

Over 11,000 register for organ donation

OMAN ORGAN DONATION DAY

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A total of 17 kidney transplant operations were performed and over 11,000 donors registered on Oman's Shifa app for organ donation this year, the Ministry of Health has announced.

The announcement was made at an event held on Tuesday to celebrate Oman Organ Donation Day in commemoration of the first organ transplant in the sultanate performed on December 19, 1988.

The event was held at Hormuz Grand Muscat under the auspices of H H Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd al Said, Secretary-General of Council of Ministers, in the presence of several senior officials, including undersecretaries, in addition to participation of civilian and military medical institutions and medical professionals from Oman's health sector.

The celebration marked a continuation of the efforts of the Ministry of Health, represented by the National Organ Transplant Programme Department, to raise awareness of the importance of organ donation through a national campaign activated in all governorates this year, in addition to developing organ transplant services.

The national campaign's message to the community highlights



(Supplied photos)



This year has seen a significant increase in the number of kidney transplant operations and beginning of a corneal transplant programme

DR AHMED AL BUSAIDI

the fact that besides being a generous and humanitarian act, organ donation is the only solution in cases of organ failure and certain ailments from which millions of patients suffer worldwide.

The ceremony included a presentation by Dr Ahmed al Busaidi, Director of National Organ Transplant Programme Department, who spoke on the accomplishments during the year, especially the increase in number of kidney transplant operations, the beginning of a corneal trans-

plant programme, and a significant increase in the number of registrations on the Shifa app for post-mortem organ donation.

Additionally, several organ donors and relatives of posthumous organ donors were honored at the event. A three-day organ donation training course was also launched in cooperation with Donation Transplantation Institute, Spain.

The Ministry of Health has a programme enabling prospective donors to express their interest to donate organs after death by

registering on the Shifa app. This year, a programme was activated to interview relatives of brain-dead patients offering them the option of donating organs after death and performing transplantation for eligible organ failure patients on the national waiting list.

The Shifa app for organ donation, which was launched in December 2021, helps provide accurate information about organ transplant and encourages a culture of organ donation in the sultanate.

In an effort to establish guidelines for transplantation of human organs and tissues, the ministry issued a decision in March 2021 to develop a national programme to regulate human organ and tissue donations.

Since 1988, 347 organ transplant surgeries have been performed in the sultanate, of which 325 were kidney transplants and 22 liver transplants.

H M the Sultan condoles with Chinese President

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Xi Jinping of People's Republic of China for victims of an earthquake which hit the northwestern province of Gansu.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sympathies to the President Xi, families of the victims and the Chinese people, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

At least 126 people were killed in the country's deadliest earthquake for years, BBC reported,

adding that fatalities may rise with more than 700 reported injured in icy conditions.

The 6.2 magnitude quake hit mountainous Gansu province around midnight on Monday, also shaking neighbouring Qinghai.

President Xi has ordered thousands of rescue crew to the region, among the poorest and most diverse in China.

On Tuesday, footage on state TV and social media networks showed entire villages split by the quake, as well as collapsed buildings and houses.

'Oman can work with India in fight against climate change'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is keen to take its relationship with India one level higher by engaging more expeditiously with the country that is making significant strides in the fight against climate change.

"The knowledge that is building up in India can definitely be used in Oman," H E Salem bin Nasser al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, told an Indian television channel in Doha recently.

"India, of course, is a close neighbour of ours. We've been working with India for quite some time and will continue to do so to reduce the carbon dioxide footprint through capture and sequestration," H E Afi told TimesNow.

Oman has been exerting concerted efforts in carbon sequestration - a process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide. It is a method of reducing the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere with the goal of reducing global climate change.



The knowledge that is building up in India can definitely be used in Oman

H E SALEM AL AFI

There are a large number of Indian firms that are part of Oman's industry and infrastructure and their emissions can be worked on, the Omani minister noted.

While fighting climate change at various levels in numerous ways, the global mission is also to shift from fossil fuel dependency.

A joint statement following the recently concluded COP28 summit in Dubai called for 'transitioning' away from fossil fuels, specifically for energy systems.

India has power generation capacity of 424GW; around 180GW from non-fossil fuels.

According to India's New and Renewable Energy Minister R K Singh, his country has set a 500GW renewable energy target, which can be achieved before the 2030 deadline.

Oman can benefit from India's efforts to meet its power demands from renewable energy.

The sultanate is investing more than US\$30bn in hydrogen production, aiming to become one of the largest producers in the world by 2030. Utilising solar and wind energy for electricity generation, Oman is currently working on a strategy of orderly transition to zero neutrality and is committed to lowering emissions by 21% by 2030.

Oman's National Strategy for Orderly Transition to Net Zero has outlined carbon capture, utilisation and storage will contribute to approximately 15% reduction in domestic emissions.

Arab Vision 2045 launched at UN meeting in Cairo

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of Arab League, announced the 'Arab Vision 2045' at the 31st ministerial session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), held in Cairo on Monday.

This initiative aspires to achieve development through a comprehensive and integrated perspective, embodying a collective hope for a bright future where the aspirations of the diverse peoples and groups in the Arab region are fulfilled.

"We envision a future that elevates aspirations, activates energies and encourages cooperation," Gheit said.

Arab Vision 2045 comprises six interlinked pillars: security and safety, fairness and justice, innovation and creativity, prosperity and sustainable development, diversity and vitality, and cultural and civilisational renewal.

These pillars were selected,



taking into account the region's priorities and in response to the significant global changes underway.

"Given our shared belief in the paramount importance of stability and security, the initiative crafted collaboratively by a team from ESCWA and the Arab League, encompasses a fundamental pillar centred on security and safety. Today, we take great pleasure in unveiling this initiative, which aims to bolster regional integration and

cooperation, fostering the realisation of development goals for Arab countries," Gheit added, while underlining the urgency of having a vision statement for the region, which reflects several undesired developments including the current conflict in Israel.

The choice of the year 2045 to materialise the vision of the Arab League was not arbitrary. "It aligns with the centennial celebrations of both the Arab League and the United Nations," Gheit informed.



03 Role of cultural intelligence in students' success studied



05 Global fintech firm ties up with Oman-based Mamun



07 Hospital in Gaza hit twice by Israel in 48 hours: UNICEF

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Role of cultural intelligence in students' success studied

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A research project titled 'The role of cultural intelligence and adaptation methods for the level of problems faced by Omani scholarship students' won in the Young Researchers' Education and Human Resources category at 10th National Research Award, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The research was led by principal investigator Marwa Nasser al Rajhi from Sultan Qaboos University.

Marwa aimed to identify the problems faced by Omani students sent to study abroad, focusing on three main areas - academic and cultural challenges, psychological aspects and economic problems. The study revealed the importance of cultural intelligence, and how it can help students overcome these problems directly and indirectly through the presence of adaptation methods (positive and negative) as mediating variables in the relationship between cultural intelligence and the level of problems.

The study sample consisted of 3,331 male and female students studying in various universities abroad. The largest percentage of the sample were students studying in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The education level of these students varied between undergraduate and post-graduate, starting from the first



(Supplied photo)

The study aimed to identify the problems faced by Omani students sent to study abroad, focusing on three main areas - academic and cultural challenges, psychological aspects and economic problems

to the seventh year.

Through the study, Marwa found various direct and indirect relationships between cultural intelligence, adaptation methods and the level of challenges of all kinds. The study found a high level of cultural intelligence led directly to a lower level of academic, cultural and psychological problems. A higher level of cultural intelli-

gence among students led to an increase in the level of positive coping mechanisms that students resorted to, which in turn led to a decrease in the level of psychological problems. Also, a high level of negative coping mechanisms led to an increase in the level of all types of problems that students suffer.

The study also revealed a link between gender and academic

year in the level of economic problems that students face - female students in general face a higher level of economic problems compared to male students.

The level of economic problems among male students increases significantly from the first year to the second year, but begins to gradually decrease thereafter until the fourth year. As for females, the level of economic problems remains almost constant, with a very slight increase and decrease between the four years.

Female students in general have a higher level of academic, cultural and psychological problems compared to male stu-

dents, and students in the first year of school suffer from a higher level of academic and cultural problems compared to older students.

Marwa highlighted the importance of organising training programmes for students before they leave for their scholarship programmes, conducted by competent authorities in the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation to prepare them for the new country.

Additionally, integrated induction programmes should be held for students after their arrival in the scholarship country by cultural attachés, which will contribute to preparing students psychologically, culturally and academically and building a communication bridge with officials in that country.

The study focused on the need of educating students before they leave for their scholarship country about the amount of financial support provided to them, and the importance of good planning and prudent spending to manage their expenses and avoid economic problems.

The study also proposed creating an electronic platform or virtual association for Omani students on scholarship in all countries, to bring them together and give them an opportunity to discuss, ask for and provide psychological support to each other, provided that it is under the supervision of specialists at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

Syria to provide Omanis visa at border checkpoints

Muscat - The Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic in Muscat has announced that citizens of the Sultanate of Oman can obtain an entry visa to Syria at border checkpoints of the Arab republic.

H E Dr Idris Maya, Syrian Ambassador to Oman, informed that the announcement reflects the depth of fraternal relations and bonds between the peoples of the two countries.

The decision was made in implementation of recommendations of a joint government committee that convened in Muscat on July 12 and 13. H E Maya described it as a gesture to upgrade ties of economic cooperation, commercial exchange and tourism to the standard of the distinguished political relations.

Omanis will not need to visit



H E Dr Idris Maya

Syrian embassies or consulates abroad to obtain an entry visa, H E Maya confirmed and added that the Syrian embassy in Muscat is fully prepared to respond to any query related to this issue and extend assistance to Omanis wishing to visit Syria for any purpose.

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OMAN WINS AL ULA TENT PEGGING CHAMPIONSHIP



Oman won the Al Ula Tent Pegging Championship after claiming seven medals - four gold, one silver and two bronze - in individual and team events at the three-day tournament held in Medina, Saudi Arabia, which ended on Tuesday (Supplied photo)

Good turnout for weekend Indian drama

Our Correspondent
Muscat

More than 1,000 people turned up to witness the play *Safalamiyatra* at Al Falaj Hotel on Friday. A cast of 25 actors and actresses delivered a riveting performance in the three-hour Malayalam play narrating a story based on a railway station in south India.

Presented by Theatre Group Muscat, the seventh play staged by the group, *Safalamiyatra* was directed by Ansar Ibrahim to a script by Kerala State Award winner Jayan Tirumana and stage set by Sujathan Master.

"The play showcases the plight of the common man who continues to be exploited due to his innocence. The play is narrated like a travelogue with a lot of questions that we ask



(Supplied photo)

the audience. The play makes us ponder over the sorrows and joys of the present time. It is meant to analyse the good and bad of human society and through it show hope," Ibrahim said.

He added that *Safalamiyatra* puts forward the message that the good wins over evil with love, shown through a story that addresses hot topics in

India, including lynching, casteism and insurgency.

Sujathan created five stages for *Safalamiyatra*. "Every play demands a new look and texture. The background and stage are important in conveying the narrative efficiently with the storyline. I worked closely with the director and writer to create and paint each background meticulously."



SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH



ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders: -

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of tenders Document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/ Before 10:00 am Wednesday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
MOH/HQ-361/2023	Provision of Support, Maintenance and Enhancement of Al-Shifa system			Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	•SME: 10,000 •LO: 25,000
MOH/HQ-362/2023	Supply of Total Parenteral Nutrition Consumables with Compounder for Khoula Hospital	28/December/2023	17/January/2024		
MOH/HQ-363/2023	Supply and Installation of Ultrasound Scanner at Ibri Hospital in Al Dhahira Governorate	21/December/2023	27/December/2023		
MOH/HQ-364/2023	Supply & Installation of Medical Equipment for RDU at Al Khaburah Extended Health Center in North Batinah Governorate				
MOH/HQ-365/2023	Supply of Laboratory Items	28/December/2023	24/January/2024		
MOH/HQ-367/2023	Supply of Pharmaceuticals	21/December/2023	03/January/2024		
MOH/HQ-368/2023	Supply of Pharmaceuticals for The Royal Hospital	28/December/2023	24/January/2024		

Notes :-

- Tenders should be submitted on line on: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone:24402200, Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om



Oman begins scouts and guides programme for promotion of health, character building

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's Ministry of Education has embarked on a national programme for the scouts and guides to explore the country's various locations, while undertaking activities for physical fitness and character building.

As part of this mission, the General Directorate of Scouts and Guides under the ministry executed 'Summit Path Programme' from December 14 to 16 taking young children to explore the majestic Jebel Shams peak.

"This programme was attended by 19 students from 7th to 11th grade, under the supervision of nine qualified leaders, in a visionary educational approach to develop physical fitness and life skills," Ali Mohammed al Maamari, Director of Public Relations and Media at the General Directorate of Scouts and Guides, told Muscat Daily.

Maamari explained that the

programme - part of the directorate's initiatives to develop the skills of scouts and guides - leverages the expertise of the Internet and Radio Communications Team.

It includes a comprehensive training schedule, starting from walking for an hour daily to running for specific distances and power training exercises - all aimed at preparing students for their real-life challenges.

The programme at the same time seeks to instil the values of national belonging and loyalty, focusing on character building and enhancing values such as independence, creativity, and leadership.

By ascending Jebel Shams - the highest peak in the Arabian Gulf - students learnt how to navigate challenging natural environments and overcome obstacles with a team spirit.

According to Maamari, the 'Summit Path Programme' reflects the directorate's commitment



This success of the first trip represents a shining point in Oman's educational activities, underscoring the value of innovation in education and upbringing

ALI MOHAMMED AL MAAMARI

ment to developing young people's leadership skills and enhancing their connection with nature, getting them involved in environmental conservation and guide them to develop a sense of responsibility.

"The achievement of this just concluded programme represents a shining point in Oman's educational activities, underscoring the value of innovation in education and upbringing."

The Jabel Shams programme had the support of several key entities, among which beah

played a significant role by extending support to the entire initiative. Sama Jebel Shams Resort graciously hosted the participants, offering them a comfortable and conducive environment for their activities.

Additionally, Atiyab Food Industries ensured the participants were well-nourished throughout the programme.

The programme had also partnered with the Fifth Direction Company for logistical support.

These collaborations were instrumental in addressing the complex needs of such a comprehensive programme.

The programme was enriched by the participation of four dedicated volunteers - two expert medics and two professional adventure photographers.

"Their involvement added immense value, ensuring safety and capturing the essence of this inspiring journey," the Public Relations official stressed.

The 'Summit Path Programme', bolstered by these collaborators, stands as a testament to the General Directorate of Scouts and Guides' commitment to nurturing the next generation's leadership abilities and deepening their connection with nature, while also underscoring the importance of community partnership in educational initiatives.

This achievement is a beacon in Oman's educational activities, highlighting the significance of innovative approaches in education and character development.

According to the participating students, the experience was inspiring and enriching.

Student Mala al Filaytiya spoke about the benefits of learning about the terrain and tree types, while student Mariam al Ra'isi highlighted the challenges and exceptional support that she received.

Sama al Hana'iyyah expressed her gratitude to the directorate for organising this programme.

Dakhliyah to get centre for science and innovation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education (MoE), represented by the Directorate-General of Education in the Governorate of Dakhliyah, on Tuesday signed an agreement with the Omani Indian Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO) to finance a science and innovation centre in Samael.

As per the agreement - signed by H E Majid bin Said al Bahri, Undersecretary for Financial and Administrative Affairs in MoE, and Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed al Fanna al Araimi, Director of Sustainability and Corporate Communications at OMIFCO - the construction of the Ibn Al Nazr Centre for Science and Innovation will be financed by the fertiliser company.

The agreement, which was signed at the ministry's General Diwan, reflects community partnership for funding the construction of the new centre for the creation of an effective scientific environment based on awareness and deep knowledge of the importance of investigation and scientific research.

Keeping pace with technical development in all its forms among students, the new centre will help expand scientific horizon of the students through programmes to trigger scientific imagination.

"The ministry seeks to create an educational environment that stimulates creativity and innovation, by building the mental capabilities of students, developing their creative thinking ability, refining their skills, and discovering their talents," said H E Majid bin Said al Bahri, Undersecretary for Financial and Administrative Affairs in MoE.

Makkah Hypermarket to mark 31st anniversary



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Makkah Hypermarket in Oman has announced 400,000 gifts to be given away in a ten-day long 'scratch and win' campaign in celebration of the group's 31 years in Oman.

Addressing a press conference at the Golden Tulip Hotel on Tuesday, Sinan Mohammad, Executive Director of Makkah Hypermarket, said that the mega promotional campaign will run from December 21 until the last day of the year.

"Every customer will get a voucher against every purchase of RO10 and accompanying scratch cards will enable one to win a prize. This is for everyone

and everyone will get a gift. Every voucher holds a surprise for our customers," he added.

Reflecting on this milestone celebration, Mammootty (who goes by only the first name), Managing Director of Makkah Hypermarket, said, "As we commemorate 31 years of serving our community, it is with great pleasure that we announce the scratch and win contest.

"This is our way of expressing gratitude to our valued customers, who have been an integral part of our journey. The contest not only symbolises the retailer's commitment to delivering quality products but also highlights its dedication to fostering a strong bond with the community it serves."

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Global fintech firm forms strategic alliance with Oman-based Mamun

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Triterras, a leading financial technologies (fintech) company focused on digital trade and supply chain finance, has announced a strategic alliance with Oman-based Mamun, an embedded fintech infrastructure as a service and finance provider.

Triterras, a global fintech firm co-headquartered in Singapore and Dubai, is a leading innovator of inclusive finance solutions for the world's micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

The collaboration between Triterras and Mamun aims to bolster the trade finance and short-term lending landscape in Oman. This collaboration harnesses Triterras' technological expertise and leverages Mamun's experience in Oman's financial services sector.

The strategic alliance will initially target the MSMEs finance sector in Oman, with a specific emphasis on the food and beverage industry. The collaboration will also enable Triterras to offer its financing platform to banks in Oman on a white-label basis.

As part of the alliance, Triterras will introduce eDirect Debit, a direct debit payment technology developed by Mamun, in the UAE market. eDirect Debit is designed to offer businesses a seamless and highly efficient payment so-



The collaboration between Triterras and Mamun aims to bolster trade finance in Oman

lution, with the aim of enhancing the ease of handling transactions within the region.

"One of the key challenges for startups and micro businesses is a lack of capital and financing, which hinders growth and accessibility to markets. Our primary aim is to enable MSMEs with access to immediate and workable financial solutions to maintain business continuity and foster growth opportunities," Ashish Srivastava, Chief Commercial Officer at Triterras said in a press statement.

"This collaboration strengthens our commitment to deliver

cutting-edge finance solutions that meet the evolving needs of businesses in Oman, and the wider Middle East region. This two-way agreement facilitates Triterras' expansion in the MENA region," Srivastava added.

On his part, Mohammed al Tamami, Co-Founder and Chief Commercial Officer at Mamun, said, "We are excited to witness the expansion of our eDirect Debit technology into the UAE through our collaboration with Triterras."

Mamun is an embedded finance and payments startup headquartered in Muscat, spe-

cialising in peer-to-peer lending and crowdfunding tailored for MSMEs. The platform is dedicated to offering robust financial support, particularly in trade finance, invoice financing, and working capital loans.

With Oman's vibrant market in mind, the collaboration between two fintech firms potentially makes a substantial impact on businesses looking for finance by simplifying access to financial resources. As with Triterras' global mission, the collaboration will support MSMEs, enhancing financial inclusivity for businesses in Oman.

MedcoEnergi acquires 20% stake in Blocks 60 and 48

Our Correspondent
Muscat

PT Medco Energi Internasional (MedcoEnergi), a leading Indonesian oil and gas company, announced that it has completed the acquisition of 20% interests in two exploration and production sharing agreements (EPSA) in Oman from OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP).

Earlier this month MedcoEnergi had announced that it has been granted Royal approval to acquire 20% interests in two blocks in Oman.

'MedcoEnergi has acquired a 20% interest in the Block 60 producing EPSA and a 20% interest in the Block 48 exploration EPSA, both located onshore in western Oman near the border with Saudi Arabia,' the Indonesian company said in a statement on its website.

It added that OQEP will remain operator of both blocks and will facilitate the exchange of expertise in gas exploration, development, technology application and sustainability processes through the secondment of MedcoEnergi personnel to the joint operations and bilateral corporate assignments.

OQEP is Oman's third largest producer and a subsidiary of OQ Group, the state owned global integrated energy group.

MedcoEnergi President Director Hilmi Panigoro said, "This acquisition leverages our reputation for sustainability and



OQEP will continue to remain operator of both blocks and facilitate the exchange of expertise in gas exploration, development, technology application and sustainability processes

gas development and provides a new hub from which to expand low-cost production."

Oman's Block 60 holds two producing fields - Bisat oil field and Abu Butabul gas field. In January 2023, OQ announced the commissioning of its third crude oil processing plant in the Bisat oil field in Block 60, raising the oil field's production capacity to 60,000 barrels per day (bpd).

OQ recently announced that oil production in Block 60 rose to 61,000 barrels of oil equivalent in the first half of 2023, up from 49,000 barrels of oil equivalent in the first half of 2022.

OQEP currently operates three blocks in Oman (8, 48 and 60) and is a participant in a number of production and exploration joint ventures both in Oman and Kazakhstan.

Oman Cables names Aydogdu as new CEO

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The board of directors of Oman Cables Industry Company, a subsidiary of the Prysmian Group and a leading cables manufacturer in the Middle East, has appointed Erkan Aydogdu as the new Chief Executive Officer of the company.

Aydogdu will replace Cinzia Farisè, the current CEO of Oman Cables Industry who is set to transition to a higher strategic role at the Prysmian Group headquarters with global responsibilities in January 2024, as disclosed by the company to the Muscat Stock Exchange.



Erkan Aydogdu

The disclosure clarified that the joining date for Aydogdu in his new role is contingent upon the completion of necessary regulatory procedures with the relevant authorities. Until the formal joining date, which will be disclosed in due course, Cinzia Farisè will continue to serve in her capacity as CEO, the company said.

Aydogdu, coming from his recent position as the CEO of Oceania and Southeast Asia at the Prysmian Group, brings a wealth of experience from his various roles within the Prysmian

Group. He holds a Global Executive MBA from SDA Bocconi University in Milan, earned between 2015 and 2017.

Oman Cables Industry emphasised Aydogdu's robust skill set, encompassing logistics, continuous improvement, research and development, quality assurance, and management. The company stated that Aydogdu's diverse experience would contribute valuable insights to the industry.

Expressing gratitude, Oman Cables Industry board of directors, on behalf of the company,

acknowledged Cinzia Farisè for her significant contributions, services, and achievements during her tenure. The board conveyed best wishes for her continued success in the new global role, where she is expected to provide support and guidance to the company.

Oman Cables Industry holds a prominent position among the top 100 global wire and cable producers. It is recognised for its advanced facilities and outstanding services, offering a comprehensive range of electrical products.

CBO issues RO29mn worth of treasury bills

Muscat - The Central Bank of Oman announced the issuance of government treasury bills worth RO29.45mn.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO10mn, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached RO99.590 for every RO100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.590.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.3446% and 5.3666%, respectively.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO19.45mn, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached RO98.660 for every RO100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO98.660. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.3747% and 5.4477%, respectively.

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

Omantel, SQU to launch new fund to foster research in ICT and AI industries

Muscat - As part of the ongoing efforts to develop scientific research in Oman, Omantel and Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) have signed a five-year partnership agreement to foster scientific research in the fields of information and communication technology (ICT) and artificial intelligence (AI).

The agreement stipulates the launch of the 'Applied Research Fund' designed to provide support to faculty members and researchers in the field of ICT and AI. The fund will empower researchers to collect and analyse data using the latest technical tools, as well as adopt technological innovations in the fields of medicine, agriculture, environment, technology, engineering and other emerging technologies. This in line with the government's policy of supporting scientific research and innovation aligning with Oman Vision 2040.

H H Sayyid Dr Fahad al Said,



Vice Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University, said, "This partnership with Omantel aims to boost our contribution, as a national university, to the country's efforts to address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially those that focus on stimulating innovation, driving sustainable industries, and encouraging partnerships between public and private sector institutions and to work towards elevating the quality of education.

"Omantel is the right fit for us, especially because of the company's proven expertise and great potential in adoption of

modern technologies and its consistent support and dedication to small and medium enterprises, specialized in the fields of ICT and AI."

Talal Said al Mamari, Chief Executive Officer of Omantel, said, "We are delighted to enter into an important partnership with Sultan Qaboos University, especially as research funding is a core part of Omantel's social responsibility and commitment to supporting Oman's youth in their career advancement and assisting them in joining national efforts to build a digital economy based on knowledge and innova-

tion. This partnership will go a long way in boosting national efforts to consolidate Oman's position in UNESCO's Global Innovation Index."

As part of the agreement, Omantel will lend multi-level support to the project through engagement of its relevant departments, with the technology, strategy and innovation departments tackling related issues and internal challenges.

Omantel Innovation Labs will provide support by providing access to Omantel's incubators and accelerators programmes and connections with Omantel's experts, through nearly 30 scientific papers divided over a period of five years.

This agreement focuses on the telecommunications and information technology sector, aligning with the National Program for Digital Economy and in line with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's commendable guidance.

TOGETHERNESS COMPANY ANNOUNCES SELLING THE FOLLOWING LANDS AND PROPERTIES:

- 1- Residential/commercial Land with an area of 5,000 square meters overlooking the highway in Bawshar
- 2- Residential/commercial Land with an area of 2934 square meters in Ghala Heights
- 3- 5 agricultural plots in Barka, a total area of 84,000 square meters, each plot with an authorized well.
- 4- Residential/commercial Building with an area of 1883 square meters in Saham, with a commercial building on it
- 5- Residential/commercial Building with an area of 547 square meters in Buraimi, a building containing 8 shops and 10 apartments
- 6- Two farms in the state of Bidiya/Ghubra, with an area of 22,619 square meters, the other 45,000 square meters.
- 7- Residential plot for the Wilayat of Bidiya/Al Wasel, total area 96,847 square meters
- 8- Residential/commercial building, with an area of 1,572 square meters, it includes hotel apartments and shops in wilayat bidyah
- 9- Residential/commercial shops, with an area of 1944 square meters, it includes a market consisting of 19 shops in wilayat bidyah
- 10- Residential/commercial Land with an area of 1044 square meters and an existing hotel in the Wilayat of Mahut/Hajj
- 11- 4 industrial plots in Duqm, total area 30,000 square meters
- 12- One residential/commercial plot with an area of 900 square meters and a residential plot with an area of 594 square meters in Al-Qabil
- 13- Residential/commercial Land with an area of 750 square meters in Duqm

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Sohar International CEO named 'CEO of the Year'

In a remarkable testament to his unwavering commitment to excellence, Ahmed al Musalmi, CEO, Sohar International, has been honoured with the prestigious 'CEO of the Year - Banking & Leadership' Award at Le Fonti International Awards 2023, Middle East.

Notably, this marks his fourth 'CEO of the Year' accolade - with three national, and a regional recognition. Musalmi's remarkable capabilities are rooted in his extensive leadership tenure and exceptional accomplishments within the financial and banking domain. His visionary guidance not only propels the bank's growth but also champions the development of individuals, both, within the institution and in surrounding communities.

Under his leadership over the past five years, Sohar International has undergone a remarkable metamorphosis, emerging as the fastest-growing bank in Oman. This exceptional growth trajectory successfully propelled



the institution to become the second-largest bank in the sultanate, a press release said.

Mohamed Mahfoodh al Ardhi, chairman of Sohar International, highlighted Musalmi's exceptional impact on Oman's financial landscape, stating, "Venturing beyond the intricate landscapes of an ever-evolving market, Sohar International stands as a pioneer within the financial sector. At the helm of this transformative journey is Ahmed al Musalmi, spearheading the bank towards unprecedented heights.

"His remarkable ability to imbue purpose and crystallise objectives within the organisation has been instrumental in Sohar International's extraordinary pursuit of excellence. Under his guidance, the bank has embarked on an exceptional trajectory, charting a course defined by innovation, resilience, and unwavering commitment to unparalleled achievement."

HSMAI Middle East conference concludes

The Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) Middle East successfully concluded its 6th Annual ROC Commercial Strategy Conference, the last of the Global, Commercial Strategy Conferences after London, Toronto, Singapore, India, and Korea.

The event's theme was 'Connect Evolve Lead'. Phil Bedford, Asentiv Worldwide, shared an inspiring keynote on networking in the hotel industry. Steven van Belleghem, a customer experience enthusiast, spoke about the story of evolution and the infusion of genuine customer culture. Michael Dominguez, Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI), spoke about the importance of culture, understanding the importance of humility, and starting with building the right team members.

The HSMAI conference was a remarkable gathering of minds, highlighted by global keynote speakers whose insights were both relevant and thought-provoking, a press release said.

The conference also featured engaging roundtable discussions that fostered dynamic exchanges of ideas providing attendees with key take-home

messages on the latest trends and strategies in the industry, emphasising innovation, customer engagement, and future-forward thinking.

The ROC Star Awards held during the second day of the conference, acknowledged three top talents nominated by their peers for their exemplary achievements and influence in the hospitality sector. Nine nominations were selected by the advisory boards from a total of 41 submissions.

Outside of UAE, 50% of submissions this year were received from KSA, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, and Iraq making this a truly regional awards program acknowledging the efforts, innovation and performance of our on-property executives.

The 2023 ROC Star winners were Linda Mwaffak, commercial director, Conrad Dubai, Abhay Bishnoi, director of Revenue Management at Jumeirah Beach Hotel, and Laurence Desirée Klett, director of Marketing Communications & Sustainability, Al Baled Resort Salalah by Anantara.

Each winner received a prestigious array of rewards.

SIG Foundation wins Save Food Award in Cairo



SIG Foundation has received international recognition for its project 'Cartons for Good', which uses SIG's expertise in filling technology to help communities process and preserve their food into meals locally.

The prize, which is awarded annually by the Save Food initiative, was recently presented to the foundation in Cairo at pacprocess MEA, the number one trade fair in the Middle East and Africa region for processing and packaging. The prize money will be invested in a comprehensive and locally based study to ensure that the impact of Cartons for Good in Egypt is as high as possible, a press release said.

Every day, a third of the world's food is lost. Farmers are often unable to sell their entire

harvest at local markets, and they also have no way of preserving the products. The SIG Foundation's Cartons for Good project, which has been operating in Bangladesh since 2019, convinced the jury with SIG's expertise in using filling technology to help communities process and preserve their food into meals locally.

SIG engineers developed a system that uses the company's boil-down technology to preserve food in SIG SafeBloc carton packs. Vegetables and fruit are processed into tasty meals without preservatives and filled into carton packs. This means that the meals can be stored at ambient conditions for up to nine months without refrigeration. The aim of the foundation is to expand 'Cartons for Good' to other parts of

the world.

The Cartons for Good initiative thus brings SIG's food preservation and packaging technology to regions where innovative solutions are urgently needed to combat food loss and malnutrition. Surplus food is preserved, farmers have an additional income, and meals are distributed to schools that provide underprivileged children with a regular lunch. This allows them to go to school instead of working for food.

Holger Dickers, managing director of the Swiss-based foundation, said, "We are honoured to receive the Save Food Award. Cartons for Good is the foundation's flagship project. It is a designed to help communities to save surplus food, support farmers' livelihoods, and promote child nutrition.



MoE celebrates Arabic Language Day

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision, organised a ceremony on the occasion of International Arabic Language Day, which this year comes under the slogan 'Arabic is the language of poetry and art'.

The ceremony was held on this occasion under the patronage of Dr Said bin Saif al Ameri, head of the office of the Minister of Education, in the presence of Dr Sulaiman al Jamoudi, director general of the Directorate General of Educational Supervision, a number of department directors, educational supervisors, and a group of school students.

The celebration ceremony, held at the theatre of the Directorate General of Education in Muscat Governorate, began with a speech, delivered by Darwish al



Kayoumi, director of the Human Sciences Supervision Department, who described Arabic as the language of poets in which 'metaphor and truth meet in a rare way'.

"Arabic is a poetic language par excellence, and the lover of this language only has to take a fleeting glance at the huge linguistic heritage of Arabic to find

it exuding poetry in all its letters and vocabulary. The Arabic language has contributed to the development of various types of arts, not just poetry. It has inspired calligraphers, engineers, and painters, and its brilliance is evident in the creativity of Islamic architecture in mosques and palaces, ancient and modern, in rare manuscripts, and in

the many types of Arabic calligraphy that calligraphers and copyists compete in embellishing their writings with it. It is truly the language of the various arts and sciences," he said.

This speech was followed by an opening panel presented by the students at the Smart Student School, and a poem by the poet Muhammad bin Saif al Abri entitled 'Cosmic Breath'. Dr Mahmoud al Riyami presented a scientific lecture entitled 'Arabic, the Language of Poetry and Imagination', in which he focused on the slogan of this year's International Arabic Language Day - Arabic is the language of poetry and art, indicating the importance of poetry in the Arabic language, and its extension throughout the ages, through some examples.

Almarai Company signs MoU with Authority of People with Disabilities

Almarai Company signed a memorandum of understanding with the Authority of People with Disabilities to train, qualify and employ persons with disabilities.

This came on the sidelines of the First International Labour Market Conference, organised by the UAE's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development on December 13 - 14, at the King Abdulaziz Convention Center in Riyadh.

The memorandum was signed by the chief human resources officer of Almarai Company, Fahad Mohammed Aldrees, and the CEO of the Authority of People with Disabilities, Dr Hisham bin Muhammad al Haidari.

"This agreement comes within the framework of the company's social responsibility programme, as Almarai employs more than 500 people with disabilities, being one of the most suitable work environments for them," Aldrees said, pointing out that Almarai has the 'Silent Line', which is one of its production lines that is designated for people with hearing disabilities.

It is worth mentioning that Almarai annually supports over 300 charity organisations across the kingdom that operate in the field of community development.



Nasser Hospital in Gaza hit twice by Israel in past 48 hours: UNICEF

Geneva/Gaza - A hospital in the southern Gaza Strip was targeted twice by Israeli forces in the last 48 hours, UNICEF announced on Tuesday.

“Over the past 48 hours, the largest remaining fully functional hospital in Gaza has been shelled twice. That hospital is Al Nasser,” spokesman James Elder said in a UN press briefing in Geneva.

Located in the besieged enclave’s city of Khan Younis, Nasser Medical Complex ‘not only shoulders large numbers of children who have brutal wounds of war, but it also shelters hundreds and hundreds of women and children from across the Gaza Strip who were simply seeking safety’, Elder said. The overnight shelling resulted in the death of a young girl, the Health Ministry in Gaza had announced Monday.

The ministry said 13-year-old Donia Abu Mohsen ‘was martyred and joined all her family members after the maternity building in Nasser Medical Complex was targeted’.

Donia lost her parents and all her siblings in the war, losing a leg in a previous Israeli airstrike, according to the ministry.

“The Gaza Strip remains the most dangerous place in the world to be a child and, day after day, that brutal reality is reinforced,” Elder said.

He stressed that without a cease-fire and sufficient food, water, medicine, and shelter, more Palestinian children would meet their end due to ‘willful neglect and deathly disregard’.

Elder also called attention to past statements by senior Is-



Al Nasser is the largest fully functional hospital remaining in Gaza (Anadolu Agency)

Nasser Hospital not only shoulders large numbers of children who have brutal wounds of war, but it also shelters hundreds of women and children from across Gaza Strip

JAMES ELDER

raeli officials, that the army’s focus would be on ‘damage, not accuracy’, and that Gaza ‘won’t return to what it was before, we will eliminate everything’.

“The sincerity in those statements has been proven with every additional child killed,” said the UN official.

At least 19,453 Palestinians have since been killed and 52,286 injured in the Israeli onslaught, according to Gaza’s health authorities.

Nearly 1,200 Israelis are believed to have been killed in the

Hamas offensive.

97 journalists killed

The death toll of Palestinian journalists killed by the Israeli army since October 7 in Gaza has risen to 97, authorities in the besieged Palestinian enclave said on Tuesday.

“The number of journalist martyrs has risen to 97 since the start of the (Israeli) brutal aggression on Gaza,” said the Gaza-based government media office.

The last journalist victim was

Adel Zorob who was killed in Israeli overnight airstrikes on Rafah city, south of the Gaza Strip, it said.

The office accused the Israeli army of deliberately killing the Palestinian journalists with the aim ‘to obliterate the truth’.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society on Monday said 4,301 humanitarian relief trucks entered the Gaza Strip through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt between October 21 and December 16.

The Red Crescent said in a

statement the trucks were loaded with water, food, and other relief and medical supplies. It noted that only 310 trucks reached the northern parts of the Gaza Strip including Gaza City and the northern areas during the week-long humanitarian pause which ended on December 1.

The number is, yet, far from meeting the growing humanitarian needs amid the ongoing Israeli devastating onslaught against the Gaza Strip.

Anadolu Agency

Freed Israeli woman says her mother was killed by Israeli fire

Istanbul, Turkey - An Israeli woman who was freed in a recent prisoner exchange between Israel and Hamas said her mother was killed and she was wounded when Israeli forces opened fire on the vehicle in which they were abducted.

In an interview that aired on Israel’s Channel 12, the woman recounted being taken by fighters from the Palestinian group’s armed wing the Al-Qassam Brigades in a tractor, which came under Israeli fire.

“My mother, whom I loved so much, was killed. I was injured in my back and my brother was injured in his leg,” she said.

The channel claimed the Israeli army ‘opened fire to stop the tractor from heading to Gaza’.

Israel’s Hannibal Protocol, which was implemented in 1986 in response to hostage crises, remained confidential for nearly 20 years.

The protocol, aimed at preventing the payment of high prices for hostages, authorised the elimination of hostages and hostage-takers if rescue efforts failed. The public became aware of the protocol in 2003, when Israeli doctor Avner Shiftan, who was serving as a reserve soldier in Lebanon, revealed it to the *Haaretz* newspaper.

Anadolu Agency

US announces security operation in Red Sea

Tel Aviv, Israel - The US Secretary of Defence, Lloyd Austin, announced a new US-led operation focusing on the ‘security challenges in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden’ following recent attacks by Houthis forces on commercial marine traffic in the region, CNN reported on Monday.

“I am announcing the establishment of Operation Prosperity Guardian, an important new multinational security initiative under the umbrella of the Combined Maritime Forces and the leadership of its Task Force 153, which focuses on security in the Red Sea,” Austin said in a statement.

He said countries ‘must come together to tackle the challenge

posed by this non-state actor launching ballistic missiles and UAVs at merchant vessels from many nations lawfully transiting international waters’.

The multinational operation includes the United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles and Spain, CNN reported.

“The recent escalation in reckless Houthi attacks originating from Yemen threatens the free flow of commerce, endangers innocent mariners, and violates international law,” Austin said. “The Red Sea is a critical waterway that has been essential to freedom of navigation,” he added.

ANI

Climate change: UNGA chief seeks cooperation

United Nations, US - Dennis Francis, president of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), has called for global cooperation and partnerships to assist vulnerable nations in coping with climate change.

During an interview with Xinhua on the heels of the COP28, or the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Francis pointed out the critical challenges faced by small island developing states, least developed countries, and landlocked developing countries in light of the effects of climate change.

The UNGA president stressed the necessity of ‘the will on the part of all stakeholders to act responsibly in helping to stabilise



UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis

the climate’, especially in support of countries on the front lines of climate change.

Recalling his recent visit to the Pacific region for the Pacific Island Forum, Francis shared firsthand observations of the critical situation faced by island nations.

“Out in the Pacific, they are having to deal with rising sea levels as a consequence of climate change, and rising at a relatively fast rate,” he noted, underscoring the imminent threat of inundation and the potential need for population relocation and migration.

Some Pacific Island nations, he said, are already in talks with third countries about relocating their populations in case of total inundation.

This dire situation raises sig-

nificant legal and existential questions for these countries.

Francis called on the international community to address these concerns urgently. “The rights and obligations of those countries can be compromised unless it is definitively clarified by the international community as to what happens to those states that can be inundated.”

This issue extends beyond the Pacific, affecting small island states in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean, integral members of the international community.

Talking about the outcome of the COP28, the UNGA president said: “The outcome ... represented an advance, an improvement.”

Xinhua

China: Rescuers struggle in sub-zero temperatures as 116 killed in earthquake

Beijing, China - At least 116 people were killed and hundreds sustained injuries after a powerful earthquake of magnitude 6.2 jolted an ethnic county in northwest China’s Gansu Province, CNN reported citing the state media.

Late on Monday night, an earthquake in Gansu Province’s Jishishan county caused damage to highways and homes.

Residents ran outside, huddling overnight in the freezing winter cold, while rescuers raced to look for survivors trapped under rubble.

According to officials, 397 persons in Gansu have been hurt so far, 16 of them critically and 76 of them seriously.



Rescuers are seen at Caotan Village in Haidong City, northwest China’s Qinghai Province, on Tuesday (Xinhua)

Residents ran outside, huddling overnight in freezing winter cold, while rescuers raced to look for survivors trapped under rubble. The earthquake caused damage to highways and homes

The tremors lasted nearly 20 seconds and were felt in the provincial capital of Lanzhou 102km (63 miles) away, CNN reported citing the state media.

Regarding the situation, Chinese President Xi Jinping has urged ‘all-out’ search and rescue efforts and proper arrangements for affected people to ensure the safety of people’s lives and property.

According to Global Times, Xi has issued important instructions, demanding full-scale search and rescue efforts, proper resettlement of affected people, and maximum efforts to ensure the safety of people’s lives and property.

In another development, the State Council’s earthquake relief headquarters and the Ministry of Emergency Management

have upgraded the national earthquake emergency response to Level II, Xinhua reported, citing the China Earthquake Networks Center, that the quake jolted at 11:59pm (local time) on Monday and had a focal depth of 10km.

The epicenter Liugou Township is about 8km from the county seat of Jishishan Bao’an, Dongxiang, Sala Autonomous County in Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu.

The witnesses said that the earthquake caused damage to houses, roads and other infrastructure. Several villages have suffered power failures and disruptions to water.

ANI

INDIA

49 opposition MPs suspended from Lok Sabha; 141 suspensions so far

New Delhi - Forty-nine opposition MPs, including Farooq Abdullah, Supriya Sule, Dimple Yadav and Shashi Tharoor, were on Tuesday suspended from Lok Sabha for the remainder of the winter session, a day after 33 MPs were suspended from the House for 'misconduct'.

The action came after the House faced adjournments, with opposition members raising slogans and displaying placards over their demands. They have been demanding a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah over the Parliament security breach on December 13.

With 49 Lok Sabha MPs suspended, the total number of opposition MPs suspended from the two Houses has gone up to 141. With suspensions on Tuesday, the number of those who have been barred from entering Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha chambers till the conclusion of the winter session stood at 92. The winter session will conclude on December 22.



Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge with Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and other opposition MPs stage a protest in New Delhi on Tuesday (ANI)

‘Failure of government’

The suspended members, meanwhile, hit out at the BJP-led Centre, terming their suspension as the ‘ultimate failure’ of the government and ‘anarchy’ inside the Parliament while claiming that the ruling govern-

It is nothing but anarchy inside the Parliament. They (BJP) do not have an iota of faith in parliamentary system in our country

ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY

ment is aiming at an ‘Opposition-mukt’ Lok Sabha..

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said: “It is clear that they want an Opposition-mukt Lok Sabha and they will do something similar in Rajya Sabha. At this point,

unfortunately, we have to start writing obituaries for Parliamentary democracy in India..”

“Today, in solidarity with my colleagues, I too joined the protest and everybody present has been suspended for the rest

of the session which means they want to pass their Bills without any discussion. I think it is a betrayal of Parliamentary democracy.”

Reacting to his suspension, Lok Sabha MP Farooq Abdullah

said: “Who does the Police come under? What would have happened if he (the Union home minister) had made a statement in Parliament on the incident (security breach)?”

“This is ultimately the failure of the government,” said Samajwadi Party Lok Sabha MP Dimple Yadav.

“Those speaking the truth and asking questions have been suspended from the House today. The public is seeing the kind of dirty politics happening in the Parliament,” said Aam Admi Party Lok Sabha MP Sushil Kumar Rinku.

Congress MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said: “It is nothing but anarchy inside the Parliament. They (BJP) do not have an iota of faith in the parliamentary system in our country.”

Lashing out at the ruling BJP, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal told ANI that a new rule is being set for the new Parliament.

“I have no words. What did they think before constructing this new Parliament building? They want to make this the graveyard of democracy...You have thrown out the entire Opposition. No action has been taken against the MP who issued passes (to the security breach accused).”

ANI

Cold tightens grip on capital city

New Delhi - Amid the biting chill prevailing in the entire North Indian belt, the cold extended its grip on the national capital on Tuesday, with the minimum temperature recorded at 10.8 degrees Celsius at Palam.

As the city woke up to a chilly morning, Sri Krishan, who has been in the habit of taking a stroll near the India Gate for the last 50 years, said the prevailing cold, combined with fog and pollution, is adding to the distress of locals battling asthma or other respiratory problems.

“Temperature (24-hr Tendency) over Delhi recorded at 0530 hrs IST of today, The 19th Dec.: Palam: 10.8 (-0.4) Safdarjung: 10.2 (+2.2),” read a post



on the official X handle of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday.

Dense fog also engulfed vast swathes of the national capital amid the biting cold on Tuesday morning.

“Owing to the cold weather

and persistent pollution, locals, especially asthma patients, are grappling with problems. Climate change is also contributing to the prevailing weather in the city,” said Shubh Bhargav, another resident.

“My health has been brittle since the COVID-19 pandemic. My body tends to tire quickly while walking,” another youth told ANI, pointing to pollution as one of the critical contributors to the indifferent air quality in the national capital. Earlier, a minimum temperature of 6.8 degrees Celsius was recorded by the IMD at Delhi’s Lodhi Road on Monday morning. The Safdarjung area logged a minimum temperature of 7.1 degrees.

ANI

Congress forms alliance committee

New Delhi - Congress on Tuesday formed a five-member committee to engage in discussions regarding potential alliances with other political parties for the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

“In the run-up to the general election 2024, the Congress president has constituted a National Alliance Committee with immediate effect,” the party said in a statement. The members of the National Alliance Committee include senior party leader Mukul Wasnik, former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot and former Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel.

Former Union Minister Salman Khurshid and senior leader Mohan Prakash are also



Opposition leaders during the INDIA alliance meeting, in New Delhi on Tuesday (ANI)

part of the National Alliance Committee. Meanwhile, the fourth meeting of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc is underway in the national capital.

The meeting comes amid the political tensions escalating between the Opposition and the BJP-led central government over the demand of Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s

statement over the Parliament security breach.

An unprecedented number of MPs, a total of 141, were suspended from the Parliament.

On the prevailing situation, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is in the national capital to meet PM Modi, said: “The voices of the people have been choked. Let them suspend the House first. They have no moral right to run this House to suspend the opposition fully...They will run a mockery, nothing else. It is a mockery of democracy.”

Responding to the delay in seat sharing in INDIA alliance, West Bengal CM said that ‘it’s not late. Better late than never’.

ANI

Pakistan poll body announces guidelines for candidates

Islamabad, Pakistan - The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) made public the rules it would follow for candidates wishing to file nominations for seats in the national and provincial assemblies, ARY News reported on Tuesday.

As per the election schedule, nomination papers are accepted from December 20 to December 22.

The nomination papers can be filed from 8:30 in the morning until 4:30 in the afternoon. “The nomination fees for the National Assembly candidates and provincial assemblies’ candidates have been (PKR) 30,000 and 20,000, respectively,” the ECP said.

The candidate has two options for paying the fees: cash or depositing it at a bank location. “A candidate will submit his/her income tax returns of

three years, annexed with nomination papers,” the guidelines read, according to ARY News.

“The age of a candidate on last date of submitting the nomination papers must not be lesser than 25 years,” the ECP said.

“A candidate of the National Assembly seat must be a voter of any place within Pakistan. A candidate of a provincial assembly must be a native of the concerned province,” the ECP announced.

According to ECP, voters in the relevant constituency must suggest and support a candidate for a general seat.

Pakistan’s general elections are slated to take place on February 8 in 2024.

The returning officers across the country took their oath on Tuesday.

ANI

Protesters rally against Britain’s migration policies

London, UK - Activists, anti-racists and refugee rights campaigners gathered outside the Home Office in London on Monday for a major protest under the banner ‘Stop the Hate’.

The event aimed to express strong opposition to Britain’s migration policies, particularly in the wake of a distressing incident linked to the controversial Bibby Stockholm barge, which was designated by the government to accommodate migrants.

The protest was ignited by a tragic death last week, further intensifying concerns over the treatment of migrants under the current policies. The Bibby Stockholm, at the centre of the controversy, was where an asylum seeker died recently.

Weyman Bennett, co-convenor of Stand Up To Racism, expressed profound concern over recent developments.

“While our hearts broke watching the news of more lives lost as a result of the racist border



People gather outside UK Home Office in London during a demonstration on Monday (Anadolu Agency)

policy, (Prime Minister Rishi) Sunak forced through legislation seeking to override the court’s ruling that the Rwanda plan was illegal,” he said.

He was referring to the government’s controversial emergency legislation aimed at

fast-tracking the process of declaring Rwanda a secure destination for asylum seekers, despite the Supreme Court having ruled against the initial scheme last month.

According to the Rwanda plan, people whom the UK iden-

tifies as illegal immigrants or asylum seekers would be relocated to the East African country for processing, asylum and resettlement.

Former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn joined the chorus of dissent, drawing a connection

between Britain’s military operations and the displacement of countless individuals.

“Every single one of those that have come from a war-torn country Britain had been involved in bombing and the war in

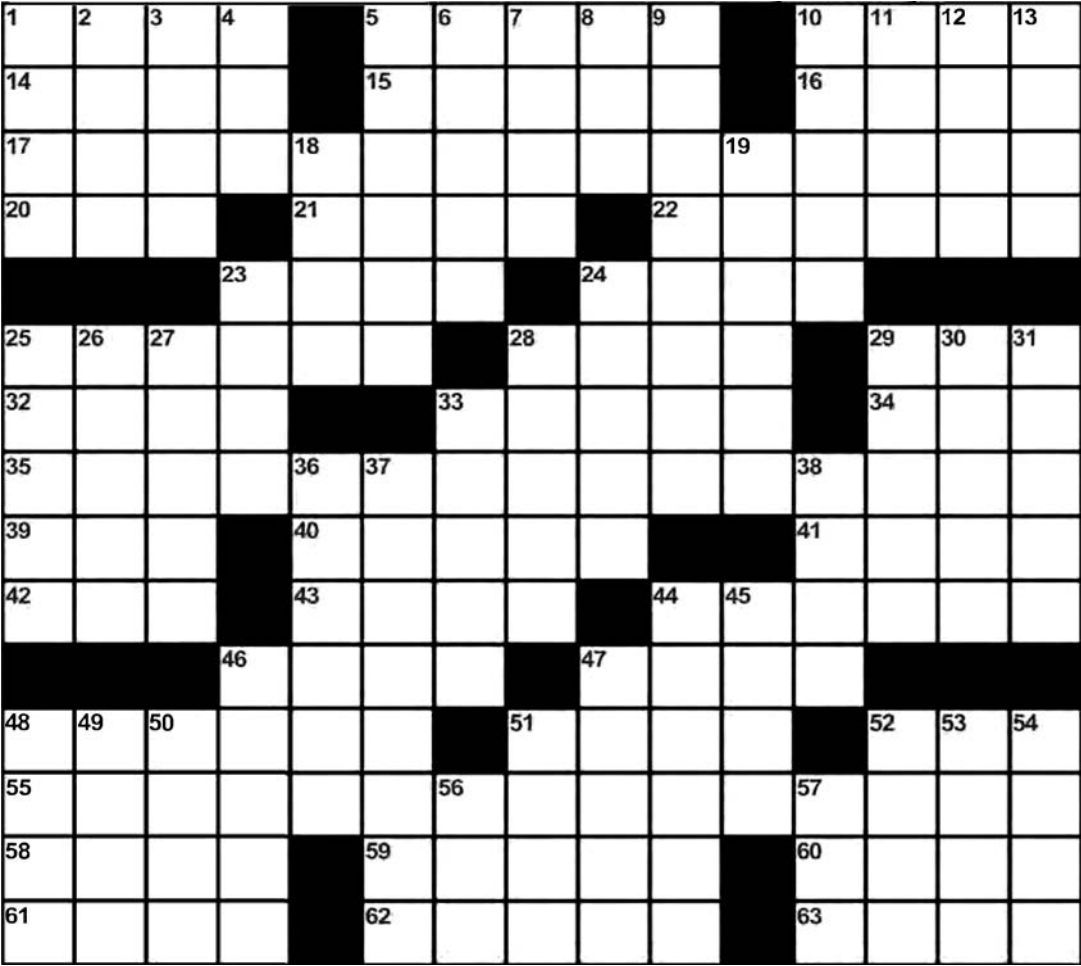
The protest was ignited by a tragic death last week, further intensifying concerns over the treatment of migrants under the current policies

that particular country,” he said.

The protesters, undeterred by recent legislative actions, delivered a resounding message demanding a more compassionate and inclusive approach to refugees and migrants.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Volcanic anagram for "ante"
 - 5) Where something can be flat or sharp
 - 10) Military lockup
 - 14) Asian cuisine choice
 - 15) Chocolate source
 - 16) An apple on a computer, for one
 - 17) One taking others to great heights
 - 20) Color attribute
 - 21) Brought into the world, as eggs
 - 22) Dough or bread
 - 23) Deeply engrossed
 - 24) Give in to pressure
 - 25) Chant
 - 28) Certain beach bird
 - 29) Monopolist's portion
 - 32) " ... lender be"
 - 33) Painful pang
 - 34) Deception
 - 35) Good feature for cars stuck in the snow
 - 39) Tall Australian bird
 - 40) Raise, as a flag
 - 41) Bibliographical abbr.
 - 42) Fink
 - 43) First-class
 - 44) Not-quite-round shapes
 - 46) Jekyll's alter ego
 - 47) Kind of individual pricing
 - 48) Certainly not alert
 - 51) Mixed assortment
 - 52) Schuss, e.g.
 - 55) Some supports for motorists?
 - 58) Kai's place, often
 - 59) Legendary actress Sophia
 - 60) " ... not always what they _"
 - 61) Places of rejuvenation
 - 62) Decorative jugs
 - 63) Amazes
- DOWN**
- 1) Carve in stone
 - 2) Holier than who?
 - 3) Soon-to-be parents' concern
 - 4) Order between "ready" and "fire"
 - 5) Knee abrasion
 - 6) Implied but not verbalized
 - 7) Battery contents
 - 8) Air-traffic control org.
 - 9) Poppycock
 - 10) Place for a hunter
 - 11) Casting director's handout
 - 12) Fictional hunchback
 - 13) " _ Jail" (Monopoly bumper)
 - 18) Brio or panache
 - 19) Immobilized (with "down")
 - 23) Bookbinding leather
 - 24) Certain chapeau
 - 25) Derive by reasoning
 - 26) _ Jean (Marilyn Monroe)
 - 27) "Rainbow" fish
 - 28) All the ones before us?
 - 29) Accused's need
 - 30) Enraged
 - 31) City on the Aire
 - 33) Biblical possessive
 - 36) "Casey at the Bat" poet
 - 37) Stack of fireproof logs
 - 38) Reason for tear gas
 - 44) Veggies sometimes served in rings
 - 45) Cello's little relative
 - 46) Complies with, as advice
 - 47) Gastric woe
 - 48) Some dangerous snakes
 - 49) Cease
 - 50) Legendary entertainer
 - 51) Shrek, for one
 - 52) Type of duck
 - 53) "Trick" joint

NOTE PAD

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55						56				57		
58						59				60		
61						62				63		

54) "Capital" and "alcohol" endings

56) "... what?"

57) "Made in the"

H	A	L	T	S		R	A	D	A	R		A	M	P
A	P	E	A	K		O	X	I	D	E		B	O	A
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M	A	N	M	A	D	E		A	N	G	E	R	E	D
A	R	O	U	S	E		S	T	O	N	E	D		
M	I	N	S	K		C	I	T	E	S		I	K	E
M	E	S	S		M	U	R	A	L		E	T	N	A
A	L	E		C	A	T	E	R		S	L	I	E	R
						N	I	A	C	I	N		R	E
M	U	S	T	S	E	E		H	O	N	E	S	T	Y
A	M	I	S	S				F	E	T	A			
N	B	C				I	M	P	R	A	C	T	I	C
T	E	A				U	B	O	A	T		O	R	A
A	L	L				S	A	I	T	H		R	A	T

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Talking is always good, but doing is much better today! This is a great time to take action: sign documents, start projects, or make your big romantic move. Open your mind to the idea that you are ready to go. Stop waiting for someone else to take you by the hand and tell you it's time. It isn't going to happen. You have been procrastinating too long. You need to just start putting things in motion and all of your confidence will come later.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You could be feeling fiery and a little bit combative today, at least when you are dealing with people who are just not getting with the program. You have absolutely no patience for people who aren't willing to listen or work in groups, so it's not the best day for team-based activities. You'll be much happier if you can go it alone and have more flexibility to do what you want to do when you want to do it. Regarding romance, if you are single, you will be loving it!

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Even though everything in your life is bright and cheerful right now, there are some dark storm clouds lurking just down the road. You won't know what direction they're coming from for a few more days, but to be on the safe side, you should take a more cautious attitude about new ventures and avoid doing anything too risky. Also, it may not be wise to make any major purchases or sign any legal documents. This time of uncertainty won't last long. Soon you'll know exactly what you're up against.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

A vibrant, hopeful, and positive energy is coming into your heart today, and it could ignite some deep feelings for someone that you thought you'd put away forever. Give yourself time to work through the way you feel today, because what your heart reveals to your head could throw you for a loop. Your subconscious is extremely active right now, and it could be playing tricks on you. This reawakening could be temporary, so don't act on it just yet

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Having a sharp focus on your goals is good, but today you should make sure that you don't lose sight of the bigger picture! It's not wise to be too obsessed about one thing. Don't forget to step back and take a break so that you can look at your progress and enjoy how far you have come up to this point. Realizing just how close you are to your goal will energize you and help you rally on to the finish line, perhaps faster than if you just kept on going at full speed.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Are you devoting too much time right now to things that are too idealistic? It's nice to want to have fun and relax with people you love, but there is a time for relaxation and there's a time for work. Today, you should stop thinking that everything will work out fine. Instead, start working to make sure that things work out fine! Double-check recent reservations. Call up friends and make sure you're still on for that outing. Don't take anything for granted.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You'll see some signs of life in one of your relationships that you thought was dead and buried. Set your hurt feelings or grudges aside, and try to give this person a second chance. You owe them that, don't you think? This person wants back into your life, but in a different capacity. It could be a win/win situation for you both, so don't let your emotions deprive you of a good opportunity. You can make the best of what you once thought was a bad thing.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

There are a lot of different options for you now, but you need to take things slowly. Gradual transitions are much more advantageous than abrupt changes because they give you time to adjust and maintain balance in your life. If you swing from extreme to extreme, you'll spend so much energy trying to get back on an even footing that any time you have saved by acting fast will go to waste. Slow and steady beats fast and frantic every time.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You're not going to need a lot of self-discipline today, because there will be too much temptation for you to be able to follow any rules. Start this day by assuming that your plans are not going to be followed completely. Let yourself off the hook. As long as you have a flexible attitude, then you won't spend the entire day feeling guilty that you aren't doing what you were supposed to be doing. If it's a day full of whims, then so be it. That is not such a bad thing.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

It's always good to feel useful, but today nothing is going to make you feel better about yourself than being of service to someone else. And you'll find someone early on who needs that help. You can be a very positive force in people's lives just by lending an ear, or a shoulder for them to cry on. You are coming to realize that it doesn't really matter whether or not you get what you want when you see so many other people who don't have anything.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Not taking few risks is not a guarantee that you will have a safe journey through life, so give careful thought to whether or not you really want to say no to that opportunity that scares you. You could be paralyzing your progress by being afraid to take a chance. Yes, a million things could go wrong, but a million things could go right too! Your subconscious is actively moving into a more positive future, so why don't you follow it by taking a leap of faith?

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

One of your partners in life or in work is not willing to let you in on their idea just yet. They are keeping their cards close to their chest. Instead of being hurt by their choice, try to accept it. Show them that you trust them and believe in them. Giving them the benefit of the doubt will touch them and help create a stronger bond between the two of you. Don't worry. They are not going to let you down when they finally lay all of their cards on the table!



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. "Criteria" is the plural, what is the singular?
- A. Criterio
 - B. Criterius
 - C. Criteriae
 - D. Criterion
02. In the film "Pink Floyd - The Wall" (released in 1982) what role did Bob Geldof, at the time lead vocalist of the Boomtown Rats, play?
- A. Rock Manager
 - B. Pink
 - C. Lover
 - D. Floyd
03. Which of these is a fictional character created by P D James?
- A. Adrian Mole
 - B. Paddy Clarke
 - C. Cordelia Gray
 - D. Kay Scarpetta
- Answers: 1. D 2. B 3. C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

I	G	I	T
U	E	A	F
C	R	S	S
I	N	S	O

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

STARC POWER

Aussie fast bowler shatters compatriot Cummins' record for most expensive player at IPL auction

Dubai - Australian fast bowler Mitchell Starc has shattered the record for the most expensive player ever sold in an IPL auction after being bought by Kolkata Knight Riders for INR 24.75 crore (US\$2,982,000 approx.). He surpassed the winning INR 20.50 crore bid (US\$2,470,000 approx.) that Sunrisers Hyderabad had made for Pat Cummins, Australia's ODI World Cup winning captain, less than two hours earlier at the IPL 2024 auction in Dubai.

Starc came up for bidding in the first set of fast bowlers - the fourth set of the day - and the battle for him began between Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals. However, the race was swiftly taken over by Gujarat Titans and KKR, the only franchises with more than INR 30 crore in their purse at that point, and KKR won the final bid.

The last time Starc featured in



Mitchell Starc (R) with Pat Cummins

an IPL auction was in 2018 when KKR had bought him for INR 9.4 crore. He didn't play that season, though, because of injury; he hasn't played the IPL since the 2015 season, in fact.

Before Starc's record bid, Sunrisers had spent INR 20.50 crore (US\$2,470,000 approx.) to buy Cummins, staving off competition from Royal Challengers Bangalore to get their man. Cummins' price had surpassed the record of INR 18.50 crore that Punjab Kings had paid to buy En-

glish allrounder Sam Curran at the 2023 IPL auction. Cummins had skipped the 2023 IPL to focus on international cricket; his previous auction price was INR 15.50 crore, when KKR had bought him in 2020.

New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell and Rachin Ravindra, Australian batter Travis Head, South African allrounder Gerald Coetzee, and Sri Lankan quick Dilshan Madushanka were some of the players who landed IPL deals on the back of impressive perfor-

mances in the recent ODI World Cup in India.

Mitchell was fiercely fought for by Capitals, Punjab and Chennai Super Kings, and was finally bought for INR 14 crore by CSK after entering the auction at a base price of INR 1 crore. Ravindra was also bought by CSK for INR 1.8 crore. CSK had also wanted to buy Head, the Player of the Match in the ODI World Cup semi-final and final, but lost him to Sunrisers, who bought him for INR 6.8 crore.

Both Coetzee (INR 5 crore) and Madushanka (INR 4.6 crore) were bought by Mumbai Indians for a total of INR 9.6 crore - these were their first two buys at the auction.

Afghanistan allrounder Azmatullah Omarzai also found a home at Titans, alongside his countrymen Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmad.

The 2024 auction began with a surprise, when West Indies T20 captain Rovman Powell was bought for INR 7.4 crore by Rajasthan Royals, who spent more than half their auction purse on one player. Powell's previous auction price was INR 2.8 crore, which Capitals paid for him in the 2022 auction.

West Indian fast bowler Alzarri Joseph was also hotly fought for between CSK, Capitals, Lucknow Super Giants and RCB. He had been released by Titans, who had paid INR 2.4 crore for him in the 2022 auction, and was bought for INR 11.50 crore by RCB, who needed an overseas fast bowler after having released Josh Hazlewood, Wayne Parnell and David Willey.

The most expensive Indian player so far at the 2024 IPL auction was fast bowler Harshal Patel. The bidding for him began between Titans and Punjab, and then between Punjab and LSG, before he was finally sold to Punjab for INR 11.75 crore.

Allrounder Shardul Thakur (INR 4 crore) will be returning for his second stint at CSK, who bought him for INR 4 crore. The last time Thakur had been sold at the auction he had gone for INR 10.75 crore to Capitals in 2022.

IPL to allow two bouncers per over

Mumbai, India - IPL 2024 will allow bowlers to deliver two bouncers an over in a bid to facilitate a more even contest between bat and ball. This change in playing conditions was trialled during the 2023-24 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, India's domestic T20 tournament.

Saurashtra veteran Jaydev Unadkat, who has played for various IPL sides and has listed his base price at INR 50 lakh (USD 60,000 approx.) for the IPL 2024 auction, has welcomed the change.

"I do feel two bouncers an over is very much useful, and I feel it's one of those things which gives the bowler an added advantage over batsmen," Unadkat told ESPN-cricinfo. "Because, for example, if I bowl a slower bouncer... the batsman in the previous case is sure that there's no more bouncer coming. In this case, even if you bowl one slower bouncer in the first half of the over, you can still use one more [in the over]. Someone who is weak against bouncers will have to be better at it and then it will give the bowler one more weapon in their armoury. So, I feel it's a very small change with a huge impact and as a bowler I feel it's very important to have that rule."

Unadkat added that fast bowlers will now have more options to try and rein batters in at the death. "Also in the death overs, you have one more option," he said. "So, it was becoming more of yorker-oriented [bowling] in death overs for fast bowlers. Not it can be yorker, slower ball and bouncers because of two bouncers an over. Even if you don't bowl the second bouncer, the batsman still has that expectation that the bowler might bowl the second bouncer."

The Impact Player rule,

which was brought in for the first time in IPL 2023, will remain in place. Under this rule, in addition to the playing XI, a team will have to list four substitutes at the toss. They can use any one of the four subs as their Impact Player.

If a team names four overseas players in their starting XI, then they can only bring in an Indian as the Impact Player. This is to limit the number of overseas players per game to four per team - something the IPL has adhered to since its inception. However, if a team

I do feel two bouncers an over is very much useful, and I feel it gives the bowler an added advantage over batsmen

JAYDEV UNADKAT

starts with three or fewer overseas players in their XI, then they can bring in an overseas player as the Impact Player. But the incoming overseas player should be among the four substitutes named at the toss.

The Impact Player rule has somewhat diminished the value of allrounders, with the likes of Venkatesh Iyer, Vijay Shankar and Shivam Dube largely slotting in as batters for their sides last season.

The trading window is closed for now but it will open again on December 20, a day after the mini-auction, and will remain open for up to a month before the 2024 season begins.

IPL 2024 is likely to be played between March 22 and the end of May.

Pakistan rest Haris for NZ T20Is; Shadab out with ankle injury

Islamabad, Pakistan - Mohammad Haris has been left out of Pakistan's 17-man squad for the five-match T20I series in New Zealand starting January 12. Haris, who has been out of the Pakistan set-up since the Asia Cup in September, is one of two notable absentees in the squad, along with Shadab Khan, who had to miss out due to an ankle injury.

However, Wahab Riaz, Pakistan's chief selector, confirmed that both players are still a part of the team's long-term plans: "Shadab is a very important



Shadab Khan

member of Pakistan T20 cricket and he's a white-ball specialist. Unfortunately, he got injured during the season; he twisted his ankle which will take another two weeks for rehab. He will be available to bowl after that. Haris is rested because there were some first-class performers and we saw Harris' capability and since he's part of our plans going forward, we want to use our pool of players."

Pakistan have been dealing with international cricket without first-choice fast bowler Naseem Shah who has been injured since

September, and while they won't have him for this tour either, there was good news.

"Ihsanullah, Shadab, Mohammad Hasnain, and Naseem Shah were unfit," Wahab said.

Pakistan squad: Shaheen Shah Afridi (capt), Aamer Jamal, Abbas Afridi, Abrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah Khan, Iftikhar Ahmed, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Mohammad Wasim, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Usama Mir, Zaman Khan

CLASSIFIEDS

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FAIRY TALE CONTINUES

Girona ease to 3-0 win over Alaves to reclaim LaLiga top spot

Girona, Spain - Ukrainian forward Artem Dovbyk bagged a brace as Girona's fairytale season took another stunning turn with a crushing 3-0 victory against Alaves on Monday.

The win helped Girona climb to the top of LaLiga, leaving Real Madrid and Barcelona in their wake. They now stand alone at the summit with 44 points, two ahead of the mighty Real and nine above last year's champions Barcelona.

Girona's stunning start to the LaLiga season scaled new heights last week when they claimed a statement 4-2 victory over Barca - their first league win over their Catalan rivals - and they kept the ball rolling against Alaves.

They dominated proceedings with the same intensity they have shown this season, with their 3-0 defeat at home to Real Madrid in late September, the only major blip in a stunning start to the campaign.

Dovbyk opened the scoring in the 23rd minute with a close-range strike from a rebound off the goalkeeper and Portu extended their lead just before the break with a fine first-time effort from the edge of the box.

Most of the hosts' scoring opportunities came from the right side of their attack, with 21-year-old Brazil fullback Yan Couto troubling Alaves' defence with his speed and skill.

On one of his sprints up the wing, he knocked the ball through a defender's legs to get into the box before being fouled from behind in the 59th minute, earning a penalty that Ukrainian Dovbyk netted with a tidy finish right down the middle of the goal.

The win was Girona's 14th in 17 games, giving them the most



Girona's Artem Dovbyk celebrates after scoring against Alaves on Monday

wins and points in Europe's top five leagues at this stage of the season.

Their remarkable run has fuelled belief that they are equipped to challenge for a maiden title only two seasons

after gaining promotion to the top flight. "This team is so hungry that it doesn't settle for anything," Portu told Movistar Plus.

"The team wants more and we only think day to day about continuing.

"We can't look at the standings. The key to the team is to stay focused, nobody relaxes here. It's not easy to get used to winning, to have that extra pressure... but the team is handling it very well."

Fluminense enter final after beating Al Ahly

Jeddah - Second half goals from Jhon Arias and John Kennedy secured Fluminense victory over Al Ahly and a place in the FIFA Club World Cup Saudi Arabia 2023 final.

Al Ahly flew out of the blocks, but it was Fluminense who had the first real chance, Arias employing impressive technique to volley the ball off the outside of the post. Percy Tau appeared through on goal after 17 minutes, but Felipe Melo made a superb sliding challenge. Arias then hit the upright again, albeit via a deflection, after a cleverly-worked corner. Ten minutes before half-time Fabio made an excellent, one-handed save from a Kahraba header.

Fluminense would take the lead with a little under 20 minutes remaining. Marcelo - a four-time winner of this competition with Real Madrid - tricked his way inside the area with a delicious nutmeg, only to be upended by Tau. Arias stepped up to take the subsequent spot-kick and confidently fired the ball low to the goalkeeper's right.

"I wasn't thinking about much," Arias recalled as he held the ball inside the Ahly area for a couple of minutes until the referee blew his whistle. "I was concentrated. I was thinking about where I was going to put it. I was trying to focus, concentrate." That he did. With clinical precision, Arias dispatched the ball inches inside the post to break the deadlock. "Unfortunately I'd hit the post, but I kept trying and then I got a penalty. I was able to score and help us get the victory."



Fluminense players celebrate after a goal against Al Ahly in the FIFA Club World Cup on Monday

I wasn't thinking about much. I was concentrated. I was thinking about where I was going to put it. I was trying to focus, concentrate.

JHON ARIAS

Tau would almost make amends straight away, though, when he met a low cross from the left in the centre of the box. But his effort lacked power, and was easily saved by Fabio.

The Brazilians would then make the game safe in the final minute of normal time. John Kennedy - the hero of their Copa Libertadores win over Boca Juniors - was slid through down the right by Matheus Martinelli, cut the ball back on to his left foot and curled a delightful effort into the bottom corner.

"I'm really happy," Kennedy told FIFA. "It's a really special moment in my life. By far the best in my career. I hope I can maintain this confidence, keep helping the team."

Eriksen expresses support to Lockyer after cardiac arrest

Manchester, United Kingdom - Manchester United's Christian Eriksen, who collapsed on the pitch during Euro 2020, offered words of encouragement to Luton Town's Tom Lockyer after his own cardiac arrest scare in a Premier League match.

Lockyer crumpled to the ground during Saturday's game against Bournemouth, forcing the match to be abandoned. Eriksen, who recovered from his own incident and returned to playing, sent a message of support to the Luton captain.

Eriksen expressed his hope for Lockyer's recovery and urged him to take his time and prioritize his health. He also offered advice on navigating the situation, drawing from his own experience.

"Well first of all, I hope he's okay," midfielder Eriksen, who suffered a cardiac arrest himself during Denmark's Euro 2020 game against Finland in June 2021, told BetFred.

"I've read and seen what's happened and I hope he's



okay, takes his time, is in a healthy way and his family are there to support him. I cross my fingers that he's fine.

"My advice to him would be to make the best decision you can. Listen to the doctors and if (they) tell you to maybe do something else then respect that.

"There's nothing that's going to hold you back, but in the end it all depends on how

he's feeling and what the doctors are saying.

He has to make the decision with his family on what's next, but he should take his time and focus on himself."

The Welsh centre back also collapsed in Luton's promotion playoff final win in May and later had surgery to fix an atrial fibrillation, before he was given the green light to continue his playing career.

World changes: Coe hints at future Olympic participation for Russia

London, United Kingdom - While Russian track and field athletes won't compete at the 2024 Paris Olympics, hope remains for potential future participation. International Athletics Federation president Sebastian Coe confirmed the current ban on Monday, but hinted at possible changes down the road.

Earlier this month the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said that Russians and Belarusians who qualify in their sport for the Paris 2024 Games can take part as neutrals without flags, emblems or anthems, changing the position of their



Sebastian Coe

original blanket ban following the invasion of Ukraine.

That followed a recommen-

dation in March that put the onus on international sports federations to decide, with most of them moving to allow the two countries' athletes to return.

Athletics, the Games' biggest and most popular sport, responded by saying they would keep their ban in place, but Coe seemed less certain when speaking to journalists on Monday.

"There is no change," Coe said. "The most important thing is that the autonomy and independence of international federations to make these judgements is really important. We made a judgement which we believe was

in the best interest of our sport.

"Do I see anything changing in the foreseeable future? I don't know. The world changes every five minutes, the situation could change. We do have a working group that is monitoring the situation within the sport and it will advise and guide (the policy-making) Council on what circumstances might need to exist for any exclusion to be lifted."

The Olympics will be sandwiched between three editions of the world championships (2022, 2023 and 2025) and Coe said his sport was in a great place after a "stupendous" year.

Harden stars as Clippers scorch Pacers, Hawks extend Pistons' losing streak

Los Angeles, United States - Los Angeles Clippers rode James Harden's hot shooting (35 points, 9 assists) to a 151-127 win over Indiana Pacers, extending their winning streak to 8 games.

Harden shot 12 of 16 from the floor, including 8 of 11 from 3-point distance. Kawhi Leonard (28 points) and Paul George (27 points) added fuel to the offensive fire, while Ivica Zubac dominated the boards with 18 points and 16 rebounds.

Bennedict Mathurin scored a career-high 34 points off the bench to lead the Pacers, who have lost four straight.

Trae Young's dazzling performance (31 points, 15 assists) helped Atlanta Hawks extend Detroit Pistons' losing streak to 24 games. Despite Cade Cunningham's career-high 43 points for Detroit, Young's offensive magic and Atlanta's strong team defense proved too much.

Jalen Brunson (29 points) and

Julius Randle (27 points, 14 rebounds) spearheaded New York Knicks' defensive lockdown against Los Angeles Lakers, securing a 114-109 victory. Knicks bounced back from a tough loss to Clippers, while LeBron James (25 points, 11 rebounds, 11 assists) and Anthony Davis (32 points, 14 rebounds) couldn't overcome the improved Knicks defense.

In Miami, Anthony Edwards turned up the heat in the fourth



James Harden scored 35 points and had nine assists as Los Angeles Clippers dominated Indiana Pacers

quarter, scoring 10 of his game-high 32 points to pull the Timberwolves past Heat 112-108. Tyler Herro's return for Miami (25 points) wasn't enough to overcome Minnesota's late surge.

Domantas Sabonis' triple-double (28 points, 13 rebounds, 12 assists) powered Sacramento Kings to a 143-131 win over Washington Wizards. De'Aaron Fox added 30 points and 6 assists, while Jordan Poole's 28 points for Washington couldn't

stop Kings' offensive onslaught.

In Toronto, Pascal Siakam carried Raptors with 27 points, leading them to a 114-99 victory over the depleted Hornets.

Scottie Barnes chipped in 22 points and 17 rebounds for Toronto, while Terry Rozier's 22 points weren't enough for Charlotte to snap their 5-game losing streak.

Meanwhile, Donovan Mitchell erupted for 37 points as Cavaliers outlast Rockets 135-130.



Suki Waterhouse wore a crimson red tulle creation



Taylor Russell wore a custom Loewe look



Model of the Year winner, Paloma Elsesser, wore a cut out black Ferragamo gown



Lewis Hamilton arrived in a white Wales Bonner outfit



Barbara Palvin was seen in a glittering black Self-Portrait frock



Alexa Chung wore a structured 16Arlington gown



Anne Hathaway stunned onlookers in vintage Valentino

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tine Rose

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Posthumous Special
Recognition Award
Joe Casely-Hayford

Cultural Innovator Award
Sam Smith

Trailblazer Award
Edward Enninful

The Pandora Leader of
Change Award
Michaela Coel

Isabella Blow Award for
Fashion Creator
Campbell Addy

BRITISH FASHION AWARDS 2023

ACROSS THE RED CARPET, AT THE BRITISH FASHION AWARDS 2023 HELD A WEEK AGO AT ALBERT HALL, LONDON, SEQUINS, VELVET AND RED TONES CONQUERED IN WHAT WAS A DECIDEDLY FESTIVE SARTORIAL PALETTE

RED TIDE

On December 4, the British Fashion Council orchestrated its annual British Fashion Awards - a star-studded ceremony in London aimed at encouraging new, trailblazing designers, as well as honouring industry stalwarts.

With Maya Jama and Kojey Radical co-presenting and Law Roach on red-carpet commentary, London feted the industry's brightest stars, including Vogue's own Edward Enninful, who took home the Trailblazer Award wearing Phoebe Philo's first menswear for her eponymous brand.

Valentino Garavani received the Outstanding Achievement Award, while Charlotte Tilbury and Sarah Burton were both honoured with Special Recognition Awards. Also, British born, LA-raised Paloma Elsesser took home the Model of the Year award — making history as the first plus size model to do so.

This year, there was an influx of US talent with high-profile appearances from all-American stars such as Anne Hathaway, Gwyneth Paltrow, Pamela Anderson and Taylor Russell. Out on the somewhat rainy red carpet, the guests were not deterred by a bit of drizzle and arrived in an array of show-stopping looks.

Fashion darling Kate Moss opted for a dramatic black YSL cape, whereas Alexa Chung stepped out in the ultimate sequin dress by London-based label 16Arlington.

There were numerous nods to British fashion dignitaries, too - TV presenter Laura Whitmore, singer Sam Smith and model Iris Law arrived in Vivienne Westwood, while chairperson of the British Fashion Council, Caroline Rush, wore an embellished dress coat from Richard Quinn (the designer was a favourite of the late Queen Elizabeth II).

The Fashion Awards brings together a global community in London, the home of fashion creativity, to amplify leaders of change, celebrate excellence in creativity and support the next generation of creative talent. The event serves as the main fundraiser for the BFC Foundation, which supports the future growth and success of the British fashion industry through its focus on education, grant-giving, and business mentoring.

The event continues to highlight the role fashion plays at the intersection of culture and is an entertainment platform for global fashion brands to join leading British designers, artists, creatives, and tastemakers who come together to celebrate excellence in the industry over the year.



Amal Clooney arrived in oversized sequins in a Versace gown



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