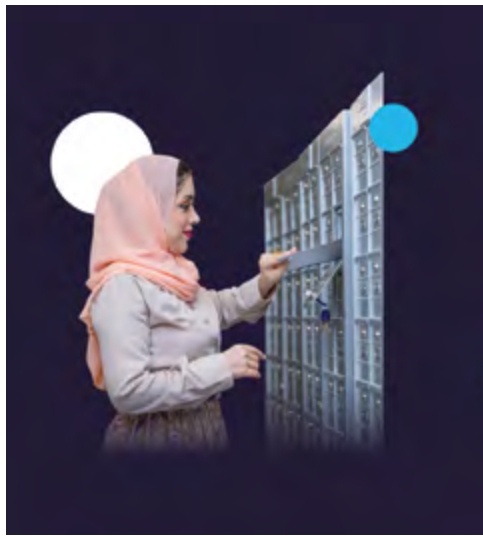




Protect Your Privacy with PO Boxes

For more information:



بريد عُمان
OMAN POST

1001

EA launches gazelle rehabilitation, release project

Our Correspondent
Al Kamil W'al Wafi

Environment Authority (EA) has launched a project to rehabilitate and release Arabian gazelles into the wild, reinforcing its commitment to biodiversity conservation. The project was inaugurated at Al Saleel Natural Park in South Sharqiyah on Monday under the patronage of Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed al Buraiki, Wali of Al Kamil W'al Wafi.

Ten Arabian gazelles were released into the park, one of the largest natural habitats for the species in the region spread over 220sq km. The project is part of efforts to restore ecological balance in protected areas and support the localisation of native species.

Located 57km from Sur, Al Saleel Natural Park is known for



its varied landscapes, including alluvial plains, acacia and gum trees, deep valleys and rugged hills. It is home to a wide range of wildlife - Arabian wolves, wild cats, red foxes, Egyptian eagles, and numerous bird and tortoise species. The park is home to about 7% of the global population of Arabian gazelles.

"This environmental project aims to conserve and sustain

biodiversity by rehabilitating the Arabian gazelle in its natural environment," said Saeed Nasser al Abdali, Director of Environment Department in South Sharqiyah. "It also enhances Oman's standing in the Global Environmental Performance Index. Our country

wildlife management.

Export, import of sharks suspended

In a separate development, EA has announced a temporary suspension on issuing permits for export, import and re-export of

Our country is home to over 15,000 species of terrestrial and marine flora and fauna, many of which are rare, endemic or of international significance

SAEED NASSER AL ABDALI

is home to over 15,000 species of terrestrial and marine flora and fauna, many of which are rare, endemic or of international significance."

The Arabian gazelle rehabilitation and release project is a key part of the sultanate's wider strategy for ecosystem protection and sustainable

all species of sharks and shark products. The three-month ban will take effect from April 24, 2025.

The authority said the measure was prompted by environmental concerns and the need to conduct a thorough assessment of shark populations in Oman's territorial waters.

MoSD expands pre-marriage counselling programme

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has launched the second edition of its Marriage Guidance Trainers Programme with 37 participants from various departments and directorates across Oman.

The two-week programme aims to equip participants with skills in communication, public speaking, persuasion, dialogue and presentation techniques, alongside core concepts in marriage counselling. The training is intended to prepare



officials to guide individuals planning to marry and support them in building stable family units.

The programme includes sessions on trainer preparation, effective communication between spouses, personality types, marital compatibility, addressing emotional needs, joint parenting and conflict resolution. Participants will also be trained in modern coaching methods and techniques to enhance their ability to connect with and counsel young couples.

Saeed bin Rashid al Maktoumi, Head of Family Counselling Section at the Family Counselling and Guidance Department, said the programme is essential for empowering regional trainers with the tools to promote healthy marital relations.

He said the programme plays a preventive role in reducing disputes and divorce rates. "By strengthening pre-marriage counselling, we are working to

preserve family cohesion and build a more resilient society."

Maktoumi described the family as a foundational unit that contributes to social stability. "The family is a group of individuals linked by kinship, operating within a legal and social framework to meet shared needs. It shapes individual behaviour and development while providing emotional support and care throughout life."

MoSD aims to enhance counselling services across the sultanate to help create more resilient families and contribute to broader societal stability.

International food safety conference focuses on public health

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat is hosting the 7th Oman International Food Safety and Quality Conference and Exhibition bringing together 500 specialists from 32 countries to discuss challenges and innovations in food safety.

The three-day event, which opened on Monday at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, will feature 26 scientific papers addressing critical issues related to food quality and regulation.

The opening was held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Dr Kamil Fahad al Said, Secretary-General of Council of Ministers, and attended by H E Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, along with diplomats and officials from across the region.

Dr Hussein al Masrouri, Director General of Food Safety and Quality Centre at Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said Oman is committed to enhancing its food safety framework as part of broader public health efforts.

"Oman aims to foster a culture grounded in awareness and scientific knowledge," he said. "By leveraging resources and technological advancements in the food sector, we strive to build a society that is informed, healthy and engaged with food safety issues." The ministry is working with government bodies and private sector stakeholders to build an integrated and sustainable food safety system.



Interactive and Social SUV



1.4L Turbo Engine, 156 hp | 7 Speed DCT
Manufacturer's Warranty - 6 YEARS / 250,000 KMS*

EMI OMR 107* for 6 years

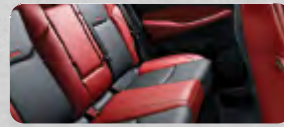
*Terms and Conditions Apply



18" Alloy Wheels



10" Infotainment Touch Screen



Leather Seats



Panoramic Sunroof



Adaptive Cruise Control



360° View Camera

*Easy Monthly Installment is calculated based on 20% down payment for 6 years loan tenure. Subject to credit approvals from Banks only. Images shown are for illustrative purpose only. Specification may vary as per the model variant. To know more, please visit the CHANGAN AUTO Showroom.

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC

Showrooms:
Qurum 94641010, Mawaleh 97888180, Nizwa 96628940
Sohar 95351200, Salalah 96629050, Ibri 96628930, Barka 96629010, Sur 96628920

800 50800
9662 8909
@changanoman
www.changanoman.com

MHT steps up efforts ahead of khareef



Our Correspondent
Salalah

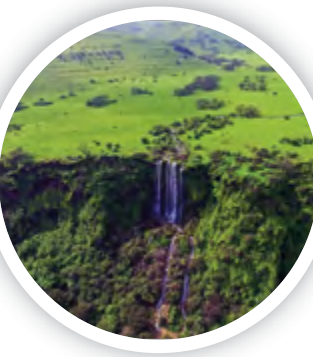
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has begun reviewing readiness of hotels and tourism establishments in Dhofar ahead of the 2025 khareef season with the aim of improving service quality and ensuring compliance with updated regulations.

The efforts include inspections and consultations with licensed establishments across the governorate. An introductory workshop was held at Al Baleed Archaeological Park in Salalah on Monday, where tourism operators were briefed on the ministry's expectations and support tools for the upcoming season.

Key areas of focus included hotel service standards, complaint resolution mechanisms and promotional strategies tailored to the monsoon season. Participants were introduced to the 'Tajawub' platform, a digital

system designed to manage visitor complaints and respond to tourism-related enquiries.

Khalid bin Abdullah al Abri, Director General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar, said the



workshop was part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to uphold service standards. "We currently have 80 licensed hospitality establishments in the governorate and expect this number to reach 120 by the end of 2025," he said.

Abri also outlined MHT's promotional strategy for the season developed in coordination with tourism offices, airlines and car rental companies. The plan includes packages designed to attract a wide range of visitors to Dhofar.

The khareef season, which runs from June 21 to September 21, continues to grow in popularity. More than 1mn tourists visited Dhofar during the 2024 season, up from 962,000 in 2023, confirming its status as a key event in Oman's tourism calendar.



THE DIFFERENCE..
OUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH YOU

With **120+** branches
More than **360** ATMs and CDMs
we are always at your service.

f X @ in bankdhofar 2479 1111 www.bankdhofar.com



WORLD CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION DAY

National initiatives launched to develop Omani talent

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman marked World Creativity and Innovation Day on Sunday with the launch of two national initiatives aimed at promoting a culture of innovation and strengthening institutional performance in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Ministry of Labour (MoL) hosted a ceremony at its headquarters in Muscat under the patronage of H E Sayyid Salim bin Muslim al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Human Resources Development.

Speaking at the event, Mohammed bin Mubarak al Kalbani, Director General of Development and Social Security at MoL, emphasised the importance of innovation as a national value and a key enabler of sustainable development.

On the sidelines of the event, Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit launched two national programmes - 'National Talent Count in Institutional Innovation' and 'Certified Innovation Professional'. These aim to develop Omani talent and build institutional capacity



Every idea, no matter how simple, has the potential to make a real difference in improving performance and enhancing the workplace

MOHAMMED AL KALBANI

to address future challenges and boost government competitiveness.

Kalbani said innovation should no longer be limited to specific departments but become an integral part of institutional culture across all levels of government. "Every idea, no

matter how simple, has the potential to make a real difference in improving performance and enhancing the workplace."

He also highlighted MoL's ongoing efforts to encourage a creative environment by supporting initiatives, investing in skills and offering platforms for the exchange of ideas.

The ceremony included a visual presentation on the Institutional Innovation and Change Management System, showcasing key trends and practices in public sector innovation. A dialogue session titled 'Institutional Innovation: The Path to Sustainable Government Excellence' brought together experts and stakeholders to discuss ways to integrate innovation in government operations.

World Creativity and Innovation Day, observed globally on April 21, emphasises the value of human capital and the need for a strong national ecosystem to translate ideas into sustainable solutions. Oman's observance of the day reflects its growing commitment to institutional innovation as it moves toward a diversified, knowledge-based economy.

Muscat to have 4 new parks in residential areas

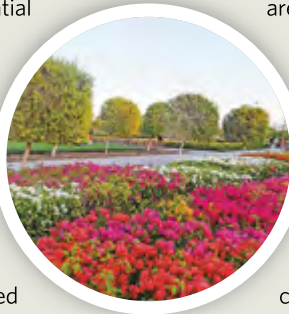
Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has announced tenders for construction of four new public parks in residential neighbourhoods of the capital as part of its broader strategy to expand green infrastructure and enhance quality of life.

A residential park in Quriyat, planned over an area of 7,698sqm, is among the key projects. The park is intended to provide dedicated space for outdoor activities and leisure for residents in the area.

The municipality's tender for a park in Wadi Kabir covers an area exceeding 2,000sqm. The facility will include a children's play area, walking track and shaded seating spaces.

A proposed park in Khuris al Haboos in Seeb will be of over 10,000sqm and serve both residents and visitors with updated recreational amenities.



A proposed park in South Mabelah is part of the municipality's efforts to ensure more accessible green spaces in densely populated neighbourhoods.

According to Muscat Municipality, 'All four parks will include sports walkways, children's play zones, fitness equipment and seating areas. These will also feature landscaped areas, improved lighting, café, public restrooms, prayer hall and car parks.'

The projects align with the city's urban planning strategy to utilise smaller land parcels for eco-friendly community spaces. The initiative also aims to encourage physical activity, improve social engagement and support overall wellbeing.

'These parks are part of Muscat's efforts to build inclusive recreational areas that promote a healthier lifestyle and contribute to reducing urban stress,' the municipality stated.

N Batinah launches youth platform to boost civic engagement, innovation

Our Correspondent
Suhar

North Batinah has launched a dedicated platform, called Shabab, to empower young Omanis and support sustainable development efforts across the governorate.

Announced by North Batinah Governor's Office, the platform aims to promote innovation, dialogue and civic engagement, serving as a link between the youth and government institutions. It seeks to support youth-led initiatives, encourage creative thinking and involve young people in decision-making processes in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Shabab is part of a wider strategy to enhance the role of youth in driving development across the governorate. The platform is expected to create an environment that promotes collaboration across sectors and helps unlock the potential of young people.

According to the governor's office, Shabab will focus on enhancing youth participation in sustainable development, improving communication within



communities, and promoting dialogue on development projects. It also aims to support development of innovative ideas for municipal work and provide tools to help youth make tangible contributions to society.

The platform will also work to identify and invest in local talent and promote a culture of creativity. Evaluating youth-led initiatives for impact and sustainability is a key component of the initiative.

Volunteerism is another central focus, with the platform encouraging youth participation in

Shura flags housing concerns

Continued from Page 01

In response, H E Shuailli outlined progress made between 2021 and 2024, noting that 4,923 families benefited from the Social Housing Programme. He added that 2,189 plots of land were allocated for investment in commercial, industrial, agricultural and mixed-use categories between 2022 and 2025.

Nearly 70,000 residential plots and housing units were distributed in the last three years, with property transactions during the period valued at over RO10bn.

A major highlight of the ministry's strategy is development of five future cities - Sultan Haitham City, Al Thuraya and projects in Suhar, Nizwa and Salalah - covering a total area of 39mn sqm. Work is also underway on 22 integrated residential neighbourhoods with target of reaching 30 by 2025.

H E Shuailli announced that in accordance with Royal Directives, 10% of new housing units in neighbourhood plans will be allocated to young families supported by the Marriage Fund, who will also benefit from reduced pricing.

Muscat to host global energy regulators' conference for first time in Middle East

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman will host the annual Energy Regulators Regional Association (ERRA) conference for the first time in the Middle East underlining the country's growing role in shaping global energy regulation.

Organised by Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), the event will take place in Muscat on May 5 and 6. More than 250 international experts, representatives of ERRA member organisations, academics and specialists from within and outside Oman are expected to attend.

ERRA is an international organisation that promotes regulatory excellence in the energy sector. It comprises 47 member organisations from 43 countries across five continents and plays a key role in strengthening regulatory frameworks and institutional performance globally.

The conference comes as Oman accelerates its transition towards renewable energy and



The event is an opportunity to highlight Oman's efforts to promote clean energy and enhance its investment climate

DR MANSOUR TALIB AL HINAI

sustainable development. It also marks 20 years since the restructuring of the country's electricity sector and establishment of APSR.

Dr Mansour Talib al Hinai, Chairman of APSR, said the event is an opportunity to highlight Oman's efforts to promote

clean energy and enhance its investment climate. "This initiative aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises sustainability, innovation and energy diversification," he said.

Hinai added that the conference would serve as "a high-level international platform for exchanging expertise and discussing the latest developments in energy regulation". It will also "enhance cooperation between member states and position the sultanate as a regional leader working towards a sustainable, innovation-driven economy".

The two-day event will include dialogue sessions, workshops and bilateral meetings focused on improving regulatory systems, attracting renewable energy investment and assessing the impact of emerging technologies on the energy sector.

Hosting the ERRA conference reflects Oman's commitment to building a resilient, knowledge-based economy and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,293.00
Sensex	79,408.50

FOREX RATES
(RO1 equals)

India	221.19
Pakistan	731.13
Bangladesh	315.44
Philippines	146.99
Sri Lanka	776.61

*Rates as on April 21

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Top officials explore projects in Buraimi, Suhar industrial cities

Aligned with the goal of maximising local economic impact and achieving shared objectives, Eng Badr bin Salim al Maamari, Secretary General of the Tender Board, and Halima bint Rashid al Zaria, Chairperson of the SMEs Development Authority, alongside Eng Dawood bin Salim al Hadabi, CEO of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) visited Al Buraimi and Suhar Industrial Cities.

During their visit, the delegation was briefed on key investors and projects in both cities, inspiring success stories of Omani entrepreneurs, and the range of comprehensive support and incentives offered by Madayn to help businesses expand and thrive.

Profits of Oman's listed companies decline 13.7% to \$3.4bn in 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Total net profits for listed companies in Oman declined by 13.7% year-on-year to \$3.4bn in the financial year 2024, compared with \$3.9bn in the previous year, primarily due to a drop in earnings from energy sector firms, according to a research report.

The decline in aggregate profits of listed firms was driven by the energy sector, which alone accounted for over 30% of the total net profits on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) during the financial year 2024. Furthermore, sectors such as insurance, transportation, and food and beverages also recorded significant drops in net profit during 2024, as per the GCC Corporate Earnings Report released by Kamco Investment.

Total net profits for the energy sector fell by 43.8% year-on-year to \$1.0bn in 2024, compared with \$1.8bn in 2023.

In contrast, full-year 2024 earnings for the banking sector – the largest sector by market capitalisation on the Muscat Stock Exchange – rose by 15.2% to \$1.4bn, up from \$1.2bn in 2023. Within the banking sector, net profits for Bank Muscat in-



ON QUARTERLY BASIS, TOTAL NET PROFITS OF COMPANIES LISTED ON THE MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE SURGED BY 83.4% YEAR-ON-YEAR TO \$702.4MN IN Q4 2024, COMPARED WITH \$383MN IN THE SAME QUARTER OF 2023

creased by 6.2% to reach \$585.9mn in 2024, compared with \$551.8mn in 2023.

The utilities sector recorded the second-largest growth in total net profits, reaching \$261.6mn in 2024, a 51.8% year-on-year increase from \$130.9mn in 2023. Within the utilities sector, Phoenix Power Company led with total profits of \$59.7mn in 2024, up 4.9% year-on-year. Similarly, Sembcorp Salalah re-

ported 2024 net profits of \$58.4mn, compared with \$53.3mn in 2023.

Aggregate net profits for the telecoms sector increased by 5.0% to \$233.2mn in 2024, compared with \$222mn in 2023. The growth in total net earnings for the sector came as both constituent companies posted year-on-year increases in profits, led by Omantel (\$202.7mn) and Ooredoo Oman (\$30.5mn).

Profits in Q4 2024 jump

On a quarterly basis, total net profits of companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange surged by 83.4% year-on-year to \$702.4mn in Q4 2024, compared with \$383mn in the same quarter of 2023, the report showed.

Total Q4 2024 earnings of the banking sector rose by 29% to reach \$258.9mn, up from \$200.7mn in Q4 2023. The energy sector recorded the second-largest net profits during Q4 2024, reaching \$182.8mn compared with \$40.4mn in Q4 2023, marking a 350.9% year-on-year growth, mainly due to the listing of OQ Exploration & Production Company (OQEP).

GCC corporate earnings

According to the Kamco Invest-

ment report, a decline in earnings for energy and utilities companies weighed on GCC corporate profit growth in Q4 2024. Quarterly net profits reported by companies listed on GCC exchanges continued to decline sequentially, reaching a three-quarter low during Q4 2024.

Aggregate profits during the quarter dropped by 5% quarter-on-quarter to \$57.3bn, as a broad-based fall in profits across most exchanges outweighed gains recorded by companies listed in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

However, on a year-on-year basis, aggregate profits for the quarter recorded marginal growth of 2.0%, as strong profit gains across most exchanges were partially offset by a decline in aggregate earnings for companies listed on the Abu Dhabi exchange.

At the country level, profit growth was highest for companies listed on the Oman exchange, which posted an 83.4% year-on-year increase in Q4 2024, followed by Bahrain and Kuwait with profit growth of 43.2% and 37.1%, respectively. Saudi-listed companies recorded modest year-on-year profit growth of 3.1%, while corporates in Dubai and Qatar registered growth of around 20%.

GCC countries seen as key player in advancing global circular economy

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – The GCC countries are well-positioned to play an important role in advancing the world's circular economy, owing to their established status as a global hub for plastics production and export, access to world-class infrastructure, and emphasis on research and innovation. However, the development of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), alongside government incentives and regulations, will be essential to delivering tangible progress in plastic waste management and circularity.

Speaking at the 14th Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA) Plastics Conference held in Riyadh on April 20-21, industry leaders agreed that innovation and collaboration are vital to achieving economies of scale, driving sustainability, and enabling continued industry growth.

In his welcome remarks on Sunday, Khalfan al-Muhairi, SVP Regional MEAE at Borouge and Vice-Chairman of the GPCA Plastics Committee, said, "As we look towards the future, one thing is abundantly clear: the journey ahead cannot be under-



taken alone. It demands a collective, unwavering commitment from all of us – from industry leaders to policymakers, from innovators to our communities and youth. Together, we must align our ambitions, mobilise our resources, and take decisive action to address the challenges and opportunities that lie before us."

Deena F al-Khayyal, Managing Director at LyondellBasell (LYB), delivered a keynote address on the future of plastics and the impact of key trends and disruptions on the regional industry. Her speech explored the evolving landscape of the plastics sector and how increasing regulatory pressures and changing consumer demands are influencing the industry.

A leadership dialogue at the conference examined the financial dimensions of transitioning to sustainable and circular plas-

tics. The programme continued with sessions focused on investment in plastics ecosystems, transforming plastic waste into high-impact solutions, the future of plastics circularity, and a series of insightful case studies.

Dr Abdulwahab al-Sadoun, Secretary General of GPCA, commented, "Driving meaningful solutions to plastic waste management is no longer a choice; it's an urgent necessity. A comprehensive approach will require government incentives and regulations that encourage investment while providing clarity and confidence to investors and technology providers. Advanced recycling technologies, such as chemical recycling, are poised to play a vital role in this transition."

He added, "To unlock new opportunities, scaling up investment in advanced recycling infrastructure is imperative. Key

Ominvest partners with Sustainable Square to advance ESG integration

Muscat – Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest), a leading investment company in the region, Monday announced a strategic partnership with Sustainable Square, a preeminent sustainability consultancy, and the adoption of its advanced ESG monitoring platform, Squarely.

This collaboration signifies Ominvest's unwavering commitment to embedding ESG principles into its core strategy and fostering long-term value for its stakeholders. By leveraging Squarely's streamlined and AI-powered approach to ESG monitoring, Ominvest will enhance its ESG disclosures, optimise data accuracy, and drive strategic decision-making in alignment with its long-term sustainability goals.

In a press release, Waleed al Yarubi, Chief People, Corporate Communication and Sustainability Officer of Ominvest, said, "Our strategic partnership with Sustainable Square and the implementation of the Squarely platform represent a pivotal step in our journey to redefine investment through the lens of responsible stewardship. Ominvest's



vision is to be a catalyst for sustainable development, and we aim to drive positive change across our portfolio and beyond. Our ambition is to set a new standard for ESG excellence in the region, demonstrating that financial success and environmental and social responsibility are not mutually exclusive, but intrinsically linked."

Feras al Farsi, Senior Manager – ESG of Ominvest, stated, "At Ominvest, we are committed to building a resilient and sustainable future. Our partnership with Sustainable Square and the adoption of Squarely represents a strategic investment in our

ESG capabilities. This state-of-the-art technology will provide us with deeper insights, enabling more transparent reporting, informed decision-making, and an even stronger commitment to responsible business practices."

Monaem Ben Lellahom, Founding Partner and Group CEO of Sustainable Square, said, "Sustainable Square has developed innovative technology to elevate ESG reporting and disclosure practices. We take great pride in our four-year partnership with Ominvest and its subsidiaries, and we look forward to achieving new milestones together through Squarely."

UAE's international trade surges to \$1.4tn in 2024, up 49% since 2021

Dubai, UAE – The United Arab Emirates recorded total foreign trade of AED5.23tn (\$1.424tn) in 2024, marking a 49% increase from AED3.5tn (\$949bn) in 2021, according to the World Trade Organization's World Trade Outlook and Statistics report.

This robust growth reflects the UAE's strategic economic vision, reinforcing its position as the leading trade hub in the Middle East and Africa since 2014, and securing its place



among the world's top 20 trade centres for goods and services.

In a global trade environment marked by 2.9% growth in merchandise trade and 6.8% in services trade in 2024, the UAE's performance underscores its resilience amid rising tariffs and economic uncertainties.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, emphasised the UAE's role as a global trade

hub, stating, "In a world of economic and trade challenges, the UAE has prioritised openness, connectivity, and the free flow of trade, capital, and people, establishing itself as a vital link between East and West and a global economic centre."

Highlighting key achievements from the WTO report, Sheikh Mohammed noted, "Foreign trade reached AED5.23tn in 2024, with a trade surplus of AED492.3bn, positioning the UAE as a driver of international trade. The UAE ranked 11th globally in merchandise exports and 13th in services exports. Services exports totalled AED646.6bn, including AED191bn in digital

services, comprising 30% of service exports. Merchandise exports amounted to AED2.22tn in 2024."

He further noted that the UAE accounted for 41.4% of the Middle East's merchandise exports, solidifying its role as the region's primary trade hub.

Dr Thani bin Ahmed al Zeyoudi, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade, said, "These achievements are the result of national efforts, flexible policies, and strong international partnerships. The UAE will continue to enhance its global role by facilitating trade, expanding collaborations, and integrating into global value chains."

The UAE recorded a trade balance surplus of AED492.3bn (\$134bn) in 2024, slightly down from AED573.1bn in 2023, reflecting stability amid global challenges. Exports totalled AED2.8619tn, compared to imports of AED2.3696tn, based on 2021-2024 data.

WAM

China warns of retaliation over US-led trade isolation efforts

Tina Teng

China has warned of retaliatory measures against countries that reach trade agreements with the United States at the expense of China's interests, as other nations are dragged into the trade war between the world's two largest economies.

In its latest response to the steeply increased US tariffs, China's Ministry of Commerce said in a statement that Beijing "respects all parties' efforts to resolve their trade disputes with the US through equal consultation." However, China will not accept any US-led trade deals that harm its interests and will "respond resolutely and reciprocally with countermeasures" to safeguard its rights and interests.

In the statement, China described the US tariffs as "unilateral bullying" in international trade, adding that "if international trade regresses to the law of the jungle where the strong prey on the weak, all countries will become victims."

Last week, the Trump administration was reportedly planning to pressure US trading partners to limit deals with China in ongoing tariff negotiations. Countries with close trade ties to China may face so-called secondary tariffs.

Meanwhile, Chinese President Xi last week visited major



Beijing has warned of retaliatory measures against countries that reach trade agreements with the US at the expense of China's interests

trade partners in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia, on his first overseas trip of the year. The visit signalled "China's renewed push to reinforce regional stability and prosperity, and its determined support for regional economic integration as global protectionism and unilateralism continue to

mount," the state news agency Xinhua reported.

The tariff war appears to have reached a peak between the US and China, as both sides have indicated no further hikes. Thus far, the US has imposed a total of 145% duties on Chinese goods, while pausing reciprocal tariffs on other nations. China re-

sponded with 125% tariffs on US goods and has said it will "ignore" any further increases, calling them a "meaningless numbers game." Trump has also signalled that no further tariff hikes are likely, citing concerns that additional measures would stall trade between the two countries.

However, the two sides have intensified their trade tensions through non-tariff means. China recently imposed export restrictions on a wide range of critical minerals, particularly targeting the US.

Adding to the escalation, the Trump administration announced fees on Chinese-built vessels docking at US ports last Friday. The decision, revealed by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), follows a one-year investigation originally launched under the Biden administration.

While President Trump has repeatedly indicated that China will approach the US to make a trade deal, there is no clear indication from Beijing that an agreement is imminent.

(Source: Euronews.com)



Gold price hits \$3,400 to reach new record high

London, UK - The price of gold hit a new record on Monday, with an ounce reaching \$3,405.19 as the uncertainty around the global trade causes the "safe haven" asset to soar.

The ounce of gold rose more than 2.3% on Monday to set a new record after investors' worries increased over further escalation of the trade conflict between the world's two biggest economies.

The central banks' inclination to cut interest rates also fueled the climb in gold, as the European Central Bank cut the rates by 25 basis points last week.

The surge in gold price intensified after US President Donald Trump announced his "reciprocal" tariffs on more than 180 countries on April 2.

China was the first country to react to the US tariff increases and responded at the same rate. As a result of the tariff showdown between the two coun-

tries, the US raised its tariffs on China to 145% and China raised its tariffs on the US to 125%.

While the Washington administration postponed the sweeping tariffs imposed on other countries for 90 days, tariffs against China came into force.

The US government also banned Nvidia's H20 chips' exports to China and the White House announced April 15 that China now faces up to 245% tariffs due to its retaliatory actions.

Meanwhile, China said Monday that it firmly opposes any deal between the US and its trading partners at the expense of Chinese interests amid a barrage of tariffs.

If such a situation arises, China will not accept it and will resolutely take corresponding countermeasures, a spokesperson for the Commerce Ministry said in a statement.

Anadolu Agency

Saudi Aramco, BYD join hands for EV technologies

Dhahran, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia's Aramco, one of the world's leading integrated energy and chemicals companies, and China's BYD, a leading manufacturer of new energy vehicles and power batteries, have agreed to explore closer collaboration in new energy vehicle technologies.

A Joint Development Agreement signed by Saudi Aramco Technologies Company (SATC), Aramco's wholly-owned subsidiary, and BYD aims to foster the development of innovative technologies that enhance efficiency and environmental performance. This collaboration leverages the research and development teams of two leading global companies, with the aim of achieving new energy vehicle breakthroughs.

Ali A al-Meshari, Aramco Senior Vice President of Technology Oversight & Coordination, said, "The collaboration between SATC and BYD aims to support improvements, and it builds on Aramco's extensive research



and development of new energy solutions. Aramco is exploring a number of ways to potentially optimise transport efficiency, from innovative lower-carbon fuels to advanced powertrain concepts. This work stems from our belief that multiple approaches are necessary to support a practical energy transition and we are delighted to collaborate with BYD on this journey."

Luo Hongbin, Senior Vice President of BYD, said, "At the crossroads of technological in-

novation and environmental protection, BYD always believes that true breakthroughs come from openness and collaboration. We expect that SATC and our cutting-edge R&D capabilities in new energy vehicles will break the boundaries of geography and mindset to incubate solutions that combine highly-efficient performance with a lower carbon footprint. We are confident that this will support the world's efforts to address the climate challenge."

WEF founder steps down from chairmanship

Davos, Switzerland - Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum (WEF), also known as Davos Summit, stepped down from the chairmanship and his position on the board of the WEF, the forum said on Monday.

"Following my recent announcement, and as I enter my 88th year, I have decided to step down from the position of Chair and as a member of the Board of Trustees, with immediate effect," Schwab said in a statement.

The board unanimously appointed Vice Chairman Peter Brabeck-Letmathe as chairman ad interim. It also established a search committee for the selection of a future chair.



Klaus Schwab

"The Board acknowledged the outstanding achievements of the retired Chairman and Founder of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab. He created the leading global platform for dialogue and progress, and the Board expressed its gratitude for his 55

years of relentless leadership at the helm of the Forum," the statement said.

In May 2024, Schwab announced that he was stepping back from his executive role.

Schwab founded the World Economic Forum in 1971 and the forum has held its annual meetings in Davos, Switzerland and in other locations occasionally ever since.

Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, the new interim leader of the non-governmental organization, is an Austrian businessman. At Nestle, Brabeck-Letmathe serves as chairman emeritus. Prior to this, from 1997 until 2008, he was the company's chairman and CEO.

Anadolu Agency

بنك برودا Bank of Baroda (Oman Branches)				
PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2024 (R.O. '000)			ASSETS AND LIABILITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2024 (R.O. '000)	
Details	Current Year (2024)	Previous Year (2023)	Assets (Net of total ECL)	20242023
Gross Interest Income	2134	3340	1. Cash	224386
Interest Expense	(1,852)	(1,461)	2. Balances with CBO	521174422
Net Interest Income	282	1879	3. Capital Deposit with CBO	500500
Other Operating Income			4. Government & other Securities	
1. Dividend Income			5. Treasury Bills & Other Bills	
2. Net Fee & Commission Income	560	269	6. Due from H.O., branches, principal shareholders & affiliates abroad	13094045
a) Fee and Commission Income	560	269	7. Due from banks:	80036006
Less: b) Fee and Commission Expense			i) Placements	80036006
3. Net Foreign Exchange Income			ii) Loans & Advances	
a) Income			8. Other Money Market Placements	
Less: b) Expense			9. Investments	799717978
4. Net Income from dealing in securities			10. Loans and advances	2488255703
a) Gain / (loss)			11. Tangible Fixed Assets	4360
Less: b) Expense			12. Losses carried forward	
5. Net Income from Investment Securities	2140	1210	13. Other Assets	20052614
a) Income	2140	1210	Total Assets	9708091714
Less: b) Expense			Liabilities	20242023
Gross Income	2182	3358	1. Deposits (incl. Govt.)	6660262446
General Administrative Expenses	(1,161)	(1,270)	a) Demand	1111711864
Depreciation	(22)	(21)	b) Savings	40664561
Total Operating Costs	(1,183)	(1,291)	c) Time	5141946021
Net Operating Profit (Profit on ordinary activities before provisions)	1799	2067	2. Certificate of Deposits	
Income from Subsidiaries			3. Due to H.O., branches, principal shareholders & affiliates abroad	
a) (Loss) from Islamic financing			4. Due to Banks:	
b)			i) Placements	
Income from Associate Companies			ii) Borrowings(Due to Affiliates)	
a)			5. Other Money Market Deposits	
b)			6. Borrowings from CBO	
Income from Other Licensed Activities			7. Capital	2450024500
- Investment Activities			8. Reserves	1503
Profit from sale of non-banking assets			9. Retained Earnings	963-579
Bad debts Written off	-	-	10. Capital Bonds	
ECL Allowance (net) charged for Loans & Advances	(1,195)	(1,314)	11. Other Liabilities	50153830
ECL Allowance (net) charged for Investments			Total Liabilities	9708091714
ECL Allowance (net) charged for Placements				
ECL Allowance charged (net) for Off-balance sheet items	-	2		
ECL Allowance charged (net) for Others (if any)				
Provision for diminution / Gain in value of investments				
Profit for the year after loan loss provisions	604	751		
Taxation	0	0		
Net profit after tax	604	751		
Other Comprehensive Income for the year				
- Movement in fair value of available for sale / FVOCI investment for the year				
- Effect of currency translation for the year				
- Any other comprehensive income for the year (please specify)				
Total Comprehensive Income for the year	604	751		



Oman Olympic Committee to elect new board for 2024-28

The General Assembly of the Oman Olympic Committee convenes its regular meeting for the year today (April 22) at the J VV Marriott Hotel, Irfan, with the presence of members of the committee's Board of Directors, members of the General Assembly, a representative from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, in addition to the candidates for membership in the new Board of Directors for the 2024-2028 electoral term.

This meeting represents a pivotal

moment in the journey of the Oman Olympic Committee, as it sets the foundation for a new phase that reflects the institution's commitment to the highest standards of governance, a press release said.

The meeting also strengthens its efforts in institutional development, broadening participation, and advancing Omani sports regionally and internationally, in alignment with Oman's comprehensive national vision that places the individual at the

centre of development and considers sport a powerful tool for promoting values, building capacities, and achieving excellence.

The agenda includes the ratification of the minutes of the Extraordinary General Assembly held on February 16, a review of the annual report for 2024, which includes key administrative and technical achievements during the past year, the presentation of the proposed activity plan for 2025, discussion of the

final account for the concluded fiscal year, the auditor's report, and the estimated budget for the current year.

The meeting also includes the election of the new Board of Directors of the Oman Olympic Committee for the upcoming term, based on the final list approved by the Election Committee. H H Sayyid Azzan Qais al Said is indicated to be elected by acclamation as President of the Committee, and H E Professor Abdullah Khamis Ambusaidi is

favoured for vice president.

As for the six seats allocated to representatives of Olympic sports federations, members are to be elected from among nine candidates representing the relevant federations. They are - Musa Khamis al Balushi, president of the Oman Handball Federation, Dr Marwan Juma al Juma, president of the Oman Hockey Federation, Brigadier (Retd) Saeed Mohammed al Hajri, president of the Oman Athletics Federation; Qutaiba

Said Al Ghilani, representing the Oman Football Association, Faiz Mohammed bin Mohammed Riyadh, vice president of the Oman Golf Association, Qais Saud al Zakwani, representing the Oman Aquatics Federation, Engineer Ibrahim Abdullah al Maqbali, president of the Oman Volleyball Federation, Engineer Khalfan Salih al Naabi, president of the Oman Basketball Federati, and Saif Sibaa al Rashidi, president of the Oman Cycling Federation.

Oman Air, Visit Oman open stopover bookings

Oman Air and Visit Oman, the digitally native travel booking gateway of the sultanate, have officially opened bookings for their joint stopover programme, unlocking a powerful channel to drive inbound tourism by converting transit passengers into visitors.

Originally announced at the World Travel Market in London 2024, the first phase of the programme is now live at omanair.com, a press release said.

Guests can now easily book their global travel journey through Muscat and pause to discover Oman, with a wide choice of customisable packages ranging from four hours to four days and accommodation at 3, 4, and 5-star hotels, as well as transport, tours and experiences. With a user-friendly, fully digital service, guests can also benefit from dedicated customer service support.

With thousands of guests transiting through Muscat every week, the programme has potential to take Oman's scenic landscapes, rich heritage and hospitality to new audiences.



Bank Muscat offers annual fee waiver

Bank Muscat has announced a special offer on its Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card. Designed to provide an exceptional banking experience for new cardholders, the card opens up a world of opportunities with a wide range of benefits and features that enhance customers' banking journey, especially for those planning trips within the sultanate or abroad.

With the current offer which is valid until May 31, new customers applying for the Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card will enjoy a waiver of the first year's annual fee, a press release said.

This exclusive promotion is part of the bank's ongoing efforts to enrich the customer experience by offering value-added benefits on credit cards. It also supports the growing adoption of digital payments by offering

customers a secure and convenient way to initiate transactions, particularly during travel when minimising cash usage is ideal.

Abdulnasir N al Raisi, general manager - Personal Banking, said, "We are pleased to launch this exclusive offer for new customers applying for the Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card. Our range of credit cards continues to receive positive feedback from customers who benefit from our ongoing promotions. As a pioneer in the banking sector, Bank Muscat is committed to offering valuable features and benefits that meet the evolving needs of our customers. This offer is especially timely with the summer travel season approaching, and we invite everyone to take advantage of it to enjoy a superior travel experience."

ISC Sanskrit Wing celebrates 'Varsha Pratipada'

Indian Social Club Sanskrit Wing celebrated the 8th edition of Varsha Pratipada Utsav (Indian New Year) on Friday at the 'Oman Hall' of the College of Banking and Financial Studies in Bowsher

The chief guest for this programme was H E G V Srinivas, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman. This event presents India's rich cultural heritage, and is the most awaited



Flagship event of the ISC-Sanskrit wing under the umbrella of the Indian Social Club.

The cultural richness of India was represented by various states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh/Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Bihar. Around 200 children of various age groups along with 100 parents participated in the Shobha Yatra

at the start of the programme. Total 150 participants and 100 volunteers make this event a success story.

The festival of Varsha-Pratipada marks the beginning of the New Year and Vasant Ritu (season of spring). The Indian New Year is a manifestation of gratitude towards mother nature and a reminder that there is a cosmic balance at the core of all existence.

Ameen Investment Account boosts investment returns

Based on the concept of Wakalah, the Ameen Investment Account from Dhofar Islamic, the Islamic Banking window of BankDhofar, empowers individuals to grow their wealth through ethical investments, ensuring both financial prosperity and peace of mind. It is designed to help individuals grow their funds while ensuring their investments align with Sharia principles.

The Account stands out for its ability to offer higher profit rates based on the amount deposited, making it an attractive option for those looking to maximise their savings. One of the key benefits

of the account is that it has no minimum balance requirement, allowing individuals from all walks of life to participate and benefit from the account's competitive returns. Profit rates are adjusted based on the account balance, rewarding customers with higher yields as their savings grow, a press release said.

It is pertinent to note that Dhofar Islamic prioritises accessibility and convenience, offering 24x7 banking services through its mobile app and internet banking platforms. This allows customers to manage their investments and access their funds anytime, anywhere.

UTAS Mussanah hosts digital forum

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Al Mussanah recently held a forum titled 'Libraries and Information Institutions in the Digital Revolution Era: Revolution of the Present and Future' at Barceló Resort in South Al Batinah.

The event served as a key knowledge-sharing platform focused on the role of libraries in embracing digital transformation and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in modern information services, a press release said.

Dr Nasser Salem al Baimani, assistant vice chancellor at UTAS Mussanah, highlighted the university's strong commitment



to keeping pace with rapid digital changes. He emphasised that digital transformation is a central part of the university's future strategy, aiming to improve service quality and meet the growing demands of a knowledge-

driven society.

Halima Suleiman al Balushi, head of the University Library, noted that the forum provided a valuable space for experts and specialists to engage in meaningful discussions.

OPAZ hosts national workshop to mark World Creativity Day

In recognition of World Creativity and Innovation Day, observed annually on April 21, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), in collaboration with the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit and the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, organised a national workshop dedicated to fostering innovation-driven economic growth.

Held under the patronage of H E Sheikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al

Sunaidi, chairman of OPAZ, the event brought together senior officials, industry leaders, and professionals, reflecting OPAZ's steadfast commitment to harnessing innovation and creativity as fundamental pillars in shaping a sustainable and resilient future for Oman, a press release said.

The workshop focused on the pivotal role of scientific research and innovation in realising the objectives outlined in Oman Vision 2040. Discussions explored the transformative impact of technological advancements on



special economic and free zones, with an emphasis on integrating cutting-edge innovations to en-

hance competitiveness and sustainability in industrial sectors.

Speaking at the event, Dr

Jameela bint Ali al Hinai, Oman's official representative to UNESCO and ISESCO, underscored

the significance of leveraging innovation to strengthen special economic zones. She highlighted the critical role of technology-driven solutions in ensuring long-term viability and positioning Oman as a leader in industrial development.

Dr Hinai also explored the potential synergies between industrial zones and scientific parks, emphasising how innovation-led investments can elevate Oman's standing in the Global Innovation Index and yield sustained economic benefits.

Adel bin Ibrahim al Fazari, assistant director of the Scientific Publishing Department at the ministry, presented an overview of Oman's key national research and innovation initiatives. He emphasised that innovation is no longer an option but a strategic necessity, playing an essential role in both economic and social advancement. Fazari stressed the importance of institutional collaboration, advocating for a robust national ecosystem that nurtures creativity, knowledge-sharing, and cross-sector innovation.

Vodafone, SQU partner to drive innovation

Vodafone Oman has signed a strategic partnership with Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) to advance research and innovation that will contribute to Oman's digital economy.

As part of the agreement, the company will launch a Vodafone Innovation Award to recognise and encourage technological breakthroughs that solve real-world challenges. In addition, Vodafone Oman will sponsor a PhD scholarship in Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Digitisation, reinforcing its commitment to supporting academic research that strengthens Oman's position in emerging technologies, a press release said.

"Innovation is not just about technology. It's about people, ideas, and the right environment to turn potential into impact," said Eng Bader al Zidi, CEO of Vodafone Oman. "Our partnership with Sultan Qaboos University is a step towards building that environment, one where



Innovation is not just about technology. It's about people, ideas, and the right environment to turn potential into impact, says Vodafone Oman CEO

academic research meets industry expertise to create meaningful advancements. The Vodafone Innovation Award and the PhD sponsorship are designed to accelerate research in AI and emerging technologies, equipping the next generation with the knowledge and know-how needed to drive Oman's digital transformation."

The agreement underscores the growing role of industry-academia partnerships in driving technological progress and aligning research with market needs.



Alizz Islamic organises discussion on 'financial awareness' challenges

As part of the banks dedicated efforts to raise financial awareness and in coordination with the Ministry of Finance's National Programme for Financial Sustainability and Financial Sector Development 'Estidama', Alizz Islamic Bank, recently organised a panel discussion on 'Financial Awareness Amidst Modern Economic Challenges' in the Grand Hall of the bank's head office in Bowsher.

The panel consisted of Sheikh Essam Khalaf al Enezi, chairman of the Shari'a Supervisory Board of Alizz Islamic Bank, Sheikh Ahmed Subhi Ayadi, member of the Shari'a Supervisory Board, Ibrahim Nasser al Sawafi, member of the Shari'a Supervisory Board, Khalid al Busaidi, director of the National Framework Initiative to Promote Financial Literacy

The panelists highlighted the importance of financial stability and independence, and equipping the next generation with financial knowledge and skills

within the National Programme for Financial Sustainability and Financial Sector Development (Estidama) and was moderated by Sheikh Ahmed al Harthi, graduate of the Tamkeen programme for 'Empowering the Second Line of Shari'a Supervisory Board Members', a press release said.

The panelists highlighted the importance of financial sta-

bility and independence and equipping the next generation with the financial knowledge and skills essential for contributing to the sustainable development and economic well-being of both individuals and society with the goal being to prepare an economically educated generation, aligning with the Oman Vision 2040 for a prosperous future for Oman and its people.

In light of the current economic challenges that may impact financial stability for individuals and families, Alizz Islamic Bank has focused its efforts to ensure that financial awareness become instilled across the nation. Alizz Islamic Bank has been raising financial awareness as it believes it is imperative for everyone to have a solid understanding of basic financial concepts.

Ruwi parish priest condoles the demise of Pope Francis

'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even if he dies...(John 11:25)'

"We are deeply saddened to hear about the passing of our Holy Father Pope Francis. This news on Easter Monday came as a shock to all of us. Though we wished him to live longer, we surrender to the will of the Almighty God. He has been a great leader of the Church, who brought a lot of changes in the life of the Church," said Fr Stephen Lewis, parish priest, Saints Peter and Paul Church, Ruwi, on behalf of the Roman Catholic community in Oman.

"He was truly a good shepherd of the Church. His life of humility and simplicity will always shine for us as an example to follow. He has been the herald of human values who embraced every person as the 'child of God' and as a brother and a sister. He had a truly divine heart to serve humanity with total humility," he



added.

Pointing out that the late Pope had inaugurated the Jubilee Year 2025 under the theme 'Pilgrims of Hope', Fr Stephen said, "As he has completed the pilgrimage of his life on Earth, we hope for an

(Matthew 25:23)."

He concluded his tribute to the late Holy Father, saying, "As we celebrate the mysteries of Easter, we believe, that Pope Francis will participate in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. May his soul rest in eternal peace."

A Jubilee Year is traditionally proclaimed by the Universal Church every 25 years. It is a particular year set aside to encourage the faithful to embark on pilgrimages, to repent for their sins, forgive the sins of others, and renew focus on spiritual life.

The Jubilee Year began with the traditional opening of the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica on December 24, 2024, by Pope Francis and continues until the closing of the Holy Door on January 6, 2026, the solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

Pope Francis had said, "We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength."

Mazda Ramadan raffle 4th winner announced

Mazda Oman captured the spirit of Ramadan by offering customers the extraordinary chance to own a Mazda and win a Mazda through a raffle.

Serap Yildirim now joins the list of lucky winners, as the fourth winner, wrapping up the campaign.

Beyond the thrill of the giveaway, Mazda Oman con-



tinues its unwavering commitment to enhancing the ownership experience, a press release said.

While the raffle may have come to an end, now remains the perfect time to explore Mazda's exceptional lineup and take advantage of ongoing offers, the release issued by Mazda Oman said.

Liva CEO leads debate on 'Future of Inclusion' at annual conference

Liva Insurance made its mark at the 8th Annual Conference of the Omani Society for Human Resource Management (OSHRM), held from April 14 to 16 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

On April 16, CEO Hanaa al Hinai took the spotlight, joining a dynamic panel discussion on 'The Inclusion Revolution: Powered by Technology', where she brought the company's bold vision for a more inclusive and tech-driven future, a press release said.

Themed Leadership in Open Space, this year's conference sought to redefine leadership



and human capital development in Oman, reflecting OSHRM's vision for the future of work. The event featured a distinguished

roster of Omani and international speakers and experts, who offered insights into sustainability economics, psychological

safety, organizational culture transformation, HR technology, diversity and inclusion, and leadership development in the pri-

ivate sector.

Hanaa said, "Inclusion is something that has to be built into the way we think, the way

we work, and the way we lead every single day. Technology has given us incredible tools to help make that possible. Whether it's using AI to uncover hidden talent, or digital platforms that make learning and development accessible to everyone, tech allows us to break down barriers that might have seemed impossible before.

"But at this current conjuncture, we have to accept that it's not just about the tools but rather about the intention behind them. At Liva Insurance, we believe that true inclusion is about making sure every voice is heard and every person has the chance

to thrive. Embracing technology is how we stay resilient, how we grow sustainably, and how we build a future that genuinely works for everyone."

Hanaa also highlighted Liva Insurance's commitment to fostering a culture of innovation and continuous development, aligning closely with Oman's broader national goals and Vision 2040.

OSHRM's 8th Annual Conference provided a critical platform for leaders across industries to explore new models of leadership in an evolving labour markets influenced by customer expectations, global economic shifts, etc.

POPE FRANCIS DIES AT 88

Did Latin American Francis live up to promise as ‘pope of the poor’?

As the head of Catholic Church, many of the hopes that greeted him went unfulfilled in Global South

Vatican City - The pontificate of Pope Francis, which began with much promise in March 2013, has now come to an end. In one of his first acts, he had washed the feet of incarcerated youth at a detention centre ahead of Easter.

Millions attended the World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro that July, cheering when the new pope spoke of ‘an option for the poor’ and slammed capitalism.

“This pope will change the church,” the Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff told DW at the time.

And Francis, formerly Jorge Mario Bergoglio, did indeed change the church.

“The pope already did a lot for the poor in his diocese during his time as archbishop of Buenos Aires,” Miguel Hirsch, an Argentine journalist who has written a book about Francis, told DW. “He set a great deal in motion, including with his 40 or so trips, most of which were to developing countries. And he repeatedly denounced the capitalist system.”

But as head of the Catholic Church for more than a decade, many of the hopes that greeted the first Latin American pope went unfulfilled in the Global South.

Climate change

According to the German Catholic relief organisation Misereor, one of the pope’s major achievements was the attention he helped to focus on the environment.

Misereor considers poverty and ecological destruction as issues that must be confronted to-



One of the pope’s major achievements was the attention he helped to focus on the environment

gether. This was the core message of the pope’s second encyclical letter, ‘Laudato Si’ (Praised Be), published in 2015.

“With ‘Laudato Si’, the pope spoke to the conscience of the powerful,” said Pirmin Spiegel, the former director general of Misereor, in 2024. “I was told by the archbishop of Suva in Fiji, Peter Loy Chong, that climate

change and migration are the most important issues for the local population.”

In an article for the left-wing German daily Tageszeitung in 2023, Boff wrote that the encyclical was ‘the first time that a pope has treated the subject of ecology in a holistic manner’. He added that many of the statements in the encyclical had ties

to the Latin American concept of liberation theology - a theological approach to aiding socio-economically disadvantaged people with socio-political affairs. “This pope managed to disappoint everyone,” Bento Domingues, a Dominican friar, wrote in an op-ed for the Portuguese newspaper *Publico* in 2023. “The laity pushing for re-

forms, as well as the traditionalists who want a return to the past.”

Influence from Latin America

Francis reshaped the geography of the conclave, the body of cardinals who elect the pope. In 2013, a majority of cardinals were European. But during his

time as pope, Francis appointed more cardinals from other parts of the world, including Latin America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region.

“I think this pope will create a dynasty of popes from the Third World,” Boff told DW in 2013. And, under Francis, the Vatican has indeed seen an increased influence from Latin America.

Given the global distribution of Catholics, Europe still remains overrepresented. According to 2023 data from the Pew Research Centre, 24% of the world’s Catholics live in Europe,

Not only was the ordination of married men of proven virtue (viri probati) as priests rejected, but so was the ordination of women as deacons, which would allow them to preach and celebrate weddings and baptisms.

Spiegel, who took part in the Amazon synod, did not understand the decision. “Two-thirds of the bishops at the synod were in favour of the ‘viri probati’ and of women deacons,” he said. “The ball was in front of the goal, and (Francis) didn’t score, he kicked it out. Why? I have no

Francis reshaped the geography of the conclave, the body of cardinals who elect the pope. During his time as pope, Francis appointed more cardinals from other parts of the world, including Latin America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region

39% in Latin America, 12% in the Asia-Pacific region, 16% in sub-Saharan Africa, 8% in North America and 1% in the Middle East.

Even if there has been a shift in the regional weighting, the pope did not make any drastic changes to the structures of the Catholic Church. This was particularly noticeable at the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region, or Amazon synod, in Rome in 2019. Francis’ post-synodic apostolic exhortation, ‘Querida Amazonia’ (Beloved Amazonia), dashed all hopes for reforms in a region where there is an extreme shortage of priests.

idea.”

Devotion to world’s poor

Francis received the greatest approval from the world’s poor, and from people who for decades were resented in Rome because of their loyalty to the gospel. Oscar Romero, the former archbishop of San Salvador, was one such person. He advocated land reform in El Salvador and was assassinated in 1980.

The process for his sainthood began in 1994, but it was only 24 years later that Romero was canonised, on October 14, 2018 in Rome by Pope Francis. DW

Pope Francis’ death: What happens next

Vatican City - Following the death of Pope Francis at the age of 88, attention across the globe has shifted to the Vatican, where the process of selecting the next leader of the Roman Catholic Church is set to begin.

Pope Francis, who made history as the first Jesuit and first Latin American pontiff, died after battling a prolonged illness described by Vatican officials as a ‘prolonged asthma-like respiratory crisis’ associated with thrombocytopenia.

His passing has left the papal seat vacant, prompting the Catholic Church to initiate the centuries-old procedure to elect a new pope, and starting the Papal Conclave - a sacred and solemn tradition by which a new pope is selected.

How is the pope elected?

The next pope will be chosen in a secretive and solemn process known as the Papal Conclave, which takes place inside the Sistine Chapel.

The election will be carried out by the College of Cardinals, composed of the Church’s highest-ranking officials. Currently, there are 252 cardinals, 138 of whom are



Pope Francis

The next pope will be chosen in a secretive and solemn process known as the Papal Conclave inside the Sistine Chapel

under the age of 80 and eligible to vote.

While any baptised Catholic male is technically eligible for the papacy, the role has historically been filled by a cardinal, and that tradition is expected to continue.

After Pope Francis’ funeral, the cardinals will meet in isolation, cut off from the outside world, as they vote to

elect a new spiritual leader for more than 1.3bn Catholics worldwide.

The papal conclave will initiate within the next two to three weeks after the death of the last pope, giving way for a 9-day mourning period, and allowing for cardinals worldwide to gather at the Vatican.

The voting process

The voting process, steeped in ritual, secrecy and symbolism, includes up to four rounds of balloting per day. According to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, to be elected, a candidate must receive a two-thirds majority. Ballots are cast in secret, with each cardinal approaching Michelangelo’s fresco of the Last Judgment to recite a prayer before placing their vote.

Four rounds of balloting are taken until a candidate receives two-thirds of the votes.

Cardinals cast their votes in successive rounds until one candidate secures the required two-thirds majority - a process that can span several days. Historically, some conclaves have stretched for weeks or even months, with rare instances of cardinals passing away during the proceedings.

Anadolu Agency

The reformist who remained a figure of both admiration and controversy

London/Istanbul - When Jorge Mario Bergoglio became Pope Francis in March 2013, his election was considered unexpected.

At 76, he was older than many anticipated, and as a Jesuit from Argentina, he was a relative outsider to the Vatican establishment.

But his selection was historic - he became the first pope from Latin America and the first member of the Jesuit order to lead the Catholic Church.

Over a decade into his papacy, Francis remained a figure of both admiration and controversy. Francis sought to reform the Vatican’s bureaucracy, tackle corruption, and address some of the church’s most pressing challenges.

While he had been hailed for his humility and commitment to social justice, his leadership also drew sharp resistance from conservatives within the church and beyond.

A life shaped by faith, struggle

Born in Buenos Aires on December 17, 1936, to Italian immigrant parents, Jorge Mario Bergoglio was drawn to religious life from an early age.

He studied in Argentina and later in Germany before being ordained as a Jesuit priest in 1969.

Unlike many Vatican figures,



Francis sought to reform the Vatican’s bureaucracy, tackle corruption, and address some of the church’s most pressing challenges

he had little international exposure early in his career, spending most of his time in Argentina, where he gained a reputation as a humble, austere leader deeply committed to social justice.

His early years were marked by personal hardship.

As a young man, he suffered a severe lung infection and lost a part of his right lung. Despite this, he remained physically active and later became Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998.

As a cardinal, Bergoglio was known for his simple lifestyle, often taking public transport instead of using a chauffeur.

His sermons frequently addressed inequality and the

struggles of the poor, subtly criticising governments that failed to protect the most vulnerable. He was seen as a voice for social inclusion, which later became a defining theme of his papacy.

A pope born outside Europe

Francis, the Catholic Church’s 266th pope, was the first non-European pope since Gregory III, who was born in modern-day Syria and elected in 731.

He chose the name Francis in honour of St Francis of Assisi, a 13th-century monk known for his charity and kindness to animals.

He studied philosophy and

earned a master’s degree in Chemistry from the University of Buenos Aires. He taught literature, psychology, philosophy, and theology before becoming the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, the Argentine capital.

In his youth, he enjoyed dancing tango with his girlfriend before discovering his religious vocation.

As a student, he worked as a bouncer in a Buenos Aires bar and had a stint as a janitor.

He was also known for washing the feet of AIDS patients during his time as archbishop - echoing Jesus, in the Bible, washing the feet of his disciples.

Anadolu Agency

Gaza death toll passes 51,200 as Israeli army kills 39 more Palestinians

Gaza City/Ankara - Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip killed at least 39 more Palestinians in the last 24 hours, pushing up the death toll from Israel's genocidal war since October 2023 to 51,240, the Health Ministry said on Monday.

A ministry statement said that 62 more injured people were also transferred to hospitals, taking the number of injuries to 116,931 in the Israeli onslaught.

"Many victims are still trapped under the rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them," it added.

The Israeli army resumed its deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip on March 18 and has since killed 1,864 people and injured nearly 4,900 others despite a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement that took hold in January.

Citing medical sources, the official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that a Palestinian and his wife were killed in an Israeli strike on their tent in the Al-Mawasi area of Khan Younis, the southern Gaza Strip.

An Israeli warplane also



An Israeli warplane struck a home belonging to the Baraka family in Khan Younis, killing five people

struck a home belonging to the Baraka family in Khan Younis, killing five people and injuring others, Wafa also reported.

It added that a Palestinian succumbed to the wounds he sustained a few days ago from an Israeli strike in Deir al-Balah city, the central Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army blew up several homes in the Al-Tuffah neighbourhood, Gaza City, as it fired artillery shells on most of the city's eastern areas, including Zeitoun and Shejaiya neighbourhoods.

Meanwhile, Israel barred Palestinian Minister of Jerusalem Affairs Ashraf al-Awar from entering the occupied West Bank for six months.

A statement by the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs said that Awar was ordered by the Israeli authorities not to enter the occupied territory for a six-month period.

"The Israeli order prevents the minister from following up on Jerusalem issues with Palestinian institutions in Ramallah and other provinces," the ministry said.

Anadolu Agency

Russia, Ukraine engage in airstrikes

Istanbul, Turkey - Both Russia and Ukraine on Monday reported airstrikes in their respective countries as an Easter ceasefire declared by Russian President Vladimir Putin expired at midnight without an extension.

Ukraine's Air Force claimed on Telegram that the country's air defences shot down 42 out of 96 drones launched by Russia overnight and that Cherkasy, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kharkiv were the regions affected.

In the northeastern Kharkiv region, Governor Oleh Synyehubov wrote on Telegram that three separate missile strikes in the region's front-line Kupiansk district resulted in damage to residential buildings.

Meanwhile, Dnipropetrovsk Governor Serhiy Lysak said that a fire broke out at a food enterprise in the city of Pavlohrad due to the drone attack, adding that damage was also reported in the settlements of Pidhordne and Mezhdova.

"Over our sky, eight Russian drones were destroyed by air defence forces and means. However, as a result of Russian aggression, an infrastructure facility was damaged," Cherkasy Governor Ihor Taburets said.

Local authorities in Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Sumy also reported attacks in their respective regions.



Both Russia and Ukraine on Monday reported airstrikes in their respective countries as an Easter ceasefire declared by Russian President Vladimir Putin expired at midnight without an extension

The reports came as a 30-hour Easter ceasefire, which began on Saturday at 6pm Moscow time (1500GMT), expired at midnight on Monday without an extension, though both Russia and Ukraine have accused each other of violating the ceasefire since it began.

In a statement on X soon after the ceasefire's expiration, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky claimed that Moscow violated the ceasefire throughout the past day nearly 3,000 times, with the largest activity taking place in the Pokrovsk front in the country's eastern Donetsk region.

"Russia's promise of a full ceasefire also did not apply to the Kursk direction," Zelensky said, adding: "Overall, across the frontline, there were 96 Russian assaults, 1,882 instances of shelling on our positions, including 812 involving heavy weaponry, and over 950 instances of FPV (first-person view) drone use by Russian forces."

The Ukrainian president added that Russia has yet to respond to Kyiv's proposal for a full 30-day ceasefire after Easter, or to the proposal to extend the aerial ceasefire over Ukraine.

"The nature of Ukraine's actions will remain symmetrical: ceasefire will be met with ceasefire, and Russian strikes will be met with our own in defence. Actions always speak louder than words," he said.

tems downed 104 Ukrainian drones since the end of the ceasefire.

Claiming that its forces 'strictly' observed the halt to hostilities as per Putin's orders, the statement accused Kyiv of continuing strikes on its military positions, as well as on civilian targets in the border areas of the Belgorod, Bryansk, and Kursk regions, and Crimea, which

Volodymyr Zelensky claimed that Moscow violated ceasefire throughout the past day nearly 3,000 times, with the largest activity taking place in the Pokrovsk front

tions as part of its 'special military operation' in Ukraine after the ceasefire's expiration.

In this regard, the statement said that Russian forces inflicted losses on Kyiv's military during offensives in Ukraine's Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Sumy, and Zaporizhzhia regions.

It also claimed that the Russian military damaged the infrastructure of a military airfield, ammunition, and drone depots, as well as temporary deployment points of Ukrainian troops in 74 districts.

Anadolu Agency

US airstrikes target Yemen's capital

Sanaa, Yemen - US warplanes carried out a wave of airstrikes on Yemen's capital late on Sunday in the latest round of near-daily attacks since the Trump administration announced a major military offensive against the Houthi group in March.

The Houthi-affiliated Al-Masirah TV channel said on X that the strikes targeted the Faj Attan area in Ma'een District of Sanaa in two raids, followed by an attack on a sanitation project in the Asr area of the district. It said additional strikes hit the Farwa neighbourhood of Sanaa and a market in Sanaa's Shu'ub District.

No details have emerged so far on potential casualties or the extent of material damage. The US has not yet commented on the report.

Earlier on Sunday, the Houthi group said the US was preparing for a ground operation in Yemen, warning that such a move 'threatens to fully destabilise the situation'.

Anadolu Agency

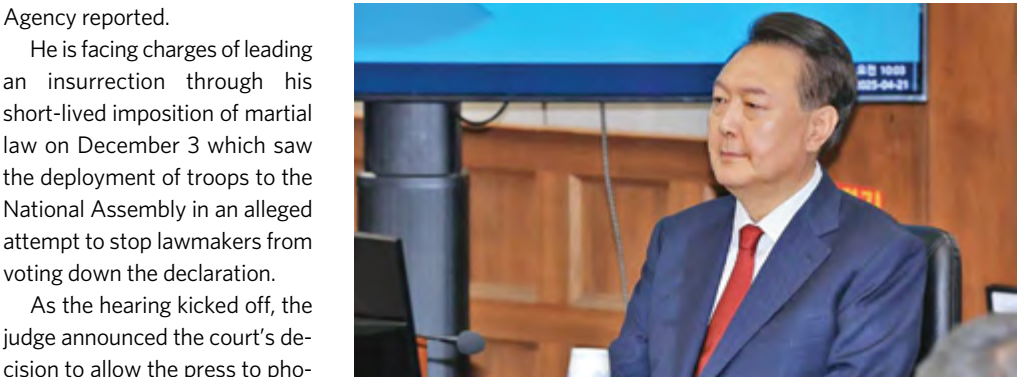
S Korea: Yoon attends insurrection trial hearing

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea's former President Yoon Suk Yeol attended the second hearing of his insurrection trial in the capital Seoul on Monday, where he was photographed in the defendant's seat for the first time, local media reported.

Dressed in a dark suit and a red tie, Yoon arrived at the Seoul Central District Court via underground parking under the flash of press cameras, Yonhap News Agency reported.

He is facing charges of leading an insurrection through his short-lived imposition of martial law on December 3 which saw the deployment of troops to the National Assembly in an alleged attempt to stop lawmakers from voting down the declaration.

As the hearing kicked off, the judge announced the court's decision to allow the press to photograph and film the opening of



Yoon Suk-yeol attends the hearing of his criminal trial in Seoul (Xinhua)

the session.

The photographers were asked to leave the room before the hearing formally got under way.

The court prohibited filming during the first hearing.

Yoon, who was removed from office on April 4 after the Constitutional Court unanimously upheld his impeachment, could face life in prison or the death penalty if convicted.

He denies the charges, saying his attempt to impose martial law did not amount to an insurrection.

Yoon's legal team questioned two military officers who as witnesses claimed during last week's hearing that they were instructed by their superiors to drag out lawmakers from the National Assembly building after martial law was declared.

Anadolu Agency

US: Harvard University confronts funding cuts, political pressure

Massachusetts, US - The Trump administration is threatening to withhold an additional US\$1bn in federal funding from Harvard University, escalating a standoff over antisemitism policies, federal oversight, and academic governance, according to press reports on Sunday.

The conflict began after Harvard publicly released an April 11 letter from the administration's Task Force to Combat Anti-Semitism, which outlined requirements for federal oversight of admissions, faculty hiring, and campus ideologies, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. Administration officials told the media outlet they had assumed the letter would remain confidential and used strictly for negotiations.

"We have informed the administration through our legal counsel that we will not accept their proposed agreement," Harvard President Alan Garber said in a public letter.



A general view of Harvard University Campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts, US

Garber described the federal demands as 'direct governmental regulation', saying the scope went far beyond efforts to combat antisemitism.

In response, the Trump administration froze nearly US\$2.3bn in federal research and health funding and threatened to revoke Harvard's tax-exempt status and its authorisation to enrol international students.

"Instead of grandstanding, Harvard should focus on rebuilding confidence among all students, particularly Jewish students," a White House spokesperson told *The Wall Street Journal*.

While Columbia University accepted similar demands to restore US\$400mn in federal funding, Harvard's refusal has turned the institution into a high-profile symbol of resistance. That has led to speculation the administration may intensify pressure on the university.

Anadolu Agency

Trump administration is threatening to withhold an additional US\$1bn in federal funding from Harvard University

China sanctions US lawmakers, NGO heads, officials over Hong Kong row

The move came after Washington sanctioned six Chinese and Hong Kong officials

Beijing, China - China announced on Monday it will impose sanctions on US Congressmen, officials, and heads of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for 'egregious behaviour' on Hong Kong-related issues.

"Hong Kong is China's Hong Kong, and Hong Kong affairs do not allow interference from the US. Any wrong actions taken by the US on Hong Kong-related issues will be resolutely countered by China with reciprocal countermeasures," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told reporters in Beijing.

The move came after Washington sanctioned six senior Chinese and Hong Kong officials earlier this month, citing 'transnational repression' and further erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy.

The US accused Beijing and Hong Kong officials of using Hong Kong national security laws extraterritorially to 'intimidate, silence, and harass 19 pro-democracy activists who were forced to flee overseas, including a US citizen and four other US residents'.

China's latest move is an ad-



China's latest move is an addition to an already escalating trade war between the two biggest global economies

Hong Kong is China's Hong Kong... any wrong actions taken by the US on Hong Kong-related issues will be resolutely countered by China with reciprocal countermeasures

GUO JIAKUN

dition to an already escalating trade war between the two biggest global economies.

Military drills
China also said the joint military

drills by the US and the Philippines 'undermine regional strategic stability'.

"The Philippines, in collusion with external countries, has been conducting large-scale

military exercises, introducing and deploying strategic and tactical weapons, undermining regional strategic stability, and jeopardising the region's economic growth prospects," Guo Jiakun said.

He was reacting to a statement by a Filipino military general that Manila regards the annual 'Balikatan' military exercise with the US, launched on Monday, as a 'rehearsal for their defence', Chinese state-run *Global Times* reported.

The US and its oldest military ally in the Asia-Pacific region, the Philippines, opened their annual military drills in the disputed South China Sea on Monday amid the ongoing tensions with Beijing.

Named the 'Super Bowl' of exercises in the region, the three-week 'Balikatan', or 'shoulder to shoulder', drills are being attended by some 18,000 troops from both sides.

The exercise includes an integrated air and missile defence

simulation to be attended by President Ferdinand Marcos.

However, Beijing claimed Manila's joint drills with extra-regional forces had 'positioned the Philippines in direct opposition to regional countries, triggering strong resentment and opposition'.

Balikatan 25 is taking place from April 21 to May 9 in Luzon Strait, which lies between the Philippines' Luzon Island and Taiwan.

"The Taiwan question is

purely a matter of China's internal affairs and is the core of China's core interests. China firmly opposes any country using the Taiwan question as a pretext to strengthen military deployments in the region, provoke tensions and confrontations, and undermine regional peace and stability," said ministry spokesman Guo.

He urged Manila and Washington 'not to provoke on the Taiwan question', warning that 'those who play with fire will inevitably burn themselves'.

A US Marine Corps regiment, equipped with Naval Strike Missiles, is taking part in the drill, marking the system's inaugural deployment in the Philippines. The missiles are being deployed to 'a strategic first island chain choke point' in the waters between Taiwan and the Philippines.

The Naval Strike Missile has a reported operational range of more than 185km (115 miles).

"We will demonstrate not just our will to uphold our mutual defence treaty in existence since 1951 but our matchless capability to do so," US Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James Glynn said at the Balikatan opening ceremony in Manila.

The Philippines' Major General Francisco Lorenzo said the exercises would reinforce the country's ability to address 'contemporary security challenges'. Apart from the US and the Philippines, several other countries, including Australia and Japan, are also sending smaller contingents.

Anadolu Agency

India: Leaders among eight naxals killed

New Delhi, India - In a significant blow to Naxalism, three high-profile wanted leaders of the banned outfit, including one carrying a bounty of Rs 1 crore, among eight members were neutralised on Monday in a joint operation in Jharkhand's Bokaro district.

Among the eight naxals neutralised in the operation were three high-profile individuals with bounties of Rs 1 crore, Rs 25 lakh, and Rs 10 lakh, respectively.

Prayag Manjhi alias Vivek had a bounty of Rs 1 crore, Arvind Yadav carried a reward of Rs 25 lakh, and Sahebram Manjhi, also known as Rahul Manjhi had a bounty of Rs 10 lakh. The remaining naxals

have been identified as Mahesh Manjhi alias Mota, Talu, Raju Manjhi, Gangaram, and Mahesh.

The bodies of the Naxals were recovered following an exchange of fire between the rebel group as well as the 209 Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) unit of Central Reserve Police Force and state police force.

The exchange of fire began around 5.30am in Lugu hills under Lalpania area of Bokaro.

As per the CRPF, the troops recovered a cache of arms from the site, including one AK-series rifle, one Self-Loading Rifle (SLR), three INSAS rifles, one pistol, and eight country-made Bharmar rifles.

US Vice President Vance begins India visit

New Delhi, India - United States Vice President J D Vance, Second Lady Usha Vance, and their three children visited the Akshardham Temple in the national capital on Monday morning shortly after their arrival here.

Vance, is on a four-day official visit to the country till April 24.

Akshardham temple spokesperson, Radhika Shukla, said that the US Vice President spent 55 minutes exploring the temple, appreciating its intricate carvings, and offering prayers for world peace.

Shukla said: "The whole family was here for around 55 minutes. Their experience of one hour inside was unforgettable. After the welcome, they started with the Charanarvind of Lord Swaminarayan. Moving ahead, they visited Bharat Upvan. They liked the garden very much. Going further, they visited Gajendra Peeth. They



US Vice President J D Vance, wife and children receives a welcome at Palam airport, in New Delhi on Monday (ANI)

were very overwhelmed by the carvings. Then they went upstairs and after having a darshan of the idol of Lord Swaminarayan in the sanctum sanctorum, they prayed for world peace..."

Earlier in the day upon their arrival at Palam Airport, Vance and his family received a warm welcome. Union Minister of Railways and Information & Broadcasting, Ashwini Vaishnav, received the

delegation at Palam airport. The visit, which includes stops in Delhi, Jaipur, and Agra, is expected to further strengthen the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership.

Vance also received a ceremonial Guard of Honour on his first official visit to India.

A bilateral meeting between the US vice president and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled for 6:30pm at the Prime Minister's official residence, 7, Lok Kalyan Marg.

Strengthening economic, trade, and defence cooperation between the two nations are likely to be on the agenda of the meeting.

Following the official meetings, the Vance family is set to visit Jaipur on Tuesday, followed by a visit to Agra on Wednesday.

The visit is also crucial as all relevant issues between India and the US will be discussed, which is expected to strengthen bilateral ties further, said the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal.

ANI

Pentagon chief shared Yemen attack details in second Signal chat: Report

Washington, D.C., US - US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth shared detailed information about forthcoming strikes in Yemen on March 15 in a private Signal group chat, the *New York Times* reported on Sunday.

Citing four people with knowledge of the chat, the Times said it included his wife Jennifer, brother Phil and personal lawyer Tim Parlatore.

Hegseth shared the flight schedules for the F/A-18 Hornets targeting the Houthi group - essentially the same attack plans that he shared in a separate Signal chat the same day, according to the report.

Last month, Jeffrey Goldberg,

editor-in-chief of *The Atlantic* magazine, said he had been inadvertently included in a messaging group where Vice President J D Vance, National Security Adviser Mike Waltz, Hegseth and other senior officials discussed plans for an attack on Houthi targets in Yemen hours before it took place on March 15.

Hegseth used his personal phone to create the newly revealed Signal chat as a forum for discussing routine administrative or scheduling information, said two of the people familiar with the chat.

He shared information about the Yemen strikes in the 'Defence Team Huddle' chat - that in-



US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth

cluded about a dozen of Hegseth's top aides - at approximately the same time he was putting the same details in the other Signal chat group that included senior US officials and

Goldberg, the people familiar the chat group said.

A US official declined to comment on whether Hegseth shared detailed targeting information but maintained that there was no na-

Pete Hegseth shared the flight schedules for the F/A-18 Hornets targeting the Houthis in a private Signal group chat, according to the report

tional security breach, the report said. One person familiar with the chat said Hegseth's aides had warned him ahead of the Yemen strikes not to discuss such sensitive operational details

in his Signal group chat which, while encrypted, is not considered as secure.

Pentagon chief spokesman Sean Parnell rejected the *New York Times* report, calling it 'garbage'. Parnell said the *New York Times* and 'all other Fake News' were 'enthusiastically taking the grievances of disgruntled former employees as the sole sources for their article'.

He said they 'relied only on the words of people who were fired this week and appear to have a motive to sabotage' Hegseth and President Donald Trump's agenda. "There was no classified information in any Signal chat, no matter how many ways they try

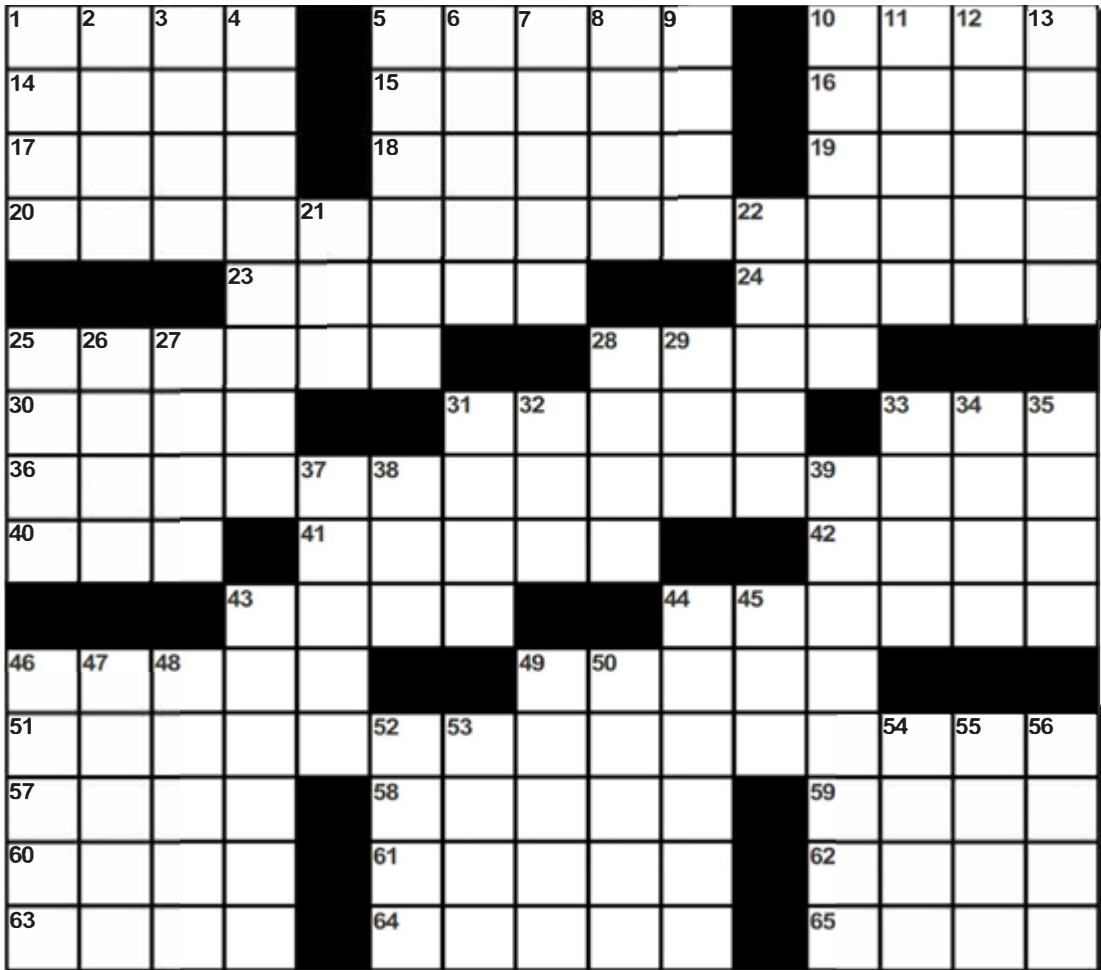
to write the story," Parnell added.

After Goldberg disclosed the first Signal chat in March, senior Trump administration officials including Hegseth repeatedly denied that any classified information was shared among the participants. "Nobody was texting war plans, and that's all I have to say about that," Hegseth told reporters.

The 'Signalgate' incident raised questions about the administration's handling of classified military information after sensitive details about weapons packages, targets and timing were reportedly shared on the unsecured platform.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Lennon or Penn
 - 5) Blacksmith's workplace
 - 10) Time machine destination
 - 14) "To Sir, With Love" singer-actress
 - 15) Turn aside, as one's eyes
 - 16) Palo_, Calif.
 - 17) "While" attachment of old
 - 18) La Scala's place
 - 19) Repair sock holes
 - 20) Four front backers
 - 23) Ocean land
 - 24) Run with a marriage license?
 - 25) Medical solution
 - 28) Nursing home staff?
 - 30) Not invitational, in tournaments
 - 31) "Two wrongs don't make a right," e.g.
 - 33) Not talking
 - 36) Four front backers
 - 40) Key grip's workplace
 - 41) Express feelings
 - 42) Turkish military title
 - 43) Man-goat of myth
 - 44) Certain string player of old
 - 46) Ceremony site
 - 49) In progress

- 51) Three front backers
 - 57) Foul mood
 - 58) Modify, as the Constitution
 - 59) Like a moray
 - 60) Do some lawn work
 - 61) The 100 in a pound
 - 62) Chest rattle
 - 63) Old Russian despot
 - 64) Kicked in the pot, as chips
 - 65) Places for pampering
- DOWN**
- 1) Malamute's load
 - 2) Continental currency
 - 3) "On top of which ..."
 - 4) Fuel for the human body
 - 5) Feuders on a game show
 - 6) Like an old shepherd's charges
 - 7) Get a new tenant for
 - 8) Neutral shade
 - 9) Large part of Sicilian scenery
 - 10) Table tennis item
 - 11) Texas battle site
 - 12) Guitar securer
 - 13) 1,000 kilograms
 - 21) Certain psychedelic
 - 22) Keep a subscription

- 25) Becomes inedible, in a way
- 26) Unsharpened sword
- 27) Where shots are put
- 28) Hospice offering
- 29) "Long... .."
- 31) Author's unknown by-line, briefly
- 32) EPA concern of the 1970s
- 33) Adoring Biblical trio
- 34) Grunts of disgust
- 35) Part of many entrees
- 37) Considers, as a judge
- 38) Swift Aussie bird
- 39) Law firm elite
- 43) More lucrative, as a contract
- 44) Bullied (with "over")
- 45) Thee, today
- 46) Item in the black
- 47) Generates interest?
- 48) Russian forest
- 49) Word with "press" or "free"
- 50) Stolen goods receiver
- 52) Snack of Spain
- 53) Word of approval
- 54) Tide type
- 55) Legendary Fitzgerald of jazz
- 56) Some breads

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

It's time to assert yourself, which should be no problem at all for you. It's your specialty! You may even be better at it than usual for quite some time to come. But in order to pull it off you need to believe in yourself as much as others believe in you. Start by letting your deepest feelings show to the person you trust the most. Their confidence in you, manifested through that intense heart-to-heart, should get you moving in the right direction.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You're just about due to put yourself on a budget, a serious one. This doesn't mean you're done having any fun or that you're unable to acquire something that you really want, but you do have to save your pennies for anything extra, and you do have to start right now. This is the perfect time for you to sit down and think about what's really important and most valuable to you.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

There's nothing you love more than education, however it is that you choose to define it. You see the world as a huge classroom and everyone you meet as a potential teacher or student. At the moment, you're craving something resembling an actual classroom with a real, live teacher. Even the prospect of homework doesn't sound too bad to you! It's time to sign up for some classes.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You've definitely got your work cut out for you today. It feels like every area of your life is demanding more and more of your time. Until robot servants are perfected, your only option is to keep all the balls in the air at once. Fortunately, you're quite determined to meet this challenge head-on, but a tiny break in the action is just what you need. Take a few hours to yourself soon. Balance work with play.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Someone close has been thinking about you for some time now, and you can't deny that you've been thinking about them too. If something has been up in the air between you, now is exactly the right time for you both to open up and say exactly what's on your mind. Why not plan a relaxing private evening alone with them? The right diversions and the right atmosphere can work wonders.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You've never been shallow in any way, and you never promise anything you're not prepared to deliver. Of course, that sets you apart from most of the world's population, so if you're forced to make plans with someone who strikes you as somewhat less than reliable, have a backup plan or two ready to go just in case. You never know. It might turn out to be a lot better than the original plan would have been.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You're in the mood to chat, in a big way. You're feeling so chatty, in fact, that you're not especially concerned with who you're with. That can make for some amazingly entertaining banter with strangers, some of whom may end up becoming fast friends. You might also inadvertently let the wrong cat out of the bag, though, if you're chatting with someone who knows less than they're letting on.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're a trusting soul, and that's a lovely quality under most circumstances. It can win you long-lasting friendships and get you through even the toughest of times in a relationship, but it can also mean being taken advantage of. If you keep an eye on what's important to you now, you don't really have to worry about losing anything that matters. On the other hand, you may need to deal with someone's fear of losing you.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Remember that there's nothing wrong with asking for help, especially when you need it because your big plan turns out so well that you can't handle all the consequences alone anymore. You can make all your dreams come true in short order as long as you're willing to call in reinforcements. Once you're confident that you're on the right track, start recruiting right away.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You're just about due to put yourself on a budget, a serious one. This doesn't mean you're done having any fun or that you're unable to acquire something that you really want, but you do have to save your pennies for anything extra, and you do have to start right now. This is the perfect time for you to sit down and think about what's really important and most valuable to you.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Your career is and always has been important to you, and starting today it's going to be even more important for some time to come. If you cross paths with someone who seems genuinely interested in what you're doing now, and if they offer to help you make your way, go for it, no matter what else is going on now. Making the right connections is vital to everyone's professional life.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You're all set to make a real name for yourself right away. If you can apply yourself 100 percent to the task currently at hand, and keep on applying yourself for the foreseeable future, all will be well. You know you can do it, and you know who to rely on for assistance, so there's not much to worry about. Just make sure that once you make it, you don't forget about those who've loved and supported you through all of this.

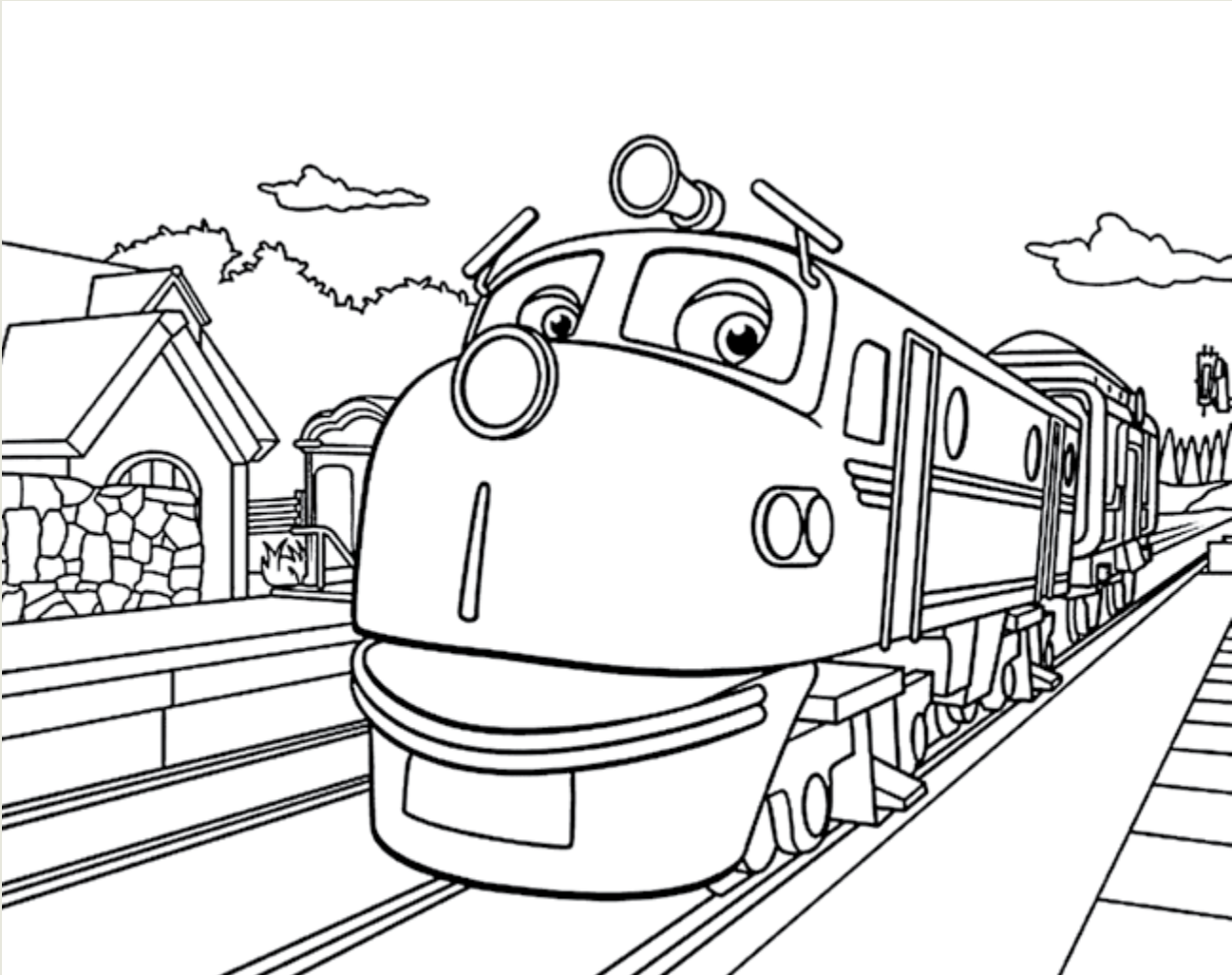


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Which country did the Olympic sprinter represent, who asked for protection to stop her from being forcibly returned home during the 2020 Olympics?
- A. North Korea
 - B. Kyrgyzstan
 - C. Belarus
 - D. Russia
02. What form of singing involves an extended note which rapidly repeatedly changes in pitch from the chest register to falsetto, making a high-low-high-low sound?
- A. Sirening
 - B. Yodeling
 - C. Be bop
 - D. Scat
03. What is a method of preserving and sterilising food, in which a product is processed under very high pressure, leading to the inactivation of certain microorganisms and enzymes in it?
- A. The Fleming Process
 - B. Pasteurisation
 - C. Pascalisation
 - D. The Curie Curing Method

Answers: 1.C 2.B 3.C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	S	S	A
A	L	S	Qu
U	R	S	I
E	B	L	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

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

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

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

ONE WIN AWAY

Liverpool can seal Premier League title with a win against Spurs on Sunday

Leicester, England - Liverpool will have to wait for a few more days to be crowned Premier League champions despite a 1-0 victory at Leicester City after Arsenal kept their slender hopes just about alive with a 4-0 romp at 10-man Ipswich Town on Sunday.

Trent Alexander-Arnold came off the bench to score Liverpool's winner in the 76th minute at the King Power Stadium to restore their 13-point lead at the top with five games left.

While Liverpool can almost taste a record-equalling 20th English crown, Leicester's defeat confirmed their relegation back to the Championship after just one season.

The Midlands club have now been relegated from England's top flight a record 13 times.

Chelsea secured a massive win in their bid to qualify for the Champions League as they came from behind to beat Fulham 2-1 at Craven Cottage with Pedro Neto scoring in stoppage time.

The win pushed Chelsea above Nottingham Forest in to fifth place, the last spot for qualification to the Champions League, although Forest play at

Tottenham Hotspur on Monday.

Chelsea have 57 points from 33 games, two behind third-placed Newcastle United and one behind Manchester City. Forest and Aston Villa are level with Chelsea on 57 points.

Wolverhampton Wanderers guaranteed their safety as they beat Manchester United 1-0 at Old Trafford. Pablo Sarabia's

They enjoy playing football and it helps when you are playing for something special. Today (Alexander-Arnold) knows when it matters most he can just bring a bit more

ARNE SLOT

stunning free kick wrapped up a fifth successive league win, the first time Wolves have achieved that in the top flight since 1970.

Liverpool were wasteful at Leicester with numerous chances going begging and Mohamed Salah suffering a frustrating afternoon including hitting both posts with an early shot.

Salah hit the woodwork again moments before the ball came out to Alexander-Arnold who fired a left-footed shot through

the crowd to give his side the points - ripping off his shirt and celebrating wildly with the travelling fans.

"We just keep going, mentally we're really strong," manager Arne Slot, whose side could be crowned champions if Arsenal lose at home to Crystal Palace on Wednesday, told Sky Sports.

"They enjoy playing football and it helps when you are playing for something special. Today (Alexander-Arnold) knows when it matters most he can just bring a bit more which is something all the top, top players have."

If Arsenal avoid defeat by Palace, Slot's side will seal the title if they beat Tottenham Hotspur at home next Sunday.

"We will focus on Tottenham and looking forward again to a home game and I think the stadium will be full," Slot, who can become the first Dutch manager to win the English title, said. "It's a nice game to look forward to."

Liverpool have 79 points with Arsenal a distant second on 66.



Trent Alexander-Arnold celebrates with teammates after scoring Liverpool's winner against Leicester City on Sunday



Real Madrid's Federico Valverde celebrates his goal against Athletic Bilbao on Sunday

Valverde winner keeps Real Madrid's title hopes alive

Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid's Federico Valverde netted a superb late volley to secure a 1-0 home win over Athletic Bilbao on Sunday that keeps them within four points of LaLiga leaders Barcelona.

Real bounced back after their midweek Champions League exit at the hands of Arsenal to move up to 69 points, six clear of third-placed Atletico Madrid, who suffered a shock 1-0 loss at Las Palmas on Saturday.

A heavily rotated Athletic kept the hosts at bay until Valverde scored the winner three minutes into stoppage time, pouncing on a poor clearance to fire a volley into the far top corner.

"Fede has a very unusual shot, a very good one," Real goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois said. "Yesterday in training he kicked a ball that looked like it was going wide and suddenly it took a spin and you think... How did you kick that? It's very sharp, fast and powerful.

"In training he easily does one or two like that a week. We've been telling him for years: 'shoot, shoot'."

Vinicius Junior thought he had handed Real the lead with a low shot, but the 79th-minute effort was disallowed by the VAR for an Endrick offside in the build up.

After an uneventful first half, Jude Bellingham had Real's first clear scoring chance with a close-range header, but goalkeeper Unai Simon made a brilliant save on the hour mark to keep the scores level.

Fresh off reaching the Europa League semi-finals, Athletic stayed disciplined in defence, frustrating Real for much of the match. Athletic's resistance finally broke and the late defeat leaves them fourth in the standings with 57 points.

"We played well, we defended until the end, but we know what Real Madrid are like at the Bernabeu," Athletic's Alex Berenguer told LaLiga TV.

Orsolini stunner hands Bologna win against Inter in Serie A

Bologna, Italy - A stunning last-gasp goal by striker Riccardo Orsolini gave Bologna a 1-0 home win against Inter Milan in Serie A on Sunday in a blow to the visitors' hopes of retaining their title.

Orsolini sealed the three points for the hosts in stoppage time with a superb bicycle kick after Bologna's long throw-in was flicked on by an Inter defender and fell kindly for the striker.

Treble-chasing Inter stayed top of the standings with 71 points after 33 games but second-placed Napoli are now level on points after securing a late 1-0 win at relegation-threatened Monza on Saturday.

Inter face a challenging 10 days ahead, where they will host rivals AC Milan for a spot in the Coppa Italia final on Wednesday before welcoming AS Roma in Serie A and travelling to Barcelona on April 30 in the Champions League semi-finals.

Bologna remain strong contenders to qualify for the Champions League as they provisionally moved up to fourth



Bologna's Riccardo Orsolini (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Inter Milan on Sunday

Treble-chasing Inter stayed top of the standings with 71 points after 33 games but second-placed Napoli are now level on points with the leaders

on 60 points, one point above Juventus who visit lowly Parma on Monday.

Bologna welcome Empoli in the second leg of their Coppa Italia semi-final on Thursday after winning the first leg 3-0.

The hosts were not intimidated by title contenders Inter and Thijs Dallinga should have given them the lead after 28 minutes when he struck first time

from close range, but the ball ricocheted off Inter defender Benjamin Pavard and went wide.

Both teams had one attempt on target each until late in the game, in a match low on chances and intensity.

The encounter became more nervy after the break and Bologna boss Vincenzo Italiano was sent off, as was Inter's assistant coach Massimiliano Farris.

Ederson goal helps Atalanta beat Milan

Milan, Italy - Atalanta beat AC Milan 1-0 at the San Siro on Sunday thanks to Ederson's second-half goal, which consolidated their place in Serie A's top four and all but ended the hosts' slim chances of earning a Champions League spot.

The win moved third-placed Atalanta to 64 points, four points ahead of Bologna who beat leaders Inter Milan 1-0 earlier on Sunday, while Milan remain ninth in the standings on 51 points.

The opening half saw Atalanta control possession but neither

side created any real chances until just before the break when Milan's Luka Jovic collected a pass on the turn in the box and put his shot just wide.

Milan were the more positive side after the interval, pushing forward but unable to find a way through and they were punished by a patient Atalanta in the 62nd minute. Ademola Lookman's cross

into the area was met by Raoul Bellanova with a deft headed pass back to Ederson who finished off the move with a diving header past keeper Mike Maignan.

That goal appeared to take the wind out of Milan's sails and Lookman was the danger man as Atalanta strived for a second goal, having one shot blocked by Youssouf

Fofana and another deflected for a corner.

Lookman then played a ball across the goal which Mateo Retegui somehow put wide from inside the six-yard box when sliding in under pressure from Milan's Strahinja Pavlovic.

Milan substitute Joao Felix did well to gather the ball and drive forward towards the Atalanta area but then completely scuffed his shot and Lookman had another chance after a run from his own area but Maignan saved his effort.

Leverkusen's title hopes vanish after slip at St Pauli

Hamburg, Germany - Reigning champions Bayer Leverkusen slipped up with a 1-1 draw at St Pauli on Sunday to drop eight points behind leaders Bayern Munich as their slim hopes of defending the Bundesliga title were all but ended.

Second-placed Leverkusen, who won the domestic league and Cup double last season without defeat, conceded a 78th-minute equaliser. They now have 64 points after 30 matches, with Bayern top on 72 after their 4-0 win over Heidenheim on Saturday.

Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso admitted the distance to Bayern was now considerable with only 12 points available.

"Clearly, mathematically it is not over but we know there are very, very few chances," Alonso told a press conference.

"Too many draws this season. That is the reason. Now the gap to Bayern is too big. But we have to be realistic. It is not all over yet. This is not the end of the season yet."

Forward Patrik Schick headed in an Alex Grimaldo free kick to give Leverkusen a 33rd-minute lead with his 18th league goal of the campaign.

Despite having Germany international Florian Wirtz in the starting lineup for the first time since he suffered an ankle injury in early March, they could not score again.

SILVER SHIMMER

FIA WEC podium at Imola for Al Harthy, Rossi and Van der Linde

Muscat - FIA World Endurance Championship driver Ahmad al Harthy celebrated his first podium finish of the 2025 campaign at Imola in Italy on Sunday as the Omani and teammates Valentino Rossi and Kelvin van der Linde just missed LMG T3 victory by a mere 0.3 seconds after six hours of racing.

Starting the 6 Hours of Imola from a fantastic LMG T3 pole position, after a superb performance in qualifying and Hyperpole, the Team WRT squad rightly focused on challenging for the win and during an excellent double-stint from Al Harthy at the beginning the aim remained firmly on target.

Rossi was every bit as competitive during the middle phase of the race, but an unfortunate penalty linked to contact with a Ferrari with just over a couple of hours to go impacted their bid. With a huge amount to do from the tail of the top 10, Van der Linde was electrifying during the closing stages and stormed back up into second place thanks to some inspired strategy calls as well from the team.

"What a race! My stint was amazing, we were doing a lot to make sure we were in the right



Ahmad al Harthy (R) celebrates with teammates Valentino Rossi (L) and Kelvin van der Linde after finishing second at 6 Hours of Imola in Italy on Sunday

My stint was amazing, we were doing a lot to make sure we were in the right position for the final few hours. Leading Imola for such a long time was tough and challenging

AHMAD AL HARTHY

position for the final few hours of the race," said Al Harthy.

"Leading Imola for such a long time was tough and challenging, so I was really pleased to give Vale the car in P1. Due to what happened on the track things started moving around, it was definitely one of the most emotional races for all of us.

"At one point we were leading,

at another point we're P10, and then to finish on the podium in P2 was an amazing result after an unbelievable recovery. That goes down to all of the drivers and the team for working incredible strategy calls at the right time. I'm really so glad to be on the podium, Imola has always been so good to me. Now we work for the next round at Spa.

"I want to say a huge thank you to all of my partners, all the people who believe in this project. This is what it's all about, we are on the podium steps of the FIA World Endurance Championship! It's sometimes hard for that to sink in and to realise what we've achieved."

Thrilled to line-up on pole at the start of round two of the FIA WEC season, OQ Group, Sohar International, Omantel, Oman LNG, BMW Oman, Oman Min-

istry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Experience Oman partnered racer Al Harthy launched well to keep the pack behind at bay.

The gap at the front ebbed and flowed during the early laps, as the Team WRT car and the chasing No.21 Vista AF Corse Ferrari 296 pulled clear of the next group. With 30 minutes complete the Omani's advantage stood at just over two seconds and although this was reduced later in the opening hour, the Fer-

rari managing to get ahead, Al Harthy's first pit-stop went as well as it could.

When the order shook-out the No.46 BMW was leading again and by an increased margin of six seconds, but after a Safety Car period in hour two the Ferrari again filled Al Harthy's mirrors. Stops were soon required once more and the majority of the field visited pitlane, while the Omani stayed on track before pitting late in hour two from the lead.

Rune stuns Alcaraz to win Barcelona title

Barcelona, Spain - Holger Rune denied red-hot favourite Carlos Alcaraz a third Barcelona Open trophy when he stunned the Spaniard 7-6(6) 6-2 in the final on Sunday to lift his first title in two years.

Alcaraz had won the tournament in 2022 and 2023 but the top seed seemed to be struggling with an injury midway through the match, allowing Rune to capitalise and win his first trophy since the Bavarian Open earlier on Sunday.

But the title was well deserved for Rune, who had also beaten second seed Casper Ruud in the quarter-finals, while Alcaraz dropped to third in the ATP rankings, below Alexander Zverev who won the Munich Open earlier on Sunday.

"It means the world, it was such a great match. In the beginning I was a bit stressed because Carlos obviously played big-time tennis and I had to breathe a lot and find my rhythm," Rune said.

Alcaraz was out of the blocks early in the opening set and he put on a show with his powerful baseline returns and the occasional drop shot that had

Rune scrambling as the Spaniard broke to go 3-2 up.



Holger Rune

Piastri wins Saudi Arabian GP, Verstappen second

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - Oscar Piastri won the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix on Sunday and seized the Formula One championship lead from McLaren teammate Lando Norris with his third win in five races.

Red Bull's four-times champion Max Verstappen was runner-up, 2.843 seconds behind the Australian, after starting from pole at Jeddah's Corniche circuit, with Charles Leclerc taking Ferrari's first podium of 2025 in third.

Norris finished fourth, after racing back from 10th.

Verstappen's plan unravelled within seconds of the start when he and Piastri went wheel-to-wheel into the first corner, with the champion running wide to



McLaren's Oscar Piastri wins the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix on Sunday

It was a pretty tough race. I'm very, very happy to have won. Made the difference at the start

OSCAR PIASTRI

stay ahead and collecting a five second penalty that he served in the pits.

"It was a pretty tough race. I'm very, very happy to have won. Made the difference at the start. Made my case into Turn One, and that was enough," said Piastri after 50 laps in 30 degree heat.

"Definitely one of the toughest races I've had in my career," he added.

Victory made Piastri, triumphant in Bahrain last weekend and China last month, the first Australian to lead the championship since his manager Mark Webber in 2010 and also the first back-to-back winner this season.

He now leads Norris, whose race was heavily compromised by a crash in qualifying, by 10 points after starting the night three behind.

Piastri has 99 points to Norris's 89 and Verstappen's 87. Champions McLaren stretched their lead over Mercedes in the constructors' standings to 77 points.

"I'm not bothered that I am leading the world championship but I am proud of the hard work we have done to get here. I want to be leading the championship after round 24, not round five," said the Australian.

George Russell was fifth for Mercedes with Italian teammate Kimi Antonelli sixth and seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton seventh for Ferrari.

Williams had Carlos Sainz and Alex Albon eighth and ninth with Racing Bulls' French rookie Isack Hadjar the final points scorer in 10th.

Oman to play four-match series with Kerala team

Muscat - In an effort to provide Oman players quality games that will serve as ideal tune-up to the tri-nation series of ICC Men's Cricket World Cup (CWC) League 2 (2024/27) in the USA next month (May 17-27), Oman Cricket will host the Kerala state team over a four-match limited-overs series from April 21 at the Oman Cricket Academy ground.

Oman's recent form in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 has been promising.

Oman are currently placed fourth in the WCL 2 standing comprising eight nations with 18 points from 16 games.

USA lead the standings with 22 from 16 while the Netherlands are second with 20. Canada are third with 20 points from 16 games followed by Oman and Namibia (14 from 20 games).

The visiting Kerala side, which finished as Ranji Trophy - India's premier domestic red-ball com-



Oman Chairman's XI team will play four limited-overs matches against Kerala team

petition - runner-up this season, will be up against an ICC side for the first time.

The Oman Chairman's XI squad will feature players from the national team.

Kerala will be led by wicket-keeper-batter Mohammed Azharuddeen, but the squad will

miss star Indian cricketer Sanju Samson, who is involved with IPL. The team is coached by former Indian cricketer Tinu Yohannan.

Mendis welcomed the Kerala team to Oman. "We are pleased to host the Kerala team, the finalist of Ranji Trophy this season for

a four-match friendly series. The team has quality players and we are keen to play against such good sides as we prepare for our USA tour next month."

He added: "This series is ideal for our boys as they have been undergoing rigorous training over the past few weeks. The boys will

OMAN TEAM

Jatinder Singh, Aamir Kaleem, Pruthvi Machhi, Hammad Mirza, Mohammad Nadeem, Sufyan Mehmood, Shakeel Ahmed, Jay Odedra, Samay Shrivastava, Wasim Ali, Vinayak Shukla, Hassnain Ali Shah, Muhammad Imran, Mujib Ali, Sandeep Goud, Ashish Odedara, Hashir Dafedar, Mohammed Bilal Shah, Muzahir Raza, Ubaidullah.

MATCH SCHEDULE:

April 21: First match, 2pm; April 23: Second match, 2pm; April 25: Third game, 2pm; April 27: Fourth and final match, 10am.

gain confidence ahead of our USA tour of WCL 2 that will also feature Canada. We will also play another strong Indian state team of Karnataka later this month and the two series will provide our boys the needed warm-up and hopefully we can get good results"

Zverev celebrates birthday with third Munich title

Munich, Germany - World number three Alexander Zverev celebrated his birthday with a comfortable win over American Ben Shelton in the Munich Open final on Sunday to claim a record-equalling third title.

The 28-year-old German crowd favourite delivered a composed display to overcome second seed Shelton 6-2 6-4, securing his 24th career tour title on the tour and his first triumph of the season.

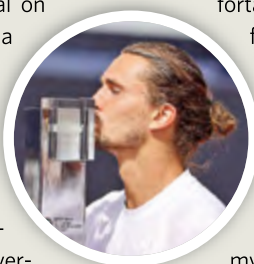
Having lifted the trophy in 2017 and 2018, Zverev has now matched fellow German

Philipp Kohlschreiber's record of three Munich titles.

The top seed dominated 22-year-old Shelton, breaking early to take control. He comfortably claimed the first set 6-2 and opened the second with another break to keep up the momentum.

"I definitely knew I had to play my best tennis today, Ben has been playing extremely well this week," Zverev said.

"The conditions suit him extremely well, it's very hot and very fast. They suit me as well, to be fair. I enjoyed my birthday so far."



Alexander Zverev

'Important to get the right combination for next year'

Mumbai, India - MS Dhoni hasn't given up hope of making the IPL 2025 playoffs, but if things don't go to plan, wants Chennai Super Kings (CSK) to use their six remaining games to figure out their best team for the next year. CSK's nine-wicket defeat against Mumbai Indians (MI) at the Wankhede has kept them at the bottom of the table, with four points from eight matches. They are six points away from the team placed fourth, and have very little margin for error.

"With all the games in front of us that we are supposed to win, we will just take it one game at a time," Dhoni said after the match on the broadcast. "And if we lose a few, what will be important for us [is] to get the right combination for next year. We don't want too many players getting changed. So I think what will be important is to try and qualify. But if not, get a secured eleven for the next year and come back strong."

Speaking at the press conference after the game, CSK head



MS Dhoni

coach Stephen Fleming said, "It's hard, really. It's not when you're playing well below par to get enthusiastic about staying in the competition, but that's what we must do, and yes, there will be an opportunity. Nothing will be wasted during this tournament. We look back at other tourna-

ments that haven't gone our way and some of the work we have done at the back end of tournaments have set us up for wins in the following year.

"We are realistic about the position that we are in. But there will no stone left unturned looking for players for next year, combinations for next year, and we'll see it as an opportunity. Not a great opportunity, because we want to be at the pointy end of the competition, but if it works out that there's no chance of us getting through, we'll certainly make the most of it."

As for what's been going wrong, Dhoni said that batters needed to score more to allow their bowlers to have something to play with.

"What we need to realise is that we are successful if we play good cricket. At the same time, if we're not playing good cricket, what is important is not to get too emotional about it," Dhoni said.

"But at the same time, you want to be practical."

MUMBAI BACK IN BUSINESS

Rohit, Suryakumar hit fifties in thrashing of Chennai

Mumbai, India - Mumbai Indians (MI) put together a third straight win in IPL 2025 as they out-gunned a Chennai Super Kings (CSK) side shorn of hitting power. The lack of batting showed in how they played a highly cagey brand of cricket, only targeting certain pockets and conceding match-ups without protest. It took them three overs to hit a boundary, then they went 27 balls in the middle overs without even attempting one, only to cap it off with no boundary in the 17th and 18th overs, bowled by MI's best bowlers on the night: Jasprit Bumrah and Mitchell Santner.

Not only did MI manage a run-rate boost with the win that takes them to eight points in eight matches, they also welcomed Rohit Sharma back to runs. Rohit scored his first fifty this IPL - his previous highest was 26 - they put together their first half-century opening stand this IPL, and Suryakumar Yadav got the better of CSK's spin threat with his various sweeps. The match was played on the pitch that produced 430 runs for RCB and MI. The toss, as usual, was a big advantage at Wankhede. Which should make it important to look for above-par scores, but CSK took the pragmatic route: don't risk 120 all out looking for 200. Consequently, their openers tested waters for too long, timing shots straight to fielders. When Shaik Rasheed finally hit one in the air, and for a four,



Rohit Sharma hit six sixes and four fours in his 45-ball 76 against Chennai Super Kings on Sunday

TODAY'S MATCH

MATCH 40

6 PM



LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS VS DELHI CAPITALS

CSK had only 16 in three overs. Rachin Ravindra by now felt he had to target the change bowler without a sighter. He

looked to go big down the ground, and edged the first ball by Ashwani Kumar. His replacement at the wicket, CSK's younger player of all time, the 17-year-old Ayush Mhatre injected some life to the innings with flair reminiscent of Dwayne Bravo. It still meant only 48 runs in the powerplay. The unperturbed MI stayed with Deepak Chahar for a fourth straight over, eventually resulting in the legcutter that got Mhatre out for 32 off 15. Santner produced a beauty in the eighth over at 77kmph to have Rasheed stumped on the defence, but that brought together Shivam Dube and Ravin-

dra Jadeja. They have batting behind these two, but it's MS Dhoni, Jamie Overton and Vijay Shankar. So these two decided not to hit anything even though their coming together meant Santner was taken off despite figures of 2-0-8-1. Put together, CSK didn't make a boundary attempt between Mhatre's dismissal and the return of Boult in the 12th over. To be fair to CSK, they did well when they went after Boult and Ashwani, taking 85 in the six overs bowled by them. Dube raced away from 16 off 19 to a 30-ball fifty even as Jadeja hovered around a run a ball.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Indian Male - CPA, CMA, CA Finalist & B.com - with 12+ years of experience in Financial Reporting & Analysis, Budget & Forecast, MIS Reports, Audit & Assurance Services, available for senior management roles in Finance. Email: su.cpacma@gmail.com GSM: 78611653

MEP Design Engineer with experience in Design Softwares and Calculations available on own visa. Contact: 99506977

FOR RENT

State of the Art warehouse and office in Misfah

Centrally located with ease of access to Muscat - Nizwa Sohar

WAREHOUSE

3000++ pallets space available on monthly/ per pallet rental bases.

loading/unloading bays, with state of the art racking and centrally air conditioning @21 degree

OFFICE

700 sq mts of office space, centralized air conditioning ready to use.

CONTACT NO: 9 3 8 9 3 5 9 6

CLASSIFIED LISTINGS

MUSCAT DAILY offers a variety of classified listings for individuals and establishments: Situations Vacant/Wanted, Accommodation Wanted or Available, Sale of Household Items, Cars for Sale or Wanted, Matrimonial Alliances, etc

Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call: 99104346

SEND YOUR REQUEST FOR

Birthday/Anniversary wishes to wish@apexmedia.co.om with your resident card copy (It's free of cost)

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684

Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com



أوربيت ORBIT

Car Rental & Lease

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Yoga, Kalari, Panchakarma, Massage, Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Beauty therpay & post Delivery Care

Zaher Building ,1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road ,near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-king Tel:24475280, GSM: 95371664 , 92504980 , Website:www.siddhayur.com



KNEE PAIN EXERCISES

SUFFERING FROM KNEE OSTEOARTHRITIS? TRY THESE SIMPLE, LOW IMPACT EXERCISES THAT CAN BE DONE WITHOUT STRAINING TOO MUCH AND WHICH CAN SIGNIFICANTLY RESTORE KNEE MOVEMENT AND HEALTH



Hinge benefits

Knee osteoarthritis (OA), also known as degenerative joint disease of the knee, is typically the result of wear and tear and progressive loss of articular cartilage. It is most common in the elderly. Knee osteoarthritis can be divided into two types - primary and secondary. Primary osteoarthritis is articular degeneration without any apparent underlying reason. Secondary osteoarthritis is the consequence of either an abnormal concentration of force across the joint as with post-traumatic causes or abnormal articular cartilage, such as rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Common clinical symptoms

include knee pain that is gradual in onset and worse with activity, knee stiffness and swelling, pain after prolonged sitting or resting, and pain that worsens over time. And the treatment options vary, from knee bracing to surgery, depending on the severity of the case. The first-line treatment for all patients with symptomatic knee osteoarthritis includes patient education and physical therapy. A combination of supervised exercises and a home exercise programme have been shown to have the best results, but these benefits are lost after 6 months if the exercises are stopped. Consider a few simple exercises daily:

Seated Hip March

- Sit up straight in a chair. Kick your left foot back slightly, but keep your toes on the floor.
- Lift your right foot off the floor, knee bent. Hold the right leg in the air 3 seconds.
- Slowly lower your foot to the ground. Do two sets of 10 repetitions. Switch legs after each set.

Pillow Squeeze

- Lie on your back, both knees bent. Place a pillow between the knees.
- Squeeze your knees together, squishing the pillow between them. Hold for 5 seconds. Relax.
- Do two sets of 10 repetitions, relaxing in between. Switch legs after each set.

Heel Raise

Stand tall and hold the back of a chair for support. Lift your heels off the ground and rise up on the toes of both feet. Hold for 3 seconds. Slowly lower both heels to the ground. Do two sets of 10 repetitions. Too tricky? Do the same exercise while sitting in a chair.

Side Leg Raise

- Stand and hold the back of a chair for balance. Place your weight on your left leg.
- Stand tall and lift the right leg out to the side, keeping it straight and outer leg muscles tensed. Hold 3 seconds, then lower the leg.
- Do two sets of 10 repetitions. Switch legs after each set.

One Leg Balance

- Stand behind your kitchen counter without holding on, and slowly lift one foot off the floor. The goal is to stay balanced for 20 seconds without grabbing the counter.
- Do this move twice, then switch sides.
- Balance for a longer time. Or try it with your eyes closed.

Step Ups

- Stand in front of stairs, and hold onto the banister for balance. Then place left foot on a step.
- Tighten your left thigh muscle and step up, touching your right foot onto the step. Keep your muscles tight as you slowly lower your right foot.

- Touch the floor and lift again. Do two sets of 10 repetitions. Switch legs after each set.

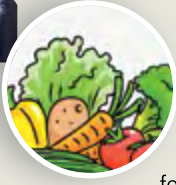
Low-Impact Activities

- Other exercises that are easy on the knees include biking, swimming, and water aerobics.
- Water exercise takes weight off painful joints. Many community and hospital wellness centers, gyms, and pools offer classes for people with arthritis.
- Being active may also help you lose weight, which takes pressure off your joints.
- Walking in the morning/evening is also a simple mobility boosting exercise.

VANDANA CHAWLA



NUTRITION YOU



colourless, light, mildly sweet, and extremely hydrating. Coconut water comes from young coconuts which is about 6-7 months of age. An average green coconut provides about one cup of coconut water, depending on its size and age. As the coconut matures, this water gradually turns into the solid white flesh, so timing is key for harvesting.

Natural electrolyte drink

One of the greatest unique selling point of coconut water is its electrolyte content. It contains potassium, magnesium, sodium, and calcium, all vital minerals that help regulate fluid balance, nerve signals, and muscle function in the body. Because of this, coconut water is often referred to as a natural sports drink. Athletes use it for post-workout hydration, as it helps replenish lost fluids and minerals. Since coconut water is free from artificial flavours, colours, and excessive sugar, it is totally different from many sports drinks. Owing to its high electrolyte content it is used in conditions like diarrhoea where there is fluid and electrolyte loss. Highly recommended for individuals who sweat excessively.

Packed With Nutrients

Coconut water is 94% water and very

Coconut water - a natural hydrator



little fat. Aside from electrolytes, coconut water offers a range of other nutrients in modest amounts, including vitamin C, B-complex vitamins, and antioxidants. Some of the key nutritional benefits per 240ml (1 cup) are:

- Potassium: 600mg (more than that of one banana)
- Magnesium: 15-17mg
- Calcium: 58mg
- Vitamin C: About 10% of the RDI
- Hydration: Its electrolyte content

- makes it ideal for rehydration, especially after exercise or during illness.
- Heart health: Potassium helps manage blood pressure levels, reducing the risk of cardiovascular issues. Plus lower fat content makes it heart-friendly.
- Kidney support: Keeping oneself well hydrated at all times is the key to kidney health. Moreover, studies suggest coconut water may help prevent kidney stones by reducing crystal and stone formation.
- Weight Management: Low in calories and slightly sweet with typical nutty flavour, it's a better option than sugary sodas or juices.
- Digestive Aid: Rich in electrolytes, antioxidants and manganese, it helps in soothing stomach lining.

Is it safe for diabetics?

While coconut water is a natural drink, it does contain naturally occurring sugars. A standard cup has around 6-7g of sugar, which is low compared to

sugary sodas or fruit juices. However, it can still cause a slight rise in blood sugar, especially if consumed in large amounts. Hence, moderation is the key for diabetics. When paired with a high-fibre meal or snack it can slow down the absorption of sugars.

Role in weight loss?

Coconut water can be a smart and a healthy choice for those on a weight-loss journey, provided it is consumed in moderation. Always, remember to treat it as a beverage with calories and natural sugars. Hence it cannot replace plain water. Coconut water can be enjoyed any time of the day. It's perfect after a workout, as a mid-day refresher, or even first thing in the morning to kick-start your metabolism and hydration. Pure coconut water is always preferred over store-brought varieties that have added sugar and flavours. To conclude, coconut water is more than just a trendy beverage, it's an age-old natural hydrator with many health benefits. Whether you're on a weight-loss journey, relaxing at a beach, working on a hot summer day, or had a strenuous workout, a glass of coconut water is a refreshing and nutritious beverage to enjoy. (Vandana Chawla is an Online Nutrition Expert and a Registered Nutritionist-UKVRN)

HIDDEN DANGER

scares of sleepiness

FEELING SLEEPY DURING WORK OR LEISURE ACTIVITIES IN THE DAYTIME COULD BE INDICATIVE OF SLEEP DISORDERS WHICH CAN HAVE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES, IF NOT TACKLED IMMEDIATELY, SAY EXPERTS

Find yourself yawning a lot? Do you need that third or fourth cup of coffee to make it through the afternoon at work? Such signs of sleepiness may be a red flag of a serious sleep deficit that could put you in physical danger and harm your long-term health, according to a new position paper by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. “Sleepiness is a serious health concern with wide-reaching consequences,” said AASM President Dr

been linked to the development or worsening of diabetes, depression, heart and kidney disease, high blood pressure, obesity and stroke, experts say. “With one-third of US adults reporting they experience excessive sleepiness, the importance of identifying interventions that recognise, assess, and treat it cannot be understated,” Olson added. All too often people write off signs of sleepiness, such as dozing off during a work meeting, as an insignificant issue instead of a sign of

via email. “If someone is experiencing excessive daytime sleepiness regularly, they should discuss this with their physician.” **A hidden danger** The body does odd things when it’s continuously sleepy, including overcoming those yawns and sending signals that you are, in fact, coping with the lack of sleep. However, those signals couldn’t be further from the truth, said AASM board member and second author Dr Indira Gurubhagavatula, a professor of

hagavatula said. “When we do actual tests to measure how well your brain is functioning — reaction time, the ability to recall, memory tests, coordination — we find people are actually making a lot of mistakes,” she said. “And it’s scary because they still have this inappropriately high level of confidence that they are okay.” With continued sleepiness, the brain may take mini naps, or what specialists call microsleeps, Gurubhagavatula said.

Tests of sleepiness How do you know if your sleepiness is crossing into the danger zone? You can measure it on various scales, including the Epworth Sleepiness Scale, Gurubhagavatula said. Questions on the test include how likely you’ll fall asleep while sitting quietly after a lunch with no alcohol, lying down in the afternoon, sitting inactive in a public place, sitting and reading, sitting and chatting with someone, riding as a passenger in a car for an hour, sitting in traffic for a few minutes while driving, and watching television. “We ask patients to rate from zero to three how likely they are to fall asleep during these eight sedentary situations,” she said. “The maximum score is 24, which indicates that you’re very, very sleepy. We generally consider scores above 10 to being clinically significant and worth intervention.”

As sleep deprivation progresses, dangerous symptoms of sleepiness can increase, Gurubhagavatula said. “You have droopy eyelids, your body is slumping, you’re having trouble staying upright, and some people even notice vertigo - the room spinning, hands shaking with severe deprivation,” she said. “You can also be reckless and impulsive, like you don’t care. That’s another symptom.”

Additional causes of sleepiness Sleep disorders such as sleep apnea, insomnia, restless leg syndrome and circadian rhythm sleep disorders, as well as chronic pain conditions and medications can also contribute to sleepiness, which will be ruled out by a sleep specialist. “You can also ask your pharmacist about your prescriptions, and you should also consider any over-the-counter medications,” Gurubhagavatula said.

Certain lifestyle behaviours can also contribute to chronic sleepiness, experts say. “Things like too much caffeine, alcohol use before bed, using marijuana, the amount of exercise you’re doing, and practicing poor sleep hygiene, such as sleeping in a bright, cold, hot or noisy bedroom, will definitely affect how your sleep will be organised and how refreshing it’s going to be,” Gurubhagavatula said. Many people turn to alcohol or marijuana in the mistaken belief that it can improve sleep. While alcohol appears to make it easier to fall asleep, the body will wake in the middle of the night once the alcohol is metabolised, experts say. “I have patients that are very surprised how much better their sleep is when they get rid of that one drink they have with dinner,” Gurubhagavatula said.

“As for marijuana, we know it actually has unwanted side effects on sleep. The efficiency of your sleep decreases, and how tired you feel the next day increases, so sleep quality actually starts to go down.” (Courtesy: cnn.com)



The unfortunate thing is data shows that with chronic partial sleep deprivation the ability to perceive our own level of impairment is no longer accurate - we think we're okay when we're really not

DR INDIRA GURUBHAGAVATULA

Eric Olson, a pulmonologist and sleep medicine specialist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. “From drowsy driving crashes to workplace errors and long-term health risks, the effects of excessive daytime sleepiness impact individuals and society every day,” Olson said in a statement about the paper, which is supported by 25 different medical organisations including the American Academy of Neurology, the National Safety Council and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Not getting a quality night’s rest of at least seven to eight hours has

a potentially dangerous sleep deficit, experts say. **Daytime sleepiness** “Nodding off in boring meetings is an indication of insufficient sleep. Someone who is fully rested will not fall asleep in meetings, no matter how boring the meeting is,” said sleep specialist Kristen Knutson, an associate professor of neurology and preventive medicine at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. “Excessive daytime sleepiness can impair performance and be an indicator of underlying sleep disorders or other issues,” Knutson said

sleep medicine at the Veteran’s Administration Medical Center at Penn Medicine in Philadelphia. **Microsleeps** “The unfortunate thing is data shows that with chronic partial sleep deprivation the ability to perceive our own level of impairment is no longer accurate - we think we’re okay when we’re really not,” Gurubhagavatula said.

“Your brain is actually going into brief two-second, three-second, 10-second microsleeps and then popping back out and you may not even realise this is happening,” she said. “It can be very dangerous if you’re driving or doing something that involves safety. So, if you do feel like you might fall asleep, pay attention to that, as it’s an indication it’s not safe to drive.”