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Muscat 87th in Smart City Index

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat has improved its standing in the global IMD Smart City Index, rising to 87th place out of 142 cities ranked worldwide in the 2025 edition. Muscat was ranked 88th in 2024 and 96th in 2023.

The index, developed by World Competitiveness Center (WCC) of IMD Business School, assesses cities on how they balance economic and technological development with quality of life indicators such as housing, healthcare, mobility, governance and inclusiveness.

Muscat's overall performance earned it a 'B' grade, with strong scores in areas such as access to green spaces, public safety, online access to services and healthcare provision. However, the survey highlighted housing affordability as the leading concern among residents. More than 60% of respondents in Muscat identified affordable housing and unemployment as the top priorities



More than 60% of respondents in Muscat identified affordable housing and unemployment as the top priorities for the city's future development

for the city's future development, reflecting a global trend where housing emerged as the dominant issue in 110 out of 146 cities surveyed.

The survey noted that access to affordable housing has become a global challenge, driven by rising prices and supply shortages, a situation impacting cities as diverse as Dublin, Vancouver and Dubai.

Commenting on the broader findings, Arturo Bris, Director of WCC, said, "Access to housing is a global issue, driven by three major factors - population moves and immigration reducing the supply of affordable housing,

overall price increases, and increasing prices of certain commodities."

Muscat also scored positively in public safety, basic sanitation services and air quality, with residents expressing satisfaction in these areas. The city's initiatives in digital governance - including online public services and platforms for civic engagement - were highlighted as contributors

to improved trust in local authorities.

Globally, Zurich topped the 2025 Smart City Index, followed by Oslo and Geneva. Within the region, Dubai (4th) and Abu Dhabi (5TH) both entered the top ten for the first time, reflecting their progress in healthcare, public spaces and environmental management. Jeddah is ranked 27th, Doha 33rd, Manama 36th and Mecca 39th.

Experts noted that sustaining growth requires addressing urban challenges through strategic planning. "Smart cities succeed when they prioritise liveability, sustainability and governance, using technology as a tool to empower residents," said Christos Cabolis, Chief Economist at WCC.

The IMD survey emphasised the fact that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' formula for becoming a smart city. Instead, success depends on building strong foundations of quality basic services, leveraging technology to address local needs and ensuring inclusive growth.

ITHCA invests in US firm closing in on tech goals

Our Correspondent
Muscat

ITHCA Group has signed a strategic investment agreement with US-based Lumotive, a company focused on programmable optical semiconductor technology, as part of efforts to strengthen Oman's position as a regional hub for advanced industries.

The agreement was signed by Saeed bin Abdullah al Mandhari, CEO of ITHCA Group, and Sam Heidari, CEO of Lumotive.

"This is our second investment in the sector, as we work towards establishing a centre of excellence for Omani semiconductor

designers catering to both regional and global markets," Mandhari said.

He added that the deal reflects ITHCA's approach of partnering with global technology leaders to promote knowledge transfer and build national expertise in semiconductor design.

Heidari welcomed the agreement, saying it would support joint work in research, design and skills development.

Lumotive's honours include the title of 'Next Big Thing in Tech' from Fast Company and three CES Innovation Awards. Its backers include Gates Frontier, MetaVC Partners, Quan Funds, Samsung Ventures and Uniquet.



03

Omani students win award in US with robotic oil change invention



09

Thousands of Gazans eat only 1 meal every 2-3 days: UNRWA

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Oman to open first camel cheese plant in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Oman is set to open its first camel cheese production facility in Rakhiout, Dhofar, as part of a broader initiative to develop the camel milk sector and support rural livelihoods.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources signed an agreement on Tuesday with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), with funding from the Al Jisr Foundation. The project is part of the initiative titled 'Strengthening the Camel Milk and Derivatives Value Chain through Empowering Women Producers'.

The plant is expected to begin operations in the first quarter of 2026. It will initially process between 500 litres and two tonnes of camel milk daily, with production projected to rise to five

This project represents a strategic investment in human capital and the infrastructure of the food sector in Oman, particularly Omani camel products, which have the potential to compete in regional and global markets

DR THAER YASEEN

tonnes by the end of the first year and more than 15 tonnes in later phases. Output will include fresh and semi-hard cheeses in various flavours, with future plans to produce hard cheese, condensed



milk, milk candy, and ice cream. Officials said that producing one kilogram of camel cheese requires between eight and twelve litres of milk.

The project will directly in-

volve 20 rural women from the Omani Women's Association in Rakhiout, who have undergone capacity-building programmes covering dairy production, food safety, quality control, finance,

and marketing.

"This project represents a strategic investment in human capital and the infrastructure of the food sector in Oman, particularly Omani camel products,



which have the potential to compete in regional and global markets when the environment is favourable," said Dr Thajer Yaseen, Acting FAO Representative in Oman.

He added that the facility will be built by a local company in Dhofar and meet international standards of quality and food safety.

The agreement was signed in the presence of H E Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture. The project aims to promote sustainable rural employment and improve the marketing and production of camel dairy products in the sultanate.

Dhofar Governorate is a major centre of camel breeding in Oman.

SAYYID ASSAD BIDS FAREWELL TO UAE ENVOY



On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, H H Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan received in his office Mohammed Nekhaira al Dhaheri, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the Sultanate of Oman to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. The ambassador offered his appreciation to His Majesty the Sultan, the Omani government and people for the support and cooperation extended to him during his tenure. H H Sayyid Asaad thanked the ambassador for his sincere efforts in boosting the bilateral relations between Oman and the UAE, and wished him continued success. He also wished the people of the UAE further progress and prosperity (ONA)

Oman Kite Festival to showcase potential of adventure tourism

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's growing reputation as a destination for adventure and sports tourism is set for another boost with the launch of the Oman Kite Festival 2025, announced by Omran Group in collaboration with Oman Sail.

Scheduled to take place from July 15 to 24, the festival will begin at Barr al Hikman and conclude at Ras al Hadd, covering several of the sultanate's key coastal regions.

Sultan Sulaiman al Khudoori, Assets Manager at Omran, said the initiative supports the group's strategy to diversify tourism offerings and capitalise on Oman's natural assets. He added that momentum from last year's downwinder races helped scale up the event. "The expanded format is expected to attract a larger number of international athletes and deliver a richer tourism offering that reflects the diversity of Oman's coastal environments," he said.

Shaima Said al Asmi, events specialist at Oman Sail, described the festival as a milestone for marine sports development in the country. She



The participation of elite international kitesurfers strengthens Oman's position as a top destination for water-based adventure tourism

SHAIMA SAID AL ASMI

noted that Oman's coastline offers ideal conditions for kite surfing, including ecological variety and favourable wind and weather. "The participation of elite international kitesurfers brings a new dimension to the

festival and strengthens Oman's positioning as a top destination for water-based adventure tourism," she said.

The festival will include a multi-stage 'Downwinder' race, beginning from Barr al Hikman to

Masirah Island, then proceeding to Ras al Ruwais, followed by a stage from the Pink Lagoons to Al Ashkharah, and ending with a stretch from Ras al Jinz to Ras al Hadd.

Additional races include the Kite Course Race at Barr al Hikman, a Coastal Race at Masirah Island, and a Slalom Race at Ras al Hadd. The event will also feature family-oriented activities and an exhibition for small and medium enterprises at Ashkharah Municipal Park.

Experts call for inclusive elderly care amid changing family structures in sultanate

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A symposium in the wilayat of Ibri has called for greater community involvement and improved support systems for the elderly, as Oman grapples with the challenges posed by changing family structures and signs of social disintegration.

Organised by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in coordination with Dhahirah governorate, the one-day event focused on the rising needs of the ageing population. Titled 'Caring for the Elderly in Light of Family Challenges: Between Social Disintegration and Care Needs', the symposium was conducted by the Health Committee in collaboration with the Elderly Care and Community Health Programme.

The event aimed to raise public awareness of the issues affecting senior citizens and promote closer family ties, while encouraging the development of more inclusive care systems.

Four working papers were presented, covering health, psychological, and social aspects of



elderly care. Badriya bint Humaid al Mahrami, a member of the Elderly Care Programme in Dhahirah, opened the session by outlining the daily challenges facing the elderly in the region and the support provided through the National Home Care Programme. Dr Huda bint Salim al Badia, a family medicine specialist, presented the second paper. She highlighted the emotional and social impact of family breakdown. "Neglect and emotional distance are becoming more common, affecting the mental wellbeing of

our elderly," she said, referencing local case studies.

In the third presentation, Dr Ali Talib al Hadrami discussed psychological strategies to strengthen family bonds. He underlined the importance of communication and mutual trust in sustaining supportive inter-generational relationships.

Yousef al Lamri, head of the Ihsan Association branch in South Batinah, delivered the final paper, stressing the value of community involvement. "Community-led initiatives are crucial

in bridging service gaps and delivering emotional and practical support," he said.

A panel discussion followed the presentations, resulting in a series of recommendations. These included expanding access to comprehensive healthcare, establishing social centres offering psychological and recreational services, adapting urban spaces to be more elder-friendly, providing financial support to low-income families, and building stronger volunteer networks across the country.

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Omani students' robotic oil change invention feted

Our Correspondent
Muscat

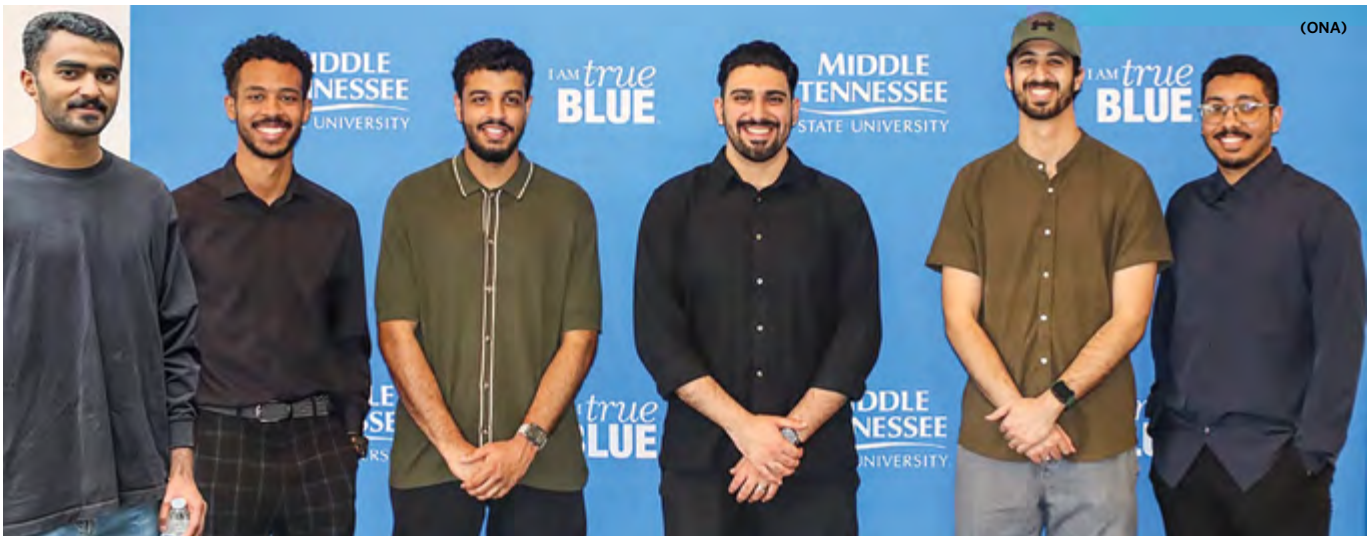
An Omani student team has secured third place in the Engineering Projects Competition at Middle Tennessee State University in the United States, earning international recognition for its invention called 'Lio and AOFR' - an automated system that replaces engine oil and filters without the need to lift a vehicle.

The invention combines a smart robotic unit, AOFR, with an oil change mechanism, completing the entire maintenance task in under ten minutes. The system is designed to operate without human intervention, offering an efficient, clean and safe alternative to traditional vehicle servicing methods.



Our goal was to develop a practical tool that would facilitate maintenance operations and reduce human error

FARID BIN SAMEER AL ALAWI



Equipped with sensors, a touchscreen interface and spill-prevention technology, the system monitors temperature and performance in real time. The

AOFR robot uses a high-powered wrench, a precision torque lever, surveillance cameras and obstacle-detection tools to remove and replace oil filters beneath the ve-

hicle. The accompanying oil change machine supports multiple engine types and eliminates the need for cranes or hoists.

"Our goal was to develop a

practical tool that would facilitate maintenance operations and reduce human error," said team member Farid bin Sameer al Alawi. "Winning this competition

represents an important step towards marketing this technology and developing it for commercial use."

The team spent several months designing and refining the system, which now stands out for its innovation and potential real-world applications.

Project supervisor Dr Elisa Ladou said the students showed a strong grasp of engineering principles. "Their innovation is a smart solution to a real-life problem facing many," she said.

The project has drawn praise for its practical design and contribution to environmentally conscious maintenance practices, and is being viewed as a benchmark for how engineering education can be applied to solve everyday challenges.

DBBS outlines strict blood donation rules, urges truthful disclosures

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Department of Blood Banks Services (DBBS) has renewed its call for transparency and honesty in completing blood donation questionnaires, stressing that accurate disclosures are essential for the safety of both donors and recipients.

"Disclosing your health status and answering the blood donation questionnaire with honesty and transparency are crucial for ensuring both your safety and the safety of blood recipients," the department said in a statement.

Under DBBS guidelines, individuals with certain medical conditions and history may be



permanently or temporarily barred from donating blood. Permanent deferrals apply to people

with blood-borne infections such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B or C and syphilis. Those diagnosed

with chronic illnesses including cancer, heart disease, epilepsy, insulin-dependent diabetes and blood disorders such as anaemia and thalassemia are also permanently ineligible.

DBBS further stated that individuals with a history of malaria - regardless of when the infection occurred - cannot donate blood.

Temporary deferrals apply to those recovering from recent surgeries, dental procedures or medical treatments that pose short-term risks, individuals who have had blood transfusion in the past year and those who donated whole blood in the last three months.

A four-month deferral applies to anyone who has had tattoos,

skin or ear piercings, acupuncture or traditional treatments such as wasam, cupping (Hijama) and bloodletting. Women who have given birth or undergone abortion are not allowed to donate for one year.

DBBS also advises prospective donors to disclose recent medication, international travel, vaccination, ongoing health issues and chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes and allergies. Any surgery undergone in the last six months must also be declared.

The department urged individuals to adhere to these guidelines and consult medical staff at donation centres if uncertain about their eligibility.



Dhofar hosts Hungarian tourism delegation as charter arrivals rise

Our Correspondent
Salalah

In a move to boost tourism and trade ties with Central Europe, Oman hosted a delegation of Hungarian travel professionals as part of a growing charter flight initiative. Ministry of Heritage and Tourism recently welcomed 46 representatives of leading Hungarian tourism companies on a familiarisation tour to Dhofar.

The group's itinerary included visits to Museum of the Land of Frankincense and the Unesco-listed Al Baleed Archaeological Site offering insights into Oman's cultural and historical heritage. The tour formed part of a wider effort to promote Oman, particularly Dhofar, as a year-round destination for European travellers, supported by direct charter flights operated by Antique Tourism.

Ministry of Heritage and Tourism views such visits as crucial in strengthening international partnerships. "Such familiarisation trips are vital for building strong, long-term partnerships with international tour operators. The

growing interest of the Hungarian market reflects Oman's rising profile as a unique and diverse destination," a ministry official said.

The charter programme has played a key role in improving connectivity between Dhofar and Central Europe, making it easier for travellers and operators to explore new markets. The initiative supports the ministry's broader strategy to diversify tourist source markets and enhance economic opportunities through tourism-linked trade and investment.

According to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the 2023/2024 tourist season in Dhofar generated more than RO23mn in charter flight revenues. Over 74,000 passengers travelled on charter flights during the season, marking a 15% increase over the previous year.

The ministry continues to collaborate with private-sector stakeholders to expand flight connections, launch targeted promotional campaigns and design travel experiences that emphasise Oman's distinct appeal, the ministry official said.

ZTE launches four new Nubia phones in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Chinese smartphone maker ZTE launched four new models under its premium 'Nubia' lineup in Oman on Monday, aiming to meet the growing demand for versatile mobile devices in the local market.

The new lineup is designed to cater to a broad user base - from first-time users and students to gamers and content creators. Among the releases is the Nubia A35E, an entry-level smartphone featuring 2GB RAM and 64GB storage, targeted at those new to smartphones.

Other models launched include the Nubia V70, V70 Design and V70 Max. These devices start with 14GB RAM and 256GB storage, equipped with advanced chipsets, high-resolution displays



with eye protection and long-lasting batteries. ZTE said the models combine performance with design and are suited for diverse user needs.

"This extensive Nubia lineup launch reflects our commitment to the Omani market - bringing together top-tier performance, artistic design and diversified fea-

tures to meet users' evolving lifestyles. Whether you're a casual user or a power gamer, there's a Nubia device designed for you," said WenYi Leo and Nasir Imran, regional managers at ZTE, during the launch event.

The devices will be distributed exclusively in Oman through Marjan Phone, the official partner

of ZTE. The devices will be available at major retail outlets and online platforms across the country.

Sahil MP, CEO and Founder of Marjan Group, said the collaboration with ZTE was aimed at delivering value to both consumers and retailers. "This partnership with ZTE reflects our commit-

ment to bringing world-class technology to Oman and delivering value to both retailers and consumers," he said. He added that the smartphones are also targeted at photography enthusiasts, with AI-enhanced high-resolution cameras, multi-scene optimisation and enhanced night photography features.

Karan Kumar Khatri, Chairman and Founder of Marjan Group, said, "We are honoured to host this groundbreaking launch in the Muscat market. ZTE's innovation aligns perfectly with our group's mission of tech-forward growth across the region."

A gaming series called Red-Magic was also showcased at the event. The devices feature high-refresh-rate displays, cooling systems, shoulder triggers and RGB lighting for an immersive experience.

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FOREX RATES (RO1 equals)	
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BRIEFS

Oil prices rise after sharp drop sparked by OPEC+ hikes

Oil prices rose on Tuesday after a sharp drop triggered by OPEC+’s announcement to increase production, amid ongoing concerns about oversupply.

Brent crude rose by around 1.94%, trading at \$61.42 per barrel at 0742 GMT, up from \$60.25 at the previous session’s close. US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) rose about 2.01%, reaching \$58.15 per barrel, up from \$57 in the previous session.

Prices rebounded on profit-taking after hitting their lowest level since February 2021 on Monday, following a decision by eight members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies -known as OPEC+- to ramp up production.

Abraj secures RO14mn drilling contract from BP for Block 61

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Abraj Energy Services, Oman’s leading oil and gas services provider, has announced the award of a significant new contract by BP Exploration (Epsilon) Limited, marking a renewed collaboration between the two companies in Block 61, one of the sultanate’s largest gas-producing areas.

In a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange, Abraj confirmed it had secured a contract from BP Exploration (Epsilon) Limited for the provision and operation of an onshore drilling unit. The contract is for an initial term of three years, with an option to extend for a further two years, highlighting the long-term nature of the partnership.

Abraj stated the contract is expected to generate approximately RO14mn in revenue over its duration, bolstering the company’s financial position and reaffirming its strategic role in Oman’s upstream energy sector.

Abraj said that the drilling rig for this project was previously operated under a contract with BP but had been stacked since the expiration of that agreement last year. The company noted the rig is now scheduled to com-



Abraj Energy Services also announced the signing of a term sheet with Algeria’s state energy giant Sonatrach, paving the way for a strategic partnership aimed at delivering integrated oilfield services

mence operations in the fourth quarter of 2025.

Block 61, situated in central Oman, is home to the massive Khazzan and Ghazeer gas fields, which play a crucial role in supporting the country’s gas supply and export capacity. BP operates the block in partnership with OQ and Petronas, with its output contributing significantly to both domestic energy requirements and LNG exports.

Abraj signs term sheet with Algeria’s Sonatrach

In a separate disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange on Tuesday, Abraj Energy Services also announced the signing of a term sheet with Algeria’s state-owned energy giant Sonatrach, setting the foundation for a strategic partnership focused on delivering integrated oilfield services in Algeria and potentially beyond.

The agreement, finalised on Monday, outlines plans for a joint effort to offer a wide range of services - including drilling, workovers, and well intervention - in one of North Africa’s most important oil and gas markets, with scope for international expansion.

Abraj noted in its disclosure that the partnership aims to leverage its considerable expertise and resources to deliver efficient, high-quality oilfield services in Algeria’s energy sector.

This term sheet builds upon the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the two companies in Muscat on April 24, 2024 and represents a key milestone in enhancing energy sector cooperation between Oman and Algeria.

Insurers cannot deny EV coverage, says FSA

Muscat - The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has directed insurance and takaful companies not to refuse coverage for electric vehicles (EVs), following reports that some firms were denying policies for such vehicles in violation of existing laws.

In a circular, the FSA stressed that insurers are obligated to comply with the Motor Vehicle Insurance Law, which prohibits refusal of insurance or policy renewal for vehicles that meet the requirements of the Traffic Law.

The directive follows observations that some insurers were excluding EVs from coverage, a breach of Article (2)(b) of the Motor Vehicles Insurance Law, promulgated by Royal Decree No 34/94. The article states that insurers may not deny cover for vehicles that satisfy the legal requirements for operation on public roads.

The FSA clarified that compulsory insurance applies to all vehicle types without exclusion. It called on insurers to address technical concerns - such as the availability of spare parts - through appropriate underwriting and pricing policies. The FSA also noted that companies may offer cash compensation in cases where spare parts or specialised garages for EVs are unavailable, but without affecting the beneficiary’s right to coverage.

Nizwa Industrial City attracts RO28mn new projects in 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Nizwa Industrial City, which operates under the umbrella of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), reported strong growth indicators in 2024, with 19 new projects localised out of 21 investment applications received. These projects, covering more than 131,000 sq m, represent a total investment of RO28mn.

This brings the total number of localised projects in Nizwa Industrial City to 186, with cumulative investments exceeding RO504mn. The industrial city spans a total area of 7.2mn sq m and currently employs 6,100 workers, with an Omanisation rate of 45%.

Eng Ishaq bin Ibrahim al Kharusi, Acting Director General



of Nizwa Industrial City, said that Madayn, in cooperation with the SMEs Development Authority, is moving forward with the implementation of the Madayn Entrepreneurship Complex project, at a cost of RO1.2mn. The project includes the construction of ten workshops designated for SMEs, with a completion rate of 60% as of the end of the first quarter

of 2025.

Kharusi also noted that consultancy studies have commenced for the planned residential area, and preparations are underway to begin general maintenance works for existing facilities. In addition, the masterplan for Phase 5, covering 4mn sq m, has been completed.

On the environmental sustainability front, Kharusi highlighted that over 1,700 trees have already been planted, with ongoing efforts to plant an additional 600 to further expand the green areas.

Several companies have initiated studies into adopting solar energy to reduce electricity consumption. Meanwhile, projects specialising in the recycling of aluminium and copper are being localised within the industrial city.

MSX showcases Alternative Investment Market and listing incentives for firms

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) held its first introductory meeting on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM) and the related incentive programme on Monday. This forms part of a series of sessions being organised across the governorates in collaboration with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), aimed at enhancing the investment climate and broadening financing opportunities.

These meetings are part of a wider strategy to create a more attractive investment environment for both local and international investors.

The first session introduced the Incentive Programme, which



falls under the Capital Market Development Initiative overseen by the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit. The programme provides a range of incentives for closed and family-owned businesses to list on the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The incentives programme features three key tracks: transitioning companies valued above RO10mn into public joint-stock companies; launching the AIM for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with a market value exceeding RO500,000; and encouraging limited liability companies with a similar valuation and more than 20 Omani employees to convert into closed joint-stock companies.

Majda bint Saeed al Hinai, Project Manager for the Incentives Programme, explained that it supports financial sustainabil-

ity by improving access to funding, governance, and transparency. The AIM is structured to meet regulatory standards while accommodating private sector needs.

Noor al-Hamidiyah from the Financial Services Authority outlined the listing process, including company evaluation, appointment of an issuing manager, preparation of a prospectus, and registration with the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.

Bader bin Hamood al Hinai, Chief Operating Officer of MSX, provided details on the listing requirements, such as legal structure, two years of financial performance, a one-year lock-in period for founders’ shares, and audited financial statements - with certain exceptions.

Building Oman's Human + AI Edge: From vision to practical action



SAINATH NAGARAJAN

The author is the CEO of HumanSense Labs, a Silicon Valley-based firm that partners with policy leaders, HR executives, and mid-market businesses to lead digital and AI transformation

As Oman moves toward achieving its Vision 2040 goals, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not just a technological tool but a national capability that can boost productivity, prepare the workforce, diversify the economy, and strengthen global competitiveness.

Oman has long been a nation of bold navigators and early adopters. Historically, its sea-faring pioneers embraced complexity and opportunity with a sense of purpose. Today, that same spirit of fearless and purposeful innovation can guide the nation as it enters the AI era - with strategic clarity, skilled and ready workforce, and execution discipline at the core.

The future of AI in Oman lies not in grand but abstract ideas or one-off pilot technology projects, but in practically harnessing AI capabilities within daily work. The real breakthrough happens

when individuals - regardless of technical background - adopt AI to streamline processes, enhance decisions, and free up time.

The current wave of AI innovation is a great equaliser. It’s intuitive, accessible, and powerful - giving individuals and organisations new ways to work smarter and grow faster. As AI upskilling and adoption expands, so do the possibilities for Omani entrepreneurs to create entirely new business models and community solutions. This is where GDP impact - potentially \$1bn or more - can emerge.

Making AI real: Focus on human, not hype

Last month, Oman American Business Council (OABC) hosted a webinar led by HumanSense Labs and a guest speaker who previously led Microsoft Office AI initiatives. The goal was to demystify AI and put people’s minds at ease. The

event drew a diverse audience ranging from government representatives to SMEs and General Managers to technologists. That engagement reflected a key insight: Oman is ready for AI!

Participants were keen to drive practical outcomes. One leader emphasised the opportunity to use AI to unlock valuable organisational knowledge hidden in documents, especially in Arabic, where AI could bridge information gaps. Another was curious about how to improve prompting skills, a new but critical competency for professionals looking to use AI tools effectively within their daily workflow. A third acknowledged integration challenges across legacy systems, and we emphasised that AI journeys must be business-driven - not treated as typical IT projects.

Rebecca Olson, CEO, Oman American Business Council noted, "Oman has the opportunity to lead not by chasing trends, but by applying AI in ways that

are grounded in its people and its priorities. The interest showed by business leaders during our recent session was unmistakable - there’s real appetite to move from curiosity to practical action."

Start where you work

While AI has existed since the 1950s, today’s AI is different: it is practical, intuitive, and accessible even to non-technical professionals. That creates both a powerful opportunity and a navigational challenge: Where do you begin? How do you make AI truly useful? How do you keep pace?

The good news: AI doesn’t reward perfection, it rewards momentum. Momentum begins with one empowered employee, one process, one decision.

- Pick a specific function or set of tasks that are repetitive or time-consuming
- Experiment using GenAI as a digital co-worker and trusted colleague

- Explore how you might re-imagine entire workflows using Agentic AI

While national strategies and governance frameworks are critical, the best starting point is simple: treat AI like a core life skill - on par with reading, writing, and arithmetic.

This is the moment to move from curiosity to confidence building, from being a bystander to becoming a confident adopter. One practical step is to assess your organisation’s AI readiness to gain insights into your current capabilities.

Oman has a rare opportunity to harness the power of AI - building on its legacy of exploration and its tradition of thoughtful, purpose-driven development.

The Human + AI Edge is not about replacing people - it’s about empowering each person to achieve their fullest potential and contribute to a greater national vision.

US economy contracts as Trump policies take effect



Washington, US - The policies of US President Donald Trump since he assumed office in January have contributed to a contraction in the American economy, which shrank by 0.3% in the first quarter, an expert told Anadolu Agency.

The US economy expanded by 2.4% in the final quarter of 2024 and grew by 2.8% overall last year. This marks the first quarterly contraction in three years - the last having occurred in the first quarter of 2022.

Analysts have suggested that the effects of Trump's policies are becoming increasingly apparent in macroeconomic data, fuelling fears of a potential recession. A decline in consumer spending and a sharp drop in federal expenditure are cited as key factors behind the contraction.

US businesses ramped up imports to avoid anticipated tariffs, distorting the trade balance and contributing to the economic downturn.

Zafer Ergezen, an expert in futures and commodity markets, said the contraction was anticipated following Trump's election victory, noting that his initiation

of trade wars had already raised expectations of a slowdown in global trade.

"Trump triggered an economic contraction while trying to 'make America great again,'" he said, referencing the president's well-known slogan.

"The global trade slowdown was expected due to Trump's economic and political strategies,

American economy shrinks by 0.3% in the first quarter, while slowdown in global trade linked to Trump's economic and political stance raises recession fears, expert says

and we are now starting to see the initial signs of their impact within the US," he added.

Ergezen explained that increased tariffs and additional taxes on imports have made some goods prohibitively expensive, thereby reducing demand.

"We are also witnessing a reduction in supply rather than demand, which is paving the way for the US economy to enter a phase of contraction," he said. "Other countries have imposed

retaliatory tariffs on American exports -high tariffs on in-demand goods have hindered trade, exacerbating the downturn."

He also noted that the EU and Chinese economies are experiencing slowdowns.

"As central banks worldwide begin cutting interest rates, an economic slowdown had already been expected. However, we ini-

growth decelerates and global trade remains sluggish, which could, in turn, fuel inflation.

High inflation leads to high interest rates, he said, pointing to Trump's criticism of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell. "Trump has repeatedly voiced dissatisfaction with Powell for not lowering interest rates."

"This could prompt the Fed - or other central banks - to accelerate rate cuts. We might even see the Fed reduce rates during this period," he noted.

Falling oil prices are another factor influencing inflation, though Ergezen remarked that there has not yet been significant movement in oil prices to meaningfully affect inflation.

He warned that US-imposed tariffs could result in higher consumer prices.

"We'll have to wait and see whether rate cuts will occur in such an environment," he said. "The world is questioning whether we're entering a recession, as uncertainty persists—we may be hearing a lot more about recession in the markets in the coming months."

Anadolu Agency

US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell



Fed expected to hold interest rates steady

Washington, US - The US Federal Reserve is expected to leave its benchmark interest rate unchanged on Wednesday, as signs of cooling inflation and stable job growth clash with renewed pressure from President Donald Trump for aggressive rate cuts.

After months of tariffs and political attacks, Trump has intensified criticism of Fed Chair Jerome Powell, accusing him of failing to act swiftly as economic risks mount.

Despite growing recession concerns, labour market indicators have remained resilient. Analysts say the Fed is likely to maintain the federal funds rate at 4.25%-4.5% as it weighs slowing inflation against geopolitical and political pressure.

US Labor Department data showed the Consumer Price Index fell 0.1% in March - the first monthly decline since May 2020 - while annual inflation dropped to 2.4%, its lowest since September 2024.

The Producer Price Index declined 0.4% on a monthly basis in March - the first drop since October 2023 - and rose 2.7% year-on-year. The Fed's preferred inflation gauge, the Personal Consumption Expen-

ditures (PCE) core index, was flat month-on-month and declined to 2.6% annually in March from 3% in February.

Gross domestic product contracted 0.3% year-on-year in the first quarter - the first contraction since early 2022 - as surging imports weighed on output. The trade deficit widened 9.6% to \$162 billion in March, the highest level on record.

Analysts say the Fed is likely to maintain the federal funds rate at 4.25%-4.5% as it weighs slowing inflation against geopolitical and political pressure

Non-farm payrolls rose by 177,000 in April, above market estimates, while the unemployment rate held steady at 4.2%. Average hourly earnings increased 0.2%, below forecasts.

March's non-farm payroll figure was revised downward to 185,000. Job openings, as

measured by the JOLTS survey, fell to 7.2 million in March - the lowest since September 2023.

Private-sector employment rose by 62,000 last month, missing expectations. Initial jobless claims reached 241,000 in the week ending April 26 - a nine-week high - and continuing claims topped 1.9 million, the most since November 2021.

Trump intensifies pressure

Trump has repeatedly called on the Fed to cut interest rates, citing moves by European central banks and warning that delays could stall the US economy.

On April 7, he wrote on social media that now is "a PERFECT time to cut rates" but Powell "is always late." Ten days later, he posted: "Jerome Powell of the Fed, who is always TOO LATE AND WRONG, yesterday issued a report which was another, and typical, complete 'mess!'"

He added that "termination cannot come fast enough"

Trump claimed on April 21 that Powell's reluctance to cut rates could lead to a slowdown in the US economy.

Anadolu Agency

US dollar dips, gold soars in Trump's first 100 days

New Delhi, India - The first 100 days of US President Donald Trump's second term have seen the US dollar become the worst-performing G10 currency, while gold has soared by over 22%, according to a research note by HSBC Asset Management.

Trump assumed office on January 20, 2025, and since then the US dollar has depreciated by over 7% against the British pound (GBP).

"While gradual depreciation may have been a policy objective of the new administration, the depth of the correction has hastened questions about a possible end to US exceptionalism," the research note stated.

The note highlights that the surge in gold prices - up by 22% in the first 100 days - has reinforced a sense of investor uncertainty. It attributes the volatility to policy unpredictability, prompting investors to consider not only where US tariff policy may be headed, but also how much damage may already have been done.

It also points to disrupted market correlations, with equities and

bonds, as well as interest rates and exchange rates, exhibiting unusual behaviour.

US equities have underperformed during President Trump's first 100 days, with the S&P 500 ranking among the poorest-performing stock indices globally.

In contrast, Indian stocks have rebounded following the Reserve Bank of India's decision to ease interest rates.

"Indian fixed income returns were subdued in early 2025 as investors fretted over the country's economic resilience in the face of global headwinds. But that reversed sharply in March after the Reserve Bank of India finally initiated its easing cycle," the note said.

It also underscored the role of technical factors in enhancing the appeal of Indian bonds. The Reserve Bank of India's efforts to improve market liquidity, coupled with the government's commitment to fiscal consolidation, are expected to foster a favourable environment for bond supply and demand.

ANI



Eurozone recovery stalls as services lose momentum despite manufacturing uptick

Piero Cingari

Business activity in the eurozone eked out minimal growth in April, as a faltering services sector offset a surprise manufacturing rebound, while easing inflation strengthened expectations of a European Central Bank rate cut at its next June meeting.

The S&P Global Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for the eurozone rose slightly to 50.1 in April, a level that technically signals growth, but only just. The reading, revised up from an initial 49.7, revealed an economy struggling to build on momentum from the first quarter of the year.

At the heart of this sluggish expansion is a divergence between sectors. Manufacturing output rose at its fastest pace in over two years, buoyed by improving supply chains and a rebound in industrial activity.

In contrast, the services sector - the bloc's economic workhorse - barely expanded, with the Services PMI falling to 50.1 from March's 51.0. It marked the weakest reading since late 2024 and suggests that demand across tourism, hospitality and business services is running out of steam.

Dr Cyrus de la Rubia, Chief



The inflationary pressure could bolster the European Central Bank's case for a rate cut in June

Eurozone growth barely advanced in April as services stagnated despite a manufacturing rebound

Economist at Hamburg Commercial Bank, said the broader picture remains subdued: "The services sector, which is a major player, practically stagnated in

April. Even though manufacturing output saw a surprising uptick, it wasn't enough to prevent the overall slowdown in growth."

Demand drags, sentiment dims

Behind the headline figures, the underlying data paints a sobering picture. New business orders fell for an eleventh consecutive month, and at a marginally faster rate than in March. Both goods producers and service providers

noted weaker sales, continuing a trend of soft demand that has restrained growth since mid-2023.

France stood out again for the wrong reasons, with its composite PMI signalling contraction for the eighth month in a row. The eurozone's second-largest economy remains mired in political uncertainty and stagnation, contrasting with comparatively better performances in Spain, Italy and Germany.

"Spain is leading the pack in terms of growth, followed by

Italy, then Germany with marginal growth, and France trailing behind," said de la Rubia. "We expect Germany to soon outpace Italy thanks to a generous fiscal package, while France is likely to remain at the bottom for now."

Employment across the bloc ticked up for a second straight month, as rising headcounts in services offset ongoing declines in manufacturing. However, businesses appear hesitant to expand their workforce, reflecting deeper caution amid persistent economic uncertainty.

Confidence about the future has also taken a hit. Business expectations for the year ahead declined to their lowest level in almost two and a half years. It marks the fourth consecutive monthly dip, underlining how soft demand and geopolitical uncertainty are weighing on sentiment.

There is a silver lining for policymakers. Price pressures continued to moderate in April, with input cost inflation at a five-month low and output charges rising at their slowest pace in 2025 so far. This could bolster the European Central Bank's case for a rate cut in June, a move several Governing Council members have already signalled.

(Source: Euronews.com)

UTAS workshops highlight AI role in education, decision-making, tourism

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), along with several academic and professional institutions, recently organised a series of specialised events and workshops that explored the growing potential of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies across the fields of education, management, and tourism.

These events placed a strong emphasis on the ethical dimensions of modern artificial intelligence applications.

The series began with a workshop titled ‘Applications of Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in Supporting Educational Curricula in the Sultanate of Oman’, held on April 24.

It was organised by the UTAS College of Education in Rustaq in collaboration with the ICESCO Chair for AI Ethics.

Dr Mohannad Khalid Farag, a Founder & CEO of TAQANA SPC and a visiting lecturer from the Muscat branch, led the session, which aimed to equip education students with the knowledge and skills to effectively integrate AI and robotics into the learning process.

The workshop included interactive applications and case studies such as the experience of St. John’s School in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic, along with real-life examples of using robots to teach mathematical concepts.

It emphasised the importance of moving from traditional teaching to smart learning environ-



Participants responded positively, expressing interest in applying these principles within their own work contexts - underscoring the university's and ICESCO's shared commitment to ethical digital

ments that foster 21st-century skills.

The second workshop, titled ‘Responsible Use of AI in Organizational Decision-Making’, took place at Daleel’s headquarters on April 28.

Led by Dr Musab al Rawi, Director of the ICESCO Chair for AI Ethics, the session targeted company employees and professionals interested in AI ethics.

It addressed core concepts

such as bias, accountability, transparency, and responsible innovation.

Participants responded positively, expressing interest in applying these principles within their own work contexts - underscoring the university’s and ICESCO’s shared commitment to ethical digital transformation in professional environments.

In the context of international academic engagement, Dr Rasha

Shakir Abdulwahhab participated in the 1st International Conference on Computational Intelligence Approaches and Applications (ICCIAA 2025), held at the University of Petra in Amman, Jordan, from April 28 to 30. She presented her research titled ‘Forecasting Visitor Numbers in Oman Using the SARIMAX Model’, which explored how AI can enhance tourism demand forecasting by utilising hotel review data offering insights to support the growth of the local tourism sector.

Additionally, Dr Rasha, in collaboration with PhD researcher Hafsa al Ansari, presented a second paper titled ‘Predicting Computer Science Student Motivation Using Multisource

Data’. This research demonstrated how machine learning techniques can analyse student data to predict academic motivation levels.

Both presentations received wide acclaim and emphasised the importance of integrating AI ethics into education and tourism research.

The series concluded with a virtual workshop on ‘Empowering Educators with Ethical AI: Exploring the IIOE Platform for Course Design and Digital Transformation’, held on April 30.

Organised by the ICESCO Chair for AI Ethics in collaboration with UNESCO-ICHEI, the workshop featured live demonstrations of AI-supported course design tools on the IIOE plat-

form. Experts from UNESCO led the session, which aimed to empower academic staff to create ethical, AI-integrated curricula. Organizers recommended follow-up hands-on training and the development of certification programmes to further encourage engagement.

Collectively, these workshops underscored UTAS’s ongoing commitment along with its partners to fostering ethical and practical awareness of artificial intelligence across education, management, and scientific research.

The events aimed to prepare a new generation of professionals capable of leading sustainable digital transformation across diverse sectors.

OETC marks two decades of existence

With a journey rich in accomplishments, strategic investments, transformative developments and vital projects, Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) celebrated its 20th anniversary, commemorated annually on May 1.

This celebration marks the company’s vital role as a cornerstone and key pillar within the electricity sector, and a principal driver of the nation’s comprehensive development. Through its unwavering commitment and continuous efforts, OETC has consistently advanced numerous projects, initiatives, and strategic plans, all implemented to the highest standards in line with national visions and global aspirations. OETC remains steadfast in its mission to achieve sustainable growth and respond to the increasing demand within the sector, affirming its dedication to enhancing the quality and performance of the electricity transmission network across Oman. By doing so, the company has cemented its leading role in supporting the nation’s all-encompassing development journey across various fields. Demonstrating its commitment to global excellence, OETC proudly stands as the first Omani institution and among the first in the region to achieve ISO certification.

84% of job applications go ‘ignored’ in Middle East

Eighty-four per cent of jobseekers in the Middle East feel that their job applications are being ignored - with 59% admitting that they now use AI to help with the job hunt process.

The survey findings - from global talent solutions business Robert Walters - reveals how the skyrocketing volume of job applications is leaving hiring managers overwhelmed, leading to longer response times and, ultimately, candidates being left in the dark.

Sixty-two per cent of jobseekers state that they would not apply to a role if it had a long application process - with a further 59% confirming they are utilising AI/automation tools in their job search. 16% state that they use AI regularly. Consequently, 55% of hiring

managers admit that this influx in applications has caused delays, with many prospective hires not meeting the basic cri-

terial for the roles in question. Sixty-seven per cent of hiring managers also claim they can spot when a candidate has used AI to create their CV or cover letter, mainly due to the

HIGHLIGHTS:

- ▶ 84% of jobseekers say their job applications are often ignored
- ▶ 39% of jobseekers are sending out over 20 applications per week
- ▶ 62% of jobseekers would be put off by a long application process
- ▶ 67% of hiring managers can identify the use of AI in a CV
- ▶ 70% of hiring managers have noticed an increase in applications, with 55% stating it’s slowed down hiring processes
- ▶ Hiring managers have also noticed a recent correlation between AI applications, and professionals ‘ghosting’ hiring managers mid-way through the recruitment process

teria for the roles in question.

Sixty-seven per cent of hiring managers also claim they can spot when a candidate has used AI to create their CV or cover letter, mainly due to the

of the candidate.

The top cause for rejecting applications is a lack of relevant experience, with 44% of hiring managers citing it as their primary reason.

BankDhofar’s minor account spurs savings

Designed specifically for individuals aged 13 to 18, the Minor Savings Account offers young customers a valuable opportunity to learn about personal finance in a secure and supportive environment.

The account provides a host of benefits that encourage good financial habits from a young age. With no minimum balance fees, young account holders can begin their financial journey without the pressure of maintaining a high balance. This flexibility allows them to start saving with ease, whether for short-term goals or long-term aspirations.

Besides, account holders also receive a customised debit card with name, giving them a sense of ownership and responsibility over their financial decisions. The card comes with reasonable transaction limits - RO50 per transaction and RO200 per month - to ensure responsible use, while the parent/guardian retains the authority to deposit



and withdraw funds as needed.

One of the key features of the Account is the option for flexible recurring deposits, intended to instil discipline and reinforce the value of consistent contributions. The account also provides access to monthly financial assistance through social protection program, offering additional support for those in need.

Highlighting the significance of this account for young individuals, Amjad Iqbal Hassan al

Lawati, Chief Retail Banking Officer of BankDhofar stated: “We believe it is never too early for young people to start understanding the value of saving and managing their finances. The combination of accessibility, flexibility, and practical tools like the customised debit card empowers our young account holders to take ownership of their financial journey and start building a solid foundation for their future.” BankDhofar’s Minor Account

can be opened by a parent or legal guardian, making it accessible to minors between the ages of 13 and 18. To open the account, the guardian will need to provide the minor’s passport or national ID, a birth certificate, and their own identification if they are Omani. For non-Omani minors, proof of residency and a copy of the passport visa page are also required. This process ensures a straightforward and hassle-free experience for families looking to empower their children with financial tools for the future.

BankDhofar’s Minor Savings Account is structured to promote financial literacy and independence, equipping the next generation with the knowledge and tools to succeed. With a strong focus on growth, innovation, and customer satisfaction, BankDhofar achieved a net profit increase of 12.5% in 2024, reaching RO43.6mn compared to RO38.7mn in 2023.

Kia takes four victories in 2025 iF Design Awards in design, innovations

Kia has achieved four awards at the 2025 iF Design Awards, highlighting its leadership in design and technological innovation across various sectors. Globally renowned for honouring outstanding design excellence, the iF Design Awards have recognised Kia’s cutting-edge vehicle designs and digital advancements, solidifying the brand’s reputation for innovation.

Kia’s recognition at the 2025 iF Design Awards underscores the brand’s commitment to delivering innovative, user-centred designs that go beyond the automotive industry and extend into digital engagement and customer experience.

Launched in 1954, the iF Design Awards is a highly respected

global design competition. Each year, the awards celebrate exceptional designs across various categories, recognising only the most groundbreaking and innovative creations. Winning an iF Design Award highlights the global impact and ingenuity of each design. All award-winning entries are presented on www.ifdesign.com and published in the iF Design App.

The Kia EV3 was named Winner in the 2025 iF Design Awards Automobiles category thanks to its groundbreaking aesthetics. The all-electric compact SUV was celebrated for its bold, geometric exterior and innovative interior design that embodies Kia’s ‘Opposites United’ philosophy. The EV3 stands out



thanks to its unique character, maximizing space and accessibility with a focus on a personalised driving experience.

Kia received multiple acco-

lades at the 2025 iF Design Awards for its design excellence across a range of customer touchpoints, with three category victories. CES 2024 Booth De-

sign (Trade Fair category), CES 2024 Film (3D Digital Animation category) and Kia App (Mobile Application UI Design Category) Kia’s booth design at CES

(Consumer Electronics Show) 2024, titled ‘A Place of Inspiration’, received recognition in the ‘Trade Fair’ category. The inviting, open layout of the stand enabled visitors to experience Kia’s Platform Beyond Vehicles (PBVs) through four unique lifestyle zones - Park, City, Home, and Factory - demonstrating how PBVs will shape the future of mobility by meeting users’ diverse needs with unprecedented levels of flexibility and customization.

Kia’s exhibition film, shown at CES 2024 and also called ‘A Place of Inspiration’, was named Winner in the 2025 iF Design Awards ‘3D Digital Animation’ category. The film creatively reinterprets Kia’s PBV vision and

demonstrates how these vehicles will revolutionise daily life while reflecting Kia’s core brand values.

This double win follows the brand’s Red Dot Design Award last year and further highlights Kia’s strong capabilities in brand communication and design innovation.

The Kia app won a ‘2025 iF Design Awards Mobile Application UI Design’ for its seamless integration and user-friendly interface. The app consolidates multiple services and platforms, offering users easy access to Kia’s offerings while delivering a consistent, intuitive design.

Reliable International Automotive LLC (RIA) the official distributor for Kia in Oman

Indian Ambassador opens Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Centre at Badr Al Samaa

Badr Al Samaa Royal Hospital - the flagship premium venture of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals proudly announces the inauguration of its new Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Centre, a modern facility dedicated to providing comprehensive care for patients recovering from surgery, managing chronic pain, and overcoming sports-related injuries.

The centre was inaugurated by H E Godavarthi Venkata Srinivas, honourable ambassador of India to Oman.

The event was attended by Managing Directors of Badr Al Samaa Group, Dr P A Mohamed and Abdul Latheef, who is also the board member of Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Executive Director; Moiden Bilal, Senior Management of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals and various dignitaries from public and private sector.

In his welcome note Abdul Latheef said that the new centre is equipped with cutting-edge technology and a multidisciplinary team of five physiotherapists, rehabilitation experts, and pain management specialists whose focus is on restoring mobility, faster recovery after surgery and enhancing quality of life through personalized treatment programmes.

Dr P A Mohamed, speaking on the occasion said that Badr Al Samaa Royal Hospital was es-



Badr Al Samaa Royal Hospital was established with the vision of ensuring majority of advanced treatments are available here in Oman involving most advanced technology and medical experts

tablished with the vision of ensuring majority of advanced treatments are available here in Oman. He said, "We got the

most advanced technology, medical experts and well experienced team for the ultimate benefit of patients".

H E Srinivas appreciated and acknowledged the long journey of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals and its untiring desire of

improving and advancing the standards in private healthcare. He said such additions in services and facilities reflect the long-term vision of the group. He appreciated the infrastructure, clinical expertise and technology of Badr Al Samaa Royal Hospital.

Dr Rajagopal T Naganathan,

Specialist Orthopaedic Surgeon gave the overview of the Physiotherapy & rehabilitation Centre and explained briefly about all the modalities available in the department. Physiotherapists Jesikala and Shine Thomas shared the information upcoming modalities in centre like Repetitive Peripheral Magnetic Nerve

Stimulation (rPMS), Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT) and Low-Level Laser Therapy (LLLT), which will be first of its kind modality in private healthcare sector in Oman.

In his thank you note, Moiden Bilal said that Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals strives to add newer facilities, services, expertise to ensure the availability of the best in the class medical services. He said that there will be further expansion of the physiotherapy and rehabilitation centre and the group aims at adding more modalities.

Firasath Hassan, Executive Director said that the centre is an important step in our mission to offer holistic recovery services. He said some of the modalities in the centre are very unique which has potential to ensure faster recoveries especially in post-surgical and sports injury patients.

With the rise in musculoskeletal disorders and post-surgical recovery needs, Badr Al Samaa Royal Hospital aims to set a benchmark in rehabilitative care by combining clinical excellence with the advanced physiotherapy and rehabilitation modalities like Shockwave Therapy, Ultrasound, Repetitive Peripheral Magnetic Nerve Stimulation (rPMS), Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT), Low-Level Laser Therapy (LLLT) and advanced training techniques.

Beyond ONE launches FRiENDi Pay in Oman

Beyond ONE, the digital services provider and global tech company, has announced the launch of FRiENDi Pay, a licensed digital mobile wallet service that will transform how people in Oman makes payments and send money internationally.

Building on FRiENDi Mobile's established reputation serving more than 750,000 Oman users, FRiENDi Pay offers a comprehensive financial solution for all Oman residents and citizens seeking hassle-free money transfers. The platform simplifies both international remittances and local transactions, allowing users to support family overseas or manage expenses with friends nearby.

Oman's digital payments market is experiencing rapid growth, expected to reach US\$9.61bn in 2025 and more than double to US\$20.83bn by 2029. Within this expanding sector, digital payment and money movement alone are projected to hit US\$116.76mn in 2025.

With FRiENDi Pay, users can instantly send money to key destinations including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines at competitive rates. The service also enables quick and convenient peer-to-peer transfers within Oman, utility bill payments, and wallet top-ups - all through an intuitive, multilingual interface.

Tawfiq al Lawati, CEO of FRiENDi Pay Oman, said, "At FRiENDi Pay, we're not just simplifying transactions - we're transforming the way people in Oman experience



money. From international transfers to local bill payments and peer-to-peer exchanges, we've made every interaction seamless - even enabling transfers directly within a chat or with a shared photo, making each moment more personal and meaningful.

What sets us apart is our belief that fintech should start with people - not features. We've built FRiENDi Pay to be a truly human-centric solution, shaped by the real needs and habits of our diverse communities. It's not just digital. It's designed to feel natural, inclusive, and emotionally connected.

And this is only the beginning. Our journey is guided by a bold roadmap focused on bringing the most relevant, impactful financial innovations to Oman - always with the user at the centre."

The introduction of fintech services to Beyond ONE's digital platform for FRiENDi Mobile is part of the organization's broader mission to enhance, simplify and widen the worlds of its customers, wherever they are.

OAB, Dar Al Atta'a share gift of reading at Muscat International Book Fair 2025

As part of a leading initiative aimed at instilling the love of reading in the hearts of children and enhancing community interaction, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has teamed up with Dar Al Atta'a, a leading charity organisation in the Sultanate of Oman, for a special book donation campaign at the Muscat International Book Fair 2025.

The fair, which was held from April 24 to May 3 at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Center (OCEC), served as a hub for book lovers, authors, and cultural enthusiasts alike.

This year, OAB introduced an exciting opportunity for visitors to make a meaningful impact. A dedicated book donation box was set up at the fair near Gate 3, opposite the OAB booth. The bank invited all visitors to bring



along their gently used books and donate them to the initiative.

These books were then to be distributed to children across Oman

to provide them with the tools to embark on their own journeys of discovery and imagination.

Commenting on the initiative, Sulaiman al Harthi, CEO of Oman Arab Bank, said, "We believe that reading opens doors to endless possibilities. This initiative is a testament to our commitment towards the communities we serve. "By partnering with Dar Al Atta'a, we have not only helped instill the joy of reading into the hearts of young readers, but we also gave back to the community in a meaningful way. Through this initiative we hoped to inspire a generation of young readers; those same who will shape the future of our country."

The collaboration between OAB and Dar Al Atta'a reflects the bank's ongoing efforts to make a positive social impact.

The book donation initiative is just one of the ways OAB supports educational and social causes, alongside its broader role in the digital transformation of Oman's banking landscape.

OAB's participation as official banking partner of the book fair was also aligned with its commitment to enhancing the visitor experience through cashless transactions using the OAB Soft-POS system at every book stall. Visitors were able to conveniently tap-to-pay to make quick and secure purchases.

The Muscat International Book Fair served as a platform to promote cultural exchange and learning. Oman Arab Bank's involvement this year was a step towards fostering a society that values education, and knowledgeable empowerment.

Bank Muscat reinforces inclusive banking for disabled

Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in Oman, is dedicated to fostering an inclusive banking environment that caters to all community segments. As one of the earliest banking institutions to embrace this mission, the bank actively works towards meeting the diverse needs of its customers, particularly those with disabilities.

In coincidence with the Arab Deaf Week, celebrated annually in the last week of April, Bank Muscat reiterates its commitment to financial inclusion by enhancing access to banking services for all societal segments.

The bank is implementing a comprehensive strategy that prioritises accessibility by utilising modern technologies and interactive devices. The bank has trained 180 employees in sign language and another 99 in disability service skills, ensuring that



staff across various branches can effectively assist customers with diverse needs.

The bank also offers the 'Maliyat' programme, an electronic platform that provides free financial literacy courses tailored for all community members, including those with disabilities. This programme incorporates digital tools and sign language to enhance learning opportunities and promote informed financial

decision-making.

Moreover, Bank Muscat prepares media and marketing communications in sign language to effectively convey information about its services and community initiatives.

With a focus on enhancing the banking experience for individuals with disabilities, Bank Muscat ensures that its 60 branches are equipped with accessible features, such as well-designed corridors,

appropriate reception areas, dedicated parking, waiting areas, stairs and elevators, and specially designed entrances to facilitate seamless service.

To further promote community integration and support the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, Bank Muscat is launching several initiatives highlighting the importance of people with hearing, visual, and physical disabilities. This includes the introduction of

a groundbreaking direct debit card specifically designed for the blind, featuring a unique Braille account number for easier use in retail, online shopping, and other transactions. The card can be availed at any of the bank's branches across the governorates, reflecting Bank Muscat's ongoing efforts to broaden access to financial services and maintain exceptional service standards for all customers.

Vatican: Phone signals to be cut ahead of conclave to elect pope

Vatican City - Ahead of the secretive conclave to elect the next pope, all mobile phone signals will be deactivated in the Vatican on Wednesday, CNN reported, citing Italian state media.

The Vatican also plans to use signal jammers around the Sistine Chapel to stop electronic surveillance or communication outside the conclave, where 133 cardinals vote to decide who will be succeed Pope Francis, CNN reported, citing Italian news agency ANSA.

Phone signals will be deactivated at 3pm (local time) on Wednesday, an hour and a half before the cardinals are scheduled to proceed to the Sistine Chapel to start the papal conclave, CNN reported, citing Italian state broadcaster RAI.

On Monday, the Vatican announced that all 133 cardinals who will vote to decide the successor of Francis have reached Rome. For centuries the Catholic Church leader has been selected in a highly secretive gathering known as 'conclave', meaning



'with key' in Latin, a nod to how cardinals get locked in until a new pope is chosen. Cardinals have been given the task to choose the next pope after an elaborate process with roots in

the Middle Ages.

The cardinals will have to give up their mobile phones and electronic devices on Tuesday and they will receive their devices back after the conclave ends, a Vatican spokesman said.

The cardinals will remain in the Sistine Chapel and cut off from the outside world from Wednesday. All of the cardinals who will participate in the conclave will remain in complete isolation and will take a vow to observe 'absolute and perpetual secrecy'.

The signal deactivation will not impact St Peter's Square, where the people often gather, according to the spokesman. However, security has been increased throughout St Peter's Square, with checkpoints at the entrances and the deployment of metal detectors and anti-drone systems at the public space, CNN reported citing news outlet Corriere della Sera.

During the conclave, the Sistine Chapel is placed under total lockdown to have complete secrecy. In 2013, signal blockers

were installed to stop any calls, texts, or internet access that elected Francis. In addition, the electricians, plumbers and elevator operators who will keep the Vatican running during the conclave will commit themselves to secrecy.

The statement from the Vatican City State Governorate said: "They all take an oath and will be in full-time service, staying overnight in the Vatican, without having contact with their families."

ANI

Trump administration cuts off new federal grants to Harvard

Washington, D.C., US - The Trump administration has barred Harvard University from receiving new federal grants, intensifying its clash with the Ivy League school over allegations of antisemitism, political bias, and mismanagement, according to a US Department of Education statement issued on Monday.

The move freezes billions of dollars in future research grants and other aid to the prestigious institution.

In a letter sent to Harvard, Education Secretary Linda McMahon, alleged that the university having failed its 'legal obligations' and 'should no longer seek grants from the federal government, since none will be provided'.

The former wrestling executive said that her letter 'marks the end of new grants' until it 'demonstrates responsible management of the university'.

Trump demands policy shifts

The administration of US President Donald Trump has cracked down on US universities, criticising their diversity programmes and claiming they are not doing enough to stop antisemitism on campuses.

Protests rocked universities across the US last year, with students calling on educational institutions to divest from Israel due to the ongoing war in Gaza.

Trump has labelled these protests pro-Hamas. However, protesters - including some Jewish groups - say the government wrongly conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism and support for Hamas.

The US government has cut off money to a number of colleges including Columbia University, the University of Pennsylvania and Cornell University, seeking complete adherence to Trump's policies.

Harvard vows to fight

Last month, Harvard University sued the US government after it froze US\$2.2bn in federal grants to the institution, while pushing



The US government has cut off funding to several top US universities for failing to fall in line with Trump policies

The US Department of Education accused Harvard, the Ivy League university, of antisemitism and criticised its diversity policies. Harvard has vowed to fight this 'illegal government overreach'

stifling research and innovation that make Americans safer and more secure'. Harvard, one of the world's top universities, has the largest endowment in the country of US\$53bn. In 2023, federal money accounted for 10.5% of its revenue.

Decree to Columbia University

The Trump administration, has also proposed a legally binding consent decree to Columbia University, aiming to impose federal oversight amid tensions over the school's handling of campus antisemitism, press reports said on Monday.

The proposed agreement would place Columbia under court-monitored reforms, barring the university from considering

race in admissions and requiring efforts to promote viewpoint diversity among faculty, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Columbia's board of trustees is reportedly undecided on whether to accept the proposal.

If the university declines, the Justice Department could pursue legal action that may result in similar oversight under stricter terms.

The university came under scrutiny in March when the government suspended US\$400mn in federal funding over alleged civil rights violations.

While Columbia initially agreed to some federal demands, it now faces more intensive negotiations that could affect future access to government funding.

DW/Anadolu Agency



German Conservative leader Friedrich Merz

Germany: Merz fails to secure majority in first round of voting

Berlin, Germany - Conservative leader Friedrich Merz on Tuesday failed to secure the required majority in the first round of voting for the German chancellor in the parliament.

In the secret ballot, 310 members of parliament voted for Merz, while 307 voted against him. Merz needed a simple majority of at least 316 votes to be elected chancellor but fell short of this threshold.

The first-round setback comes despite Merz's conservative CDU/CSU alliance and its junior coalition partner, the Social Democratic Party (SPD), having a comfortable majority of 328 seats in the Bundestag, surpassing the required 316-seat threshold.

During the vote, three lawmakers abstained and one vote was invalid. Nine parliamentari-

ans were absent due to illness or other reasons. Due to the secret ballot, it remained unclear how many lawmakers from the coalition parties voted against Merz's chancellorship and what their party affiliations were.

After the setback, party leaders met with their senior advisers to discuss the path forward. It was not immediately clear whether a second round of voting would take place later on Tuesday or would be delayed until Friday. The German Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) officially signed a coalition deal with the centre-left SPD on Monday, following weeks of negotiations after the February 23 elections. The Christian Democrats won the snap elections with 28.5% of the vote but fell short of an outright majority.

Anadolu Agency

LIFE MIRED IN DECADES OF CONFLICT



A resident is seen transporting goods in Goma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on Monday, The eastern DRC has been mired in decades of conflict, and people have been striving to maintain their daily lives (Xinhua)

NZ: Lawmaker introduces bill to ban social media for under-16s

Wellington, New Zealand - A New Zealand ruling party lawmaker has introduced a bill in parliament to ban social media use for individuals under the age of 16 - a move that has received the backing of Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, according to local media on Tuesday.

The bill, put forward by National Party MP Catherine Wedd, would require social media companies to verify the age of users and prevent those under 16 from accessing their platforms, Radio New Zealand (RNZ) reported.

Wedd argued that the country needs to do more to mitigate the risks social media poses to young people.

"That's why today National has introduced a members bill to ban social media for kids under 16 years old," he said on X.

The move comes after Australia passed similar legislation last year, becoming the first government globally to enforce an under-16 social media ban.



The move comes after Australia passed similar legislation last year

Studies have linked excessive social media use among youth to lower self-esteem and other health issues

While most social media platforms technically prohibit users under 13, enforcement has been

lax, and children often bypass restrictions. Several platforms have faced criticism for allegedly using algorithms that increase user dependency - particularly among teens - though the companies strongly deny such claims.

Multiple studies have linked excessive social media use among youth to lower self-esteem, anxiety, and other mental health issues.

Anadolu Agency

UN launches funding appeal for Afghan refugees

Istanbul, Turkey - UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) on Tuesday launched a funding appeal for relief as nearly 110,000 Afghan refugees returned between April 3 and May 3.

The appeal aims to provide support near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and adjacent areas where severe conditions and funding gaps are increasing risks for the most vulnerable populations, the IOM said in a statement.

The IOM said that the appeal aims to support between 600,000 and 1.5mn Afghan returnees - mostly undocumented - who are affected by the second phase of Pakistan's Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan.

"Most of the people returning to Afghanistan are in a state of acute vulnerability, having been forced to leave behind their homes, possessions, and jobs," IOM Deputy Director General for Operations Ugochi Daniels said, urging the international community to help.

According to the latest IOM data, an average of 3,000 people per day crossed back into Afghanistan through key border points in Nangarhar and Kandahar provinces in April.

Anadolu Agency

Thousands of Gazans eat only 1 meal every 2-3 days: UNRWA

Gaza City/Istanbul - Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians eat only one meal every two or three days amid a crippling Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said on Tuesday.

"More than 66,000 children in Gaza are suffering from severe malnutrition," UNRWA spokesman Adnan Abu Hasna told Al-Ghad TV in an interview.

Since March 2, Israel has kept Gaza's crossings closed to food, medical, and humanitarian aid, deepening an already humanitarian crisis in the enclave, according to government, human rights, and international reports.

Figures released by Gaza's government media office showed that at least 57 Palestinians have died of starvation since October 2023.

Nearly 2.4mn people in Gaza live completely dependent on humanitarian aid, according to World Bank data.

'UNRWA will not be part of the new Israeli plan' for aid distribution in Gaza, as the plan 'doesn't adhere to UN standards at all', Abu Hasna said.

On Sunday night, the Israeli Security Cabinet approved a plan to distribute aid in the blockaded enclave through private security contractors.

The plan, however, was rejected by the UN and dozens of international aid groups, saying it runs against humanitarian principles, is logistically unworkable, and could put Palestinian civilians and staffers in harm's way.



Figures released by Gaza's government media office showed that at least 57 Palestinians have died of starvation since October 2023

The UN Humanitarian Country Team in Gaza said on Sunday night that it 'can only support plans that respect the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence, and impartiality'.

'A weapon of war'

Meanwhile, the UN humanitarian affairs office warned on Tuesday that Israeli restrictions on humanitarian aid to Gaza risk turning relief efforts into a 'weapon' of war. "It appears to be a deliberate

attempt to weaponise the aid, and we have warned against that for a very long time," said Jens Laerke, OCHA spokesperson, at a UN briefing in Geneva.

"Aid should be provided based on humanitarian need to whomever needs it, targeting those who need it most, first, and not be used in any way as a tactic to move people to any particular place or to convince people to do this, that or the other," Laerke said.

Asked about a memo issued

by the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories, Israel's military body for civilian coordination, in which it said that all aid must now enter Gaza exclusively through the Kerem Shalom crossing, with around 60 trucks allowed daily, he warned: "Even if trucks are getting through to those officially closed borders, we can't reach them for security reasons, mainly so it can't be picked up."

WHO spokesperson Margaret Harris said that nearly 10,000

children with global acute malnutrition have been treated in Gaza this year, including 1,397 with severe acute malnutrition.

However, 'we're actually seeing fewer cases of children coming into hospitals for treatment than we expect ... simply, they're not getting to the centres', she said due to evacuation orders and attacks against facilities.

Harris also reported rising cases of acute watery diarrhoea and skin diseases, driven by unsafe water, collapsing sanitation,

and disrupted health care.

4 more killed in fresh strikes

At least four Palestinians were killed and several others injured in fresh airstrikes by Israeli warplanes on Tuesday in the war-torn Gaza Strip, medics said.

A medical source told Anadolu that a girl was killed in a strike targeting a tent for displaced people in western Khan Younis in southern Gaza.

Anadolu Agency

Power outage hits Port Sudan after strike

Port Sudan, Sudan - Sudanese authorities reported an electricity outage in Port Sudan on Tuesday following a drone strike on the main power plant in the eastern city.

In a statement, the Sudan Electricity Company said the city's power plant went offline after the strike, saying the drone attack was part of a systematic campaign targeting basic services of civilians.

The company said technical teams are working to restore the power supply in the city.

There was no claim of responsibility for the attack, but the Sudanese government accused the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of being behind the attack.

Explosions were heard in the city on Tuesday after the strike that targeted several sites in Port Sudan, including the airport and seaport.

According to Al Jazeera, multiple explosions were heard and



a huge fire erupted in Port Sudan, though the exact locations and causes were unclear.

As per the publication, dark plumes of smoke could be seen on Tuesday emerging from the vicinity of the country's main maritime port in the city, where thousands of displaced people have sought refuge.

The Red Sea city has become the temporary administrative

capital and a de facto seat of the Sudanese government following the outbreak of clashes with the RSF since April 2023.

On Sunday, the Sudanese authorities accused the RSF of striking the eastern cities of Port Sudan and Kassala with combat drones, triggering wide Arab condemnations.

In recent weeks, drone strikes have increasingly targeted power

stations in northern cities such as Merowe, Dongola, Al Dabbah, and Atbara, with the Sudanese government blaming the rebel faction for the attacks.

Since April 2023, the RSF has been battling the army for control of Sudan, resulting in thousands of deaths and creating one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Agencies

'Israeli PM seeks to destroy 2-state solution possibility'

Oviedo, Spain - European Council President Antonio Costa on Tuesday accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of seeking to eliminate the possibility of a two-state solution.

In an interview with Spanish broadcaster Cadena SER, Costa condemned Israel's recently approved military occupation plan for Gaza, calling it a breach of international law.

"Netanyahu is trying to destroy the possibility of the existence of two states," he said.

"Europe must be clear - condemn Israel's violation of international law and support a two-state solution," Costa added.

The former Portuguese prime minister and the first Socialist to hold the permanent European Council presidency was in Spain on an official visit.

Speaking about global secu-



Antonio Costa

rity, Costa underlined the need for the EU to increase defence spending to support its social model and security interests.

"The EU is a peace project, but peace without defence is an illusion," he said.

He stressed the need for co-operation with southern Mediterranean countries and argued that defence must go beyond military buildup, including

development aid and innovation in dual-use technologies.

Costa also criticised economic protectionism, describing tariffs as a 'tragedy' and warning of the negative effects of a trade war with the United States. "It's bad for us, but even worse for the US economy," he said.

On Ukraine, Costa said Europe must support a 'just and lasting peace', insisting that ceasefires alone are not enough.

"Only Ukraine can define the terms of peace," he said. "We must not reward the aggressor."

Costa also acknowledged the challenges posed by the rise of far-right populism in Europe, attributing the trend to growing discontent among the middle class and younger generations.

"It's more a reaction against the system than support for the extreme right," he said.

Anadolu Agency

New Zealand wildlife clinic calls for dimming city lights to save birds

Auckland, New Zealand - A wildlife clinic in Auckland, New Zealand's most populous city, has called for city lights to be dimmed on cloudy nights to protect native seabirds, local media reported on Tuesday.

BirdCare Aotearoa, a veterinary hospital treating injured seabirds, said urban light pollution - especially from landmarks such as the Harbour Bridge and Sky Tower - disorients juvenile birds, often leading to injuries or grounding, according to RNZ News.

Catriona Robertson, a hospi-

tal staff member, said groundings occur most often on overcast or rainy nights when the moon is obscured and city lights reflect off the clouds.

"Driving at night in the rain we've probably all experienced the way the lights flare off a little bit more than usual, so for these guys it's a confusion factor where they think they're heading towards the moon or some sort of light source that would usually guide them home and then they crash-land," she told RNZ.

She explained that seabirds



Urban light pollution disorients juvenile birds, often leading to injuries or grounding

As per studies in New Zealand and abroad, flicker and blue spectrum of LED lights are attractive to the seabirds, worsening the problem

rely on elevated spots like cliffs to take flight, so when they end up grounded in urban areas, it's

hard for them to become airborne again. Upon crash-landing, they may injure themselves, lose their waterproofing quickly and have difficulty finding food.

Many of the seabirds treated by the clinic are juvenile petrels, including the nationally vulnerable black petrel.

Studies in New Zealand and abroad have found that the flicker and blue spectrum of LED lights are especially attractive to seabirds, worsening the problem, the report said.

Anadolu Agency



US House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson

US will make every effort to support India: Mike Johnson

Washington, D.C., US - US House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson has said that US will make every effort to support India in its fight against terrorism.

He called India a 'very important' partner for the US in so many ways.

In his remarks at the Congressional briefing at the Capitol Hill on Monday, Johnson also spoke about the trade deal between India and the US and expressed hope that the trade negotiations

clearly understands the importance of that relationship and clearly understands the importance of the threat of terrorism. And so I think if that threat is increased, I think you'll see the administration, my belief is that they will focus more energy and resources and time to help assist with that. That's certainly our hope," he added.

On April 30, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and reaffirmed the

Look, we have great sympathy for what's happening over there (in India) and we want to stand with our allies. I think India is a very important partner in so many ways

MIKE JOHNSON

will work out well between two nations.

When asked about his message for India, Mike Johnson said: "Look, we have great sympathy for what's happening over there and we want to stand with our allies. I think India is a very important partner to us in so many ways. I hope that the trade negotiations will work out well between the two countries. No one asked me about tariffs, I'm glad. Yes, but a critically important relationship for us and such a large population in such an important country. And India has to stand against terrorism there as well."

"We'll do everything we can in the US to support those efforts. And I think that's all part of this relationship as it develops. The Trump administration

United States' commitment to cooperate with India against terrorism.

Expressing his sorrow for the lives lost in the 'horrific terrorist attack' in Pahalgam, Rubio also encouraged India to work with Pakistan to 'de-escalate tensions' and maintain peace and security in South Asia, US State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce had said in a statement.

On April 23, US President Donald Trump held a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and offered his condolences at the loss of lives in the terror attack. Trump condemned the attack and expressed full support to India to bring to justice the perpetrators of this 'heinous attack'.

ANI

'Weaponisation' of 1960 Indus Waters Treaty is 'red-line' for Pakistan, says premier Sharif

Islamabad, Pakistan - Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday stressed India's 'weaponisation' of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty is unacceptable and was a 'red line' for his country's 250mn people, state media reported.

Sharif made the remarks during his meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Sayyid Abbas Araghchi in Islamabad, according to the Associated Press of Pakistan. Sharif expressed Pakistan's deep concerns about rising tensions due to India's 'provocative behaviour' following the attack on a Pahalgam tourist resort in the Indian-administered Kashmir which left 26 people dead on April 22.

He firmly rejected 'any attempt' to link Pakistan to the attack without evidence, stressing that Islamabad had proposed an international, transparent, neutral, and credible investigation to uncover the truth.

Tensions are running high between the nuclear-armed neighbours following the attack in Kashmir.



A view of the Baglihar Hydroelectric Power Project Dam after all the gates of it on Chenab River got closed, in Ramban on Tuesday (ANI)

India blamed Pakistan, saying the attack had 'cross-border links'. Islamabad denied and instead offered a neutral probe with third-party monitoring.

The two sides took reciprocal measures including further downgrading the diplomatic ties, including cancelling visas for each other's citizens and recalling some diplomatic staff.

India also suspended its participation in the Indus Waters Treaty, a 1960 water use and distribution agreement with Pakistan.

In recent days, many countries, including the US, have contacted leaders of both countries in an attempt to ease tensions.

Sharif said India had 'created a media frenzy to divert the world's attention away from the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, which remained the root cause of instability in South Asia', according to state media.

New Delhi was yet to react to the latest statement of Islamabad by the time of publication.

The Iranian foreign minister is on an official trip to Islamabad, he is also expected to travel to New Delhi.

Severe water shortage

Meanwhile, Pakistan has recorded a significant decrease in the waters of the Chenab river, after India held the Indus treaty in abeyance and the closure of the gates of Baglihar and Salal dams.

According to Pakistan news site Dawn News, the water flows

in the Chenab, recorded at the Marala headworks, decreased from up to 35,000 cusecs on Sunday to about 3,100 cusecs on Monday morning.

"They have almost blocked the River Chenab flows to downstream (Pakistan) after they (Indian authorities) took the decision on Sunday," a senior official of Pakistan's Punjab irrigation department confirmed on Monday to Dawn.

Separately, a meeting of the

advisory committee of the Indus River System Authority held in Islamabad on Monday also expressed concerns over the unilateral Indian decision that would cause additional shortages to Kharif crops, already facing an estimated 21 per cent shortfall.

The water regulator declared an overall shortage of 21 per cent for the remaining early Kharif season in case supplies in River Chenab remained normal.

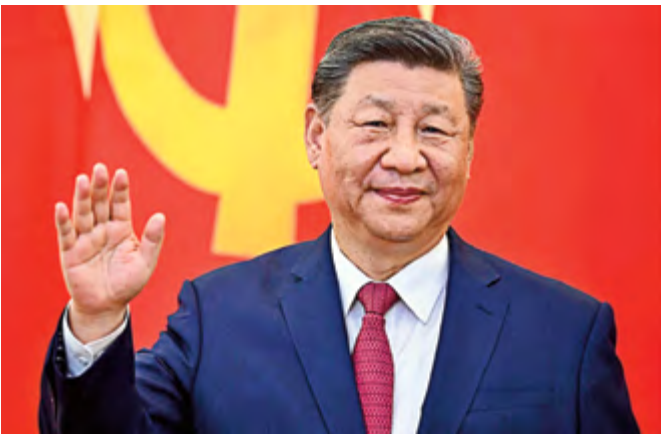
Agencies

China's President Xi urges healthy ties with EU

Beijing, China - China's President Xi Jinping on Tuesday called for 'healthy and stable' ties with the EU amid tariffs war with the US.

The world 'is undergoing a century-long transformation, and human society has once again come to a critical crossroads. A healthy and stable China-EU relationship will not only achieve mutual success, but also illuminate the world', Xi said, stressing that he attaches 'importance' to the development of ties with EU.

Xi made the comments during



China's President Xi Jinping

an exchange with EU Council President Antonio Costa and EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to mark the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and the EU, according to Chinese state media.

The Chinese president showed readiness to 'deepen strategic communication, enhance mutual understanding and trust, consolidate the positioning of partners, expand mutual openness, properly handle frictions

and differences, and open up a brighter future for China-EU relations'. Beijing is expected to hold a leaders-level summit between China and the EU in the latter part of July.

Xi's comments about ties with the EU come amid a raging tariff war initiated by US President Donald Trump. Washington imposed 245% tariffs on imports from China which retaliated with its own 125% levies on all imports from the US.

Anadolu Agency

Human Development progress slows to 35-year low: UNDP

Geneva, Switzerland - Human development progress is experiencing an unprecedented slowdown according to a new report released on Tuesday by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The report showed how Artificial Intelligence (AI) could reignite development.

Instead of seeing sustained recovery following the period of exceptional crises of 2020-2021, the report revealed unexpectedly weak progress. Excluding those crisis years, the meagre rise in global human development projected in this year's report is the smallest increase since 1990.

The 2025 Human Development Report 'A Matter of Choice: People and Possibilities in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)' analyses development progress across a range of indicators known as the Human

Development Index (HDI), which encompasses achievements in health and education, along with levels of income. Projections for 2024 revealed stalled progress on the HDI in all regions across the world.

Beyond the alarming rate of deceleration in global development, the report found widening inequalities between rich and poor countries. As traditional paths to development are squeezed by global pressures, decisive action is needed to move the world away from prolonged stagnation on progress.

"For decades, we have been on track to reach a very high human development world by 2030, but this deceleration signals a very real threat to global progress," said Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator. "If 2024's sluggish progress becomes 'the new normal', that 2030 milestone could slip by decades -



making our world less secure, more divided, and more vulnerable to economic and ecological shocks."

For the fourth year in a row inequality between Low HDI and

Very High HDI countries continues to increase, according to the report. This reverses a long-term trend that has seen a reduction in inequalities between wealthy and poor nations.

Development challenges for countries with the lowest HDI scores are especially severe - driven by increasing trade tensions, a worsening debt crisis and the rise of jobless industrial-

isation. "Amidst this global turmoil, we must urgently explore new ways to drive development," Steiner said. "As AI continues its rapid advance across so many aspects of our lives, we should consider its potential for development. New capabilities are emerging almost daily, and while AI is no panacea, the choices we make hold the potential to reignite human development and open new pathways and possibilities."

The report contained the results of a new survey that showed people are realistic yet hopeful about the change AI can bring. Half of respondents worldwide think that their jobs could be automated. An even larger share - six in ten - expect AI to impact their employment positively, creating opportunities in jobs that may not even exist today.

Only 13 per cent of survey re-

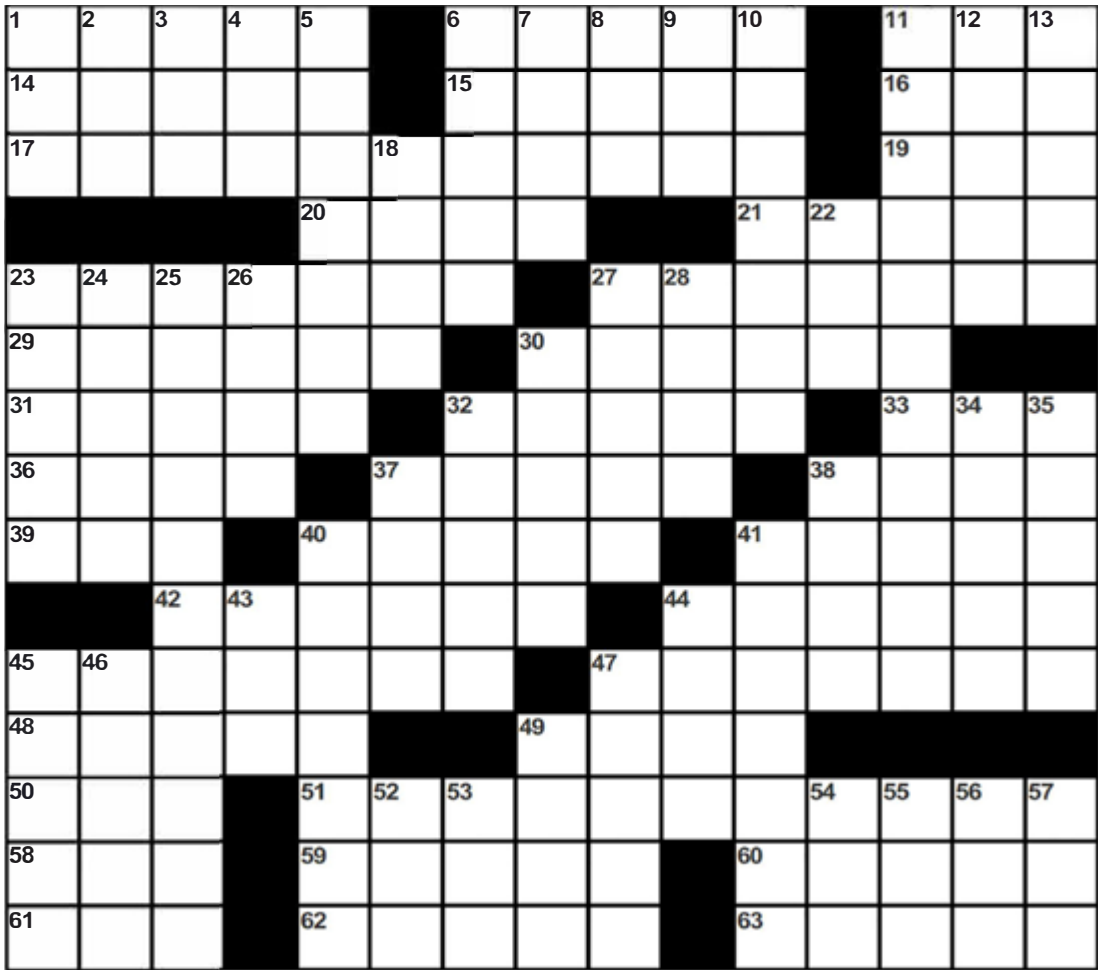
spondents fear AI could lead to job losses. In contrast, in low and medium-HDI countries, 70 per cent expect AI to increase their productivity, and two-thirds anticipate using AI in education, health, or work within the next year.

The report advocates for a human-centred approach to AI - which has the potential to fundamentally redesign approaches to development. The survey results showed that across the world people are ready for this kind of 'reset'.

The report outlined three critical areas for action: building an economy where people collaborate with AI rather than compete against it; embedding human agency across the full AI lifecycle, from design to deployment; and modernising education and health systems to meet 21st-century demands.

ANI/WAM

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Church focal point
 - 6) Far away from port
 - 11) "Boo" mo.
 - 14) Difficult to get through
 - 15) Understand
 - 16) Promise
 - 17) Driving toward
 - 19) 112.5 degrees from S
 - 20) Add it to "a one" to make "none"
 - 21) Material that's worsted for wear?
 - 23) Zagreb's place
 - 27) Old pro
 - 29) Moved by semi
 - 30) Gen. Charles de _
 - 31) Bewhiskered mammal
 - 32) Group of officers
 - 33) Software program, briefly
 - 36) Customary practice or observance
 - 37) Prefix meaning "bone"
 - 38) Cut remnant
 - 39) Word from Homer
 - 40) Like a DC comics "man"
 - 41) "I'll second that"
 - 42) Mexican Januaries
 - 44) Like many radials

- 45) If everything fails miserably
 - 47) Chinese dumplings
 - 48) Where Dolphins play
 - 49) Start up a computer
 - 50) Wood shaping tool (var.)
 - 51) Attempt to lure
 - 58) _Paulo
 - 59) Dangerous sub of WWII
 - 60) Aligned perfectly
 - 61) _pitch softball
 - 62) Numerical sense?
 - 63) America's bird
- DOWN**
- 1) Big hullabaloo
 - 2) Sportscaster Berman
 - 3) Blast maker
 - 4) Fire remnant
 - 5) Come again?
 - 6) Old Greek marketplace
 - 7) Food carrier
 - 8) Feeling blue
 - 9) "To the max" suffix
 - 10) Last Supper guest
 - 11) Be melodramatic
 - 12) Kind of line
 - 13) Adolescent, almost
 - 18) Make a sudden attack
 - 22) Sniggler's catch
 - 23) Musical combo?
 - 24) 6:1, e.g.
 - 25) Expensive way to pay?
 - 26) Away from gales
 - 27) Skywalker's daddy
 - 28) Certain dollar
 - 30) Airport choices
 - 32) A hundred bucks
 - 34) Eucharist plate
 - 35) Gives the goad-ahead?
 - 37) Yours and mine
 - 38) Deposit for a moist bank
 - 40) Not to be taken lightly
 - 41) Having toothlike notches
 - 43) _ de plume
 - 44) TV, informally (with "tube")
 - 45) Gather for a collection
 - 46) Type of wave
 - 47) Market value
 - 49) Defeated
 - 52) Agent's org.
 - 53) Sly critter
 - 54) Nest egg letters
 - 55) Give a little pull
 - 56) Communications abbr.
 - 57) Keats poem, e.g.

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
New beginnings aren't just your specialty; they're your very favorite state of affairs! Fortunately, that's exactly what's on the agenda right now thanks to an impending offer that is pretty sweet. It may be so sweet, in fact, that you're tempted to jump on it right away. Moving quickly might not be a bad idea, but taking the time to check out the details first doesn't hurt.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
You need intense, meaningful conversation right now, and anyone who deliberately tries to avoid the issues via pointless, trivial chitchat receives their due. You're happy to dispense a chilly stare and a quick glimpse of the back of your head. On the other hand, if you've been deliberately avoiding a topic that someone close has been trying to bring up for weeks, you change your tune in a hurry.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
It's all too easy for you to fall headfirst into work and forget about anything even remotely resembling fun or leisure, but make the effort to resist. All work and no play really does make life dull, you know, and besides, you have your reputation to consider! You're seen as fun-loving, lighthearted, and downright chipper, so give yourself at least a couple of hours off.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Take time out to appreciate that you're happy with yourself. There's no reason to think you won't continue to be. That doesn't mean you haven't been thinking about introducing a new and improved version of yourself to the world. You need to create this persona before throwing a coming-out bash. Actually, that's the easy part. Deciding to do it is what takes the real work. All you need is a notepad and a bit of that famous perseverance.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
It may be human nature to dream, and to at least make an effort to bring those dreams to life here on earth. You have the chance to turn one of your dreams into a real goal now and tackle that goal with your usual meticulous attention. If you're dealing (or want to be dealing) with long-distance travel, higher education, or spiritual quests, you should have all the positive energy you could ever ask for to get the show on the road!



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You're just about to take flight in nearly every possible aspect of your life, but especially in affairs of the heart. If you've been dating someone casually, things should shake up right away. One of you is sure to either want to make a commitment or say your (graceful) goodbyes, but don't worry. Your life is full of romance over the long run, and betting on anything other than commitment just isn't prudent.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Every now and then we all get the chance to begin again. This time, the trigger you've been needing to change your work situation could be coming, complete with a brand-new friend to inspire and guide you to get the job done. Especially if you haven't been consciously thinking about your career, you might want to consider becoming self-employed part-time.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Your skills as a negotiator and mediator have been famous for nearly forever, and for good reason. You can talk almost anyone into almost anything as long as you believe in your heart that it's the right thing. When you're approached today by someone who needs you to help them broadcast the unvarnished truth, you don't just accept the job, you volunteer for it enthusiastically!



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
You generally accept change pretty easily regardless of the kind of change that happens to be taking place and how or when it's due to arrive. When you hear about a major shift in your life that's just around the corner, it doesn't frighten you at all. You're actually exhilarated! If a family member greets the news with less enthusiasm, though, try to do what you can to help them adjust. Tell them that nothing but the best is en route!



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
You've always been a private person. It's the way you were born and the way you're most comfortable. If someone approaches you with a smirk and a question about what you've got up your sleeve today, you shouldn't feel obliged to let them in on any secrets, unless you want to, of course. When you can't stand it for another moment, though, don't just stop at whispering the news to one person, alert the media!



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
After days of intense conversation, you've finally reached a compromise of some sort. You may keep talking, but there should be absolutely no argument. If you can't see eye to eye, you need to agree to disagree. That might not sound like progress at first, but if you remember where you've come from, you should realize that it's not just progress, it's the beginning of a whole new style of communication!



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You generally accept change pretty easily regardless of the kind of change that happens to be taking place and how or when it's due to arrive. When you hear about a major shift in your life that's just around the corner, it doesn't frighten you at all. You're actually exhilarated! If a family member greets the news with less enthusiasm, though, try to do what you can to help them adjust. Tell them that nothing but the best is en route!



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 01. What is the atomic number of the element which is the basis for all organic chemistry?**
- A. 14
 - B. 2
 - C. 4
 - D. 6
- 02. By what name were Judith Keppel, Chris Hughes, Kevin Ashman, Daphne Fowler and CJ de Mooi known in a long-running British TV series?**
- A. The Think Tank
 - B. The Avengers
 - C. The Eggheads
 - D. The Filthy Five
- 03. What is found on a charcuterie board?**
- A. Salad greens and pieces of fruit
 - B. Different cheeses
 - C. Pieces of cooked and /or cured meats
 - D. Breads

Answers: 1.D 2.C 3.C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

A	S	D	E
A	A	K	E
O	N	H	N
M	Y	S	E

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Dembele fit for Arsenal clash as Paris St Germain eye Champions League final

Paris, France - Paris St Germain received a boost ahead of Wednesday's Champions League semi-final second leg against Arsenal with Ousmane Dembele passed fit as the French champions look to turn growing squad cohesion into a place in the final.

Dembele, who scored the only goal in last week's 1-0 win at the Emirates Stadium, picked up a muscle injury during that match but will be available at the Parc des Princes. "He has been training with the squad for two days so he is available for tomorrow," PSG coach Luis Enrique told a press conference on Tuesday.

It is welcome news for a PSG side whose progress this season has been built less on individual brilliance and more on the kind of collective spirit and tactical maturity that has often eluded them in past European campaigns.

Luis Enrique, brought in to overhaul a team once shaped around marquee stars, has made no secret of his mission to build a unit capable of competing at the highest level.

"This season we've grown so much as a team," he said. "You have to be ready for any scenario

and pay attention from start to finish. The target for the coming years is to keep improving the process," he said when asked about last season's semi-final loss to Borussia Dortmund.

That steady evolution was evident in the first leg in London where PSG's compact shape, aggressive pressing and controlled possession frustrated Arsenal's attacking rhythm.

Defender Achraf Hakimi said the team's new-found identity had been key to their run.

"The key is to show our personality with and without the ball and press high," Hakimi said. "Arsenal will need to feel that the Parc des Princes is our home."

PSG's only Champions League final appearance ended in defeat by Bayern Munich in 2020, while Arsenal's sole final was in 2006 when they lost to Barcelona in Paris.

"We will have to be as good as last week, but while many expect the same kind of game, I guarantee you it will be completely different," said Luis Enrique.

The winners will face Inter Milan or Barcelona, who meet later on Tuesday, in the May 31 final in Munich.



Paris St Germain's Ousmane Dembele at a training session ahead of Wednesday's Champions League semifinal second leg against Arsenal



Luis Enrique

Luis Enrique's PSG bank on collective spirit, not star power

Paris, France - In a sport sometimes defined by individual brilliance and star power, Paris Saint-Germain manager Luis Enrique is quietly reshaping the narrative as his side gear up for their Champions League semi-final return leg against Arsenal.

The Spanish coach, whose career has already seen success at Barcelona and with the Spanish national team, has introduced a distinct philosophy in the French capital, one where no individual rises above the collective.

The results have been telling. PSG find themselves on the verge of a place in the Champions League final, with a decisive clash against Arsenal at the Parc des Princes on Wednesday after prevailing 1-0 at the Emirates last week.

Enrique arrived at PSG last season with a simple but firm mantra - No one head sticking out. At a club historically synonymous with star players — from Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Neymar to Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe — his refusal to build a

side around individual talent raised eyebrows, particularly as the team struggled in the early stages of their Champions League campaign.

"You cannot understand," he quipped as an interviewer asked about his tactics during the league phase.

A string of unconvincing performances in the opening phase had indeed led critics to question whether Luis Enrique's philosophy could succeed at a club where star power has so often overshadowed tactical cohesion.

Yet, months later, his approach appears vindicated. PSG have evolved into one of the most cohesive and disciplined sides in Europe this season.

Central to their resurgence has been an emphasis on pressing as a unit and maintaining balance between attack and defence. The transformation is most evident in the midfield, once seen as a relative weakness, now operating with precision and control against some of the continent's elite.

Forest slip at Crystal Palace

London, England - Nottingham Forest's quest for Champions League football next season suffered a setback when they were held to a 1-1 Premier League draw by Crystal Palace on Monday as Murillo cancelled out Eberechi Eze's penalty for the home side.

The draw leaves Forest in sixth place in the table on 61 points from 35 games, two points behind fifth-placed Chelsea in the final Champions League qualification position.

Mid-table Palace took the lead at Selhurst Park when Eze converted a penalty on the hourmark after Forest goalkeeper Matz Sels had felled Tyrick Mitchell. Eze also hit the crossbar late on.

The lead lasted four minutes before Neco Williams' shot was deflected into the Palace net by defender Murillo, who limped off shortly afterwards with a hamstring injury that could see him miss Forest's run-in to the end of the campaign.

"It was a game of two halves," Forest manager Nuno Espirito Santo told Sky Sports. "First half we controlled the game. Second half we started good but then Palace reacted. It was good for us that we achieved the goal so soon after the (Palace) score."

"The final games (of the season) are going to be like this, nervous games, tight games. Everybody is fighting for some-



Nottingham Forest's Murillo celebrates with teammates after scoring against Crystal Palace on Monday

First half we controlled the game. Second half we started good but then Palace reacted. It was good for us that we achieved the goal so soon after the (Palace) score

NUNO ESPIRITO SANTO

thing. It is up to us to react."

Palace have still not beaten Forest in the top division since 1991 but stepped closer to their Premier League record points total of 49. They have 46 with three games to play.

"We had quite a few chances at the end," Eze said. "I thought we were going to take it, but I think a point, we'll take it. We're positive, we know we put in a good performance."

It took almost 35 minutes for

Palace to have the first effort on goal when Daniel Munoz's volley from 10 yards was well saved by Sels.

Palace were awarded a penalty on 60 minutes when Mitchell was felled by the outstretched leg of Sels for what looked a clear penalty, though it took a Video Assistant Referee to confirm it.

Eze, who missed a spot-kick at Newcastle United last month, swept the ball into the left corner, just past the out-stretched arm of Sels.

Sweet to win the title, the first one of my career, says Kane

Munich, Germany - England striker Harry Kane said it feels sweet to finally end his career-long trophy drought on Sunday, after securing the Bundesliga title with Bayern Munich in his second season at the German club.

The England captain broke a league record two weeks ago with his 60th goal in his first 60 league games for Bayern, and the 31-year-old looks set to become the first player in Bundesliga history to be crowned top scorer in both his first two seasons.

"What a night last night, what a celebration with the players, with the staff. I'm sure everyone's feeling it a little bit this morning, but we're here," Kane said in a video on Monday.

"I feel amazing, it's been a long time coming, obviously a lot of hard work, a lot of dedication, and it just feels sweet to win the title, the first one of my career."

"I appreciate all the support, as always, it never goes unnoticed, and I can't wait to enjoy these next couple of weeks."



Harry Kane

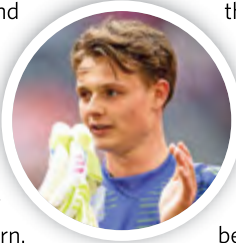
Bayern's Urbig eyes title with second-tier club Cologne

Berlin, Germany - Bayern Munich keeper Jonas Urbig celebrated his first Bundesliga title on Sunday with his team sitting eight points clear at the top with two games left to play.

But the 21-year-old, who is first choice at Bayern with Manuel Neuer injured, could end

up collecting a second title with second-tier club Cologne.

Urbig made 10 appearances for them this season before his January transfer to Bayern. Cologne are second in



Jonas Urbig

the standings, a point behind leaders Hamburg SV with two matches remaining.

"I am in very good contact with the lads and I would be extremely happy if Cologne win the second

division title," Urbig said.

Only two players have previously achieved this feat, Pasi Rautiainen with Bayern Munich and Werder Bremen in the 1980/81 season and Frank Hartmann in 1986/87, with Bayern Munich and Hannover 96.



Ahmad al Harthy has enjoyed huge success at Spa-Francorchamps, and the Omani is keen to continue that run this weekend

ALL SET FOR A SPARKLING SHOW

Oman’s Al Harthy excited as FIA WEC season continues at Spa-Francorchamps

Muscat - Spa-Francorchamps, venue for some of Ahmad al Harthy’s most spectacular achievements in motor racing, welcomes the FIA World Endurance Championship for round three of the season on Saturday, when the Omani aims to continue his and Team WRT’s podium momentum.

Fresh from a near-victory at Imola in Italy less than three weeks ago, where team-mate Kelvin van der Linde took the chequered flag a mere 0.3 seconds shy of the race win, the duo and fellow Team WRT racer Valentino Rossi are focused on trying to go one better at Spa. “We’re all looking forward to

continuing the FIA WEC season at Spa this weekend,” said Al Harthy. Imola was an amazing event and really did kick-start our championship. Everyone at Team WRT did an incredible job, Vale and Kelvin were super quick as always and I was so happy with my performance in both qualifying and the race. “What can you say about Spa that hasn’t already been said? It’s an incredible track, one of the best in the world, and we have enjoyed so much success there over the years. I’ve always loved

racing at Spa, the track is an amazing challenge and it’s one of those places where I have always seemed to go well. After being so close to the win at Imola, we’re aiming to fight just as hard again this weekend.” Imola very much marked the true start of the 2025 season for the No.46 BMW M4 LMT3 entry with a spectacular performance – Al Harthy fastest by some margin in qualifying and Rossi then sealing pole position in Hyperpole. In the fight for victory through-out, an unfortunate penalty

I’ve always loved racing at Spa, the track is an amazing challenge and it’s one of those places where I have always seemed to go well.

AHMAD AL HARTHY

threatened to derail the squad’s podium challenge but an outstanding final stint from van der

Linde brought the BMW back through the order superbly to second place, a fraction from the win. Rocketing up the championship standings into the LMGT3 top six as a result, only eight points shy of the top three, the goal in Belgium is to continue the high level of performance in the TotalEnergies 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps to solidify their 2025 championship challenge. Not only that, there is a clear desire for some redemption too after an unfortunate retirement

from last year’s encounter at Spa. Contact from one of the Hypercar class Porsches midway through hour two ended the BMW’s involvement while in the battle for the LMGT3 podium. Historically, of course, OO Group, Sohar International, Omantel, Oman LNG, BMW Oman, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Experience Oman supported racer Al Harthy has a strong affinity with Spa-Francorchamps having enjoyed tremendous success there.

Doohan’s Formula One future looks bleak as Alpine exit looms

Australian Jack Doohan’s Formula One future looks increasingly uncertain amid speculation the rookie could be replaced at Renault-owned Alpine before the next race at Imola. Doohan, 22 and son of motorcycle great Mick, has yet to score a point in six races this season and one at the end of 2024. The Race.com website said Alpine were evaluating Doohan’s position following another retirement at the Miami Grand Prix on Sunday. The driver has been dogged for months by questions about his future, with Alpine signing Argentine Franco Colapinto from Williams as a reserve before the start of the season. Colapinto raced nine times for Williams last year as replacement for dropped American Logan Sargeant and scored five points, with a best finish of eighth in Azerbaijan. Alpine’s executive advisor Flavio Briatore, a team boss of the team in its former guises of Benetton and Renault, is a fan and known to be keen to get him into the race seat.



Jack Doohan

Alpine team boss Ollie Oakes cancelled his regular media session after Sunday’s race in which Doohan collided with New Zealander Liam Lawson’s Racing Bulls on the opening lap and retired. Alpine are ninth of the 10 teams in the constructors’ stand-

We’ve been pretty open as a team that that’s just noise. Jack needs to continue doing a good job. But it’s natural that there’s always speculation there

OLLIE OAKES, ALPINE TEAM BOSS

ings. “As it is today, Jack is our driver along with Pierre (Gasly),” Oakes had said on Friday when asked to confirm Doohan would be in the car at Imola.

“We always evaluate, but yeah. Today, that is the case.” Apart from Doohan’s lack of points and failure to finish higher than 14th, the latest rumour of an impending change were triggered by one of Colapinto’s Argentine sponsors suggesting in an unguarded television moment last month that it would happen for Imola. He later clarified it was only a personal opinion. “I’m sure there’s a lot of people in Argentina who’d like him in the car this Sunday,” said Oakes

when asked about that on Friday. “We’ve been pretty open as a team that that’s just noise. Jack needs to continue doing a good job. But it’s natural that there’s always speculation there.”

Leao on target as Milan edge Genoa

Genoa, Italy - AC Milan secured a 2-1 victory over Genoa in a rainy Monday Serie A clash, with a rapid second-half turnaround driven by Rafael Leao’s equaliser and an own goal from Morten Frendrup. The result kept Milan at ninth place with 57 points, six points behind fourth-placed Juventus, who occupy the last Champions League spot, with three rounds remaining. With crucial back-to-back clashes against Bologna looming --first in the league followed by the Coppa Italia final -- Milan appeared passive for much of the match, lacking urgency and creativity until a late surge turned the tide. “We always try to improve. We work on individual and group levels. We work a lot,” Milan manager Sergio Conceicao told reporters. “The players responded well, which shows we have a group that believes in what we do at Milanello (Milan training ground). I’m pleased with that.” Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan was the stand out performer in a first half largely dominated by Genoa, making several crucial saves to keep his side level at the break. Milan began to find their rhythm late in the first half and



Rafael Leao

nearly took the lead just before the break, but Christian Pulisic was denied at point-blank range by a sharp save from Genoa keeper Nicola Leali. The second half started in a largely uninspired fashion, with the relentless downpour proving more consistent than the football, as play was frequently halted for injury treatments. Vitinha, introduced only a minute earlier, made an instant impact in the 61st minute, drifting into space inside the box and smashing home a perfectly delivered cross with his first touch to put Genoa in front. A fortunate equaliser from Leao came in the 76th minute, when a low cross from the byline

by Santiago Gimenez wrong-footed the Genoa defence and found the Portuguese forward unmarked in the box; his shot took a deflection off Genoa’s Brooke Norton-Cuffy before nestling in the net to level the score. Less than two minutes later, Milan completed the turnaround when Genoa midfielder Frendrup, attempting to clear a short cross, inadvertently tapped the ball into his own net. In stoppage time, Milan nearly added a third when Leao fired a powerful effort that Leali was forced to parry away from danger. “In terms of our game plan, we could’ve done better in possession during the first half. We played against a tough team on a tough pitch. Credit to the opponent - but we could have looked for depth more,” Conceicao said.



Jannik Sinner

Sinner keeps expectations low for Italian Open after return from ban

Rome, Italy - World number one Jannik Sinner said on Monday that he was heading into the Italian Open with low expectations as he makes his comeback after serving a three-month doping ban. Sinner agreed a settlement with the World Anti-Doping Agency in February and began an immediate three-month sus-

pension after authorities accepted that the anabolic agent clostebol had entered his system via massages from his physio-therapist. The three-time Grand Slam champion, who has not played since winning the Australian Open in January, will now hope to leave the doping saga behind him and build momentum for

the French Open, which runs from May 25 to June 8. The Italian was cleared to return to training from April 13, with his suspension ending on May 4. “It’s a very, very low expectation tournament in general for me, it’s talking also results wise,” Sinner told reporters ahead of the Italian Open. “What’s missing is the com-

plete feedback of where my level is. That’s going to come then slowly with the time of playing, after the first round match I’m going to have a good picture of myself — where I am at.” Despite missing out on three month’s action, the 23-year-old was assured of retaining the top ranking for his home tournament after his closest challenger

Alexander Zverev crashed to an early defeat in Monte-Carlo Masters. “For me personally good news that the Grand Slams were not included ... This kind of agreement, I didn’t want to do it in the beginning. It was not easy for me to accept it because I know what really happened, but sometimes we have to choose

the best in a very bad moment,” Sinner said. “It’s all over now, so I’m happy to play tennis again.” “I was in a tough situation and in the beginning of the Australian Open I struggled a lot. So, it was nice also to take a small break...,” he added.



Sai Kishore of Gujarat Titans celebrates after taking the wicket of Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya on Tuesday. Kishore took two wickets to help Gujarat restrict Mumbai to 155 for 8

'Hyderabad conditions weren't what we expected this year'

Hyderabad, India - Daniel Vettori, the Sunrisers Hyderabad head coach, has clarified that the team's batting style wasn't aggressive by default, after their washout against Delhi Capitals knocked them out of contention to make the IPL 2025 playoffs. But he did note that the conditions in Hyderabad didn't match their expectations, and that they were tricky for batters.

"I definitely didn't say after every match I was backing an aggressive approach," Vettori said. "I said we're about assessing conditions and this year, the conditions weren't as we expected. If you look at last year, there were a lot of high-scoring games here.

"These surfaces in particular have been a little bit different. It has been tricky, it hasn't been

easy for the batters. All we've talked about is assessing conditions, trying to read the game and understand what to do in certain situations. I think the guys are innately aggressive, but certainly, this season has been about trying to establish what's been required on the day."

Hyderabad has hosted six games so far and teams have crossed 200 in four of the 11 innings in total. However, teams crossed 200 seven times in 12 innings last year. The reason for the reduced high-scoring pitches, according to Vettori, was the conditions being more bowler-friendly.

"There have been two surfaces that have been 250-plus, and there have been four here that have been probably more conducive for the fast bowlers."



Daniel Vettori

RAIN KNOCKS SUNRISERS OUT

Cummins' show in vain as Delhi escape with a point

Hyderabad, India - Rain put an official end to Sunrisers Hyderabad's (SRH) IPL 2025 playoffs hopes and gave Delhi Capitals (DC) what could be a valuable point in their bid to finish in the top four. It certainly looked like a point gained for DC rather than one lost, after Pat Cummins took three new-ball wickets to put SRH in the driver's seat at the innings break.

Rain arrived soon after DC, sent in to bat, finished their innings at 133 for 7. By the time the weather cleared, the outfield was too sodden for the ground staff to clear by 11.42pm, the official cut-off time for a five-over chase.

A grass-free surface at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium proved to be a tricky one, offering enough grip for balls banged into a hard length to misbehave, and Cummins is a master of banging the ball into a hard length.

The SRH captain took the new ball himself with Mohammed Shami left out, and struck first ball, getting it to straighten and find Karun Nair's edge. It was a sign of things to come, with the ball frequently stopping on the batter or - particularly if delivered with a wobbly seam - deviating sideways, usually just enough to find the edge.

By the time he had bowled 19 balls, Cummins had taken three wickets and Ishan Kishan - keeping for the first time this season, relieving Heinrich Klaasen of the



Sunrisers Hyderabad put in a spirited bowling performance against Delhi Capitals on Monday before the rain came to spoil their day

TODAY'S MATCH

MATCH 57

6 PM



KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

VS

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

gloves - three catches.

With Harshal Patel and Jaydev Unadkat also getting into the wickets column, DC were gasping at 29 for 5 in the eighth over. The fullish ball Unadkat bowled to dismiss KL Rahul, from left-arm around, summed up the conditions - on nine out of ten IPL pitches, Rahul would have probably muddled the drive he attempted; this was the tenth pitch, and the ball straightened to kiss

his edge and make Kishan the first keeper to catch out an entire top four in an IPL innings.

Tristan Stubbs anchored DC's recovery from that point, putting on 33 with Vipraj Nigam for the sixth wicket - Nigam sacrificed his wicket following a mix-up that left both batters at the same end - and 66 with Ashutosh Sharma for the seventh.

As they have done in other recent games, DC named a bowler-

heavy starting XI despite batting first, and brought Ashutosh off the Impact Player bench when the need arose. And Ashutosh was primarily responsible for a late flourish that brought DC 61 runs off their last six overs, hitting three sixes in a 26-ball 41. Stubbs was unbeaten on 41 off 36 balls.

Rain began soon after DC's innings ended, leaving SRH waiting to begin a chase that eventually never took place.

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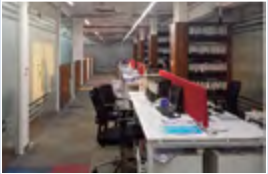
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MET GALA 2025

NEW YORK'S METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART CAME ALIVE WITH TRIBUTES TO BLACK HISTORY, CULTURE AND STYLE AS THE ANNUAL MET GALA GOT UNDERWAY ON MONDAY EVENING UNDER THE THEME 'SUPERFINE: TAILORING BLACK STYLE'

who accessorised her cream-coloured tuxedo with a cigar, creating an interplay between soft feminine materials and a distinct masculine energy. Black icons like Diana Ross also made her first appearance at the gala since 2003 in a 60-pound, 18-foot-long train embroidered with the names of all her children and grandchildren.

The evening's men also embraced colourful, theatrical suiting -Bridgerton actor Regé-Jean Page was seen in all red, Henry Golding in gold, and musician Bad Bunny in a loose-fitting brown two-piece paired with a Puerto Rican pava hat.

Also, co-chair Pharrell Williams made a statement in a pearl-encrusted pinstripe suit by Louis Vuitton, embodying the theme's essence while Colman Domingo paid homage to André Leon Talley with a royal blue Valentino cape. Lewis Hamilton's all-white ensemble by Grace Wales Bonner featured cowrie shell embellishments, nodding to West African heritage, while A\$AP Rocky sported an all-black Awge suit, completing the look with a Briony Raymond umbrella.



Alicia Keys



Nicole Kidman



Diana Ross



Colman Domingo



Lewis Hamilton



Kim Kardashian

Monday night marked one of the world's biggest nights of fashion, as stars served up their most iconic looks for the annual Met Gala in New York City, replete with glitz and glamour with a message.

The theme for this year's event was 'Superfine: Tailoring Black Style', the first since 2003 to focus exclusively on menswear. This year's dress code - 'Tailored for You', was inspired by the Costume Institute's accompanying exhibition 'Superfine: Tailoring Black Style' which explores the history of Black dandyism. It was intended to provide guidance as well as invite creative interpretation.

Inspired by a newly unveiled exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's costume institute featuring the 'black dandy', which examines the importance of clothing and style to the formation of black identities in the Atlantic diaspora, the much-awaited gala saw the participation of A-list celebrities including Zendaya, Demi Moore and Diana Ross, who brought their own interpretation to the theme.

Actress Zendaya opted for a wide-brimmed hat and tailored Louis Vuitton cream suit while US reality TV star Kim Kardashian wore an all-black ensemble by LA-based brand Chrome Hearts - a fitted leather top and skirt, and Demi Moore showcased another round of method dressing. On the other hand, Sabrina Carpenter was seen in a burgundy Louis Vuitton bodysuit that didn't quite fit in the theme.

Rihanna made a striking entry with a custom Marc Jacobs pinstripe look, revealing her third pregnancy, and Halle Berry returned to the Met Gala in a sheer black-striped gown by LaQuan Smith, complemented by the Tsagaan snow leopard diamond necklace from Cartier High Jewellery.

Then there was pop legend Madonna,



Zendaya



Gigi Hadid



Jodie Turner Smith



S Coups



Diljit Dosanjh

MET GALA
2025

KING
KHAN,
AND
MORE



Shah Rukh Khan



Nick Jonas and Priyanka Chopra



Kiara Advani

Indian superstar Shah Rukh Khan, who made his Met Gala debut, arrived with acclaimed designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee who dressed him in an all-black ensemble. Khan's look featured a single-breasted, floor-length, elongated coat with wide lapels, accessorised with jewellery, including one piece with a giant bejewelled 'K', chunky oxidised rings, and a walking cane.

Bollywood actress Kiara Advani also made her Met Gala debut, showing off her baby bump in a black gown embellished with a golden breastplate, designed by Gaurav Gupta while singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh paid tribute to Punjabi culture and Indian royalty with his pearl white sherwani ensemble by Nepali-American designer Prabal Gurung.

Meanwhile, Chopra Jonas, who co-ordinated her look with husband Nick Jonas, channelled retro Hollywood glam in a polka dot gown by Olivier Rousteing at Balmain. But the highlight of her look was a necklace featuring a giant 241.06 carat rare emerald, a piece by Bulgari High Jewellery, for which she is a brand ambassador. Nick opted for a Bianca Saunders look with Christian Louboutin boots and Tiffany & Co jewellery and watch.



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