to increased fatigue, reduced con-



Dr Abdulrahman al Subhi

centration, and heightened levels of anxiety and stress. To combat this, several countries have introduced effective solutions.

"The issue of heavy school bags remains a serious concern, but successful experiences in



Mazen al Arfi

various countries show that solutions can be implemented to create a safer educational environment," Dr Subhi said.

Mazen bin Masoud al Arfi, Head of Medical Rehabilitation Services Department at Khoula

Hospital, also weighed in on the issue. Emphasising the importance of choosing the right school bag, he advised that it be lightweight and both shoulder straps used to distribute weight evenly.

He recommended ensuring the total weight does not exceed 15% of the student's body weight. The bag should not be larger than the student's back and provide adequate support.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Education (MoE) has taken steps to address the issue, particularly for younger students in Grades 1 to 4. As part of its ongoing efforts to ensure students' health, MoE has introduced practical measures to reduce the weight of school bags. A recent directive limits students

in these grades to using just two notebooks of 80 sheets each - one for each main subject. The use of additional booklets or external binders has been prohibited, with students required to use only the books provided by the ministry.

Lockers have been installed in schools so that students can leave their books there instead of carrying them home every day. MoE is also promoting the use of electronic books available on the educational portal, which can further reduce the weight students carry. Teachers have been asked to coordinate homework assignments to ensure that students do not have to carry unnecessary items.



08 Dam collapse sweeps away 20 villages in Sudan



16 Dina Macki - Food, history and identity

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Omani Culinary Arts Festival in Dhofar draws 50,000 visitors

Our Correspondent
Salalah

More than 50,000 visitors attended the Omani Culinary Arts Festival, held at Al Haffa Beach in Salalah from August 22 to 26, coinciding with the Dhofar Kha-reef 2024.

Organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT),

the event brought together both locals and tourists to experience the rich culinary traditions of the region. Over the five-day festival, attendees were treated to a range of activities and live cooking demonstrations by renowned chefs from Oman and the GCC, including Lulwa Altaanak, Nader al Aisari, Ahmed al Saadi and

Mohammed Issa. The event also featured participation from Oman Tourism College, photographer Haitham al Farsi, and entrepreneurs who led discussions on innovation in Omani cuisine. The festival offered a variety of sections to explore, such as the Little Chef's Corner for children, traditional music performances, culinary competitions,

and the Farmers Corner, where local produces were showcased. Restaurants served authentic Omani dishes, and a Souvenir Corner allowed visitors to take home a piece of the experience. More than 34 local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) participated, further enhancing the local content through their products and services.

The Omani Culinary Arts Festival is part of the broader 'Food Tourism and Omani Culinary Arts' programme by the ministry, aimed at promoting Omani cuisine on both local and global stages. The event had been designed to support the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the region by positioning Omani culinary arts as a key cultural tourism asset. The programme also focused on documenting the heritage of Omani cuisine, ensuring its preservation while encouraging innovation to meet the evolving tastes of tourists. By maintaining the core ingredients that define these traditional recipes, the initiative seeks to create unique culinary experiences and entrepreneurial opportunities for local communities, contributing to the broader tourism industry. The festival's success underscores the growing interest in culinary tourism, with the ministry committed to further developing Oman's food tourism potential, benefiting both the local economy and international visitors alike, organisers said.



Royal Oman Police

Directorate of Public Relations
& Security Information

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Royal Oman Police - Department of Public Relations and Security Media - announces that the owners of impounded vehicles and the relevant financing and insurance companies must complete the procedures for vehicles impounded in the Royal Oman Police's impound yards that have been in the custody of the Royal Oman Police for (more than six months) since the date of the end of their impoundment, within a period not exceeding fifteen days from the date of publication of this announcement, without the Royal Oman Police bearing any consequences or responsibility thereafter.



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Belarusian delegation explores investment opportunities

Suhar - Alexei Bogdanov, Minister of Trade and Antimonopoly Regulation in the Republic of Belarus, and his delegation visited North Batinah on Tuesday to explore investment opportunities and learn about major economic projects in the wilayat of Suhar. During the visit, the minister met with Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al Busaidi, wali of Suhar. The discussion included a detailed overview of current and future investment opportunities in various sectors including ports, agriculture, fisheries, mining, and the oil and transformation industries. Highlights of the meeting included information about the Sohar Port, the Free Zone, and Sohar Industrial City, as well as the logistical services supporting these projects. They also reviewed the latest developments in the 303km railway network connecting Suhar with Abu Dhabi.

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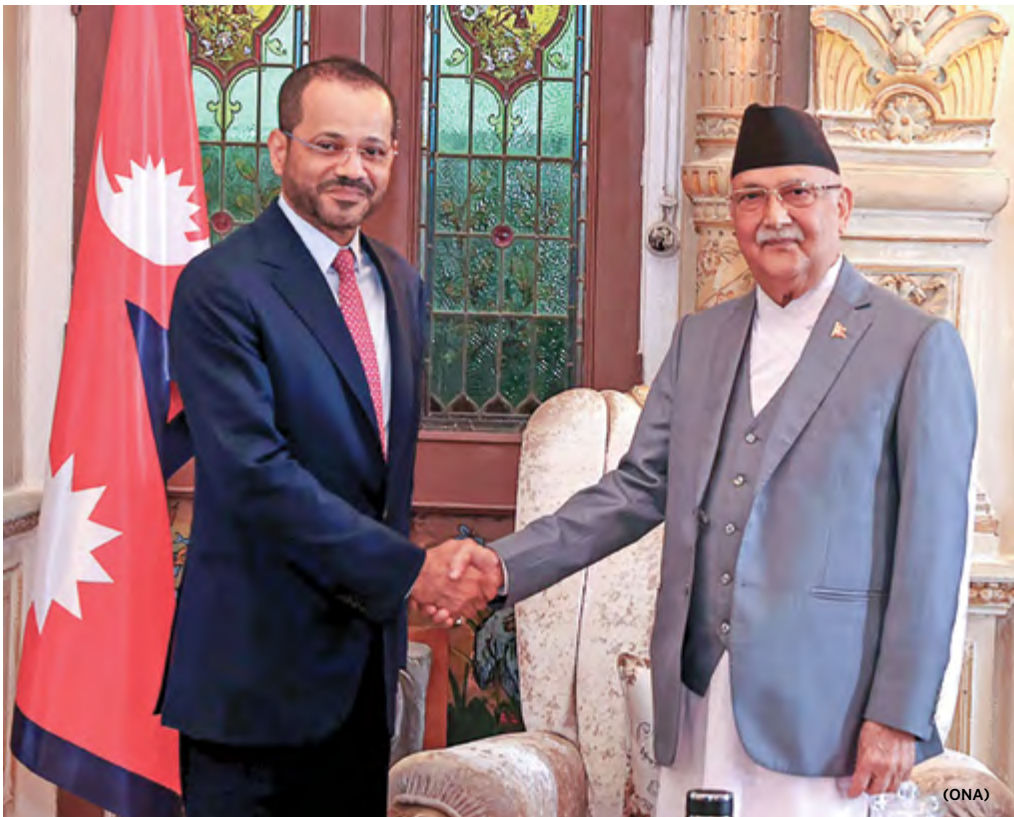
Oman, Nepal discuss enhancing ties, new avenues of cooperation

Kathmandu, Nepal – H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, met Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

During the meeting, ways to enhance bilateral relations between the two nations and opening new horizons for cooperation in various fields were discussed.

The two sides also discussed opportunities for developing economic and trade cooperation, especially in the fields of tourism, mining, agriculture and cultural exchange, while stressing the importance of exchanging expertise and encouraging joint investments.

The two officials stressed the need for close cooperation between Oman and Nepal to confront common challenges and promote peace and stability in



H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi and Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli of Nepal in Kathmandu on Tuesday

the world.

In a separate meeting, H E Sayyid Badr met Dr Arzu Rana Deuba, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

The two ministers discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations and identify new opportunities for cooperation across various sectors benefiting both nations.

The two addressed recent regional and international developments of mutual interest. They emphasised the significance of continued collaboration and coordination between the two countries to achieve shared objectives, and promoting peace and development both regionally and globally.

The meeting was attended by H E Ambassador Issa bin Saleh al Shaibani, Ambassador of Oman to India and Nepal, along with several officials from both sides.

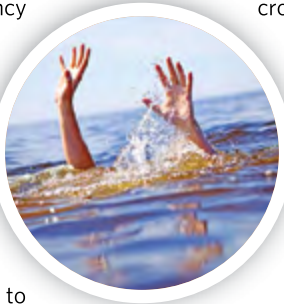
2 children drown in Ibri; CDAA urges increased safety measures

Our Correspondent
Ibri

Two children drowned in Ibri on Monday. Announcing the accident, Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), stated that despite immediate response of emergency rescue and ambulance teams, the children were found dead and could not be revived.

CDAA highlighted the critical need for adhering to safety guidelines for children when swimming. Factors contributing to drowning incidents include inadequate swimming skills, swimming in unauthorised or hazardous areas like agricultural ponds and dams, reckless rescue attempts, lack of supervision, and ignoring warning signs.

To prevent such tragedies, CDAA emphasised the impor-



ance of following safety protocols. These include swimming only in designated areas, securing wells with high barriers, ensuring swimming pools have fixed ladders and metal handles, providing life jackets or flotation devices, avoiding overcrowded pools, and maintaining vigilant adult supervision.

It is essential to ensure that children are not left unsupervised when leaving the pool area.

According to the latest CDAA data, drowning incidents have decreased significantly, with 166 cases reported in 2023 compared to 324 in 2022 – down 48.7%. Despite this progress, it remains crucial to act swiftly in the event of a drowning.

To report a drowning, immediately call the emergency numbers 9999 or 24343666.

89 bikers from region on six-day, 1,300km ride to Salalah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Riders embarked on a much-anticipated ride to Salalah on Sunday.

The six-day ride, named ‘Salalah al Asalah’, will cover approximately 1,300km and see participation of 89 members of the group hailing from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Algeria, besides Oman.

About the event, Hussain Ben Ali Ben Khalfan al Muqaimi, member of Oman Riders, said, “The weather and green landscapes make this trip special every year. The khareef season is very popular among all. ‘Salalah al Asalah’ aims to promote tourism in Oman while providing a unique experience for all riders.”

He added, “We have set a goal to showcase the beauty of Oman through trips like these,



contributing to the country's tourism.”

Oman Riders has new bikers every year from across the Middle East, some of whom have been participating in these rides for over ten years.

This is the 14th ride to Salalah since the club's formation, with the last one taking place in August 2023. The group continues to attract bikers from around the region, making this annual ride a highlight for its members.

Employers urged to update worker records

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Employers are now required to ensure that their non-Omani workers' data is accurately reflected in the Social Protection Fund (SPF) e-portal. In cases where discrepancies are found, especially in the private sector, employers must correct the data.

Issues related to contracts should be addressed directly with the Ministry of Labour.

Employers are also responsible for verifying and updating wages of both non-Omani and Omani workers on the SPF portal. Changes in wages must be promptly updated to ensure accuracy. Employers should contact the Ministry of Labour for

any necessary amendments to their data.

SPF calculates the monthly contribution amount based on information provided.

SPF will begin issuing monthly contribution invoices, with payments to be made by employers each month. The deadline for these payments is set for September 15.

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TENDER/2024/07/ENG/015	(Re-Tender) Revamping of Al Maha Filling Station & Construction of New Commercial Buildings at Al Jood at Wilayat Al Suwaiq in Al Batinah North Governorate.	150/-	03.09.2024	08.09.2024	12.09.2024

Bank Name & Account Number

Bank Muscat (0423005687760617)

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with minimum of 3 years' experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om
- Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted a sealed envelope and addressed to the Chairman of Tender Committee, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
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*Rates as on August 27

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Chinese state-owned companies see uptick in revenues

China's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) saw a 1.6% increase in revenues from January to July this year, the Ministry of Finance said on Tuesday.

Their combined revenues totaled around 47.29tn yuan (about \$6.64bn) during this period.

Combined profits of China's state-owned enterprises dipped 2% year on year to over 2.57tn yuan, the data showed.

SOEs saw their debt-to-asset ratio reach 64.9% at the end of July, according to the data.

These figures, excluding financial firms, were collected from the state-owned enterprises in both provincial-level regions and those administered by the central government.

India-Oman free trade pact talks at advanced stage

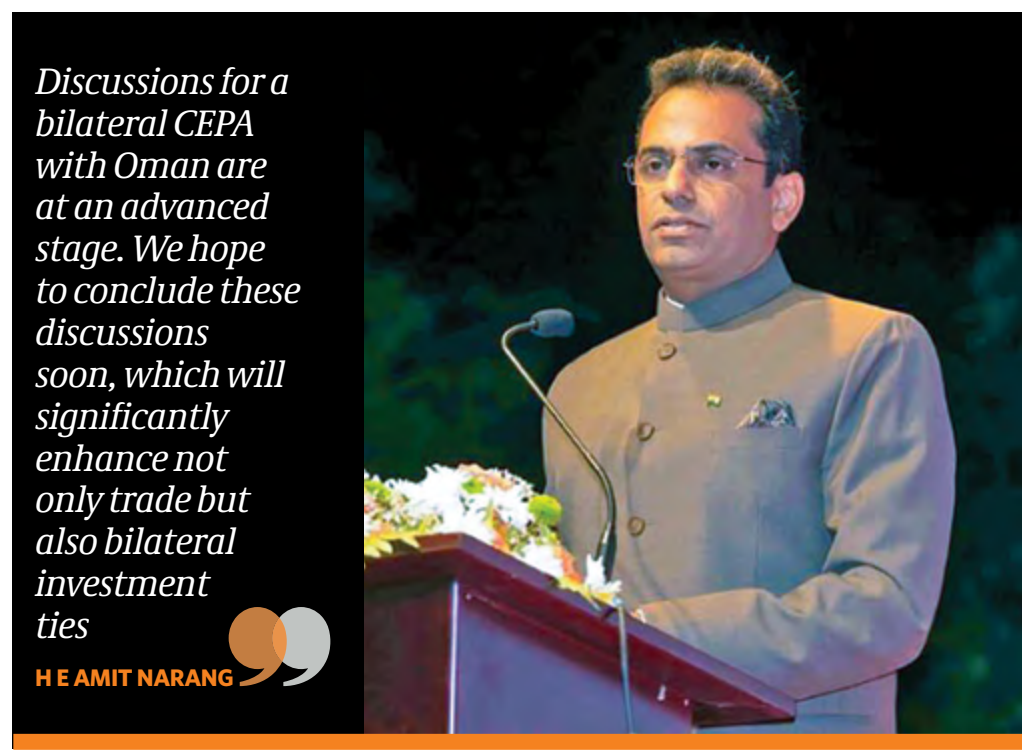
Our Correspondent
Muscat

Negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between Oman and India are in an advanced stage, with both countries aiming to finalise the pact soon, H E Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to Oman, said on Tuesday.

The proposed India-Oman free trade pact, officially referred as the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), will give a significant push to bilateral trade and investment ties between the two countries, H E Narang said while addressing an event organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) in New Delhi.

"Discussions for a bilateral CEPA with Oman are at an advanced stage. We hope to conclude these discussions soon, which will significantly enhance not only trade but also bilateral investment ties," H E Narang was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency.

H E Narang also emphasised the potential for improving direct shipping links between India and Oman, noting that a substantial portion of Indian exports to Oman currently transit through the UAE. This indirect route af-



fects the recorded trade figures between India and Oman.

According to the PTI report, H E Narang noted that India-Oman bilateral trade, which surpassed \$12bn mark in the Indian financial year 2022-23, had moderated to \$8bn in the 2023-24 financial year.

"Between 2021 and 2023, bilateral trade between India and Oman more than doubled—from \$5bn to over \$12bn. However, in the past financial year, trade has moderated to \$8bn, primarily

due to the dominance of hydrocarbons in bilateral trade," H E Narang explained.

He further clarified that India's imports of oil and fertilisers from Oman have seen a decline in value, reflecting the global decrease in the prices of these commodities.

H E Narang reiterated the need for enhancing direct shipping links, as much of India's exports to Oman are currently routed through the UAE, and thus recorded in India-UAE trade



Oman's gas consumption rises 5.5%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's consumption of natural gas rose by 5.5% year-on-year in the first seven months of 2024 compared to the same period of last year.

Total consumption of natural gas rose to 32,608mn cubic metres (mncm) during the January-July period of 2024 against 30,914mncm in the corresponding period of 2023.

The growth in total consumption was driven by increased natural gas demand in power generation plants and industrial projects, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals' figures released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed.

Oman produced and imported a total of 32,608mncm

natural gas to meet the country's demand during the January-July period of this year, which is 5.5% higher compared to the total of production and imports in the first seven months of 2023.

Industrial projects, the biggest natural gas consuming sector in the sultanate, recorded a total gas consumption of 20,748mncm in the first seven months of this year, which is 14.6% higher as compared to 18,102mncm consumption in the same period a year ago.

Gas usage in power generation increased by 11.9% to 5,366mncm as against 4,794mncm in the same period a year ago. Gas usage in the oilfields decreased by 19.3% to 6,347mncm in the first seven months of this year against 7,865mncm in the same period of 2023.

Oman, Bulgaria to sign MoU for energy cooperation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman and Bulgaria are set to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote bilateral energy relations within the next two months.

This agreement was reached during a recent meeting between Bulgaria's Minister of Energy, Vladimir Malinov, and Oman's Minister of Energy and Minerals, H E Eng Salim al Aufi, according to an announcement on the Bulgarian Ministry of Energy's website.

The MoU will enhance bilateral energy cooperation in areas such as oil and gas, hydrogen, renewable energy production and storage, as well as potential Omani investments in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian ministry stated.

"Guaranteeing security and diversification of energy supply is an integral part of Bulgaria's national security. In this respect, one of our main goals is securing long-term supplies of liquefied natural gas (LNG)," Malinov told his guest, according to the statement.

Malinov noted that starting October 1 this year, the LNG terminal near Alexandroupolis, Greece, where Bulgaria is a co-shareholder, will commence commercial operations.

As per the statement, Malinov and H E Aufi discussed the possibility of supplying LNG to Bulgaria, thereby meeting some of the necessary quantities for the upcoming winter season.

"Our country continues to pursue the target of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. However, that goal must not impede the competitiveness of the Bulgarian economy," Malinov said.

H E Aufi expressed interest in Bulgaria's experience with operating pumped-storage hydropower plants as an option for



storing energy from renewable sources.

Furthermore, the energy ministers of Bulgaria and Oman considered potential cooperation in the field of hydrogen as a clean energy source.

"Bulgaria can serve as a gateway for hydrogen producers and traders looking to enter the European market," Malinov noted.

"We have already developed a project with Greece to build a hydrogen interconnector, which has been granted the status of a Project of Common Interest by the EU. Romania has also expressed interest in joining the project," Malinov added.

Oil prices expected to float below \$80 in short-term on declining demand

Ankara, Turkey – The price of Brent crude oil, which fell in response to weakened demand reflected in global macroeconomic data and efforts towards a ceasefire in the Middle East, has been trading below \$80 for nearly two weeks, and experts forecast that prices would continue to stay below this level in the short-term.

Brent crude fell 0.27% to \$80.14 per barrel in morning trade on Tuesday, down from the previous session's close of \$80.36. US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) decreased by 0.32% to \$77.17 per barrel, after closing at \$77.42 in the prior session.

Oil prices remain volatile due to weak economic data from China, the world's largest oil importer, and the US, the largest oil consumer.

According to recently data released, China's industrial production rose by 5.1% year-on-year, falling short of forecasts, while the unemployment rate exceeded expectations at 5.2%. Additionally, weak labour market data from the US heightened concerns about economic growth and reinforced forecasts of subdued demand from China.

On the other hand, the prospect of a ceasefire in the Middle East, home to a vast majority of global oil reserves, alleviated supply concerns in the markets, contributing to the decline in prices.

After US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell announced the need to adjust monetary policy in his speech at the Jackson Hole Economic Policy Symposium, oil prices ended last week at \$78.30, marking a 2.1% increase indicating a recovery trend, though they remained below \$80.

China demand concerns

The decline in oil prices is attributed to a combination of factors rather than a single cause, Julien Mathonniere, Oil Markets Economist at the US-based Energy Intelligence, told Anadolu Agency.

Noting that the weak demand forecast from China is the most

significant factor among these reasons, Mathonniere highlighted that China's lower-than-expected oil demand is a major concern for the market, especially after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) downgraded its 2024 global demand growth forecast in response to these weak projections.

Mathonniere also noted that the reduction in gasoline and diesel production by refineries in China in July, compared to the same period last year, also influenced prices.

"Chinese refiners cut gasoline and diesel output in July compared to the same period last year, when demand for these two products should, on the contrary, be rising during the third quarter. And because this happened in China, the world's largest oil importer, this bearish trend has revived the prospect of peak demand for transportation fuels and started to roil global prices again," Mathonniere said.

Contrary to forecasts, no decisive growth in demand has been observed in China this year, Mathonniere said.

Anadolu Agency



Brent crude fell 0.27% to \$80.14 per barrel in morning trade on Tuesday, down from the previous session's close of \$80.36

UAE's ADNOC deploys AI-enabled process optimisation technology

Abu Dhabi, UAE – The UAE's energy giant ADNOC announced on Tuesday the deployment of an industry-leading artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled process optimisation technology.

Neuron 5, developed by ADNOC, has been initially deployed at ADNOC Onshore's Northeast Bab (NEB) field and ADNOC Gas's Taweelah gas compression plant, across hundreds of pieces of equipment.

The innovative solution autonomously monitors the performance of critical equipment, enabling process optimisation and preventative maintenance, reducing operational downtime, boosting efficiency and reducing the need for time-consuming manual inspections. Neuron 5 uses advanced AI models and deep learning algorithms to predict maintenance needs and monitor equipment performance by interpreting data such as pressure, temperature and vibration, received from sensors on critical equipment.

Following the successful initial deployment, Neuron 5 will now be rolled out in all ADNOC facilities across thousands of critical pieces of equipment essential for production, including compressors, valves and generators.

Abdulmunim Saif al Kindy, ADNOC Upstream Executive Director, said, "ADNOC is placing AI at the heart of its operations and leveraging industry-leading advanced technologies to help responsibly meet the world's growing energy demand. The development and deployment of Neuron 5 across our upstream and downstream facilities demonstrate this strategy in action and highlight our continued progress towards our vision to become the world's most AI-enabled energy company."

ADNOC Gas has initially deployed Neuron 5 at the Taweelah plant, supporting its efforts to provide a reliable, uninterrupted gas supply to major industries in Abu Dhabi and the Northern Emirates.

The pilot phase of Neuron 5 indicated that the technology has the potential to cut the number of unplanned shutdowns by 50% and enhance planned maintenance intervals across operations by 20%, while freeing ADNOC operators for more productive activities.

Neuron 5 was developed by ADNOC's Thamama Excellence Centre, AIQ and AVEVA.

WAM



China export curbs on semiconductor materials fuel chip shortage fears

Indrabati Lahiri

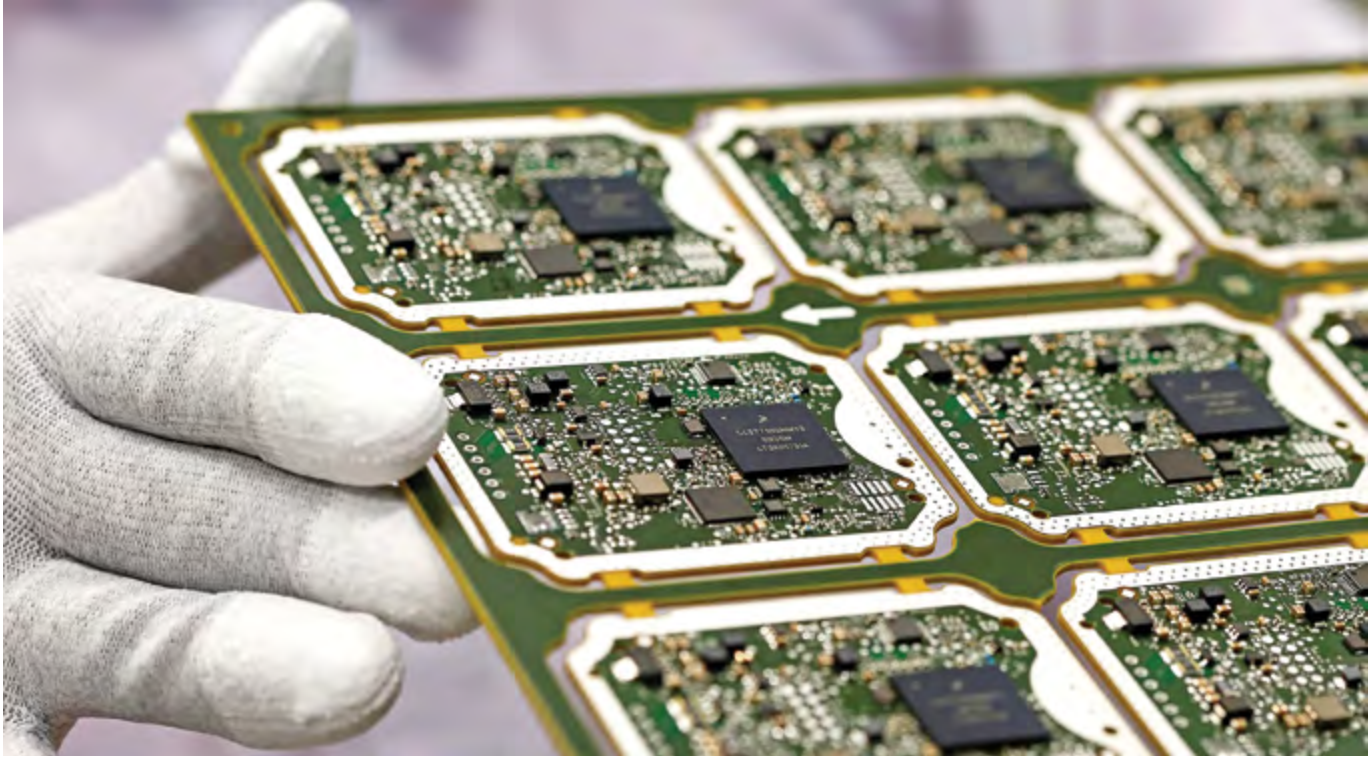
China's ongoing export restrictions on key semiconductor metals have led to backlogged supply chains and increased worries about the possibility of Western manufacturers and consumers facing chip shortages.

These semiconductor metals, namely gallium and germanium, are used extensively in chips, communications and military equipment.

China was the top producer of gallium globally in 2022, accounting for more than 98% of worldwide production, according to Statista, with Russia a distant second, contributing only 0.81% of global production. According to the Critical Raw Materials Alliance, China also currently accounts for 60% of global germanium production.

The country announced these export curbs last July, enforcing them from August 2023. As both these metals are exceptionally rare, these restrictions have meant that both gallium and germanium prices have surged, especially in Europe.

Chinese exports of germanium dropped from 13,514kg in the second half of last year, to 12,410kg in the first half of 2024, according to the Financial Times, using Chinese customs data.



China says it has imposed export curbs to protect its national interests and security. However, it is largely speculated that these are Beijing's answer to US export controls on the sale of highly advanced semiconductor chips

Similarly, following the introduction of the export curbs, Chinese gallium exports also plunged from 28,000kg in the first half of 2023, to 16,000kg in the second half of 2023.

China has revealed that it has imposed these curbs to protect its national interests and security. However, it is largely speculated that these are Beijing's answer to the US export controls on the sale of highly advanced semiconductor chips and production equipment to Chinese

companies such as Huawei.

The US earlier revealed that it was imposing these export curbs in order to limit China's access to semiconductors for military and artificial intelligence uses. In turn, China has also restricted exports of graphite, as well as antimony, which is a mineral used in armour-piercing ammunition.

Gallium is also used for bulbs, transistors, medical processes and thermometers, whereas germanium is used for infrared optical instruments and plastic

production. They are also critical for things like night vision goggles and fibre-optic cables, which may also see shortages and price hikes as a result of export restrictions.

Following China announcing these controls last year, the US International Trade Commission said, "The global supply chain for germanium and gallium is expected to encounter significant changes with the Chinese government's announcement of new export controls on these critical minerals, effective 1 August 2023.

Germanium and gallium hold immense importance in various industries such as semiconductors, solar panels and electric vehicles.

"The United States is heavily reliant on imports for both of these critical minerals, especially from China, given its dominant role as a major producer and supplier of both products."

Although several European companies still have some stockpiles of gallium to tide them over in the short term, the long-term scenario is more uncertain, as Europe may not be able to scale up its own domestic production of the metals quickly enough.

SEMI Europe, a microelectronics industry association said, "In the long term, in the event of trade escalations and further export restrictions, the European semiconductor industry could be impacted by a shortage of critical raw materials, particularly considering the lack of domestic production capacity for the foreseeable future.

"Building up a respective value chain from mining to processing with sufficient capacity in Europe would require significant time and large investments, to allow supply chains and market prices to adjust effectively. The establishment of suitable production facilities in Europe could take multiple years to scale up."

(Source: Euronews.com)

China's industrial profits grew

Beijing, China - China's industrial sector has shown signs of continued recovery with profit growth accelerating in the first seven months of 2024, driven by improving market demand and strengthening new growth drivers.

The combined profit of major industrial enterprises rose 3.6% year on year in the January-July period, an increase of 0.1 percentage points from the first half of the year, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said in a statement on Tuesday.

In July alone, profits increased by 4.1% compared to the same month in 2023, while also 0.5 percentage points higher than June and marking an acceleration for two consecutive months.

NBS statistician Yu Weining highlighted that the industrial sector had maintained a steady recovery, with stable production and improvements in high-quality development.

Of the 41 major industrial sectors, 21 reported either accelerated profit growth or a narrowed decline in the first seven months of 2024, according to official data.

High-tech manufacturing served as a significant contributor to this positive trend, with profits growing 12.8% year on year, substantially exceeding the overall industrial average by 9.2 percentage points. It contributed nearly 60% of the total industrial profit growth.

Xinhua

Adani Power incorporates ME subsidiary

New Delhi, India - Adani Power Limited incorporated a wholly-owned subsidiary, Adani Power Middle East Ltd. on Monday in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, the company informed the exchanges.

The objective of the subsidiary will be to invest in power, infrastructure, and related fields, the company added in the exchange filing. The authorised capital of Adani Power Middle East is \$27,000 shares of \$1 each, as per the statement.

Adani Power owns 100% of the shares in the new Incorporated Company, Adani Power Middle East Ltd.

With a power generation capacity of 15, 250MW Adani Power Limited (APL) is the largest private thermal power producer in India.

APL has thermal power plants in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Jharkhand, and a 40 MW solar power pro-

ject in Gujarat.

The company claims to be the world's first company to set up a coal-based Supercritical thermal power project registered under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto Protocol.

Adani Power Limited and its subsidiary Mahan Energen Limited (MEL) have recently signed a contract with Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL) of Rs110bn, where BHEL will develop three supercritical thermal power projects for the company

The contract, signed on Sunday (August 25), encompasses the supply of critical equipment and the supervision of the erection and commissioning processes for three major power projects.

Each project will feature a capacity of 2x800 MW and will be based on advanced Supercritical Technology.

ANI

German economy shrinks in second quarter

Berlin, Germany - Germany's economy contracted by 0.1% in the second quarter of the year, raising recession fears. Consumer confidence plummeted, investments weakened, and the economy sharply underperformed compared to other major nations.

Germany's economy took a step back in the second quarter of 2024, with the gross domestic product contracting by 0.1%, according to final figures released Tuesday by the Federal Statistical Office.

This downturn, following a modest 0.2% growth in the first quarter, signals growing concerns of an impending recession if economic conditions do not improve in the current quarter.

"After the slight increase in the previous quarter, the German economy slowed down again in spring," stated Ruth Brand, President of the Federal Statistical Office, highlighting the fragility of Germany's economic recovery.

Compared to a year earlier, the German economy showed no growth, having last recorded year-on-year expansion in the first quarter of 2023.



Consumer spending weakens

The economic decline was largely driven by a reduction in household consumption and investment. Household final consumption expenditure fell by 0.2%, reversing the gains seen earlier in the year. On the other hand, government final consumption rose by 1.0% from the previous quarter.

Investments showed significant weakness underscoring the hesitancy of businesses to commit to new projects amid grow-

ing economic uncertainty.

Gross fixed capital formation, a measure of investment in physical assets, saw a steep decline. Investment in machinery and equipment dropped by an annualized 4.1%, while construction investment fell by 2.0% on the quarter.

Foreign trade, typically a strong point for the German economy, also failed to provide any positive momentum. Exports of goods and services declined by 0.2% compared to the first quarter of 2024, reflecting

weaker global demand and supply chain disruptions.

Sector-wise, the construction activity faced significant challenges, contracting by 3.2%. The downturn in building construction and completion work highlights the broader slowdown in one of Germany's most critical industries.

Despite the economic slowdown, employment trends remained positive. The number of employed persons rose by 0.4% compared to the second quarter of 2023. Additionally, average

gross wages and salaries per employee increased by 5.1% year-over-year, providing some relief to workers amid rising inflation and economic uncertainty.

Germany's economic performance in the second quarter of 2024 was notably weaker than that of other major economies.

The European Union as a whole grew by 0.3% during the same period, with Spain leading the way with a 0.8% real growth. France and Italy also posted modest gains of 0.3% and 0.2%, respectively.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the United States recorded a 2.8% economic growth, further highlighting Germany's sharp underperformance.

Adding to the gloomy economic outlook, a separate report released on Tuesday by the GfK revealed a sharp decline in consumer confidence.

The forward-looking Consumer Climate index fell by 3.4 points to -22.0 in September, as income and economic expectations weakened significantly, and the willingness to spend also dropped.

(Source: Euronews.com)

US labour market to determine September Fed rate cuts: Deutsche Bank



Vahid Karaahmetovic

Recent statements by Federal Reserve officials signaled that a rate cut in September is likely "a done deal," although the magnitude of the reduction remains uncertain and data-dependent, Deutsche Bank economists said Monday

They believe that the size of the rate cut at the upcoming September meeting will be primarily determined by labor market data. The bank's current view is that the Fed will cut rates by 25 basis points (bps) "at each of the remaining meetings

Deutsche Bank's current view is that the Fed will cut rates by 25 basis points at each of the remaining meetings this year, then a pause until Q3 2025 to gradually bring rates back down to neutral

this year, then a pause until Q3 2025 to gradually bring rates back down to neutral."

During his speech at the Jackson Hole conference last Friday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell hinted that rate cuts are on the horizon, though he did not specify when or how much the cuts might be.

"The time has come for policy to adjust," Powell stated during his keynote address at the Fed's annual Jackson Hole retreat in Wyoming. "The direction of travel is clear, and the timing and pace of rate cuts will depend on incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks."

While markets eagerly anticipated clues about the future direction of monetary policy, Powell dedicated much of his speech to reflecting on the factors that drove the inflation surge, which led to 11 rate hikes between March 2022 and July 2023.

He acknowledged the progress made in reducing inflation and indicated that the Fed could now focus more on maintaining full employment, the other aspect of its dual mandate.

"Inflation has declined significantly. The labor market is no longer overheated, and condi-

tions are now less tight than those that prevailed before the pandemic," Powell said. "Supply constraints have normalized. And the balance of the risks to our two mandates has changed."

He also emphasized the Fed's commitment to ensuring both a strong labor market and continued progress on inflation, pledging that "we will do everything we can" to achieve these goals.

The speech comes with the inflation rate's gradual return to the Fed's 2% target.

(Source: Investing.com)

Ominvest takes part in psychological safety, mental health at work forum

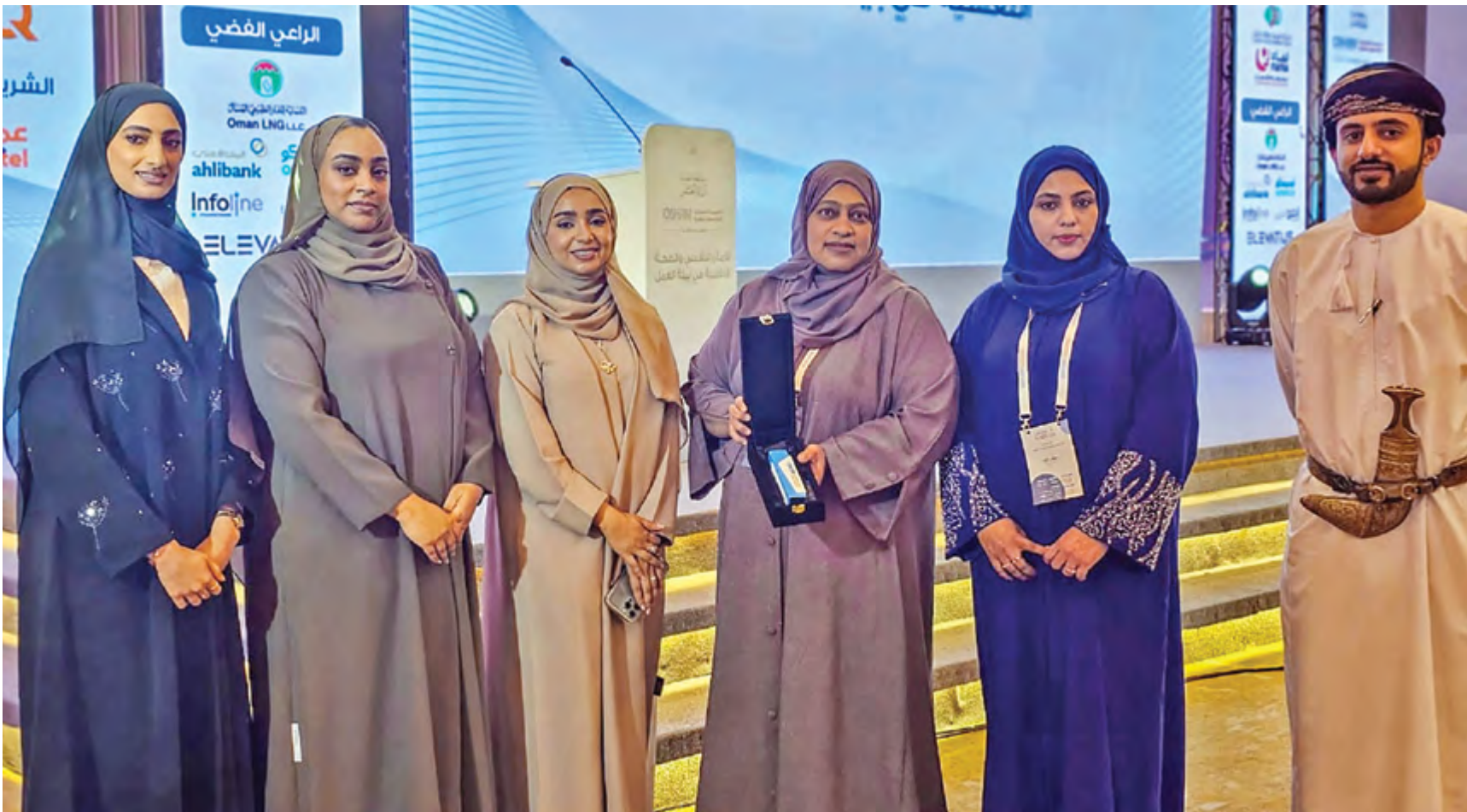
Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest) recently participated in the form of psychological safety and mental health in the work environment kicked off in Salalah, held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

This participation aligns with Ominvest's commitment to fostering sustainable development and creating a motivating work environment for its employees, s press release said.

Organised by the Ministry of Labour (MoL) in collaboration with the Omani Society for Human Resources Management (OSHRM), the forum aimed to raise awareness about enhancing mental health and psychological safety in the workplace.

It provided a platform for exchanging knowledge and best practices, equipping participants with practical tools and strategies to support employees facing psychological challenges at work.

The event also encouraged the adoption of policies and programs that prioritize psychological safety, ultimately contributing



to the overall well-being and productivity of employees. Waleed bin Nasser al Yarubi,

Chief People, Corporate Communication, and Sustainability Officer at Ominvest, emphasised

that the company's participation in the forum underscores its dedication to employee well-being.

"Ominvest is committed to creating a conducive environment for its employees, one that

supports their career growth, skill development, and overall aspirations. We implement various

initiatives aimed at improving working conditions, fostering a sense of belonging, and enhancing job satisfaction - all of which are crucial for maintaining mental health in the workplace."

He also pointed out that in a rapidly changing global landscape, companies must prioritise employees' mental health to help them navigate challenges successfully. At Ominvest, promoting mental health in the workplace is viewed as a key strategy for achieving sustainability, boosting productivity, and driving organisational success.

Six employees from Ominvest participated in the forum, gaining insights into modern methods and effective practices for enhancing psychological safety and mental health at work. They also explored strategies for achieving a balance between professional and personal life, as well as the critical role of Human Resources Management in supporting employees' mental well-being.

The Ominvest team actively contributed to the discussions throughout the forum, sharing their perspectives and experiences.

MoE receives British Ambassador



H E Dr Madiha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniya, Minister of Education, received on Monday H E Dr Lianne Saunders, the UK Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, and her accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, areas of joint cooperation in educational aspects were reviewed, as well as ways of strengthening relations

between the two countries, in addition to reviewing the joint bilateral relations between Oman and the UK in the fields of education, and the programmes and initiatives provided by the British

Council for the teaching staff and students in studying the English language. The two sides stressed the importance of strengthening relations between the two countries and the keenness to en-

hance and expand the scope of this cooperation. H E Dr Lianne thanked the Ministry of Education for its support and provision of educational services to the British community in Oman.



ahlibank hosts fun day for children from Child Care Centre

In line with its commitment to promote values of inclusivity and community spirit, ahlibank organised a fun day for children from the Child Care Center, Seeb, by taking a trip to Snow Oman.

The outing, undertaken by its corporate social responsibility (CSR) team 'ahli Cares' for children aged 4 to 14 years, exemplifies ahlibank's strategic and enduring commitment to empowering social responsibility and uplifting the quality of life within the communities it serves.

This heartfelt gesture not only brought joy to the young participants but also reinforced ahlibank's unwavering dedication to driving positive change and fostering community engagement.

Commenting on the CSR initiative, Jumana al Hashmi, Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications at ahlibank,

said that the bank's ongoing commitment to organising these initiatives underscores its dedication to fostering inclusivity within the community.

"Such initiatives are of great significance to ahlibank, as it represents the bank's role in supporting the efforts of government bodies in aiding various members of society. By providing care and attention to children's needs, ahlibank aims to enrich their childhood with joyful memories and experiences, and to contribute to establishing a more compassionate and interconnected community," she said.

At ahlibank, Jumana asserted that the bank would continue to focus on leading initiatives that create meaningful impacts, promote social cohesion, and empower individuals, thereby strengthening the bonds that unite us all.

ISC-Sanskrit Wing celebrates talent, creativity

Indian Social Club Oman - Sanskrit Wing successfully hosted its flagship event, Indradhanush 2024, a vibrant celebration of talent, creativity, and fun.

The event took place on August 23 and 24 at the ISC TT Hall and MP Hall, Darsait - Muscat, a release stated.

Indradhanush is a children's competition program that showcases a colourful array of activities designed to ignite imagination, foster camaraderie, and reveal the hidden potential

of our young participants. This annual extravaganza featured activities such as colouring, drawing, collage making, monodrama, speech, personality presentation on stage, and chess.

This year's theme of the Indradhanush was 'Harmony with Nature', as Indian philosophy provides a comprehensive approach to living in Harmony with Nature through principles of interconnectedness, responsibility, and respect for all living beings.



Malabar Gold & Diamonds wins award at India Gold Conference in Bengaluru

Malabar Gold & Diamonds (MGD), the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 355 showrooms across 13 countries, has been honoured with the prestigious India Gold Conference (IGC) Responsible Jewellery House Award for 2023-24.

This accolade, one of the most esteemed in the Indian jewellery sector, recognises Malabar Gold & Diamonds for its unwavering commitment to ethical sourcing and sustainability.

The award acknowledges MGD's dedication to procuring

responsibly mined gold and diamonds from legitimate sources, ensuring that every piece of jewellery is crafted with the highest standards of purity and integrity.

O Asher, managing director of India operations, MGD, received the award from Dr Sundaravalli Narayanswamy, chairperson of the India Gold Policy Centre, at a function held in Bengaluru, the capital of the southern Indian state of Karnataka.

Also in attendance were Sitaraman Varadarajan, business



development head at MGD; Dileep Narayanan, MGD's bullion head; Sunil Kashyap, Director of Finmet PTE Ltd; Praveen Bajinath, CEO of Rand Refinery; and Filsor Babu, Karnataka regional head at MGD.

Speaking on the occasion, Malabar Group chairman M P Ahammed, expressed his gratitude and reaffirmed the company's commitment to ethical practices.

"We are deeply honoured to receive the Responsible Jewellery House Award from IGC.

Gold and diamonds are treasured gifts, often exchanged during life's most joyful moments, such as weddings and birthdays. We are committed to ensuring that these precious materials are sourced ethically, from legitimate origins, free from exploitation," Ahammed said, reasoning out that only then can these gifts truly embody the sanctity, purity, and brilliance they symbolise.

"We uphold this commitment from the moment gold is mined to the final product reaching our customers," he further said.



BYD, Uber sign partnership deal to accelerate global EV transition

BYD, the world's leading manufacturer of new energy vehicles and power batteries, recently announced a multi-year strategic partnership with Uber, designed to bring 100,000 new BYD electric vehicles onto the Uber platform across key global markets.

Beginning first in Europe and Latin America, the partnership is expected to offer drivers access to best-in-class pricing and financing for BYD vehicles on the Uber platform and will expand to include markets across the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand. Both companies are EV leaders in their respective categories. Uber has the most widely available on-demand EV network in the world, and BYD is a global leader in EV production.

"By working together, the

Uber and BYD share a commitment to innovate towards a cleaner, greener world, and I am excited to work together towards that future

CHUANFU WANG

companies aim to bring down the total cost of EV ownership for Uber drivers, accelerating the uptake of EVs on the Uber platform globally, and introducing millions of riders to greener rides," a release stated.

While Uber drivers are going electric five times faster than private car owners, driver surveys

show the price of EVs and availability of financing remain the key barriers to switching. In addition to their affordability, BYD vehicles have lower costs of maintenance and repair, and are well suited to ride-share due to the wide range of models, superior battery performance, and excellent build quality.

To support drivers going electric, the companies' joint efforts may also include discounts on charging, vehicle maintenance, or insurance, as well as financing and lease offers, based on what works best for drivers in a given market.

The two companies will also collaborate on future BYD autonomous-capable vehicles to be deployed on the Uber platform. As the largest on-demand mobil-

ity and delivery platform in the world, Uber is well-positioned to bring autonomous vehicle technology to a global audience at scale.

"Uber and BYD share a commitment to innovate towards a cleaner, greener world, and I am excited to work together towards that future," said Chuanfu Wang, Chairman and President of BYD.

"As the largest global agreement of its kind, we're thrilled about the benefits this partnership will deliver for drivers, riders, and cities," said Dara Khosrowshahi, CEO of Uber. "When an Uber driver makes the switch to an EV, they can deliver up to four times the emissions benefits compared to a regular motorist, simply because they are on the road more. Many riders also tell

us their first experience with an EV is on an Uber trip, and we're excited to help demonstrate the benefits of EVs to more people around the world."

Stella Li, Executive Vice President of BYD and CEO of BYD Americas, also commented, "We are elated to join forces with a global leader like Uber not only to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles but also to make green transportation accessible and affordable for everyone. This collaboration marks a new era in the electrification of urban mobility, and we look forward to seeing our cutting-edge EVs become a common sight on the streets of cities worldwide."

In Oman, BYD vehicles are distributed by Saud Bahwan Group.

TAISM welcomes Peter Lee as new school director

The American International School of Muscat (TAISM) has informed that Peter Lee, a veteran in the TAISM community, officially assumed the role of school director on July 1, following the departure of Kevin Schafer from the directorship.

Lee brings a wealth of experience to his new role, having been an integral part of the TAISM community for 19 years, the school stated.



Previously serving as the middle school principal, Lee has been a key figure in fostering a school climate emphasising community, wellness, and inclusivity. His dedication to creating an environment of belonging and mutual respect is evident in his daily interactions with students, staff, and parents.

In 2022, Lee was honoured as one of only two international school educators to receive the prestigious National Distinguished Principals Award from the US-based National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). This accolade was awarded in recognition of his outstanding leadership and contribution to education at the international level.

Educated at Gustavus Adolphus College with a bachelor's degree in elementary education, Lee also holds a master's in education from St Mary's University and an EdS in education leadership from Capella University. His leadership is marked by a dedication to excellence and a deep commitment to the educational and personal development of

every student.

"Finding the right fit for the leadership role of School Director at TAISM is no small task," says Fawzi Mushantaf, Chair of the TAISM Board of Directors. "An extensive recruitment and selection process, led by our Board and international consultants over the course of months, ensured we chose the best leader for our community. Peter Lee brings with him 19 years of dedicated service at TAISM and a deep familiarity with the American educational system. His experience and understanding of our community make him uniquely qualified to lead the school into its next chapter."

About his new role, Lee says: "At TAISM you can see an essential commitment to fostering close-knit community, and a phrase shared on t-shirts and in the hallways: 'You belong here'. This value is personal to me as my own children grew up in the unique family atmosphere TAISM provides, within the wider peace and safety of Oman. I look forward to collaborating with our families, students, and staff."

ASA CONDUCTS AIR AMBULANCE MISSION



Al Sharqiya Aviation (ASA) on Monday successfully carried out an international air ambulance mission with a state-of-the-art H145 helicopter to transport a patient from Sohar Hospital in Oman to Al Ain Airport in the UAE. The medical evacuation was executed flawlessly by the ASA team, with the patient transported smoothly and within the scheduled timeline. Al Sharqiya Aviation continues to demonstrate its capability to handle a range of helicopter transport needs, including charter flights, aerial work, and specialised air ambulance missions

Al Amerat Club unveils new kit sponsored by MG Motor

Al Amerat Club has officially unveiled its new kit for the 2024-2025 season, with MG Motor proudly continuing its role as the official sponsor. This collaboration highlights MG Motor's commitment to supporting local sports and fostering community engagement throughout Oman.

The new kit is more than just a jersey; it symbolises unity, pride, and the team's relentless pursuit of excellence. Designed with both tradition and modernity in mind, it embodies the spirit of Al Amerat Club and their dedication to success on and off the field.

As the official sponsor, MG Motor is deeply invested in the success of Al Amerat Club.

This partnership goes beyond brand visibility; it represents our commitment to nurturing local talent, empowering youth, and promoting a healthy, active



lifestyle in Oman.

The unveiling of the new kit comes on the heels of several remarkable achievements by Al Amerat Club. They demonstrated their dominance in the Khareef Dhofar Bowling Championship by taking both 1st and 2nd place. The team secured a bronze medal at the Moscow International Beach Soccer Cup

erat Club even more significant.

"We are incredibly proud to continue our partnership with Al Amerat Club as they unveil their new kit for the 2024-2025 season," Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, remarked. "This collaboration reflects our dedication to nurturing local talent and promoting a strong sense of community through sports," he pointed out. "At MG Motor, we believe in the transformative power of sports to inspire, unite, and elevate. The new kit embodies the spirit of Al Amerat Club - a spirit of resilience, pride, and relentless pursuit of excellence. We look forward to supporting the club in their journey and witnessing their success this season."

"The launch of the new kit marks a significant milestone in our journey with Al Amerat Club," he added.

Opening 'youth account' at BankDhofar simple, convenient, suited to lifestyle

Young people are the driving force behind societal and economic progress, essential for initiating transformative change and fuelling innovation and growth. Recognising their pivotal role, banks are crucial in empowering youth by offering services and opportunities that support their financial and personal aspirations. These services range from offering financial guidance, helping them build a stable financial future. Additionally, banks offer accounts that enable young people to manage their money efficiently, guiding them toward sound financial planning.

BankDhofar understands the unique needs of its young customers and has designed the

'Youth Account' to meet those needs. The account provides numerous benefits, allowing young people to manage their finances effortlessly. Customers have praised the convenience of the ease of opening accounts through the Intilaqah app, where they can easily open an account with just a click, anywhere and anytime. The 'Youth Account' also offers advantages like no minimum balance fees, free mobile transfers and more.

Smart way to save

The 'Youth Account' from BankDhofar is more than just a banking option; it's a tool for building a secure future. Abdul Rahman Mohammed al Balushi,



a satisfied customer, shared how he uses his account to save for his post-graduation plans.

He sets aside a portion of his monthly income to fund his dream of starting a small busi-



ness, ensuring he has the financial foundation needed to succeed. He also mentioned how saving has become a part of his lifestyle, helping him achieve both professional and personal



goals, including planning a fun annual vacation with friends.

Easy mobile banking

For Hassan al Lawati, the ease of opening a 'Youth Account' at

BankDhofar aligns perfectly with the fast-paced lifestyle of today's youth. Whether busy with university studies or personal projects, young people can open their account through the Intilaqah app from anywhere - be it a college café, a family outing, or while watching their favourite team's match.

Hassan emphasised that the account also offers exclusive deals at various outlets and facilitates seamless electronic transactions, such as bill payments and money transfers, all through the mobile banking app.

Free money transfers

Mohammed Maqbool al Balushi, another happy customer, didn't

think twice before opening a 'Youth Account' with BankDhofar. He appreciates the numerous benefits that cater to young people's needs and future ambitions, such as free money transfers via mobile banking app and the freedom to deposit any amount without worrying about a minimum balance. Mohammed highlighted how the account offers exclusive discounts at various outlets and allows him to manage most of his banking transactions via mobile banking app, including bill payments and account management.

BankDhofar's widespread branches across Oman provide easy access to assistance and services whenever needed.

US administration ‘pressured’ Meta to censor COVID-19 content

Washington, D.C., US - Meta Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg, in a letter to the House Judiciary Committee has alleged that the Biden-Harris administration ‘repeatedly pressurised’ Meta’s teams to censor posts related to COVID. He further said that the platform had to make some changes, that ‘with the benefit of hindsight and new information’, they won’t make today. Zuckerberg also said he ‘regrets’ not being ‘more outspoken’ about it.

“In 2021, senior officials from the Biden Administration, including the White House, repeatedly pressured our teams for months to censor certain COVID-19 content, including humour and satire, and expressed a lot of frustration with our teams when we didn’t agree. Ultimately, it was our decision whether or not to take content down, and we own our decisions, including COVID-19-related changes we made to our enforcement in the wake of this pressure,” Zuckerberg said in the letter.

“I believe the government pressure was wrong, and I regret that we were not more outspoken about it. I also think we made some choices that, with the benefit of hindsight and new information, we wouldn’t make today. Like I said to our teams at the time, I feel strongly that we should not compromise our content standards due to pressure from any Administration in either direction and we’re ready to push back if something like this happens again,” he added.

The House Committee on the Judiciary, of the Republican Party informed about the Meta CEO’s letter on social media platform X.

“Mark Zuckerberg just admitted three things: 1. Biden-Harris Admin ‘pressured’ Facebook to censor Americans. 2. Facebook censored Americans. 3. Facebook throttled the Hunter Biden laptop story. Big win for free speech.,” the post read.

Zuckerberg recalled another episode in the letter, in which he alleged that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) warned Meta about a potential Russian disinformation operation about the Biden family and Burisma in the lead-up to the 2020 election.

Following this, Meta demoted a story on corruption allegations involving Joe Biden’s family, but Meta CEO claims that the reporting was not Russian disinformation and the story shouldn’t have been demoted.

“That fall, when we saw a New York Post story reporting on corruption allegations involving then-Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden’s family, we sent that story to fact-checkers for review and temporarily demoted it while waiting for a reply. It’s since been made clear that the reporting was not Russian disinformation, and in retrospect, we shouldn’t have demoted the story,” he stated.

ANI



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“Mark Zuckerberg just admitted three things: 1. Biden-Harris Admin ‘pressured’ Facebook to censor Americans. 2. Facebook censored Americans. 3. Facebook throttled the Hunter Biden laptop story. Big win for free speech.,” the post read.

Zuckerberg recalled another episode in the letter, in which he alleged that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) warned Meta about a potential Russian disinformation operation about the Biden family and Burisma in the lead-up to the 2020 election.

Following this, Meta demoted a story on corruption allegations involving Joe Biden’s family, but Meta CEO claims that the reporting was not Russian disinformation and the story shouldn’t have been demoted.

“That fall, when we saw a New York Post story reporting on corruption allegations involving then-Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden’s family, we sent that story to fact-checkers for review and temporarily demoted it while waiting for a reply. It’s since been made clear that the reporting was not Russian disinformation, and in retrospect, we shouldn’t have demoted the story,” he stated.

ANI

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ANI



Dam collapse sweeps away 20 villages in Sudan

Khartoum, Sudan - The collapse of a dam in eastern Sudan after heavy torrential rainfalls has swept away at least 20 villages, killing scores, according to local media.

The Arbat Dam, which contains a reservoir that is a primary source of fresh water, collapsed in the city of Port Sudan on Monday after months of seasonal rains.

Heavy rain on Saturday flooded the Arbat area north of the Red Sea city of Port Sudan, causing the Arbat Dam to collapse and wash away entire villages. Hundreds of residents fled to mountain peaks to avoid the danger of the floods while others remained trapped in villages, according to the Sudanese daily Al-Taghyeer.

The UN Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said on Tuesday that nearly 27,000 homes have been destroyed and up to 31,240 homes damaged by the heavy rains.

Over 317,000 people have also been affected by the floods and heavy rains across Sudan, including the displacement of some 118,000 people.

“Preliminary reports indicate the breach resulted in the dam reservoir being fully drained, causing extensive damage to life and property in about 20 villages downstream,” it added.

Meanwhile, Sudanese authorities said that the dam collapse and heavy floods in the country have killed at least 132 people.

Authorities estimate that around 50,000 people living on the western side of the dam have been severely affected, while the extent of the impact on the eastern banks is still being assessed.

The dam was constructed in 2003 to capture rainwater for use during the dry season. However, it has not undergone regular maintenance for several years.

Sudan has been mired by fighting between the army, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who is the head of the ruling Sovereign Council, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

At least 12,260 people have been killed and more than 33,000 injured in the conflict that started in April 2023, according to UN figures.

A humanitarian crisis continues to worsen as nearly 6.8mn people have fled their homes seeking safety in Sudan or neighbouring countries.

Anadolu Agency

Apparent Helium leak delays Polaris Dawn mission launch

Florida, US - In the early hours of Tuesday, the Polaris Dawn mission was delayed due to an apparent helium leak in ground equipment at the launch site, Complex 39A at NASA’s Kennedy Space Centre in Florida. A new launch date was set for Wednesday, at the original time of 3:38am US Eastern Time.

If it succeeds, Polaris Dawn will be the first non-government mission to perform a spacewalk. But not only that - it’ll do that about 700km (435 miles) above Earth. The highest ever.

To compare: the International Space Station (ISS) orbits Earth at about 400km, where the radiation is less intense.

It will also orbit Earth through regions of a highly-charged belt of radiation. There are two of these ‘Van Allen Belts’, an inner and an outer one.

Astronauts tend to avoid the hazardous Van Allen Belts, but they will have to travel through them if humans want to fly to Mars and survive. This privately-funded mission could be a first step toward that goal.

The four astronauts on the Polaris Dawn mission will test new spacesuits, designed by Elon Musk’s company, SpaceX, to see how well they protect them against the Van Allen Belt radiation. SpaceX is also providing the spacecraft - a Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon capsule for the crew - to reach an altitude beyond the current record of 1,373km, set by NASA’s Gemini 11 mission in 1966.

The Polaris Dawn crew include Jared Isaacman (commander), Scott Poteet (pilot), Sarah Gillis (specialist) and Anna Menon (specialist and medical officer)

Polaris Dawn, the first of a three-part programme, is Isaac-



The Polaris Dawn mission will be the first to test SpaceX’s new EVA (extravehicular activity/spacewalk) suits

man’s idea. Isaacman is a billionaire entrepreneur, who made his money in digital payments and military defence. He previously financed and flew on SpaceX’s Inspiration4 mission, the first civilian mission to orbit Earth.

Dangerous Van Allen Belts

The Van Allen Belts consist of charged particles locked in place by Earth’s magnetosphere, which includes its magnetic field.

Earth’s magnetosphere traps high-energy radiation particles and protects our planet from solar storms and other threats to daily life from space.

While the outer belt holds

Astronauts tend to avoid the hazardous Van Allen Belts, but they will have to travel through them if humans want to fly to Mars and survive

high-energy particles from the sun, the inner belt is formed by cosmic rays that interact with Earth’s atmosphere. They were discovered by American physicist James Van Allen in 1958.

The Van Allen Belts range from about 680km above Earth’s surface to what some estimates suggest is about 40,000km from the surface of the planet. And there’s a gap between the first and second belt. The inner ‘proton’ zone is centred at about 3,000km from Earth’s surface and the outer ‘electron’ zone is centred about 15-20,000km from Earth’s surface.

The Polaris Dawn spacewalk will expose the crew to higher levels of radiation than on the ISS. They hope to collect data on the effects of that radiation as a key scientific experiment.

In 2025, NASA plans to send astronauts beyond the Van Allen

Belts to land on the south pole of the moon, and eventually on to Mars. Any data provided by Polaris Dawn will feed into those future missions.

Planned health research

Polaris intends to use data from the mission to create research Biobanks to study the effects of space travel on human biology.

It will investigate the effects of space travel on eyesight and brain structure - a major health risk in space, known as Spaceflight Associated Neuro-ocular Syndrome (SANS). The team also hopes to contribute to studies into decompression sickness (DCS), another health risk during spaceflight. DCS occurs when nitrogen gas bubbles (or gas emboli) damage human tissue.

The crew will test laser communications provided by SpaceX’s Starlink satellite network. Starlink is large satellite constellation, eventually consisting of about 12,000 satellites for communication on Earth and in space. It was used early in the Russia-Ukraine war.

Polaris hopes its communications tests will provide ‘valuable data for future space communications systems necessary for missions to the Moon, Mars and beyond’.

Isaacman has committed to three missions in collaboration with SpaceX. This first mission is scheduled to last five days.

The second mission will, they say, ‘expand the boundaries of future human spaceflight missions, in-space communications, and scientific research’.

And the third mission will be the first crewed test of SpaceX’s reusable Starship spacecraft.

DW

Knife attack in Solingen heats up election in Germany’s federal states

Berlin, Germany - On September 1, Saxony and Thuringia will elect new state parliaments. The Alternative for Germany (AfD), a party known for its hostility towards migration and for being in part right-wing extremist, could become the strongest party in both federal states.

It is currently polling at around 30 per cent, and the deadly knife attack in Solingen, a city in Germany’s most populous state of North Rhine-Westphalia, may very well give the party an additional boost.

For years, the party’s calls for a much more restrictive immigration policy have been greeted with approval, especially in eastern German states such as Saxony and Thuringia. The debate over the deportation of criminal refugees has intensified in the wake of the suspected terrorist

act committed by Issa Al H, a Syrian asylum seeker whose application for asylum was rejected.

Speaking on public broadcaster ZDF, AfD leader Alice Weidel called for an ‘immediate ban on immigration, admission, and naturalisation for at least five years’. Long before the massacre in Solingen, Weidel had spoken in the Bundestag of ‘subsidised knife men’.

Calls for radical measures

There are also calls from within the ranks of the conservative Christian Democratic Party (CDU) for swift and tangible consequences. Shortly after the knife attack in Solingen, party leader Friedrich Merz called on Chancellor Olaf Scholz to ‘work with us quickly and without further delay on decisions aimed at effectively



The Alternative for Germany (AfD) could become the strongest party in Saxony and Thuringia

preventing further terrorist attacks like the one last Friday in our country’. He said that deportations to Syria and Afghanistan should be carried out.

Germany does not deport rejected asylum seekers to countries deemed generally unsafe, in accordance with the Geneva Refugee Convention. Due to the

ongoing civil war in Syria, no deportations have been conducted from Germany to Syria in the last twelve years. But now, conservative politicians have been arguing

that some regions in Syria are safe.

“We will not accept any more refugees from these countries,” demanded Merz in reference to Syria and Afghanistan. He also reacted to reports of refugees allegedly returning to their home countries for vacations: “Anyone who travels from Germany back to their home country as a refugee should immediately lose all residence status in Germany.”

Kevin Kühnert, the General Secretary of Scholz’s centre-left Social Democratic Party (SPD), immediately rejected this demand on public broadcaster ARD. He said that many of Merz’s proposals are not possible because they conflict with the German constitution. This is true, for example, concerning the individual right to asylum.

Mario Voigt, the CDU’s lead

candidate in the upcoming state elections in Thuringia, made his own demand. He is calling for repatriation centres where rejected asylum seekers should be held. The centres would serve to prevent people from going into hiding prior to deportation.

“We need a fundamental change in asylum policy,” Voigt told the Reuters news agency.

Meanwhile, Chancellor Scholz has announced swift consequences. Following a visit to Solingen, he held out the prospect of a rapid tightening of weapons laws.

“Everything that is in our power, within our means, must be done,” Scholz said. He also said new regulations must be considered to speed up the deportation of rejected asylum seekers.

DW

Widespread outcry against 'synagogue proposal' at Al-Aqsa Mosque complex

Ankara, Turkey - The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Tuesday strongly denounced a call by far-right Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir to build a synagogue inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque complex in occupied East Jerusalem.

Ben-Gvir claimed on Monday that Jews have the right to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque, saying he would build a synagogue at the flashpoint site.

This call 'is a continuation of the repeated violations by Israel, the occupying power, of the sanctity of holy sites and freedom of worship, and a flagrant violation of the Geneva Conventions and international law', the Jeddah-based organisation said in a statement.

The OIC said Jerusalem 'is an integral part of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 and the capital of the State of Palestine'. "All decisions and measures taken by the Israeli occupation to Judaize the occupied city of Jerusalem have no legal effect and are considered null and void under international law and international legitimacy resolutions," it added.

The pan-Islamic bloc held Israel fully responsible for the consequences of its 'ongoing violations and systematic assaults that provoke the sentiments of Muslims worldwide'.

Ben-Gvir's call was the first by the extremist minister to openly speak about building a synagogue inside the Al-Aqsa



Far-right Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir claimed on Monday that Jews have the right to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque, saying he would build a synagogue at the flashpoint site

These types of statements are highly counterproductive, to say the least. They risk inflaming a situation which is already bone dry

STEPHANE DUJARRIC

Mosque. However, he has repeatedly called in recent months for allowing Jewish prayers at the site.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is considered the third holiest site in Islam. Jews refer to the area as

the Temple Mount, believing it to be the location of two ancient Jewish temples.

Israel occupied East Jerusalem, where Al-Aqsa is located, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. In 1980, Israel

annexed the entire city, a move that has never been recognised by the international community.

'Respect legal status'

Saudi Arabia on Tuesday condemned Ben-Gvir's call for building a synagogue inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque complex. In a statement, the Saudi Foreign Ministry categorically rejected these 'extremist and provocative statements'.

The ministry also stressed 'the need to respect the historical

and legal status of Al-Aqsa Mosque', and renewed its call on the international community to assume its responsibilities and put an end to the Palestinian humanitarian catastrophe.

The UN has also denounced Ben-Gvir's remarks on building a synagogue inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque, saying they were 'highly counterproductive'.

"These types of statements are highly counterproductive, to say the least. They risk inflaming a situation which is already bone

dry," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters in a news conference.

Highlighting the sensitivity surrounding the status of holy sites in Jerusalem, Dujarric said that 'there is a status quo agreed to the parties for the holy sites in Jerusalem that must be respected by all'.

He urged adherence to this agreement, in actions as well as public statements, to avoid escalating tensions further.

Asked about recent reports of

a senior UN official stating that UN aid operations in Gaza have been halted after latest Israeli evacuation orders at Deir al Balah, Dujarric said UNRWA, the agency for Palestine refugees, was able to operate as 'they are embedded with the population'.

"What our senior UN official was referring to, is UN officials and UN humanitarian staff moving about and trying to get to places (in Gaza)," he added.

Meanwhile, the local media reported on Monday evening that the Israeli government will finance for the first time the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque by illegal Israeli settlers in the occupied East Jerusalem.

According to the Israeli public broadcaster KAN, the office of Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu - an extremist minister known for being anti-Palestinian - will allocate 2mn NIS (US\$545,000) for the project which is expected to be implemented in the coming weeks.

KAN added that the Heritage Ministry was in contact with the National Security Ministry of Ben-Gvir to obtain the Israeli police permission for the settlers' funded tours to Al-Aqsa.

Earlier on Monday, Ben-Gvir told the Israeli Army Radio that his policy is to 'allow Jews to perform prayers inside the Temple Mount (in reference to Al-Aqsa Mosque)', noting that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu knew his policy before forming the coalition government.

Anadolu Agency

World's oldest sloth dies in German zoo

Krefeld, Germany - A sloth in the German city of Krefeld, who was considered to be the oldest sloth in the world, has died at the age of 54.

The two-toed sloth was named Jan and lived at the zoo in the western city of Krefeld, near Düsseldorf. In a statement on Tuesday, the Krefeld zoo announced that he had passed last week.

"It was very difficult for his keepers to say goodbye to him, as some of them had known and cared for him for over 25 years," the statement read.

The sloth was born in the wild in 1969. He had spent time in Hamburg's Hagenbeck Zoo in 1986 and spent the rest of his life, 38 years, in Krefeld.

In 2021, Jan gained notoriety when he was entered into the Guinness World Records in as the 'Oldest sloth in human care'.

The title was previously held by another sloth in Germany, Paula, who lived in the zoo of the eastern city of Halle.

"He had the nickname 'record sloth' not only because of his age, but also because of his high number of offspring," the zoo said.

Jan is said to have fathered 22 sloth pups in Krefeld with females Lolita and Trine. Despite his old age, Jan fathered his last baby, a girl, with Trine in March of this year.

DW



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin

Putin, Modi discuss resolution of Ukraine conflict over phone

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke by phone on Tuesday, discussing the Ukraine conflict as well as other important bilateral issues, the Kremlin said in a statement.

Prime Minister Modi briefed President Putin on his recent visit to Kyiv and emphasised his commitment to finding a solution to the Ukraine conflict through political and diplomatic means.

"Vladimir Putin shared his principled assessment of the destructive policies of the Kyiv authorities and their Western patrons, and went on to highlight Russia's approaches to resolving this conflict," the statement added. The leaders also discussed steps to implement trade and economic agreements reached during Modi's official visit to Russia in July 2024.

They expressed satisfaction with the progress of their collaboration within the BRICS, a group of emerging economies made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. In January, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE were admitted as full members.

The Indian PM briefed the Russian President on his recent visit to Ukraine and emphasised his commitment to finding a solution to the Ukraine conflict through political and diplomatic means

Prime Minister Modi confirmed his intention to attend the Kazan Summit in October 2024, as Russia has held the year-long presidency since January 1 of this year. Both leaders agreed to maintain and strengthen bilateral contacts at various levels.

The conversation took place days after Modi's visit to Poland and Ukraine, the first by an Indian PM to the European nation. During the meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Modi had emphasised India's position of peaceful resolution through dialogue and diplomacy.

Agencies

Japan condemns violation of its airspace by Chinese aircraft

Tokyo, Japan - Japan on Tuesday lambasted what it said was a violation of its airspace by a Chinese military plane, describing it as 'utterly unacceptable'.

Japan's chief government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters on Tuesday that Monday's incursion 'threatens Japan's security'.

Tokyo said it scrambled fighter jets after a Chinese Y-9 surveillance aircraft entered its airspace for two minutes, flying over the Danjo Islands in Nagasaki Prefecture.

"We understand that this is the first confirmed and announced airspace incursion by a Chinese military aircraft since



Japan said a Chinese surveillance plane entered its airspace

we started the anti-airspace incursion measures," Hayashi told a regular briefing.

He added that the government continues to monitor in-

creasing Chinese military activity near Japan, adding it will be fully prepared for any airspace violation.

Tokyo summoned a Chinese

embassy official in protest. Hayashi declined to comment on the details of the diplomatic talks.

"We refrain from giving a definite answer as to the intended purpose of the Chinese aircraft's action. However, recent (Chinese) military activities near Japan have a tendency to expand and become increasingly active," he said.

A China State Oceanic Administration plane violated Japan's airspace in 2012 while in 2017, a China Coast Guard drone also breached Japan's airspace, according to Japan's public broadcaster NHK.

DW

EU warns of swift spread of polio in Gaza

Athens, Greece - EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Tuesday warned of the rapid spread of poliovirus in the Gaza Strip, stressing the need for a ceasefire to allow children to be vaccinated against the disease, which causes certain limbs to be immobile for the rest of their lives.

"The quick spread of polio threatens all children in Gaza, already weakened by displacement, deprivation & malnourishment," he stated on X.

Urging an immediate three-day ceasefire, independent of wider negotiations, to enable WHO and UNICEF to conduct vaccinations, Borrell said: "Our humanity demands it."

On August 16, Gaza's Health Ministry announced the first confirmed case of polio in the Gaza Strip in 25 years, in the city



Polio virus found in wastewater threatens the lives of Palestinian children in Gaza

of Deir al-Balah. The case involved a 10-month-old baby who had not received any doses of the polio vaccine.

The disease primarily affects children under the age of five, with one in 200 infections leading to irreversible paralysis. According to the World Health

Organization (WHO), between 5% and 10% of those paralysed die due to the failure of their respiratory muscles to function.

16 killed in fresh airstrikes

Meanwhile, at least 16 Palestinians were killed in fresh airstrikes

in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, according to medical sources.

An Israeli drone strike targeted a house in the southern city of Khan Younis, leaving four people dead and injuring several others, a medical source told Anadolu.

Anadolu Agency

INDIA



Champai Soren speaking to media in New Delhi on Tuesday (ANI)

Former Jharkhand CM Champai Soren, his son to join BJP

New Delhi - Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren on Tuesday clarified that he along with his son Babu Lal Soren is going to join Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on August 30.

"Today I had started a new chapter. Initially, I thought of taking retirement, but later witnessing the enthusiasm of workers and the public, I thought of being actively involved in politics. Later, I also thought of forming a new organisation, but due to time constraints and the unique dynamics in Jharkhand, I decided to join the BJP after much contemplation," said Champai Soren. "I have full faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Me and my son Babulal Soren will join the BJP in Ranchi."

When asked about JMM's statement that he has been exposed, Champai Soren said: "I don't think it's appropriate to respond. I have struggled a lot, and our history is evident in Jharkhand. But we will join the

BJP."

Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi welcomed Champai Soren joining the BJP saying that he had chosen the right alternative. "Champai Soren was the CM of Jharkhand and was doing good work. It is correct that he was made the CM but instead of asking him to resign all his work was cancelled and a new leader was chosen. He was insulted, after which Champai Soren has chosen an alternative. He has done the right thing," Jitan Manjhi said. JMM Leader Manoj Pandey criticised the BJP saying they are dependent on other parties and have no face of their own.

"It pains but now the situation is clear. He will be joining another party. What impact it will have that time will tell. History has proven that those who have left JMM and joined some other party, have not been given that respect...BJP's existence is dependent on our leaders...They (BJP) have no face of theirs," Manoj Pandey said. ANI

Apex court grants bail to BRS leader K Kavitha

New Delhi - The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted bail to BRS leader K Kavitha in the excise policy irregularities cases being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

A bench of justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan directed to release K Kavitha immediately. The top court also imposed various conditions against Kavitha including not to tamper with evidence or influence witnesses in the matter. The top court directed her to furnish a bail bond of Rs 10 lakh each in both CBI and ED cases. The top court also directed her to surrender her passport.

The top court noted that Kavitha is behind bars for five months and the trial will take a long time to complete as there are 493 witnesses and many documents. The SC noted that the reliance is on the statements of co-accused who have been granted pardon and made an approver.

Kavitha is the second big opposition leader to get bail in this case. Former Delhi deputy CM Manish Sisodia, who was arrested in February last year, was released earlier this month. The Supreme Court noted a delay in trial in his case too and said he could not be jailed for an 'unlimited time' as it is a violation of his fundamental rights.

The Delhi High Court on July 1 had denied bail to Kavitha. Among other grounds, Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma held that Kavitha was a 'well-educated' woman who could not be



This file photo shows BRS leader K Kavitha leaving from Rouse Avenue Court after a hearing, in New Delhi on May 7 (ANI)

The top court noted that Kavitha is behind bars for five months and the trial will take a long time to complete as there are 493 witnesses and many documents

considered 'vulnerable', so the exception would not apply to her. A trial court order by Judge Kaveri Baweja had interpreted the provision on the same lines to deny bail to Kavitha.

Taking strong exception to the Delhi High Court observations that an educated, sophisticated woman is not entitled to bail under the beneficiary provision for women under PMLA, the apex court said: "The learned single-judge while deny-

ing relief under Section 45 comes to a heartening conclusion that appellant is highly educated and has made significant contributions and (engaged in) social work. (High) Court while recording her accomplishments said it cannot lose sight of serious allegations and proceeded to observe that present appellant cannot be a vulnerable woman." It said that courts should be more sensitive towards women accused under

PMLA.

"Courts need to be more sensitive and sympathetic to those in that category. We find that the learned single-judge has totally misdirected herself in applying the proviso," the order said.

In view of the same, the appeal was allowed and Kavitha was directed to be released on bail.

Kavitha was arrested by the ED on March 15 from Hyderabad. Subsequently, the CBI took her into custody on April 11.

The CBI and the ED have claimed that she was involved in the exchange of bribes and the laundering of money in connection with the Delhi Excise Policy. The trial court rejected K

Kavitha's bail plea in both the CBI and ED cases on May 6.

The case against Kavitha and others originated in 2022 when a First Information Report (FIR) was registered by the CBI alleging that the Delhi Excise Policy of 2021-22 was manipulated to facilitate monopolisation and cartelisation of wholesale and retail liquor trade in Delhi.

As per the CBI and ED, certain persons/groups from South India benefited in the process and some amount of their profits was given to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which used the same to campaign for the Goa assembly elections.

Kavitha is one of several political leaders arrested in the case.

SIT begins probe into 'harassments' in Malayalam film industry

Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala - Amid sexual harassment allegations in the Malayalam film industry, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been formed to investigate the hardships faced by women in the industry. The SIT met at the police headquarters on Tuesday to outline the continuation of the probe.

"Special Investigation Team formed to investigate the hardships faced by women in the film industry convened at the police headquarters to outline continuation of the probe. The SIT has been strengthened by including additional women officers. All related cases regis-

tered at local police stations are to be handed over to the SIT for further investigation," said the statement from the Kerala Police.

The Kerala government had earlier said that it has decided to form a special investigation team, led by a senior police officer, to investigate allegations of sexual abuse in the Malayalam film industry.

"In light of recent interviews and statements from several women in the Malayalam film industry detailing the hardships they have faced, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan convened a meeting with senior police officials here on Sunday," said an



Congress Youth workers stage a protest against Kerala Film Academy Chairman Ranjith over the allegations of his inappropriate behaviour towards Bengali actress Sreelekha Mitra, in Thiruvananthapuram on Saturday (ANI)

official release from the Chief Minister's Office.

On August 26, Malayalam film actor Minu Muneer made sexual harassment allegations against some of her co-stars in the Malayalam film industry. Minu accused actors M Mukesh, Jayasurya, Maniyanpilla Raju, and Idavela Babu of subjecting her to verbal and physical abuse in the process of filming movies.

The allegations came a day after the resignation of director Ranjith and actor Siddique from their positions in the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) following accusations made against them.

Earlier this month, a redacted version of the Justice Hema Committee report on harassment faced by women in the Malayalam cinema industry was made public. It contained shocking accounts alleging harassment, exploitation, and ill-treatment of women professionals.

The 235-page report, published after redacting the names of witnesses and the accused, notes that the Malayalam film industry is controlled by about 10 to 15 male producers, directors, and actors who dominate and exert control over the industry.

ANI

IAEA chief in Russia to inspect Kursk NPP

Moscow, Russia - International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) head Rafael Grossi arrived in the Russian town of Kurchatov on Tuesday to inspect the safety of the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant (NPP), which Moscow has repeatedly stated was attacked by Ukrainian forces in recent weeks following their incursion into the Kursk region.

The visit by IAEA Director General Grossi was organised in response to security concerns raised by Ukrainian troops' incursion into the Kursk region, which began on August 6. The UN nuclear watchdog chief has previously

warned of the serious risk of damage to the Kursk NPP as a result of ongoing military actions, noting that the IAEA takes the situation surrounding the plant very seriously.

Grossi plans to visit the plant, meet with its management, and assess the situation and severity of the threat to it.

The IAEA has repeatedly stated that military activity near nuclear facilities poses a serious threat to nuclear and physical security. On August 22, Ukraine attempted a drone attack on the NPP. The drone was shot down near a spent nuclear fuel storage facility.

Anadolu Agency

Pakistan's PM Sharif vows retribution for attacks

Islamabad, Pakistan - Pakistani security forces on Tuesday hunted for separatist militants who were behind a deadly series of attacks in the southwestern province of Baluchistan, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif saying there was 'no room for any kind of weakness'.

At least 61 people in Baluchistan, including 19 soldiers, died in the Monday attacks on civilians and security forces, which were claimed by the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA).

The coordinated attacks on buses, a bridge and a hotel in several districts throughout the province were some of the worst violent incidents in the restive region's history.

The attacks, which occurred as a high-ranking Chinese general was visiting Pakistan to talk with



Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

civil and military leaders, came amid widespread resentment in Baluchistan of foreign actors - notably China - seen as exploiting the impoverished province at the behest of the state.

The BLA is the most active militant separatist group in the province and has previously tar-

geted Chinese interests in the region.

Pakistan's prime minister told a meeting of the federal Cabinet that '(we) have to move forward with a resolute decision. There is no room for any kind of weakness'.

He said the militants aimed 'to

At least 61 people in Baluchistan, including 19 soldiers, died in the Monday attacks on civilians and security forces, which were claimed by the Baluchistan Liberation Army

halt Pakistan's progress, sabotage the development projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and create divisions between Pakistan and China'.

"In Baluchistan, the doors for negotiation are always open to those who believe in Pakistan and

accept its constitution and flag," he said.

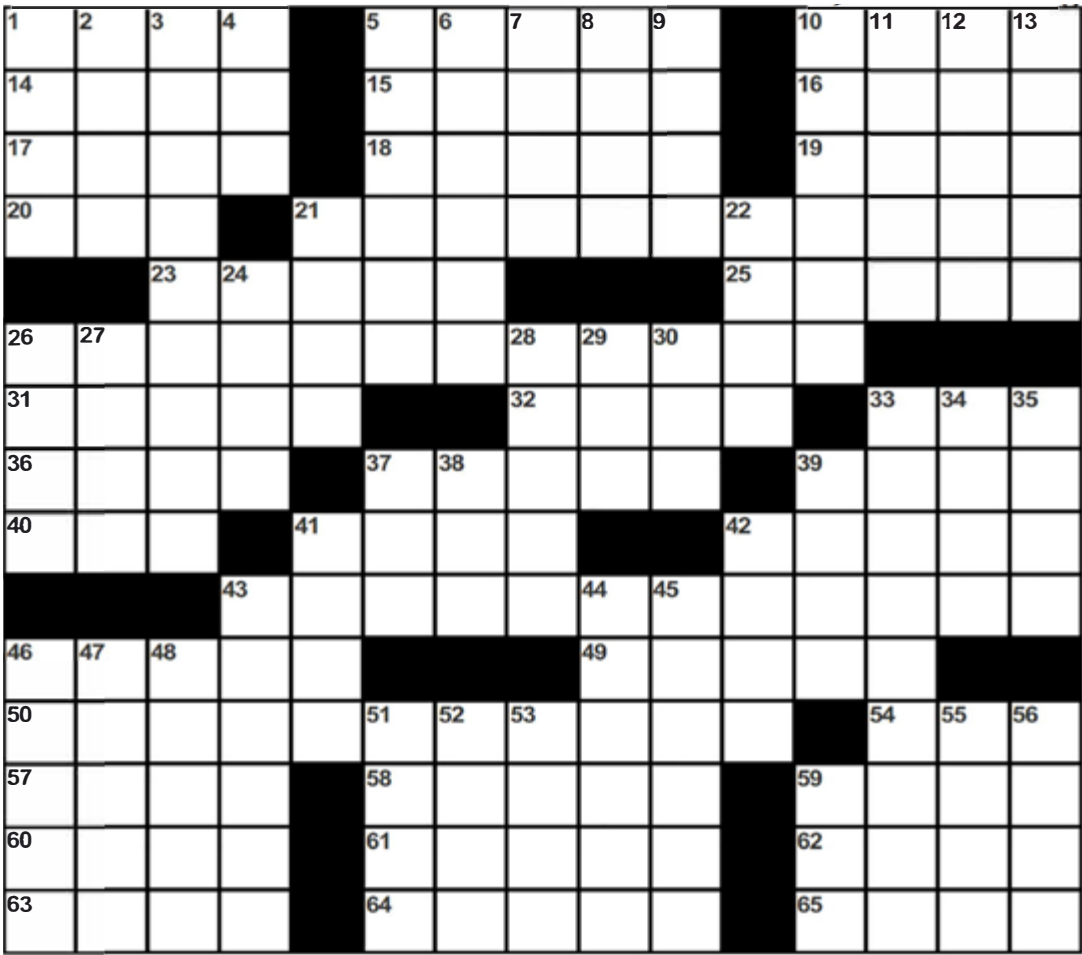
China has also commented on the attacks.

"China is ready to further strengthen counterterrorism security co-operation with the Pakistani side in order to jointly maintain regional peace and security," Lin Jian, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson, told a regular news briefing.

The militants took control of a highway and shot dead 23 people, mostly labourers from neighbouring Punjab province, attacked a hotel and also assaulted the railway bridge that connects Baluchistan to the rest of Pakistan.

The group said seven suicide bombers and over 800 fighters took part in the attack action. DW

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) St. PaulA's recess
 - 5) Cliffside debris
 - 10) Chowder morsel
 - 14) It may be furrowed or knitted
 - 15) Capricious ideas
 - 16) Move, in Realtor lingo
 - 17) Low-fat, casually
 - 18) Camel's stopping place
 - 19) "Go back," on a PC
 - 20) Psyche section
 - 21) Spiny-shelled crustacean
 - 23) Roaring success
 - 25) Do penance
 - 26) Wall-covering workers
 - 31) "Me, Myself and _" (Carrey movie)
 - 32) "Got it"
 - 33) St. PaulA's seating
 - 36) Celestial Seasonings products
 - 37) Big exam
 - 39) Clothier Strauss
 - 40) Hairy Himalayan beast
 - 41) Johnson of "Laugh-In"
 - 42) Minimal amounts
 - 43) Sidestroker's leg movement
 - 46) Modify to fit
 - 49) Ignited anew
 - 50) Where gains are equally balanced by losses (and a clue to this puzzle's theme)
 - 54) Short-lived craze
 - 57) Lyft alternative
 - 58) Islam branch
 - 59) Dunce cap shape
 - 60) Littlest litter member
 - 61) Unforeseen difficulties
 - 62) Half-inning threesome
 - 63) Cockpit guesses, for short
- DOWN**
- 1) Fit to serve
 - 2) Prudish sort
 - 3) In a way
 - 4) Lea female
 - 5) Nike's logo
 - 6) Dance with a three-step turn
 - 7) Capitalist's gamble
 - 8) Disney's boy detective
 - 9) Old U.S. gas brand
 - 10) Pie perimeters
 - 11) Slowly, in music
 - 12) Priscilla's John
 - 13) Julianne of "Still Alice"
 - 21) Roast beef order
 - 22) Like Hubbard's cupboard
 - 24) Department store department
 - 26) Be sorry for
 - 27) Neck of the woods
 - 28) Dressed to the _
 - 29) Govt. property overseer
 - 30) Sniggler's quany
 - 33) Bite-size cake
 - 34) Escape action, briefly
 - 35) "Ring around the collar" brand
 - 37) TGIF part (Abbr.)
 - 38) Common possessive
 - 39) Trickster in Norse myth
 - 41) Gets off the fence
 - 42) Capri or Wight
 - 43) Is wearing
 - 44) Oriole color
 - 45) Shirking one's duties
 - 46) Clear sky color
 - 47) Air for the first time
 - 48) Where the action is
 - 51) Cold War initials
 - 52) Bond type, briefly
 - 53) Swarming pest
 - 55) _ up (pay one's share)
 - 56) Blotter's spot
 - 59) Cabin bed

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your vision for the future is very strong today. So much so that you will be seeing things that haven't even been invented yet! It's going to give you a certain air of mystery. People will be intrigued by you and your Cheshire cat smile, and they'll be eager to strike up a conversation. Keep them guessing and you will be able to create at least one very interesting new friendship.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

It's going to be difficult to explain your ideas or yourself today. Thoughts are scattered, and certain intimidating people could leave you tongue-tied. If that happens, just be patient with yourself. Give yourself time to go off and put together a script if you need to. Not only will it help you feel at ease, it will keep you on track. Plus, other people will be envious of how organised and together you seem to be!

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

In order to get more romance in your life, go back in time. Not all old-fashioned ideas are keepers, but some of them are lost treasures you should try to regain. Instead of rushing into a new relationship because you're eager to get something going, opt for some courtship. Take things slowly and really get to know the person. If you're in a relationship, integrate a few courtship rituals into it. Go on a date with your sweetie and pretend you've just met.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

In what country was the "Red Cross" founded?

A. England
B. Germany
C. France
D. Switzerland

2. In 1954, the US Department of Defence established what song as the official musical tribute to the president of the USA?

A. Hail to the Chief
B. I Think It's Gonna Work Out Fine
C. Imagine
D. Smoke Gets In Your Eyes
Correct Answer: Hail to the Chief

3. Although an annual Thanksgiving Day had been observed in several colonies throughout what became the USA, who proclaimed USA's first national Thanksgiving Day?

A. Abraham Lincoln
B. George Washington
C. Theodore Roosevelt
D. Harry S. Truman

Answers: 1. D 2. A 3. B

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Things that stick out like a sore thumb are going to obviously grab your attention today, but they will also get you thinking. Unusual combinations, unexpected directions, and any weird behaviour that you run across will all strike you as fascinating in some way. Your mind is hungry for a puzzle to solve, and you might get a real feast's worth of conundrums! As a result, you can expect some brave new ideas to swarm into your head very soon.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 23

Absolutely anything is possible today, given your level of enthusiasm and creativity. This is a great time to figure out new ways of doing old things. You may find a new way of reorganising your work, getting across town, knowing someone better, or cooking your favourite dish. It's all about experimentation and trial and error. And remember that you learn more from mistakes than successes, so don't get too down on yourself if at first you don't succeed.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Help yourself today by helping others. Not only will the gratitude you receive from the people you aid lift your spirits, but it will also inspire you to do bigger and better things for the world at large. Now is the right time to move forward with big plans. People in power will be receptive to your ideas, and they'll be willing to give you the resources and encouragement you need. Consider a long-term volunteer opportunity: It might finally be time to take that step.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Today, it's best if you can surround yourself with people who look at the world from a different point of view than you do. If all you encounter are folks who feel the same way about things as you, how are you going to have any excitement in your life? Friction can cause great enlightenment, not just conflict, so don't be afraid of it. In fact, why not seek it out? Stirring up a little bit of controversy is good for everyone right now.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Sometimes needy people only get needier. Keep that in mind when one of them comes to you again for a favour. You may be helping them, but who's helping you? Too much time is being drained from your life and devoted to other people's lives. It's time to put yourself back in center stage. Make this effort for them one more time, but make it clear that they're on their own after this. You're doing them no favours by enabling them. It's time for them to walk on their own two feet.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

A high level of excitement is around you today. People are all buzzing about something that you either don't know about or do know about but aren't that fascinated by. It's okay not to join in on their energy. If you don't feel it, you don't feel it. Faking it would only feel weird to you, and the forced feelings will be obvious to the smarter folks in your circle of friends. So just feel how you feel and don't second-guess yourself. No one will be bothered.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You need to curb your spending for now. Excessive shopping could leave you cash poor just when you need cash the most! If you are dying to buy things, at least slow the process down. Put more time into researching the best brands or models, and try to find a way to get what you want at a lower price. When was the last time you went to a flea market or a secondhand shop? These places can offer you a very satisfying shopping experience for less money.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

The time you have been able to spend with your family has been slim to none lately, and they are starting to forget what you look like! Do what you can to get back into a closer relationship with them. Cancel whatever you need to cancel to devote a big chunk of free time to at least one family member. They know what a sacrifice it will be, and they will appreciate it. It's time to focus on what really matters.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Things that appeal to your intellect will be drawing you in today. You'll find that the most challenging concepts suddenly make a lot of sense, and your brain will get a new sense of its capabilities. This means it's the perfect day to readdress a project or book that has been a struggle to deal with. Complicated ideas aren't so complicated right now. In fact, they're pretty fun to wade through! If you're being tested or challenged in any way today, expect things to go well.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

I	S	S	A
A	L	S	O
U	R	S	I
E	B	L	T

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

DUSAN DAZZLES

Vlahovic hits double as Juventus cruise to victory against Verona in Serie A

Verona, Italy - Juventus continued their flying start under new manager Thiago Motta with a comfortable 3-0 victory at Hellas Verona in Serie A on Monday as a Dusan Vlahovic double and a goal by Nicolo Savona sent them to the top of the table.

Juventus, who kick-started their campaign with a 3-0 win over promoted Como last week, are the only side who kept their points tally at a maximum over the opening two match days of the Italian top flight and lead the

Samuel Mbangula set up Savona with a brilliant lofted pass across the face of the goal and the 21-year-old, coming from Juventus' reserves team, scored on his first start for the first team.

Vlahovic then made it 3-0 from the spot following halftime, after Juve were awarded a penalty for Jackson Tchatchoua's foul on winger Samuel Mbangula.

Juventus have won both of their opening two Serie A games of a season for the first time since 2019-20.



Dusan Vlahovic of Juventus celebrates after scoring against Hellas Verona in Serie A on Monday



Thiago Motta

Dusan 'a positive leader in the group', says Motta

Verona, Italy - Juventus showed great team effort when they actively engaged in pressing the opponent, manager Thiago Motta said after they beat Verona 3-0 in Serie A on Monday, praising his players for the job well done.

Juventus delivered another brilliant performance to move to the top of the standings, after they beat promoted Como 3-0 last week in their season opener.

"You can see the group's attitude from the way they press the opponent. They take risks, but if you recover the ball it's a big advantage," Motta told DAZN.

"Congratulations to Dusan (Vlahovic), but also to all the others who applied good pressure allowing us to score.

"This phase of the game is important, we need everyone. Today our forwards worked hard and well, having this balance is very important because it leads us to play games like tonight's." Striker Vlahovic scored twice to help Juventus secure a comfortable victory.

"A positive leader in the group," Motta added.

"He played for the team, doing a lot of movement and above all he is a player who knows how to score goals. I am satisfied with him, he must continue like this."

Netting his first Serie A goal since April, the Serbian forward seemed relieved to have been back on target.

Juventus, who kick-started their campaign with a 3-0 win over promoted Como last week, are the only side who kept their points tally at a maximum over the opening two match days of the Italian top flight

standings with six points.

They were winless in their previous eight away games in Serie A.

Vlahovic put Juve in front in the 28th minute with a low shot from around the penalty spot for his first league goal since April 19.

Manuel Locatelli won the ball on the left flank before Kenan Yildiz teed up Vlahovic with a low pass into the box and the Serbian striker struck past Verona keeper Lorenzo Montipo into a bottom corner.

Defender Savona doubled the lead for the visitors before the break, scoring with a header inside a far post.

Since their return to the top-flight in 2007-08, only once have they previously won their opening two Serie A matches without conceding, doing so in 2014-15.

Verona, who looked nothing like the team who stunned Napoli 3-0 at home last week, could have pulled a goal back seven minutes from time through Casper Tengstedt.

The Danish forward produced the only shot on target for the hosts but his effort from point-blank range was saved by Juve goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio.

Juventus next host AS Roma on Sunday while Verona travel to Genoa earlier that day.

Selling players Chelsea's main target, says Enzo Maresca

London, England - Chelsea's main aim in the transfer window is to offload players from their squad so the club can balance its books, manager Enzo Maresca said on Tuesday.

Chelsea have been busy in the market since American owner Todd Boehly took over two years ago.

The West London club have spent over 160 million pounds (\$211.50 million) on 11 new signings for this season, including winger Pedro Neto, forward Joao Felix, midfielder Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall and goalkeeper Filip Jorgensen.

Chelsea sold Conor Gallagher to Atletico Madrid and



Raheem Sterling is not training with the first team

defender Ian Maatsen joined Aston Villa, but they still have over 40 senior players registered are at risk of falling foul of the Premier League's profit and sustainability rules.

"The target is to solve the economic problem in terms of selling players," Maresca told the club website. "From there,

we try to do our best and see where we arrive."

Chelsea's struggles to offload players are well documented, with England internationals Ben Chilwell and Raheem Sterling among a group of about 15 high earners frozen out by the manager and not training with the first team.

Colombian star Rodriguez joins Vallecano after fine Copa show

Madrid, Spain - Colombia captain James Rodriguez has returned to LaLiga for a second stint after signing with Rayo Vallecano on a free transfer, the Spanish club announced on Monday.

The 33-year-old, who made 125 appearances for LaLiga giants Real Madrid between 2014-2020, joins Vallecano after leaving Brazilian side Sao Paulo.

Rodriguez had a fine Copa America campaign during which he scored one goal and provided six assists to lead Colombia to the final



James Rodriguez

He played 26 times for the Toffees but left 12 months into a two-year deal in a move to Qatari club Al Rayyan. He joined Olympiakos a year later before moving to Sao Paulo in 2023.

Rodriguez, capped 106 times for his country, had a fine Copa America campaign during which he scored one goal and provided six assists to lead Colombia to the final and was named as the tournament's Best Player.

Brighton sign O'Riley

Brighton & Hove Albion have signed Denmark midfielder Matt O'Riley from Scottish Premiership side Celtic on a five-year contract, the Premier League club announced on Monday.

Financial details were not disclosed by either club, but British media reported that the deal was worth around 25 million pounds (\$33 million). The 23-year-old London-born player, capped twice for Denmark, started his senior career at fellow Premier League club Fulham before moving to English League Two side Milton Keynes Dons.

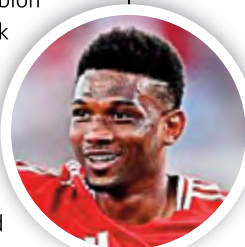
Ivory Coast recall Man United's Diallo

Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast - Manchester United forward Amad Diallo has been recalled to the Ivory Coast squad for the first time in some 18 months as they begin the defence of their Africa Cup of Nations title.

Diallo, 22, won the last of his six caps for the Ivorians in March 2023, missing out on Cup of Nations success in February when Ivory Coast won the tournament on home soil.

They begin their bid to qualify for the next finals in Morocco in late 2025 with qualifiers against Zambia at home in Bouake on Sept. 6 and away to Chad on Sept. 10.

Diallo was included by coach Emerse Fae in a 25-man squad for the two matches, with first call-ups for Swiss-based striker Benie Traore and midfielder Mario Dorgeles from Danish club Nordsjaelland.



Amad Diallo



Hansi Flick

Barcelona's goal should always be to win the league, says Flick

Madrid, Spain - Barcelona have started the LaLiga season well with two consecutive win despite missing several key players, raising expectations around the prospects of new manager Hansi Flick.

Top of LaLiga alongside Celta Vigo on six points, Barcelona were in Madrid to face Rayo Vallecano on Tuesday, who are unbeaten after shocking Real Sociedad 2-1 and holding Getafe to a hard-fought goalless draw on Saturday.

"The goal in Barcelona should always be to win the league," Flick told a press conference on Monday. "Sure, it's a long road, but we have started well, al-

though everything can change quickly. Now we are happy about our start and we are confident. We are not looking ahead to May, our focus is to keep momentum in the next game.

"We are very satisfied with what the team is doing on the pitch. The quality of the training sessions is good, the players are very focused, the intensity is good... and you can see that in the matches."

Following a trophyless last campaign which ended with the controversial firing of manager Xavi Hernandez, Barcelona signed former Bayern Munich and Germany coach Flick to help them regain the LaLiga.

QUEST FOR HISTORY

Djokovic starts bid for record 25th major with win against Albot

New York, US - Defending US Open champion Novak Djokovic began his quest for a historic 25th singles major in emphatic fashion with a 6-2, 6-2, 6-4 win against Radu Albot on Monday night at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The Olympic gold medallist met resistance from the Moldovan qualifier early in each set, but Albot could not sustain his challenge enough to seriously threaten for his first Top 10 win—a result that would have ranked among the all-time tennis upsets.

“I think it was a solid start,” Djokovic said after his first hard-court match since Indian Wells in March. “Look, I struggled with my serve and the rhythm on certain shots. Overall from the back of the court I thought I played pretty well. “It’s always challenging to start, particularly when you haven’t played on this surface for five, six months and coming off an Olympic gold and playing on clay broke early in the second for a 2-1 lead.

That sparked an eventful stretch of three consecutive breaks, with the defending champion shrugging off his lone lost service game of the evening by breaking back with the help of two passing-shot winners.

Albot hung in despite being on



Novak Djokovic celebrates his victory against Radu Albot

broke early in the second for a 2-1 lead.

That sparked an eventful stretch of three consecutive breaks, with the defending champion shrugging off his lone lost service game of the evening by breaking back with the help of two passing-shot winners.

Albot hung in despite being on

the ropes in set three, fighting off multiple break points in consecutive games to lead 3-2. But the Serb buckled down and won four rallies of 10+ balls to secure his sixth and final break of the match, ultimately seeing the victory home with no further fuss.

With his 89th US Open match win, Djokovic ties Roger Federer

for second-most wins at the event in men’s history. Now 89-13 in New York, Djokovic trails only Jimmy Connors (98-17) on the US Open’s all-time list.

“I was not aware of it, to be honest with you,” Djokovic said of the centre court milestone.

“It’s definitely the loudest stadium we have in the history of our

It’s always challenging to start, particularly when you haven’t played on this surface for five, six months and coming off an Olympic gold and playing on clay

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

sport. The night sessions are the best in the world here.”

While having never played Albot before, Djokovic said he had done his homework on the 34-year-old who beat both his younger brothers Marko and Djordje during their playing days.

“They both lost to him so hopefully I can avenge my brothers tonight,” he told ESPN commentator Brad Gilbert with a laugh before taking the court.

The Serb will bid for win No. 90 in the second round against countryman Laslo Djere.



Victoria Azarenka

Azarenka overcomes slow start to beat qualifier

New York, US - Victoria Azarenka went from feeling overpowered to feeling sick to feeling angry to, finally, feeling triumphant in her US Open first-round match on Monday.

Azarenka, a three-time finalist at the US Open, overcame a sluggish start and rallied to defeat Ukrainian qualifier Yuliia Starodubtseva, 3-6, 6-1, 6-1, in the Grandstand to advance to the second round.

The scoreline—particularly the final two sets—looks flattering on paper, but Azarenka had it all to do after Starodubtseva, who won three rounds in qualifying at each of the four Grand Slams this year, reeled off the first four games of the match. Even though Azarenka fought back to get the match on serve again at 3-4, Starodubtseva broke for a third time and served for the set at 5-3. The world No. 146 fought off a break point to pull out the set and move one step closer to the biggest win in her career.

During the break between the first and second sets, Azarenka, who was visibly in discomfort after a few points late in that opening frame, had her blood pressure checked by the trainer. Whatever that reading was, her blood pressure soon peaked after back-to-back double faults (two of her 10 doubles in the match) gave Starodubtseva a break-point opportunity in the third game of the second set. Azarenka disgustedly threw her racquet onto the court after the second of those double faults, and that outward expression of anger proved to be a catalyst for a turnaround; she won the final three points of that game for 2-1, the next four games to win the second set, and the final six games of the third.

Azarenka retired from her Round of 16 match in Toronto earlier this summer and she subsequently withdrew from the tournament in Cincinnati, so her early physical struggles against Starodubtseva was far from a surprise.



Dominic Thiem (R) with Ben Shelton after the match

Former champion Thiem bids farewell to US Open

New York, US - Former champion Dominic Thiem’s final appearance at the U.S. Open ended tamely on Monday after he was beaten 6-4 6-2 6-2 in the first round by American Ben Shelton.

The Austrian has struggled to reproduce the form that carried him to the 2020 Flushing Meadows title and announced he would retire from the sport this season after being troubled by a wrist injury in recent years.

Shelton leaned on his powerful forehand and sent over eight aces to open the action on Arthur Ashe Stadium, as the 21-year-old hopes to recapture the magic of his charmed run to the semi-finals 12 months ago.

Despite struggling with his serve, Thiem showed he had some fight left in him as he fended off two break points in the 10th game but a relentless Shelton forced him into an error to break him on the third attempt to take the opening set.

The American extinguished Thiem’s lone break point opportunity in the opening game of the second set and the Austrian handed Shelton a break in the

second game with a double fault and an unforced error.

Shelton showed he could be a threat over the next two weeks as he broke Thiem again to close out the second set. He ran away with the match in the third set, pummeling 34 winners in a confident performance.

“Not much better atmosphere than being here at Ashe,” said Shelton. “I’m glad that I had the opportunity to open it up here.”

Thiem, who hoisted the trophy in front of empty stands in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, stayed back on court for ages on Monday to sign memorabilia for fans.

“I am super happy I got the chance to play my last U.S. Open match on this court,” Thiem said.

“I can now spend some time with you guys to say thank you to all of you and to make the time up that we missed four years ago.

“I was struggling enough the last years, especially since I was not able to come back to my level, but once I took the decision this year in March, I was happy about it,” Thiem told reporters.

Defending champion Gauff thumps Gracheva

New York, US - Defending champion Coco Gauff overcame early nerves to cruise by France’s Varvara Gracheva 6-2, 6-0 in the first round of the U.S. Open on Monday.

Gauff was popular as ever with her home crowd as she sent 10 aces over on Arthur Ashe Stadium, showing her determination to put a string of frustrating performances behind her in New York.

“I was just trying to enjoy the match,” said Gauff, who set up a meeting with German Tatjana Maria in the next round. “I think today was the best tennis I’ve played in a while.”

Gauff suffered early exits at tune-up tournaments in Cincinnati and Toronto and there were early signs of trouble as she had five double faults in the first set.

She had to fend off three break points to hold her serve in the second game but the world number three found her footing from there, breaking her opponent’s serve in the third and seventh games.

Gracheva was never able to match Gauff’s firepower, with 25 unforced errors and just five win-



Coco Gauff hits a return to Varvara Gracheva

Gauff suffered early exits in Cincinnati and Toronto and there were early signs of trouble as she had five double faults in the first set

ners, as the American broke her on the fourth try in the opening game of the second set.

Gauff ploughed through the second set in 27 minutes, upping her level across the board as she produced only five unforced errors. She exclaimed with frustration as she hit the ball out of bounds to give her opponent a break point chance in the final game, but got back on track with

a pair of aces before her opponent handed her the match with an error on the final point.

The 20-year-old pumped her fist with satisfaction after clinching the win and reminded fans that she was bringing a new mentality to Flushing Meadows a year after winning her maiden major.

“It was definitely a lot of pressure, this tournament, but I’m just enjoying it,” said Gauff.

Sabalenka cruises past qualifier Hon in opener

New York, US - Aryna Sabalenka opened her U.S. Open campaign with a 6-3 6-3 win over qualifier Priscilla Hon on Monday, with the Belarusian fighting hard for every point in a dominant performance to wrap up the opening night action at Louis Armstrong Stadium.

Sabalenka, who came up short in the final a year ago and reached the semis in 2021 and 2022, fired off 27 winners to set up a meeting with Italian Lucia Bronzetti in the second round.

“Even though I didn’t play my best tennis I was fighting for every point,” said Sabalenka, who



Aryna Sabalenka

arrived in New York in terrific form after winning in Cincinnati.

“She played really aggressive, great tennis today. It wasn’t easy facing her in the first round.”

With the New York crowd on her side, the twice Australian Open winner used her lethal forehand to break Australian Hon in the opening game and converted on another chance to close out the first set.

After trading breaks, Sabalenka converted an opportunity with a backhand winner in the sixth game of the second set. Hon had upped her level

across the board, producing only one unforced error in the second set, but could not match Sabalenka’s firepower as she failed to convert on any of the five break point chances she had in the seventh game.

Sabalenka, who took time off this season to address injury issues, closed out the affair with a pair of forehand winners, pumping her fist in subdued celebration.

“I took everything I could from that little pause,” said Sabalenka. “Hopefully it’s going to play well for me.”



Toto Wolff

Constructors' championship wide open and that's good for F1, says Wolff

Zandvoort, Netherlands - McLaren and Dutch Grand Prix winner Lando Norris have blown the Formula One constructors' championship wide open with Red Bull in danger of being overhauled, according to Mercedes boss Toto Wolff.

Norris took the chequered flag 22.8 seconds clear of Red Bull's home hero Max Verstappen at a windy Zandvoort on Sunday, finishing with a fastest lap flourish to secure an additional point.

While the Briton is a massive 70 points behind Verstappen in the drivers' standings with nine races remaining, McLaren are now only 30 behind reigning champions Red Bull in the constructors' battle. "He (Norris) has basically annihilated all of the competition with that fastest lap at the end, with a 42-lap old hard tyre and a 20 second gap," Wolff told reporters after the race.

"So I think this championship, the constructors' championship, is wide open in my opinion and that's good for Formula One."

With sprint races inflating the available points tally at some weekends to come, the gap is one that could be closed relatively quickly. Red Bull scored 54 points from the China sprint weekend alone in April while McLaren scored 27 points more than Red Bull in Hungary last month.

McLaren have outscored once-dominant Red Bull in eight of the last nine races while Mercedes, fourth overall, have done so in four of the last five.

There have been seven different race winners so far, the most since 2012, and while McLaren, Ferrari and Mercedes have triumphed with both their drivers, Sergio Perez has become Red

Bull's Achilles heel. The Mexican has scored just 36 points in his last nine races but his team have stuck with him in the hope his contribution will pick up again - and the absence of a clearly better alternative.

While Mercedes are 158 points off the top, they have won three races this season - the same as McLaren and one more than third-placed Ferrari who are 34 points behind Norris' team and have their home Italian Grand Prix next up on Sunday.

Red Bull boss Christian Horner

He (Norris) has basically annihilated all of the competition with that fastest lap at the end, with a 42-lap old hard tyre and a 20 second gap

TOTO WOLFF

pointed out that Sunday was still only the fourth time this season that triple world champion Verstappen had come away from a race weekend with his points lead reduced.

He recognised, however, that Red Bull - who started the season with Verstappen taking seven successive poles and winning seven of the first 10 races - had issues to resolve and McLaren currently had the quicker car.

"It can change very quickly, and that means it can change back the other way as well," he said. "McLaren has been the benchmark car over the last few races, we're very acutely aware that we need to respond to that."

NEW CHALLENGE FOR AL HARTHY

Ace Omani racer and team target big points in 6hr race at Circuit of the Americas

Muscat - Oman's Ahmad al Harthy returns to race action this weekend during round six of the FIA World Endurance Championship, the event marking another test for the Team WRT driver with his maiden visit to the Circuit of the Americas in the USA.

Badged as the 'Lone Star Le Mans', the six-hour race at COTA in Austin, Texas, will be contested on Sunday and Al Harthy and his esteemed teammates in the No.46 BMW M4 LMGT3 entry, Valentino Rossi and Maxime Martin, are determined to deliver a serious points haul.

Going into the ante-penultimate event of the FIA WEC campaign, the trio hold sixth in the LMGT3 driver standings after a season which has certainly experienced ups and downs - the highlight thus far being a fantastic second place at Imola in Italy during round two.

"I really cannot wait to get on track at COTA for the first time this week, it's going to be another amazing first for me in my career and I'm looking forward to learning this incredible circuit and making the best preparations we can for qualifying and the race," said Al Harthy. "I'm excited to be racing in the USA for the first time, and proudly promoting Oman as we do that - hopefully with a strong result."

"It's been a good season generally in FIA WEC, our first together with Vale and Maxime with WRT, with just a few things



Ahmad al Harthy and his teammates Valentino Rossi and Maxime Martin are determined to win points at the Circuit of the Americas

working against us, especially Spa and Le Mans. Overall I'm happy with my performances, it's incredible working with such a professional team as WRT, and we will all be working hard to deliver the best we can over the last three races - starting at COTA this weekend!"

Two unfortunate non-scoring events, at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium and Le Mans in France, have tempered the teams' chal-

lenge in LMGT3 but ahead of this coming weekend's race in North America they are only nine points shy of the top four in the championship. Last time out at Interlagos in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Al Harthy, Martin and Rossi combined to deliver a richly deserved return to the points with a very creditable top five result from 12th on the class grid in a sun-baked six-hour contest. The desire, of course, is to make an overdue return to the

LMGT3 podium but in a category as hugely competitive as the FIA World Endurance Championship that is much easier said than done, with an entry packed with the world's most high profile teams and professional endurance racers.

As is always the case, OQ, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omantel, Experience Oman and BMW Omansup-ported Al Harthy will be keenly

focused on developing the very best race set-up during the practice sessions in Austin. From there, he will be determined to progress to the top 10 Hyperpole qualifying shoot-out after only just missing out in Brazil by a mere tenth of a second.

LMGT3 qualifying is scheduled to begin at 15.00 local time on Saturday with the Hyperpole shoot-out taking place directly after.

India's Shah elected ICC chairman after Barclay steps aside

New Delhi, India - India's Jay Shah will succeed New Zealander Greg Barclay as chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC) later this year, the governing body said on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old Shah, son of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home minister Amit Shah, will be the youngest ever ICC chairman when he begins his tenure on December 1.

Barclay decided against seeking a third term and Shah,

considered the game's most influential administrator as the secretary of the world's richest cricket board, was the sole candidate, the ICC said.

"I am humbled by the nomination as the Chair of the International Cricket Council. I am committed to working closely with the ICC team and our member nations to further globalise cricket," Shah said in an ICC statement. "We stand at a critical juncture where it is in-



Jay Shah

creasingly important to balance the coexistence of multiple formats, promote the adoption of advanced technologies, and introduce our marquee events to new global markets. Our goal is to make cricket more inclusive and popular than ever before.

"While we will build on the valuable lessons learned, we must also embrace fresh thinking and innovation to elevate the love for cricket worldwide," Shah said.

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FOOD, HISTORY AND IDENTITY

Passion on her plate

Tridwip K Das

Dina Macki walks the line between Michelin cuisine and street food effortlessly. She was among 20 guests invited to a £3,000 per guest dinner prepared by seven – no less – Michelin chefs at One&Only One Za’abeel in Dubai recently. A few months earlier, in February, she wrote a commissioned piece for *Conde Nast Traveller Middle East* on the best street-food restaurants in Muscat.

Third on this list featured a no-frills eatery in a busy corner of Ruwi called Bakery & Rosted (sic) that has seven items on its menu, all priced about RO1. It has a loyal Omani and Indian subcontinent clientele who mostly take away. But Dina always eats in.

“I’m just about happy to sit anywhere in any setting to enjoy great food,” she says. While she warned her readers that it’s not for the faint-hearted, she also lured them by writing that this is where they’d “find the best tandoori chicken and fish in the city.”

So, other than the obvious, how do the two experiences – dinner prepared by seven Michelin chefs vs Bakery & Rosted’s seven-item menu – compare? “I feel like there’s more love going into it,” Dina says in reference to the latter. “You feel the hard work and love; the blood, sweat and tears in it. The food tastes so much better because there’s probably sweat in it. Okay, I don’t like to imagine it, but I’m telling you that’s why it’s good. There’s passion to give people their food. The whole experience is so authentic, so rough and ready.”

Raising awareness on Oman

These are the kind of stories Dina likes to narrate and has a book full of these. Released in February, *Bahari - Recipes from an Omani Kitchen and Beyond* is the first Omani cookbook written by an Omani chef featuring close to 90 recipes. Three years in the making, Dina travelled extensively across Oman (except Al Wusta governorate) and Zanzibar for the book, tapping into stories behind the recipes and ingredients.

Bahari won the Jane Grigson Trust Award for New Food and Drink Writers which recognises distinguished scholarship and depth of research in cookbooks. ‘Dina aims to educate the world on the food and culture of Oman, a hidden gem of the Middle East...’ the jury stated of *Bahari*.

Her ability to engage readers and TV viewers – besides taste buds – has brought her enviable projects and collaborations with renowned brands, including Adobe, Mastercard, Nat Geo and most recently, Amouage.

Dina has developed recipes for British brands Tesco and Waitrose, and made five appearances in *Sunday Brunch* on Channel 4 and two in *Saturday Kitchen Live* on BBC. Taking Dina away from food to corporate social responsibility, last year Magnum Ice Cream took her to Ivory Coast – her bucket list destination – to write a feature for *Glamour* magazine about a programme launched by the company to socially and economically empower the women of their cocoa farming communities.

“I’m not the best cook and I don’t want to be the greatest chef there is. I prefer to tell the stories of culture, of me and my identity. And I love the element of travelling, writing and filming,” Dina says of what drives her.

Dina Macki - Omani-British chef, food writer, presenter, recipe developer and food consultant specialising in Omani, Zanzibari, Middle Eastern and East African cuisine - is preparing to wear yet another hat with the opening of a ‘Portuguese, Mediterranean meets Oman in the middle of fine dining but still accessible restaurant’ at Muttrah Fort this October

How it all began

A search for identity is how Dina landed behind the kitchen counter. Born and raised in an Omani-Zanzibari family in Portsmouth, UK, as a little girl, “I had just assumed I was exactly the same as every child I sat with in class. As I got older, I slowly began noticing the differences in my life: I spoke a second (uncommon) language, I didn’t look the same as them, and, of course, I always had warm and extremely aromatic lunches that would not lose their smell no matter how many bags and jumpers I wrapped them in,” she wrote in the prologue to *Bahari*.

In university to study fashion and marketing in the summer of 2013, her first Ramadan away from her grandmother, mother, and their food, Dina began to learn their recipes via FaceTime, taking her on a journey to discover “where I was really from and who I actually am. It turns out that every bowl of ingredients I mix together, every meal I plate up and every bite I take leads me on an adventure through family trees and maritime history.” The more she cooked, the more she understood that “the food I grew up eating is not alien, but a mix of me, my family, my heritage and the two countries beyond the UK that I refer to as home - Oman and Zanzibar.”

The heritage and culture she once had to try to fit into, she counts as a blessing now. It has given Dina opportunities. “When they’re looking for someone different - from the UK perspective - to partner with to target a new market, I fit in a very good kind of box.” While there are others, too, from the region talking about Middle Eastern food in the UK, the fact that she comes from Oman gives her an advantage. “It always sits nicely because Oman is seen as a neutral, happy country. I get picked and chosen to be the representative for the rest of the Middle East. And they know that I can bring the Middle East as well as the Western side. So, I’m that chosen hybrid.”

Many hats and more

Of the many hats - recipe developer, food consultant, food writer, presenter, chef and communications manager (Anglo Omani Society) – she wears or has worn, besides the crown of Pomegranate Queen bestowed on her by her social media followers, the first two are dearest to Dina. She enjoys helping create something new from food or teaching people something new about food. “I love recipe development because I love to play and experiment with food. And that’s kind of the same with food consultancy - you’re advising and experimenting. I don’t actually love being a chef as much because it’s tiring, very draining.”

Dina is currently preparing to wear yet another – that of restaurant managing partner - with the opening of Mesa in Muttrah. An old house at the bottom of Muttrah Fort is being turned into a boutique hotel and restaurant.

‘Mesa’, she explained, in Portuguese, Spanish and Swahili means ‘table’. “Back in the day when the British, and also before when the Portuguese were there, they had a word called ‘meizaan’ derived from an Arabic word which basically meant a big spread of food. It was a very known word in the Muttrah area. We wanted something that correlated to the area, but also made sense for the restaurant. It ties in the whole Portuguese fort element as well as Oman.”

Scheduled to open October end in time



(Supplied photos)

I’m not the best cook and I don’t want to be the greatest chef there is. I prefer to tell the stories of culture, of me and my identity. And I love the element of travelling, writing and filming

Dina Macki

for National Day, the kitchen will be ready earlier in the month with a few offerings which customers can grab and go. “I want to bring in a softy machine and make really crazy flavours of ice cream before the opening.”

Originally brought in as a consultant, Dina has designed the restaurant interiors and is

looking to recruit staff, including a European chef with whom she’ll curate a menu which is ‘part me, part a European chef that comes together’. She’s quite certain Muscat doesn’t need another Middle Eastern restaurant.

With the historic fort sitting next door, Dina will add a new spin to its story from Mesa’s kitchen.



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