

BRUSSELS
HOSTS H M
IN GRAND
RECEPTION

Brussels, Belgium - An official reception ceremony was held at the Royal Palace in Brussels on Tuesday for His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the occasion of his state visit to the Kingdom of Belgium.

As the motorcade of His Majesty the Sultan headed to the Royal Palace Square, it was surrounded by a group of motorcycles.

Before reaching the main square of the Royal Palace, a group of horse riders surrounded the parade. Then, a cavalcade of knights from the Royal Belgian Cavalry lined up on both sides of the path.

Upon His Majesty's arrival at the Royal Palace, King Phillippe Leopold Louis Marie, King of the Belgians and Queen Mathilde Marie Christine Ghislaine, Queen of the Belgians were at the forefront of His Majesty the Sultan's welcoming party.

The Royal couple welcomed His Majesty the Sultan, wishing him and his accompanying delegation a pleasant stay. Then, accompanied by the Belgian monarch, His Majesty the Sultan inspected the guard of honour.

After that, King Philippe Leopold escorted His Majesty to the dais of honour, where the Omani Royal Anthem and the Belgian Royal Anthem were played.

Then, the King and His Majesty the Sultan headed to the interior of the palace and posed for a commemorative photo in the reception area of the Royal Palace.

Afterwards, His Majesty the Sultan and King Phillippe held a bilateral meeting.

During the meeting, the two monarchs underscored their joint keenness to boost cooper-

ation and partnership relations in a manner that contributes to stimulating the two countries' economies and expanding vistas of cooperation and exchange of benefits.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan signed the Visitors Book.

Exploring economic
collaboration



H M is greeted by Alexander De Croo, Belgian PM

His Majesty the Sultan and Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, held an official session of talks at the Belgian Prime Minister's office, Le Lambertmont, on Tuesday.

The session discussed areas of the investment and economic cooperation, and means of promoting them to serve joint interests. The two sides exchanged

views on international developments and global changes, as well as investment opportunities available in various sectors.

The session was attended from the Omani side by H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr Hamad bin Said al Afi, Head of the Private Office, Abdusalam al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority, Eng Salim bin Nassir al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Rua Issa al Zadjali, Ambassador of Oman to Belgium.

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His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik was welcomed by King Phillippe Leopold Louis Marie and Queen Mathilde at the Royal Palace in Brussels on Tuesday

H M conferred with highest Belgian order



Brussels, Belgium - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Phillippe Leopold Louis Marie, King of the Belgians, exchanged orders and commemorative gifts at the Royal Palace in Brussels.

His Majesty the Sultan conferred 'Al Said Order' on King Phillippe and 'Oman First Order' on Queen Mathilde Marie Christine Ghislaine, Queen of the Belgians, in commendation for the King of the Belgians and his spouse and in manifestation of the advanced relations of friendship, cooperation and partnership between the two countries. His Majesty also conferred Royal orders

on a few Belgian officials.

Meanwhile, King Phillippe honoured His Majesty the Sultan with the 'Order of Leopold', the highest Belgian order, in commendation of His Majesty the Sultan and in acknowledgment of the two countries' distinguished relations.

The King of Belgians also awarded Royal orders to members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan.

Furthermore, the two leaders exchanged commemorative gifts. The ceremony was attended by the official delegations of the two sides and several senior Belgian officials.

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H M VISITS HISTORIC BRUSSELS TOWN HALL

Brussels, Belgium - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, accompanied by King Philippe Leopold Louis Marie, King of the Belgians, visited Brussels Town Hall in the Kingdom of Belgium, on Tuesday.

On his arrival at the Town Hall, His Majesty the Sultan was received by the Mayor of Brussels. His Majesty viewed

this ancient historical edifice, famous for its unique architectural design and for being the only remaining building from the Middle Ages.

Commemorative gifts were exchanged and memorial photos of His Majesty the Sultan and the Belgian monarch were taken on the balcony overlooking the outer

square of Brussels Town Hall.

Children of members of the Embassy of Oman in Brussels, the GCC and Arab missions, as well as attendees from Belgium and other nationalities participated in welcoming His Majesty the Sultan, waving the flags of Oman and of Belgium. His Majesty the Sultan and the King waved back to

them from the balcony of the Town Hall.

At the conclusion of his Royal tour, His Majesty the Sultan signed the Visitors Book, expressing his delight at visiting the historical monument, deemed a unique ancient architectural masterpiece that embodies the antiquity of the friendly Kingdom of Belgium.



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Oman Across Ages Museum wins prestigious architecture award

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman Across Ages Museum in Manah has been honoured with one of the world's most prestigious architecture awards - the Prix Versailles World Titles.

The museum received the 'Special Prize for an Exterior', while the 'Special Prize for an Interior' was awarded to the Smritivan Earthquake Museum in Bhuj, India. The grand prize, the Prix Versailles, went to the Simose Art Museum in Otake, Japan.

Granted annually at Unesco headquarters in Paris since 2015, the Prix Versailles celebrates architectural excellence by showcasing the finest contemporary achievements worldwide.

In June, for the first time, Prix Versailles unveiled its World's Most Beautiful Museums List for 2024, featuring seven newly opened or reopened museums that embody creativity, local heritage, and ecological efficiency.

Among the listed museums was Oman Across Ages Museum, recognised for its exceptional impact on its surroundings. Other shortlisted museums in-

cluded the A4 Art Museum in Chengdu, China; Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza, Egypt; Paleis Het Loo in Apeldoorn, Netherlands; and the Polish History Museum in Warsaw, Poland.

This year's ceremony was held on December 2, celebrating 70 of the 'World's Most Beautiful' achievements across eight categories: Museums, Hotels, Restaurants, Emporiums, Airports, Campuses, Passenger Stations, and Sports.

This year's finalists were selected through a rigorous process that reviewed new and recently opened sites across 31 nations. The 2024 World Jury, chaired by Benjamin Millepied, awarded three World Titles in each category.

Commenting on the event, Millepied said, "Architecture has the ability to display creative and stylistic diversity with great force. That diversity is the sign that the attention given to nature, togetherness, and different forms of expertise can help an environment emerge - one that is both receptive to expression and capable of harmony. Such an assembly of actors from every background reminds us of culture's unique talent for leading humankind into dialogue."

The recognition affirms Oman Across Ages Museum's standing as a cultural and architectural beacon, reflecting the nation's commitment to preserving heritage while embracing modernity.

New regulations to enhance maritime safety

Muscat - The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) has introduced new regulations for ship and port security under ministerial decision No 423/2024.

These regulations aim to enhance the security of ports and ships, achieving the highest levels of maritime safety. Based on Maritime Law No 19/2023 and approved international agreements, the regulations establish a comprehensive framework to ensure the safety and security of maritime operations in the Sultanate.

Captain Majid bin Saif al Barhi, Director General of Maritime Affairs at MTCIT, stated that the regulations are designed to provide comprehensive protection for individuals, maritime facilities, and goods from security risks. They also aim to ensure the continuity of efficient maritime operations while supporting Oman's efforts to enhance the investment environment in the maritime sector.

Capt Barhi informed that the new ship and port security regulations include a range of measures to ensure compliance with international standards.



Oman’s taekwondo stars leave their mark in Romania

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omani athletes showcased exceptional skill and determination at the Balkan Open Taekwondo WT Cup 2024, held in Romania from November 30 to December 1. Competing against 500 participants from 48 countries, the team secured six medals, including three gold, one silver, and two bronze, marking a significant achievement on the global taekwondo stage.

The event featured strong competitors from nations such as the US, the UK, Egypt, Australia, India, Japan, Germany, France, and Sweden. Oman's athletes stood out with their disciplined performances, earning praise from both organisers and rivals.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily* coach Hareb al Abdali expressed immense pride in the team's accomplishments. "Our athletes have made Oman proud with their determination and success. This performance not only brings honour to our country but also enhances Oman's reputation in the international taekwondo community," he said. He noted that the experience gained in the tournament would inspire the athletes to aim for further milestones.

Among the standout

achievements, Fidaa al Barwaniya was named Best Player of the Tournament, and coach Salem al Abri received the Best Coach Award, underscoring the team's overall excellence.

Gold medals were won by Nibras al Tawqi in the Men's Under-54kg category, Fidaa al Barwaniya in the Youth Under-52kg category, and Hilal al Rashidi in the Junior Under-49kg category. Saleh al Rashidi claimed silver in the Junior Under-45kg category, while bronze medals were earned by Mohammed Adnan al Habsi in the Youth Under-63kg category and Mustafa al Balushi in the Youth Under-51kg category.

Coach Abdali highlighted the need for greater financial support from the private sector to ensure the team's continued participation in international tournaments. "Sustained investment in developing our athletes is essential for future success and for strengthening Oman's presence on the global sports stage," he said.

The team's achievements reflect not only their dedication but also Oman's growing stature in the world of taekwondo. The triumph in Romania sets a high standard for the nation's athletes as they prepare for upcoming international competitions.

Rustaq night hike promotes astronomy, physical fitness

Our Correspondent
Rustaq

The Al Hoqain Observatory in the wilayat of Rustaq, South Batinah, organised a 6km night hike on Friday, November 29, drawing over 200 participants.

The initiative aimed to foster a deeper understanding of astronomy while encouraging physical activity within the community.

Yousef Zahir al Salmi, a member of the Oman Astronomical Society and Supervisor of Al Hoqain Observatory, said the event sought to "promote the culture of astronomy and physical fitness among people".

The hike began at 8pm in Al Hoqain, traversing villages along Wadi al Hoqain. Under the theme 'Discover the Sky', the event brought together hiking and adventure enthusiasts, alongside volunteers. "The participants included women and children from various wilayats," Salmi said.

As the group walked under the starlit sky, they paused at key points to learn about stars, planets, and constellations. Salmi explained how participants were shown the use of the North Star for navigation during the night walk. Telescopes were set up at the end of the hike, allowing participants to observe and photograph galaxies and celestial bodies, sparking curiosity and lively discussions.



Refreshment breaks punctuated the hike, where participants enjoyed tea, coffee, and dinner. The walk concluded at 10pm, leaving attendees both physically invigorated and inspired by the celestial wonders above.

Salmi emphasised the broader



Al Hoqain Observatory regularly organises workshops and events for students and astronomy enthusiasts, with a focus on reviving the legacy of ancient Arab astronomers

YOUSEF ZAHIR AL SALMI

goals of the event. "The march aimed to spread astronomical culture among members of society," he said. The Al Hoqain Ob-

servatory regularly organises workshops and events for school students and astronomy enthusiasts, with a focus on reviving the legacy of ancient Arab astronomers and instilling a love for astronomy among the younger generation.

Looking to the future, Salmi outlined plans for expanding the observatory's activities and infrastructure to host more astronomical events. He also announced a second night hike to be held in December. "We are cooperating with the Oman Astronomical Society to monitor celestial phenomena. We invite everyone to join us for the upcoming astronomical walk," he said.

The event underscored the growing interest in astronomy within Oman and highlighted the role of local communities in promoting scientific awareness through engaging, hands-on activities.

Residential real estate prices decline by 1.9% in Q3 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The general index of residential real estate prices in Oman registered a 1.9% decline in the third quarter of 2024 compared to the same period last year, according to data from the National Center

for Statistics and Information.

The residential land price index showed a decrease of 1%, while residential apartment prices dropped by 12.9%. The index for other homes also recorded a 6.5% decline. However, villa prices bucked the trend with a 2.5% increase.

When compared to the second quarter of this year, the overall residential real estate price index rose by 0.3%. Residential land prices recorded a 0.3% increase, while residential apartment prices fell by 5.2%. In contrast, villa prices increased by 3.5%, and other home prices grew by 2.3%.

At the governorate level, the value index for residential real estate experienced declines in most areas when compared to the third quarter of 2023. Muscat governorate saw a 7% drop, Dhofar declined by 4.3%, and Musandam registered a decrease of 26%. Buraimi fell by 17%, Dakhliyah by 3.3%, Dhahirah by 6.8%, and Al Wusta by 6.1%.

Some governorates, however, recorded growth. North Batinah experienced an 18.8% increase, South Batinah rose by 3.1%, South Sharqiyah grew by 1%, and North Sharqiyah by 5.3%.

Guidelines issued for winter camping

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat governorate has issued an advisory for camping enthusiasts, outlining regulations to ensure a safe and environmentally friendly experience during the winter months. The guidelines apply to camping in tents and caravans, with restrictions and penalties in place to maintain order and protect the environment.

According to the advisory, camping for more than 48 hours requires a permit. Campers must pay a mandatory insurance fee of RO100 for a seven-day permit, which can be renewed. Campsites are restricted to designated areas specified by the municipality, ensuring they are at least 10m from beaches and 5m apart from one another. Camps must also be



set up away from fishing zones and security-prohibited areas.

Permitted campsites must comply with technical standards. Campers are required to display their licence number on a visible board, organise parking and entry/exit points, and use noise-regulated generators. The use of heavy machinery for site preparation is not allowed, and licences cannot be transferred to

other individuals.

Campers are expected to adhere to etiquette and public moral standards. Safety and security equipment must be readily available at the site, and fencing should not obstruct visibility. The use of lasers or upward-pointing lights is strictly prohibited.

To preserve the environment, campers must keep their sites clean, avoid damaging crops or

wild plants, and refrain from burning waste or altering the natural landscape. Fires or grilling on beaches and green areas are not allowed, and mobile restrooms must meet hygiene standards.

Violations of the regulations carry significant penalties. Camping without a permit will result in a fine of RO200, with repeat offenders being removed from the site immediately. Additional violations, such as improper site use or environmental damage, will incur a fine of RO50.

Muscat's winter camping guidelines aim to strike a balance between enjoying nature and protecting it for future generations. Campers are encouraged to follow the rules to ensure a safe and pleasant experience for all.

National campaign promoting clean energy concludes

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) successfully concluded its national campaign, 'Our Sustainable Energy', in Muscat governorate on Tuesday. The final stop of the campaign saw broad participation from government and private institutions, civil society organisations, and volunteer teams.

An APSR official said that the

Muscat campaign focused on raising public awareness about clean energy, advancing energy efficiency initiatives, and promoting sustainable consumption practices. It also encouraged the adoption of innovative technologies powered by alternative energy sources.

Launched in Dhofar, the campaign visited North Batinah and South Batinah governorates before culminating in Muscat. It attracted over 200 participants

from diverse sectors who discussed three main themes: sustainable construction, renewable energy, and electric vehicles.

Throughout the campaign, entities such as the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, Nama Supply Company, Petroleum Development Oman, Nafath Renewable Energy Company, the Electric Vehicles Club, and the Green

Universe Foundation presented working papers. These sessions explored topics like energy efficiency, consumption rationalisation, and strategies for ensuring the sustainability of energy projects and environmental development in Oman.

Participants expressed satisfaction with the campaign's achievements, noting its role in enhancing awareness about clean energy and supporting the sultanate's strategic goals.

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Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Turkish inflation eases to 47.1% in November

Türkiye's annual inflation rate eased to 47.09% in November, marking its lowest point since June 2023, according to official data released Tuesday.

The decline represents the sixth consecutive month of easing inflation, down from October's 48.58%, TurkStat reported.

Energy prices showed significant relief, with annual increases slowing to 46.08% in November compared to 59.37% in October.

Food and non-alcoholic beverages price hike, on the other hand, accelerated to 48.57% year-on-year in November, versus 45.28% in October.

Apex Media's inaugural CXO Awards set to honour top corporate executives

Muscat – Apex Media's inaugural Business Today CXO Awards, one of the most prestigious corporate honours, will recognise top-performing executives across industries. The gala awards ceremony is scheduled for Wednesday, December 18, at the Sheraton Oman Hotel, Muscat.

H E Dr Said Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, will be the chief guest at the prestigious event. Infiniti, distributed in Oman by Al Hashar Automotive, is the luxury auto partner for the event.

Saleh Zakwani, Executive Chairman of Apex Media and Editor-in-Chief of Muscat Daily, said, "The CXO Awards aim to celebrate not only individual excellence but also the collective impact that visionary leaders bring to their organisations and industries. It is a tribute to those who have shown wise leadership in driving progress and shaping the future of business. We look forward to honouring these business leaders at this event."

More than 25 awards will be presented during the awards ceremony, celebrating excellence in



H E Dr Said Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, will be the chief guest at the Business Today CXO Awards 2024

Business Today CXO Awards ceremony will be attended by over 200 senior corporate executives from sectors including oil & gas, banking and finance, insurance, investments, energy, FMCG, manufacturing, logistics, tourism, automotive, retail and more

leadership roles such as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), Chief Strategy Officer (CSO), Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), Chief Information Officer (CIO), Chief Digital Officer (CDO), Chief Marketing Officer

(CMO), Chief Risk Officer (CRO), Chief Investment Officer (CIO), Chief Internal Audit Officer (CAO), Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO), Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), Chief Legal Officer (CLO) and Chief Commercial Officer (CCO), etc.

Additionally, a special recognition will be given to the overall CXO in Oman, alongside top CXOs from the other five participating GCC countries.

The awards are open to C-level senior executives responsible for overseeing key functions within their organisations across various sectors. Nominees will be evaluated on both qualitative and quantitative factors, including leadership excellence, demonstrated by their ability to lead teams and drive organisational success. They will also be judged on their contributions to setting and achieving strategic objectives, initiatives that have significantly impacted their businesses or industries, exceptional financial performance, and significant achievements in industry growth, thought leadership and community development.

The event will be attended by over 200 senior corporate executives from sectors including oil & gas, banking and finance, insurance, investments, energy, FMCG, manufacturing, logistics, tourism, automotive, retail and more.

Beyond recognising the best in corporate leadership, the evening will offer high level networking opportunity and flavour of Omani entertainment. A keynote address will be delivered by an internationally renowned thought leader, adding depth and insight to the distinguished gathering. The event is set to bring together some of the most prominent business figures, making it a key occasion for corporate executives and industry leaders to share knowledge and build valuable connections.

The Business Today CXO Awards 2024, organised by Interactive Apex and Muscat Daily, promises to be a must-attend event for the corporate community. For more information on awards, table reservations or partnerships, contact: sajir@apexmedia.co.om or call +968 9947 4314

Hind Bahwan appointed as chairperson of the Family Business Council Gulf

Muscat – The Family Business Council Gulf (FBCG), a non-profit organisation dedicated to the continuity and success of family businesses in the GCC region, recently announced its leadership transition. Sheikha Hind Bahwan has been appointed as Chairperson, with Hassan Jameel assuming the role of Vice Chairman.

This leadership transition reflects FBCG's mission to lead by example, demonstrating how family businesses can navigate succession while remaining rooted in values of collaboration, resilience, and service to the community.

"Family businesses are the lifeblood of our region, sustaining not only economies but the communities they touch," said Sheikha Hind Bahwan. "It is an honour to take on this responsibility, and I am committed to working with our members to ensure their success and sustainability across generations."

Family businesses are a vital pillar of the GCC's economy, accounting for 90% of the private sector, contributing 60% of the region's GDP, and employing over 80% of its workforce. How-



ever, many face challenges during generational transitions, with research showing only 33% of family businesses in the region have a robust, documented, and communicated succession plan, compared to 55% globally.

Outgoing FBCG Chairman Omar Alghanim expressed his gratitude for his tenure, remarking, "Serving as Chairman of FBCG for the past six years has been an honor - and a deeply rewarding one - as I worked to fulfill that promise. During our tenure, together with Omar al

Futtaim and the leadership team, we were also building a bridge to the future. Sheikha Hind Bahwan and Hassan Jameel are both exemplars of our broader mission and will deliver world-class leadership for a new era of family businesses in the region. This transition embodies the principles of planning and foresight that we believe in and champion at FBCG."

New leadership for a new era

Sheikha Hind Bahwan's deep

connection to the family business ecosystem and her experience as a leader in the technology and business sectors position her uniquely to guide FBCG into the future. Hassan Jameel, known for his commitment to innovation and sustainability, complements this vision. His roles in Abdul Latif Jameel and Community Jameel reflect his dedication to addressing global challenges while staying grounded in the region's heritage.

"Family businesses are not

just about preserving the past; they are about building a stronger future," said Hassan Jameel. "Together with Sheikha Hind Bahwan, the FBCG Board and our members, I look forward to ensuring that FBCG continues to support a focus on innovation and inclusivity, to collectively drive the long-term prosperity of our region."

he incoming leadership was announced at FBCG's 11th Annual Summit in Doha, Qatar and co-hosted by the Alfardan Group. This year's theme, 'Envision, Embrace & Empower,' underscored the importance of visionary leadership, adaptability, and the empowerment of future generations in navigating the rapidly changing global landscape.

Under its new leadership, FBCG remains committed to addressing critical continuity issues for family businesses in the GCC through networking, educational initiatives, and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, FBCG collaborates with leaders and stakeholders to identify and address sustainability challenges, propelling family businesses in the GCC towards a thriving future.

Belarus signs contract with Oman to supply dry milk products

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Belarus-based Lida Milk Canning Plant has signed an agreement to supply dry milk products to Oman and neighbouring states in 2025, valued at approximately \$10mn. The agreement was signed on the sidelines of Oman Agrofood 2024 in Muscat, according to Belarus' official news agency BelTA.

According to the report, the Omani and neighbouring markets hold a significant share in the export portfolio of Lida Milk Canning Plant and its subsidiaries. This agreement will help the company ramp up exports to Oman and other countries in the region.

Leading enterprises of the Belarusian dairy industry are participating in Oman Agrofood 2024, which is being held from December 2-4, with the support of Oman's Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth, and Water Resources.

The annual event brings to-

gether producers and processors of agricultural goods, exporters and importers, government agencies, and public organizations. In 2023, the exhibition featured 100 exhibitors from 15 countries, attracting 6,760 visitors from 29 countries, according to the BelTA report.

The exhibition covers various sectors, including animal husbandry, crop cultivation, fisheries, agricultural technologies, food, and packaging.

"The exhibition is an excellent opportunity for Belarusian companies to showcase their export potential and examine the latest achievements and technical solutions in agriculture, fisheries, and the food industry," said the Belarusian National Center for Marketing.

'Oman Agrofood 2024 is also an effective platform for establishing business ties, identifying promising areas of cooperation, sharing best practices, and concluding foreign trade deals,' the center added.



110 companies showcase petrochemical innovations at GPCA Forum

Muscat – The 18th Annual Forum of the Gulf Petrochemical and Chemicals Association (GPCA) continued its activities on Tuesday, marking the second consecutive day of sessions that explored the trajectory of the petrochemical industry in alignment with the GCC vision. Discussions focused on strategic partnerships and their role in achieving growth, efficiency, and sustainability.

The forum's exhibition showcased groundbreaking innovations and advancements in the petrochemical sector. Over 110 local, regional, and international companies participated in the exhibition, highlighting their efforts in areas such as sustain-

ability, digital transformation, and carbon neutrality.

Mulham bin Basheer al-Jarf, Deputy President for Investment at the Oman Investment Authority and Chairman of the Board of Directors of OQ Group, delivered a speech at the forum, emphasising OQ's contributions. He noted that OQ aligns with Oman Vision 2040, supporting private sector growth.

Al-Jarf pointed out that the group had launched initial public offerings (IPOs) this year to support Oman's economic diversification policies, attract both domestic and foreign investments, and strengthen the private sector. He further highlighted the importance of



the 18th Annual GPCA Forum in discussing the future of the petrochemical industry and its

sustainability efforts in the coming years.

The forum also delved into

GPCA Forum explores the importance of regional and international partnerships and fostering the growth of GCC petrochemical sector

the ambitious visions and strategic plans for the future of the petrochemical industry in GCC countries, addressing challenges such as market fluctuations, regulatory changes, and sustainabil-

ity goals.

Shaikh Nawaf al-Sabah, Deputy Chairman and CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), emphasised the continuing critical role of hydrocarbons in meeting global energy demand. He stated, "While renewable energy sources will play an increasingly significant role, hydrocarbons will remain indispensable. By 2040 and 2050, even with full utilisation of renewable energy, nuclear power, and coal, hydrocarbons are expected to account for a quarter of global energy demand."

The forum also explored the importance of regional and international partnerships in shaping the future of the petrochemical

industry and fostering the growth of the GCC petrochemical sector, highlighting significant developments in recent years.

In a session with chief executives, discussions centred on the evolution and growth of the chemicals industry over the next decade, driven by technological advancements, sustainability imperatives, trade dynamics, market regulations, and emerging global markets. These shifts are expected to open new avenues for growth.

Participants also examined how chemical producers are navigating climate challenges while balancing investments in sustainability and innovation.

China unleashes economy to fight Trump tariffs

China has announced more than \$2.03tn in stimulus to boost economic growth, but many analysts think Beijing hasn't gone far enough

Nik Martin

China's economy is still struggling to recover from the pandemic, nearly two years after Beijing dropped its draconian zero-COVID lockdowns. In the first three quarters of 2024, economic growth came at 4.8% - just shy of Beijing's 5% target.

Deflation, weak consumer demand and a huge real estate crash have hurt the country's incredible growth trajectory, while ongoing trade tensions with the United States - likely to worsen under Donald Trump's second term - have hurt exports, which were credited with helping China's ascent to become the world's second-largest economy.

"China suffers from overproduction and under-consumption," George Magnus, a research associate at the University of Oxford's China Centre and former chief economist at UBS, told DW. "[Chinese leaders] have finally recognised that the economy seems to be losing momentum and is not a one-off."

Targeted approach to stimulus

In September, Beijing injected liquidity into the banking system worth 2.7tn yuan (\$370bn) to encourage lending, cut interest rates and announced new infrastructure spending and aid to in-

debted property developers.

Earlier this month, the Chinese government unveiled a further boost worth 10tn yuan to help ease a debt crisis among regional governments, which borrowed heavily for infrastructure and economic development projects in recent years.

These measures sparked a spectacular short-term rally in Chinese stocks - the CSI 300 index of the largest stocks listed in Shanghai and Shenzhen soared by 35%. Investors bet that Beijing would soon announce trillions more yuan to help boost domestic consumption.

"There was speculation that there would be finally demand-side policy to support consumption. So far, none of this has come true," Singapore-based Jiayu Li, senior associate at the public-policy advisory firm Global Counsel, told DW.

Not real stimulus measures Li said that while the package announced was "impressive," it was primarily focused on restructuring existing debts and "cannot be regarded as a new stimulus." She said Beijing was still underestimating the size of local government debt at 14.3tn yuan. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has put the figure at 60tn yuan, or 47.6% of the gross domestic product (GDP).

The new measures are much



larger than the amount unleashed in the wake of the 2008/09 financial crisis, which was worth up to 4tn yuan. Then, however, the measures equated to almost 13% of GDP, versus about 10% this year. This intervention helped China to keep GDP growth above 8% during the global downturn.

Trump 2.0 impact

Many other China watchers also think the recent moves don't go far enough, especially with Trump threatening new US tariffs on Chinese imports when he

returns to the White House in January. Trump said on Monday he would put an additional 10% levy on all Chinese goods entering the US, potentially raising the overall tariff to 35%.

A poll of economists by the Reuters news agency last week predicted that new US tariffs could hurt China's growth by up to a percentage point.

"The market is hoping that Beijing is choosing to hold off on more fiscal measures until next year [when Trump takes office]," Li told DW, adding that concerns are growing that the impact of

any potential stimulus will be even more limited by then.

Magnus, meanwhile, said he thinks the new tariffs "won't have a huge impact" on China's economy, although they may lead to further weakening of the yuan.

During the first round of Trump's tariffs in March 2018, Beijing offset some of the impact by letting the yuan depreciate, which made Chinese exports cheaper. The currency fell by roughly 12% against the US dollar, reaching its lowest point in nearly a decade by August 2019. Washington then labeled China

a "currency manipulator," which sparked even higher US tariffs for months until negotiations eased tensions somewhat between the two powers.

Huang Yiping, dean of the National School of Development at Peking University and a member of the People's Bank of China's Monetary Policy Committee, has called for a much larger stimulus program to "stabilise and spur domestic demand."

In an interview this month with the South China Morning Post, he called for Beijing to unleash a "Chinese Marshall Plan,"

referring to the post-World War II economic aid program launched by the US to rebuild Europe.

Huang's version proposes using China's surplus industrial capacity to help low-income countries in the Global South build new infrastructure and transition to renewable energies. The proposal is, however, likely to face a backlash from the West, which is already concerned about China's growing influence in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Other analysts agree that Beijing still needs to inject substantial amounts into the economy - with projections ranging between a further 5tn yuan to 10tn yuan. Union Bancaire Privée (UBP) Asia senior economist Carlos Casanova told Reuters this month that a 23tn yuan package was needed.

Many analysts also recommend that any future stimulus should focus on social welfare spending for households and more help for the ailing real estate sector, rather than traditional industrial investment and infrastructure projects.

While Magnus agreed that the government will "fine-tune" its policies to boost domestic demand, he is skeptical whether China will speedily move from a production-based, export-driven economy.

"I'm not saying that Beijing will be hollow when it comes to further stimulus measures, but I think the government's priority is certainly not to change the development model to become a more consumer-led, welfare-oriented economy," he told DW. DW

Air India's transformation, merger within two years showcase its ability, CEO says

New Delhi, India - Air India's successful merger of four airlines within two years, along with its ongoing transformation, demonstrates its ability to manage significant changes, said Campbell Wilson, CEO of Air India.

During a recent media briefing, Wilson explained that the merger process had been two years in the making. A critical aspect of this process was aligning the operating procedures and manuals across all four airlines. In other countries, this could have taken approximately five to eight years, he noted.

Recently, Air India completed its merger with Vistara, while Air India Express and AIX Connect Pvt Ltd (formerly AirAsia India) also merged under the group's banner.

"We had to harmonise the op-



Air India CEO Campbell Wilson

erating procedures across the four airlines. Once we had achieved that, we needed to train all staff on the new procedures so that, when the Air Operator Certificates (AOCs) were integrated, employees could collaborate seamlessly, regardless of the airline they came from. This en-

sured the entire operation could run smoothly," Wilson said.

He also highlighted the addition of around 9,000 new employees during this period, which significantly reduced the average age of staff from 54 to 35. The average age of cabin crew is now 28.

Wilson further shared that the group currently operates 300 aircraft, employs 30,000 staff, and conducts 1,200 daily flights. These figures underscore the scale of the new Air India group.

Air India now commands a 29% share of India's domestic market, up from single digits at the time of privatisation. It holds a 55% market share on metro routes and a 40% share on the top 120 routes, which together account for 60% of domestic traffic, he added.

The airline's fleet comprises 120 aircraft with business class and 70 wide-body aircraft flying to 48 international destinations. Additionally, Air India has placed an order for 470 new aircraft and invested \$200 million in infrastructure.

ANI

'Bitcoin \$100K' was so near, yet so far. What's next?

Kyle Torpey

Some analysts say that slowed rally is likely a result of profit-taking by relatively new investors into the crypto asset, with longer-term investors holding on to their bitcoin

The "bitcoin \$100,000" price milestone has proven elusive. Some analysts are blaming skittish investors taking profits as companies continue to purchase the crypto asset.

Bitcoin, the largest cryptocurrency by market cap, rose to an all-time high over \$99,500 recently. The \$100,000 mark seemed imminent. Now, however, it's closer to \$95,000.

What happened? And what's next?

Bitcoin's rally picked up steam after Donald Trump's electoral victory, with optimism regarding a more crypto-friendly administration and Congress that could pave the way for regulatory clarity the crypto-industry has been seeking helping to lift bitcoin and other crypto assets.

Still, that rally has slowed lately. Some analysts say that is likely a result of profit-taking by relatively new investors into the asset, with longer-term investors holding on to their bitcoin.

Most of the selling "is coming from 2024 buyers who bought above \$56,000," said Galaxy Digital CEO Mike Novogratz in an X post Sunday, citing Galaxy's research. "Normal profit taking."

Bitcoin analyst James Check said those who purchased bitcoin around \$68,000 six weeks ago are responsible for a large amount of the selling.

Investors pull money out of Bitcoin ETFs

Strong selling was also seen in



bitcoin exchange-traded funds (ETFs) last week, as the category had its third-largest day of outflows on record at \$435.3mn, according to Farside Investors.

This follows the large inflows that seen in these products since Election Day. (BlackRock's iShares Bitcoin Trust (IBIT) saw \$267.8mn of inflows on previous Monday, despite the net outflows for the category as a whole.)

Bitcoin rose to an all-time high over \$99,500 recently. The \$100,000 mark seemed imminent. Now, however, it's closer to \$95,000

Bitcoin ETFs hold bitcoin and they needed to purchase it as more investors poured money into these products. That's why spot bitcoin ETFs were partially responsible for the cryptocurrency's rise this year.

Where is Bitcoin headed?

So far this year, bitcoin prices have more than doubled, gaining

roughly 120%. The S&P 500, a broad stock index, has risen about 25%.

Some analysts called for bitcoin to rise above \$100,000, though others figured that might not last. Novogratz in a CNBC interview last week said he expected a price correction, though not one that sends bitcoin below \$80,000.

The recent weakness comes at a time when more companies are purchasing bitcoin. MicroStrategy (MSTR) announced the purchase of another \$5.4bn worth of bitcoin on Monday morning. Companies such as Marathon Digital (MARA), Semler Scientific (SMLR) and Rumble (RUM) have also committed to purchasing bitcoin.

If that trend continues it could bolster bitcoin prices, according to Coinbase Research.

"We think that these corporate inflows represent an increasingly important source of capital inflow into the space as corporate purchase plans that we think may be relatively more price inelastic," Coinbase researchers wrote in recent commentary.5 "This could contribute to continued market momentum in the near term." (Source: Investopedia.com)

US Fed official signals December rate cut

Washington, US - The US Federal Reserve is aiming to lower its policy interest rate in December, an official said Monday.

Speaking at an event, Christopher Waller, a member of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, said inflation in the country is continuing on a downward path to 2% over the medium term.

"I lean toward supporting a cut to the policy rate at our December meeting," he added.

Waller said the decision to cut will depend on upcoming figures.

Last month, the Fed reduced interest rates by 25 basis points to a range of 4.5% to 4.75%.



The move was the second rate cut by the central bank in four years, since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

In September, the bank lowered rates by 50 basis points, exceeding expectations.

The annual inflation rate was at 2.6% in October and 2.4% in

September.

Meanwhile, US President-elect Donald Trump's latest threats to impose sweeping new tariffs on imports, particularly from China, are raising alarms over their potential to significantly hike the cost of living for American families.

Trump's proposals include a universal tariff of 10% to 20% on all imports and additional tariffs of 60% to 100% on goods from China, which would be layered on top of existing duties.

If implemented, the measures would dramatically inflate the cost of key consumer items such as clothing, toys, furniture,

household appliances, footwear, and travel goods.

Nancy Vanden Houten, lead economist at Oxford Economics, said if implemented, the tariffs would likely be inflationary, creating challenges for the Federal Reserve.

"If these tariffs were implemented as threatened, we expect that they would be passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices, which would be inflationary. That would probably slow the rate at which the Federal Reserve lowers interest rates, although we can't say that for sure," she said.

Anadolu Agency

BankDhofar launches educational platform for financial literacy

BankDhofar has announced the launch of a digital education platform focused on financial literacy to raise the level of financial awareness among individuals in the Sultanate of Oman.

The initiative is carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, represented by the National Program for Fiscal Sustainability and Financial Sector Development (Estdama) and with the participation of a number of government entities; the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, the SME Development Authority and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, represented by Youth Centers.

BankDhofar's initiative to spread financial literacy among the community is achieved by leveraging the expertise and skills of its employees to create educational and informative content that can be accessed through digital learning platforms. The platform offers a variety of training programs and interactive courses covering various aspects of the financial sector, such as basic money management, online payments, credit and insurance products, investing and financial planning for the future. The platform also provides specialized educational tools and resources to support



Dr Khalid bin Salim al Hamadani

employees, entrepreneurs and SMEs and enhance their skills to manage their finances efficiently.

"The launch of this platform stems from our belief in the importance of financial education in empowering individuals to make sound financial decisions and

achieve financial stability. We are confident that this initiative will go a long way in enhancing the financial inclusion in Oman and meeting the needs of various segments of the society. This aligns with BankDhofar's mission to provide integrated financial services, achieve financial inclusion, and strengthen its position as a reliable partner in the sustainable development which is in line with the Oman Vision 2040," said Dr Khalid bin Salim al Hamadani, Chief Human Resources Officer at BankDhofar.

The platform contains a variety of educational materials covering a wide range of financial

topics in a simple and easy-to-understand language. The platform is interactive and flexible, allowing users to interact with the educational content and select programs that meet their needs. The platform can be accessed through computers and smart mobile devices, making it easy for users to benefit from its services anytime and anywhere.

On the other hand, BankDhofar has recently launched a series of podcasts in partnership with Hala FM on YouTube channel to raise awareness about financial literacy. The episodes covered several important financial topics, including fraud, investment,

marketing, customer experience, and others.

The bank is committed to strengthening its position in the financial and banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman by encouraging innovation and enriching the banking experience for its customers through the provision of the best products and services and the utilisation of the latest technology, and is determined to achieve its vision and implement its comprehensive customer-centric operational strategy.

BankDhofar is committed to playing an interactive role in the community, as the launch of the educational program comes within the bank's efforts to promote and spread financial literacy. In addition to other initiatives adopted by the bank, such as organising the first Omani Women's Leadership Forum in the presence of a group of women leaders from various sectors with the aim of empowering women financially, and launching comprehensive life-cycle banking products and services such as; ladies, children, youth and minors accounts, which can be opened easily via the BankDhofar's app. The bank also launched a special account for SMEs, as well as creating a dedicated page on the bank's official website with content focused on financial literacy.



Sohar International holds forum

Sohar International continues to strengthen its commitment to societal development through strategic initiatives that enhance learning and professional growth within the local community.

In line with this commitment, Dr Saud al Shidhani, Chief Transformation Officer at Sohar International, recently conducted two expert-led sessions at Muscat University centred on Customer Experience (CX). These sessions, designed for undergraduates, alumni, and postgraduate participants, aimed to equip emerging business leaders with critical skills to optimize customer satisfaction and drive long-term loyalty.

Emphasising the significance of initiatives like the Customer Experience Programme, Dr Shidhani emphasised the importance of programmes like the Customer Experience initiative.

"Through such efforts, Sohar International endeavours to bridge the gap between academic theory and real-world application, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of customer experience and its significant impact on sustainable business growth," Dr Shidhani added.

In today's highly competitive environment, where customer expectations are continually evolving, a well-rounded approach to CX is essential. This programme empowers students to navigate

the complexities of customer satisfaction and design experiences that engage diverse audiences effectively, he elaborated. "At Sohar International, we recognise that education is a transformative force that drives societal progress. The youth of Oman, as the future leaders and change agents, must be equipped with the skills to excel in a rapidly changing landscape."

The Customer Experience Program provides participants with advanced knowledge and practical tools for optimising customer interactions by identifying and addressing pain points throughout the customer journey.

The curriculum seamlessly integrates theoretical insights with practical strategies, covering key areas such as understanding customer needs, journey mapping, persona development, feedback analysis, and employee training.

This comprehensive approach ensures that students gain the expertise needed to measure and enhance customer experiences, tackle real-world business challenges, and create impactful solutions that promote customer satisfaction, loyalty, and continuous improvement.

Sohar International's collaboration with Muscat University reinforces the bank's commitment to fostering a future-ready workforce that drives innovation and sets new benchmarks of excellence.

ahli islamic opens new branch in Al Khoudh 6

ahli islamic is proud to announce the opening its opening of its latest branch in the wilayat of Seeb in Al Khoudh 6.

Established to offer sharia'a-compliant banking products and services, the new branch is set to facilitate the diverse needs of its growing customer base.

The branch was officially inaugurated on November 27 under the auspices of H E Dr Nasser Rashid al Ma'awali, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Economy.



Located in the bustling Al Khoudh 6, the new ahli islamic branch will serve as a vital hub for providing sharia'a-compliant banking products and services.

The bank is committed to spearheading innovation, meeting the evolving needs of its clientele, and capitalising on the growing opportunities in the region. This new branch showcases ahli islamic's mission to provide exceptional value to its customers, thereby becoming accessible to all people in Oman.

ahli islamic's strategic expansion into Al Khoudh 6 marks another milestone in its journey to redefine Islamic banking within the sultanate. With a team of experienced professionals and a state-of-the-art facility, the branch is poised to deliver innovative, sharia'a-compliant solutions tailored to meet the evolving needs of its customers.

This expansion also reflects ahli islamic's unwavering commitment to integrity and its dedication.

Lincoln Aviator offers luxury, versatility on every drive

The Lincoln Aviator is a strikingly luxurious SUV that redefines what it means to drive in style and comfort. Powered by a robust twin-turbocharged 3.0-litre V6 engine paired with a smooth 10-speed SelectShift® automatic transmission, the Aviator delivers a powerful 400hp and 562Nm of torque. This refined performance allows for effortlessly swift acceleration, while its three-row seating and off-road capability make it a perfect blend of luxury and versatility.

Every drive in the Aviator is an experience of tailored elegance, thanks to its Lincoln Drive Modes, which offer five distinct settings: Normal, Conserve, Excite, Slippery and Deep Conditions. These modes allow drivers to customise their driving dynamics, with each selection vividly displayed on the 12.3-inch configurable LCD instrument cluster, enhanced by clear, dynamic graphics.

Making every journey smooth and enjoyable, the Aviator comes equipped with advanced technology that 'sees' rough roads before you even feel them. With Adaptive Suspension and Road Preview, an advanced forward camera constantly scans the road for potholes or uneven



With just the push of a button, the Aviator handles steering, shifting, braking and acceleration during parking

surfaces, adjusting the suspension in real-time for an exceptionally smooth ride.

Safety and driver-assistance come standard in the Aviator, courtesy of Lincoln Co-Pilot360. Features like Traffic Jam Assist manage speed and lane position-

ing during heavy traffic, while Evasive Steer Assist provides extra steering support to help avoid sudden obstacles. Reverse Brake Assist enhances peace of mind by stopping the vehicle if sensors detect an obstacle while backing up.

And when it comes to parking, Active Park Assist 2.0 takes the stress out of the process. With just the push of a button, the Aviator handles steering, shifting, braking and acceleration, allowing it to easily manoeuvre into parallel or perpendicular spaces.

The Lincoln Aviator elevates every journey with the perfect blend of power, sophistication and intelligent design.

Toyota Corolla promises rewarding journey in newly crafted elegant design

The Toyota Corolla continues to set the gold standard in the automotive world, effortlessly blending elegant design, advanced technology and a beautifully crafted interior. Since its debut, the Corolla has become an icon synonymous with reliability, versatility and pure driving satisfaction. From its sleek, dynamic exterior to its sophisticated, well-appointed cabin, the Corolla exemplifies the perfect harmony of style, spaciousness, comfort, fuel efficiency and power.

The Corolla offers two impressive engine options designed to thrill and perform. The 2.0-litre Dynamic Force engine packs a powerful 168 horsepower and 20.39 kg-m of torque, paired with a Direct Shift CVT transmission, delivering a more immersive and engaging driving experience. For those seeking an exceptional balance of power and fuel economy, the 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine option generates 121 horsepower and 15.7 kg-m of torque, also equipped with a smooth CVT transmission for an economical yet responsive drive.

Inside, the Corolla's interior is as refined as it is inviting. The minimalist yet sophisticated de-



sign emphasises space, comfort and elegance, making each journey a pleasure. Newly cushioned, ergonomically designed seats, a spacious armrest and ample legroom create a premium experience for both driver and passengers. Rear-seat passengers will appreciate the added comfort of rear AC vents, while a host of thoughtful amenities—such as a moon roof, a 4.2-inch multi-information display (MID), a 7-inch display audio system, cruise control and a six-speaker sound system enhance every drive.

Toyota's unwavering commitment to safety shines in the Corolla, equipped with a suite of advanced safety features to keep you and your loved ones protected. Four SRS airbags, Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Brake Assist, Electronic Brake-force Distribution (EBD) and a Tyre Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS) work in unison, providing peace of mind at every turn.

With its legendary performance, stylish design and pre-

mium comfort, the Toyota Corolla continues to captivate enthusiasts and set the benchmark for what a sedan should be.

Specifications of vehicle imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions & fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories. Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications.

MoH to launch package of screenings for newborns, affianced couples

In preparation for entering a new expanded phase of newborn screening for metabolic disorders and premarital screening for certain hereditary blood disorders and infectious diseases, H E Dr Saeed bin Harib al Lamki, Undersecretary for Health Affairs in the Ministry of Health, chaired a meeting with the team responsible for monitoring the implementation of the initiative.

The national initiative, which will be implemented by the ministry in January 2025, reflects Oman's commitment to raising healthier and more resilient generations.

During the meeting, H E Lamki emphasised that the expansion of services for the target groups aims to assist community members, particularly those planning to marry, in building healthy and stable families and raising healthy children. This will contribute to the future development of a strong society, as the family is the fundamental building block of any community.

H E Lamki stressed the importance of raising awareness among the target groups, ensuring that both partners fully un-



derstand and are convinced that marriage should only proceed after undergoing medical screenings, being fully informed of the results, and providing proof of having completed these tests.

He also highlighted that the newborn screening service will make a significant difference in

the future of families, allowing for early treatment or interventions if the test results reveal any genetic disorders.

H E Lamki pointed out that the initiative, expected to be officially launched in January 2025, offers a package of tests targeting individuals planning to marry. These

tests aim to determine whether either partner is affected by or carries certain hereditary or infectious blood disorders. The initiative provides couples with options and alternatives, enabling them to make informed and appropriate decisions.

Regarding the importance of

this screening, H E Lamki stated that it helps prevent children from suffering from hereditary diseases and reduces the transmission of certain hereditary and infectious blood disorders. This contributes to minimising many psychological, social, and economic challenges faced by fami-

lies with children affected by such conditions.

The national programme for early newborn screening also aims to detect any genetic disorders that may cause serious complications. The program focuses on conducting newborn screenings as early as possible to

prevent disease-related complications and to reduce rates of morbidity, disability, and mortality resulting from genetic disorders. It is worth mentioning that, congenital anomalies and genetic disorders are among the leading causes of disability, morbidity, and child mortality in Oman.

Nepal Embassy holds trainer's training programme on social security services

The Embassy of Nepal has organised a trainer's training programme for Social Security Enrolment and Regularisation Services, Passport and Consular Services at Nepal House from 6pm to 9.30pm on Monday.

During the event, H E Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of Nepal, elaborated about the Social Security Fund (SSF), initiatives taken the Government of Nepal and importance of SSF. He highlighted about the relevance of the Trainer's Training to educate Nepali workers in Oman who could further assist other Nepalis in the process of enrolment and regularization of social security.

During the event, queries raised by the participants related to SSF were addressed by Bibek Panthee, Deputy Executive Director, SSF.

Radhika Niraula, Assistant Director and Rajesh Chapagain, IT officer shared the information and trained the participants about SSF. Bishesh Kumar Sah,



Second Secretary, explained about Passport and Consular Services and showcased the passport application. H E Aryal handed over a Training certificate to each of the participant.

The embassy organised the first-ever camp on the social security enrolment and regularisation services and Consular and Labour Awareness on November 29. Similarly, the embassy con-

ducted a SSF and Labour Awareness programme in Sohar on November 30.

Both events were graced with encouraging participation from the Nepali community members in Oman. The participants expressed happiness and also requested the embassy to continue such services. They also sought work permits to be issued from the embassy itself.

The embassy found out that most of the Nepali workers were unaware of the social security scheme and its relevance. Generally, the Nepali worker get enrolled in the SSF at the time of getting labour approval in Nepal, but they don't continue with the scheme. Hence the embassy took the initiative to organise events with the support of SSF team, it informed.

Zubair EDC participates in UTAS forum in Shinas

The Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC), a social initiative of The Zubair Corporation, recently participated in the Entrepreneurship Forum hosted by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Shinas. Organised in collaboration with the Department of Small and Medium Enterprises Development in North Batinah governorate, the three-day forum carried the theme 'Innovation for a Sustainable Future' and featured various initiatives aimed at empowering entrepreneurs.

The event was inaugurated under the patronage of Sheikh Abdullah bin Salem bin Hamdan al Hajri, wali of Shinas, and attended by Dr Ahmed bin Abdullah al Balushi, Assistant President of UTAS Shinas, alongside prominent officials from multiple sectors.

The forum's objectives included fostering awareness of entrepreneurship's significance,



Zubair Corporation, remarked "Since its inception over a decade ago, Zubair EDC has consistently engaged with educational institutions across Oman, delivering workshops and offering expert guidance to support student entrepreneurs and their innovative business ventures."

Echoing this sentiment, Iman al Rubaie, Lecturer at UTAS Shinas, noted "The partnership with Zubair EDC has enriched our Entrepreneurship Forum, providing attendees with valuable insights and fostering collaboration between academia and the business sector. Initiatives like this play a pivotal role in empowering young minds to achieve their professional aspirations."

The forum also featured the Entrepreneurs Exhibition, showcasing projects by business owners, student entrepreneurs, artisans, and home-based ventures, along with contributions from entities supporting entrepreneurship.

equipping participants with essential skills through workshops, and nurturing creativity, innovation, and a competitive spirit among students. Zubair EDC's participation underscored its commitment to collaborating with educational institutions to develop the youth sector and inspire innovation, aligning with Oman Vision 2040's goals of advancing entrepreneurship and youth development.

Hilal al Siyabi, Head of Business Services Support at The

NBO's Muzn Islamic launches eco-friendly credit and debit cards

NBO Muzn Islamic Banking offers a range of eco-friendly credit and debit cards, combining sharia'a-compliant finance with sustainable practices. Such cards allow customers to manage their finances responsibly while contributing to environmental sustainability.

Following Ujrah fee structures and credit limits based on Qardh Al Hasan guidelines, eco-friendly cards provide secure global transactions, enhanced by One-Time Password (OTP) services for added protection during on-line purchases.

Muzn's credit card range includes three options, each catering to different customer

needs. The Gold Credit Card offers travel assistance and discounts on car rentals, the Platinum Credit Card provides access to airport lounges and exclusive offers, and the Signature Credit Card, designed for Priority Banking customers, features multi-trip travel insurance and concierge services.

Muzn also offers a variety of Visa Debit Cards tailored to different lifestyles. This includes the Visa Signature Debit Card, which comes with exclusive travel benefits; the Visa Platinum Debit Card, which offers savings on everyday purchases; and the Visa Classic Debit Card, which provides secure and convenient payment solutions.

Buckle up: Hollywood stars in Qatar Airways video

Qatar Airways has launched its latest in-flight safety video, spearheaded by comedian, actor, entrepreneur and newest Qatar Airways Global Brand Ambassador, Kevin Hart, bringing together global and social media superstars to help deliver important safety messages to passengers. From December, Kevin Hart and other stars will be presenting the airline's in-flight safety procedures in a short and entertaining film. Directed by renowned Hollywood director Tim Story, the video has been created to engage passengers' attention and focus on the important safety instructions.

Travellers will not want to miss a moment of Hart's performance, or the star-studded cameo appearances that help him demonstrate the airline's important safety instructions. Supermodel Rosie Huntington-Whiteley assists him to reach new heights - in this instance, the



overhead lockers - and Anwar and Amal Jibawi remind him to ensure seatbelts are tightly secured and kept on throughout the flight. Additionally, Khaby Lame supports Kevin Hart doing what he does best, and Adam Waheed demonstrates how to put on an oxygen mask.

Qatar Airways Group Chief

Executive Officer, Badr Mohammed al Meer, said, "At Qatar Airways, the safety of our passengers and crew is our highest priority. Our main ambition for this project was to design an in-flight safety video that passengers will not want to miss."

"As we continue to become more technologically advanced,

we are seeing more and more passengers not paying enough attention to the in-flight safety video, instead opting for entertainment content on their other devices. We decided there was no better way to capture their attention than with their favourite celebrities and content creators. Shining a spotlight and amplify-

ing this message, we are proud to welcome Kevin Hart, our latest Global Brand Ambassador, to help spread the word."

Qatar Airways Global Brand Ambassador, comedian, actor and entrepreneur, Kevin Hart, said: "Buckle Up! This safety video is unlike anything you have seen on-board a luxury airline before. I have loved partnering with Qatar Airways to produce a video that passengers will not only pay attention to but remember for a long time coming, or at least until their next flight. Qatar Airways represents best-in-class service and attention to detail, and this video brings those elements to your seat-back screen. Now, sit back, relax and enjoy the flight!"

Hollywood Director Tim Story said: "When you have a world-class brand such as Qatar Airways providing the creative freedom to set new boundaries, you can really reach new heights."

Biden’s decision to pardon son didn’t go well with party officials

Washington, D.C., US - US President Joe Biden’s decision to pardon his son, Hunter Biden, has not been received well among Democratic party officials, who are exasperated by this allegedly last-minute decision.

Democratic members believe the pardon undermines trust in institutions and provides political cover for US President-elect Donald Trump to pursue alleged far-right ambitions that Democrats fear will harm the country, NBC news reported on

Tuesday. A former senior White House official said they and others around them were ‘certain’ that the president would ultimately pardon his son, while another ex-administration official described it as ‘extremely, painfully obvious that this was where things would end up’, according to CNN.

In an interview, Democratic strategist Chris Kofinis said: “The unfortunate thing here is he (Biden) basically has legitimised these (corruption) accusations



US President Joe Biden

against the Justice Department, and that is going to reverberate for the next four years. That’s the problem.”

Hunter Biden was found guilty of federal gun charges stemming from his possession of a firearm while addicted to drugs in 2018. In September of the same year, he pleaded guilty to federal tax charges.

Nearly a month before the end of his presidential term, Biden formally pardoned his son Hunter on Sunday evening, de-

spite previous promises not to use his executive powers.

The presidential pardon covers both convictions and represents a significant reversal for a president who has repeatedly pledged that he will not do so.

Later, Biden left the US on Sunday evening for a trip to Africa, where he is unlikely to face reporters for the next several days. Biden previously said in a lengthy statement that the charges against his son were politically motivated, claiming that

‘raw politics has infected’ the justice system and resulted in a ‘miscarriage of justice’.

“No reasonable person who looks at the facts of Hunter’s cases can reach any other conclusion than Hunter was singled out only because he is my son - and that is wrong. There has been an effort to break Hunter - who has been five and a half years sober, even in the face of unrelenting attacks and selective prosecution,” he said.

Anadolu Agency

Trump's pick chanted ‘Kill all Muslims’

Pete Hegseth, picked to lead the Department of Defence, is accused of chanting so in a drunken rage

Houston, US - US President-elect Donald Trump’s pick to lead the Department of Defence is accused of chanting ‘Kill all Muslims’ in a drunken rage at a Veterans group event in 2015, in addition to allegations of sexual impropriety and personal misconduct during a separate incident in 2017, according to the *New Yorker* magazine.

According to the report, Pete Hegseth was on a work trip in the state of Ohio on May 29, 2015 for the group Concerned Veterans for America when he allegedly got drunk at the hotel bar and yelled multiple times: “Kill all Muslims!”

“We’re not going to comment on outlandish claims laundered through *The New Yorker* by a petty and jealous disgruntled former associate of Mr Hegseth’s,” said his attorney Tim Parlatore in response to the *New Yorker*’s allegations. “Get back to us when you try your first attempt at actual journalism.”

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), America’s largest Muslim advocacy group, is not taking the accusations against Hegseth lightly, calling for Congress to reject his nomination.

“Based on his current views and past actions, it is clear Mr Hegseth is totally inappropriate as a nominee for secretary of defence,” said CAIR National Executive Director Nihad Awad in a statement. “Anyone who - even in a drunken state - would call for the slaughter of all members of a faith has disqualified himself from



According to a report, Pete Hegseth was on a work trip in the state of Ohio on May 29, 2015 when he allegedly got drunk at the hotel bar and yelled multiple times

Anyone who - even in a drunken state - would call for slaughter of all members of a faith has disqualified himself from holding an important position

NIHAD AWAD

holding an important position that would inevitably interact with representatives of Muslim-

majority nations.”

In addition to Hegseth’s alleged Islamophobic remarks, the

New Yorker detailed that Hegseth was also accused of personal misconduct, including the revelation that he had secretly paid a financial settlement to a woman who accused him of raping her in 2017.

Despite these revelations, Trump is standing by his choice for Secretary of Defence. “President Trump is nominating high-calibre and extremely qualified

candidates to serve in his administration,” Trump communications director Steven Cheung said in a statement, noting that the former Fox News anchor has not been charged with any crime.

Beyond the personal misconduct allegations, the *New Yorker* presented information about Hegseth’s previous record which the publication said raises additional decisions about his suit-

ability to run the world’s largest and most powerful military force. A paper trail of documents showed that Hegseth was forced to step down by the two veteran nonprofit advocacy groups he ran - Veterans for Freedom and Concerned Veterans for America - due to multiple allegations, including financial mismanagement, sexual impropriety and personal misconduct.

Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, described the report of Hegseth’s drinking as alarming and disqualifying, telling the *New Yorker* that the committee will carefully review Hegseth’s nomination.

“Much as we might be sympathetic to people with continuing alcohol problems, they shouldn’t be at the top of our national-security structure,” said Blumenthal. “It’s dangerous. The Secretary of Defence is involved in every issue of national security. He’s involved in the use of nuclear weapons. He’s the one who approves sending troops into combat. He approves drone strikes that may involve civilian casualties. Literally life-and-death issues are in the hands of the Secretary of Defence, and entrusting these kinds of issues to someone who might be incapacitated for any reason is a risk we cannot take.”

Blumenthal referred to a similar situation in 1989 during the George H W Bush administration when Senator John Tower, a Republican from Texas, was voted down by the Senate due to concerns about his drinking and womanising.

“John Tower went down for these same kinds of issues,” said Blumenthal. “I don’t think it’s a partisan issue.” Confirmation hearings for Trump’s Cabinet picks are expected to begin during the 119th Congressional session which starts on January 3.

Anadolu Agency

Trump chooses billionaire as UK ambassador

Washington, D.C., US - US President-elect Donald Trump on Monday nominated billionaire financial executive Warren Stephens as the next US ambassador to the UK.

“Warren has always dreamed of serving the United States full time. I am thrilled that he will now have that opportunity as the top diplomat, representing the USA to one of America’s most cherished and beloved allies,” Trump posted on his Truth Social platform. Stephens serves as chairman, president and CEO of Stephens Inc, a financial services company headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas. He has a net worth of US\$3.4bn, according to US news outlet Forbes.

Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin congratulated Stephens on the nomination, saying Trump ‘tapped one of our state’s finest to represent our nation and continue the special relationship we have with our cousins and staunch allies in the United Kingdom’.



Warren Stephens

Rewarded for Trump 2024 donations

Stephens donated money to a political action committee which supported Trump’s 2024 election campaign. It’s not uncommon in US politics for presidents to reward campaign donors with ambassadorial posts.

Trump will take office on January 20, 2025. Stephens’ ambassadorship will need to be confirmed by the US Senate, which will have a Republican-majority in January.

DW

Tanzania: Opposition cries foul after CCM victory

Dodoma, Tanzania - Official results show that Tanzania’s ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party won more than 98% of seats in last week’s local elections.

CCM has dominated the East African nation’s politics for decades, and the poll was widely seen as a test for Tanzania’s democratic institutions ahead of the presidential elections in October 2025. It was also the first time that President Samia Suluhu Hassan’s popularity was tested on the ballot.

The result seems to be a resounding success for the 64-year-old leader, who took office in 2021 after the death of President John Magufuli.

Godwin Gonde Amani, lecturer at Dr Salim Ahmed Salim Centre for Foreign Relations in Dar Es Salaam, noted that the overwhelming victory for ruling CCM signifies the party’s 60-year dominance of Tanzanian politics.

“The ruling party has advantages in the rural areas where other parties cannot manage to campaign or have very little support, and they have invested a lot,” Amani told DW.



Tanzania’s local elections delivered an overwhelming victory for the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party

Opposition alleges vote rigging

In the run-up to the vote, the opposition party, Chadema, protested against what it said were unfair disqualifications of some of its candidates. It also said three of its members were killed in incidents linked to local elections and accused the authorities of rigging the vote.

Rights groups and Western governments have cited repression, with opposition politicians facing frequent arrests, abduc-

tions and killings. On Monday, Tanzania’s opposition youth leader Abdul Nondo was found dumped at a beach in Dar es Salaam, a day after he was reportedly kidnapped in the city. He was severely injured and taken to the hospital. The Catholic Church in Tanzania condemned the violence, saying the country was going ‘through a trying period filled with pain and suffering’.

“This is an evil, but unfortunately, we do not see it being

strongly condemned,” Archbishop Jude Thaddeaus Ruwa’ichi said.

In 2019, the opposition boycotted the polls, citing violence and intimidation, paving the way for a clean CCM sweep of the seats.

However, President John Magufuli’s efforts to weaken opposition parties’ ability to participate in politics came at a cost. He was frequently at odds with Western partners, and international investment in Tanzania

stagnated.

When Suluhu Hassan became president following Magufuli’s death, political observers hailed her for shifting away from Magufuli’s oppressive restrictions on the opposition and media in Tanzania.

“President Magufuli had some setbacks for elections and democracy at large,” Amani said. “When Samia Suluhu came into power, she called for resilience and reconciliation, and tried to show that the opposition is given the same opportunities to participate in politics.”

Seen through that lens, ‘she has done far better in terms of democracy than Magufuli’.

According to Amani, some officials tried to use outdated mechanisms to control the opposition party.

Conrad John Masabo, a political science lecturer at the University of Dodoma, said it is important to distinguish between the rhetoric of President Samia Suluhu and her actions as representative of the CCM and institutional frameworks guiding elections and democracy in Tanzania.

DW

206 priceless archaeological, heritage sites destroyed by Israel in Gaza: Official

Gaza City, Palestine - The Israeli army has destroyed and vandalised 206 priceless archaeological and heritage sites amid its genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian official said on Tuesday.

"Palestinian archaeological and heritage sites were not spared from destruction, vandalism, looting and theft by the Israeli occupation army," Ismail Thawabteh, the head of Gaza's Government Media Office, told Anadolu. He said some of the sites were completely destroyed, while others took severe damage.

"Israel's targeting of these sites reflects a systematic strategy to obliterate the Palestinian identity," he added.

Prominent among archaeological sites targeted by the Israeli army in Gaza are the Great Omari Mosque, Byzantine Church in Jabalia, Shrine of Al-Khadir in the central Gaza city of Deir al-Balah, and Blakhiya Byzantine cemetery (the Anthon of Palestine) in northwestern Gaza City.

Also on the list are the Greek Orthodox Saint Porphyrius Church, 400-year-old Al-Saqa House, and Sayed al-Hashim Mosque, one of the oldest mosques in Gaza.

Some of the ancient and archaeological sites destroyed by



Some of the ancient and archaeological sites destroyed by the Israeli army date back to the Phoenician and Roman eras, while others date from between 800 BC and AD 1400

the Israeli army date back to the Phoenician and Roman eras, while others date from between 800 BC and AD 1400, and some more recent ones were built 400 years ago.

Gaza is an ancient and historic city that came under the rule of several empires and civilisations, including the Egyptian pharaohs, the Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines, and then Ottoman rule in

the Islamic era, among others.

"These criminal acts aim to harm the Palestinian people, their history and culture," Thawabteh said.

Israel, he said, seeks 'to oblit-

erate the Palestinian cultural heritage, break the will of the Palestinians and consolidate the occupation as part of a plan to empty the land of its people and impose a new reality'.

Meanwhile, at least five more Palestinians were killed as Israeli forces continued their onslaught on the Gaza Strip on Tuesday.

Witnesses reported to Anadolu that an Israeli drone tar-

Palestinian archaeological and heritage sites were not spared from destruction, vandalism, looting and theft by the Israeli occupation army

ISMAIL THAWABTEH

geted a group of people in Beit Lahia town, northern Gaza, resulting in the deaths of three Palestinians and the injuries of several others.

The witnesses added that the Palestinians were on their way home to see the destruction following the previous Israeli airstrikes.

Sounds of explosions were also heard as Israeli forces continued to destroy and detonate more Palestinian homes in northern Gaza, the witnesses also said.

In Gaza City, a medical source told Anadolu that a Palestinian woman died from wounds she sustained in a previous Israeli attack on a school sheltering displaced people in the western part of the city.

Anadolu Agency

Putin not interested in peace, says NATO's new chief Rutte

Athens, Greece - NATO's new chief on Tuesday drew a grim picture of Russia's leadership, saying that President Vladimir Putin is 'not interested in peace'.

Referring to the Ukraine war that Russia launched in February 2022, Secretary General Mark Rutte said: "He is pressing on, trying to take more territory. Because he thinks he can break Ukraine's resolve."

"Ukraine is entering another crucial winter. And Russia's aggression shows no sign of abating. Just the opposite, Putin is ramping up his rhetoric and reckless actions," Rutte, who took office last month, told a press conference ahead of a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Brussels.

According to Rutte, Putin is using Ukraine as a 'testing ground for experimental missiles and is deploying North Korean soldiers in this illegal war'.

Moreover, he said: "Russia and also China have tried to destabilise our nations with acts of sabotage, cyber-attacks, and energy blackmail."



NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte

However, this state of affairs will not deter NATO from supporting Ukraine and consolidating the transatlantic alliance, he said. Against this background, he added: "We are setting up our new NATO Command in Wiesbaden (Germany) to coordinate security assistance and training for Ukraine."

Meanwhile, Ukraine on Tues-

day said that it will not accept any alternatives to Kyiv's full membership in NATO, pointing to the 'failure' of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum which will mark the 30th anniversary since its signing later this week.

"With the bitter experience of the Budapest Memorandum behind us, we will not accept any alternatives, surrogates or sub-

stitutes for Ukraine's full membership in NATO," a Ukrainian Foreign Ministry statement said.

It said that Kyiv is convinced that the only real security guarantee for Ukraine is its membership to NATO, adding that inviting the country to join the alliance will deprive Moscow of its 'illusions about the possibility of hindering Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration'.

The statement argued that not providing Ukraine with effective security guarantees in the 1990s was a 'strategic mistake' that Russia 'exploited' and that the Budapest Memorandum failed to prevent the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

"Failure of the Budapest Memorandum to fulfil its functions has led to a catastrophic increase in security threats not only for Ukraine, but also for other countries and regions, including Europe, the Euro-Atlantic area, Central and Southeast Asia, the Middle East and international peace and security in general," it further said.

Anadolu Agency

Georgia: Police use force to disperse pro-EU protesters

Tbilisi, Georgia - Police in Georgia's capital Tbilisi used tear gas and water cannons to disperse thousands of pro-European Union protesters attempting to surround the parliament on Monday.

The latest incident was part of nationwide protests now in their fifth day which began after Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze's government announced on November 28 that EU accession talks would be postponed until 2028.

Demonstrators, angered by the decision, gathered in front of parliament, launching fireworks and throwing stones at police officers stationed behind barricades. Security forces responded with force, pushing protesters back from the building.

Several protesters were detained during the clashes.

"This is an attack on freedom of expression and the right to protest - basic rights violated," said Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili, criticising the police intervention.

The president claimed the protests are 'unlike anything in our (Georgia's) history', suggest-



ing that Georgians want their 'votes' and 'European future' back.

The Interior Ministry said that some groups resorted to violence during the demonstrations.

It added that since the protests began, 113 police officers have been injured.

Meanwhile, demonstrators reportedly began to disperse around 6am local time (0200GMT), with hundreds marching towards Ilia Chavchavadze Street.

Georgia's bid for EU membership, initiated in 2022, has faced significant hurdles.

Tensions escalated after the

adoption of the controversial 'Transparency of Foreign Influence' law, which critics argue limits political freedoms.

Late last month, the European Parliament called for new elections in Georgia, saying the October 26 polls were neither free nor fair, intensifying protests led by opposition groups and pro-EU activists.

Kobakhidze accused European officials of interference.

"Considering all this, we have decided not to bring the issue of initiating negotiations with the EU to the agenda until the end of 2028," he said.

Anadolu Agency

Ireland's ruling coalition loses parliamentary majority in general poll

London, UK - Ireland's governing coalition failed to secure the 88 seats needed to form a government in the general election held on November 29.

In the 174-seat Dail, or House of Representatives, Fianna Fail emerged as the largest party, maintaining its position from the 2020 elections. Led by Micheal Martin, who serves as Ireland's Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, the party increased its seats from 38 to 48.

Prime Minister Simon Harris's Fine Gael party finished third, slightly improving its seat count from 35 to 38.

The Green Party, a junior coalition partner, saw a dramatic decline from 12 to just one seat.

The election results left the coalition partners with 87 seats, short of the majority threshold.

Meanwhile, several ministers lost their seats, including Health Minister Stephen Donnelly, Tourism Minister Catherine Martin and Minister of State Anne Rabbitte.

Lowest turnout since 1923

Ireland's main opposition party Sinn Fein, which advocates for Irish unification, remained the



The election results left the coalition partners with 87 seats, short of the majority threshold

In the 174-seat Dail, or House of Representatives, Fianna Fail emerged as the largest party, maintaining its position from the 2020 elections

second-largest party, increasing its seats from 37 to 39.

The Labour Party and Social Democrats each won 11 seats, while 16 independent candi-

dates also secured parliamentary positions. The recently formed 100% Redress Party managed to win one seat.

Voter turnout was notably low, with only 59.7% of the 3.4mn registered voters participating - the lowest since 1923.

Labour Party leader Ivana Bacik indicated that she would consult with the Social Democrats and Green Party to map out potential government formation strategies.

The parliament was dissolved by President Michael D Higgins on November 8 at the request of Harris.

Anadolu Agency

Religious sites under dispute in India

New Delhi, India - At least five people were killed, and many more injured, last week during street clashes sparked by a survey investigating if India's centuries-old Shahi Jama Masjid mosque was built on the former site of a Hindu temple in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

The hilltop mosque in the city of Sambhal has long been contested, with Hindu groups claiming it was constructed on the ruins of the Harihar temple in 1529.

A local court ordered the survey after a Hindu priest in November claimed the mosque was built on the temple site.

Nearly 1,000 Muslim protesters gathered outside the mosque in a bid to block surveyors from the government's Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) from entering to investigate the claims.

The court's swift authorisation for the survey has exacerbated tensions between India's Hindu and Muslim communities. A judicial inquiry commission is now probing the circumstances surrounding the violence.

Amid the incident in Sambhal, a petition was filed in court by a right-wing Hindu group in the northwestern state of Rajasthan claiming that the Ajmer Sharif Dargah, a Sufi tomb, was built on the site of a Hindu temple.

Politics and religion in India

Opposition political parties have suggested political motives behind the disputes, rather than genuine historical inquiries.

Some Hindu activist groups, which are often linked to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP



Protests began after a survey investigated whether a 16th-century mosque was built on a Hindu temple

Despite a legal framework designed to protect religious sites from being contested based on historical claims, courts have increasingly entertained petitions challenging this status

party, have claimed that several mosques in India were built over Hindu temples centuries ago during the Muslim Mughal empire.

"The governance of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its ideological mentor, the RSS, is weakening the rule of law in the country," Asaduddin Owaisi, chief of the All India Majlis-e-It-

tehadul Muslimeen, a political party advocating Muslim rights, told DW.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is a Hindu umbrella group that advocates a Hindu nationalist agenda. It provided the ideological inspiration for the BJP.

Owaisi pointed out that the Ajmer Sharif Dargah is 800

years old and many non-Muslims also worship there.

Owaisi added that India's 1991 Places of Worship Act was passed to preserve India's secular character and prevent communal conflicts. Its aim is to preserve worship sites as they were on August 15, 1947, India's Independence Day.

Legal disputes intensify

Despite this legal framework designed to protect religious sites from being contested based on historical claims, courts have increasingly entertained petitions challenging this status.

Over the past few years, there

have been efforts by Hindu nationalists to challenge the status of mosques across the country by asserting that they were originally temples destroyed by Muslim rulers.

There is currently a debate about the centuries-old Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, one of Hinduism's holiest cities, which is mired in legal battles.

The status of the Mathura Shahi Idgah mosque in the northern city of Mathura is also embroiled in a legal dispute.

Similarly, the 13th-century Bhojshala-Kamal Maula complex in central Madhya Pradesh has become the latest site for an ASI scientific survey.

The action followed a Madhya Pradesh High Court ruling, which ordered the ASI to conduct a survey of the premises as the complex is contested by Hindus and Muslims, who call it Vagdevi temple and Kamal Maula Mosque, respectively.

Similar claims have also been made about other historical sites, such as the Qutub Minar, a 13th-century minaret and UNESCO World Heritage Site in New Delhi, further fuelling tensions.

Last year, Modi inaugurated the Ram temple in Ayodhya, built on the site of the Babri mosque that had been similarly contested as a holy site for Hindus.

DW

India: 7 dead after boulder falls on residence

Tiruvannamalai, India - In a tragic incident, 7 people died after a boulder from the hills fell on a residence in Tiruvannamalai district of Tamil Nadu following heavy rainfall.

The large rock reportedly fell onto the residence of a man identified as Rajkumar, located on 11th Street in VOC Nagar, Tiruvannamalai, around 4pm on December 1 after heavy rains in the region.

The deceased have been identified as Rajkumar, his wife Meena (27), his son Gowtham (8), daughter Viniya (5), Ramya (7), Vinodhini (16), and Maha (7).

According to officials, the bodies of five have been recovered, while a search operation is underway to recover the other 2.

Experts from Madras IIT have arrived at the site of the landslide, caused by the continuous rainfall because of Cyclone Fengal.

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin conducted a review meeting on Tuesday with concerned ministers overseeing flood-affected areas.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister also announced compensation for damages caused by the cyclone. CM Stalin announced Rs 5 lakh ex-gratia to the families of those who lost their lives in the flooding .

ANI



Nigerian President Bola Tinubu and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa

Nigeria seeks SA's help to join G20, BRICS

Abuja, Nigeria - The Nigerian government on Monday signalled a desire for South Africa's endorsement to join the G20 and BRICS groups of leading and emerging economies.

Nigeria's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, officially made the request on a trip to Cape Town for bi-annual talks between the two countries, sometimes seen as political and economic rivals.

However, South Africa, which assumed the rotating G20 presidency on Sunday, welcomed the request.

"We will count on Nigeria's wise counsel as we assume this major responsibility," Minister of International Relations Ronald Lamola was quoted by Nigerian news agency NAN as saying.

"Our people expect South Africa and Nigeria, given our common roots, to continue working together and more closely in order that their conditions and prospects are improved and the quality of life enhanced," he added.

At the same summit, known

as the Bi-National Commission Meeting (BNC), the two countries pledged closer cooperation in key areas of development such as mining and infrastructure.

In addition to being a member of the G20 bloc of the world's biggest economies, South Africa was also an early member of the BRICS group of emerging economies meant to offer an alternative to Western dominance. Other members include China, Russia, and India.

According to European Union figures, the BRICS group, which comprises nine nations, now represents about 37% of global GDP. Recently, several other African nations have joined, such as Egypt and Ethiopia.

On Tuesday, Odumegwu-Ojukwu and Lamola are expected to present their draft communique on Nigerian membership of both groups to South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Nigerian President Bola Tinubu for their approval.

Earlier this year, President Tinubu announced a series of ambitious reforms.

DW

INDIA STAGES KONARK DANCE FESTIVAL

Odissi dancer Aloka Kanungo and her group from Kolkata performing Odissi Dance during 35th Konark Dance Festival -2024, at Konark, in Puri, India on Monday (ANI)



Ban on Indian TV Channels sought in Bangladesh HC

Dhaka, Bangladesh - A writ petition has been filed in the Bangladesh High Court seeking a ban on the broadcast of Indian TV channels in the country citing growing concerns over the impact of Indian media on Bangladeshi culture and society, *Dhaka Tribune* reported.

Lawyer Ekhas Uddin Bhuiyan, who filed the petition on Monday, is seeking a directive under the Cable Television Network Operation Act 2006 to prohibit the broadcast of Indian TV channels.

It also asks why a rule should not be issued instructing a ban on Indian TV channels in Bangladesh, as per *Dhaka Tribune*. The hearing on the application may take place in the High Court bench comprising Justice Fatema Najib and Justice Sikder Mahmudur Razi.



The secretaries of the Information Ministry and the Home Ministry, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), and others are named as respondents in the petition.

According to *Dhaka Tribune*, the writ calls for a ban on channels like Star Jalsha, Star Plus, Zee

Bangla, Republic Bangla, and all other Indian TV channels. The petition alleges that provocative news is being aired on Indian channels and that unregulated broadcasts of content opposing Bangladeshi culture are leading to the destruction of the youth.

Further, it alleges that these channels operate without adher-

The lawyer, who filed the petition, is seeking a directive under the Cable Television Network Operation Act 2006 to prohibit the broadcast of Indian TV channels

ing to any regulations . Notably, Bangladesh has witnessed a surge in violent attacks against Hindus and other minority groups, prompting calls for greater protection and support.

The situation in Bangladesh has been marked by increasing violence against minority communities, with temples, being de-

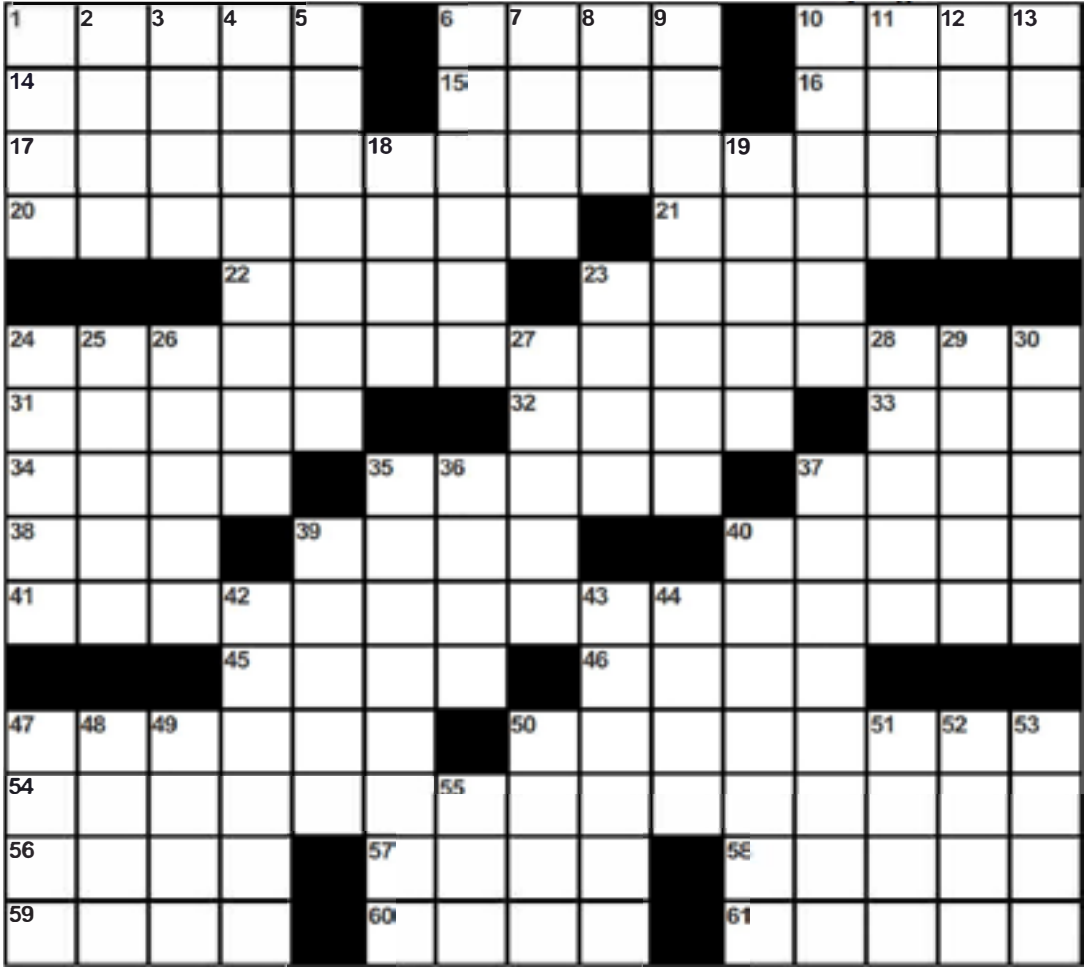
stroyed after the arrest of a former priest Chinmoy Krishna Das over sedition charges and for allegedly hoisting a saffron flag above Bangladesh's national flag in Chittagong on October 25.

Tensions escalated further after a lawyer was killed during clashes between police and alleged followers of Das in the Chattogram Court Building area on November 27.

India has multiple times raised concerns regarding the Bangladesh situation and urged Bangladesh's interim government to take steps to protect minorities. Last week, during the weekly media briefing, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal expressed concern over the rise of 'extremist rhetoric, increasing incidents of violence'.

ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) "A man's house_ castle"
6) _'clock (midmorning)
10) Pampering places
14) Worst possible turnout
15) African antelope
16) Travel by foot
17) 1998 film about a ball for teachers?
20) Be humiliated
21) James or Marilyn
22) IRA type
23) Top-of-the-line
24) Bette Midler film about a thorny person?
31) Paddled a canoe
32) Golden Triangle country
33) "Deep Space Nine" shapeshifter
34) Walk of Fame figure
35) Fresh from the shower
37) Boo-boo
38) Suffix for "acrobat"
39) Hermes' mother
40) Hotel offering
41) Tom Cruise flick about a bed?
45) Gen. Robert_
46) Homemade knife

DOWN

- 1) Like JFK and LAX
2) Manhattan neighbor-hood
3) Some gardening tools
4) One who derives by reasoning
5) Type of restaurant
6) "Good comeback!"
7) Colleague of Agatha and Dashiell
8) Big Apple paper's initials.
9) Pretty ugly, for one
10) Foster's river of song
11) Wife number VI for Henry VIII
12) Sax type
13) Kind of terrier
18) Rum Tum Tugger's musical

- 19) Mallards' domains
23) Honor student's grades?
24) "I'll have _ this one out"
25) Contrive, as a scheme
26) Wipe clean
27) Flash of light
28) "God's honest truth"
29) Corrects text
30) Boxing-ring features
35) Happy-go-lucky
36) Citrus fruit
37) CBS reality show
39) First name in lip-synching?
40) Grad student's pay-ment
42) Decrepit
43) Comparable to a pin?
44) He and she
47) "... Wonderful Life"
48) In those days
49) Penn of movies
50) Olympus Mountains peak
51) Ireland, affectionately
52) "Pool" intro
53) Mother sheep
55) Summer time, but not in Ariz.

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Right now, you should stick to what you do well and demonstrate your excellence in areas you feel comfortable. As long as your mind is employed in the service of some great problem, you're not available for more casual pleasures. When working with others, keep a smile on your face. You'll be surprised by the effect it has. You won't be tested on this material later, but keep it around just in case.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Tired of constantly being in the spotlight lately? Now's your chance to take a break and let someone else take center stage while you catch your breath. Let someone else lead the usual suspects on their merry chase. Right now, you feel like hibernating, and there's no reason not to give in to your desires. Don't feel obligated to say yes when you really want to say no.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Did you dive straight into a delicious dish only to find out you've bitten off more than you can chew? Your heart might have been in the right place, but now you're in a bind. By taking the right steps, you still have some time to save yourself further hassle. Test your strength of character and willpower by facing up to the situation. You'll be glad you did.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What measurement has been used for the magnitude of earthquakes?

- A. Torino Scale
B. Beaufort scale
C. Richter scale
D. TORRO scale

02. The Hindu temple complex of Angkor Wat, built for the king Suryavarman II in the early 12th century as his state temple and capital city, is in which country?

- A. Thailand
B. Myanmar
C. Cambodia
D. Sri Lanka

03. What was the title applied by the Ottoman Empire and, later, Turkey, to their viceroy of Egypt?

- A. Aga
B. Rajah
C. Panjandrum
D. Khedive

Answers: 1.C 2.C 3.D



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Good times come back into your life, so revel in the fun! This is a time to reunite with friends and rejuvenate your spirit. Enjoy the effortlessness that comes to you today. Connections happen beautifully and naturally in both your professional and private worlds. Keep in mind that nothing is too good for your best clients or favorite guests. It's time to talk about open-ended deals and life contracts.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You have the map, so it's up to you to decide where to go next. Be as adventurous as you like. You may not have exact directions, but you know you want to chart a new course for all those who want to come along. Your grasp of the situation is even better than usual right now. With everything that's going on, this is a good time to consider putting off a few mundane chores. Any extra details will only muddy the water.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Right now, you have some tough decisions ahead of you. Emotions and logic aren't as unrelated as some might think. Choose carefully, and be judicious before you give your final seal of approval since your integrity is the glue that holds a complex system together, namely, yourself! Being at the center of things merits extra rewards, as your immediate future will surely illustrate.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Have you been preparing to bring all your issues to the table? Be careful. If you keep this act up for too long, others may start thinking of you as a one-trick pony. You may want to take some downtime and figure out other methods of expressing yourself. Broaden your mind in whatever way possible. Be proud of yourself. You're the ultimate manifestation of the old saying "no guts, no glory."



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Focus your energy on the important people in your life right now. Someone very dear to your heart expects the world from you at this moment. Partial delivery may be all you can manage, but the important thing is to make an effort. You can be your own harshest critic, but do your best to lighten up and celebrate your actual accomplishments rather than your perceived shortcomings.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

There's nothing more dangerous than assuming you know everything. If you listen carefully, someone's forthright manner is liable to stop you in your tracks, but not in the way you expected. When was the last time you were as sure as the person who's now trying to convince you of something? The only conclusion you'll probably come to is that maybe this business isn't settled after all. Keep an open mind tonight.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You like lending a helping hand, but it's time to concentrate on yourself for a change. Don't feel guilty about possessing skills or assets that others only dream of having. As things change, your organized state lets you advance quickly and seamlessly. As long as you can keep your conscience from needlessly clouding over, the weather ahead looks just fine.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

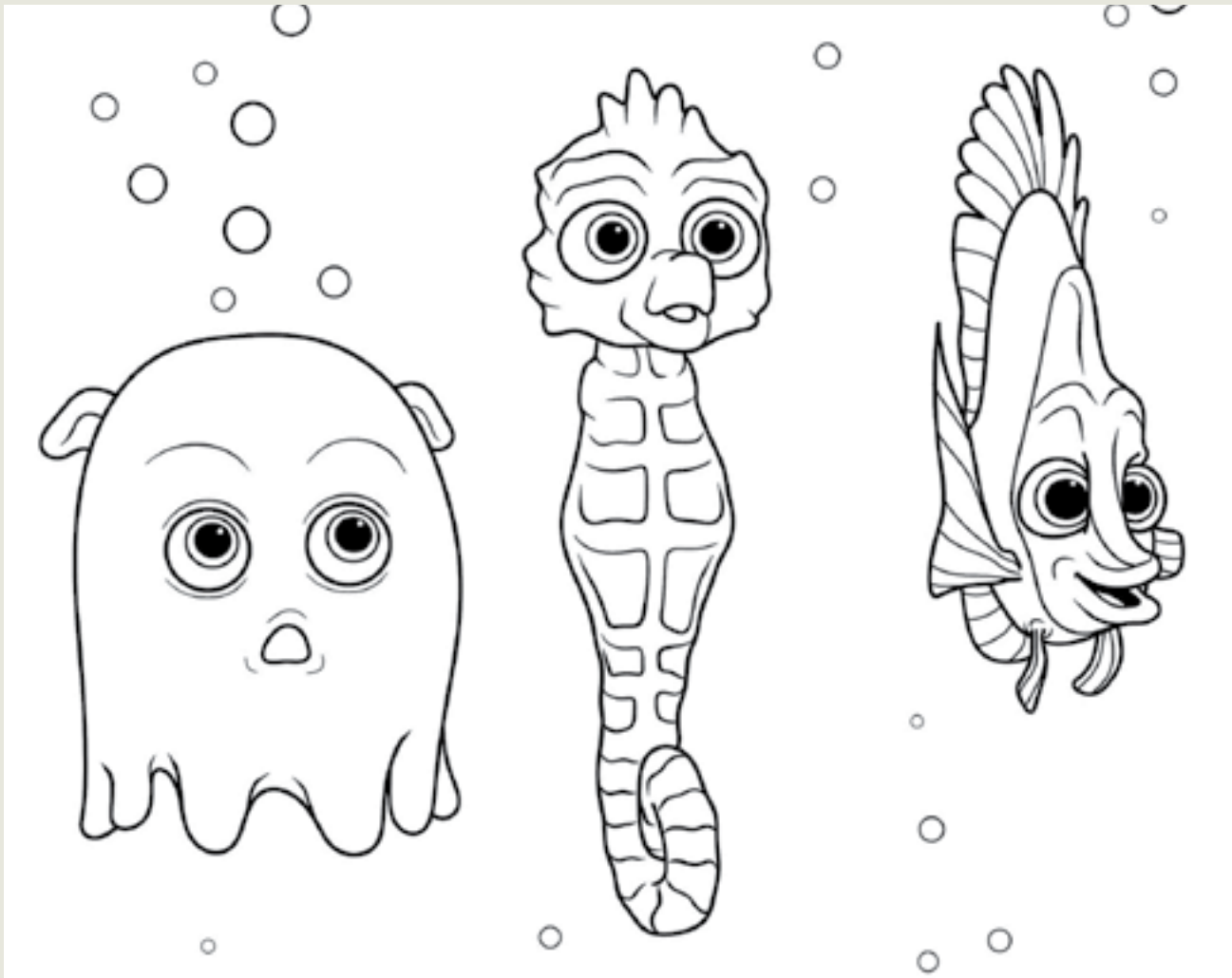
As everything in your life evolves, you feel the urge to jump into something with both feet. You're always eager to do unto others in the most generous ways. Some of that kindness is already coming back to you, but that isn't your reason for being so bountiful. Those who know you best realize you are content but never complacent. All of the new information you learned is registered this evening for immediate use.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

The last thing you need is to be shy or inflexible. Instead, you need to be ready and willing to repeat your stellar performance in case someone needs to see it again. Figuring out the formula for success is an ongoing process for you. Later in the day, you might be stunned to find out that what you consider rights are really privileges. If it's necessary for you to earn them, then that's what you should focus on.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

A	G	E	G
E	S	A	N
W	T	O	Y
M	K	A	S

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

SOLUTION

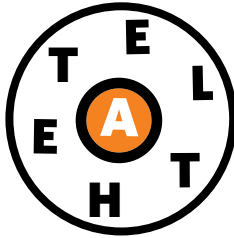
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

AMORIM FACES ACID TEST AT ARSENAL

It's important to be brave against the Gunners, says new manager

Manchester, England- Manchester United are unbeaten in their first three games under Ruben Amorim and have climbed into the top half of the Premier League table but the Portuguese faces the first real test of his managerial skills at high-flying Arsenal on Wednesday.

United, who are in ninth place 15 points adrift of leaders Liverpool, have struggled to score this season with 13 goals in their first 12 league matches, but the floodgates finally opened on Sunday when they thumped Everton 4-0 at Old Trafford.

However, they travel to the Emirates knowing full well the scale of the task at hand, having lost their last three meetings with Arsenal, who are in second spot, six points above United.

"It's the best team that we have faced by far. But a test is every game. If you saw the last game (against Everton), it was really tough..." Amorim told reporters on Monday.

"It's important to be brave (on Wednesday), when I say it's brave it's not pressing all the time higher. It's not the same. You have to understand the



Ruben Amorim will be under intense pressure when they go to the Emirates Stadium on Wednesday as Manchester United have lost their last three meetings against high-flying Arsenal

game, the moments of the game. We need to have the ball, that is a key point.

"We want to have the ball, we want to dominate some moments of the game, because you know these matches it's hard to control all the game. We have to be brave and play the game."

Amorim said captain Bruno Fernandes, who was taken off in the 66th minute on Sunday, trained with the team and would be fit, adding: "I saw him already (on Monday) morning. He's fit and he doesn't need a lot of rest. He's prepared to play."

Amorim also praised 19-year-old defender Leny Yoro, who was signed from Lille this year but has yet to play in a competitive fixture for United after picking up a foot injury in pre-season.

We want to have the ball, we want to dominate some moments, because you know these matches it's hard to control all the game. We have to be brave and play the game.

RUBEN AMORIM

"His fitness is better. I think he's going to be in the squad. The rest I have to see because some players are tired. We have to assess them in tomorrow's training," Amorim said.

"I think he (Yoro) is a special talent. We have to be careful in these first moments because we didn't have too many training (sessions) together. He's been

Man United take on Arsenal in FA Cup

London, England - Holders Manchester United will travel to record 14-times winners Arsenal in what promises to be an enthralling clash in the FA Cup third round in January, while Manchester City, Liverpool and Chelsea were all drawn at home to fourth-tier rivals.

United, 13-times winners of the competition, visit Arsenal in the Premier League on Wednesday, a little over a month before their FA Cup fixture.

The third round matches, where Premier League and second-tier clubs enter the competition, will be held from Jan. 9-13.

Aston Villa, with seven FA Cup titles to their name, will welcome West Ham United in the only other all-Premier League clash.

Last season's losing finalists Manchester City host fourth-tier neighbours Salford City, while Premier League leaders Liverpool welcome Accrington Stanley and Chelsea are at home to another League Two side Morecambe.

Tottenham Hotspur, eight-times winners, travel to non-league Tamworth.

Tamworth and Dagenham and Redbridge are the only two non-league clubs that made it to the third round this year, with the latter visiting second-tier Millwall.

Brighton and Hove Albion, fourth in the Premier League, travel to Championship Norwich City.

Championship leaders Sheffield United will host Cardiff City, 20th in the standings.

just three weeks in the job, he insisted he would prefer if chants were used to support the players.

"I don't like my chant, I don't like it," Amorim said.

"I feel a little bit, not embarrassed, but because I'm the coach, they have to chant for the players and for the club. So it's not a good thing for me.

"I understand and really appreciate the connection with the supporters but I want them to support the team and the players because they are on the pitch and I'm outside the pitch.

"But I am really honoured by that, I feel a connection with the supporters but we know we need results to maintain that."

It hurt that I had to leave, says Van Nistelrooy

Leicester, England - Ruud van Nistelrooy was disappointed to leave Manchester United after his successful spell as interim coach came to an end but the Dutchman said he understands why new manager Ruben Amorim wanted to bring his own assistants into the club.

Van Nistelrooy, who was appointed Leicester City manager at the end of last month, went unbeaten in his four games in charge at United following Erik ten Hag's dismissal, having previously served as his compatriot's assistant. "I was disappointed, yeah, very much so, and it hurt that I had to leave," he told reporters on Monday.

"The only job I would take as

The only job I would take as an assistant was at United because of the bond that I have. But in the end I got my head round it because I also understand the new manager.

RUUD VAN NISTELROOY

an assistant was at United because of the bond that I have with the people in the club and the fans. But in the end I got my head round it because I also understand the new manager.

"I spoke to Ruben Amorim about it, the conversation was grateful, man to man, manager to manager, and that helped a lot to move on and straightaway get into talks with new possibilities

which lifted my spirits."

Van Nistelrooy scored 150 goals in a highly successful five-year stint at United before moving to Real Madrid but the former striker said he has the battling qualities to help 16th-placed Leicester avoid relegation.

"People see Real Madrid, Manchester United, but my first three seasons as a professional were in Dutch football with FC

Den Bosch, so I know what it's like to fight," he added.

Leicester host West Ham United in the Premier League later on Tuesday.

Big task at Leicester

Van Nistelrooy is aiming to bring a sense of positivity to Leicester City and quickly make an impression on the club's players, as he looks to ensure that they remain in the English top flight.

Asked if the players needed to be picked up, Van Nistelrooy told reporters: "That is what needed to be done. Sunday was the first time that I was here. Was it yesterday? It feels longer.

"I had a meeting with the players and it was the first thing to

address," added the Dutchman, speaking ahead of a home match against West Ham on Tuesday.

"The situation we're in, the challenge that we face, and what's necessary to get out of that situation.

"In two days it's difficult to make a lot of changes, but we have started to make changes in the style of play, training sessions, structure, little by little starting to build a foundation of a highly motivated team who can compete in this league."

Leicester have a tough run of fixtures coming up in December including matches against Brighton & Hove Albion, Newcastle United, Liverpool and Manchester City.



Ruud van Nistelrooy at a Leicester City training session

Ashley Young set to face his son in FA Cup

Liverpool, Britain - Everton defender Ashley Young could be in for a dream family clash in the FA Cup third round when his side take on Peterborough United, where his 18-year-old son Tyler plays.

Peterborough travel to Goodison Park next month with Young keen to see his son in action at the League One club where he made his first senior appearance this season.

"Dreams might come true," Young said in a post on X on Friday.

A former England international, Young boasts a remarkable total of 724 appearances for top clubs including Watford, Aston Villa, Manchester United and Inter Milan.

The 39-year-old is in a similar situation to LeBron James and his son Bronny, who became the first father-son duo to play together in an NBA regular-season game for the Los Angeles Lakers in October.



Ashley Young and son Tyler

We have to be focused in attack, says Barcelona manager Flick

Barcelona, Spain - Barcelona had started their season under new manager Hansi Flick in great form - winning 11 of their first 12 LaLiga matches, averaging over three goals per game and thrashing old rivals Real Madrid 4-0.

But suddenly they seem to have hit a brick wall as they have picked up only one point in their last three matches.

Defeats against Real Sociedad and Las Palmas cut Barcelona's comfortable nine-point lead in the standings to just one and Flick is now under pressure.

Since overcoming local rivals Espanyol 3-1 a month ago, Barca were beaten 1-0 at Real Sociedad, gave up a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at Celta Vigo and suffered an embarrassing 2-1 loss at home against lowly Las Palmas who arrived at Camp Nou on Saturday in the relegation zone.

With second-placed Real on



Hansi Flick

37 points and with a game in hand, Barca know they cannot afford any slip-ups against Mallorca.

Having scored just three goals in their last three league games, Flick urged his players on Monday

day to be more clinical up-front and make the most of the chances they create.

"For me, the good news is that November is over and we are in December," Flick told a press conference on Monday.

"The team has given a lot in those games, in the midfield we have had a lot of intensity and we have been very disciplined. We created chances but we have to finish better.

"It may seem like I'm making excuses, but we lost. We have to be focused in attack. We can't afford to have two or three chances and do not score them. In football it's the goals that count."

Flick said he did not think the players were suffering an attitude problem, instead they just needed to show more focus on the details.

"We are a young team that have to learn and fight for victories," Flick said.

"At the back, we need to stop conceding goals and for that we have to defend as a unit. In attack, we also have to be united... We have to score with the chances we get."

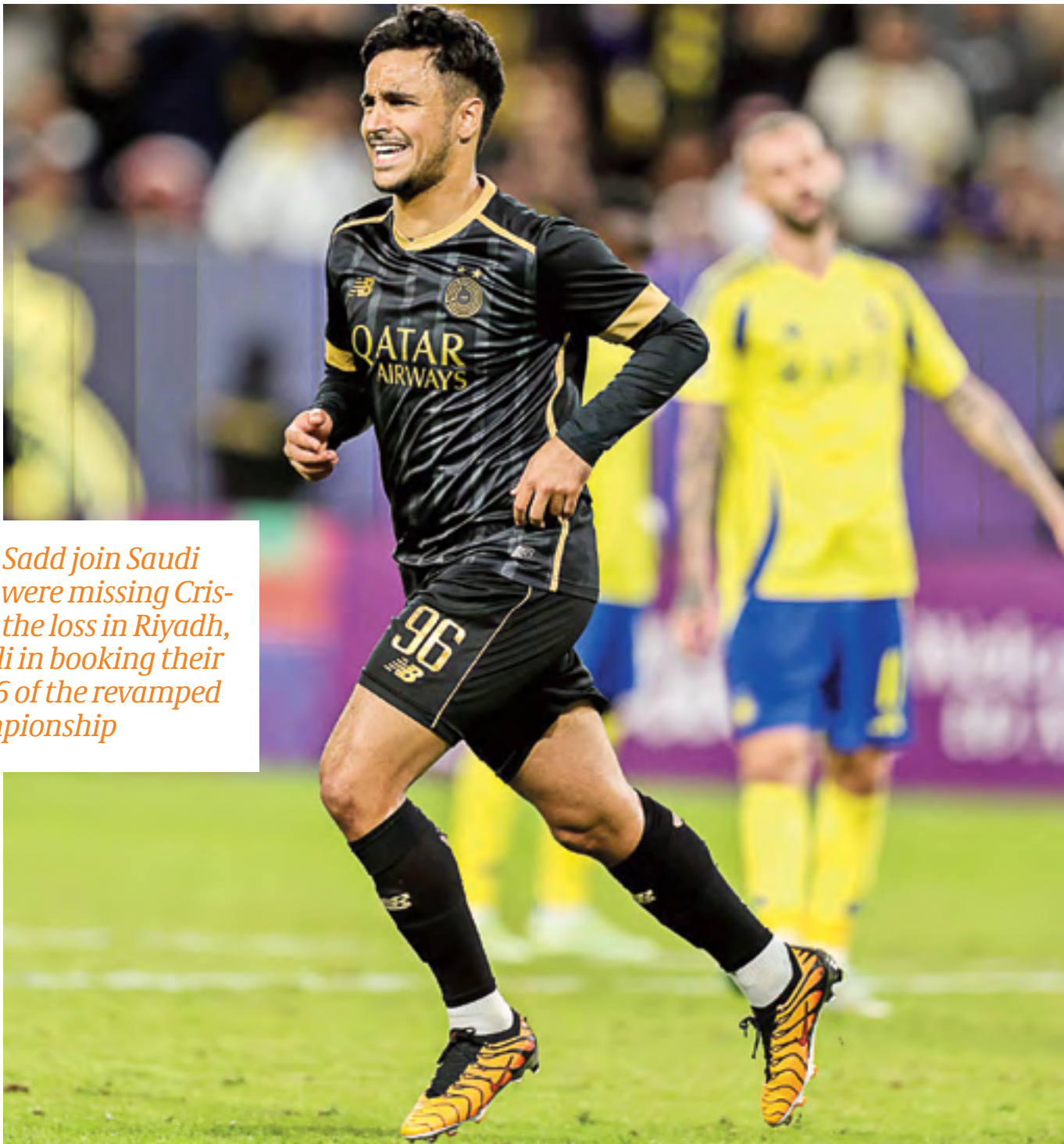
AL SADD REACH LAST 16

Ounas’ stoppage-time penalty ensures Qatari side’s progress in Asian Champions League

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Adam Ounas scored an injury-time penalty to earn Al-Sadd a 2-1 win over Saudi Pro League side Al Nassr on Monday taking the Qatari outfit into the knockout rounds of the Asian Champions League Elite.

The win means Al Sadd join Saudi trio Al Nassr, who were missing Cristiano Ronaldo for the loss in Riyadh, Al Hilal and Al Ahli in booking their spots in the last 16 of the revamped continental championship.

Al Ahli needed a pair of Ivan Toney penalties to salvage a 2-2 draw with Esteghlal as the Jeddah-based club’s perfect record was ended at home while Perse-



Adam Ounas of Al Sadd celebrates after scoring against Al Nassr on Monday

The win means Al Sadd join Saudi trio Al Nassr, who were missing Cristiano Ronaldo for the loss in Riyadh, Al Hilal and Al Ahli in booking their spots in the last 16 of the revamped continental championship

polis defeated Al Shorta 2-1 and Al Wasl drew 1-1 with Al Rayyan.

Al Ahli’s draw is the first time the Jeddah-based club have dropped points in the competition after five consecutive wins had guaranteed their place in the last 16 of the competition.

Matthias Jaissle’s side have 16 points from six games and continue to lead the standings by three points from Al Hilal, who face Qatar’s Al Gharafa on Tuesday.

The top eight finishers in the western and eastern league ta-

bles progress to the round of 16, which will be played in March.

Half of those spots on the western side of the draw are now filled, with Al Sadd’s late win taking Felix Sanchez’s side through to the knockout rounds.

Afif, the reigning Asian Player of the Year, gave Al Sadd the lead after charging from the halfway line to calmly slot past goal-keeper Bento in the 53rd minute.

Al Sadd’s Romain Saiss turned Wesley’s wicked cross into his own net in the 80th minute but when Afif was brought down in the area in injury time Ounas stepped up to hit the winner.

Al Ahli, meanwhile, were twice forced to fight back after going behind, trailing for the first time when Rafael Silva put Iran’s Esteghlal ahead three minutes before the interval with a volley past Edouardo Mendy.

Toney levelled from the penalty spot eight minutes into stoppage time after a foul by Didier Ndong on Fahad al Rashidi but Esteghlal went back in front six minutes into the second half when Mohammad Hossein Eslami’s strike bounced over Mendy. Eslami’s sending off with nine minutes left increased the pressure on the visitors and, with four minutes left, a second Toney penalty salvaged a point for the hosts.

In Doha, Oston Urunov and a 103rd minute penalty from Giorgi Gvelesiani secured Persepolis’s first victory in the competition against Al Shorta after Mohanad Ali had given the Iraqis a 19th minute lead with a well-judged lob.



Felix Sanchez

Coach Sanchez revels in Al Sadd’s victory

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Al Sadd head coach Felix Sanchez lauded his team’s grit after a last-gasp penalty sealed a thrilling 2-1 win over Al Nassr Club on Monday, securing the Qatari side’s spot in the AFC Champions League knockout stage.

“I congratulate the Al Sadd fans on this win, and I especially want to commend the players. We played a strong and wonderful match against an attacking team,” said Sanchez.

“We defended when necessary in a distinctive way and capitalised on our opportunities with the attacking approach we wanted. Our primary goal was to deprive Al Nassr of possession. It’s never easy to beat Al Nassr in their home stadium, but the players displayed tremendous character on the field.

“We approach every match independently. Each team we face plays differently, and we take the AFC Champions League (ACLE) one match at a time. The team has consistently shown strong character throughout the tournament by adapting to different opponents.”

Al Nassr suffered their first defeat of the campaign and head coach Stephano Pioli lamented his team’s inability to convert their chances.

Jaissle pleased as Al Ahli pass Esteghlal test

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - Their winning run may have been halted but head coach Matthias Jaissle was delighted that Al Ahli Saudi FC fought back to salvage a 2-2 draw in their AFC Champions League tie against Esteghlal on Monday.

Having already confirmed their knockout stage spot on Matchday Five, Saudi Arabia’s Al Ahli had to claw back twice against their opponents from Iran with Jaissle taking home the positives.

“As we expected, the match was strong and difficult against a physically robust team. Esteghlal were not only strong in physical confrontations but also effective in set-pieces, scoring two goals from very few chances,” said Jaissle. “However, the result is positive, and most importantly, we remain unbeaten in the tournament.”



Matthias Jaissle

As we expected, the match was strong and difficult against a physically robust team. Esteghlal were not only physically strong in physical confrontations but also effective in set-pieces, scoring two goals.

Jaissle, however, admitted that Al Ahli were undone by their lack of precision in the final third.

“If we look at the statistics, we didn’t only rely on penalty kicks to reach Esteghlal’s goal. We reached the final third and created many chances, but we lacked the final touch.”

Despite letting victory slip away, Esteghlal head coach Pitso Mosimane was pleased with his team’s performance.

“My team took the lead twice and we caused problems for the opposition, forcing them to come back twice. I am completely satisfied with the players’ performance,” said Mosimane.

“The match was as challenging as we had anticipated. We faced a big team like Al Ahli in their home stadium in Jeddah. My team believed in their abilities and showed great composure by taking the lead twice.”



Sifan Hassan

Hassan, Tebogo named world athletes of the year

Monaco - The Netherlands’ Sifan Hassan and Botswana’s Letsile Tebogo were named World Athletes of the Year on Sunday after they both scooped multiple medals at the Paris Olympics.

Hassan won the women’s marathon in an Olympic record time of 2:22:55. She also claimed bronze medals in the 10,000m and 5000m events.

“Thank you to the fans, to everybody who voted,” Hassan, also awarded women’s out of stadium athlete of the year, said in Monaco. “I never thought I was going to win this one. This year was crazy. It’s not only me, all the athletes have been amazing. I’m really grateful. What more can I say?”

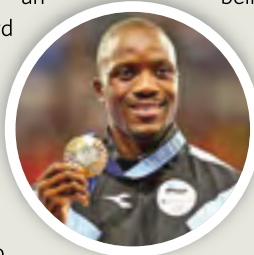
Tebogo also made history in

the French capital as he became the first African to win the Olympic men’s 200 m title and earned Botswana their first ever Olympic gold medal.

He also set a national record of 9.86 when finishing sixth in the 100m final before being part of Botswana’s silver medal-winning men’s 4x400m team.

“It feels amazing to know that the fans are always there for us athletes. It was a great year,” Tebogo, also named men’s track athlete of the year, said.

“This means a lot. It’s not just about the team that is around you, there are a lot of fans out there that really want us to win something great for the continent. It was a real surprise to hear my name because I didn’t expect this.”



Letsile Tebogo

Garrido hails Persepolis’ spirit in win against Al Shorta

Doha, Qatar - Juan Carlos Garrido was extremely proud after Persepolis FC revived their AFC Champions League knockout stage hopes with a 2-1 win against Iraq’s Al Shorta on Monday.

The Islamic Republic of Iran side showed grit and determination to defeat Al Shorta, drawing level in the 89th minute and then proceeding to score the winner through Giorgi Gvelesiani deep in stoppage time to move up to six points with two matches remaining.

“This victory was the result of the efforts of the players and our analysis of the opponents and until the last moment, we fought to win,” said Garrido.

“This game was full of events, but we tried until the last minute. We knew that this game was important and when a penalty was



Oston Urunov of Persepolis celebrates with Lucas Joao after scoring against Al Shorta

awarded to Al Shorta, the goalkeeper and players believed they would not score.

“We had opportunities during the game, but we had to work until the last moment to win and

we reached our goal.”

Mohanad Ali gave Al Shorta a 19th minute lead and they looked good value to defend it until Uzbekistan international Oston Urunov struck the

equaliser with a minute left of regulation time.

More drama was to follow with Al Shorta awarded a penalty in the ninth minute of stoppage time but Mahmoud Al Mawas hammered his effort against the post with Persepolis then earning a spot-kick of their own which was put away by Gvelesiani.

Garrido praised Uronov’s contribution, with the 23-year-old forward having just returned from a groin injury.

“Uronov showed today that he is working hard for the success of the team and scored a goal at a very important moment for Persepolis.

“It was very difficult to make a comeback and get back into the game and I congratulate the team and the players for their fighting spirit.”



Edoardo Bove

Bove stable after collapsing on field

Rome, Italy - Fiorentina midfielder Edoardo Bove is awake and alert in hospital, his club said on Monday, providing reassurance on his condition after he collapsed during a Serie A match against Inter Milan on Sunday.

Fiorentina said that the 22-year-old had spent a peaceful night in the Careggi University Hospital in Florence and no longer required assistance with his breathing. Further tests would be conducted in the coming days in order to establish the cause of his illness.

Bove has spoken to teammates on a video call and the squad was now preparing for a match on Wednesday night when they face Empoli at home in the last 16 of the Italian Cup.

Fiorentina owner Rocco Commisso has been in contact with the player’s father and further reassured about his condition.



Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek got only minor reprimands for failing dope tests but their reputations surely took a hit



DOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

Sinner and Swiatek's triumphant season tarnished by scandals

Bengaluru, India - Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek enjoyed a trophy-laden 2024 but rather than ending the year basking in glory, they were instead fighting for their reputations after receiving only minor reprimands for failing dope tests.

The two cases shocked the tennis world with many fuming at how they were handled by the authorities.

Players and pundits accused those overseeing tennis's anti-doping programme of double standards as they felt Sinner and Swiatek, who were both ranked number one at the time of their respective failed tests, had received preferential treatment.

Rattled by two failed drug

tests in March for trace amounts of the anabolic androgenic steroid clostebol, Sinner endured sleepless nights over fears that a ban could stall his career, before being cleared of wrongdoing by an independent tribunal that accepted his explanation of unintentional contamination.

However, the men's world number one will go into the 2025 season facing a possible ban of up to two years after the World Anti-Doping Agency lodged an appeal with sport's highest court.

"It's in the head a little bit," Sinner admitted. "The most important thing is the people who are around me, who know me as a human being, trust me.

"That's also why I kept playing

at the level I did. I was emotionally a bit down, a bit heartbroken. Sometimes life gives you difficulties and you just have to deal with it."

Sinner captured his first two Grand Slam titles at the Australian Open and U.S. Open to split the majors with Carlos Alcaraz.

Sinner also won the ATP Finals trophy before masterminding Italy's successful Davis Cup defence.

Triumphs in Rotterdam, Miami, Halle, Cincinnati and Shanghai meant Sinner had more titles than his six defeats but the doping saga put an asterisk on a stunning season in which he sparked a seismic shift atop the men's game to shut out Novak Djokovic.

On the women's tour, Swiatek dazzled with five titles that included her fourth French Open

trophy, but was leapfrogged to the top ranking by Australian Open and U.S. Open winner Aryna Sabalenka, and ended the season with a month-long ban.

The Pole tested positive for trimetazidine but authorities accepted it was caused by contamination of her sleep medication melatonin, prompting 2019 Wimbledon champion Simona Halep to slam doping authorities after she had to battle to have her own ban reduced from four years to nine months.

"Both me and my team had to deal with tremendous stress and anxiety. Now everything has been carefully explained, and with a clean slate I can go back to what I love most," Swiatek said.

There were pleasant surprises too as Barbora Krejickova won her second major at Wimbledon, Zheng Qinwen bagged Olympic gold, Coco Gauff wore the WTA

Finals crown in its new home of Riyadh and Jasmine Paolini led Italy to Billie Jean King Cup glory.

Perhaps no triumph meant more to a player than Djokovic winning Olympic gold, with the 37-year-old recovering after tamely losing to Alcaraz in the Wimbledon final to outlast the Spaniard in the Paris Games showpiece.

Victory reduced the Serb to an emotional wreck on the Roland Garros clay and once he managed to come up for air, he described the feat as his "greatest achievement".

With a career Grand Slam in the bag, the 24-times major champion will now look to eclipse Margaret Court's haul under the guidance of old rival and new coach Andy Murray, who ended his glorious career in Paris after an emotional farewell at Wimbledon.



Alex Carey

We take a lot of confidence from pink ball record: Australia's Carey

Melbourne, Australia - Australia will draw confidence from their exceptional record in day-night tests and expect to rebound from their Perth setback when they face India in the second match in Adelaide, wicketkeeper Alex Carey has said.

Australia have won 11 of their 12 pink ball tests and all seven they have played at Adelaide Oval, including a victory over India in the last home test series when they skittled Virat Kohli's team for 36.

"We're excited. We should take a lot - and we do take a lot - of confidence out of our record from pink ball cricket," Carey told reporters on Tuesday.

"It doesn't mean we'll have the success but I think our methods, our style of play and the experience we have with this group, we'll bounce back from Perth.

"I'm sure India will be confident from the last game as well, so it will be a great contest," added Carey.

India scored a resounding 295-run victory at Perth Stadium in the opening test of the five-match series.

Australia's winning streak in day-night tests was ended in January by the West Indies, who won a cliffhanger by eight runs at the Gabba.

Australia head into the second test starting on Friday with some concern over the fitness of all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, who pulled up sore after bowling 17 overs in Perth.

Australian media have speculated that Marsh may be retained as a specialist batsman alone, though selectors brought in another all-rounder into the squad in uncapped Beau Webster.

Carey said he thought Marsh would be fit to play and had not heard otherwise from the team.

"His batting has been fantastic since he's come back into this team and his bowling again -- he took some handy wickets," he said.

"Hopefully he is right and ready to go."

Pakistan thrash Zimbabwe by 10 wickets to win series

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - Spinner Sufiyan Muqem took career-best figures of five wickets for three runs in 2.4 overs as Pakistan thrashed hosts Zimbabwe by 10 wickets to clinch the three-match Twenty20 International series with a game to spare in Bulawayo on Tuesday.

After electing to bat, Zimbabwe were bundled out for 57 in 12.4 overs, their lowest ever score in T20 matches, beating the 84 they scraped together in Sri Lanka in January.

The home side had a bright opening stand as Brian Bennett (21) and Tadiwanashe Marumani (16) put on 37 in 27 balls, but they lost 10 wickets for the addition of only 20 runs as left-arm wrist spinner Sufiyan ripped



Sufiyan Muqem took five wickets for three runs in 2.4 overs

through their middle order.

Pakistan made light work of the chase and reached their target with 87 balls remaining and without the loss of a wicket.

Openers Saim Ayub scored 36 from 18 balls and Omair

Yousuf 22 from 15 deliveries in Pakistan's largest ever win by number of balls remaining.

Pakistan won the first game of the series by 57 runs. The third and final fixture will be played at the same venue on Thursday.

Mick Doohan's son Jack to replace Ocon at Alpine for Abu Dhabi GP

Doha, Qatar - Australian Jack Doohan, son of motorcycle great Mick, will make his Formula One debut for Alpine in Sunday's season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix after departing Esteban Ocon was released early, the Renault-owned team said on Monday.

Ocon has signed for Haas and the switch will allow him to take part in the post-season test at Yas Marina next week, while also preparing Doohan for next season when he graduates from reserve to full race driver.

Doohan, 21, joins French driver Pierre Gasly at a team currently fighting Haas in a close battle for sixth place in the championship.



Jack Doohan

Alpine moved five points clear of their U.S.-owned rivals on Sunday after Gasly finished fifth at the Qatar Grand Prix.

Ocon, a race winner for the team in Hungary in 2021, was caught up in a collision at the start and retired.

Doohan will debut with his reserve driver number 61 and will also take part in the end-of-season test. The switch had been flagged up already after the race at Lusail, with team boss Oliver Oakes telling reporters it would suit everybody concerned.

"I guess you could say it's good to get Jack in early. I think you could say from Esteban's side it's good to move on early," he said.

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THE WINNERS & THE BEST RED CARPET LOOKS

THE FASHION AWARDS 2024

FROM JONATHAN ANDERSON, WHO WAS AWARDED DESIGNER OF THE YEAR, TO ALEX CONSANI, GRACE WALES BONNER AND SIMONE ROCHA, HERE ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FASHION AWARDS HELD IN LONDON AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL



Alex Consani at the 2024 Fashion Awards



Jonathan Anderson and Alison Oliver

The 2024 Fashion Awards lit up London's iconic Royal Albert Hall with an evening of glitz, glamour, and groundbreaking talent. Organized by the British Fashion Council, the annual event isn't just a dazzling red-carpet affair—it's a vital fundraiser supporting the future of British fashion. This year, it brought together the crème de la crème of the fashion world, celebrating style, creativity, and innovation on an extraordinary scale.

Among the night's standout moments, Jonathan Anderson, the visionary behind Loewe and JW Anderson, clinched the coveted Designer of the Year award. In a fiercely competitive category that included luminaries like Miuccia Prada, John Galliano, and Kim Jones, Anderson's win cemented his position as a transformative

force in contemporary design.

But the spotlight didn't stop there. The British Menswear and Womenswear Designer Awards highlighted two trailblazers redefining modern aesthetics: Grace Wales Bonner, whose menswear merges cultural heritage with cutting-edge design, and Simone Rocha, celebrated for her ethereal and subversive approach to womenswear. Their wins reflected a broader celebration of boundary-pushing creativity that shaped the evening.

As the crowd of designers, celebrities, and industry insiders soaked up the grandeur of the occasion, honorary awards paid tribute to titans of the industry. Tom Ford received the Outstanding Achievement Award, recognizing his storied career—from revitalizing Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent to building his eponymous empire. Mean-

while, the Trailblazer Award went to Remo Ruffini, the visionary CEO of Moncler, whose innovative strategies have turned the brand into a global powerhouse. And after over 50 years of leadership at J Barbour & Sons, Margaret Barbour was honoured for her enduring contributions to British fashion.

The night also featured a heartfelt homage to London itself. Gucci's Cruise 2025 campaign, "We Will Always Have London", directed by the legendary photographer Nan Goldin, earned special recognition for its artistic brilliance and celebration of the British capital.



Sabrina Elba



Kit Price



Nicola Coughlan



Asap Rocky, in Bottega Veneta, and Rihanna



BT
BUSINESS TODAY
CXO AWARDS
MUSCAT, SULTANATE OF OMAN

18 December 2024
Sheraton Oman Hotel

Time to Recognize, Appreciate and Honour GCC's Exceptional Corporate Leaders

The Business Today CXO Awards will felicitate the most distinguished C-Level executives (CXOs) with exceptional achievements to their credit.

CHIEF GUEST
H.E. Dr. Said Mohammed Al Saqri
Minister of Economy

In a gala awards night, the leading CXOs across industries will be felicitated for their outstanding corporate achievements, transformative business strategies, excellence in governance, dedication to talent development and their positive contributions to the economic, social and environmental well-being of society.

AWARD CATEGORIES

- Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Year
- Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the Year
- Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Year
- Chief Strategy Officer (CSO) of the Year
- Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) of the Year
- Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of the Year
- Chief Information Officer (CIO) of the Year
- Chief Digital Officer (CDO) of the Year
- Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) of the Year
- Chief Risk Officer (CRO) of the Year
- Chief Investment Officer (CIO) of the Year
- Chief Audit Officer (CAO) of the Year
- Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) of the Year
- Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) of the Year
- Chief Legal Officer (CLO) of the Year
- Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) of the Year
- CXO of the Year – Oman
- CXO of the Year – Saudi Arabia
- CXO of the Year - UAE
- CXO of the Year - Qatar
- CXO of the Year - Kuwait
- CXO of the Year - Bahrain

Note: Some of the awards will be presented in respective industry categories

LUXURY AUTO PARTNER

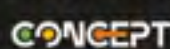


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For table reservations, award information and partnership opportunities, contact: sajir@apexmedia.co.om or +968 9947 4314

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