

# 66% of Oman's adults obese

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Close to 66% of adults in the sultanate are overweight or obese, the Ministry of Health (MoH) stated on Tuesday.

This was revealed at a workshop titled 'The Plan to Accelerate Obesity Prevention in the Sultanate of Oman' organised by MoH in collaboration with World Health Organization.

Held under the patronage of H E Dr Ahmed Salim Saif al Mandhari, Undersecretary for Planning in MoH, the workshop saw participation of experts from Oman and international organisations with the objective of devising a comprehensive strategy to combat obesity. It aimed to offer insights into the sultanate's ongoing obesity crisis, assess existing programmes, identify best practices, and ultimately develop an expedited plan to curb obesity



in Oman.

Salima Ali al Maamari, Director of MoH's Nutrition Department, highlighted the fact that over 1bn people worldwide, including children and teenagers, are grappling with obesity. "The surge in obesity rates in recent decades signifies an imminent health crisis, burdening individuals,

society and the healthcare sector." She cited alarming statistics from Oman's latest national survey of non-communicable diseases, including a staggering 66% of adults being overweight or obese. "This means, of every ten individuals, only three maintain a healthy weight."

Salima informed that obesity

is not merely a matter of exceeding an ideal weight by a few kilograms; it is a precursor to numerous other health conditions. "It's implicated in over 220 diseases affecting adults and now affects even the youngest members of society. No one is spared."

She stressed the importance of collective action to combat the

perils of obesity. "Developing a robust, actionable national strategy for reducing obesity rates is paramount."

The workshop addressed critical topics, including the global obesity epidemic, international recommendations to reduce prevalence, the situation in Oman, and the proactive efforts

*Obesity is not merely a matter of exceeding an ideal weight by a few kilograms; it is a precursor to numerous other health conditions*

SALIMA ALI AL MAAMARI

of MoH towards this end. These efforts include establishment of comprehensive nutrition clinics, formulation of the National Nutrition Strategy 2020-2030, implementation of the 2021 National Campaign, revision of the Omani Food Guide, banning products containing trans fats, and several educational activities.

## Oman hails UNSC resolution on Gaza

Muscat - The Sultanate of Oman has welcomed a resolution issued by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) supporting a deal to reach a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

Oman urged all parties to immediately take steps to implement the resolution.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, Oman expressed appreciation for the efforts made by Qatar, Egypt and the United States of America to pass this draft resolution.

In this context, Oman called upon the international community to implement the resolution and compel the Israeli occupation state not to evade its responsibilities and to respect international demands to stop its brutal aggression in the Gaza Strip.

The statement also stressed the need for concrete action leading to the two-state solution and establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, in a manner that supports peace and stability in the region.

See also [Page 09](#)

# Russian tourists to Oman increased over 300% to 53,145 in 2023

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Oman witnessed a remarkable surge of over 308% Russian tourist arrivals in 2023, with numbers increasing to 53,145 from around 13,000 in 2022.

This significant jump was highlighted by H E Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Tourism in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, during promotional events held in

Moscow and St Petersburg on June 10 and 11, aimed to showcase Oman's diverse tourism offerings to the Russian market.

The Omani delegation, led by H E Busaidi, included representatives of 20 tourism companies and institutions. Bilateral meetings between Omani and Russian tourism businesses facilitated valuable networking opportunities.

"These promotional activities are designed to introduce the

most prominent tourism experiences in Oman to key Russian travel companies," H E Busaidi explained. "We aim to boost ties between Omani and Russian tourism operators and attract more Russian visitors to explore our beautiful country."

He informed that Oman is a multi-season destination known for its natural beauty and cultural heritage, attracting tourists from all walks of life. Currently, there is a focus on attracting more travellers



H E Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidi

to experience the luxurious and diverse hospitality of the sultanate as reflected in the Oman Pavilion at St Petersburg Economic Forum held from June 5 to 8.

In recognition of Russia as a significant global source of tourism - particularly for Oman - the promotional events aimed to capitalise on the momentum generated by the surge in Russian tourists in 2023, while highlighting the sultanate's unique blend

of natural beauty, cultural heritage and luxurious hospitality.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism launched a campaign in Paris in May, aimed at showcasing the beauty of Oman through various mediums, including public transport buses and iconic French landmarks like Champs-Elysees, Eiffel Tower and Place de la Concorde. The campaign sought to reinforce Oman's status as a distinctive tourism destination for European tourists.



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Council of Ministers receive State Council members

Oman, Belgium mark 46 years of flourishing ties



Muscat - H H Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, and several members of the cabinet received Hon Sheikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of State Council, and members of the council on Tuesday.

The meeting was held in the context of coordination between the Council of Ministers and State Council.

The two sides held an extended meeting at the premises of Council of Ministers. Upholding the Basic Law of the State and the Law of the Council of Oman, the interaction was in pursuance of continuous coordination between all institutions of the state

During the meeting, it was agreed that all efforts should be combined to safeguard the national accomplishments and enable the State Council to continue conducting studies and proposals for the advancement of national action

to formulate common visions on further Oman's comprehensive development.

At the outset of the meeting, H H Sayyid Fahd commended the State Council's role in implementing the state's general policies and rendering the best services to citizens. He stressed that the government values all visions and proposals on developing public services and upgrading

facilities. During the meeting, it was agreed that all efforts should be combined to safeguard the national accomplishments and enable the State Council to continue conducting studies and proposals for the advancement of national action.

The Chairman and members of State Council expressed their satisfaction with the meeting and the topics and opinions exchanged by the two sides. They affirmed that many common goals would be realised during the next stage of joint action.

The meeting discussed several topics, including means of consolidating integration between state institutions through implementation of plans and programmes. The two sides laid emphasis on promoting the mission of the ministerial coordination committee liaising between the Council of Ministers and the State Council for realisation of public aspirations. They also exchanged views on ways of enhancing awareness and safeguarding the accomplishments made so far in Oman under its wise leadership.

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Belgium celebrated the 46th anniversary of bilateral and diplomatic relations on Sunday at Royal Opera House Muscat.

Ties have witnessed remarkable growth and economic and investment partnerships, including in the Duqm Port project.

On the occasion, H E Rua bint Issa al Zadjali, Ambassador of Oman to Belgium, said relations between the two countries are built on solid foundations and values, and have witnessed remarkable development, especially in economic relations and investment partnerships between the two sides.

In a speech, H E Rua stressed Oman's eagerness to consolidate relations with Belgium, enhance aspects of bilateral cooperation, and complete agreements supporting friendly relations and partnership between the two countries in a manner that contributes to the growth of mutual benefits and promotion of common interests.

On his part, H E Pascal Grégoire, Ambassador of Belgium to Oman, praised the relations between the two friendly countries, noting that the visit of King Philippe Leopold Louis Marie, King of the Belgians, to the sultanate in February 2022 witnessed the opening of Duqm Port, a joint project between the



Relations between the two countries are built on solid foundations and values, and have witnessed remarkable development

H E RUA BINT ISSA AL ZADJALI

Government of Oman and the Port of Antwerp.

The volume of trade exchange

between Oman and Belgium at the end of 2023 exceeded RO106mn; the volume of Omani exports to Belgium totalled about RO55mn, while Belgian imports to Oman was valued at RO51mn.

Several visual presentations were made at the ceremony on Sunday focused on investment opportunities and cooperation between the two sides in numerous big and promising projects.

During the ceremony, Omani and Belgian operatic pieces were played by the Opera Ballet Vlaanderen and Omani artists to highlight the role of music as a tool for communication between peoples.

The ceremony was attended by several ministers, undersecretaries, members of State Council and Majlis A'Shura, CEOs and businessmen from both sides.

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New cohort from private sector trains to be leaders of tomorrow

Our Correspondent Muscat

Royal Academy of Management has rolled out the third iteration of its National Leadership Development Programme - called Etimad - aimed at bolstering middle and senior management in the private sector.

This year's programme commenced with the enrolment of 202 employees from private sector enterprises and entrepreneurs, divided into two cohorts.

Dr Yasmin al Balushi, Director of Leadership Development Centre at the academy, underscored the programme's vital role in sculpting Omani leaders. "Etimad has been instrumental in nurturing national leaders equipped with advanced skills, ready to drive institutional growth and adapt to the dynamic economic landscape."

The programme aligns with Oman Vision 2040's strategic

goals to cultivate a robust leadership cadre that can spearhead private sector innovations and sustain economic growth. This ambitious programme stands out for its comprehensive training modules which include both on-site and remote learning sessions, leadership camps, and developmental assessments to monitor graduates' progression and effectiveness in their respective organisations.

Additionally, the programme boasts a strong international collaboration with institutions such as Columbia Business School, Tuck Executive Education at Dartmouth, and the Management Executive Education of Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Participants were selected through a rigorous process from over 3,400 applicants, ensuring that only the most promising professionals with proven leadership potentials are groomed for future challenges.

# 14 pacts worth RO8.3mn to boost agri sector

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP), in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, signed 14 usufruct contracts in the agricultural sector, totalling an investment of RO8.3mn, on Tuesday.

The agreements were signed by Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani, Undersecretary for Housing in MHUP, and representatives of



(Supplied photo)

the investing companies and institutions.

H E Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Undersecretary for Agriculture in Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, attended the signing of the contracts alongside several officials of Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development.

The contracts include various projects - poultry farming and marketing, livestock breeding and sales, waste management, apiculture and honey production, and cultivation of frankincense, wheat, coffee and dates.

Additionally, contracts were signed for establishment of a fig farm, an agricultural tourism project, and a goat farm spread over 850 acres.

The projects are strategically distributed across several governorates including Dhofar, Dakhliyah, North Sharqiyah, South Batinah, Buraimi and Muscat.

## Bids invited to construct new dam in Bahla

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) is inviting local companies to construct an underground recharge dam on Wadi Kidd in the wilayat of Bahla, Dakhliyah. Last date to submit bids for the tender has been set for July 15.

MAFWR aims to support farmers and help them achieve self-sufficiency in farming by bolstering the nation's water capacity and expanding agricultural activities.

The dam is part of a broader strategy of the ministry, which has already seen the development of various dams across the country.

Highlighting the significance of these projects, the ministry pointed out that the sultanate's groundwater con-

stitutes 94% of its fresh water resources. Numerous exploratory drillings, including the Masarat water basin, Sharqiyah Sands water basin, Runab water basin, and Najd basin projects are currently underway to tap into these reserves.

According to MAFWR, the country grapples with a water deficit of 316mn cubic

metre annually. The increasing strain on the available 1,318mn cubic metre of renewable water, especially with the agricultural sector consuming around 83% of the nation's yearly water needs, underscores the urgency of such projects.

Oman has constructed 181 dams, of which 63 are underground feeders, 115 surface storage sites, and three protective dams, all aimed at improving water security.



# Vision 2040 unit unveils guidelines to improve government efficiency

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, in cooperation with Alizz Islamic Bank, issued three new guidelines for quality management, institutional excellence and innovation, and application of the Lean Continuous Improvement methodology on Tuesday with the aim of bolstering government efficiency and performance.

The event was held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Dr Kamil Fahad al Said, Secretary-General of Council of Ministers, and attended by several dignitaries.

Underlining the significance of the guidelines, Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, head of the unit, said, "These are meticulously crafted to furnish our government system with the requisite tools and capabilities to elevate its performance, ensuring it meets the expectations of beneficiaries while enhancing competitiveness of Oman."

He emphasised the fact that



(Supplied photo)

*These are meticulously crafted to furnish our government system with the requisite tools and capabilities to elevate its performance*

DR KHAMIS BIN SAIF AL JABRI

advancing government services is a cornerstone to realising the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Jabri informed that the unit, in collaboration with its partners, will continually refine these guidelines to adapt to the rapid changes and developments in the business environment, while ensuring entities adhere to these performance standards.

On the occasion, Ali bin Saif al Maani, CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank, said that the guidelines will deepen partnership between the public and private sectors.

He also spoke of the bank's dedication to collaborating with government agencies for sustainability and achieving the goals of

Oman Vision 2040, thereby enhancing competitiveness and economic growth.

The guideline for quality management aims to instil a culture of excellence in government institutions, prioritising continuous improvement and development in work environments, fostering healthy competition among government agencies, facilitating exchange of experiences, and promoting application of best practices.

The guideline for institutional excellence and innovation provides a comprehensive frame-

work for establishment of an innovation system. It unifies concepts and perspectives on innovation within government institutions in Oman, supports effective innovation system management, and highlights best practices and directives for innovation development and strategic planning mechanisms.

The guideline on application of the Lean methodology aims to provide practical tools to enhance government systems working towards digital transformation and institutional excellence.



## Rare discovery: Arabian tahr sighted drinking seawater

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

A field study carried out by Environment Authority (EA) has unveiled a rare phenomenon of Arabian tahr drinking seawater in Oman.

H H Taimur bin Abdullah al Said, an environmental specialist at EA, noted that terrestrial mammals consuming seawater is an unusual occurrence. "This was evidenced following collection and analysis of camera trap data from a study site at a beach in Ras Abu Dawood in Muscat governorate."

The site has limited availability of freshwater, with average annual rainfall of 117.2 mm, primarily during winter.

H H Said emphasised the significance of the Arabian tahr (*Arabitragus jayakari*) as a prominent wildlife species of Oman. It is endemic to the Hajar mountain range in the Arabian Peninsula, which holds the status of being the only



(Supplied photos)

home of the Arabian tahr in the world.

Highlighting the tahr's habitat preferences, H H Said referenced prior studies conducted by Office for the Conservation of Environment, indicating its affinity for steep and rugged terrains at elevations ranging from 400m to 1,200m.

The EA study area is home to other mammals such as the Arabian gazelle, Arabian wolf, lynx, wildcat, red fox and mountain fox, besides the Arabian tahr.

The EA study proved the

Arabian tahr's ability to consume seawater, primarily owing to the scarcity of freshwater in the Ras Abu Dawood area. It also confirmed the hypothesis that certain species of animals utilise seawater as a nutritional supplement for deficiency of sodium and minerals.

H H Said informed that both male and female tahrs, and young ones, were observed through two cameras drinking from large pools on the rocky shore during low tide, rather than directly from the sea.

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| Philippines                            | 152.70    |
| Sri Lanka                              | 789.07    |
| *Rates as on June 11<br>Source: xe.com |           |

**BRIEFS**

**\$73bn deals concluded at Russia's SPIEF 2024**

The organisers of the S. Petersburg International Economic Forum 2024 (SPIEF) revealed the results of the economic event, where 1,073 agreements worth (about \$73bn) were concluded.

Anton Kobaykov, advisor to the Russian President and Executive Secretary of the Organizing Committee of the S. Petersburg International Economic Forum said that the forum harvested the signing of 1,073 agreements with a total amount of \$73 billion, including 55 agreements signed with representatives of foreign companies.

From June 5 to June 8, 2024, the Russian city of S. Petersburg hosted the activities of the S. Petersburg International Economic Forum. The forum is an effective platform for exchanging opinions and expertise among policy makers and officials.

# Oman's public revenues drop 15% in first 4 months of 2024

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Oman's total public revenues dropped by 15% to RO3.744bn in the first four months of 2024 compared to RO4.392bn recorded in the corresponding period of last year.

The decline in total revenues was mainly due to a decrease in both hydrocarbon and non-hydrocarbon revenues during the January-April period this year, according to the Fiscal Performance Bulletin issued by the Ministry of Finance on Tuesday.

The sultanate's net oil revenue amounted to RO2.237bn for the first four months of this year, a decrease of 3% compared to RO2.308bn registered over the same period in 2023. This decline was due to lower oil prices and production compared to 2023.

The average realised oil price came to \$82 per barrel for this year compared to \$88 per barrel in the same period a year ago. Oman's average oil production slightly decreased to 1.009mn barrels per day during the first four months of 2024 against 1.064mn barrels per day in the same period of 2023.

On the other hand, net gas revenue sharply fell by 38% to RO565mn in the January-April period this year compared to RO908mn in the same period a year ago. This decline in gas revenue is due to the deduction of



*As a result of lower revenues, Oman's budget surplus for the first four months of 2024 sharply declined to RO147mn from the RO520mn surplus recorded in the same period of 2023*

gas purchase and transport expenses from the total revenue collected from the Integrated Gas Company, the Ministry of Finance said.

Furthermore, the government's current revenue reached RO938mn in the four-month period ended April 2024, falling by RO234mn compared to the RO1.172bn current revenue registered over the same period in 2023.

As a result of lower hydrocarbon and non-hydrocarbon revenues, Oman's budget surplus for the first four months of 2024 sharply declined to RO147mn from the RO520mn surplus recorded in the same period of 2023.

**Spending decreased 7%**

During the first four months of 2024, Oman's total public spending amounted to RO3.597bn, decreasing by 7% or RO275mn compared to the actual spending over the same period in 2023. Of the total spending, current expenditure in the first four months of this year reached RO2.678bn, up by RO4mn compared to RO2.674bn registered over the same period in 2023.

Meanwhile, development expenditure of ministries and government units amounted to RO304mn during the January-April period of 2024, representing 34% of the total development spending, i.e., RO900mn, allocated for 2024.

Contributions and other expenses amounted to RO615mn, increasing by 68% compared to RO365mn spent over the same period in 2023. The social protection system subsidy, oil products subsidy, and electricity sector subsidy amounted to RO186mn, RO96mn, and RO83mn, respectively, for the first four months of 2024. Furthermore, an amount of RO133mn was transferred to the future debt obligations budget item.

**CBO issues RO20mn treasury bills**

Muscat - The Central Bank of Oman announced the issuance of three tenders of the government treasury bills worth RO20mn.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO300,000, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached RO99.645 for every RO100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.645. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.6276% and 4.6441%, respectively.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO14.7mn, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached RO98.732 for every RO100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO98.725. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.0874% and 5.1527%, respectively.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO5mn, for a maturity period of 182 days. The average accepted price reached RO97.440 for every RO100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO97.440. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.1340% and 5.2689%, respectively.

The interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 6.00% while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with the central bank is 6.50%.

ONA

## Goldman Sachs sees oil rising to \$86 this summer

Tsvetana Paraskova

Brent crude prices are set to rise to \$86 per barrel this summer amid strong consumer demand which will put the market into a sizeable deficit in the third quarter, according to Goldman Sachs.

Oil prices started this week higher, with a slight gain in Asian trade on expectations of higher fuel demand during the summer driving season.

Brent crude prices could rise to \$86 per barrel this summer, as healthy consumer demand and spending will leave the oil market in a supply deficit of 1.3mn barrels per day (bpd) in the third quarter, according to a note from Goldman Sachs, quoted by Reuters.

The Wall Street bank revised its oil demand growth estimate for this year, by 200,000 bpd to 1.25mn bpd, but noted it still sees robust global demand thanks to recovering jet fuel consumption.

"We still see a \$90 per barrel ceiling in our base case of no



geopolitical supply hits, and the risks to our \$75-\$90 range as modestly to the downside," Goldman's analysts wrote.

The investment bank also sees a floor of \$75 per barrel under Brent, due to physical demand for crude, which tends to rise amid lower prices, including in China and in the US for the refill of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).

Last week, BMI, a Fitch Solutions company, said that Brent

## Apple unveils artificial intelligence features in partnership with OpenAI

Cupertino, US - Apple has officially embraced artificial intelligence (AI), making the announcement at its renowned Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC).

The long-awaited Apple AI has finally come to light at the WWDC24. A highlight of the conference was the tech giant's announcement of its partnership with OpenAI, integrating ChatGPT into Siri and various text-generating tools.

**Apple Intelligence**

At Apple's WWDC24, the spotlight was on Apple AI, referred to as Apple Intelligence, which facilitates generative AI technology across its iPhone, iPad, and Mac.

An AI-powered Siri stands as the most significant upgrade for the iPhone, manifesting as a pulsating light on the side of the screen. The Large Language Model (LLM) serves as the key technology underpinning this function, enabling Siri to enhance



*Apple Intelligence facilitates generative AI technology across its iPhone, iPad, and Mac*

its comprehension of your requests by integrating with OpenAI's ChatGPT.

As stated by Apple: "Equipped with awareness of your personal context, the ability to take action

Additionally, the feature can prioritise notifications based on your personal context, schedule document filing at designated times, summarise emails, generate responses, create images in requested styles, and provide personalised assistance spanning across applications.

Image creation and Genmoji are also noteworthy features integrated with Apple Intelligence. Apple can generate images based on an original image or a sketch with accompanying notes. Genmoji is an AI-powered personalised emoji tool.

Furthermore, a significant focus of Apple AI lies in personal security, as Senior Vice President of Software Engineering, Craig Federighi, stated: "We've extended iPhone's industry-leading security to the cloud," and "Private Cloud Compute utilises your data solely to fulfil your request and never stores it, ensuring it remains inaccessible to anyone, including Apple."

## 54% of global CEOs committed to decarbonising business: Survey

London, UK - There is a clear sense that global CEOs in 2024 are more confident about controlling what they can and managing what they can't. Resilience has fueled a more positive outlook about their own growth and profitability, and they are more comfortable navigating external challenges outside their own authority.

Right now, CEOs are focused on technology, especially artificial intelligence (AI) transformation, as a means to boost productivity and growth. But when they look into the not-

too-distant future, their focus shifts to achieving net zero by decarbonising their business and creating new revenue streams.

Juggling profit with broader ambitions reflects the CEOs' need to both create financial value for shareholders and to deliver on societal demands in accelerating the sustainability journey.

Over half of CEOs globally (54%) see sustainability issues as a higher priority than they did 12 months ago. Comparably, only 28% of institutional in-



vestors have reported the same. But this misalignment, which heightens the priority of short-term financial returns at the expense of achieving sustainability targets more swiftly, may be shortsighted.

Achieving sustainability targets can be challenging - particularly in a difficult, cost-focused market. Our report shows that greater collaboration between corporates, investors and policymakers could unleash a new wave of bottom-up initiatives that could help accelerate the road to net

zero and unlock a more sustainable future.

Elsewhere, CEOs and institutional investors have a positive outlook for mergers and acquisitions (M&A) in 2024, albeit compared to a subdued 2023 for deals.

More CEOs are looking to make acquisitions, and even more are planning to divest assets. The majority of institutional investors (61%) anticipate a stable deal environment, with a third (34%) expecting an acceleration of deals.

(Source: ESG News)

# World Bank revises up 2024 global growth forecast to 2.6%

Washington, US – The World Bank on Tuesday revised the global growth forecast for this year to 2.6%, up 0.2 percentage point from its previous projection.

The figure is foreseen to hold steady compared to last year for the first time in three years despite heightened geopolitical tensions and high interest rates, the bank said in its latest Global Economic Prospects report.

The upward revision was led by continued solid growth in the US, it stressed.

The bank forecast the gross domestic product (GDP) growth will edge up to an average of 2.7% in 2025-26 amid modest growth in trade and investment.

The figure is below the 3.1% average in the decade before the pandemic or 2010-19.

"Four years after the upheavals caused by the pandemic, conflicts, inflation, and monetary tightening, it appears that global economic growth is steadying," said Indermit Gill, the World Bank Group's chief economist and senior vice president.

The GDP in developing economies are forecast to increase 4% on average in 2024-25 and in advanced economies to hike 1.5% this year before rising to 1.7% next year.



After slowing to 1.5% in 2023, growth in the Middle East and North Africa region is expected to pick up to 2.8% in 2024 and 4.2% in 2025, mainly due to a gradual resumption of oil production

Gill underlined the need for developing economies to find ways to encourage private investment, reduce public debt, and improve education, health, and basic infrastructure.

The report highlighted that one in four developing

economies is expected to remain poorer than it was in 2019.

The World Bank hiked its growth projection for China by 0.3 percentage point to 4.8% this year, due to stronger-than-expected activity in early 2024, particularly exports. The

world's second-largest economy is projected to grow 4.1% in 2025, down 0.32 point from the January report.

The GDP in the US is expected to increase by 2.5% this year and 1.8% next year, with upward revisions of 0.9 point

and 0.1 point, respectively.

The euro area's GDP growth is projected to come in at 0.7% in 2024, the same as foreseen in the previous report, and 1.4% in 2025, a downward revision of 0.2 points.

The World Bank projected the global inflation to average at 3.5% this year and 2.9% in 2025.

Global interest rates are likely to remain high by the standards of recent decades – averaging about 4% over 2025-26, roughly double the 2000-19 average, read the report.

After slowing to 1.5% in 2023, growth in the Middle East and North Africa (MNA) region is expected to pick up to 2.8% in 2024 and 4.2% in 2025, mainly due to a gradual resumption of oil production.

The World Bank's 2024 outlook for the Middle East and North Africa has weakened since January, partly reflecting extensions of additional voluntary oil production cuts and the ongoing conflict in the Middle East centered in Gaza.

Growth in the South Asia region is projected to slow from 6.6% in 2023 to 6.2% in 2024, mainly due to a moderation of growth in India from a high base in recent years. With steady growth in India, regional growth is forecast to stay at 6.2% in 2025-26.



## Libya's oil production reaches 1.5mn bpd

Tripoli, Libya – Head of Libya's National Unity Government Abdulhamid al Dabaiba announced that Libya's oil production has reached 1.5mn barrels per day (bpd), indicating that his government is working to ensure that this number reaches two million barrels per day in the future.

During a meeting of the National Unity Government cabinet, Dabaiba also revealed that the state's public revenues amounted to more than 43.7bn Libyan dinars as of May 2024,

while spending amounted to 32bn, calling for the citizen not to be burdened with the parallel spending tax that is not subject to any system.

The National Oil Corporation announced that crude oil production in the country reached 1,254,350 barrels during the past twenty-four hours, indicating that the total production of crude oil, condensates and natural gas reached 522,333 barrels equivalent per day.

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### Public Notice of Lost Mulkiya (Land)

Lost the Tittle Deed No. 680 for our residential/ commercial land plot measuring 828 square meters located at al Khwair in the Wilayat of Bausher registered under the name of Mohamed Omar Ahmed Aideded . Whoever finds the aforementioned title deed, please contact on telephone number +968 98555556 or hand it over to the ROP or the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning . Thanking you for your cooperation.



## TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) announces the following tenders:

| SR. NO.                        | TENDER NO.       | TENDER NAME                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | LAST DATE FOR OBTAINING THE DOCUMENTS | BID SUBMISSION DATE | REQUIREMENTS FROM PARTICIPATORS                                                      | TENDER DOCUMENT'S FEES (INCLUDING VAT) (RO) |
|--------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 1                              | 60/2023 (Extend) | Replace Old Grid Station Gates With Cantilever Slide Gates at Muscat, Al Batinah (South & North) & Al Dhahira Governances.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 23/06/2024                            | 09/07/2024          | Local Companies with Experience in Same Field, Have A Valid Commercial Registration. | 52/500                                      |
| 2                              | 71/2024          | Provide Network Management, Monitoring & Analysis System for OETC Telecom Network.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 03/07/2024                            | 30/07/2024          | Local Companies with Experience in Same Field, Have A Valid Commercial Registration. | 52/500                                      |
| Participation                  |                  | Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity Apply on E-tendering                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                       |                     |                                                                                      |                                             |
| Buying the Tender              |                  | By E-Tendering System.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                       |                     |                                                                                      |                                             |
| Fees                           |                  | Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document. (Payment Through Bank Transfer), SMEs are exempted from tender's fees.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                       |                     |                                                                                      |                                             |
| The deadline for clarification |                  | Before (21) Days from bid submission date.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                       |                     |                                                                                      |                                             |
| Submission                     |                  | The submission of hard copy will be only for Bid Bond & other documents by E-Tendering                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                       |                     |                                                                                      |                                             |
| Terms and conditions           |                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Specifying the name of the Company or whatever refers to in the Bid Guarantee Envelope.</li><li>The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from bid submission date.</li><li>The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from bid submission date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). Small &amp; Medium Enterprises are exempted from the submission of 1% of the bid bond.</li><li>Any bid not complying with the required guarantee will not be accepted.</li><li>OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.</li></ul> |                                       |                     |                                                                                      |                                             |
| Offer                          |                  | The bid bond should be submitted in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                       |                     |                                                                                      |                                             |
| Company Address                |                  | Muscat - Al Mawaleh<br>Road No: 2153 - Building No. 423 O Block No: 321<br>Contact Details: 93515198 - 91777378                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                       |                     |                                                                                      |                                             |
| Email & Website                |                  | tenders@omangrid.com<br>www.omangrid.com / link of E-Tendering System<br>https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                       |                     |                                                                                      |                                             |



## إعلان طرح مناقصات

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصات التالية:

| م                                    | رقم المناقصة    | عنوان المناقصة                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة | آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات | الدرجة                                                               | أهم الوثيقة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (ر.ع.) |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| ١                                    | 60/2023 (تمديد) | استبدال البوابات القديمة لمحطات الكهرباء بوابات منزلقة في محافظات (مسقط، الظاهرة، شمال وجنوب الباطنة).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 23/06/2024                           | 09/07/2024               | الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها سجل تجاري ساري المفعول. | 52/500                                         |
| ٢                                    | 71/2024         | توفير أنظمة إدارة ومراقبة شبكات الاتصالات وتحليل البيانات للشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 03/07/2024                           | 30/07/2024               | الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها سجل تجاري ساري المفعول. | 52/500                                         |
| الإشتراك                             |                 | يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة بعد تقديم الطلب عن طريق نظام التناقص الإلكتروني.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                      |                          |                                                                      |                                                |
| طريقة الشراء                         |                 | من خلال نظام التناقص الإلكتروني.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                      |                          |                                                                      |                                                |
| الرسوم                               |                 | مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة - لا ترد. (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي، تُعفى المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة من دفع ثمن الوثيقة.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                      |                          |                                                                      |                                                |
| آخر موعد للاستفسارات                 |                 | قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                      |                          |                                                                      |                                                |
| تقديم العرض                          |                 | يتم تسليم النسخة الأصلية فقط من الضمان البنكي للعطاء في الصندوق، أما العرض فيتم تسليمه من خلال نظام التناقص الإلكتروني.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                      |                          |                                                                      |                                                |
| الشروط والضمائم                      |                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>تحديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على المظروف.</li><li>أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء.</li><li>إرفاق تأمين في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (1%) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء. ومعنوناً باسم الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء، تُعفى المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة من تسليم الضمان المصرفي.</li><li>كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه.</li><li>الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مقيدة بقبول أقل العروض أو أي عطاء آخر.</li></ul> |                                      |                          |                                                                      |                                                |
| العرض المقدم                         |                 | يجب وضع الضمان البنكي للعطاء فقط في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بمبنى الشركة قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                      |                          |                                                                      |                                                |
| عنوان الشركة                         |                 | Muscat - Al Mawaleh<br>Road No: 2153 - Building No. 423 O Block No: 321<br>Contact Details: 93515198 - 91777378                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                      |                          |                                                                      |                                                |
| البريد الإلكتروني والموقع الإلكتروني |                 | tenders@omangrid.com<br>link of E-Tendering System<br>www.omangrid.com / en/Pages/Services.aspx                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                      |                          |                                                                      |                                                |

# Bank Muscat celebrates relocation of its Jalan Bani Bu Ali branch

Bank Muscat celebrated recently the official relocation of its branch in Jalan Bani Bu Ali in Sharqiyah South Governorate. The inauguration ceremony was held under patronage of Sheikh Mohammed bin Humaid al Ghabshi, Wali of Jalan Bani Bu Ali, in the presence of executive management members, officials, and a number of customers.

The relocated branch is characterised by a large space and a modern design considering the latest standards of the banking sector, the most important of which are security and safety standards and the use of modern technologies harnessed to serve customers.

It also offers a wide range of diverse banking services and products to meet the growing requirements of customers. The services provided by the branch can be availed during weekdays from Sunday to Thursday starting from eight in the morning until two noon, a press release said.

Taya Eid Bait Sabeea, deputy general manager – Regional

Branches, Bank Muscat, said, “The new place is more spacious and is located in a vital area inside the Willayat to meet the growing needs of the residents through a wide range of products and facilities. I urge our dear customers to visit the redesigned branch and benefit from the special services it offers.”

He added that Bank Muscat is keen to continue developing its branch network as a key pillar of its long-term strategy, aiming to improve the quality of services, and provide the best solutions and innovative banking products. “The bank will continue, in the coming period, to update and develop its existing branches, and add new branches to its network in order to enhance its leadership in the sector,” he said.

As a leading financial services provider, Bank Muscat has an extensive network of 183 branches for retail and corporate customers and more than 870 devices, including ATMs, CDMs and omnichannel devices distributed in all governorates.



## NBO launches Eid note dispensing machines

As a testament to its commitment to providing a seamless digital banking experience, National Bank of Oman (NBO) is set to launch five Eid note dispensing machines across Oman this month.

This innovative service, available exclusively to existing NBO customers, will be introduced at five digital branches - NBO Head Office, Sohar Branch, New Salalah Branch, Ibra Branch and Bahla Branch. The machines will dispense 100 Baiza and 500 Baiza notes, addressing the high demand for these denominations during the festive season, a press release said.

Dr Ali Salim al Shekaili, assistant general manager – Head of Digital & E-Channels at NBO, commented on this initiative - “At NBO, we recognise the challenges individuals face in obtaining Eidiya notes during Eid due to the high demand. Hence, we introduced this service, the first of its kind in Oman, to provide a seamless experience for our clients and meet their needs effectively. Our Eid note dispensing machines also represent a significant advancement in our digital banking capabilities, underscoring our dedication to enhancing



customer experience through cutting-edge solutions.”

This launch follows the successful unveiling of the trial version of the Eid note dispensing machine at COMEX 2024, held at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC). The machine was unveiled by Taher bin

Salem al Amri, executive president of the Central Bank of Oman, in the presence of Abdullah Zahran al Hinai, CEO of NBO.

With the launch of the Eid note dispensing machines, NBO continues to lead the way in providing cutting-edge banking solutions.

## Wizz Air Abu Dhabi offers seasonal sale

Wizz Air Abu Dhabi, the ultra-low-fare national airline of the UAE, has announced an unmissable promotion for adventurous travellers looking to discover exotic, culturally rich destinations, including vibrant cities and natural paradises.

The flash 20% promotion applies to bookings made on 11 June, for the travel period from 1 July until 31 August, a press release said.

The selected routes to hidden gems and charming neighbourhoods are now available on wizzair.com and the WIZZ mobile app, both accessible in Arabic. With Wizz Air, ultra-low-fares



and a well-deserved vacation to discover outstanding natural beauty and incredible history throughout Europe, North Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East is just a few clicks away.

Johan Eidhagen, managing di-

rector of Wizz Air Abu Dhabi, said, “We are delighted to share an extraordinary promotion that reaffirms our commitment to spontaneous travel and enables an exhilarating adventure for all ages. As the flagbearer for ultra-

low-cost travel in the region, we are proud to continue fostering connectivity and create unmissable travel experiences. We strongly encourage all adventurous travellers to secure their bookings early.”

## Visa brings simplicity to subscription economy

Visa (NYSE: V), a world leader in digital payments, today announced the launch of subscription manager, a new, all-in-one service for financial institutions, to provide Visa cardholders with a simple, convenient way to track their subscriptions, all from the palm of their hands.

The global subscription market is on a steady rise, expected to reach a staggering US\$406bn by 2025. As the trend of consumers subscribing to services in sectors such as retail, food, and



more increases, so does the challenge of managing their pay-

ments, a press release said.

Visa's new Subscription Manager streamlines key aspects of recurring payments in one place, allowing cardholders to see where their card details are stored, view which recurring payments are attributed to their card, and stop recurring payments.

“Navigating through each platform's unique terms can potentially lead to unnoticed charges, even after a subscription is cancelled,” said Manish

Gautam, Visa's country manager for Oman. “Our goal is to make this process simpler and ensure cardholders know exactly where their money is going, and when.”

As consumer expectations for seamless, secure digital payments grow, it's crucial for issuers to keep pace. A forthcoming Visa report supports this trend, revealing that 63% of surveyed consumers are comfortable with a future that relies entirely on digital money.

## Six Senses Zighy Bay floats Eid offers

This Eid-al Adha, guests are invited to discover one of the region's most beloved escapes, Six Senses Zighy Bay, while taking advantage of the resort's GCC Local Residents Offer, which includes breakfast, a three-course dinner as well as a 10% discount on the Best Available Rate.

GCC residents can embark on a picturesque 2-hour drive from Dubai, immersing themselves in scenic vistas before reaching the resort nestled amidst the rugged Hajar mountains and the tranquil azure waters of the Gulf, a press release said.

Upon arrival, luxuriate in one of the 82 Omani-inspired villas, meticulously crafted from natural stone and timber. These villas

feature colourful and cool interiors open onto personal infinity-edge pool, with high cobblestone walls, sun loungers and shaded summer houses. For families looking for a home away from home, the collection of Duplex Two-Bedroom Pool Villas is suitable for up to six guests.

A plethora of enriching experiences within this natural playground await. From sunset cruises aboard the resort's very own Dhabab dhow, to rejuvenating visits at the award-winning spa where skilled therapists offer a variety of treatments and wellness experiences, or scuba diving trips where adventure seekers can uncover the exquisite underwater world of Musandam.

## Zubair EDC member innovates diabetic wound stickers

Marking another feather in its proverbial cap, a member of the Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC), the SME empowerment initiative of The Zubair Corporation, Zaher bin Salem al Alawi, has developed diabetic wound stickers as part of his master's studies.

Zaher, an employee of the Environment Authority of Oman, has utilised brown and red algae to accelerate the healing of diabetic wounds, presenting promising results that mark a significant advancement in medical treatment for diabetics, a press release said.

The initial phase of this project demonstrated the potential of polyphenol-rich extracts from Saccharina Latissima and Alaria Esculenta Algae to enhance the



proliferation and migration of human skin cells. This enhancement is crucial for patients expe-

riencing delayed wound healing, especially diabetics. The findings of Zaher's research have been

published by Coventry University and are slated for publication in a scientific journal.

Ali Shaker, acting director of the Zubair EDC, expressed his enthusiasm for Zaher's project, Tahlub. He said, “We are thrilled with the research results published by Coventry University. Our centre is working closely with Zaher to transform this innovation into a commercial product that will benefit government and private hospitals across the sultanate. We are preparing a feasibility study and implementation plans in collaboration with our strategic partners, aiming to attract attention and support from relevant authorities. This project aligns with the Sultanate's Vision 2040 goals, representing a significant

step forward for innovative healthcare solutions.”

Zaher al Alawi highlighted the motivation behind his invention, stating, “This product addresses the health challenges faced by diabetics and other patients with delayed wound healing, including the elderly. Diabetics' impaired ability to heal naturally requires specialised care, as their wounds heal slowly due to complex processes such as inflammation, cell proliferation, matrix deposition, and tissue remodelling. Current treatments rely on topical dressings to create a moist environment for healing. Our sustainable dressings made from Oman's native brown algae can promote rapid, cost-effective healing, especially for diabetic patients.”



## Ooredoo named Top 360 Degree Services Merchant

Ooredoo was named Top 360 Degree Services Merchant partner at Bank Muscat's Partners in Progress Awards 2024.

Bank Muscat, Oman's flagship financial services provider organises the annual event to honour its merchant partners in the public and private sectors for their outstanding contributions to the card business, a press release said.

The award ceremony was attended by Bassam Yousef al Ibrahim, CEO of Ooredoo, Nasser al Yaarubi, chief financial officer of Ooredoo, Quique Vivas, chief commercial officer of Ooredoo, and

Saoud al Riyami, Ooredoo's chief business and wholesale officer

The Partners in Progress Awards are a way to measure the success of Bank Muscat's efforts in changing the customer's preferred payment method from cash to card, which signals a transformation of the financial landscape. Ooredoo aims to encourage and incentivise its customers to pay for products and services using safe and secure digital payment methods. Cards currently lead as the digital payment method of choice, besides emerging payment technologies, such as digital wallets.

# Al Mouj Muscat wins Office Development of the Year Award

Al Mouj Muscat wins Office Development of the Year Award

Reaffirming its position as leading developer of the year, Al Mouj Muscat (AMM) has secured a victory at the Real Estate Asia Awards 2024, earning the title of Office Development of the Year – Oman for its Business Park.

Competing against a number of developers, this marks AMM's third consecutive win at the awards. This accolade highlights the excellence and innovative design of the Business Park, strengthening AMM's reputation in the real estate sector, a press release said.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, "We are proud to win at the Real Estate Asia Awards for the third year, with our first-time recognition in the business development category. This award is a testament to our commitment to excellence and innovation in the real estate sector. We are dedicated to creating spaces that enable local businesses to grow and thrive within our expanding economy. Our Business Park reimagines the possibilities of modern business, offering a high-tech working environment that supports both well-being and productivity."

The state-of-the-art Business Park is celebrated for its eight standalone buildings set across



*This award is a testament to our commitment to excellence and innovation in the real estate sector*

NIASSER AL SHEIBANI

two districts – three in Business Park East and five in Business Park West, combining G+2 and G+3 structures that integrate

seamlessly with natural landscapes.

Built to exacting grade A standards, the buildings are separate

yet seamlessly connected by beautiful landscaped gardens and outdoor spaces, designed for business networking. The complex offers 39,000 square meters of office space, with flexible floor plans and access to basement car parks with between 115 and 148 spaces per office block.

One of the most prestigious awards in the region, the Real Estate Asia Awards celebrate ex-

cellence in the Asian real estate sector. Each year, an independent panel of industry experts evaluates entries based on design, quality, service, innovation, originality, and commitment to sustainability.

The awards continue to highlight outstanding projects and companies that are setting new benchmarks and making significant contributions.

## Oman Post launches 'Travel Light, Enjoy The Sights' for Khareef

With the start of the Khareef season, Oman Post, the national postal operator, launched 'Travel Light, Enjoy The Sights' - a Khareef with Parcel Service campaign aiming to make travelling to Dhofar more convenient and enjoyable.

The service allows customers and SMEs to reliably ship their luggage and parcels by simply visiting the nearest Oman Post branch and receiving them hassle-free at the Oman Post branches in Dhofar. Each parcel can weigh up to 30 kg, and customers may track their parcels and request proof of delivery for added convenience.

With a wide delivery network locally, regionally, and internationally, Oman Post, part of



Asyad Group, complies with the best international standards while delivering to over 190

countries and territories. As part of its strategy, Oman Post aims to provide exceptional customer

service through the delivery of innovative and practical solutions.



## BankDhofar extends to Dakhliyah

In line with its commitment to be closer and strengthen its relationship with customers, BankDhofar recently inaugurated two new branches in Al Dakhliyah governorate.

The first branch is located in Jibreen, Wilayat of Bahla, and the second at the Sultan Qaboos Academy of Police Sciences in Nizwa, a press release said.

As the second largest bank in the Sultanate of Oman by the

number of branches, at a total of 123 branches, the bank also operates 360 ATMs, multi-use cash deposit machines, and multi-service interactive machines. Notably, customers can perform banking transactions via ATMs using just their mobile phone numbers, eliminating the need for a card.

The Jibreen branch and Sultan Qaboos Academy of Police Sciences branch will provide spe-

cialised services to the SME sector. The bank is offering specialised Al Rifaa preferred banking, Al Riadah priority banking services. The Jibreen branch was inaugurated by Sheikh Saeed bin Ali Al Salaf al Nuaimi, Wali of Bahla. The Sultan Qaboos Academy of Police Sciences branch was inaugurated by Lieutenant Colonel Said Salim al Manaai, director of Administrative and Financial Affairs.

## Dubai Internet City joins delegation at London Tech Week

As advancements towards digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI) redefine the business landscape across the world, Dubai Internet City, the Middle East's leading technology-focused destination for 25 years, is showcasing pathways to nurture innovation for global good at London Tech Week on 10-14 June.

Joining forces with the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), Dubai Internet City, part of TECOM Group PJSC and the region's leading destination dedicated to the tech sector, is spotlighting how the city's robust pro-innovation framework can contribute to the development and growth of the industry.

"Technology is already changing the ways in which we

live, work, and invest, and the world's most pressing challenges can be solved with creativity and ingenuity if the global talent pool of inventors and innovators is appropriately empowered," said Ammar al Malik, executive vice president of Commercial at TECOM Group PJSC, on behalf of Dubai Internet City. "Start-ups and enterprises are rapidly providing globally pertinent solutions for sectors ranging from climate and healthcare through to finance and transport.

"Strategic support is a crucial lever along this journey and be it the Dubai Economic Agenda 'D33' and Dubai's Universal Blueprint for AI or the UK Innovation Strategy, future-focused governance is essential for entrepreneurship.

## SBG Group opens Chery Showroom in Sohar



Recently Saud Bahwan Group inaugurated Chery's new showroom in Sohar, thereby in a short time, increasing Chery's presence in Oman to three.

Present at the occasion was Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdullah al Busaidi, Wali of Sohar and distinguished guests from the public and private sectors, a press release said.

The showroom in Sohar offers automotive enthusiasts an impressive range of Chery vehicles that are equipped with the latest features and technology promoting some of the finest driving experiences.

Speaking on the occasion, a representative from Saud Bahwan Group said, "Saud Bahwan Group is focused on offering

some of the finest products and services that customers will love. On its journey to establish a wider network of Chery showroom in Oman, the Group has also offered exciting employment opportunities to talented Omanis, whilst also making investments in sales and service facilities, contributing to Oman's growing economy."

On the partnership between Chery Automobile and Saud Bahwan Group, he said, "Chery's passion for quality and advancements in features and technology makes owning a Chery vehicle absolutely delightful. This when combined with Saud Bahwan Group's strengths promotes Chery ownership experiences to even greater levels."

The event showcased a range of Chery vehicles offering customers an opportunity to get close to their favourite Chery vehicle and learn more about its high quality features.

Chery's car range in Oman consists of an impressive lineup of the TIGGO8 PRO MAX, TIGGO4 PRO, and ARRIZO6 PRO.

# A year of extreme heat: What's in future?

Istanbul, Turkey - As the world grapples with a year marked by extreme temperatures, climate scientists are raising concerns about the potential implications for the summer months.

A recent report by the European Commission's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) observed that May 2024 was the warmest May on record globally, with a global average surface air temperature 0.65C (1.17F) above the 1991-2020 average.

It further indicated that the global average temperature for the last 12 months, from June 2023 to May 2024, is the highest on record, at 0.75C (1.35F) above the 1991-2020 average and 1.63C (2.93F) above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average.

"This marked the 12th consecutive month for which the global average temperature reaches a record value for the corresponding month," said a statement by C3S.

Carlo Buontempo, the director of C3S, in a statement called the 12-month streak 'shocking' but not surprising.

"While this sequence of record-breaking months will eventually be interrupted, the overall signature of climate change remains, and there is no sign in sight of a change in such a trend," he added.

**Summer under threat**

Experts also warned that the record heat being observed for the past 12 months can have an impact on this summer.

Piers Forster, director of the Priestley Centre for Climate Futures at the University of Leeds in



May 2024 was the warmest May on record globally, with a global average surface air temperature 0.65C (1.17F) above the 1991-2020 average

*While temperatures fluctuate from one year to the next due to natural variability, breaching the 1.5C limit for a whole year is quite a landmark moment*

MAXIMILIAN KOTZ



to natural factors such as El Niño, but in 10 years' time such temperatures will be common," he told Anadolu.

**Temperature breach: A landmark moment**

Global climate agencies warn about how temperatures from this year onwards till the next four years, can set a new record, surpassing 2023, which is currently the warmest year documented. A recent report by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) indicated that the planet's annual average temperature is 80 per cent likely to temporarily exceed

the 1.5C (2.7F) threshold above pre-industrial levels for at least one of the next five years.

The global mean near-surface temperature for each year between 2024 and 2028 is predicted to be between 1.1C and 1.9C higher than the 1850-1900 baseline, said the UN weather agency's report.

C3S also already reported that the global average temperature for May 2024 was 1.52C (2.73F) above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average, marking the 11th consecutive month since July 2023 at or above 1.5C.

"While temperatures fluctuate

from one year to the next due to natural variability, breaching the 1.5C limit (which was agreed as the safe limit for the global climate in Paris in 2015) for a whole year is quite a landmark moment," said Maximilian Kotz, a post-doctoral research scientist for the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.

Joeri Rogelj, a professor of climate science and policy and director of research at the Grantham Institute at Imperial College London, said the recent reports and updates show the 'dire state of our climate, the outcome of our continued green-

house gas pollution'.

"Human-caused global warming stood at 1.3C last year and is increasing at 0.26C per decade, a record pace," he added.

He warned that with global warming advancing so 'precipitously' towards the Paris Agreement's 1.5C limit, this means that an increasing number of individual days, months and years will show a global temperature that is more than 1.5C higher than pre-industrial levels.

"The first time this happens - potentially already over the next few years, says the WMO - global warming won't have breached the Paris Agreement's lower long-term warming limit yet, but it will be a clarion call for the need for ambitious and sustained action on climate."

Rogelj highlighted the need to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. "Significantly lowering greenhouse gas pollution over the next five to 10 years is the only way to ensure that the planet is not warming by another quarter of a degree by 2035," he said.

**Consequences of global warming**

Speaking about the record heat in the past 12 months, climate researcher Kotz said that while phenomena like El Niño have added to it, it has largely been due to emissions and global warming. "It's clear that this unprecedented amount of global heat is fundamentally driven by human emissions and subsequent global warming," he said.

Kotz warned that continued global warming has huge consequences across the world.

Anadolu Agency

## US defence chief to host Ukraine meeting in Brussels

Washington, D.C., US - US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin will host a meeting this week in Brussels of the coalition committed to backing Ukraine's defence against Russia's ongoing war, the Pentagon announced on Monday.

"Secretary Austin and (US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman) General (Charles Q) Brown will travel to Brussels on Wednesday to host the 23rd Ukraine Defence Contact Group on June 13th," spokesman Pat Ryder told reporters.

They will join defence ministers and senior military officials from nearly 50 nations to assess the ongoing crisis in Ukraine and the continued support from the international community to provide the Ukrainian people with the means necessary to defend their sovereign territory, Ryder said.

Austin will also participate in the NATO defence ministers' meeting on Friday at NATO headquarters, he added.



US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin

Minister Annalena Baerbock on Tuesday accused Russia of deliberately targeting Ukraine's economic and energy lifelines.

"Russian President Putin wants to destroy Ukraine's lifelines with his brutal war of aggression," she told reporters during the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Berlin.

She said Russia's intensified attacks target not only Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity but also its economic and energy infrastructure, as well as the country's future in the European Union.

"Amid these attacks on the lifelines of their country, Ukrainian people urgently need electricity, water, and heat. That's why here, in this conference, not only politicians, government officials, but also mayors, companies and civilian organisations are present," Baerbock said.

She also pledged strong support for Ukraine's EU membership bid.

Anadolu Agency

## Malawi: VP, 9 others killed in crash

Lilongwe, Malawi - Malawi Vice President Saulos Chilima and nine other people, including his wife, were killed as the plane they were onboard crashed in the Chikangawa mountain range, CBS News reported, citing the government.

Malawi President Lazarus Chakwera declared Tuesday a national day of mourning. The announcement was made in a statement released by the Office of the President and Cabinet.

The statement reads, unfortunately, all on board have perished in the crash, which happened on Monday morning after the military aircraft took off from Malawi's capital Lilongwe.

Saulos Chilima and others onboard the aircraft were travelling to attend the funeral of Malawi's former attorney general when their plane dropped off the radar, according to CBS News report.

Air traffic officials said the plane was not able to land at Mzuzu airport, about 200 miles north of Lilongwe, due to poor visibility, and the pilot had been advised to head to the capital when the flight disappeared.



In light of the incident, President Chakwera cancelled a scheduled overseas trip and ordered both regional and national agencies to intensify searches to locate the missing aircraft.

In a televised address on Monday night (local time), Chakwera said that the search and rescue operation would continue until Chilima's plane was found. He said: "I know this is a heartbreaking situation," adding that, "we are all frightened and concerned". In the late-night address to update the nation on the

missing aircraft, President Chakwera said his government has contacted the US, Israeli, Norwegian and British governments for possible assistance.

Several nations, including the US, provided technological support to Malawi in the search operation, CBS News reported. In a statement posted on X, the US Embassy in Lilongwe said it was 'deeply concerned by the news of the crash' and added an offer of 'all available assistance including a Defence C-12 aircraft'.

Chilima (51) was seen in

*Vice President Saulos Chilima and others onboard the aircraft were travelling to attend the funeral of Malawi's former attorney general when their plane dropped off the radar*

Malawi as a possible contender for the presidential election set to be held in 2025. Earlier in 2022, he was arrested on graft allegations, amid reports that he had received kickbacks from a businessman for government contracts. However, the charges were denied by Chilima, the report said.

Earlier in May, the charges against Saulos Chilima were dropped by the national prosecutor, who registered a notice for the discontinuation of the case.

Agencies

## South Africa's new parliament members to elect president on Friday

Johannesburg, SA - South Africa's new members of parliament will elect the country's next president on Friday during their first sitting, the office of the chief justice said in a statement on Monday.

South Africans on May 29 voted for national and provincial lawmakers in an election which saw President Cyril Ramaphosa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) party - in power since 1994 - fall short of getting a majority for the first time.

Chief Justice Raymond Zondo on Friday will administer the

oath or affirmation to the newly elected 400 members of parliament who will then elect a speaker and deputy speaker.

Later he will later preside over the election of the president.

This is the first time that a candidate from the ruling ANC is not guaranteed an automatic win as they lost their parliamentary majority in the May 29 elections. In South Africa, voting is done on a party basis, and the parties get seats in parliament.

The national lawmakers elect the president, which means that the party which wins the election gets ultimate power in the



country. The ANC candidate will be Ramaphosa, who could win with help from smaller parties.

Once led by global icon Nelson Mandela, the ANC secured 159 seats in the assembly, down from the 230 it got in 2019. The party had secured more than 60 per cent in all elections since 1994, except in 2019, when its share dipped to 57.5 per cent.

This time the ANC got only 40.18 per cent of the vote putting it in a difficult position to form a government on its own.

Last week, Ramaphosa announced that the ANC has agreed to form a government of

national unity after losing its majority.

He said the party had agreed to invite political parties to form a government of national unity, the best option to move the country forward as no party had an outright win.

"The purpose of the government of national unity must be, first and foremost, to tackle the pressing issues that South Africans want to be addressed. These issues include job creation and the growth of our economy that will be inclusive and the high cost of living," he said.

Anadolu Agency

# Countries welcome UNSC’s adoption of Gaza ceasefire resolution

Washington, D.C., US - Turkey, UK and Jordan were among the countries which welcomed the UN Security Council's adoption of a resolution calling for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry, on Tuesday, called it 'an important step.' "We consider United Nations Security Council Resolution 2735 adopted on 10 June, which aims to bring about a ceasefire in Gaza, as an important step towards putting an end to the massacre.

"We welcome Hamas' constructive and positive approach to the ceasefire plan," the ministry said in a statement.

The statement came after

the Security Council on Monday adopted a US-drafted resolution backing a proposal outlined by US President Joe Biden for a ceasefire in Gaza. Russia abstained from the vote, while the remaining 14 council members voted in favour.

"It is imperative that Israel announces its commitment to the implementation of a permanent ceasefire and fully implements all elements of the resolution," the ministry said.

Turkey will continue to contribute to the steps that will ensure a permanent end to the war, Israel's withdrawal from all of Gaza, the mutual release of hostages and prisoners, the re-



turn of displaced Palestinians to Gaza, the uninterrupted and adequate delivery of humanitarian aid and the reconstruction of Gaza, it added.

Meanwhile, UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron welcomed the UN Security Council's adoption of the draft resolution, calling it a crucial step towards ending the Israel-Hamas war.

In a statement on X, Cameron emphasised the importance of the resolution in alleviating the prolonged suffering experienced by both Palestinians and Israelis.

"The resolution on a ceasefire and hostage deal passed at the United Nations is an important step in bringing about an end to the conflict," he said.

"There can now be no excuses. Hamas must accept this deal. It will stop the fighting, stop the suffering."

Highlighting the widespread support for the resolution, Cameron noted that Israel had already offered the deal and it has received backing from the

US. Additionally, the UN, including Muslim-majority countries such as Algeria, have endorsed it.

Cameron called on Hamas to embrace the proposal, saying they 'are now the one thing standing in the way of bringing this to an end'.

Jordan also welcomed the development and in a statement, the Jordanian Foreign Ministry stressed the importance of implementing the resolution 'as it goes in line with the rules of international law, and represents the international will in ending the war on Gaza'.

Anadolu Agency



Pentagon spokesman Major General Pat Ryder

## Israel’s hostage operation was ‘near’ Gaza pier

Washington, D.C., US - The Pentagon on Monday rejected claims that Israel used the US's floating aid pier off Gaza during its hostage rescue operation but said there was some type of activity 'nearby'.

"I don't have a proximate location...It was near, but I think it's incidental," spokesman Major General Pat Ryder told reporters when asked how close the rescue operation got to the pier.

"Again, the pier, the equipment, the personnel - all supporting a humanitarian effort - had nothing to do with the IDF rescue operation," he added.

Israeli forces rescued four hostages from Gaza on Saturday held since October by the Palestinian group Hamas in a raid on the Al-Nuseirat refugee camp, killing at least 274 Palestinians and wounding more than 700.

"We've acknowledged that there was some type of helicopter activity nearby, but that was completely separate and not associated with the JLOTS operation," Ryder said.

Reiterating that the pier 'had nothing to do' with the rescue operation, he said: "I can tell you that there was no US military involvement in this rescue operation, nor were there any US forces on the ground."

Ryder underscored that the

pier's 'only purpose' is to help move additional urgently needed lifesaving assistance to Gaza.

The US resumed aid delivery to Gaza via the pier on Saturday which was reestablished after it broke apart in rough seas late last month.

Rough seas affected four US Army vessels supporting the maritime humanitarian aid mission in Gaza, and the vessels broke free from their moorings, resulting in two vessels being anchored on the beach near the pier. The third and fourth vessels were beached on the coast of Israel near Ashkelon.

US President Joe Biden ordered the establishment of a sea route to deliver food and other aid to Palestinians on March 8 amid Israeli restrictions and months of conflict in the enclave.

The JLOTS - the floating pier and the Trident pier - became operational on May 17 when trucks carrying humanitarian assistance began moving ashore via the pier.

The initial cost of the pier was estimated at US\$320mn. But the Pentagon said on Wednesday that the price had dropped to US\$230mn due to contributions from the UK and because the cost of contracting trucks and other equipment was 'lower than expected'.

Anadolu Agency

# Netanyahu committed to Gaza ceasefire proposal: Blinken

The US State Secretary, however, noted that Hamas has to clearly approve the ceasefire proposal



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

*I met with Prime Minister Netanyahu last night, and he reaffirmed his commitment to the proposal. If you want a ceasefire, press Hamas to say yes*

ANTONY BLINKEN

Ankara, Turkey - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had 'reaffirmed his commitment' to a Gaza ceasefire proposal during their meeting on Monday evening.

"I met with Prime Minister Netanyahu last night, and he reaffirmed his commitment to the proposal," Blinken said according to the Israeli public broadcaster KAN.

He also said Hamas's welcoming of a UN vote on the US-backed cease-fire resolution was a 'hopeful' sign.

Blinken, however, noted that Hamas has to clearly approve the ceasefire proposal, saying: "If you want a ceasefire, press Hamas to say yes."

The UN Security Council on Monday adopted a resolution that supports a Gaza ceasefire proposal announced by US President Joe Biden with 14 votes in favour and only Russia's abstention. The adopted resolution highlights the diplomatic efforts led by Egypt, the US, and Qatar, and welcomes the Biden-backed three-phase proposal on May 31.

The Palestinian group Hamas welcomed the provisions of the UN Security Council resolution and its affirmation of a perma-

nent ceasefire in Gaza, the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, the exchange of prisoners, reconstruction, the return of displaced persons to their areas of residence, and the rejection of any demographic changes or reduction in the size of the Gaza Strip, as well as the introduction of necessary aid for the Palestinian people in Gaza.

Israel has faced international condemnation amid its continued brutal offensive on Gaza since an October 7 attack by Hamas, despite a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire.

**Call to reach agreement**

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday called on both Israel and Hamas to reach an agreement on a ceasefire plan backed by the US President.

"I welcome the peace initiative recently outlined by President Biden and urge all parties to seize this opportunity and come to an agreement," said Guterres in a statement to an emergency aid conference in Jordan.

The UN chief further described the situation in the Gaza

enclave as 'deplorable'. Guterres also called for the world 'to stand united to safeguard the UNRWA (UN agency for Palestinian refugees) in the face of outrageous and relentless attacks'.

"UNRWA is the backbone of this humanitarian response, and it has suffered intolerably alongside the people it supports."

He added that 'the speed and scale of the carnage and killing in Gaza is beyond anything in my years as secretary-general'.

**Call for 'immediate steps'**

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi called on Tuesday for 'immediate steps' to stop the ongoing Israeli onslaught on the Gaza Strip. "The unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip is a direct responsibility of the Israeli occupation," Sisi said in a speech at an emergency aid conference for the Gaza Strip, hosted by Jordan.

He called for 'immediate, effective, and serious steps' to halt the war in Gaza and release the hostages and detainees.

The Egyptian leader also demanded the implementation of international resolutions 'to stop the offensive in Gaza, compel Israel to stop using starvation tactics against Palestinians, and end the siege on Gaza'.

The humanitarian aid conference, dubbed 'Call for Action: Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza', is organised by Jordan, Egypt and the UN.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian death toll from Israel's deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip since October 7 has soared to 37,164, the Health Ministry in the enclave said on Tuesday.

A ministry statement added that 84,832 people have also been injured in the onslaught.

Anadolu Agency

# Poland: PM says 10 people involved in ‘acts of sabotage’ arrested

Warsaw, Poland - Ten people involved in 'acts of sabotage and subversion' in Poland have been arrested in recent weeks, said the nation's prime minister on Tuesday.

"We have reasons to believe that these are not the last events of this type," Donald Tusk told reporters in the Polish city of Biaystok.

"Today, there can be no other priority - for the central government, the EU, regional and local government authorities - than security," he said. "We're not talking about exercises or lessons in threat theory," he added.

Tusk warned that there may be more incidents posing a security threat and emphasised that Poland's influence in the EU in the areas of security, including energy, and nearby countries is more important now.

In May, Poland arrested nine members of an alleged Russian spy ring. "These are Ukrainian, Belarusian and Polish citizens," Tusk said, adding that some may have been recruited from criminal gangs.

The detained were accused of 'beatings, arson and attempted arson', according to Tusk, who said alleged Russian plots against European countries concern not just Poland, but also Lithuania, Latvia, and possibly Sweden.

Tusk cited an attempt to set fire to a paint factory in Wroclaw,

*Today, there can be no other priority - for the central government, the EU, regional and local government authorities - than security*

DONALD TUSK



western Poland.

Earlier this month, Tusk announced the strengthening of the Polish intelligence services due to Moscow's destabilising activities, announcing that Poland would allocate 100mn zlotys (US\$25mn) to civil and military counter-espionage services.

Poland said in early June that it will spend over 3bn zlotys (US\$760mn) to boost cybersecurity after state news agency PAP was hit by a likely Russian cyberattack.

Tusk said on Monday that his government would change the law governing the appropriate

use of firearms on the borders of EU member states after three Polish soldiers were arrested last week for allegedly shooting at migrants crossing the Belarus border.

Such situations, Tusk said, include 'repulsing a direct, unlawful attack on the inviolability of the state border by a person forcing someone to cross the border' or 'resisting a direct attack on the life, health or freedom of a soldier or another person'.

Last week, Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski demand that authorities in Belarus - a close Russian ally - establish the identity of a man who murdered a Polish soldier at the border, and hand him over to Polish law enforcement agencies. "It is completely unacceptable for a neighbouring country to behave this way towards its neighbour. I promise you that Belarusian authorities will bear the consequences for this," he added.

Belarus has been widely accused of sending migrants over the border into Poland since 2021, aiming to destabilise the EU member. Polish authorities say it is an act of hybrid warfare. Critics accuse Poland of breaking international law by pushing people back over the border. Several clashes have taken place since late 2021 between Polish border authorities and migrants at the border.

Anadolu Agency

INDIA

# 'Modi 3.0 will take security to next level'

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said government will build Bharat as a bulwark against terrorism

New Delhi, India - After assuming charge as Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation on Tuesday, senior BJP leader Amit Shah said that Modi 3.0 will take its efforts for India's security to the next level and build Bharat as a bulwark against terrorism and naxalism.

Taking to X he shared: "Under the stewardship of PM Narendra Modi Ji, I reassumed charge of the Ministry of Home Affairs today. The MHA will remain committed to the security of the nation and its people, as it always has been. Modi 3.0 will take its efforts for India's security to the next level and build Bharat as a bulwark against terrorism, insurgency, and naxalism."

Shah took charge as Home Minister for the second consecutive term. He has been holding the portfolio since 2019.

Speaking about his role in the Home Ministry, Shah said: "In Modi 3.0, the MHA will continue to accelerate and strengthen security initiatives and introduce new approaches to realise PM Modi's vision of a secure Bharat." On empowering farmers and villages through the Ministry of Cooperation, Shah said: "Under the astute leadership of Modi Ji, the Ministry of Cooperation will remain com-



Amit Shah takes charge as Home Minister, at the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi on Tuesday (ANI)

mitted to empowering farmers and villages with the vision of 'Sahakaar Se Samridhhi'."

### Jaishankar to deal 'border issues'

Meanwhile, External Affairs

Minister S Jaishankar, after assuming charge on Tuesday, outlined distinct approaches to handling relations with China and Pakistan, asserting that India's foreign policy under the third term of Narendra Modi will

focus on finding solutions to 'border issues' with Beijing and the 'years-old cross-border terrorism' with Islamabad.

He noted that both the neighbouring countries present unique challenges and India's

relations with them are different. "Our focus with regard to China will be on finding a solution for the border issues," Jaishankar said, signalling India's commitment to resolving territorial disputes through dialogue

and diplomatic channels.

India has time and again faced border issues with China and the situation escalated in 2020, when Indian and Chinese troops clashed at Galwan, the same year the pandemic started. India, in January this year, while reiterating its longstanding position on China, said the two countries continue to engage on the diplomatic and military sides for some sort of resolution.

solution to the issue of years-old cross-border terrorism," Jaishankar said.

India has repeatedly emphasised that it will not tolerate cross-border terrorism and it cannot keep aside terrorism to improve ties with Pakistan. New Delhi has also said the onus is on Islamabad to create a conducive atmosphere in which there is no terror, hostility or violence.

### More ministers assume office

Among other union ministers who assumed office on Tuesday were BJP chief Jagat Prakash Nadda as Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Hardeep Singh Puri as Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat (Culture), Jyotiraditya Scindia (Communications), Shivraj Singh Chouhan (Agriculture and Farmers Welfare), former chief minister of Haryana Manohar Lal Khattar (Power), Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan (Food Processing Industries), Giriraj Singh (Textiles), Bhupender Yadav (Environment, Forest & Climate Change) and Ashwini Vaishnaw as Minister of Railways.

ANI

*In Modi 3.0, the MHA will continue to accelerate and strengthen security initiatives and introduce new approaches to realise PM Modi's vision of a secure Bharat*

AMIT SHAH

## 'Big responsibility', says new aviation minister

New Delhi, India - Newly appointed Union Minister and Telugu Desam Party MP Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu has an optimistic vision for the aviation sector of the country.

In an exclusive interview with ANI on Tuesday, Naidu said: "Prime Minister Modi has given me a big responsibility... I want to thank him for this... I am very excited to fulfil this responsibility... After taking charge, I will hold a review meeting and plan for the future."

Naidu emphasised his commitment to enhancing the travel experience for all passengers, regardless of their socio-economic background.

"Travelling by plane is no longer just for the rich. People from all classes are flying now, so I will strive to ensure better and more comfortable travel for them," Naidu told ANI.



Ram Mohan Naidu (ANI)

After meeting the PM, Naidu explained his policy to fulfil the directions given by the PM following his cabinet appointment. "PM Modi has given me an important responsibility, and I will try to fulfil it. During our meeting, the PM told me that aviation requires more involvement from younger people. The sector has much scope and potential," Naidu said.

Naidu will take charge as the

Minister of Civil Aviation on Thursday, alongside his Minister of State (MoS) Murlidhar Mohol. BJP's Jyotiraditya Scindia was the previous aviation minister. At 36, three-time Lok Sabha MP from Andhra Pradesh's Srikakulam is the youngest minister in the Modi 3.0 cabinet.

Meanwhile, Naidu said that he will head to Andhra Pradesh (Vijayawada) for the swearing-in ceremony of N Chandrababu Naidu, who will take the oath as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday.

TDP and its allies defeated Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSRCP in the recently held Assembly elections. TDP won 16 of 25 seats in Andhra Pradesh to emerge as a critical ally of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the centre.

ANI

## AP: TDP's Naidu stakes claim to form govt

Vijayawada, India - Telugu Desam Party (TDP) supremo N Chandrababu Naidu met with Andhra Pradesh Governor S Abdul Nazeer at Raj Bhavan on Tuesday and staked a claim to form a government in the state.

Naidu was accompanied by his party allies, Janasena Party chief Pawan Kalyan and BJP state president Daggubati Purandeswari. TDP, Janasena Party, and BJP, which fought together as NDA in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections, registered a landslide victory, winning 164 out of the total 175 seats. TDP won 135 seats, Janasena Party won 21, and BJP won 8.

Speaking to reporters after meeting with the Governor, Daggubati Purandeswari said: "There was an NDA meeting today in which Chandrababu Naidu was elected as the leader of the NDA Legislative Assembly. We have just come to the Governor and submitted a re-



Telugu Desam Party (TDP) Chief N Chandrababu Naidu (ANI)

quest letter to him that he should invite Chandrababu Naidu to form the government immediately, to which the Governor has responded and said that following the proper procedures, he will immediately call him to form the government."

She added that the swearing-in ceremony will take place tomorrow.

TDP MLA Atchannaidu, who was also part of the delegation that met with the Governor,

told reporters that all three (TDP, Janasena, and BJP) parties participated in the meeting and unanimously elected Chandrababu Naidu as the chief ministerial candidate.

"We have met the Governor and told him the same thing," Atchannaidu said.

Earlier in the day, during a meeting held in Vijayawada, the NDA MLAs proposed N Chandrababu Naidu as the chief ministerial candidate of the NDA

government, which is set for swearing-in on June 12.

Leaders of NDA constituent parties, including state BJP president Daggubati Purandeswari, Chandrababu Naidu, and Janasena Party chief Pawan Kalyan, attended the meeting. During the meeting, Janasena Party chief Pawan Kalyan supported the proposal to elect N Chandrababu Naidu as the CM of the NDA government.

Addressing the meeting, Pawan Kalyan said: "From the Janasena Party, we are giving our consent to Chandrababu Naidu to become the upcoming CM of the NDA government."

Naidu, while addressing the meeting, thanked the people for the historic mandate. "All MLAs of the BJP, Janasena, and TDP have given their consent for me to become Andhra Pradesh's Chief Minister," he said while addressing the meeting.

ANI

## NEET-UG 2024: SC issues notice to NTA

New Delhi, India - The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued notice to the National Testing Agency (NTA) on pleas seeking fresh NEET-UG, 2024 examination amid allegations of paper leak. The court said the 'sanctity' of the exam has been affected and it needs an answer from the testing agency.

"It is not that simple that because you have done it is sacrosanct. Sanctity has been affected, so we need answers," a vacation bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Ahsanuddin Amanullah told NDA. Advocate Mathews J Nedumpara, appearing for the petitioners, urged the bench to stay the counselling

process.

The apex court, however, refused to stay the counselling process and posted the case for hearing on July 8.

"Let the counselling start, we are not stopping the counselling," the bench remarked. The Supreme Court was hearing petitions seeking cancellation of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test - Undergraduate (NEET-UG) 2024 exam over alleged paper leak and other irregularities this year.

Apart from paper leak, candidates have also alleged irregularities in the award of compensatory marks to students for loss of time.

ANI

New Delhi, India - Universities and higher education institutions in India can now admit students twice a year similar to the admission process followed by universities abroad, according to the University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Jagadeesh Kumar.

The two admission cycles will be July-August and January-February from the 2024-25 academic session.

"If Indian universities can offer admission twice a year, it will benefit many students. Such as those who missed admission to a university in the July/August session due to a delay in the announcement of board results, health issues, or personal reasons. Biannual university admissions will help students maintain motivation since they do not have to wait one full year to be

*With biannual admissions in place (in higher education institutions), Industries can also do their campus recruitment twice a year, improving employment opportunities*

JAGADEESH KUMAR

admitted if they miss admission in the current cycle," UGC Chairman Kumar said on Tuesday.

Currently, UGC Regulations allow the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to admit students in one academic session in a year starting in July/August. An 'Academic session' is twelve months, beginning in July/August. Indian HEIs, therefore, follow the academic session that begins in July-August and ends in May-June.

UGC had decided in its 571st

commission held on 25 July 2023 to permit biannual admissions under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Online modes in January and July during an academic year.

As per the information furnished by the HEIs on the UGC DEB portal, in addition to a total of 19,73,056 students were enrolled in July 2022 and an additional 4,28,854 students joined in January 2023 in ODL and online programmes.

Considering the tremendous



response and interest from the students in ODL and online programmes in biannual admissions, in its meeting held on May 15 this year the UGC took a policy decision to allow Higher Education Institutions who offer programmes in regular mode to admit students twice in a year, either in January/February or July/August from the coming academic year, the UGC chairman said.

Those institutions that have the required infrastructure and

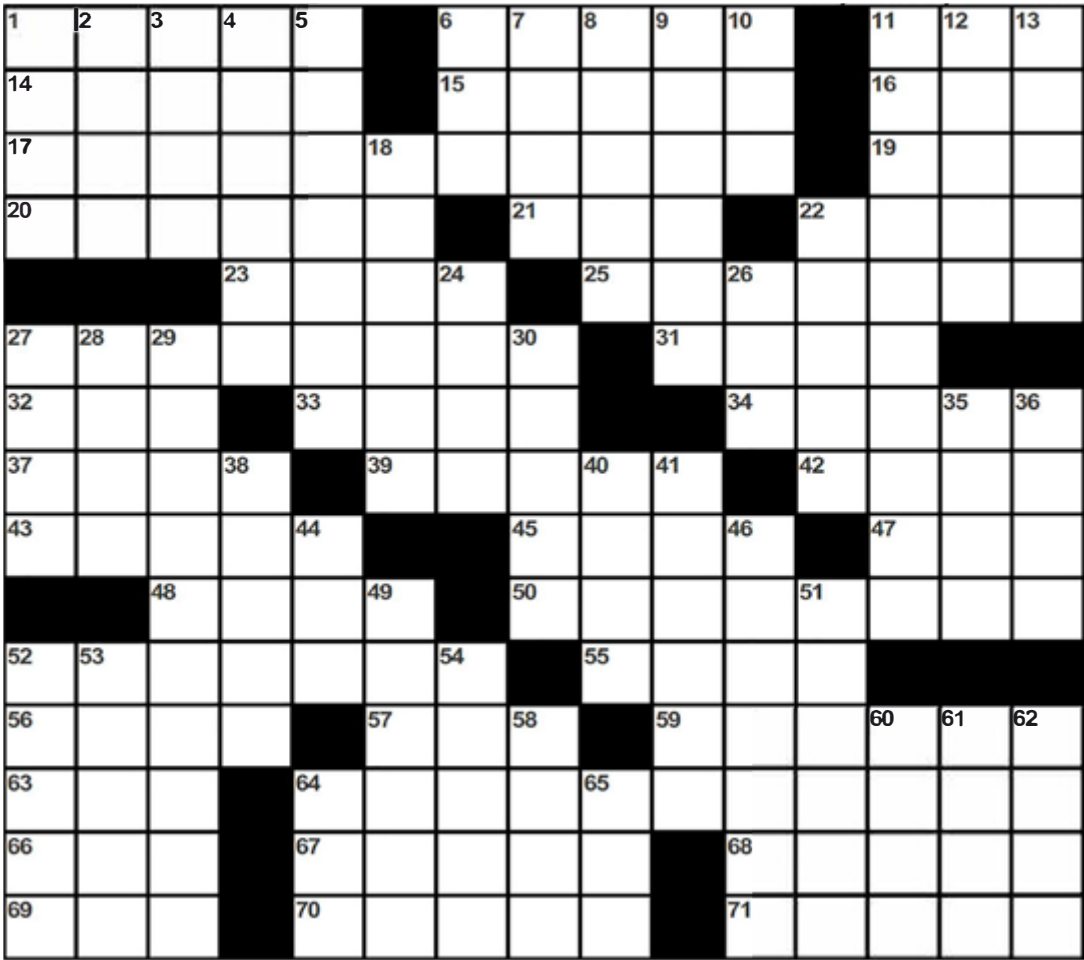
teaching faculty can utilise the opportunity to admit students biannually. Offering biannual admissions is not mandatory for the HEIs; it is the flexibility that UGC provides to the HEIs who want to increase their student intake and offer new programmes in emerging areas. To be able to admit students twice a year, HEIs must make suitable amendments to their institutional regulations.

UGC Chairman Kumar said: "With biannual admissions in place, Industries can also do their campus recruitment twice a year, improving employment opportunities for the graduates."

Biannual admissions will also enable the HEIs to plan resource distribution, such as faculty, labs, classrooms and support services, more efficiently, he said.

ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Looked at lustfully
- 6) Giraffe's striped kin
- 11) "... fish \_ fowl"
- 14) Hotelier Helmsley
- 15) More abundant
- 16) "... got an idea ..."
- 17) Trellis feature
- 19) Operatives' org.
- 20) Melodious composition
- 21) Charged particle
- 22) Transmit
- 23) Vast amount of money
- 25) Hit the horn
- 27) Born prematurely?
- 31) "It's now or never" time
- 32) This puzzle's hidden theme
- 33) "Buona \_" (Italian greeting)
- 34) Give a large donation
- 37) Bottleneck blocker
- 39) Chops finely, as potatoes
- 42) Spanish lady's title
- 43) Blacksmith's block
- 45) Colorful aquarium fish
- 47) Filbert, for one
- 48) Dating duo
- 50) Most dependable

- 52) Nonfictional
- 55) Fill to the max
- 56) Follow orders
- 57) Grazing locale
- 59) Evil intent
- 63) CD's end
- 64) Quest for a shopper
- 66) Org. quoted on tooth-paste tubes
- 67) Herb for flavoring
- 68) Sesame-seed-and-honey confection
- 69) Japanese currency
- 70) Assailed on all sides
- 71) Ran in neutral

DOWN

- 1) Wide-mouthed earthenware jar
- 2) Transmission unit
- 3) "An Iceland Fisherman" author
- 4) Bury in a pyramid
- 5) Yellow-disked flowers
- 6) Essay specimen
- 7) New Zealand bird
- 8) In progress, to Sherlock
- 9) Licorice-flavored liqueur
- 10) Annoy
- 11) "Goodjob!"
- 12) Like bighorns

- 13) Check, as a bill
- 18) Large eel
- 22) Rise to one's feet
- 24) Topics in topology
- 26) "... to a Nightingale"
- 27) Thinly layered mineral
- 28) Computer image
- 29) Male in the armed forces
- 30) Burger alternatives
- 35) Burden or responsibility
- 36) Bulb measure
- 38) Poker pot
- 40) Collection of poetry
- 41) Deli meat
- 44) Romanian currency
- 46) Sony rival
- 49) Sam in "Cheers"
- 51) Remove a metal from
- 52) Sudden invasion
- 53) Home sweet home
- 54) "The Bellboy" star
- 58) It's behind the altar
- 60) "... do" (faint praise)
- 61) Spelunker's milieu
- 62) "Land sakes!"
- 64) Chemist's workplace
- 65) No longer in the USAF

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

After doing your best to hold a grudge (something you've never been any good at), the peaceful mood of the heavens will be the last straw. You'll wake up ready to accept the apology and move on. A word of advice, though. Forgive, by all means, but if you were treated badly, don't feel bad if you aren't able to forget just yet. You have every right to expect your trust to be earned back.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

It's just about time for you to tend to the dilemma you've been trying so hard to work out. If you can manage it, taking a few days off now is the very best possible approach. Why not see if you can make it happen? Aren't you due for some time away from anyone and everyone? Sure you are. You've entertained and looked after everyone for long enough. It's time to see to yourself.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Let the rest of the world deal with problems. Your job now is to forget about anything that's serious and enjoy the next 24 hours simply because you can. If there's someone you'd like to invite alone for the ride (and if there isn't, that would be a tremendous shock), get them on board early enough to enjoy the preparations as well. The packing, unpacking, and shopping for what you know you don't need but sure want, for example.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You're torn between two very strong impulses. One side of you wants to shout your news to the world. The other can't stand the thought of letting a soul know even half of what's going on inside you. Until you find a way to bring those warring factions to a happy compromise internally, do what you can to ensure that the battle isn't obvious externally. In other words, keep your chin up and your mouth closed.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Don't let anyone tell you that their jealousy is happening because of something you've done. It's not. It's there because they're not confident in your feelings, and they're not confident about their own worth. That said, why not look around for someone who'll show you their admiration in a more flattering, outgoing way? Perhaps by taking you out to dinner and holding your hand across the table, for example. Sounds better, doesn't it?



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

No matter where you go, what the circumstances are, or why you happen to be there, more often than not you're likely to be made the honorary principal. Most times, you either don't mind or you outright enjoy it. But there are those moments when you don't want to be on duty. This may be one of those times, but if you see the need for your services, you'll bite the bullet and do what's required. Try to at least take the evening hours off.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Believe it or not, the new friend or acquaintance you've been trying to find a way to introduce to your present crew is more than ready to meet them, and the feeling is mutual. Both sides are curious, and both are eager to see if everything you've said about the other is true. It's your enviable task now to get them together for a party that won't soon be forgotten. Ah, well. There are worse jobs.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

The person with whom you've been spending all the free time you can possibly manage has made it quite clear that they're interested in spending even more of their waking hours with you. You're probably quite flattered and quite game. If you're also quite interested, don't keep them on hold forever. The longer you wait, the more unsure they'll feel. And after all, you do want to help them feel confident, don't you?



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

When you least expect it, someone you're quite fond of (mainly because they're rather like you when it comes to being unpredictable, unmanageable and even erratic at times) will call, write, or visit with one objective in mind: to persuade you to take their side in a tricky dispute. You, of course, won't hesitate to agree. This time, though, you might want to uncover the nature of the problem before you sign up.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You've always believed you'd be good at management. There's a compromise here that will work well. You just have to find it. And now the chance to climb the ladder, corporate or otherwise, has just arrived, and if you can manage to negotiate the in-betweens with your family, you might just be able to make a name for yourself, and a comfortable mark on the world at large too. Go for it!



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

That confidence you're feeling doesn't only work from nine to five, you know. It's pretty much a 24/7 kind of thing, and it actually applies even more to your behavior once you punch out of work, since just about everyone will still be looking to you then, just as they always do, for your approval and support. It's a lot to carry, but it's a compliment to your abilities. Be the benevolent dictator.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Go ahead and tell people what you think even if you've suddenly realized that it's going to startle them. Your list of priorities has changed, and changed drastically, just over the past few days or even hours. It's not all that odd. All it takes is one event to see things clearly, and that may be what's happened to you now. Announce your new attitude to everyone, and don't worry about their feelings. Think about your own for a change.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Baffin Bay is on which continent?

- A. Asia
- B. South America
- C. Europe
- D. North America

02. In cricket, what term is used to describe the situation when a batsman is "out" for no score in both innings of the same two-innings match?

- A. Golden duck
- B. Bronze duck
- C. Silver duck
- D. Pair

03. What song was a UK #1 hit for Mike and the Mechanics in 1989?

- A. Age of Reason
- B. Reelin' in the Years
- C. The Year of the Cat
- D. The Living Years

Answers: 1. D 2. D 3. D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| S | Z | C | N |
| T | T | I | L |
| A | S | T | R |
| A | P | I | E |

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

SOLUTION

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | E | L | 6 | 6 | E | 4 | 1 | Z |
| 4 | 1 | 6 | Z | E | L | 9 | 5 | 8 |
| 5 | Z | 9 | 4 | 8 | 1 | L | 6 | E |
| L | 9 | 4 | 5 | Z | E | 6 | 8 | 1 |
| 1 | 6 | 5 | L | 4 | 8 | E | Z | 9 |
| E | 8 | Z | 6 | 1 | 9 | 5 | L | 4 |
| Z | 4 | E | 8 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 9 | L |
| 6 | L | 8 | 1 | 9 | 4 | Z | E | 5 |
| Z | 5 | 1 | E | L | Z | 8 | 4 | 6 |



Gareth Southgate

## Southgate: If we don't win, I probably won't be here anymore

London, England - England manager Gareth Southgate says the European Championship in Germany might be his last chance to win a major trophy with the country, having been in charge of the Three Lions since 2016.

The 53-year-old led England to the Euro 2020 final and also guided them to a third-place Nations League finish in 2019.

Former Middlesbrough coach Southgate has been linked with Manchester United but earlier said he was completely focused on the national team. His England contract expires in December.

"If we don't win, I probably won't be here anymore. Then it might be the last chance," Southgate told German newspaper BILD. "I think about half the national team coaches leave after a tournament — that's the nature of international football.

"I've been here for almost eight years now and we've

been close. So I know that you can't keep standing in front of the public and saying, 'A little bit more please', because at some point, people lose faith in your message.

"If we want to be a great team and I want to be a top coach, then you have to de-

*I know that you can't keep standing in front of the public and saying, 'A little bit more please', because at some point, people lose faith in your message*

GARETH SOUTHGATE

liver in the big moments." England kick off their Group C campaign against Serbia on Sunday, followed by matches versus Denmark and Slovenia.

# DUTCH WIN BIG, BUT DE JONG RULED OUT

### Key midfielder's absence a big blow to Netherlands hopes in Euro 2024

Rotterdam, Netherlands - Netherlands' delight with an emphatic 4-0 win over Iceland in their last warm-up match on Monday before heading to the Euros turned to despair when it was announced that playmaker Frenkie de Jong would not be going to the tournament in Germany.

De Jong has been battling to be fit in time after suffering several ankle injuries this season playing for Barcelona.

He tried training for the first time with his team mates on Sunday, after a week of individual work, but following examinations on Monday doctors said he would not be ready in time.

That put a damper on Dutch spirits despite the impressive scoreline at the Feijenoord Stadium.

De Jong's diagnosis was made public immediately after the game but coach Ronald Koeman said he knew about it some four hours before kickoff and had told the players.

"Tests have shown that he cannot yet do what he should be able to do. He gets a reaction



Frenkie de Jong

from his ankle every time after training," Koeman told Dutch television.

"Then you have to conclude that he will not be 100% fit for the next three weeks. I already thought that playing against Poland (in the Group D opener) would be difficult."

De Jong posted a reaction on social media. "I am sad and disappointed that I will not make it to the European Championship," said the 26-year-old.

"We have done everything we can in recent weeks, but unfortunately my ankle needs more time. "It is a dream and the greatest

honor to represent your country at a final tournament, to wear the orange shirt, sing the national anthem and feel the support of the entire country. But now I, like the entire Orange legion, will cheer our team on from the sidelines. Let's go boys."

Earlier the Dutch made sure of

a good send off in their last warm-up game as Xavi Simons finally scored for his country, in his 14th international, to put the Dutch 1-0 up at halftime.

Virgil van Dijk got on the scoresheet for a second successive game before Donyell Malen added the third.



Franz Beckenbauer

## UEFA to honour Beckenbauer at Euro 2024 opening ceremony

Munich, Germany - Germany's late World Cup-winning captain and coach Franz Beckenbauer will be honoured by UEFA at the Euro 2024 opening ceremony in the Munich Football Arena on Friday, European soccer's governing body said.

Beckenbauer, one of his country's greatest players, captained West Germany to a European Championship triumph in 1972 and a World Cup success in 1974 before winning the World Cup again as manager in 1990. He died in January aged 78.

The opening ceremony will see Beckenbauer's wife Heidi carry the Henri Delaunay Cup - the tournament's championship trophy - along with Germany's two Euro-winning captains Bernard Dietz and Juergen Klinsmann. This will ensure "all three of Germany's UEFA Euro triumphs are reflected," UEFA said in a statement on Tuesday.

The venue of the ceremony is also home to Bayern Munich, the club where Beckenbauer played for over a decade, winning three successive European Cups from 1974 to 1976.

The opening ceremony will precede Germany's opening match in the tournament against Scotland in Group A.

## Injuries worry Poland after win against Turkey in final warm up

Warsaw, Poland - Poland's Nicola Zalewski scored a 90th minute goal to snatch a 2-1 win over Turkey in the final warm-up match for both sides on Monday before Euro 2024 but the home side will be worried over injuries to strikers Karol Swiderski and Robert Lewandowski.

Swiderski opened the scoring in the 12th minute, slipping his shot under the legs of goalkeeper Mert Gunok but as the forward celebrated he came down awkwardly on his ankle and went off injured shortly afterwards.

"Karol has sprained his ankle and only after the tests will we know what the situation looks like. There will certainly be no changes made," Poland manager Michal Probiez said.

Turkey equalised in the 77th minute with two substitutes involved when Kenan Yildiz passed to Baris Alper Yilmaz on the edge of the area and his shot went through the legs of defender Bartosz Salamon and past keeper Wojciech Szczesny.



Robert Lewandowski and Karol Swiderski both suffered injuries in Poland's friendly victory against Turkey

Both sides had chances to find a winner but it was Poland who extended their unbeaten run to eight games when Zalewski went on a solo-run into the area and netted a fine goal in the final minute.

"We haven't won for five games but in all the friendly matches we had difficult oppo-

nents," Turkey manager Vincenzo Montella said, with his side having held Italy to a 0-0 draw last week. "What worries me is that we work hard, we try, and every failure affects our well-being. I'm not worried because we had 20 scoring opportunities. We need to have better efficiency, I am aware of that."

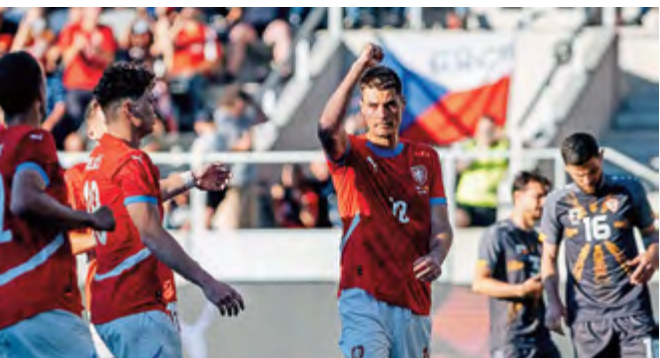
Poland had already lost Arkadiusz Milik to injury during their 3-1 win over Ukraine on Friday, with the Juventus forward then left out of the Euro squad, and, after Swiderski's injury, manager Probiez could have even more problems.

### Lewandowski out of opening match

Lewandowski will miss Poland's European Championship opener against the Netherlands on Sunday after suffering a torn hamstring, the Polish FA said.

"We examined three players who suffered injuries in the match against Turkey ... (defender) Pawel Dawidowicz suffered a pulled quadriceps thigh muscle," the Polish FA said in a statement on Tuesday.

"In the case of (striker) Karol Swiderski, an examination showed an ankle sprain without significant damage. Both players should return to full training within three to four days after the treatment.



Czech Republic's Patrik Schick celebrates after scoring against North Macedonia in their final warm up match ahead of Euro 2024

## Czech Republic beat North Macedonia in final warm-up

Prague, Czech Republic - The Czech Republic laboured to a 2-1 win over North Macedonia with two second-half penalties on Monday in their final tune-up for Euro 2024 as the hosts rarely threatened a team that failed to qualify for the tournament in Germany.

Czech coach Ivan Hasek made nine changes from the 7-1 win over Malta on Friday, fielding a likely starting team for the Euros with midfielder Tomas Soucek and forward Patrik

Schick. The Czechs struck first on the hour when Schick converted a penalty after a foul on Soucek. Isnik Alimi levelled five minutes later when he headed home a rebound off the post before Antonin Barak notched the winning penalty in added time.

The Czechs, who will go to Germany without Michal Sadilek after the Twente Enschede midfielder injured himself on a tricycle at the weekend, start their Euro campaign on June 18 against Portugal in Leipzig.

## People expect a lot from us, says Portugal's Fernandes

Lisbon, Portugal - Bruno Fernandes said the criticism that followed Portugal's 2-1 defeat by Croatia at the weekend was a reflection of fans' elevated expectations ahead of Euro 2024.

Portugal won all 10 of their qualifiers but their preparations for the June 14 to July 14 tournament in Germany have been far from perfect with losses to Slovenia and Croatia in recent friendlies.

"I don't want anyone to think that we came to this point thinking that everything was done and there was nothing to improve," midfielder Fernandes told reporters on Monday.

"There are always aspects to improve. To be honest, I like a bit of this negativity around the national team, 'the team isn't as good anymore', 'it's still not what we want'.

"I like it because it's a sign that people expect a lot from us

and want more from the national team. It means that we players who are representing the country have the quality to do more. We know that, we have ambition and we want to do more and better."

Portugal play Ireland in their final warm-up match later on Tuesday. They are in Euro 2024 Group F and begin their campaign against the Czech Republic, before taking on Turkey and Georgia.



Portugal's Bruno Fernandes in action in the match against Croatia

# AYEW HAT-TRICK FIRES GHANA TO THRILLING WIN

Algeria rally to beat Uganda in World Cup qualifier, Salah goal rescues Egypt

Cape Town, South Africa - Nigeria's World Cup qualifying hopes took a heavy blow with a 2-1 defeat by Benin on Monday, but Ghana and Algeria salvaged wins while Egypt drew after all three were behind at halftime.

Ghana's Jordan Ayew got a hat-trick as they beat the Central African Republic 4-3 in Kumasi after trailing 2-1 at the break, while Algeria were 1-0 down to Uganda in Kampala but second-half goals from Houssein Aouar

*Nigeria lost away to Benin, who were forced to move the match to Abidjan in the Ivory Coast because their own stadium in Cotonou was declared unfit for use in international games.*

and Said Benrahma secured a 2-1 win. Mohamed Salah came to Egypt's rescue with a sensational equaliser for a 1-1 draw in Guinea Bissau.

Nigeria lost away to Benin, who were forced to move the match to Abidjan in the Ivory Coast because their own stadium in Cotonou was declared unfit for use in international games.

Nigeria were ahead when Raphael Onyedika netted in the 27th minute, hesitating at first before squeezing the ball home, but Benin bounced back with goals by Jodel Dossou and Steve Mounie. Dossou sprinted onto a break-



Ghana's Jordan Ayew celebrates with teammates after scoring against Central African Republic

away chance to score but hurt his hamstring in the process and had to come off soon after the 37th minute goal while Mounie had a free back post header to win the game as he profited from poor Nigeria defending.

The Super Eagles, who were

favourites in Group C, have not won any of their opening four group matches and sit on three points while Benin lead with seven.

The victory was particularly sweet for coach Gernot Rohr, sacked by Nigeria three years

ago on the eve of taking them to the Africa Cup of Nations finals, and he was carried on the shoulders of his players at the final whistle.

Ghana battled the rain to stage a spirited comeback with Ayew the hero, after being presented

with a commemorative shirt before the match to mark 100 caps.

Ghana moved top of Group I with nine points after the victory, which followed an away triumph in Mali last week where Ayew snatched a late winner.

Egypt have a four-point lead in

Group A while Algeria's away win restored top spot in Group G after Guinea lost 1-0 to a last minute penalty for Mozambique, who join Algeria on nine points.

Botswana are on six points in the group after a 3-1 away win over Somalia.



Toni Kroos

## Kroos wants Germany to enjoy pressure

Herzogenaurach, Germany - Germany feel pressure to deliver as hosts of Euro 2024 but the team should feel privileged to play a major tournament on home soil, midfielder Toni Kroos said on Tuesday.

The Germans kick off the tournament on Friday with their opening Group A match against Scotland in Munich before also playing Hungary and Switzerland.

The 34-year-old Kroos, who won the Champions League with Real Madrid on June 1 and will retire from football following the Euros, said there was pressure for the hosts to do well after a decade without any major international title. But he urged his team mates to enjoy what is a rare occasion for most professional footballers, a major tournament in their own country.

"Basically at every tournament on home soil (there is pressure). It is even more special," Kroos told a press conference. "You get feedback instantly, the positive and the negative. We have a big responsibility for the atmosphere in the country for the next few weeks."

# Perfect Japan end campaign in style

Hiroshima, Japan - Three goals in eight first-half minutes ensured Japan finished the Preliminary Joint Qualification - Round 2 for the FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027™ with a perfect record as Hajime Moriyasu's side handed Syria a 5-0 defeat in Hiroshima on Tuesday.

Ayase Ueda opened the scoring in the 13th minute before Ritsu Doan struck six minutes later and, with Thaer Krouma putting the ball in his own net in the 21st minute, the Japanese had an unassailable lead in a Group B clash the Syrians had to win to seal their spot in the next round.

Defeat for Hector Cuper's



Japan's Ritsu Doan scores against Syria in their World Cup qualifier on Tuesday

team means DPR Korea can take second place in the standings - and a spot in the draw for the third phase on June 27 - if they take three points from Myanmar in Vientiane.

Knowing victory would move his side into the next round, Syrian captain Omar Al Somah had an early sight of goal for the visitors, bending an attempt from distance wide of Keisuke Osako's right post in the seventh minute.

Barely a minute later the Japanese opened up the Syrian defence, Takumi Minamino's slide-rule pass releasing Keito Nakamura into the left channel, only for his pull-back to be thumped over the bar by Takefusa Kubo.



South Korea's Lee Kang-in (top) celebrates with Son Heung-min after scoring against China

# Olympic athletes bet on blood sugar monitors for winning edge

Olympians including Dutch marathon runner Abdi Nageeye are using a new tool they hope will boost their medal chances this summer: tiny monitors that attach to the skin to track blood glucose levels.

Continuous glucose monitors or CGMs were developed for use by diabetes patients but their makers, led by Abbott (ABT.N) and Dexcom (DXCM.O), also spy opportunities in sports and wellness. The Paris Olympics, which start on July 26, are an opportunity to showcase the technology - even though there is as yet no proof it can boost athletic performance.

"I do see a day where CGM is certainly going to be used outside of diabetes in a big way," said Dexcom's Chief Operating Officer Jacob Leach.

Diabetes patients remain the CGM specialist's commercial focus, he told Reuters, but Dexcom is also working with re-



Abdi Nageeye

searchers on future use to optimise athletic performance. He would not disclose details.

The CGM market is already worth billions of dollars thanks to

demand from diabetes patients, who use the coin-sized adhesive skin patches with a Bluetooth link to a smartphone instead of drawing blood through a finger stick.

The readings help determine whether they need an insulin dose.

In March, Dexcom's Stelo device, targeting people with early-stage diabetes who are not on insulin, became the first CGM to

using CGMs to optimise calorie intake and workout intensity as they prepare for sport events.

Abbott said it is targeting the non-diabetic consumer market.

On Monday it won U.S. approval for its prescription-free

*Continuous glucose monitors or CGMs were developed for use by diabetes patients but their makers, led by Abbott (ABT.N) and Dexcom (DXCM.O), also spy opportunities in sports and wellness*

win U.S. approval for purchase without a prescription. Launch is planned for this summer.

Abbott introduced a CGM product for amateur and elite sports users without diabetes in Europe as early as 2020 and has sponsored Kenyan marathon great Eliud Kipchoge and his team since 2021. Top athletes and their support staff have been

Lingo device and smartphone app for health and wellbeing, available in Britain since January at a cost of 120-150 pounds (\$152-\$190) per month.

Also on Monday, Abbott won U.S. clearance for its non-prescription system Libre Rio, for people with diabetes who do not need insulin, to compete with Dexcom's Stelo.

# Defeat to South Korea leaves China on the edge

Seoul, South Korea - A Lee Kang-in goal saw South Korea defeat China 1-0 on Tuesday and conclude their Preliminary Joint Qualification - Round 2 for the FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 campaign with an unbeaten record atop of Group C.

After a goalless first half of few chances, Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Lee put the Taegeuk Warriors in front on 61 minutes to seal a victory with a scoreline that, in truth, did not reflect their near complete dominance of proceedings at Seoul World Cup Stadium.

China, meanwhile, will need to await the conclusion of the later tie between Thailand and Singapore to know whether they will join South Korea in the next round of qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup 2026.

The hosts began on the front

foot and had a corner kick within the opening five minutes but a defensive-minded China side dealt with the danger and for the opening period kept clear-cut chances to a minimum, despite South Korea having the lion's share of the ball.

Breaking down the China low-block seemed to require a moment of magic and they almost found inspiration from their captain on 20 minutes when Son Heung-min jinked his way past three defenders on the edge of the area, but Wang Dalei did well to save his resulting shot.

Son almost repeated his trick a minute later but this time was hauled down before he could get his shot away. From the resulting free-kick the Tottenham Hotspur forward saw his curled effort fly narrowly over, taking a deflection on its way, to land on the top of the net.

# MEHRAN SHINES BRIGHT

Experienced Oman medium pacer is among the top wicket-takers in the tournament

Saint George, Antigua and Barbuda - Oman's thrilling journey at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 is all but over with their hopes of advancing extinguished after a hat-trick of defeats in the West Indies.

However, one player who has emerged as a standout bowler is Mehran Khan. Amidst the fierce competition and heart-pounding moments, Mehran's exceptional bowling performances have captivated audiences worldwide, showcasing not only his skill but also his unwavering determination to leave an indelible mark on the cricketing world.

Mehran's name is among the list of top wicket-takers after the World Cup has witnessed 22 matches so far across four groups comprising 20 nations.

Mehran has stood out as a formidable force in Oman's bowling lineup. With a presence exuding quiet confidence and a smile that conceals his competitive fire, the 37-year-old medium pacer has made a significant impact on the field. His tally of six wickets places him among the top five bowlers in the tournament, a testament to his skill and consistency.

tency.

Afghanistan's left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi, who claimed a five-wicket haul against Uganda, leads the table of the highest wicket-takers with nine wickets from two matches and is followed by South Africa's pacer Anrich Nortje with eight.

At the third spot there are three bowlers including Mehran with six wickets each. The other two are West Indies' left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein and Afghanistan's spinner Rashid Khan.

Except for Mehran and Nortje who have featured in three matches each, the rest have played two games so far. India's Jasprit Bumrah, who was the star of India's win over Pakistan on Sunday, is next best with five wickets from two games.

Mehran's bowling has also been rated as one of the most impactful performances so far. According to ESPNcricinfo, Farooqi is on top with a score of 190.1 in the bowling impact category. At second spot is Mehran, who with a score of 146, is ahead of Bumrah with 128.7. The rating of most impactful bowlers is measured



Mehran Khan's performance has been the biggest positive for Oman in the T20 World Cup

*We could have even won the match against Namibia but for the fumble off the last delivery behind the wickets that allowed [David] Wiese to steal a single off a bye*

MEHRAN KHAN

not only by the wickets taken and economy rate but also of the pressure under which these performances happened.

Mehran's show has been one of the highlights of Oman in Group B at the ongoing World Cup, but the all-rounder admitted that these figures and bowling would have been sweeter had the team won.

"I would have been happier had we won the matches. We went close in the opener and to

produced one of the most memorable spells against Namibia.

Mehran returned with dream figures of 3/7 and led to defend the meagre total of 109 and force a tie and a Super Over.

The spell against Namibia was his career-best in the 40 T20Is he has played since his debut Oman against Afghanistan in July 2015.

"We could have even won the match against Namibia but for the fumble off the last delivery behind the wickets that allowed [David] Wiese to steal a single off a bye," he said.

His tidy line and length and ability to pull back his length came in handy against the mighty Australia. Mehran not only shone with the ball but made an enterprising 27 off 16 balls.

Mehran had the Aussies in a spot as he struck twice off successive balls to get rid of their skipper Mitchell Marsh and Glenn Maxwell in the ninth over of the game.

He was on a hat-trick and nearly had the star performer Marcus Stoinis caught at the boundary in the 15th over, a drop that will haunt Oman for long.



Keshav Maharaj celebrates South Africa's win against Bangladesh

## South Africa beat Bangladesh in last-ball thriller

New York, United States - South Africa survived an almighty scare to maintain a 100 per cent win-record at the T20 World Cup 2024, and in New York, where they chose to bat first in their final fixture at Eisenhower Park. On a used wicket, Aiden Markram decided to put a total on the board, and it almost looked like a mistake. South Africa were 23 for 4, but a record 79-run fifth-wicket stand between Heinrich Klaasen

and David Miller took them to 113, which they scrapped hard to defend.

Bangladesh's start was not ideal. They were 50 for 4 after ten overs, but Towhid Hridoy and Mahmudullah put on 44 for the fifth wicket and got them back on track. They almost also got them over the line and will look back on one incident which could have forced a Super Over. In the 17th over, Mahmudullah

missed a flick off Ottneil Baartman, which hit his front pad and deflected to the boundary for what looked like four leg byes. But he was given out off that ball, which made it dead at the point of impact, and reviewed the decision. Ball-tracking showed Mahmudullah was not out, but because he had been given out, the four runs did not count, as outlined by the ICC's protocols on DRS (3.7.1) in the playing con-

ditions for T20Is.

In the end, Bangladesh fell short by four runs. That, and their inability to capitalise on Keshav Maharaj bowling the final over for the first time in T20Is and sending down three full tosses, cost them the game.

Maharaj was tasked with the final over after Markram bowled the seamers out earlier. It seemed a miscalculation, but he got two wickets as Bangladesh

sought to clear the boundary though neither Jaker Ali nor Mahmudullah could. Mahmudullah was out on the penultimate ball - off a full toss - to a well-timed running catch by Markram from long-on, which all but ended Bangladesh's hopes.

South Africa leave the USA with three wins from three matches, and will move to St. Vincent to play Nepal in their last group match.

## CLASSIFIEDS

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MET GALA 2024  
REFLECTIONS

Belle  
of the  
Ball

For Keke Palmer, the 'Sleeping Beauty: Reawakening Fashion' theme of the Met Gala 2024 was easy to interpret because there are parallels to her own life.

"I am having my own reawakening and becoming a woman in my own right. I do feel like it's funny how art imitates life in this way," Palmer told Vanity Fair before hitting the steps of The Metropolitan Museum of Art recently.

At the Met Gala 2024, Palmer looked radiant in a custom Marc Jacobs gown ("It's giving goddess, look at me, look at me, but don't get blinded because I'm shining so brightly!") made of gold frayed sheer silk and tulle and delicately covered with antique beaded embroidery.

"With the theme 'Sleeping Beauty: Reawakening Fashion,' meshed with what's actually happening in my life as a new mom and stepping into the year being 30, I do think both of those things in my life and what I'm trying to express, and what Marc is trying to express within the art, all align. And I hope that that's also why he chose me to even be a part of what he's doing this year with The Met," Palmer said.

It was the perfect alignment indeed, as Ja-



Clothes have always made me come alive in that way. And, I think, it's a big part of me, too, as an actress

KEKE PALMER

cobs said he's long been a fan of Keke. "I was thrilled when she accepted our invitation to the Met Gala. The exhibit, 'Sleeping Beauties,' is going to showcase some of the museum's most rarely seen items that are no longer suitable to be worn. This idea of fragility was really where we started with Keke's look," Jacobs said.

While the actor has attended the Met Gala several times in the past, last year, when she attended with designer Sergio Hudson shortly after the birth of her son, Leo, she realised how fashion could rejuvenate her.

"It reignited in me something that, I think, I really needed, which was just leaning into the fun that we can have with beauty. I think there's so much seriousness around it. For me, after I became a mom, with years of just being so dolled up, it had a new meaning to me where it was kind of like I found a strength and power in putting on my best looks and putting my best foot forward," she said. "Especially when it comes to an opportunity. And so, I look forward to that for tonight."

As Palmer embraces this new era of her life, she's leaned into the playful nature of style as a means to relieve stress, and so, working in collaboration with her longtime stylist, Seth Chernoff, Palmer becomes 'a character' with every new look.

"Whether it's on *Password*, or whether it's something that I'm doing on the carpet, or even if we're preparing to look for a new character that I'm developing. There's always the confidence, but there's a certain key to who I'm going to be tonight, what I'm going to get, how I'm going to serve, what the attitude is."

"Clothes have always made me come alive in that way. And, I think, it's a big part of me, too, as an actress. I'm always talking when I work with the director on what's the look, what does her hair look like, what does her outfit look like? Because all of that really brings that person to life," Palmer said.

And as for the character that inspired Palmer at the Met Gala 2024? "When I wear this dress, I feel like I'm the belle of the ball," she said.

(Courtesy: vanityfair.com)

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BOLLYWOOD'S BANE

For nearly a century, Bollywood has held a mirror to Indian society, the plotlines of the world's most prolific movie industry reflecting the changing tides of a vast, developing nation.

India's multibillion-dollar movie industry produces around 1,500 to 2,000 films per year in over 20 languages - more than any other country. And most of these are Hindi films, meaning Bollywood holds an outsized influence on the country's culture, identity and economy.

And while the industry is perhaps most famous for its lavish musical productions, many films also tackle the political, religious and social issues of any given era.

But where Hindi cinema once reflected certain secular, democratic values championed by India's founding fathers, many critics say the industry has veered toward the right over the past decade - coinciding with the populist rule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Alarmed liberals and some industry insiders point to a string of recent blockbusters that they say perpetuate anti-religious stereotypes and sideline opposition views. While they only represent a fraction of movies produced each year, they receive outsized publicity and sometimes government support - and critics worry they serve as propaganda tools for the BJP.

Observers and insiders say the change is profound - as if Hollywood was increasingly pandering to the Republican party's most right-wing sensibilities.

These types of films swap the common romantic heartthrob archetype with heroes that champion Hindu-first policies, and villains are almost always Muslims who threaten the country's majority-Hindu population. Even movies without a religious lean are being used to amplify BJP's domestic policies, critics say.

"There are a lot of these releases coming out now," said award-winning director Raja Sen in a video interview. "It's not the kind of thing that you should be allowed to do in an election year."

While films echoing the ruling party's views are not produced or directly funded by the BJP, many of them are said to be publicly endorsed by the government.

Though divisive, the prime minister enjoys enormous support across the country thanks to his economic wins, overseas diplomacy and brand of Hindu nationalist populism. Modi's seal of approval can therefore boost a movie's audience and bring commercial success, experts say.

"I have seen firsthand this tidal change in popular Hindi cinema, of films not just toeing the government line, but also just becoming ... more and more vile," said Tanul Thakur, a film critic and journalist based in Mumbai, the home of Bollywood, in a phone interview.

"The degree to which we are seeing the infusion of politics in popular Hindi cinema, coupled with ... this very blatant disregard for India's religious minorities, and any kind of multiplicity of narratives ... has been very disconcerting."

CNN reached out to the Ministry of Culture, the BJP, and the regulatory Central Board of Film Certification for comment on the claims made by critics in this story.

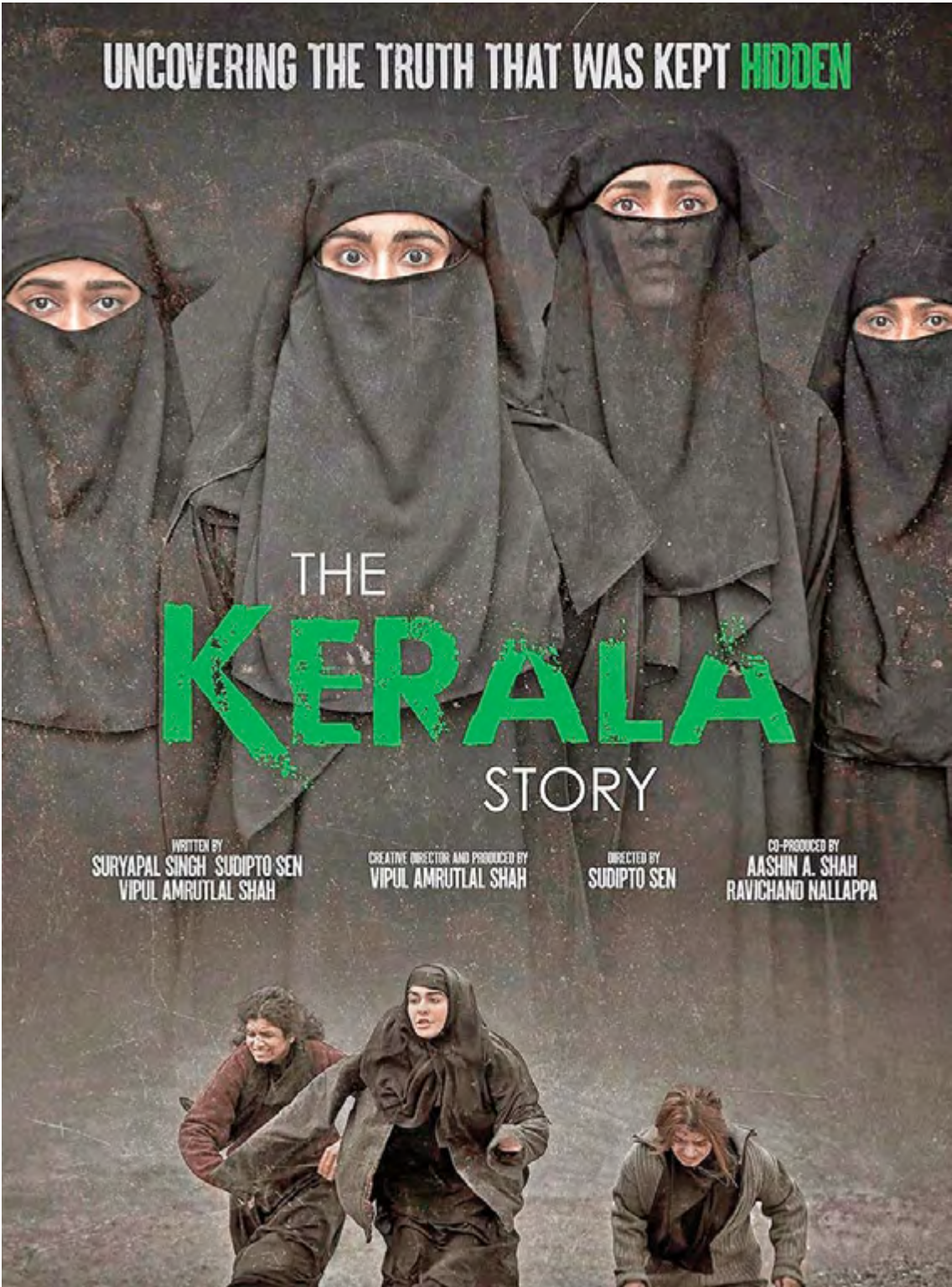
A BJP national spokesperson had previously told CNN the party is not prejudiced against Muslims, and the community has benefited from Modi's leadership, saying, "India's constitution protects the Indian democracy."

Every expert who spoke with CNN, however, agreed that the production of pro-



CELLULOID SLANT

A 'TIDAL CHANGE' IS SEEN IN BOLLYWOOD WHICH HAS BEEN VEERING TO THE RIGHT DURING THE PAST DECADE OF THE 'MODI ERA'



ernment and anti-Muslim movies has accelerated during Modi's time in office.

They pointed to a number of recent releases that pushed that agenda - including this year's Swatantrya Veer Savarkar, a biopic of a leading figure in India's Hindu-nationalist movement, and the upcoming JNU, which critics worry will demonise the titular university known for left-wing student activism.

Two of the most famous examples are The Kashmir Files of 2022 and The Kerala Story of 2023, which were both criticised for vilifying Muslims, perpetuating negative stereotypes, worsening religious tensions and distorting historical facts.

Both were also massive box office successes - The Kashmir Files raked in over US\$30mn on a US\$3mn budget - in part because they received enthusiastic government praise.

While the BJP didn't fund the productions, prominent party politicians, including Modi, publicly endorsed the two movies, and some BJP-ruled states waived tax on tickets for both. Other states gave police officers and government workers time off to watch The Kashmir Files.

"The Kashmir Files" was based on the mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits - members of Hinduism's highest caste, the Brahmin, or priestly class - from the restive region as they fled violent Islamist militants in the 1990s.

Sudipto Sen, director of The Kerala Story, has similarly denied that his film propagated Islamophobia, telling local media "It has nothing to do with any religion."

Then there's the recently released Article 370, also endorsed by Modi, named after the Indian government's controversial 2019 decision to remove the special autonomy of the country's only Muslim-majority state, Jammu and Kashmir. Some media and rights groups slammed the government's heavy-handed crackdown at the time, while critics of the film argued it distorted the facts and drove a government narrative that the move was essential.

Critics say these types of movies stretch back years during Modi's tenure - with a similar spate of pro-government films that sprung up around the 2019 election season, including a glowing biopic of the prime minister himself which was ultimately held for release until after polls closed, due to concerns it would serve as political propaganda.

Netflix's 2020 show A Suitable Boy, which depicts a young Hindu woman being kissed by a Muslim man at a Hindu temple, and Amazon's 2021 series Tandav, which included depictions of some Hindu deities, are other examples, besides this year's release of Netflix's Annapoorani: the Goddess of Food, which follows a high-caste Hindu woman cooking and eating meat as she trains to become a chef.

In all three instances, the filmmakers faced backlash from far-right Hindu nationalists and politicians who called for boycotts and filed police complaints against the streaming platforms and production companies.

Thakur and Sen both lamented the self-censorship that has ensued, saying there may be countless filmmakers and artists concerned about these issues who feel unable to speak out - which can come at a hefty cost.

Movies are expensive to make, meaning there's little incentive for filmmakers to produce controversial movies that could be pulled from streaming platforms or censored by authorities - especially for independent creators without much funding, says Darab Farooqui, a screenwriter based in Jaipur and Mumbai.

(Courtesy: cnn.com)

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