



H M HOSTS DINNER ON SAF DAY

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, hosted a dinner on Wednesday to mark Sultan's Armed Forces Day at Hisn al Shumoukh in Manah. SAF Day is celebrated annually as a tribute and appreciation of His Majesty the Supreme Commander for his valiant armed forces and all their formations and units for their dedicated efforts in performing a sacred national duty and protecting the resources of the homeland (ONA)

Italian knighthood for Apex Media chairman



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Embassy of the Republic of Italy in Oman conferred the Ordine della Stella d'Italia (Order of the Star of Italy), with the rank of knighthood, on Salah Zakwani, Executive Chairman of Apex Press and Publishing, on Wednesday. The ceremony was officiated by H E Pierluigi D'Elia, Ambassador of Italy to Oman.

The order, under patronage of the President of Italy, is awarded to expatriates and foreign nationals who achieve exceptional results in preserving and promoting Italy's national prestige and enhancing bilateral relations between Italy and other countries.

Zakwani received the order for his efforts to strengthen cultural ties between Italy and Oman. Speaking on the occasion, H E D'Elia said, "Salah Zakwani has been a bridge between Italy and Oman, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration through his commitment to highlighting the cultural richness and opportunities in Italy. His dedication has played a vital role in enhancing ties between our nations. Through his work with Muscat Daily and his other publications, he has greatly contributed to raising awareness on Italy in Oman and strengthening exchanges between our friendly countries."



03
Oman, Netherlands mark 400 years of maritime ties



13
BBC series presented by Attenborough on Dhofar

Impact of Personal Income Tax Law reviewed by State Council

Muscat - Under chairmanship of H E Sheikh Abdulmalik al Khalili, the State Council convened a session on Wednesday to review and discuss the draft Personal Income Tax Law.

The session began with remarks from H E Khalili, who emphasised the council's commitment to its national responsibility. He highlighted the "significant role played by its members in achieving their tasks" through in-depth deliberations on crucial legislative matters.

The primary focus of the meeting was the draft Personal Income Tax Law, which was referred to the State Council by Council of Ministers. The proposed law, submitted by the



State Council members are committed to its national responsibility and achieving their tasks

H E SHEIKH AL KHALILI

State Council's Economic and Financial Committee, is regarded as one of the most significant legislative projects under review during the current term of the council.

The committee outlined key objectives of the proposed law, which include diversifying the country's income sources, reducing reliance on oil revenues and

aims to strengthen the government's ability to finance social protection programmes and tackle issues related to tax evasion.

Council members discussed the potential impact of the law on the economy and society, with the committee stressing the need for a balanced approach. The co-

mmittee has pledged to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed law, assessing both its positive and negative effects before a final decision is made.

During the session, the State Council also reviewed the opinion of the Majlis a'Shura on the draft

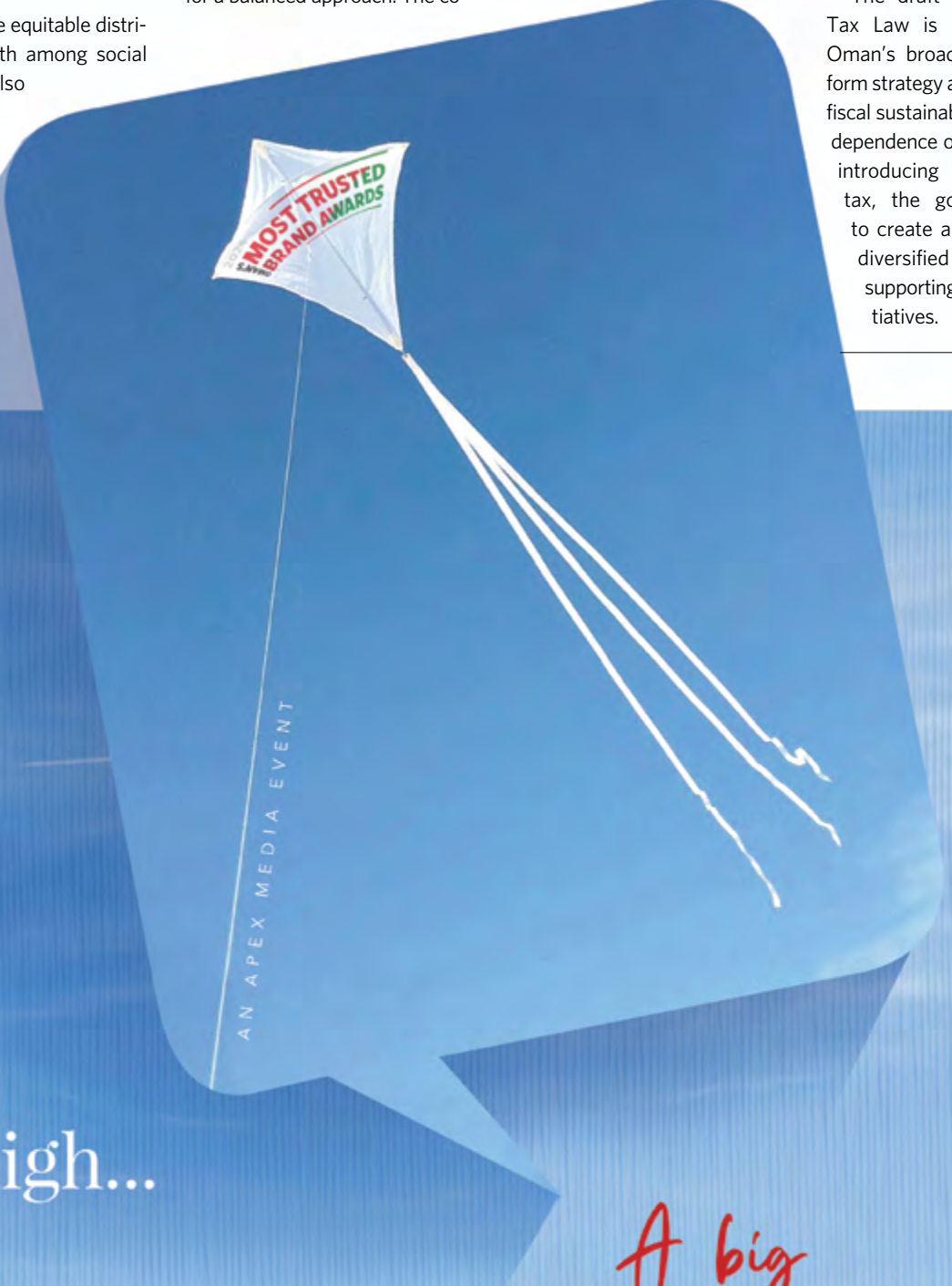
law. The council agreed with the shura on several articles as received but held differing views on certain provisions. These differences will be addressed by a joint committee formed between the two councils, which will prepare for further discussions in a joint session.

The draft Personal Income Tax Law is seen as part of Oman's broader economic reform strategy aimed at achieving fiscal sustainability and reducing dependence on oil revenues. By introducing personal income tax, the government seeks to create a more stable and diversified economy while supporting social welfare initiatives.

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CAA licenses
Tahleeq to
manage
drone
operations
in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has granted a licence to Tahleeq Drone Services to oversee the registration and management of drone air traffic in Oman.

The licensing aims to enhance air navigation safety and regulate drone operations in the Omani airspace.

The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the International Civil Aviation Organization Security Week and a high-level ministerial meeting being held from December 9 to 12 in Muscat. Drone air traffic management service will be provided through the Serb platform, which incorporates a state-of-the-art digital system.

In its initial phase, the platform will focus on registering amateur drone operators. It will facilitate operator data registration, grant licences upon successful completion of a test, and permit drone flights in designated safe areas in co-ordination with military and security agencies.

The service addresses the growing use of drones and expediting permit issuance and streamlining registration processes. Additionally, the platform will monitor and track drone operations, ensuring robust security and protection against cyber threats. All data will be stored on local servers, utilising locally developed algorithms and software.



H M presents medals of service
excellence to military officers

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, presented Service Excellence and Royal Commendation Medals to several commissioned and non-commissioned officers of military and civilian branches of Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), the Ministry of Defence and Royal Guard of Oman on Wednesday.

Held at Al Murtafa'a Camp, the ceremony was held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, who pinned the medals on the honourees in recognition of their loyalty and dedication to serving the nation and fulfilling their national duties.

H H Sayyid Shihab congratulated the recipients, praising their commitment to the country. He encouraged them to continue their loyal service under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan.



The ceremony was attended by several high-ranking officials, including Mohammed Nasser al

Zaabi, Secretary-General at Ministry of Defence ; Lt Gen Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of



Staff of SAF; Gen Mattar Salim al Balushi, Commander of Royal Army of Oman; Maj Gen Khamis

bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of Royal Air Force of Oman; and Rear Admiral Saif

Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of Royal Navy of Oman. ONA



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Hackathon from Dec 14
on sustainable tourism



Muscat - Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) has announced the first edition of a hackathon in its efforts to foster innovation and support entrepreneurship in the tourism sector.

Scheduled to take place from December 14 to 21, the event will bring together developers, designers and young entrepreneurs to develop creative solutions addressing challenges in the tourism sector and other key areas, including energy, environment and logistics.

The hackathon will be held in strategic partnership with Oman Across Ages Museum and the Governorate of Dakhliyah. Executed by Al Jabr, a regional leader in startup development and institutional innovation in the MENA region, several Oman Investment Authority entities will also be involved.

The hackathon will serve as a dynamic platform for tech and creative talent to collaborate in a competitive environment, crafting innovative ideas in fields such as technology, artificial intelligence,

health and environmental sustainability. Participants will work to transform these ideas into prototypes or actionable projects.

The event will be inaugurated on December 14 at Oman Across Ages Museum. This will be followed by an innovation sprint at

The event will bring together developers, designers and young entrepreneurs to develop creative solutions addressing challenges in the tourism sector and other key areas

Dusit D2 Naseem Resort in Jabal Akhdar on December 19 and 20, featuring two days of intensive brainstorming and mentorship. The hackathon will conclude with a ceremony on December 21, also at Dusit D2, where teams will present their final projects to a panel of judges and compete for

recognition and prizes.

Developers, designers and university students specialising in technology, tourism and business, as well as entrepreneurs from the tourism and technology sectors are encouraged to participate. Out of over 100 registered teams, only 30 will be selected, ensuring a showcase of the brightest emerging talent.

Commenting on the event, Kawthar Said al Amrani, Research, Development and Innovation Lead at Omran, said, "We are thrilled to launch the first edition of the Omran Hackathon, which reflects our dedication to fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. Through this initiative, we aim to empower local talent to establish SMEs that will be able to provide sustainable solutions to boost the competitiveness of Oman's tourism sector."

Mohammed Salim al Wahibi, CEO of Al Jabr, stated, "We are committed to supporting entrepreneurship and developing national talent by providing a nurturing environment for creativity."



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Oman, Netherlands mark 400 years of maritime ties

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To celebrate 400 years of maritime history and enduring ties between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Sultanate of Oman, Dutch Ambassador H E Stella Kloth hosted a culinary event at the historic Mirani Fort on Wednesday evening.

The celebration highlighted the collective heritage of the two nations, brought to life through a fusion of Dutch and Omani cuisines prepared by Dutch Michelin-star chef Peter Gast and Omani culinary enthusiast and chef Dina Macki.

At the heart of the event was an exclusive canapé menu crafted by the two chefs. The



We have shared cordial relations for centuries and what better way to rekindle ties than at this beautiful Al Mirani fort overseeing the serene ocean

H E AZZAN AL BUSAIDI

menu featured a creative blend of typical Dutch and Omani ingredients such as mussels and dates, creating a unique culinary experience that honoured the traditions of both nations.

On the occasion, guest of honour H E Azzan al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Tourism in Min-

istry of Heritage and Tourism, said, "We have shared cordial relations for centuries and what better way to rekindle ties than at this beautiful Al Mirani fort overseeing the serene ocean. We are sure that our bonds will strengthen further in the coming times."

Addressing the gathering, H E Stella said, "It's truly extraordinary that two nations, separated by oceans and seas, have forged such an enduring partnership. Looking to the future, events like this are vital for inspiring and educating new generations, highlighting the opportunities for collaboration that lie ahead."

The event brought together dignitaries, business leaders and members of the local community, offering a platform for rich cultural exchange. It also served as the official launch of a series of events planned for the coming year, ranging from sports activities to cultural initiatives, all aimed at further strengthening ties between Oman and the Netherlands.

Oman, Maldives review bilateral relations



Muscat - On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, H H Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Co-operation Affairs, and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received in his office Dr Abdullah Khaleel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives, on Wednesday.

The meeting reviewed aspects of cooperation between the two countries and ways of promoting

these to serve joint interests. They also discussed issues of common concern.

Oman and Maldives also held a session of political talks headed by Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, and Khaleel.

During the session, the two sides reviewed the historic relations between the two countries. Both sides underscored keenness to enhance bilateral cooperation in the fields of diplomacy, the economy and tourism in a man-

ner that serves mutual interests.

Further, the ministers signed a memorandum of understanding pertaining to political consultations between the two countries' foreign ministries reflecting commitment of both sides to boost coordination and joint action.

The session was attended by Sheikh Abdulaziz Mohammed al Hosni, Head of Asia and Pacific Department at Foreign Ministry, and several senior officials from both sides.

Ministerial delegation reviews progress at Sultan Haitham City

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A high-level ministerial delegation visited Sultan Haitham City on Tuesday to oversee and accelerate the progress of construction at the project site.

The visit aligns with strategic measures to ensure the successful completion of the first phase (2024-2030) in collaboration with partners from both government and private sectors.

An official at Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning stated that the delegation included representatives from Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Muscat Governor's Office and Muscat Municipality.

The visit aimed to update partners on the project developments, monitor implementation



phases of the city, and review key initiatives such as a cultural centre, school complexes, rehabilitation centre for people with disabilities, and other modern service facilities.

The visit included an inspection of ongoing infrastructure projects undertaken in collaboration with specialised companies. Five bridges are being constructed in partnership with Strabag Oman, while main roads are being built by Al Sarooj Con-

struction Company.

Essential services for the city - including electricity, water, sewage, broadband network, communications, cooling systems and gas distribution - are being implemented in cooperation with Towell Infrastructure Projects Company. Additionally, three power transformers are being set up in collaboration with Oman Technical Contracting.

During the visit, Al Abrar Real

Estate Company showcased the latest construction technologies utilised in the city's Hay al Wafa neighbourhood, which has made significant progress in building residential units for the first phase. The delegation also reviewed sites and details of residential districts being developed by leading companies.

An official added that the city is preparing to launch sales of residential neighbourhoods within the first phase soon.

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MSX30	4,517.20
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India	220.29
Pakistan	723.47
Bangladesh	309.99
Philippines	151.48
Sri Lanka	752.76
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BRIEFS

Abu Dhabi, Istanbul financial centers sign deal

The Abu Dhabi Global Market and the Istanbul Financial Center (IFC) have signed a deal to cooperate on boosting Türkiye's financial competitiveness by bringing together public and private sector banks, asset management firms, brokerage firms, and more.

The IFC said in a statement on Wednesday that the deal will help boost the development efforts of Türkiye's financial markets, products, and services, in addition to strengthening their integration into international financial and capital markets.

Under the deal, the two financial centers will work together in the areas of research, development, training, transferring know-how, and technological developments.

Oman announces third auction round for green hydrogen blocks

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Hydrom, the national orchestrator of Oman's green hydrogen strategy and green hydrogen economy development, on Wednesday concluded its inaugural gH2 Investor Day with a landmark announcement of its third green hydrogen auction round, set to launch in early 2025.

The event brought together more than 400 global stakeholders, investors, and industry leaders to explore Oman's advancements in green hydrogen and its role in driving the global energy transition.

Building on the outcomes of the first two rounds, the third auction round incorporates lessons learned to optimise bidder participation and enhance competitiveness. These include refined block allocation strategies, streamlined auction processes, and the exploration of innovative mechanisms such as double-sided auctions to align upstream hydrogen production with downstream industries like green steel and fertilisers.

Designed to attract a diverse pool of global and local stakeholders, the upcoming auction round emphasises localisation,



Bids for the third auction round will open in the first quarter of 2025, with project awards anticipated by the fourth quarter of 2025 and the first quarter of 2026

infrastructure readiness, and alignment with global market trends, all of which will further strengthen Oman's hydrogen ecosystem and contribute to its long-term renewable energy goals.

Bids for the third auction round will open in the first quarter

of 2025, with project awards anticipated by the fourth quarter of 2025 and the first quarter of 2026.

H E Eng Salim bin Nasser al Auli, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of Hydrom, said, "With this third auction round, Oman is taking a

measured and strategic step forward in advancing its green hydrogen ambitions. Our focus is not only on scaling production but also on ensuring that each project is grounded in sustainability, technological innovation, and tangible economic value."

He further said, "By leveraging

Oman's competitive renewable resources and strategic geographic position, we aim to create opportunities that resonate globally, attract meaningful partnerships, and contribute to a robust and reliable green hydrogen supply chain. This is about delivering real impact - locally and internationally - while positioning Oman as a trusted and capable leader in the global hydrogen economy."

The inaugural gH2 Investor

Day featured engaging discussions and updates on Oman's progress in green hydrogen. One of the event's key discussions focused on the ongoing liquid hydrogen corridor collaboration, launched during COP28 through an agreement with the Port of Amsterdam, Ecolog, and EnBW. The partnership recently achieved a significant milestone with the completion of a joint study, which confirmed the feasibility of specialised vessels and advanced infrastructure for liquid hydrogen exports. Central to these efforts is the Port of Duqm, positioning Oman as a critical hub for green hydrogen exports to Europe via the Port of Amsterdam and to Asia-Pacific markets through Singapore.

Eng Abdulaziz Said al Shidhani, Managing Director of Hydrom, said, "Hydrom's inaugural gH2 Investor Day has been a powerful demonstration of global interest and trust in Oman's green hydrogen vision. The insights shared and partnerships explored reflect not only the progress we have made but also the immense potential that lies ahead. Our role at Hydrom is to turn this momentum into action, delivering tangible results through the third auction round and beyond."



MEM signs deal to boost salt production

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals on Wednesday signed a mining concession agreement with Naqaa Salt Company to develop a large-scale salt production project in the Filim area of Al Wusta Governorate. The 109 sqkm site, located in the concession area No 51-k, aims to produce 400,000 tonnes of salt annually.

The agreement was signed by H E Eng Salim Nasser al Auli, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and Badr bin Saud al Kharousi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Minerals Development Oman (MDO). The project will use modern production methods, including natural evaporation, washing, and refining processes, to extract high-purity industrial salt.

Construction is set to begin early next year, with the development phase expected to span four years. The project will be implemented in partnership with a foreign investor, reflecting the government's strategy to attract international participation in Oman's mining sector.

The initiative is expected to support downstream industries that rely on salt ore, such as bromine, caustic soda, soda ash, and polyvinyl chloride (PVC). These materials play a critical role in key sectors, including chemicals, plastics, water treat-

ment, energy, and construction.

The project will also incorporate the latest technologies for the design and implementation of evaporation basins.

H E Auli described the agreement as a strategic step in Oman's broader efforts to enhance raw material production and support the local and global demand for essential industrial products. "This year, we have achieved an important milestone by signing several mining concession agreements targeting key raw materials such as copper, chromium, and silica," he said. He added that the salt project will strengthen the link between raw material production and downstream industries, serving vital sectors such as oil and gas.

Badr al Kharousi, Chairman of MDO, said the agreement reflects the collaborative efforts of the ministry and MDO to expand investments in strategic minerals. "This agreement represents a fruitful cooperation between MEM and MDO and marks a qualitative step towards expanding MDO's investment in strategic mineral resources," Kharousi said.

He revealed that the project is the result of three years of exploration, prospecting, and chemical analysis. "Our studies confirmed the mining potential of sea salt ore in the concession area, enabling MDO to move forward with development procedures," he added.

PDO awards 3 renewable energy projects

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) signed landmark agreements on Wednesday with OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE) and TotalEnergies to develop three key renewable Independent Power Producer (IPP) projects: North Solar 100MW PV IPP, Riyah-1 Wind 100MW IPP, and Riyah-2 Wind 100MW IPP.

These projects represent a significant step in PDO's commitment to sustainability, aligning with Oman's Vision 2040 and the national target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

The North Solar IPP, spanning an area of 3 sqkm - equivalent to 468 football pitches - will generate 100MW of clean, renewable energy. This utility-scale solar photovoltaic farm, which is scheduled to be commercially operational in Q2 2026, marks a major milestone in PDO's renewable energy journey. By harnessing solar power, the project will reduce CO2 emissions by over 220,000 tonnes annually and save millions of cubic metres of natural gas each year.

The Riyah-1 and Riyah-2 wind farms, located in Amin and Nimr West, will collectively produce



North Solar IPP will generate 100MW of clean, renewable energy, while Riyah-1 and Riyah-2 wind farms will collectively produce 200MW of clean energy

200MW of clean energy. These two projects, covering an area equivalent to 1,870 football pitches, are expected to be commercially operational by Q4 2026.

Both onshore wind projects

will set a remarkable global precedent, with the first oil and gas company as the sole buyer integrating a wind farm into its grid. The wind farms will save millions of cubic metres of gas annually, contributing significantly to cost savings and a substantial reduction in CO2 emissions - collectively by approximately 740,000 tonnes.

H E Eng Salim Nasser al Auli, Minister of Energy and Minerals, commended PDO's leadership in advancing the energy transition. He said, "PDO's commitment and collaboration with key energy sector partners reflect our collective efforts to achieve the nation's vision and goals. Today's

event highlights the strength of our national partnership in reducing carbon emissions and advancing the transition to clean energy sources, in line with global trends toward a more sustainable future. This project also reinforces the trust placed in OQ Alternative Energy as a leading developer for this and future initiatives."

Dr Aflah al Hadhrami, Managing Director of PDO, emphasised the company's critical role in supporting Oman's net-zero ambitions, saying, "We are delighted to sign these agreements, which further reinforce our steadfast commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by

2050, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly the diversification of energy sources to ensure sustainable energy security."

Najla Zuhair al Jamali, Chief Executive of OQ Alternative Energy, said, "Today, we witness a significant milestone in OQAE's journey as we step forward as the appointed National Champion for Clean Energy in Oman. The energy transition is a significant journey for everyone, but we are actively engaged in planning this journey for Oman, with over 7GW of projects in our pipeline. At OQ, we focus on sustainable growth in Oman's energy sector and foster partnerships for a smooth energy transition."

Olivier Jouny, Senior Vice President of Renewables at TotalEnergies, reaffirmed the company's dedication to advancing the energy transition. He said, "This collaboration affirms our ambition to be a key partner in the energy transition and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. By collaborating with PDO and OQAE, we are proud to contribute to Oman's sustainable energy future and set a precedent for innovation and environmental stewardship for generations to come."

H E Yousef meets regional CEO of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries

Muscat - In a significant move to bolster international investment ties, H E Qais al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, hosted Hiroshi Matsuda, Senior Vice President and Regional CEO for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa at Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI), at the Invest Oman.

The visit, coordinated in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reflects Oman's proactive approach to strengthening economic diplomacy and forging robust partnerships with global business leaders. Discussions



focused on exploring investment and trade collaboration opportunities, highlighting Oman's strategic commitment

to fostering international economic cooperation.

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, a global leader in industrial solu-

tions, expressed keen interest in Oman's dynamic investment landscape. Matsuda's visit underscores the sultanate's appeal

as a premier destination for international business, driven by its competitive advantages. Oman continues to attract global attention through its thriving business environment, high quality of life, robust competitiveness indicators, and diverse investment incentives.

This meeting was part of a broader initiative by Omani authorities to showcase the country's evolving economic ecosystem and its readiness to support transformative investments that align with the Sultanate's Vision 2040 goals.

Oman's public revenues rise 4% to RO10.2bn in 10 months of 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's public revenues for the first ten months of 2024 reached RO10.2bn, reflecting a 4% increase compared with RO9.8bn in the same period of the previous year, according to the latest Fiscal Performance Bulletin from the Ministry of Finance. The growth was primarily driven by a notable rise in net oil revenue.

Net oil revenue for the January-October period of 2024 rose by 11%, reaching RO6.029bn, up from RO5.446bn in the corresponding period of 2023. The increase in revenue coincided with a rise in the average realised oil price, which stood at \$83 per barrel, while oil production averaged 999,000 barrels per day.

These figures underscore the effectiveness of the oil revenue collection and cash flow management strategies employed by Energy Development Oman (EDO), the ministry said.

However, net gas revenue showed a decline, decreasing by 12% to RO1.525bn in the first ten months of 2024, compared with RO1.734bn in the same period of 2023. This drop is attributed to changes in the gas revenue collection methodology, which has impacted overall gas receipts.

In addition to oil and gas revenues, the government's current



Net oil revenue for the January-October period of 2024 rose by 11%, reaching RO6.029bn, up from RO5.446bn in the corresponding period of 2023

revenue stood at RO2.629bn, marking a modest increase of RO21mn from RO2.608bn in the same period last year.

Public spending up 8%

Oman's public spending also saw a significant rise during January to October period. Total expenditure in the first ten months of 2024 amounted to RO9.684bn, an increase of RO714mn, or 8%, compared

with RO8.970bn in the same period in 2023.

Current expenditure amounted to RO6.860bn by the end of October 2024, a slight decrease of RO12mn from RO6.872bn in the same period of 2023.

In contrast, development expenditure by civil ministries and government units increased. By the end of October 2024, development spending had totalled RO992mn, representing 110% of

the full-year target of RO900mn for 2024. This suggests that the government has front-loaded a significant portion of its investment in key infrastructure and development projects.

Subsidies and social protection

The largest increase in public spending came from contributions and other expenses, which reached RO1.831bn by the end of October 2024, up by 43% from

RO1.278bn in the same period of 2023. This surge was primarily driven by the implementation of Oman's expanded social protection system, a key element of the government's strategy to support vulnerable populations amid ongoing economic challenges.

Subsidies for the social protection system, electricity, and oil products accounted for a substantial portion of this increase. A total of RO466mn was allocated for social protection, RO463mn for electricity subsidies, and RO201mn for oil product subsidies. In addition, RO333mn was set aside for future debt obligations.

MSX Chairman's Dialogue charts global trends

Muscat - The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) hosted the third edition of its flagship event, the MSX Chairman's Dialogue, a dynamic platform dedicated to exploring pivotal global economic shifts and fostering visionary thought leadership.

This highly anticipated virtual session, themed 'The Global Economy: A Story of Historical Transformation and Global Opportunities,' brought together MSX Chairman Mohammed Mahfooth al Ardhi and Dr David Folkerts-Landau, Group Chief Economist and Global Head of Research at Deutsche Bank, for an insightful and thought-provoking discussion.

The dialogue attracted over 360 registrations, including prominent government officials, business leaders, entrepreneurs and students.

In his introductory speech Mohammed Mahfooth al Ardhi remarked, "The MSX Chairman's Dialogue continues to provide an invaluable platform for addressing the complexities of our evolving global economy. In recent years, the world order has appeared more uncertain than ever. From newsrooms to boardrooms, the pressing question remains - What next?"

Dr. Folkerts-Landau shared a wealth of insights shaped by decades of navigating market cycles. Framing his analysis around

the unprecedented unpredictability of the current global order, he illuminated the profound transformations reshaping the economy, from the rise of groundbreaking technologies to shifts in international power dynamics.

Highlighting Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a transformative milestone in human history, Dr Folkerts-Landau likened its impact to that of agriculture or the industrial revolution. "We are no longer just amplifying muscle power; we are manufacturing intelligence - a resource that has propelled humanity from caves to skyscrapers and from walking to flying. AI is poised to revolutionise industries, address scientific challenges, and drive unprecedented efficiencies," he remarked. However, he cautioned that the race for AI supremacy will not only shape industries but also redefine geopolitics, as nations compete for dominance in this pivotal field.

On advanced economies, he discussed the stagnation caused by bureaucratic systems and emphasised deregulation as a catalyst for innovation and growth. Dr Folkerts-Landau predicted that strategic policies, particularly in the United States, focusing on energy exports, flexible labor markets, and technology-driven deregulation, would lead to robust productivity and sustained GDP growth.

US inflation rises to 2.7% in November

Washington, US - Inflation in the United States moved slightly higher in November, fueled by costlier used cars, hotel rooms and auto insurance, official data showed on Wednesday, but that is unlikely to discourage the Federal Reserve from cutting interest rates for a third time next week against the backdrop of a cooling labor market.

The annual consumer inflation rate in the US rose for a second consecutive month to 2.7% in November, in line with estimates, according to official data released on Wednesday.

The figure rose from 2.6% in October partly due to low base effects from the last year.

The annual decline in energy prices continued to slow in November by 3.2% while food inflation accelerated to 2.4%.

Core inflation, stripping out volatile food and energy prices, was constant at 3.3% in November

On a monthly basis, the consumer prices index rose 0.3% in November, after rising 0.2% in the prior 4 months, matching



Food inflation in the US accelerated to 2.4%

forecasts.

Sticky US inflation data has boosted expectations that the Fed will reduce its key borrowing rates by 25 basis points to 4.25%-4.50 in the policy meeting on December 18.

According to the latest Reuters poll, 90% of economists expect that there will be a 25-basis points interest rate reduc-

tion next week. The poll also showed that a majority of economists expect the Fed to pause the policy-easing spree from the first policy meeting of 2025 in January, assuming that policies of higher import tariffs and lower taxes by US President-elect Donald Trump will be inflationary.

Agencies

Infrastructure works at Sustainable City - Yiti marks 96% completion

Muscat - The Sustainable City - Yiti, the region's first city committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2040, has reached a major milestone with the completion of 96% of its infrastructure works. The eco-friendly community designed to accommodate approximately 10,000 people, is set to be fully operational in 2026.

Significant progress has been achieved within the Sustainable District. The infrastructure for the central plaza is now fully completed, with construction reaching 31% for the plaza itself. Additionally, 33% of the construction work for the villas and the broader Sustainable District is now finalised. Meanwhile, construction of the school and nursery commenced in September 2024, following a groundbreaking ceremony.

The next phase of development will focus on vital community components, including the 4-star hotel, and wellness center, which have been awarded to contractors. Additional planned components encompass the autism village, equestrian club,



sports complex, SEE Lab, bridges, public solar parking, and a biogas plant.

Developed by Diamond Developers, a subsidiary of SEE Holding, in collaboration with Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran), The Sustainable City - Yiti is setting a new benchmark for eco-friendly developments in Oman and the region. The overwhelming success of phase one, which has completely sold out, and the robust sales performance of phase two reflect a growing appetite for sustainable living solutions. Notably, Omani nationals represented 55% of the buyers in phase one, underscoring the pro-

ject's strong appeal to the local community.

Mahmoud Shehada, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer at The Sustainable City - Yiti, said, "This milestone marks a significant step forward in our journey to redefine urban living in Oman and the region. The Sustainable City - Yiti embodies our vision of creating thriving sustainable communities that prioritize environmental responsibility, innovation, and quality of life, in line with the sustainability objectives of Oman Vision 2040. As we near the completion of infrastructure works, we are one step closer to delivering a community that meets the growing demand

for sustainable living and serves as a blueprint for net zero urban developments across the globe."

Taking shape along the Gulf of Oman coastline near Muscat, The Sustainable City - Yiti is poised to become the largest operational sustainable community in the region and Oman's first net zero emission community by 2040. Spanning nearly one million square meters, this groundbreaking development serves as a resilient and scalable model for low-carbon living, seamlessly integrating intelligent technologies to enhance sustainability.

The community is designed to reduce the per capita carbon footprint of its residents by an impressive 78% compared to conventional housing in Oman. This ambitious goal is achieved by addressing emissions across six core pillars of environmental sustainability: food, energy, water, products, mobility, and waste. The development incorporates eco-friendly materials in construction and interiors, while aiming to be powered entirely by renewable energy.

Eric Trump sees Bitcoin reaching \$1mn, delivering financial revolution

Siamak Masnavi

Eric Trump, executive vice president of the Trump Organization and son of US President-elect Donald Trump, delivered a rousing speech at the Bitcoin MENA 2024 conference in Abu Dhabi on Monday. Trump confidently predicted that Bitcoin would surpass \$1mn per coin, calling it the cornerstone of a financial revolution.

Eric celebrated Bitcoin as a "global asset," emphasising its unique ability to hedge against inflation, political instability, and

even natural disasters. He credited Bitcoin's decentralized nature and scarcity as the foundation of its strength, contrasting it with the inefficiencies of traditional finance. "Bitcoin eliminates the need for tens of thousands of bankers pushing paperwork for exorbitant fees," he said, adding that the cryptocurrency's limited supply of 21mn coins ensures its value will only grow as adoption increases.

In his remarks, Eric described his father as the most pro-crypto president in history. He accused the outgoing Biden administra-

Eric Trump celebrated Bitcoin as a "global asset," emphasising its unique ability to hedge against inflation, political instability



tion of waging "war" on the cryptocurrency industry through aggressive regulatory actions, pointing to the Securities and

Exchange Commission's lawsuits and the fallout from FTX's collapse.

Eric declared that, under his

father's leadership, the United States would protect digital assets from overregulation and lead the world in blockchain in-

novation. "America is going to lead the way in the digital revolution," he proclaimed, drawing cheers from an audience wearing "Make Bitcoin Great Again" caps.

Eric credited his father's support for reviving the cryptocurrency sector and claimed Donald Trump's leadership added \$1tn to Bitcoin's value. He highlighted Bitcoin's recent milestone of surpassing \$100,000, stating that he immediately informed his father of the achievement. He also pointed out that those who em-

brace Bitcoin now, including governments and institutions, would emerge as the biggest winners of the digital revolution.

Drawing parallels to the slow adoption of email, Eric said that disruptive technologies take time to gain widespread acceptance but ultimately redefine industries. He argued that blockchain technology is already proving to be faster, cheaper, and more transparent than traditional financial systems, making it the backbone of the future economy.

(Source: Cryptoglobe.com)



Bank Muscat organises special event for govt customers

In continuation of the series of events organised by the bank to enhance communication with customers and discuss the latest developments in the sector, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, hosted a special event for government banking customers in Muscat governorate.

The event aims to discuss new developments in corporate banking, and enhance communication and cooperation with these institutions to achieve common goals.

During the event which witnessed great turn out, Dr Amer al Rawas, Consultant and Coach in Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence, gave an interesting presentation about government digital transformation, with a focus on administrative challenges and artificial intelligence.

He also touched upon key concepts in relation with digital transformation, including improving the quality of services, increasing productivity and efficiency, as well as, promoting innovation.

These events emphasises the bank's commitment to enhancing leadership in the banking sector, particularly through digital transformation which comes in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and contribute to economic growth. The bank is dedicated to leveraging digital capabilities to improve the quality of services provided to government institutions and companies, ensuring alignment with the latest developments in this field.

The digital services the bank offers are designed to assist institutions in managing their resources effectively, reducing time, effort, and resource utilisation.

Furthermore, the bank provides various digital platforms that deliver a wide range of value-added banking services.

"This event represents an opportunity to strengthen cooperation and partnership with various government institutions," said Ilham Murtadha al Hamaid, General Manager - Corporate Banking, Bank Muscat.

MoE organises conference on modern science laboratories

Under the patronage of H E Prof Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, the Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Curriculum Development, Department of Applied Science Curriculum Development, organised a conference on Prospects for Developing Modern Science Laboratories.

The conference targets 70 employees from science laboratory specialists, project and maintenance engineers, and science laboratory supervisors and technicians.

Dr Afaf al Lawati, Director of the Applied Science Curriculum Development Department at the Directorate General of Curriculum Development, delivered the ministry's speech in which she said developing science laboratories in school buildings represents a fundamental step towards building an integrated educational system that contributes to developing the minds of future generations.

"Laboratories are not just spaces designated for practical experiments, but rather an inspiring educational environment that combines theory and application and encourages creativity and exploration. In light of the rapid transformations in education, it has become necessary to reconsider the designs of school laboratories to keep pace with technological developments and respond to the requirements of modern learning. Science laboratories in the schools of the Sultanate of Oman have witnessed significant development in recent years, as their number has increased to more than 1200 science laboratories where their designs vary to keep pace with the latest international educational standards."



Santosh Baliken, Director of Investment Fund at Nizwa University and in Future Labs, said, "This conference serves as a forum for professionals and specialists in laboratory furniture to exchange technology and practical knowledge, and openly discuss standards that will benefit

all end users of laboratories. "We focus on a variety of design-related topics such as adaptable laboratory design, the advantages of sustainable laboratory design, and what to expect from the laboratory of the future. We will be better equipped to deal with the details of today's

rapidly changing environment, and to promote excellence in laboratory furniture design."

The conference included a working paper by the keynote speaker, Miguel Pinto from Portugal, architect, and member of the European Foundation for Sustainability in Laboratories, fo-

cused on modern laboratory planning and the latest designs of gas evacuators. The speaker from the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Trespa) presented a paper entitled 'Laboratory Tabletops'.

The third paper was presented by a speaker from the Kingdom of Denmark from Broen, who pointed out multiple options and modern designs for sanitary connections for laboratories. The speaker from the Italian Republic from Abet presented a working paper entitled: 'Laboratory Table Worktops'.

The speaker from the Sultanate of Oman from Future Laboratories, an Omani company specialised in furnishing scientific and medical laboratories, presented a paper which presented the company's latest designs for laboratory furniture.

The conference concluded by a speaker from the Federal Republic of Germany from Hettich.

OTE Group opens exclusive Nexen showroom in Ghala

The OTE Group recently celebrated the grand opening of the state-of-the-art Nexen exclusive showroom in Ghala, Muscat. This landmark event marks a significant step forward in enhancing access to premium Nexen tyres and expert automotive services in the sultanate.

The launch event was attended by esteemed guests, including business leaders, automotive enthusiasts, and representatives from the OTE Group and Nexen Tyre. The new showroom, strategically located in

Ghala, offers a comprehensive range of Nexen tyres, tailored to meet the diverse needs of customers across Oman.

The ceremony included a ribbon-cutting event, a detailed showcase of Nexen's innovative tyre range, and an opportunity for guests to engage with tyre experts on-site. Guests praised the modern facility and its commitment to providing world-class tyre solutions, coupled with exceptional service.

"This new showroom is a testament to our dedication to of-



fering the best in automotive solutions to our valued customers," said the spokesperson, Nexen Tyre. "We are proud to represent Nexen Tyre in Oman and look forward to serving the community with the highest standards of quality and service."

The Nexen Exclusive Showroom in Ghala is now open to the public, promising a seamless and personalized experience for all tire-related needs.

Nexen Tyre is a global leader in tyre manufacturing, renowned for its commitment to innova-

tion, safety, and performance. With a rich history spanning over 80 years, Nexen Tyre offers a diverse range of products designed to meet the needs of passenger cars, SUVs, and commercial vehicles. Known for cutting-edge technology, superior durability, Nexen continues to deliver exceptional driving experiences across more than 150 countries worldwide. Nexen is a trusted original equipment (OE) supplier for some of the world's most prestigious automobile brands.

St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort decorates enchanting evening

The festive season has gracefully arrived at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, marked by the dazzling illumination of its modern-cone Christmas Tree. This iconic display invites guests to immerse themselves in an atmosphere of elegance and celebration, inspired by the storied legacy of the Astor family.

The House of Celebration has been transformed into a luxurious haven, offering exquisite experiences that seamlessly blend timeless traditions with contemporary flair.

Families are encouraged to create unforgettable memories with a special accommodation package this holiday season. When booking one room, guests can save 50% on their second room for children aged 16 and under, including breakfast for up to two adults and two children.

As the holiday spirit unfolds, patrons are welcomed to indulge in refined Festive Afternoon Tea available until January 11th, served daily at The Lobby Lounge. Accompanied by soothing Christmas melodies, this delightful experience features a selection of delicate pastries and artisanal teas. Children can also partake in a whimsical "Tiny Afternoon Tea" tailored just for their enjoyment.

Until December 28, visitors can savour in a gourmet take-away turkey that embodies the seasonal spirit, perfect for the celebrations ahead. This offering includes a beautifully roasted turkey accompanied by traditional trimmings, allowing families to enjoy a sumptuous and memorable feast within the comfort of their own homes without the stress of preparation.



As dusk descends upon the resort, a sense of anticipation fills the air as guests are invited to partake in the elegant tradition of Sabrage daily at The Stage Bar and Lounge, adding a touch of grandeur to their festive evenings.

The Adventure Hub trans-

forms into a canvas of creativity from December 20th to January 11th, offering children opportunities to participate in cupcake decorating and gingerbread workshops daily. Following these engaging workshops, face painting and henna art sessions await, creating a joyful atmosphere

where families can bond and create lasting memories.

On Christmas Eve, the festivities reach new heights with a Mediterranean-inspired three-course dinner at Novikov Café, complemented by unlimited selected beverages. Meanwhile, Zorba invites visitors to revel in a

lively Greek experience with an à la carte menu and live band entertainment.

Roberto's enchants diners with a special set menu showcasing Italian cuisine, while Hakkasan offers an elegant à la carte menu for those craving Cantonese flavours. Karibu rounds out the evening with a delectable buffet featuring Omani, Zanzibari, and Indian dishes.

For those seeking relaxation amidst the holiday bustle, the Guerlain Spa offers indulgent treatments throughout the festive season. Guests can unwind with the Ultimate Black Orchid facial, complemented by a complimentary add-on massage until December 31. Additionally, those who purchase any Orchidee Imperiale Black product will receive an exclusive gift set.

Japanese embassy to participate in 968GameZ

The Embassy of Japan will participate in the biggest video game and pop culture event in Oman '968GameZ' from December 19 to 21 in the evening in Al Mouj Muscat. The embassy will introduce Japanese cultures such as, calligraphy, origami and Japanese books which will be displayed at the Embassy's booth during the event.

The event, organized by SOCIALMANIA Creative and Digital Marketing, is free to attend. The embassy invites visitors to explore and engage with the cultural exhibits.

Egypt conveys to US its rejection of Israel's grab of buffer zone in Syria

Istanbul, Turkey - Egypt said on Wednesday that it conveyed to the US its rejection of Israel's seizure of the buffer zone in Syria's occupied Golan Heights.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty received a phone call from his US counterpart Antony Blinken during which they agreed on the importance of adopting 'an inclusive political process' in Syria with the participation of all parties to restore stability, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Abdelatty reiterated Egypt's rejection of Israel's grab of Syria's buffer zone and other positions.

"These moves constitute an occupation of Syrian territory and a blatant violation of its sovereignty, and represent a breach of international law," he added.

Abdelatty stressed Egypt's support for the Syrian state, its sovereignty and territorial integrity, the statement said.

Kremlin's concerns

Meanwhile, the Kremlin on Wednesday said that Israel's actions in Syria are unlikely to stabilise the situation amid its seizure of a demilitarised buffer zone in the occupied Golan Heights.

"I have nothing to add to what has already been said. Of course, the strikes, the actions (of Israel) in the Golan Heights, in the



A view of the Syrian-Israeli border in the Majdal Shams region in Golan Heights as Israeli army reinforces its ground forces

buffer zone, are unlikely to contribute to stabilising the situation in an already destabilised Syria," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters in the Russian capital Moscow.

Expressing that Moscow would like to see the situation in Syria stabilise in 'one way or another' as soon as possible,

These moves (Israel's grab of Syria's buffer zone) constitute an occupation of Syrian territory and a blatant violation of its sovereignty, and represent a breach of international law

BADR ABDELATTY

Peskov said they are closely monitoring all that is going on in the country and maintaining con-

tacts with those currently controlling the situation on the ground.

"This is necessary because our bases are there, our diplomatic missions are there,"

Peskov further said.

He also said Russia helped Syria 'at one time' to stabilise the situation in the country after this threatened the entire region, and that it 'fulfilled its mission' but spent 'a lot of effort' for this.

"Unfortunately, (the course of events) led to the situation that exists now," Peskov went on to

say, adding that they now need to 'proceed from the realities that currently exist on the ground'.

Bashar al-Assad, Syria's leader for nearly 25 years, fled to Russia after anti-regime groups took control of Damascus early on Sunday, ending the Baath Party's rule in the country, which had been in power since 1963.

Since the fall of the Assad regime, the Israeli army embarked on an extensive air campaign that targeted military sites across Syria, including strikes on the Syrian ports of Al-Beida and Latakia that destroyed the Syrian navy fleet. The Israeli army also announced it has 'temporarily' seized control of a demilitarised buffer zone in the Golan Heights, saying the 1974 disengagement agreement with Syria had 'collapsed'.

Pope calls for stability, unity

Pope Francis on Wednesday expressed hope for stability and unity in Syria following the downfall of decades-old Baathist regime.

Noting that he is closely monitoring the developments in Syria, pontiff said he is sharing the world's hope that Syria can progress on the path of stability and unity without further violence and fractures, reported Vatican News agency.

Anadolu Agency

Life returns to normal in Hama

Hama, Syria - Life has begun to return to normal in Syria's Hama province, which was recently captured by the groups that overthrew the Baath regime in Syria.

In Hama, where the people expressed sympathy for the groups that liberated the city from the collapsed regime forces, bread distribution resumed in the city centre.

As life returned to normal, the police force resumed work, and the streets were cleaned.

The abandoned tanks of the fallen Baathist regime army were noticeable in the city, and the people of Hama removed the posters of Bashar al-Assad and his father, Hafez al-Assad, from the streets. Residents celebrated the liberation of Hama with joyful demonstrations, chanting slogans against Assad and his family.

Maher Al Masry, a resident of Hama, shared his joy over the city's liberation with Anadolu, saying that Bashar al-Assad followed the same methods as his father, subjecting them to suffering, persecution, and all kinds of torture.



As life returned to normal, the police force resumed work, and the streets were cleaned

The people of Hama removed the posters of Bashar al-Assad and his father, Hafez al-Assad, from the streets

"Instead of protecting us, the Syrian army did the opposite. It destroyed our country and killed our children. There is no return to

this cruel regime," Masry said.

He also noted that Hama did not receive any services during Assad's rule, with unpaved streets, constant power outages, and widespread corruption.

Masry emphasised that the collapsed Assad forces turned their tanks' barrels on civilians, bombing women and children, but expressed hope for 'a bright future with the youth'.

'There was no water, electricity'

Muhenned Seffef, another resi-

dent, said they left Hama 'because of the cruel regime'.

Seffef recalled living through 'fearful' times when the regime and Russia bombed civilians in Hama.

He added that the regime banned prayers in the army and mistreated them, saying: "At the beginning, things were very bad in Hama, there were no services. There was no water or electricity. But now we expect good things from them (the anti-regime forces)."

Anadolu Agency

Israeli missile kills mother, 2 children in northern Gaza

Gaza City, Palestine - A Palestinian woman and her two children were killed in an Israeli missile attack in the northern town of Beit Lahia on Wednesday, a medical source said.

The attack targeted the family outside the gate of Kamal Adwan Hospital in the town, the source added. Witnesses said that an Israeli drone fired a missile into the family outside the medical facility.

Since October 5, Israel has launched a large-scale ground operation in northern Gaza to allegedly prevent the Palestinian resistance group Hamas from regrouping. Palestinians, however, accuse Israel of seeking to occupy the area and forcibly displace its residents.

Since then, almost no humanitarian aid, including food, medicine, and fuel, has been allowed into the area, leaving the remaining population in the area on the verge of famine.

Nearly 4,000 people have since been killed in northern Gaza, according to Palestinian



health authorities.

The assault was the latest episode in a genocidal war launched by Israel on Gaza since a Hamas attack last year, killing more than 44,800 people, mostly women and children.

Last month, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its deadly war on

Gaza.

25 more killed

At least 25 more Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes on two houses in the northern and central Gaza Strip on Wednesday morning.

Eyewitnesses told Anadolu that the Israeli warplanes struck a three-story building near Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia area in the northern Gaza Strip, killing 18 Palestinians and completely destroying the building.

Anadolu Agency

Research shows 'systematic bias' in UK media coverage of Muslims

London, UK - A newly-published research on Tuesday shed a light on widespread anti-Muslim bias in British media with GB News accounted for half of UK news channels coverage about Muslims and Islam, much of it with negative portrayals.

Following a two-year analysis, the research produced by the Centre for Media Monitoring (CFMM) showed 'structural and systematic bias in GB News reporting about British Muslims'.

According to the report, the channel's coverage is 'excessive' focus on Muslims bordering on an 'obsession' that 'regularly de-

monises their beliefs'.

"Stories about Islam are 'overwhelmingly negative' and fail to understand the diverse nature of Muslim communities in the UK," the report suggested.

The finding revealed that GB News mentioned Muslims or Islam more than 17,000 times in its output, accounting for almost 50% of total mentions on UK news channels. BBC News and Sky News accounted for 32% and 21% respectively.

Saying that Islamophobia has been referenced on GB News on 1,180 occasions accounting for 60% of all mentions when compared with BBC News and Sky



News, however it noted that GB News stories 'overwhelmingly' are geared towards 'rubbishing the concept of Islamophobia'.

Coverage during far-right riots

The study showed that during the summer riots, GB News accounted for 62% of all clips on UK news channels that associated Muslims with the riots.

It stated that this figure was the most of any news channel and three times as many as featured on BBC News or Sky News.

The far-right riots that broke out across the UK following a

stabbing incident in Southport on July 29.

The violent disorder was fuelled by false online claims that the suspect in the fatal stabbing of three children in Southport was a Muslim asylum seeker. The attacker, identified as Axel Rudakubana, a 17-year-old from Cardiff with Rwandan parents, has done little to deter the far-right mobs.

"GB News repeatedly framed Muslims as perpetrators rather than victims of violence, downplaying attacks on mosques and Muslim communities, contributing to a biased narrative."

Anadolu Agency

France condemns gang violence in Haiti that killed over 180

Paris, France - France condemned the gang attacks in Haiti, its former colony in the Caribbean, which claimed the lives of 187 people in recent violent incidents.

"France condemns in the strongest possible terms the massacre that killed more than 184 people, most of them elderly, in Port-au-Prince's Wharf Jeremie neighbourhood on December 6 and 7," the French Foreign Ministry said in a statement

on Tuesday.

Gang attacks in Wharf Jeremie, located in the City Soleil district of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, resulted in the deaths of many people, mostly elderly, over the weekend.

Expressing condolences to the victims' families, the statement conveyed a message of solidarity with the Haitian authorities and people. The statement also welcomed the efforts of Haitian authorities to bring the



In Haiti, incidents of violence continue to rise daily

perpetrators of 'these barbaric crimes' to justice.

It underlined France's continued support for Haiti's national police, armed forces, and the multinational security missions operating in the country to restore security against the gangs.

In the Caribbean nation of Haiti, a former French colony, gang attacks involving machetes and firearms over the weekend resulted in 187 deaths.

The Haitian Prime Minister's

Office blamed gang leader 'Mic-anor' for the massacre and announced that the government would work with full force to eliminate these gangs.

Struggling for years with fundamental issues such as political, economic, and security crises, Haiti, with a population exceeding 11 million, faces the threat of famine.

In the country, where armed gangs control 80% of the capital, incidents of violence con-

tinue to rise daily.

According to the UN Integrated Office in Haiti, more than 5,000 people have been killed in armed gang attacks since the beginning of the year.

These violent incidents led to the resignation of former Prime Minister Ariel Henry in April 2024, the establishment of a Transitional Council, and the appointment of Garry Conille as Prime Minister on May 28.

Anadolu Agency

Travel disruptions loom in Italy, France

Istanbul, Turkey - Transport services in Italy and France are set to face significant disruptions as workers launch a series of strikes over economic policies and labour rights, with the protests coinciding with the holiday travel season.

In Italy, a 24-hour general strike scheduled for December 13 will impact airline, rail, and public transport services nationwide, local media reported on Wednesday.

Ferry operations to Sicily and Sardinia, as well as motorway toll booth services, may also experience delays and cancellations.

Italy's major airports will be affected by a 24-hour strike by TechnoSky air navigation staff, while air traffic controllers plan a shorter strike on December 15. Leading transport unions are supporting the actions, which are part of broader protests against government policies accused of increasing social inequalities. Italian commuters also face additional strikes in the coming weeks. A four-hour public transport strike is planned for January 10, likely affecting buses, trams, metro lines, and water buses. Florence's rail network will see disruptions on January 12, while tram services in the city could face delays on January 25 due to potential protests.

Anadolu Agency

Donald Trump pushes 'America First' agenda with key selections

Washington, D.C., US - US President-elect Donald Trump unveiled a series of high-profile appointments on Tuesday night on Truth Social, signalling his administration's focus on strengthening diplomatic ties, reshaping regulatory frameworks, and advancing his 'America First' agenda.

These appointments highlight Trump's commitment to pursuing an assertive diplomatic, regulatory, and economic strategy as he prepares to take office on January 20, in a matter of weeks.

With a mix of loyal allies and seasoned professionals, Trump's picks reflect his administration's priorities of asserting US interests globally and overhauling domestic policy frameworks.

Envoy to Greece

Among the most notable picks was Kimberly Guilfoyle, nominated to be US ambassador to Greece.

Guilfoyle, a longtime Trump ally and prominent fundraiser, was praised by Trump for her qualifications: "For many years, Kimberly has been a close friend and ally. Her extensive experience and leadership in law, media, and politics along with her sharp intellect make her supremely qualified to represent the United States, and safeguard its interests abroad."

Trump also stressed her potential to strengthen US-Greek relations: "Kimberly is perfectly suited to foster strong bilateral relations with Greece, advancing



The appointments highlighted US President-elect Donald Trump's commitment to pursuing an assertive diplomatic, regulatory and economic strategy

With a mix of loyal allies and seasoned professionals, Trump's picks reflect his administration's priorities of asserting US interests globally and overhauling domestic policy frameworks

our interests on issues ranging from defence cooperation to trade and economic innovation."

Ronald Johnson to Mexico

Trump also nominated Ronald (Ron) Johnson for the post of US ambassador to Mexico.

Johnson, who served as am-

bassador to El Salvador during Trump's first term, is a decorated former Green Beret and CIA operative with a Master of Strategic Intelligence from the National Intelligence University.

Trump lauded Johnson's record: "Ron will work closely with our great Secretary of State Nominee, Marco Rubio, to pro-

mote our Nation's security and prosperity through strong America First Foreign Policies. During my First Term, Ron served as the Ambassador to El Salvador, where he worked tirelessly with Salvadoran authorities and our team to reduce violent crime and illegal migration to the lowest levels in History."

Trump concluded his announcement with a pledge: "Together, we will put an end to migrant crime, stop the illegal flow of Fentanyl and other dangerous drugs into our Country and, MAKE AMERICA SAFE AGAIN!"

Key regulatory, administrative roles

Trump also announced appointees for key regulatory and administrative roles: Andrew Ferguson as chairman of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and Mark Meador as an FTC commissioner.

Trump hailed Ferguson's credentials: "Andrew has a proven record of standing up to Big Tech censorship, and protecting Freedom of Speech in our Great Country."

He added that Ferguson would be 'the most America First, and pro-innovation FTC

Chair in our Country's History'.

Additionally, Trump named Dan Bishop as deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Ed Martin as OMB chief of staff.

Describing Bishop as 'a tireless fighter for our MAGA Movement', Trump said he would drive a deregulatory agenda and combat the 'Weaponised Deep State'. He characterised Martin as 'a winner who will help Make America Great Again'.

Reflecting the administration's focus on technological and economic competition, Trump appointed Jacob Helberg undersecretary of state for economic growth, energy, and the environment.

Helberg, a staunch critic of China and TikTok, the Chinese-owned app which is slated to be banned in the US unless it is sold, previously served on the US-China Economic Security Review Commission.

Trump praised Helberg's expertise: "Jacob is a successful technology executive, has the knowledge, expertise, and pragmatism to defend America's Economic interests abroad, and always puts AMERICA FIRST!"

Helberg, an advocate of economic statecraft, has referred to TikTok as a 'Chinese weapon of war'. Despite previous affiliations with other Republican figures, Helberg has become a significant Trump supporter, contributing heavily to his campaign and related super PACs.

Anadolu Agency

China expands military drills around Taiwan

Taipei, Taiwan - The Defence Ministry in Taiwan on Wednesday said that it had detected 53 Chinese aircraft and 19 ships near the island over a 24-hour period.

The latest movement of Chinese aircraft and vessels around the island comes as Beijing conducts its largest military drills in years.

'Operating around Taiwan'

"53 PLA aircraft, 11 PLAN vessels and 8 official ships operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6am (UTC+8) today," Taiwan's defence ministry said in a post on social media platform X.

"23 of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern, southwestern and eastern ADIZ," the ministry said, referring to its air defence identification zone.

Taiwan's military said that it had monitored and responded to the situation.

Taiwanese military officials said that 100 Chinese sorties had been detected near the island over the past two days.



Taiwan denounces drills

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry accused Beijing of being a 'troublemaker' in mounting the drills.

Taipei 'solemnly demands that the Beijing authorities immediately stop military intimidation and all irrational activities that endanger regional peace and stability', the ministry said.

Meanwhile, China's Foreign Ministry accused Taipei of stoking instability in the Taiwan Strait.

"Harming the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait is the work of Taiwan independence separatist forces, with the sup-

port of external actors," ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said Washington was monitoring the situation. He said that the US would 'help Taiwan acquire the means to defend itself' and ensure 'nobody does anything to change the status quo in the (Taiwan Strait)'.

On Tuesday, Taiwan said that China had deployed its largest naval fleet in regional waters in nearly three decades, deploying around 90 ships along the so-called first island chain, which links Okinawa, Taiwan and the Philippines.

China's Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) is yet to comment on any increased military activity in the region and the latest spike in tensions comes after Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te's visits to the United States last week.

The Reuters news agency cited China's Taiwan Affairs Office as saying on Wednesday that the government would never let go unchecked Taiwan 'separatist' forces colluding with external forces to seek independence, when questioned about Chinese military activity around Taiwan.

DW

South Korea: Police raid President Yoon's office

Seoul, South Korea - South Korean police on Wednesday searched the office of President Yoon Suk Yeol, as part of a widening investigation into his failed imposition of martial law last week.

Police investigators presented a search warrant that specified the president as the suspect, the Yonhap news agency reported, in a dramatic escalation of the probe against Yoon.

"The Special Investigation Team has conducted a raid on the presidential office, the National Police Agency, the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency, and the National Assembly Security Service," the unit stated in a message sent to the French AFP news agency.

Meanwhile, former South Korean Defence Minister Kim Yong-hyun, who is believed to have played a key role in the failed imposition of martial law, attempted to take his own life while in custody.

The attempt failed and Kim is still alive.



Yoon Suk Yeol

The suicide attempt

The former defence minister was formally arrested on charges of 'engaging in critical duties during an insurrection' and 'abuse of authority to obstruct the exercise of rights'.

Kim attempted suicide shortly before midnight (1500 GMT Tuesday), said the commissioner general of the Korea Correctional Service Shin Yong-hae. He had tried to kill himself using a string from his clothing, he added.

"A control room staff member intervened, and when they

opened the door, he immediately gave up the attempt," said Shin.

Kim is now under protection and in good health.

2nd impeachment attempt scheduled

South Korea's main opposition Democratic Party is set to submit a motion to impeach Yoon. Their first attempt failed last Saturday when the ruling party blocked the vote. A few of Yoon's top officials have already been arrested, detained and questioned about their role in imposing martial law on the country.

The imposition of martial law has deeply impacted South Korean politics and foreign policy, as well as its financial markets.

Experts and the opposition say the imposition of martial law is warranted only during national emergencies, wartime or war-like situations by law.

The leader of the conservative ruling party has promised Yoon's exit from power and an early election.

DW

China slams Canada over human rights sanctions

China was responding to new sanctions against eight former or current senior officials

Beijing, China - China on Wednesday slammed Canada over human rights sanctions, saying the North American nation has its own problems with human rights, state media reported.

Canada has a 'long history of human rights violations and numerous problems', Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told reporters in Beijing.

The statement came in response to new sanctions against eight former or current senior Chinese officials over alleged human rights violations.

"Rather than reflecting on its own problems, Canada brazenly slanders and defames other countries, spreading lies about so-called human rights issues in China," Mao said.

Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said the sanctioned Chinese officials were involved in 'grave human rights violations in the country'. The sanctions were in response to 'Chinese government-led repression of ethnic and religious minorities in China, including in Xinjiang, Tibet and against those who practice Falun



China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said Canada has a long history of human rights violations

Mao warned that China would take all necessary measures to 'resolutely safeguard its national sovereignty, security, and development interests'

Gong (Christian sect outlawed by Beijing)', said Melanie, marking International Human Rights Day on December 10.

"This is a typical case of the thief shouting 'catch the thief', making itself a laughingstock in the eyes of the world," Mao retorted, calling on Canada to lift the 'illegal' sanctions on these individuals.

Mao warned that China would take all necessary measures to

'resolutely safeguard its national sovereignty, security, and development interests'. However, the Canadian foreign minister said Ottawa had a 'deep' concern over reports in China indicating arbitrary detaining of 'more than one million people in Xinjiang since 2017, many of whom were held in camps and faced psychological, physical and sexual violence'.

Xinjiang is home to more than 10mn Uyghurs. The Turkic Mus-

lim group, which makes up around 45% of the region's population, has long accused China of cultural, religious, and economic discrimination.

Beijing denies the charge. "Canada continues to raise concerns regarding human rights violations in China and calls on the Chinese government to uphold its international human rights obligations, including through the United Nations Human Rights Council," the statement added. In a separate statement, Joly also announced sanctions against 'individuals who are involved in Russia's ongoing human rights violations since the beginning of its full-

scale invasion of Ukraine and occupation of Crimea'.

"The individuals sanctioned today are involved in the systematic and widespread use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment against detained Ukrainian citizens, including prisoners of war and civilians," it said.

Noting that those sanctioned are affiliates of Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN), Federal Security Service (FSB) and the National Guard of Russia (Rosgvardia), the statement said: "Their direct involvement in the torture and death of Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war in multiple penal colonies, including human rights activists, is well-documented."

Canada pledged its commitment to 'expose and condemn human rights violations committed by Russian authorities and their local collaborators against Ukrainian citizens during Russia's illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine, as they continue to forcefully defend their rights and freedoms in the face of Russia's aggressive actions'.

Over the years, Beijing has also pushed back criticism over Tibet, calling it interference in its 'internal affairs'. In the recent past, Canada has also faced criticism over its handling of pro-Gaza demonstrations. Human rights defenders have also criticised Ottawa over its crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Anadolu Agency



Iranian Ambassador to India Iraj Elahi

'India has all that Iran needs', says envoy Elahi

New Delhi, India - Iran's Ambassador to India, Iraj Elahi on Wednesday said that India has all that Iran needs, and hence he plans to work to improve accessibility between the countries.

Elahi, while attending the Iran Food Festival in the national capital told ANI that he was working with Indian officials to remove bottlenecks in the transfer of money in trade.

"I have studied the market of India and Iranian market. I always mention to my authority, my government that whatever Iran needs is available in India. But we should make it accessible. Accessibility means that we should remove the problem of transfer of money. We need to make different legal bases for our trade. So I am in close contact with the Minister of Trade of India, and I have planned a joint meeting with the Minister of Trade of Iran find a solution for the difficulties which is now and the bottlenecks for trade between two countries," he told ANI.

Elahi added that Iran is facilitating travel with India by exempting Indian passport holders from visa.

"In Iran, we are facilitating and giving more facility to Indian tourists. We have exempted Indian passport holders from visa. Their passport will not be stamped by Iranian authorities. So they can easily visit Iran. And we are also trying to increase the frequency of flight between two countries. I have talked to Air India and other flights. I hope that there will be some progress, and Indians can easily buy a ticket and visit Iran," he said.

Elahi told ANI that he encouraged Iranians to visit India and

see the culture and food. Iran wants to improve the people-to-people ties and trade.

"From Iranian side, I encourage the Iranians to visit India. They should come to India and see the beauty of India. They should come to India to try Indian cuisine. They buy souvenirs from India. So India is not an unknown country for Iran. But people need to come to India by themselves and see the reality of India especially at this moment. India is daily improving, developing and as a new emerging economy we can learn from India, Iranian people can come to India, can set up joint venture in different fields of industries. So we have planned B2B and G2G meeting. In the coming weeks, we will witness more events," he said.

He said that there are commonalities between food of India and Iran.

"Today we hosted different Indian stakeholders, tourism and diplomats in our food festival, Iranian cuisine similar to Indian cuisine, but just a little bit different... We have different commonalities with Indian, so as you mentioned, people-to-people contacts are important. This is the beginning. We plan to promote tourism between two countries," he said.

Elahi further said that Iran is following the situation in Syria and wishes for stability in the region. "Syria was a close friend to Iran, so the current situation of Syria is not acceptable for Iran. But the main concern of Iran is sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. It is very soon to judge about the future of Syria," he said.

ANI

Philippine VP Duterte ready to face impeachment

Manila, The Philippines - Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte stated on Wednesday that she is prepared to face impeachment proceedings amid a widening rift within the ruling coalition.

Two impeachment complaints were filed against Duterte in the House of Representatives last week. "It is better that there are impeachment cases so that we can properly answer whatever their accusations are because the process is laid out clearly in our laws regarding impeachment," Duterte said in a TV interview, according to the *Manila Times*.



Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte

Under local law, any lawmaker or citizen can file a complaint in parliament, but citizen-filed complaints must be endorsed by a member of parliament.

The complaints, filed on December 2 and December 4, allege misuse of confidential funds by the Office of the Vice President. The Constitution requires a vote by one-third of all House members for the impeachment process to move to trial.

Duterte has faced mounting legal challenges since last month after allegedly threatening President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, his

wife, and his cousin, who is the House speaker, with assassination if she were killed.

The vice president was summoned to appear before the National Bureau of Investigation regarding the allegations on Wednesday but skipped the appearance for the second time.

Meanwhile, a joint committee of parliament has declined to reinstate the 1.3bn Philippine pesos (US\$22.2mn) cut from the Office of the Vice President's funding request for 2025 by the House of Representatives.

Anadolu Agency

WHO calls for efforts against malaria

New Delhi, India - Lauding progress being made against malaria in South-East Asia Region, the World Health Organization on Wednesday emphasised on continued concerted efforts by member countries, focusing on the vulnerable population, to ensure equitable access to malaria prevention, diagnosis and treatment, as per an official statement.

As per the World Malaria Report 2024, estimated malaria cases in the region fell from 22.8mn in 2000 to four million in 2023 - a reduction of 82.4 per cent.

The region, home to a quarter of the world's population, accounted for 1.5 per cent global malaria cases in 2023.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party holds protest march against India

Dhaka, Bangladesh - On Wednesday, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) launched a day-long protest march against India, condemning 'aggression and disinformation', as well as a recent attack on the Bangladeshi diplomatic mission in Tripura, India.

Supporters of the party gathered in front of BNP's headquarters in Dhaka before starting the so-called long march towards Brahmanbaria district, which is home to the Akhaura land port, located on the border with India's northeastern city of Agartala.

The party stated that at least 2,000 vehicles would support the march to reach the border area of Akhaura, situated approximately 128km (79.5 miles) from Dhaka.

This march follows a recent attack on the Bangladeshi consulate in Agartala, after which Indian authorities expressed regret and made several arrests.

BNP leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi criticised India for hosting Bangladesh's former Prime Min-



The march follows a recent attack on the Bangladeshi consulate in Agartala, after which Indian authorities expressed regret and made several arrests

ister Sheikh Hasina, saying: "India is supporting the survival of the bloodthirsty lady (Hasina). Yet India is a democratic country!"

"India does not want the peo-

ple of Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sri Lanka to follow their own words. They want them to follow Delhi's words," Rizvi added.

Earlier on Sunday, BNP sup-

porters had also marched towards the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

Hasina had fled to India on August 5 amid a nationwide student uprising.

After her departure, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus assumed office on August 8.

On Monday, Bangladesh and India held their first-ever high-level diplomatic meeting in

In its day-long protest march, BNP condemned 'aggression and disinformation', as well as a recent attack on the Bangladeshi diplomatic mission in Tripura, India

Dhaka.

Yunus also alleged that Hasina's stay in India exacerbated tensions.

Meanwhile, according to local newspaper *Prothom Alo*, the Indian Coast Guard seized two vessels with 79 Bangladeshi sailors on board while they were fishing near Bangladesh's territorial waters on Monday.

However, the Indian Coast Guard stated it apprehended two Bangladeshi fishing trawlers and 78 crew members for 'unauthorised fishing in Indian waters'.

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REAL BACK IN BUSINESS

Mbappe, Vinicius and Bellingham on target as holders edge Atalanta



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham celebrates his goal against Atalanta on Tuesday

This team has a lot to give still. We're going to take it one game at a time. We can finish with 15 points if we win the last two games and then see what happens.

BRAHIM DIAZ

Bergamo, Italy - Real Madrid got a much-needed 3-2 Champions League win at Atalanta on Tuesday thanks to goals from Kylian Mbappe, Vinicius Junior and Jude Bellingham as the holders snapped a two-game losing run in the competition.

Real handed the Serie A leaders their first defeat in this season's revamped Champions League after Mbappe gave them the lead with a strike from inside the box in the 10th minute before he was forced off with an injury.

Charles de Ketelaere equalised with a penalty after Aurelien Tchouameni tripped

lanta are ninth on 11 points after slipping into the playoff places.

"It was a great game and we're happy that it was Real Madrid who took it," Brahim Diaz, who set up Mbappe for the opener, told Movistar Plus.

"We came here with confidence and for the players these games are to show that we are made to play for a club like Real Madrid. This team has a lot to give still and we're going to give much more.

"We're going to take it one game at a time. We can finish with 15 points if we win the last two games and then see what happens. Things are going the way they have to go and that's promising."

Off the back of a fabulous campaign in which they won record-extending titles in LaLiga and the Champions League, Real have struggled in their European title defence.

They lost three of their previous four continental matches before heading to Italy to face red-hot Atalanta, who were unbeaten in the competition having conceded only one goal.

Mbappe, who has been under scrutiny for an inconsistent start at Real, began the game well and forced Marco Carnesecchi into a couple of fine early saves but there was nothing the keeper could do to stop the France captain giving Real the lead.

He scored with a low strike from inside the box after superbly controlling a pass by Diaz with one touch to move the ball past a defender and put himself in the box where he netted.



Kylian Mbappe opened the scoring for Real Madrid but soon had to come off with an 'ischial discomfort'

Ancelotti hopes Mbappe's injury not serious

Bergamo, Italy - Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti hopes Kylian Mbappe will not be sidelined for an extended period after the striker paved the way for a 3-2 Champions League win at Atalanta on Tuesday but was forced off with an injury a few minutes after scoring the opener.

Real Madrid have endured a series of injuries this season, with several key players missing significant time, including Dani Carvajal and Eder Militao who are out for the rest of the campaign with ACL tears.

"Mbappe has suffered an overload, an ischial (lower pelvis) discomfort," Ancelotti told Movistar Plus. "It doesn't seem serious, but we'll see to-

morrow after the exams. He couldn't sprint, it was bothering him a bit and we decided to make the substitution."

Facing heavy criticism for his poor form in his first few months with Real Madrid after signing as a free agent from Paris St Germain, Mbappe was having arguably one of his best games of the season at Atalanta, scoring the opener in the 10th minute and making menacing runs.

But his night lasted only 35 minutes, when he fell to the floor and asked to be substituted before being replaced by Rodrygo.

"It's a very important victory, not everyone wins here," Ancelotti said.



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah celebrates after scoring off a penalty

Salah spot on as Liverpool's winning run continues

Girona, Spain - Liverpool maintained their 100% record in this season's Champions League and have a healthy lead at the top of the standings after a 1-0 win at Girona on Tuesday, with the only goal of the game coming from Mohamed Salah's second-half penalty.

A sixth win from six puts Liverpool, already guaranteed at least a playoff place before kick-off, on 18 points, five ahead of Bayer Leverkusen, Aston Villa, Inter Milan and Brest, while Girona are in 30th place on three points.

Girona suffered their fifth defeat of the competition but made Liverpool work for the victory and in the opening half had chances to take the lead but were foiled by the visitors' keeper Alisson.

Liverpool struggled against a side happy to sit back and bide

their time, but found the breakthrough from the penalty spot with Salah converting in the 63rd minute after Luis Diaz was fouled.

"Six wins out of six, you can't ask for much better than that. It's not easy to do or there would be more teams doing it," Liverpool defender Andy Robertson said.

"We've played a lot better than tonight, we weren't at our highest level, but at this point it's about winning the games and securing qualification."

Girona were pinned back in the opening minutes by Liverpool's pressure, with the visitors creating two early chances.

Defender Joe Gomez was denied his first goal for Liverpool by a reaction save from Paulo Gazzaniga from a close-range header, with the keeper also saving a shot from Darwin Nunez minutes later.

Slot all praise for Alisson

Girona, Spain - Liverpool keeper Alisson saw plenty of action on his return from injury in the Champions League win at Girona on Tuesday, and manager Arne Slot was full of praise for the Brazilian who played a big role in maintaining their perfect record.

Alisson had been out with a hamstring injury since Oct. 5, and while his replacement Caoimhin Kelleher impressed during his absence, Alisson showed why he is Slot's first choice with several saves before Mohamed Salah's penalty gave Liverpool the win.

"Alisson definitely didn't look like he'd been out for two months," Slot said.

"I joked with the players that maybe they wanted to see how ready he was because they let him make so many saves.

"But he showed why I always say that he's our number one."

Liverpool defender Andy Robertson also praised his keeper but was unhappy with how many chances they allowed Girona, with Alisson pulling off saves from Alejandro Frances and Miguel Gutierrez in the opening half.

"He has been out for a while so maybe we had to see whether



Liverpool keeper Alisson makes a save to deny Girona's Bryan Gil

I joked with the players that maybe they wanted to see how ready he was because they let him make so many saves

ARNE SLOT

he was rusty or not and he certainly wasn't," Robertson said.

"But we have to have more control. We can't leave so many gaps, we have to press aggressively and a lot better. Especially in the first half, it was a bit too back and forth for our taste."

Slot was also complimentary towards the opposition, who really posed problems for Liverpool

Brugge rally to beat Sporting

BRUGES, Belgium - Club Brugge bounced back from conceding after three minutes to beat Sporting 2-1 on Tuesday in a major boost to their hopes of advancing to the next stage of the Champions League.

Geny Catamo gave the Portuguese champions the early lead with an easy tap-in from a rebound after Maximiliano Araujo's powerful shot had struck the post but Brugge

fought back to level in the 24th minute and got the winner six minutes from time with a strong close-in finish from substitute Casper Nielsen.

The home side pulled level when Christos Tzolis's strike took a wicked deflection off Eduardo Quaresma, with the goal later adjudged by UEFA to be an own goal.

Sporting were awarded a penalty two minutes later, after

Araujo was fouled by Andreas Skov Olsen. But after a check, the VAR officials determined the foul had occurred outside the area and English referee Anthony Taylor's decision was changed to a free kick which Viktor Gyokeres put over the crossbar.

Nielsen had barely come on when he was set up by Gustaf Nilsson's pass and expertly hammered home the winner in the 84th minute.



Club Brugge's Casper Nielsen (L) celebrates with Gustaf Nilsson after scoring against Sporting on Tuesday



Khvicha Kvaratskhelia

Napoli winger Kvaratskhelia sidelined with knee injury

Naples, Italy - Napoli winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia will be out of action after suffering a sprain in his right knee, the Serie A club said on Tuesday.

The Georgian sustained the injury in Sunday's 1-0 loss to Lazio, with Napoli stating that he has already begun his rehabilitation.

While the club has not confirmed the likely duration of his absence, Italian media reported that recovery from such injuries typically takes up to four weeks. Kvaratskhelia has contributed five goals and three assists in 15 Serie A appearances for Napoli, who are second in the Serie A table.

HIGH FIVES ALL AROUND

Olise brace inspires Bayern Munich to 5-1 thrashing of Shakhtar

Gelsenkirchen, Germany - Bayern Munich's Michael Olise netted a second-half double as they came back from conceding an early goal to win 5-1 against Shakhtar Donetsk in the Champions League on Tuesday to earn their first away victory in this season's competition.

Bayern's third successive win moves them up to eighth into the automatic qualification places on 12 points, while Shakhtar are 27th with four points, three points off the playoffs.

Bayern had suffered defeats in both of their previous away games in the competition and went behind after five minutes when Oleksandr Zubkov's through ball found Kevin, who cut inside Kim Min-jae before sending his shot into the far corner.

The German side were on level terms just six minutes later. Olise lost possession in the area but the ball fell kindly to his teammate Konrad Laimer who took a touch to control it and then smashed his effort into the roof of the net.

Shakhtar had the chance to go back in front but Georgiy Sudakov put his shot wide after an excellent pass from Kevin had teed him up almost from the penalty spot.



Bayern Munich's Michael Olise celebrates with Thomas Mueller after scoring against Shakhtar Donetsk on Tuesday

Bayern Munich's third successive win moves them up to eighth into the automatic qualification places on 12 points, while Shakhtar are 27th with four points, three points off the playoffs.

Bayern went down the other end, Jamal Musiala took the ball into the box and laid a pass off to Thomas Mueller who made no mistake with a simple slotted finish on the stroke of halftime.

Shakhtar put pressure on Bayern at the start of the second half but were unable to find a second goal before the visitors eased to victory.

Bayern thought they had extended their lead when Musiala volleyed home from a corner but the goal was chalked off for a foul on the keeper. However, minutes later the referee pointed to the spot for a foul by Alaa Ghram on

substitute Sacha Boey.

Olise stepped up in the 70th minute and although keeper Dmytro Riznyk went the right way the ball was powered into the top corner to put Bayern well and truly in the driving seat.

Musiala got the goal he deserved for an excellent performance three minutes from time, collecting a loose ball in the box and firing past Riznyk.

There was still time for some Olise magic in added time as he skilfully weaved his way through the Shakhtar defence before coolly finding the bottom corner with his shot.



Nordi Mukiele scored in 90th minute to give Bayer Leverkusen a 1-0 win against Inter Milan

Last-gasp Mukiele hands Leverkusen win against Inter

Leverkusen, Germany - Bayer Leverkusen's Nordi Mukiele scored a 90th-minute goal to give his team a 1-0 home win over Inter Milan in the Champions League and move them closer to qualification.

The Germans, who enjoyed more than 60% of possession, were the better side for most of the game, hitting the post through Nathan Tella early in the match before going close again with shots from Florian Wirtz and Jonathan Tah.

But they had to wait until the final minute for Mukiele to slot in after a goalmouth scramble which was the first goal Inter had conceded in the competition after five clean sheets.

The Italians' first Champions League defeat this season saw them drop to fourth place on 13 points, behind Leverkusen who are second, also on 13, with two matches remaining.

"I am delighted with the performance against a top, top team," said Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso. "We showed good maturity. We did not expect to have 20 chances but a few good ones and to use one of them."

Mueller plays a very important role for us, says Bayern manager Kompany

Gelsenkirchen, Germany - Bayern Munich manager Vincent Kompany praised his veteran striker Thomas Mueller who took advantage of a rare start this season to put the side ahead against Shakhtar Donetsk after they had gone behind early in their Champions League game on Tuesday.

"His goal is a quality that he always had in his career, just the right moment, the right place and he scored the goal very efficiently," Kompany said. "And then of course the energy, the passion, the leadership. For us it is very important to have a good balance between experienced players and young players who still have to grow."

Mueller had started only one



Bayern Munich manager Vincent Kompany was all praise for Thomas Mueller's energy, passion and leadership

of Bayern's previous five games in the competition but, with Harry Kane out injured, the 35-year-old stepped up and was in the perfect position to put Bayern in front just before halftime and begin the fightback.

Kompany has given Mueller just three starts in the Bundesliga this season but the manager was keen to emphasise the importance of the player to his squad.

"I think it has always been clear that he still plays a very important role for us, even if sometimes it is not every minute in the season, it is sometimes normal," Kompany said. "I think because he has so much experience, he knows how important these moments are."

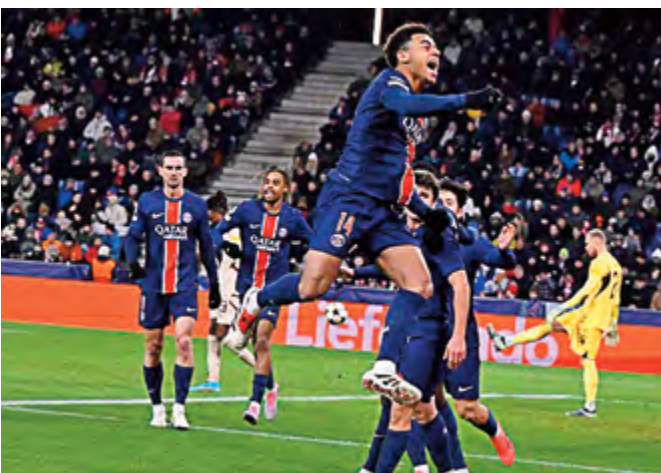
PSG back in reckoning after win against Salzburg

Salzburg, Austria - A fine finish from Goncalo Ramos, a goal from Nuno Mendes and a late strike from Desire Doue gave Paris St Germain a vital Champions League victory, as they beat RB Salzburg 3-0 on Tuesday to move into the playoff spots.

Luis Enrique's side, who have made a terrible start to their Champions League campaign, now sit 24th in the standings just inside the playoff positions, with seven points from six games, while Salzburg are 32nd.

PSG looked sharp in the first half and went close early on through Lee Kang-in's long-range effort and Vitinha's attempt that was denied by goalkeeper Alexander Schlager.

Bradley Barcola also went close as he burst into the area after a superb run but was unable to finish.



PSG's Desire Doue celebrates after scoring against RB Salzburg

"I'm missing that little something in front of goal that will unlock me. Don't think it is a blockage, but we talked about it a lot among ourselves. I had to continue working," Barcola said.

Achraf Hakimi set up Ramos for the opener on the half-hour mark.

The Parisians looked dangerous in the second half as the home side struggled to find their feet. The closest Salzburg came was through Nene Dorgeles in the 63rd minute, as he broke into the box on the left and shot at

goal, but PSG keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma kept the ball out.

But PSG were the better side and Mendes doubled their advantage in the 72nd minute with a thunderous left-footed shot from Doue's pass.

Defender Lucas Hernandez returned to the side after a long-term injury and replaced Mendes six minutes from time before Doue added a third goal to seal a much-needed win.

"It's a pleasure and a pride to be back on the pitch. When you suffer an injury like that, it's never easy. From the first day after my operation, I knew I was going to come back stronger and fitter," said Hernandez.

PSG next face Pep Guardiola's Manchester City on Jan. 22 before closing their campaign against VfB Stuttgart seven days later.



Aston Villa's Ross Barkley celebrates his goal against RB Leipzig

Barkley's deflected goal helps Villa beat Leipzig

Leipzig, Germany - Aston Villa substitutes Jhon Duran and Ross Barkley bagged second-half goals to salvage a 3-2 victory over RB Leipzig on Tuesday in a Champions League match marked by a stunning error from keeper Emi Martinez that gifted Leipzig a goal.

With 13 points after six games, Unai Emery's men are provisionally third in the table and just a win away from booking their berth in the Champions League last 16.

Leipzig have zero points and their loss means they cannot advance.

"I thought overall we were the better team and we could have scored more," Villa captain John McGinn told Amazon Prime. "We dealt with their problems well and what we needed today was substitutes to come on and make a difference."

"It is exciting. It is great to be in the top three."

McGinn put Villa on the scoresheet inside three minutes when he fired in Ollie Watkins's header past Peter Gulacsi.

Lois Openda levelled against the run of play in the 27th minute when Martinez ventured well out of his net but misjudged the bounce of the ball, allowing Openda to nudge it past him and score.

"One mistake and they score but then we played very well," Emery said.

"Champions League is very difficult and we have to expect that every team playing at home are feeling strong. We played with consistency and domination."

"Today we were thinking if we won we could be a contender in the last two matches to be in the top eight. We achieved this."

Always Reddy for a challenge

India’s Nitish Kumar Reddy has impressed with his explosive batting and positive attitude

Fifteen yards out from the boundary line in Canberra, Dhruv Jurel had rocked onto his back foot, opening up his hips to get power into the shot. He found it and the ball was hurtling away in front of square... exactly where Nitish Kumar Reddy was taking his throwdowns.

Someone cried out in warning. They needn't have. Reddy shifted seamlessly from checking what he could do better with India's assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate to whack this ball away too. He has got himself a nice little highlight reel in this Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

It began in Perth when he was alert to the possibility of some quick runs. Nathan Lyon had come on and after sussing up that there was no real turn on offer, in addition to knowing that facing the fast bowlers had been really hard work, Reddy reeled off three fours in eight balls. One went down the ground, the next over cover, hit inside out, and the last was a reverse sweep. Shots seem to be his thing.



Nitish Kumar Reddy

According to ESPNcricinfo's ball-by-ball data, Travis Head, that phenom who has left Ricky Ponting in awe of how hard he hits the ball, is on top of the list for most runs made in this series through aggressive shots, or attempts made to find the boundary: 156 in 54 balls. Picking the ball early and committing to shots fully are hallmarks of Head's batting and it helps that he has such great hands too. Reddy shares that strength. He is No. 2 on the list: 114 in 36 balls.

In the second Test, when Mitchell Starc presented him with just the slightest bit of width - the length was still fine - there was an opportunity to free the arms and the young India all-

60kph. Whirlwind hands.

"[Reddy] has done everything a young player could do in a very short space of time and we think he has a very high ceiling," ten Doeschate said on Friday.

At the time he was picked to play in Australia, he had played only 21 first-class matches, and his better discipline, batting, had fetched him one century and two fifties. Obviously, as an allrounder he plays down the order so he doesn't always have the chance to score big runs but those numbers are still not the break-the-door-down type that the selectors often ask for. Reddy struggled in the early part of the tour, playing for India A. In four innings, he made 0, 17, 16 and 38

[Nitish Kumar Reddy] has done everything a young player could do in a very short space of time and we think he has a very high ceiling

RYAN TEN DOESCHATE

rounder took it with glee. The host broadcast had calculated that ball had come to him at 116kph (after pitching) and was sent away at 116kph too. Reddy hit Scott Boland for a reverse swept six as well and since that shot is a little more unorthodox it tends to stick out.

But the square boundaries are shorter at the Adelaide Oval. To hit Starc - who is deadly almost every time he pitches the ball up - over cover - so no slogging - and have enough on it to go sailing into the crowd is a pretty special effort. His bat speed on that lofted drive was recorded to be

and picked up only one wicket.

Players with raw talent like Reddy need this kind of exposure. Back when he was making his way up the Andhra age-group system, he was scoring double and triple-centuries for fun. So when he levelled up and had a poor season, he thought it was nothing. Then he had another blip and that's when he realised where he stood.

"Still a little bit of work to do, he's very raw. But for a young kid, a 21-year-old to come out like that and play three innings and the quality he has, it is super exciting," said ten Doeschate.



Marquez Lopez

Qatar part ways with coach Marquez Lopez

Doha, Qatar - Asian champions Qatar have parted ways with coach Marquez Lopez after a poor showing in World Cup qualifiers and promoted his assistant Luis Garcia as new boss, the Qatar Football Association announced on Wednesday.

Spianard Lopez led Qatar to their second Asian Cup title in a row in February after replacing Carlos Queiroz last December.

Former Spain international Garcia, who has also managed LaLiga team Espanyol, joined Qatar as his No 2 at the same time.

"All appreciation and gratitude to coach Marquez Lopez for his dedication and the achievements he brought during his time

Lopez, who signed a contract extension until 2026 following his Asian Cup win, leaves after Qatar suffered an embarrassing 5-0 loss to United Arab Emirates

leading our national team. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours," the Qatar FA posted on X.

Garcia will take charge at the Arabian Gulf Cup later this month.

Lopez, who signed a contract extension until 2026 following his Asian Cup win, leaves after Qatar suffered an embarrassing 5-0 loss to United Arab Emirates in the World Cup qualifiers last month.

Qatar face UAE again in the group stage of the Arabian Gulf Cup.

Lopez's men have also disappointed in the World Cup qualifiers, as they sit fourth in their group in the third round with seven points from six matches, six points behind second-placed Uzbekistan.



FIFA President Gianni Infantino talks at a virtual extraordinary Congress

Saudi confirmed as 2034 World Cup hosts

Zurich, Switzerland - Saudi Arabia will host the men's football World Cup in 2034 while the 2030 edition will be held in Spain, Portugal and Morocco, with one-off matches in three South American countries, world football's governing body FIFA confirmed on Wednesday.

The decision was announced by FIFA President Gianni Infantino following a virtual extraordinary Congress. The 2030 and 2034 World Cups each had only a single bid and both were confirmed by acclamation.

"We are bringing football to

more countries and the number of teams has not diluted the quality. It actually enhanced the opportunity," Infantino said about the 2030 World Cup.

The combined proposal from Morocco, Spain and Portugal will see the 2030 World Cup take place across three continents and six nations, with Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay hosting celebratory games to mark the tournament's centenary.

Uruguay held the first World Cup in 1930, while Argentina and Spain have also staged the tournament.

Austrian players shine at Oman Golf Trophy after second day

Muscat - Austrian players enjoyed the upper hand on the second day of the Oman Golf Trophy Grand Final at La Vie Golf Club. At the end of play, three of the top five were from Austria - Otmar Pusterhofer won the leg with 46 points, Gerald Monsberger finished third with 30 and Michael Winner finished fifth with 37. Edouard Rasquet of France finished second with 38 points and Michele Oronti of Italy finished fourth on 37.

Mayu Otsuka of Japan and Constance Johnson of Germany won the Closest to the Pin competition on hole 3 and hole 12 respectively.

Players enjoyed a rest day after the first round where they had the opportunity to explore Muscat and the surrounding areas while enjoying the local Omani culture and experiencing the warm hospitality the country is known for. The tour included a tour of Muscat and excursions to



Austria's Otmar Pusterhofer won the second leg of Oman Golf Trophy with 46 points

Wadi Shab, Nizwa and Al Hamra, Nakhal and the Diymaniyat Islands.

Thursday marks the final day of play where the winners will be

decided. All players will head to Al Mouj Golf for an 8 am tee time where they will play in a championship format. The prize-giving and closing ceremonies

will be held under the auspices of HE Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Undersecretary for Sports and Youth at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Australian teen sensation Gout earns Bolt comparison with dazzling run

Melbourne, Australia - School-boy sensation Gout Gout is bathing in new-found celebrity and savouring comparisons with Usain Bolt following his eye-catching runs at the Australian schools championships in Brisbane.

The 16-year-old ran the 200 metres in 20.04 seconds in Brisbane on Saturday to break the national record Peter Norman set at the 1968 Olympics.

The son of migrants from war-torn South Sudan, Gout also clocked a blistering 10.04 in the 100 metres heats on Friday in a wind of +3.4, the fourth fastest time in all conditions by an Aus-

tralian.

Gout's performances went viral on social media and earned a shout-out from 100m and 200m world-record holder Bolt, who posted on Instagram: "He looks like young me."

Now the biggest name in Australian athletics while finishing year 11 at high school, Gout said the reaction since the week-end had been overwhelming.

"Obviously it has been mad and hasn't really sunk in yet," Gout, who trains with middle-distance runner Peter Bol in Melbourne, told Australian media.

"Probably not for a couple of months I think but it has been a



Australia's Gout Gout, 16, ran 200m in 20.04sec in Brisbane on Saturday to break the national record set by Peter Norman at the 1968 Olympics

Probably not for a couple of months I think but it has been a crazy response. There have been quite a few people reach out but Usain, that took the boat, for sure.

GOUT GOUT

crazy response.

"There have been quite a few people reach out but Usain, that took the boat, for sure."

Gout met with Adidas executives in Melbourne on Tuesday, having recently signed a contract with the apparel giant.

He will head to Florida next month to join Olympic 100m champion Noah Lyles at a training camp organised by Adidas, which sponsors both athletes.

With Australia set to host the 2032 Olympics in Brisbane, the country's athletics chiefs are thrilled to have a potential track superstar in their midst but are also hoping to temper expectations and ensure Gout can live a normal childhood.

"He's so young and you can imagine at the moment he's

going to have every sporting code, every agent, every commercial entity, they'll all be chasing him and he hasn't even finished year 11," Athletics Australia president Jane Fleming told Sydney radio station 2GB.

"Part of our responsibility as an organisation is to make sure the young man gets to his thirties in good physical and mental shape.

"So we need to try and temper it, make sure he gets back to school, does year 12 next year, hangs out with his mates, has a good time with it all, while still progressing him on the way through."



14

INDULGE IN CHEESE

Cheese can be a sensory experience linked to tradition



15

IN TOWN

Romanian National Day celebrates bonhomie



16

ENTERTAINMENT

A peek into tinsel town, in Hollywood and Bollywood

Above the clouds

Dhofar shines in BBC’s captivating seven-part series presented by Sir David Attenborough



Anirban Ray

The natural wonders of Oman’s Dhofar region are captivating global audiences through stunning visuals in the second episode of the BBC documentary series *Asia: Above the Clouds*, presented by Sir David Attenborough.

The seven-part series, currently available on BBC iPlayer, will be released on streaming platforms after its broadcast concludes in the UK. It has already aired on BBC1 in a prime-time slot, further boosting its reach.

Behind the scenes, Omani producer Jassim Jaffer al Lawati played a crucial role in facilitating the production through his companies, Diligence Trading

and Oman Fixer.

“We are essentially a logistics company or specialised tour guides, managing all transport for the crew, food and beverage, as well as health and safety on location. This role is known in the TV and film industry as ‘The Fixer’ - hence our company name,” he explained. “We fix anything the production needs and resolve any problems that may arise during the shoot, ensuring the technical team can focus on capturing the breathtaking visuals you see on screen.”

Preparations for the Dhofar shoot began in late 2022, with the final filming taking place in September 2023. The production involved two three-week shoots,

along with multiple field visits beforehand.

“Working with the BBC Natural History Unit is a real privilege. They are incredibly meticulous in their planning, and it was rewarding to be part of that process,” said Al Lawati.

His team played a key role in securing filming permissions from various government bodies. “Our

main task is liaising with the relevant authorities to ensure all permissions are in place for the crew to film at the selected locations. This included extensive drone filming, which required clearance from the Civil Aviation Authority and the security agencies,” he explained.

The production team, alongside the BBC Natural History Unit,

employed advanced technology to capture the dramatic transformation of Dhofar’s landscape

Being part of these iconic productions is a tremendous achievement for us. For *Asia: Above the Clouds*, we captured groundbreaking footage, including stunning drone transitions

Jassim Jaffer al Lawati



during the khareef season. Long-term time-lapse cameras and drones were deployed to document the shift from dry terrain to lush greenery.

“We installed seven camera rigs across key locations to capture this natural spectacle. The humidity, mould, and moss posed challenges, but the footage we secured was absolutely worth it,” said Al Lawati.

Community collaboration and safety were top priorities throughout the production. “Our Dhofar office head, Musellem Harden, worked closely with herders and local residents to ensure we had their support and blessings for filming. The Environment Authority was also highly supportive, helping us protect and showcase Oman’s natural treasures,” he said.

Reflecting on the experience, Al Lawati said working on a production presented by Sir David Attenborough was a moment of pride. “Being part of these iconic productions is a tremendous achievement for us. *For Asia: Above the Clouds*, we captured groundbreaking footage, including stunning drone transitions by Daryl Macdonald, a brilliant cinematographer and former Muscat resident.”

Diligence Trading has established itself as the leading fixer for wildlife documentaries in Oman and Saudi Arabia. The company has been involved in four major productions, including *Planet Earth 3*. Looking ahead, Al Lawati hinted at new ventures, including cultural and food-focused shows featuring Oman.

“Our aim is to showcase Oman’s beauty and heritage to a global audience. Over the past three years, the shows we’ve worked on have reached over 200mn viewers worldwide. *Asia* is a testament to the collaboration between filmmakers, local experts, and communities, shining an international spotlight on Oman’s breathtaking landscapes,” he added.

With Dhofar’s natural beauty on full display, the episode is expected to further enhance Oman’s reputation as a world-class destination for nature, wildlife, and cultural tourism.



cook-up



Butter Chicken

Behold! A beginner-friendly Butter Chicken recipe with the signature restaurant oomph, made in one pan, ready in under 40 minutes. This recipe promises a silky, buttery makhani sauce with tender chicken. Tested well over 2 dozen times, in comparison with several restaurants, this is the Butter Chicken recipe of your dreams!

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons peanut oil, divided
- shallot, finely chopped
- ¼ white onion, chopped
- tablespoons butter
- 1 tablespoon ginger garlic paste
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons garam masala, divided
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 cup tomato puree
- 1 cup half-and-half
- ¼ cup plain yogurt
- 1 pinch salt and ground black pepper to taste
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into bite-size pieces
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- ¼ cup water

Method

- Step 1:** Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Sauté shallot and onion until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes.
- Step 2:** Stir in butter, ginger-garlic paste, lemon juice, 1 teaspoon garam masala, chili powder, cumin, and bay leaf. Cook and stir for 1 minute. Add tomato sauce, and cook for 2 minutes, continuing to frequently stir.
- Step 3:** Stir in half-and-half and yogurt. Reduce heat to low, and simmer for 10 minutes, frequently stirring. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from heat and set aside.
- Step 4:** Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a large heavy skillet over medium heat. Cook chicken until lightly browned, about 10 minutes.
- Step 5:** Reduce heat, and season with remaining 1 teaspoon garam masala and cayenne. Stir in a few spoonfuls of sauce, and simmer until liquid has reduced, and chicken is no longer pink. Add cooked chicken into sauce and stir together.
- Step 6:** Dissolve cornstarch into water, then mix into the sauce. Cook for 5 to 10 minutes, or until thickened.
- Step 7:** Serve over rice with naan.

Garlic Butter Baked Brie

This garlic butter baked Brie in a box uses the wooden box base that the cheese is sold in to hold the melty Brie together in the oven. Nestled in the lid after baking, it makes a beautiful presentation.

Ingredients

- 1 (12 to 14 ounce) wheel Brie cheese, in wooden box
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 cloves garlic, minced, or more to taste
- freshly cracked black pepper to taste
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves, finely chopped
- crushed red pepper to taste
- Toasted baguette slices for serving

Method

- Step 1:** Preheat the oven to 180°C.
- Step 2:** Remove lid from Brie box and set aside for serving. Remove Brie from any inner packaging and return the cheese to the bottom half of the box. Score the top of the rind to slightly expose the cheese underneath.
- Step 3:** Add butter and garlic to a small bowl and microwave until melted, about 45 seconds. Season with pepper; spoon butter mixture over Brie. Place Brie on a rimmed baking sheet.
- Step 4:** Bake in the preheated oven until gooey and melted, 12 to 15 minutes. Sprinkle with thyme and crushed red pepper. Place Brie into the top of the box for extra support for serving and transfer to a serving platter. Served with toasted baguette slices.

Let's indulge

Cheese/butter can be a sensory experience that evokes tradition, craft, and culinary artistry. Experience it!!!



Cheesecake-Stuffed Snickerdoodle Cookie

Method

- Step 1:** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (180 degrees C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- Step 2:** For filling, mix softened cream cheese and sugar together until smooth. Scoop filling into small balls and place onto the prepared baking sheet. Freeze for at least 30 minutes.
- Step 3:** Meanwhile, combine butter, brown sugar, and white sugar in a bowl and beat with an electric mixer until creamy. Add egg and vanilla extract; beat until smooth and fluffy.
- Step 4:** Reduce mixer speed to low and beat in flour, cinnamon, and baking soda just until flour disappears.
- Step 5:** In a separate shallow bowl stir 1/4 cup sugar and 1 teaspoon cinnamon together for the cinnamon sugar.
- Step 6:** Scoop cookie dough by 2 table-spoonfuls and flatten into a circle with your hands. Place a ball of cream cheese filling in the centre of the cookie dough. Press cookie dough up and around filling, sealing filling inside.
- Step 7:** Roll each cookie dough ball into the cinnamon sugar mixture and place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
- Step 8:** Bake in the preheated oven until cookies are just turning golden on the bottom and the edges, 12 to 14 minutes.



This easy snickerdoodle recipe is made with simple baking ingredients for sweet and soft cinnamon cookies that taste just like grandma's.

Ingredients

- Filling**
- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened
 - 2 tablespoons white sugar
- Cookie Dough**
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
 - 1/2 cup brown sugar
 - 1/3 cup white sugar
 - 1 egg
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 - 1 1/2 cups flour
 - 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
 - 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- Cinnamon Sugar**
- 1/4 cup white sugar
 - 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

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take a break

IN TOWN

ROMANIAN NATIONAL DAY HELD



Romania's National Day - also known as the Great Union Day or the Unification Day - was celebrated in Muscat in the presence of high officials and othe dignitaries



Photos: V.K. Shafer

CELEBRATING OMAN ART EXHIBITION



Indian Social Club Oman organised an exhibition of art inspired by nature and culture on December 5, at the club's multi-purpose hall in Darsait. Ana Algabre Hernandez, the spouse of the Ambassador of the Philippines, was the guest of honour



Photos: V.K. Shafer

BOGGLER

Y	I	I	R
B	E	D	S
U	I	R	S
A	G	A	A

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY:

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

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

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS

- Channing Tatum stars alongside which A-List actress in the 2022 film "The Lost City"?
A Sandra Bullock
B Jennifer Aniston
C Cameron Diaz
D Julia Roberts
- Whose song, 'Space Girl', went viral on TikTok in 2020?



- A Frances Forever
B Tai Verdes
C Charli D'Amelio
D Jason Derulo

- Where did rapper Eminem grow up?
A Miami
B New Orleans
C Detroit
D Brooklyn

Answers
3. C
2. A
1. A

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You care about people, but right now, you are so driven by ambition you are in danger of seeing people as a means to an end. Don't get too caught up in thinking about the ways in which they can help you. Astute people can generally tell when they're being used, no matter how sugarcoated the manoeuvre.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Comfort is particularly valued when away from home, and that's huge if you're gearing up for travel. You'll be thrilled with your surroundings once you arrive at your destination and so delighted with your accommodations and the various other niceties offered that you'll become a walking billboard.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Because you generally rule the roost with uncontested authority, the challenge to your iron control that comes today could leave you momentarily speechless. You recover quickly enough, but you may have a battle of wills on your hands. The objections you're hearing, however, could be the tip of a much larger iceberg.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You likely are not feeling emotionally and physically up to it, but you will probably need to confront a personal situation today. Dodging the issue now will only stretch it out and make its effect linger, and you'd much rather put it behind you as quickly as possible. Be careful what you say and how you say it. Someone is primed for battle, so don't give them plenty of ammunition.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You're a natural leader, but be on guard. Don't allow arrogance to gain the upper hand. Throwing your weight around may get you some cooperation in the short term, but it won't do much to inspire long-term loyalty, much less admiration. When people sense they're being treated in a condescending way, they either get angry or withdraw.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You will really begin to see some solid and gratifying results today if you've been working hard on a creative project, perhaps related to home improvement or maybe an artistic work. Lots of effort goes into pulling such an undertaking together, though it doesn't look like much in the early and middle stages. Now, however, the concept is really taking shape.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

If you're feeling down in the dumps today, you just need to get out of bed and make something happen regardless of your feelings. Events in the past are over and can't be changed. Everyone has to live with the consequences of their actions, and that can be difficult. But don't give in to any tendency to endow your regrets with more significance than they deserve.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Others will be eager to fall into step behind you today, so make sure you have some idea of where you're going. Fixing your sights on a destination shouldn't be a problem, though. Your confidence is high, your outlook is positive, and you can explain anything to anyone. Put those communications skills to good use and keep the team fully informed. Their morale will soar.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You really want to explore your creative potential, and you feel that you need a professional's direction. So today's overriding concern is probably how to make that happen financially. Sure, such lessons could take a big bite out of your budget, but look at the big picture and establish some priorities.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Getting up in front of a crowd is easy for you today, especially since you are showered with so many good wishes before you begin. You could be making an important business presentation, speaking to a classroom of students, or making a heartfelt toast at a celebration. Words come easily, backed by your sincerity and positive feelings.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Have you been having trouble sleeping? Exhaustion is your constant companion today. Staring wide-eyed at the clock in the middle of the night is no fun and does a real number on your attitude. If you're keyed up over personal issues that are robbing you of sleep, perhaps it's time to resolve them if you can.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Prepare for an important upcoming meeting so you can make a meaningful contribution and help gather enough information to make an intelligent decision. You could be tasked to recommend a new hire at work, a replacement teacher at your child's school, a board member for a volunteer organisation.

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

entertainment



Freedom for Menendez brothers unclear

The twisty fight for the release of Erik and Lyle Menendez from California prison, where they are serving life sentences without the possibility of parole for gunning down their parents in 1989, took a turn towards unpredictable after the decision to initiate the legal process for their release moved to the hands of incoming Los Angeles District Attorney Nathan Hochman, sworn into office last week.

Hochman rides into the city's top law enforcement position after handily ousting embattled progressive incumbent George Gascón in the November election. Gascón, whom voters kicked out of office on November 5 following two tumultuous terms and multiple bruising recall attempts, had bolstered the process to free the brothers, who admitted to killing their parents but who have been model inmates for nearly three decades.

DICK CLARK'S NEW YEAR'S ROCKIN' EVE

Several more big names have been added to the lineup for the fast-approaching Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve. ABC and Dick Clark Productions revealed on Tuesday that the event's West Coast Party will include Alanis Morissette, Renéé Rapp and Dasha, with DJ Cassidy's Pass The Mic Live! set to feature Ja Rule, Fat Joe, Slick Rick & Doug E. Fresh, Ernest, HARDY, Kesha, Laufey, Natasha Bedingfield, and T-Pain.

Blake Shelton will perform as part of the Las Vegas celebrations, with Luis Fonsi performing from his native Puerto Rico. And finally, legendary R&B act TLC are set to join the main Times Square, New York lineup for New Year's Rockin' Eve.

Aever, Ryan Seacrest will host New Year's Rockin' Eve, and lead the live Times Square countdown to midnight alongside Brit singer Rita Ora. Dayanara Torres returns as co-host in Puerto Rico. Carrie Underwood will close out 2024 with a live, headlining performance of some of her biggest hits live in Times Square just before midnight.

Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve with Ryan Seacrest 2025 will air Tuesday, December 31, live on ABC beginning at 8 p.m. EST and stream next day on Hulu.



CRITICS CHOICE'S CELEBRATION OF BLACK CINEMA AND TELEVISION



Star power was strong at the Critics Choice Association's 7th annual Celebration of Black Cinema and Television, where some 14 awards were presented to actors, producers, directors and composers, including Tyler Perry, Cynthia Erivo, Regina King and Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor.

The ceremony, held at the Fairmont Century Plaza in Los Angeles on Monday, was hosted by comedian Jay Pharoah, who brought levity to the room as the night's honorees spoke about the impact of their awards and the work for which they were garnered.

Perry addressed the death of Steve Mensch, the president of Tyler Perry Studios who died in a plane crash on Friday night, while acknowledging the 15th anniversary of his mother's death just the day before while accepting the Icon Award presented to him by Kelly Rowland.

Perry began his acceptance speech harkening back to a quote from author Jesmyn Ward, which fellow honoree Ellis-Taylor shared in her own speech: "The first weapon I ever held was my mother's hand." The actress went on to speak of what it meant to receive the Social Impact Award presented

to her by Nickel Boys co-stars Ethan Herisse and Brandon Wilson and director Ramell Ross.

"I do this work because Black liberation in this country is a fragile, constant never-ending pursuit," the actress said. "They can have their freedom with this lack of concern for the pain of others. I want liberation."

Expressing an intention to continue her legacy of telling stories of overlooked Black heroines, Ellis-Taylor added, "My fight will be to tell the truth of these women. Our creators, Black women, Fannie Lou Hammer, Ella Baker. If I have to sell fish plates on the side of the road until my last breath, I'm going to do that. It will be my fight, my next fight. But I don't want to do it alone. So don't let me."

Additional honorees included Regina King who received the Trailblazer Award for Shirley, Wendell Pierce the actor award (series) for his work on *Elsbeth* and John David Washington the actor award (film) for *The Piano Lesson*. *How To Die Alone* creator Natasha Rothwell was given the producer award, Steve McQueen the director award for *Blitz*, and Jharrel Jerome the breakthrough award for *Unstoppable*. Kris Bowers also received the composer award for his work on *The Wild Robot*, while *The Fire Inside*'s Ryan Destiny and *Power*'s Michael Rainey Jr. were each given the Rising Star Award for film and series, respectively. Natalie Rae and Angela Batton received the documentary award for their project *Daughters* and filmmaker Malcolm D Lee was presented with the Career Achievement Award by members of the cast of *The Best Man*, the movie that launched his foray into Hollywood. Among the presenters were Ava DuVernay, Aldis Hodge, Mara Brock Akil and Jeffrey Wright.

Cynthia Erivo, who earlier in the day was nominated for a Golden Globe Award for her role as Elphaba in *Wicked*, also accepted the actress award from the Critics Choice Association - presented to her by Sheryl Lee Ralph, who played Madame Morrible in the Broadway musical.



TXT finally get a break! Thank you new BigHit CEOnim



TOMORROW X TOGETHER! TXT! Bang-tang's babies! BTS's *dongsang*! Did you know they debuted way back in 2019, with their EP *The Dream Chapter: Star*? They have been going on non-stop! With hit after hit, they became one of the biggest rising stars in K-pop. Yeonjun (*my boo*), Soobin, Beomgyu, Taehyun (*Cutie pro max*), and HuenINGKai.

But here's the big news - TXT are finally taking a break! They've been working so hard, and the new BigHit CEO is giving them time to rest, recover, and spend time with their families. Aww! As a MOA, join me being sad as we will not to see them for a while, but I know they deserve the break it. I'll be here, waiting for their next comeback no matter how long it takes. TXT fighting! MOA fighting!

WHATS ON

Genre: Action
Starring: Russell Crowe, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Ariana DeBose
Language: English

KRAVEN THE HUNTER

Kraven the Hunter is the visceral, action-packed origin story of how and why one of Marvel's most iconic villains came to be.

The Czech Republic's Oscar entry a thrilling affirmation of independent journalism

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW:
WAVES
Genre: Spy thriller Starring: Vojtěch Vodochodský, Ondřej Stupka, Tatiana Pauhofová, Stanislav Majer, Vojtěch Kotecký, Marika Šoposká

Inspired by the true story of a Czechoslovakian public radio station, the Jiri Mádľ-directed drama centers on two young brothers during the Prague Spring and the aftermath of the Warsaw Pact invasion.

A new energy flowed in the Czechoslovakia after Alexander Dubcek became its leader in 1968. The statesman championed reforms that expanded freedom of speech, protection of press rights and economic programs prioritizing working class people without radically disrupting the nation's communist framework. The Soviet Union loathed the plan and sought to suppress it with force. Their military intervention, in which the government and its Warsaw Pact allies sent in troops to end that period now known as the Prague Spring.

In *Waves*, the Czech Republic's submission for the 2025 Oscars, Jiri Mádľ crafts a propulsive thriller about a team of journalists doggedly pursuing the truth in the months before the Prague Spring and the days of the Soviet Union's aggressive occupation. The film is inspired by true events, which Mádľ came across while researching how the International News Office of Czechoslovak Radio operated in the '60s. At the time, the office was helmed by Milan Weiner, a tenacious manager who ushered in editorial changes to help the state-sanctioned radio station circumvent censorship. He encouraged reporters to verify information with independent sources (rather than those offered by the Czechoslovak government) and invited dissenting opinions to discussion.

There are times, when Mádľ's screenplay undercuts this work by briefly abandoning Tomáš and Paja to consider secondary plotlines (office affairs, general politicking). There are moments when Mádľ leaves Paja for so long that his re-entry into the story feels abrupt. One wishes that the brothers were given more screen time to wrestle with how their respective political leanings challenge and change their relationship.

Still, *Waves* excels in other areas, particularly when it comes to Mádľ's use of archival footage. The director scatters these clips throughout this film, sometimes making the grainy footage of Czech citizens storming the streets during a protest or the Soviet Union tanks rolling into Prague seem indistinguishable from this fictionalized retelling. The effect is dizzying in a good way.

Rating ★★★★★

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