

Foreign investment drives Oman's real estate boom

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The value of real estate transactions in Oman saw a significant rise of 29.6% in 2024, reaching RO3.38bn compared to RO2.61bn in 2023, according to preliminary data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The fees collected for real estate transactions amounted to RO69mn, reflecting a 6.4% increase from December 2023. The value of sales contracts rose by 4.8% to RO1.09bn, with 13,668 contracts registered, marking a 3.8% growth in volume.

Mortgage contracts experienced the most substantial growth, with their value surging by 46.4% to RO2.27bn across 20,680 contracts. Exchange contracts also saw activity, totalling 1,325 with a combined value of RO13.1mn.

Foreign investment has been a major driver of this growth, contributing 70% of total investments in the sector till September in 2024, according to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

Property titles issued by the end of December 2024 stood at



Foreign investment has been a major driver of this growth, contributing 70% of total investments till Sept 2024

233,345, a slight decline of 0.9%. However, titles issued to Gulf Cooperation Council nationals increased by 10%, reaching 1,447.

The steady growth in Oman's real estate sector reflects rising investor confidence, bolstered by economic development and policies aimed at creating an investment-friendly environment.

Two flagship projects are leading the transformation of Oman's real estate landscape: Sultan Haitham City and Al

Khuwair Downtown. Sultan Haitham City is envisioned as a sustainable urban development that blends modern design with green initiatives. It will feature integrated residential neighbourhoods, commercial spaces, and community-focused amenities. Investors have opportunities to

contribute to key facilities such as private schools, hospitals, and sports centres.

Al Khuwair Downtown, designed by the world-renowned Zaha Hadid Architects, is set to become a vibrant urban hub. Combining commercial, cultural, and entertainment spaces with a waterfront location, the development aims to attract investments in retail, hospitality, and leisure, making it a dynamic centre for residents and tourists alike.

Oman's participation in

Cityscape Global 2024, held in Riyadh in November, showcased its real estate potential on an international stage. The event highlighted Oman's alignment with its Vision 2040 goals, which focus on sustainable and inclusive growth, improved social and economic conditions, and adherence to global standards. A ministry official said the legislative framework, which allows 100% foreign ownership of certain properties and projects, has further boosted investor confidence.



Tech firms sign RO4.5mn pacts in Saudi Arabia

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omani technology companies signed nine agreements worth a total of RO4.5mn with international firms during their participation in the 'Leap 2025' technology conference in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Monday.

The deals highlight Oman's growing role in the regional tech ecosystem.

Among the agreements, Global Semiconductor Micro-electronics (GSME), an Omani-US partnership, signed a deal valued at RO3.85mn with Saudi firm e-Photonics. The collaboration focuses on semiconductors, electronics, and 3D computer vision solutions, aiming to enhance knowledge exchange, research, and services.

DataMining, an Omani company specialising in artificial intelligence and programming, signed

an agreement worth RO380,000 with Saudi-based AlJazeera Falcons. The partnership will focus on developing and producing electronic products tailored to the Saudi market.

Within the ITHCA Group, Mubashir, a provider of advertising screen solutions, entered into a RO380,000 agreement with Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) in Saudi Arabia. The deal aims to expand digital advertising capabilities in the region.

Additionally, OSOS, another ITHCA Group company, signed six agreements with international firms to offer software solutions, artificial intelligence applications, cloud systems, and technical support.

The agreements reflect Oman's commitment to advancing its technology sector and strengthening cross-border partnerships to drive innovation and market expansion.

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EU will react against 'unlawful' US tariffs

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Should we all be napping on the job?

Oman accelerates development of new industrial cities

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) is advancing plans to establish new industrial cities as part of its strategy to expand industrial activities, attract investments, enhance the sector's contribution to the gross domestic product, and create employment opportunities for Omani youth.

In collaboration with the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), which manages industrial cities across the sultanate, OPAZ is currently developing multiple industrial areas.

The expansion of industrial cities comes amid increasing activity in Oman's special economic zones and free zones



Among them is Mahas Industrial City in the wilayat of Khasab, Musandam governorate, where an agreement for road and infrastructure development was signed in October last year.

Al Mudhaibi Industrial City marked a key milestone with the signing of an agreement to lo-

calise its first projects in Q4 2024. The tender for constructing basic infrastructure for its first phase has been floated, inviting participation from Omani and Saudi companies through a consortium.

Significant progress was also made last year in other industrial cities. The consultancy services

project for the design and supervision of Thumrait Industrial City in Dhofar governorate was completed, alongside the master plan consultancy for Seeh Al Sarya Industrial City.

Furthermore, the consultancy service contract for the master plan and detailed design of Madha Industrial City (Seih Al Wasat) has also been awarded.

OPAZ has also floated tenders for consultancy services for the design and supervision of Al Suwaiq Industrial City in North Batinah governorate. Additionally, preparations are underway to issue a consultancy tender for Al Wadi Al Kabir Industrial City in Muscat governorate, while dis-

cussions continue with relevant authorities to allocate land for Shinas Industrial City in North Batinah Governorate.

The expansion of industrial cities comes amid increasing activity in Oman's special economic zones and free zones, where the number of industrial licences reached 183 by the end of 2024. Industrial cities accounted for the majority of this growth, with 125 licences issued, representing 68% of the total licences across OPAZ-supervised zones.

This growth highlights the government's commitment to developing the industrial sector and the incentives provided by OPAZ to attract investment.



Kristalina Georgieva

MENA region expected to grow 3.6% in 2025: IMF

Dubai, UAE - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected global economic growth of 3.3% in 2025, with a decline to 3% over the following five years, which is below the historical average.

For the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the IMF expects a growth rate of 3.6% in 2025, driven by the recovery of oil production and a decline in regional conflicts.

These forecasts were presented during the Ninth Arab Public Finance Forum, held on the preliminary day of the World Government Summit in Dubai.

Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of IMF, noted that policymakers have succeeded in lowering inflation rates in some countries. However, inflation has risen again in others, which may result in varying interest rates and higher borrowing costs for emerging markets and developing economies.

Kristalina also warned that global public debt could exceed 100% of GDP by 2030. She highlighted the concern that some countries in the region already face debt levels exceeding 70% of GDP, putting them at risk of low growth and high debt burdens. She further addressed the challenges facing governments, such as creating job opportunities and strengthening social safety nets.

DAVID GAUDU OUTDUELS ADAM YATES FOR UPHILL VICTORY



French cyclist David Gaudu of Groupama-FDJ climbed to victory on 180.8km stage 3 of the Tour of Oman after a thrilling battle up Jabal al Sharqi in Al Hamra with defending champion Adam Yates (UAE Team Emirates-XRG) that lasted all the way to the line. Damien Howson (Q36.5) was third, with Valentin Paret-Peintre (Soudal-QuickStep) taking fourth. The fourth stage on Tuesday will span 181.5km starting from the Oman Across Ages Museum and ending at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat

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New health centre boon for remote Al Hallaniyat Islands

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Monday inaugurated the Al Hallaniyat Health Centre in the wilayat of Shalim and Al Hallaniyat Islands in Dhofar governorate, marking a significant step in expanding the country's healthcare services to remote areas of Oman.

The inauguration ceremony was held under the patronage of H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality. The project, at a cost of over RO1.3mn, spans 8,000sqm, with a buildup area of 861sqm.

The centre has a wide range of healthcare services, including two general clinics for primary healthcare and medical examinations. It is equipped with a consultation and examination room, an observation room for emergency cases, radiology and sterilisation rooms, and a dental clinic.

A key feature of the centre is its maternity unit, designed to provide safe care for mothers and newborns. It also includes a maternal and child health ward to care for the health of women and children in the area.

Additional facilities include a medical laboratory, pharmacy, medicine storage rooms, recep-

tion areas, and separate waiting areas for men and women.

The opening of the Al Hallaniyat Health Centre addresses longstanding healthcare challenges faced by the local community due to the geographical isolation of the islands. Previously, residents struggled to access integrated medical services, but the new facility is expected to significantly improve healthcare access and overall quality of life.

The Ministry of Health's initiative aligns with the government's commitment to enhancing healthcare services across the sultanate, ensuring that even the most remote areas benefit from modern medical facilities.

National identity strategy to strengthen global presence

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Promotional Identity strategy, under the slogan 'Ahl Oman', was officially launched on Sunday, declaring the country's new approach to build its global image.

The initiative, developed through collaboration between the Oman Promotional Identity Office and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, aims to bolster Oman's international standing across diverse sectors.

The launch of the campaign was held under the patronage of H E Sultan bin Salem al Habsi, Minister of Finance.

H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, explained that the strategy took over a year to get ready with a design, involving contributions from both the public and private sectors as well as insights from local and international experts.

"Various segments of the society helped shape the identity, with the visual design selected through a public vote," he said. The project also received the Royal blessing of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, underlining its national importance.

Eng Aisha Mohammed al Saifi, Director of the Oman Promotional Identity Office, stated that the strategy will provide a framework for coordinated communication efforts aimed at enhancing Oman's image globally.

She announced the launch of a capacity-building programme,

which will train more than 600 participants through workshops and online sessions to implement the identity effectively.

"This week, we will begin with 80 participants, with plans to execute over 60 projects during the next five years," she said. These projects will focus on streamlining communication, boosting digital content about Oman, and applying global best practices.

A digital platform will be developed to provide comprehensive information about the identity, and an artificial intelligence system will compile official data, reports, and research for easy access

Sayyid Dr Faris bin Turki al Said, a member of the project's technical team, explained the strategy's implementation mechanism, which includes leveraging global events and conferences to promote Oman.

For instance, he highlighted how sports, such as golf tournaments organised by the Foreign

Ministry, can strengthen Oman's global presence.

Additionally, Oman's heritage and culture will be showcased internationally, as demonstrated by the country's recent participation as a guest of honour at the Cairo International Book Fair.

Dr Faris also stressed the critical role of media in promoting the identity. "Media will be a key partner in ensuring consistent

cial data, reports, and research for easy access by government and private entities.

Capacity-building efforts will include extensive training, starting with 60 to 80 participants initially and expanding to cover 600 more.

The performance of this identity promotion campaign will be monitored using digital dashboards, and annual studies will assess its global impact and effectiveness.

Dr Faris noted that the project goes beyond visual branding. "This is an integrated national strategy, laying its foundation over the next 12 months before transitioning into full implementation," he said.

A licensing system will regulate the use of the identity logo, with authorised entities identified in coordination with the Ministry of Commerce and other authorities. Key information about the identity will also be made available to major institutions in tourism and investment sectors.

صندوق مزون الأول
The First Mazoon Fund

P.O. Box 1137, PC 111 - CPO, Sultanate of Oman, CR No. 1279406, Tel: +968 24949001, Fax: +968 24949099, Email: fmf@u-capital.net, Web: www.u-capital.net

Invitation for Annual General Meeting

The First Mazoon Fund takes the pleasure in inviting all the unitholders to attend the Annual General Meeting which will be held on Wednesday February 26, 2025, at 3 pm via the electronic platform to hold general meeting which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository (www.mcd.om). If the quorum to convene the annual General Meeting is not complete the second general meeting will be held on Thursday February 27, 2025, at 3 pm via the electronic platform to hold general meeting which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository (www.mcd.om). to decide on the following:

Agenda of Annual General Meeting (AGM):

- To consider and approve the Fund Management Body's Report for the financial year ending on 31 December 2024.
- To consider and approve the auditor's report on the fund's audited financial statements for the financial year ending on 31 December 2024.
- To approve the sitting fees paid to the Fund Management Body for the financial year ending on 31 December 2024 and to determine their sitting fees for the next financial year.
- To consider and approve the proposal to distribute remuneration fees to the Fund Management Body's for an amount of RO (15,000) for the year ending on 31 December 2024.
- To consider and approve the related party transactions entered into by the Fund during the year ending on 31 December 2024.
- To consider and approve the proposed related party transactions entered into by the Fund during the financial Year ending on 31 December 2025.
- To appoint auditors for the financial year ending on 31 December 2025 and approve their fees.

According to the Fund Article of Association, and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by Financial Services Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- A legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the general meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCD.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than 3 days before the date of the general meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meetings. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the general meeting.

For any inquiries please contact on telephone No 24949043 / 24949014

Oman marks day to honour its influential personalities recognised by Unesco

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman observed a special day on Monday to honour its globally influential personalities, recognised by Unesco.

The initiative, led by the Ministry of Education through the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science, designates February 10 as the annual day to remember Omani figures included in Unesco's list of influential personalities. This day is also significant as it marks the anniversary of Oman's accession to Unesco in 1972.

The list of notable Omani personalities includes linguist Al Khalil bin Ahmed al Farahidi, added in 2005; physician and pharmacist Rashid bin Omaira al Rustaqi, recognised in 2013; social reformer Sheikh Noored-

Al Khalil bin Ahmed al Farahidi

Rashid bin Omaira al Rustaqi

Abu Mohammed Abdullah al Azdi

Sheikh Nooredin al Salmi

Nassir bin Salim al Rawahi

Ahmed bin Majid

din al Salmi and physician Abu Mohammed Abdullah al Azdi, both listed in 2015; poet Nassir bin Salim al Rawahi, included in 2019; and navigator Ahmed bin Majid, known as the Lion of the Sea, who was added in 2021.

The day honours the contributions of Omani figures who have made a mark both locally and internationally in their chosen fields. Oman's inclusion of six distinguished individuals and two significant cultural

events in Unesco's programme underscores the country's rich heritage. Unesco has also recognised two key cultural milestones of Oman in its list of anniversaries for 2024-25. These include the 350th anniversary of Jibreen Castle and the 150th death anniversary of historian and poet Humaid bin Mohammed bin Ruzaiq.

Jibreen Castle, a 17th-century structure, stands as a testament to Oman's architectural and cultural legacy.

The anniversary of Ruzaiq's passing commemorates his role in documenting Oman's history from the rise of the Al Busaid dynasty to the end of Sayyid Said bin Sultan's reign in 1856.

The observance of this day highlights the lasting influence of Omani personalities and cultural landmarks on both the national and global stage.



Oman, India enter into deal for historical documentation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman and India have formalised a partnership to advance historical documentation and archive management.

The sultanate, represented by the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), signed an executive programme for cooperation with the National Archives of India (NAI) on Monday in New Delhi.

Dr Hamad bin Mohammed al Dhawyani, Chairman of the NRAA, signed the deal on behalf of Oman, while Arun Singhal, Director General of the NAI, represented India. The agreement covers key areas such as document reproduction, manuscript printing, and the exchange of books and publications.

The programme aims to preserve and maintain historical records using advanced technologies, jointly publish documentary and historical works, and organise conferences, exhibitions, and workshops on archive management.

It also includes initiatives for

expertise exchange, personnel training, and capacity-building, as well as scientific research in historical documentation.

Dhawyani highlighted the importance of the agreement, saying, "This collaboration facilitates technical support, knowledge exchange, and mutual access to historical documents and manuscripts. It will also enhance the professional capabilities of archival specialists through specialised training programmes."

Singhal underscored the significance of the partnership, noting that the agreement provides opportunities for extensive cultural and historical cooperation. "Research in India's archives and libraries could uncover Omani historical records, just as Oman's archives may contain valuable Indian documents," he said.

This agreement reflects the strong ties between Oman and India and their shared commitment to preserving and promoting historical and cultural heritage. It aligns with the NRAA's strategy to foster international partnerships to enhance archival and documentary efforts.

N Sharqiyah winter activities draw over 450,000 visitors

Our Correspondent
Muscat

North Sharqiyah governorate has welcomed over 450,000 visitors to its winter activities so far, according to Badr bin Ahmed al Habsi, Director of the Events and Awareness Department in the governorate.

Among the standout events, the inaugural Sinaw Festival - held from February 2 to 8 under the theme 'Sinaw is Our Destina-

The festival featured an array of cultural, entertainment, social, and heritage activities, including poetry evenings with participants from Oman, the UAE and Qatar

tion' - drew more than 150,000 visitors from across Oman and beyond.

The festival featured an array of cultural, entertainment, social, and heritage activities, including poetry evenings with participants from Oman, the UAE and Qatar, as well as camel racing competitions and a scientific symposium on livestock.

Additionally, exhibitions showcasing heritage, agriculture, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) provided a platform for local businesses and productive families.

Other major attractions in the



governorate included the Bidyah Carnival in the wilayat of Bidyah, which attracted nearly 120,000

visitors in four days, and the Water Activities Festival in the wilayat of Wadi Bani Khalid,

which saw around 50,000 visitors. The Zad al Rakeb event in the

wilayat of Ibra, focused on horse and camel activities, drew approximately 40,000 visitors, while the ongoing 'Rahala' event in the wilayat of Al Qabil, set to continue until February 27, has already welcomed 100,000 visitors.

These festivals have significantly boosted domestic tourism, provided temporary job opportunities, and supported SMEs and local businesses. Hotel and tourism facilities in the region experienced full occupancy during several festival days, highlighting the economic benefits of these large-scale events.

Dhahirah Municipality launches RO1.68mn project to enhance recreational facilities

Our Correspondent
Yanqul

Construction has officially begun on Itlalat Yanqul, a landmark development by Dhahirah Municipality aimed at enriching recreational spaces and boosting local investment. Strategically positioned along the Sohar-Yanqul Road at Al Nahda Square, the project spans 120,704sqm, with 65,000sqm allocated for development.

Eng Abdullah bin Suleiman al Hashemi, Director of Yanqul Municipality, highlighted the project's key features, including



lush green spaces, an open-air theatre, cafés, playgrounds, water fountains, walking paths, and barbecue areas.

Additionally, prayer rooms

and other essential amenities will be incorporated to ensure a comfortable visitor experience.

With an investment of RO1.68mn, Itlalat Yanqul aligns

with Dhahirah governorate's vision to enhance community well-being, promote sustainable development, and showcase the region's natural beauty. The project is scheduled for completion within a year and is expected to become a significant recreational and social hub for residents and visitors alike.

The project is part of Dhahirah's broader initiative to enhance recreational services, expand green spaces, and boost local investment.

The development is expected to showcase the region's natural beauty.

Oman observes Arabian Leopard Day with renewed focus on conservation of habitat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman observed the International Day of the Arabian Leopard on Monday (February 10), with an emphasis on raising awareness about the critically endangered species and efforts to ensure its survival.

The Environment Authority (EA) highlighted the importance of preserving the Arabian leopard, classified as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Conservation initiatives also serve to safeguard biodiversity and maintain ecological balance in the region.

Dr Mohammed Ali al Maashani from EA said noteworthy progress has been made in Dhofar governorate in the Arabian Leopard Project. "Encouraging results include the



monitoring of new births in the wild, a clear indication that preservation strategies are working," he said. These developments provide hope for the leopard's continued existence in Oman's natural habitats.

The Arabian leopard (Panthera pardus nimr) is one of the smallest and rarest leopard species, facing threats from habitat loss, dwindling prey populations, and illegal trafficking. The

species has already become extinct in parts of its historical range, including Palestine, Jordan, the UAE, northern Oman, and the large areas of Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

Current estimates suggest fewer than 120 Arabian leopards remain in the wild, with populations concentrated in Oman, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. Oman and Yemen are home to approximately 50 individuals each,

while around 20 are believed to live in Saudi Arabia.

Oman continues to play a critical role in the survival of the species. Conservation efforts include tracking the leopards' behaviour, gathering biological data, and enforcing strict anti-poaching laws.

Nature reserves and advanced monitoring techniques, such as trap cameras, have been instrumental in confirming the presence of leopards in the wild.

Maashani emphasised the importance of community involvement in conservation.

"Educational initiatives are key to fostering coexistence between local communities and this endangered species," he said, adding that cooperation with residents helps to address threats such as unsustainable hunting and habitat encroachment.



Sultan Qaboos University ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University announces their desire to sell used furniture in sealed envelopes. Those wishing to enter the auction must adhere to the following conditions:

- Interested parties can view used furniture in auction yard and receive the bidding on Sunday & Monday (16-17/02/2025) from 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.
- Deposit of (200) Omani riyals in cash as an insurance. This amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders.
- Submitting the offer in a sealed envelope after viewing the used furniture, entitled by the name of the head of the committee for selling used furniture, and put the envelope in bid box.
- The presented offer is binding on its owner if it is placed on it, and in the event that the buyer does not pay the purchase price on time, the insurance amount will be forfeited, and the sale will be awarded to another applicant.
- Those who win the bidding will be contacted. They must pay the remaining sum, and they are responsible for moving their items on Tuesday & Wednesday (18-19/02/2025) from 09:00 am to 03:00 pm.
- The Used furniture are sold in their current condition and SQU is not responsible for any loss or damage to the sold material if the moving is not completed after the end of the sale (10) Omani riyals will be imposed for each day after 20/02/2025.

Notes:

- Prices are sorted according to groups and the higher price is taken.
- Funds will be collected electronically through visa cards.
- Entering the auction stores through Gate No (2).
- For more information contact on 24141272.



MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,533.07
Sensex	77,311.80
FOREX RATES (RO1 equals)	
India	227.25
Pakistan	731.40
Bangladesh	315.79
Philippines	151.00
Sri Lanka	771.48
*Rates as on February 10 Source: xe.com	

BRIEFS

Yemen to sign debt deal with Arab Monetary Fund

Salem bin Breik, Yemen's Minister of Finance, said that his country is set to sign an agreement with the Arab Monetary Fund to reschedule its debt, including the repayment of certain loans and instalments.

This move is aimed at improving the government's financial position and supporting economic reforms and development projects, he added.

Speaking to the Emirates News Agency (WAM) during the Arab Fiscal Forum at the World Governments Summit, Breik highlighted the dual challenges facing Yemen's economy, including internal shocks caused by more than a decade of conflict, as well as external pressures such as the COVID-19 pandemic and tensions in the Red Sea.

Ladayn Polymer Park set to start production phase in early 2025

Our Correspondent
Muscat

OQ Group on Monday announced a significant milestone in the development of Ladayn Polymer Park, as three pioneering companies transition from the construction phase to production in early 2025.

Representing a combined investment of \$42mn, these companies include one Omani firm and two international players, underscoring Ladayn Polymer Park's global appeal and Oman's growing role as a hub for industrial innovation and sustainability.

Since its inception, Ladayn Polymer Park has made remarkable progress, securing 16 agreements worth nearly \$155mn. These agreements span various applications in packaging, construction, and advanced polymer solutions, reinforcing the park's strategic importance in reducing Oman's reliance on imports and strengthening local manufacturing capabilities.

"This milestone demonstrates the transformative potential of Ladayn Polymer Park in fostering local manufacturing, creating jobs, and driving Oman's economic growth. By enabling the



Ladayn Polymer Park has already secured investments worth \$155mn for 16 factories. Three companies, with a combined investment of \$42mn, are expected to commence production in early 2025

production of finished plastic products locally, we are not only reducing our reliance on imports but also positioning Oman as a regional hub for innovation and sustainability in the polymer industry," said Sadiq Hassan al Lawati, Managing Director of OQ Marketing.

Set to begin production in Q1 2025, Madayn Plastic Company (MAPCO), an Omani pioneer,

plastics sector, marking a significant step towards building a robust domestic manufacturing ecosystem.

Bringing international expertise to the park is MAK Sohar, a German company renowned for its high-performance chemical solutions in the automotive, construction, agriculture, and healthcare sectors. Leveraging cutting-edge machinery and collaborating with local contractors, MAK Sohar has committed \$11mn to establishing a state-of-the-art facility in the Sohar Free Zone. The facility will commence production in Q2 2025, focusing on thermoplastic elastomers (TPE) and engineering compounds to meet the evolving needs of polymer manufacturers.

Also preparing for production in Q2 2025 is Multibond Metal Company, a Chinese-Indian joint venture that has made a landmark \$23mn investment in Ladayn Polymer Park. The company will focus on advanced polymer solutions for heat resistance and surface protection, positioning Oman as a regional leader in cutting-edge polymer applications.

"Our partnerships with investors like MAPCO, MAK Sohar, and Multibond Metal highlight the strategic importance of Ladayn Polymer Park in the region. Through initiatives such as these, we are creating an integrated ecosystem that supports value-added manufacturing, addresses global challenges, and enhances Oman's industrial capabilities," said Mundhar al Rawahi, Ladayn Park Programme Leader.

To drive growth and enhance operational efficiency, the companies have established supply contracts with OQ, ensuring consistent access to high-quality raw materials at competitive prices. The availability of raw materials, combined with Sohar Port's strategic geographical advantage and the economic incentives of the Sohar Freezone, has made Ladayn Polymer Park an ideal location for companies looking to expand in the region.

"We are strategically positioned with access to emerging markets in West Asia and Africa. In addition, the park's bespoke incentives, advanced infrastructure, and dependable raw material supply from OQ create a thriving environment for businesses to succeed," Lawati added. "We look forward to welcoming more investors and partners to the park in 2025."

OQ8 celebrates inauguration anniversary with 110% refining capacity milestone

Muscat – Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company (OQ8) has marked the first anniversary of its historic inauguration with OQ8 Day, celebrating a year of remarkable achievements and industry leadership.

Since taking over operations, OQ8 has demonstrated exceptional resilience and operational excellence, expanding its refining capacity from 230,000 to 255,000 barrels per day, achieving 110% nameplate capacity.

This milestone underscores OQ8's commitment to driving growth, sustainability, and operational efficiency in the energy sector.

In a press statement, David Bird, CEO of OQ8, said, "Since taking control from the project, OQ8 has demonstrated resilience, strategic foresight, and operational excellence. Our growth reflects the dedication of our team, the strength of our partnerships, and the unwavering support of our shareholders, OQ and KPI, as well as our suppliers and offtakers, OQT and KPCT. This milestone could not have been achieved without their ongoing commitment. As we celebrate this success, we remain focused on driving innovation,



sustainability, and long-term value for Oman, Kuwait, and the broader global energy landscape."

A key highlight of OQ8's journey has been the successful completion of the Lender Reliability Test (LRT) just 10 months after mechanical completion, reinforcing the refinery's technical prowess, business readiness and operational reliability. Furthermore, OQ8 stands as the first merchant refinery in the Middle East, showcasing its expertise in sourcing and processing diverse crude and feedstock types, and demonstrating its flexibility and

commercial strength in a dynamic global market.

OQ8 has also made significant strides in workforce development, achieving a 68% Omanisation rate, up from 60% at the time of operational launch. This milestone reflects OQ8's dedication to nurturing national talent and supporting Oman's broader workforce development goals.

OQ8's achievements extend beyond operational success and is positioning itself as a reliable partner and a catalyst for economic growth in the region. Since assuming full operational control,

OQ8 has maintained safe, reliable, and efficient performance, contributing to regional energy security and reinforcing Oman's role as a global energy hub.

OQ8's future outlook remains focused on sustainable growth, technological innovation, and enhancing its commercial resilience in a dynamic and increasing volatile market. Strategic partnerships and continued investment in sustainability and digital transformation will drive OQ8's growth, positioning it as a benchmark for operational excellence and environmental responsibility in the energy sector.

Asyad Group leads logistics sector transformation at Breakbulk ME

Dubai, UAE – Asyad Group, Oman's global integrated logistics provider, is reinforcing its position as a transformative leader in the region's logistics landscape at the Break Bulk Middle East 2025 being held in Dubai during February 10-11, 2025. The event brings together industry leaders and key stakeholders to explore the dynamic future of breakbulk logistics in the GCC and MENA regions.

Juma al Uraimi, Asyad Group's Acting Chief Commercial Officer, articulated the group's strategic vision. He said, "As we navigate the dynamic landscape of breakbulk logistics in the GCC and MENA regions, we are witnessing an unprecedented convergence of efficient operations management in mega-projects, technological innovation, and sustainable practices that are redefining our industry's future. Our strategic vision is anchored in leveraging new technologies, embracing sustainability initiatives, and positioning ourselves as a global logistics hub that not only meets the demands of transformative projects but also champions operational excellence and environmental stewardship."



During the event, Asyad will host dynamic panel discussions to explore key industry challenges and opportunities shaping the logistics industry. Industry leaders will delve into the region's strategic logistics ecosystem and the effectiveness of integrated solutions in driving sector growth. Discussions will focus on enhancing efficiency and competitiveness, the transformative impact of technology, and infrastructure readiness. These panels will showcase the region's potential as a hub for breakbulk shipments, emphasizing effective stakeholder collaboration and the essential elements for successful implementation of integrated logistics solutions.

Reggy Vermeulen, CEO of the Port of Duqm, will deliver a keynote on the GCC's evolving energy investment landscape. He will highlight regional renewable energy targets, with Oman's national plan to achieve zero neutrality by 2050, and Saudi Arabia aiming for 50% renewable energy by 2030. Vermeulen will also emphasise the critical role of breakbulk logistics in facilitating this transition, particularly in transporting wind turbine components, solar panels, and other oversized equipment essential to renewable energy infrastructure.

Aramco Digital, Qualcomm launch world's first 5G AI-enabled industrial smartphone

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – At LEAP 2025, Qualcomm Technologies and Aramco Digital, the digital and technology subsidiary of Saudi Aramco, announced their groundbreaking collaboration to develop the world's first AI-enabled industrial 5G smartphones with native support for the 450MHz spectrum.

Support for 450 MHz spectrum allows 5G IoT devices, edge computing and end-users to connect to a new generation of AI-enabled industrial applications, initially focusing on ad-

vanced industrial solutions for Aramco, one of the world's leading integrated energy and chemicals companies.

The new industrial smartphones will be powered by the Qualcomm QCM8550 and QCM6490 processors which provide native support for 5G in 450MHz. These processors are designed to provide ubiquitous connectivity to intelligent edge devices, enabling superior communication and data transfer in industrial settings.

"At Aramco Digital, we are committed to pushing the



boundaries of technological innovation. This collaboration with Qualcomm, introducing the world's first AI-enabled industrial smartphone with 450MHz support, represents a significant milestone in our journey to empower industries with next-generation connectivity. By utilising cutting-edge 5G and AI technologies, we are enabling smarter, more sustainable industry that align with the kingdom's Vision 2030," said Eid Alharbi, Connectivity President, Aramco Digital.

Nakul Duggal, group general

manager, automotive, industrial and embedded IoT, and cloud computing, Qualcomm Technologies, said, "Qualcomm is excited to collaborate with Aramco Digital to help them develop innovative solutions in Saudi Arabia, supporting the kingdom's industrial transformation in alignment with their Vision 2030. This collaboration also aims to drive the advancement of cutting-edge technology in the Middle East, delivering benefits on an international scale."

Qualcomm Technologies

and Aramco Digital also previously announced the deployment of Aramco's first generative AI industrial IoT solutions, which are improving operational safety, efficiency, and sustainability at Aramco sites. The new industrial smartphones will give Aramco users another way to connect to these advanced industrial applications. Examples of the industrial smartphone and Qualcomm Technologies' 450MHz processors are on display at Aramco Digital's stand at LEAP.

EU will react against 'unlawful' US tariffs

Brussels, Belgium – The European Commission has announced that it would retaliate against US tariffs on aluminium and steel if they are confirmed, considering them unlawful and counterproductive.

The EU will react to protect its interests against "unlawful and economically counterproductive" tariffs on aluminium and steel if these confirmed, the Commission said in a statement on Monday.

"The EU sees no justification for the imposition of tariffs on its exports. We will react to protect the interests of European businesses, workers and consumers from unjustified measures," the statement read.

"The imposition of tariffs would be unlawful and economically counterproductive, especially given the deeply integrated production chains the EU and US established through Transatlantic trade and investment," it added.

The US president claimed on Sunday he would impose a 25% tariff on any steel and aluminium coming to the US without specifying whether European imports would be hit.

The Commission said it had not received any official notification and would not respond to announcements with "without details and written clarification".

Trump has already announced tariffs against Mexico, Canada and China, and has indicated that he will target the EU. The EU claims trade between it and the US benefits both sides, with a goods surplus of 155.8bn euro for Europeans and a services surplus of 104bn euro for Americans.

President Donald Trump said he will announce on Monday that the United States will im-



US President Donald Trump

Trump said that the United States will impose 25% tariffs on all steel and aluminium imports, including from Canada and Mexico, as well as other import duties later in the week

pose 25% tariffs on all steel and aluminium imports, including from Canada and Mexico, as well as other import duties later in the week.

"Any steel coming into the United States is going to have a 25% tariff", he told reporters on Sunday, speaking on Air Force One as he flew from Florida to New Orleans to attend the Super Bowl. When asked about aluminium, he responded: "Alu-

minium, too" suggesting they will be part of the trade penalties.

Trump also reiterated that he would announce "reciprocal tariffs" - "probably Tuesday or Wednesday" - meaning that the US would impose import duties on products in cases where another country has levied duties on US goods.

"If they are charging us 130% and we're charging them nothing,

it's not going to stay that way", he told reporters.

Aluminium and steel were at the heart of a trade dispute between the EU and the US during Trump's first term in office. At that time the US imposed 25% tariffs on European steel and 10% on aluminium citing "national security". The EU retaliated by taxing Bourbon whiskey, Harley-Davidsons and a range of other products. Tariffs were temporarily lifted during the Biden administration, but only until March this year.

Contradictory messages

Trump's comments are the latest example of his willingness to

threaten, and in some cases to impose, import taxes. Tariffs are coming much earlier in his presidency than during his previous four years in the White House, when he prioritised tax cuts and deregulation. Trump has alternately said he sees import taxes as tools to force concessions on issues such as immigration, but also as a source of revenue to help close the government's budget deficit.

The US President did not offer any details about the steel and aluminium duties, or the reciprocal tariffs. Trump had previously threatened 25% import taxes on all goods from Canada and Mexico, although he paused them for 30 days barely a week

US trade policy causes global economic friction: ECB

Frankfurt, Germany – Luis de Guindos, Vice President of the European Central Bank (ECB), has voiced concerns over the impact of US trade policy on the worldwide economy. De Guindos specifically pointed to the recent US plans for tariffs on steel and aluminium, announced by President Donald Trump, as a source of significant uncertainty.

The Vice President of the ECB made these remarks during an interview with Spain's TVE on Monday. He expressed that the actions of the new American administration have led to a situation filled

with great uncertainty.

De Guindos further cautioned that the proposed tariffs could result in a "supply shock" which would have a profound impact on the global economic growth. However, he

stated that the effects on inflation are less predictable due to the potential decrease in output.

In his comments, de Guindos emphasised the importance of avoiding a trade war, which he believes would lead to a decline in global economic activity. He stressed that such a situation would result in losses for all involved parties.

(Source: Investing.com)



UAE continues AED bond issuances to strengthen local debt market

Dubai, UAE – Younis Haji AlKhoori, Undersecretary of the UAE's Ministry of Finance, said that the Ministry of Finance is continuing its plans for bond issuances in UAE dirham to develop the local debt market by building and enhancing the yield curve for the currency.

AlKhoori explained that this initiative is part of the ministry's broader efforts to deepen liquidity in the local debt market, supporting financial stability and strengthening the investment environment in the country.

Regarding international issuances, he confirmed that there are currently no plans to issue dollar-denominated bonds this year. He noted that the ministry continues to monitor financial markets to make future decisions based on economic developments and in coordination with relevant authorities. Any international issuances would require prior approval from the



UAE Cabinet.

On the public debt-to-GDP ratio, AlKhoori stated that calculating this percentage requires consolidating debt across local emirates. He affirmed that the country's debt levels remain within sustainable limits, aligning with global best financial practices and reflecting the

strength and resilience of the UAE economy.

Speaking about the 2025 budget, he noted that it aligns with the current strategic cycle, which concludes at the end of next year. The ministry is working closely with partners to ensure sound financial planning that aligns with the govern-

ment's strategic plans through 2027.

He added that the new budget prioritises enhancing essential government services, particularly those impacting citizens and residents, including education, healthcare, infrastructure, and legislation.

WAM

Japan posts \$193bn current account surplus in 2024

Tokyo, Japan – Japan posted a current account surplus of 29.26tn yen (\$193 billion) in 2024, a record high, driven by its highest-ever returns on foreign investments amid a weak yen and a decline in the trade deficit, the Finance Ministry data showed Monday.

According to Kyodo News, the surplus in the current account balance, one of the widest gauges of international trade, grew 29.5% from a year earlier, rising for the second consecutive year and marking the highest since comparable data became



available in 1985.

Primary income, which reflects how much Japan earned from overseas investments, climbed 11.3% from the year

before to 40.21tn yen, buoyed by higher returns from offshore subsidiaries in the financial, retail and auto sectors, the ministry said in its preliminary

report.

Japan's primary income has been boosted by returns from foreign direct investments by domestic companies and overseas dividend income.

Goods trade registered a deficit of 3.90 trillion yen, down 40%, with exports rising 4.5% to 104.87tn yen, led by strong demand for semiconductor-making equipment and vehicles.

Imports also increased 1.8% to 108.77tn yen due to increased shipments of personal computers and nonferrous metals.

Kyodo News

Oil prices rise amid trade tensions, market uncertainty

London, UK – Oil prices rose at the beginning of the week as threat of new tariffs on steel and aluminum and retaliatory tariffs by China sparked fears of escalating trade wars and increased inflationary pressures.

The international benchmark Brent crude rose by 0.7%, trading at \$75.04 per barrel in morning trade in London, up from \$74.53 at the close of the previous session. The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) increased by 0.7%, reaching \$71.37 per barrel, compared to its prior session close of \$70.86.

Oil prices increased on Monday after US President Donald Trump announced plans of new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports.

Trump announced on Sunday that he would impose a 25% tariff on steel and aluminum imports, including those from Canada and Mexico. He also mentioned that tariffs would be applied based on reciprocity, saying, 'If they are charging us 130% and we're charging them nothing, it's not going to stay that way.'

The move raised concerns that it could dampen global economic growth and energy demand. Experts noted that Trump's statements raised concerns about an escalating trade war, with fears that US's protectionist trade policy could increase inflationary pressures in the country.

On the other hand, China's retaliatory tariffs against the US came into effect on Monday, amid failed negotiations be-



tween Beijing and Washington. Oil and natural gas traders are demanding exemptions from China for US imports of crude oil and liquefied natural gas.

Meanwhile, uncertainty over US Federal Reserve policies and

Oil prices increased 0.7% on Monday after US President Donald Trump announced plans of new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports

US sanctions on Iranian oil exports added further volatility to the energy markets.

Last week, the US administration announced sanctions against an international net-

work for facilitating the shipment of Iranian crude oil to China. Trump signed a presidential decree reinstating the 'maximum pressure on Iran' policy. The US Treasury Department imposed new sanctions targeting a number of individuals and tankers transporting millions of barrels of oil from Iran to China.

The Fed's Monetary Policy Report created uncertainty in the oil markets. The Fed's commitment to reducing inflation to 2% and signals regarding its interest rate policies could influence oil prices.

Experts say the Fed's policy decisions could lead to fluctuations in the markets. Possible interest rate hikes may strengthen the dollar and lower global oil demand, while the possibility of an interest rate cut could push prices up.

Anadolu Agency



Indian school teachers win awards for excellence

The prestigious 'Navin Asher-Kazi Awards for Excellence in Teaching' instituted by the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman, graced the occasion as the chief guest. Mahmoud bin Yahya bin Hamoud al Hussaini, assistant director general for Administrative and Financial Affairs, Ministry of Education, was the guest of honour. Kawthar bint Khalifa bin Khamas al Sulaimani, assistant director - International Schools Office, Ministry of Education, was the special guest, Aaditya R Khimji, managing director, Seera Communications was the Keynote Speaker. Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, presided over the function.

In the opening address, Dr Manickam emphasised the transformative role of teachers in unlocking the untapped potential of students' minds. He personified the teacher as an architect who not just builds the students' intellect but also values, vision and character development surpassing the role of just an educator.

'Awards for Excellence in Teaching' is an annual event designed to encourage, reward, and

acknowledge sustained excellence in teaching. The award recognises excellence in teaching practices that reflect the highest standards in pedagogy, a record of outstanding teaching effectiveness within and outside the classroom, the ability to inspire, promote and sustain the intellectual, emotional and social development of students.

H E Narang captivated the audience with insights into the pivotal role of teachers in society. "In today's world, the true responsibility of educators is not just to impart knowledge, but to empower students to think independently, teaching them 'how' to think, rather than 'what' to think," he said.

Dhofar Islamic floats Minor Savings Account

Dhofar Islamic's Minor Savings Account is designed to help the next generation achieve financial stability through a comprehensive set of benefits that provide a strong foundation for a secure financial future.

The Minor Savings Account provides young people with the tools and resources they need to make informed financial decisions, helping them achieve their goals and dreams

The initiative underscores Dhofar Islamic's commitment to raising financial literacy awareness among young people and fostering responsible money management from an early age, a press release said.

"The Minor Savings Account provides young people with the tools and resources they need to make informed financial decisions, helping them achieve their goals and dreams and ultimately enabling them to attain financial independence," said Amer bin Said Mohammed al Amri, DGM and head of Retail Banking at Dhofar Islamic.

A fully Shari'a-compliant solution based on Mudarabah principles, the Minor Savings Account is specifically tailored to meet the



financial needs of minors aged between 13 and 18 years. It offers a safe and accessible platform for young individuals to manage their funds while learning key principles of financial responsibility.

With no minimum balance requirement and competitive profit payments calculated on the monthly average balance, the account ensures steady financial growth for young savers. Additionally, it provides flexibility in adjusting withdrawal limits upon

the request of the father or legal guardian, along with a customised debit card to facilitate secure transactions.

Beyond financial security, the Minor Savings Account also aligns with the social protection programme, ensuring eligible minors receive monthly financial assistance. The role of the father or legal guardian is integral, allowing them to actively participate in their child's financial journey. Guardians can monitor account activities and transac-

tions, reinforcing transparency and promoting responsible financial habits.

As an added feature, a supplementary debit card will be issued in the minor's name, granting unrestricted access for the father or guardian to deposit or withdraw funds at any time. The account also includes free standing instructions, making regular transactions seamless and efficient.

Dhofar Islamic has played a key role in expanding access to Shari'a-compliant services.

'Wosool' ePlatform training held in Muscat

Within its continuous efforts to promote digital transformation, Muscat Governorate, through its Documents Department, conducted a training workshop on the implementation of the electronic document management platform 'Wosool' on Monday.

This workshop introduces the employees of Reconciliation and Settlement sections to the procedures and functions that electronic document management requires, a press release said.

The workshop included an explanation of the 'Wosool' platform, its characteristics and advantages, and a practical application to use the main interface such as correspondence management, personal profile, E-signature, and the document management system.

The participants were trained on creating files, uploading and preparing internal memos, forwarding/comments procedures, and tracking/restoring sent items.



'Dum Dum Biryani Fest' on the cards

'Dum Dum Biryani Fest,' organised by 'Me Friend,' the digital platform of Gulf Madhyamam, announced that preparations are underway to find the best Biryani chefs in Oman.

The festival, which is the largest Biryani cooking competition in Oman, will proceed in three phases. The first phase, which included online registration and submission of cooking

recipes, has already been completed. Positive responses have been received from participants from various countries.

In the second phase, a semi-final competition featuring the top 50 contestants will take place on February 14, details of which will be shared through Gulf Madhyamam newspaper and its social media.

In the third and final phase, a mega-final competition will take place on February 21 at the Muscat Bowsher Football Club, featuring the top 20 selected contestants. The grand finale will be a live cooking event.

The winners of the 'Dum Dum Biryani Fest' will be awarded exciting prizes. Prizes will also be awarded to those selected for the semifinals.

The jury panel, consisting of renowned chefs such as Chef Suresh Pillai - an ambassador of Kerala Cuisine, culinary expert Abida Rasheed - celebrity chef specialised in Malabari cuisine, and popular host Raj Kalesh - an Indian magician, chef, TV host, stage choreographer and performer hailing from Kerala, will choose the final winners.

XS.com partners with Smart Vision Summit

XS.com, the award-winning global multi-asset fintech and financial services provider, is proud to announce its participation as the Official Global Sponsor of the prestigious Smart Vision Summit (SVS) 2025 in Oman.

The event will take place on February 12-13, at JW Marriott Muscat in Oman, bringing together industry leaders, traders, investors, and financial professionals to explore the latest trends and opportunities shaping the financial sector, a press release said.

As part of its presence at the Smart Vision Summit, XS.com will host interactive sessions and live demonstrations showcasing its advanced multi-asset trading platforms and financial solutions.

Attendees will have the opportunity to connect with XS.com experts, explore cutting-edge tools designed to enhance trading strategies, and gain insights into the company's customer-focused approach to financial services. Additionally, the award-winning broker is proud to feature distinguished speakers who will share their insights and expertise during the event.

Ahmed Negm, head of the Research Department at XS.com, will be holding an educational and informative presentation about the 'The Effect of AI on Global financial Markets'. Moreover, Elie Nachawaty, Business Development VP at XS.com will make a presentation titled 'Using AI to Improve Online Trading Strategies'.

Sultan Qaboos University and UAEU hold joint meeting

A delegation from the University participated in the 33rd meeting of the joint committee between SQU and the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU).

During the meeting, both parties discussed enhancing cooperation between the colleges of law at both universities through initiatives such as mock courts, legal clinics, and inviting experts and academics from each institution to deliver lectures, with the aim of exploring each other's perspectives, a press release said.

Other points of discussion included collaboration between the colleges of agriculture, marine sciences, and veterinary medicine, focusing on conducting training courses for students to facilitate the exchange of experiences.



Several jointly sponsored research projects were approved during the meeting, along with plans for an upcoming conference hosted by the two universities.

Additionally, mechanisms for marketing the scientific journals of both institutions and exchanging expertise in the field of Arab university rankings were

proposed.

The meeting also encouraged student competitions between the two universities in various fields and agreed that each institution would invite the other to participate in significant events.

H H Sayyida Dr Muna bint Fahd al Said, assistant vice chancellor for International Cooperation,

would invite the other to participate in significant events.

H H Sayyida Dr Muna bint Fahd al Said, assistant vice chancellor for International Cooperation,

led the delegation from SQU. The delegation included Prof Hussein al Kharousi, assistant deputy vice-chancellor for Academic Affairs and Commu-

nity Services, Prof Rashid bin Abdullah al Yahyai, dean of the College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences, Dr Ghazi bin Ali al Rawas, dean of Research, Fatma bint Ali al Khuzairi, deputy director of International Cooperation, and Khalil bin Ibrahim al Hashami, International Cooperation specialist.

Representing UAEU were Prof Ahmed al Raisi, acting vice-chancellor, Dr Suad bint Mohammed al Marzouqi, associate provost for Student Affairs, Dr Mohammed bin Abdulmuhsen al Yafei, acting dean of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine; Ghalayah al Ahbabi, director of Government Communication, Mar Yam al Qamzi, international communication executive, Prof Fatiha Gourari, acting dean of the College of Law.

Sohar Aluminium, Takaful Endowment celebrate Takaful's new premises

Sohar Aluminium (SA) and Takaful Endowment Foundation celebrated the official launch of Endowment Building of Takaful Suhar Charity Team, established in the Wilayat of Suhar, North Al Batinah Governorate. The building is funded by Sohar Aluminium as one of its sustainable social investment projects.

The official launch was held under the patronage of Mahmood bin Abdullah Al Awaini, secretary-general of the Ministry of Finance, and attended by Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Balushi, deputy wali of Suhar, members of A'Shura and municipal councils, executive management of Sohar Aluminium and other dignitaries, a press release said.

Establishing this endowment building aims to enhance and ensure the sustainability of the activities of Takaful Suhar Charity Team, which serves the community in the Wilayat of Suhar. The proceeds of this endowment building will support funding the team's various social and chari-



table activities that are conducted by the team since inception to achieve its goals.

The endowment building is a 4-storey residential and commercial building with a total built-up area of approximately 406sqm. It consists of residential apartments and commercial units that are designed with high modern standards.

Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Nasser al Kharusi, general manager of HR and Corporate Affairs at Sohar Aluminium, pointed out that Sohar Aluminium's support to establish this endowment building came is aimed to provide a tributary that supports financial sustainability and enhances the team's societal impact, as well as to sustain the teams' charitable activities and initiatives for the community. Therefore, this project marks a testament to the successful co-operation and partnership in enhancing the role of the private sector in shouldering its responsibility of contributing to the development of society.

On the other hand, Abdulmunim bin Mohammed al Murshidi, chairman of Takaful Endowment Foundation, highly valued the role of Sohar Aluminium, being one of the first supporters of Takaful Suhar Charity Team since 12 ago, where the company supported building the Team's administrative structure. As well, today, it stands as the first company to support the construction of an endowment building for Takaful Endowment Foundation.

On the sidelines of the event, three agreements were signed between Takaful Endowment Foundation, Razaz Engineering Consultancy, Dr Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Farsi and Partners Lawyers and Legal Consultants, and Rawabet Real Estate Company. These agreements aim to provide the best engineering and consultancy solutions, enhance the legal and regulatory framework and governance for endowment projects, develop, manage and market endowment properties, and provide specialised real estate consultations.



Global Village hosts 'Hag Al Leila' celebration

Global Village, the region's premier multicultural family destination for entertainment, dining, shopping, and attractions, is set to deliver a spectacular Hag Al Leila, a delightful Emirati traditional celebration that marks the countdown to the Holy Month of Ramadan. Observed on the 15th night of Sha'ban, the Hijri month preceding Ramadan, this joyful occasion celebrates generosity and cultural heritage, a press release said.

For the first time, Global Village will bring this beloved tradition to life with a four-day activation from February 13 to 16, situated at the heart of the park between the Main Stage and Dragon Lake. Families and their children are invited to in-

dulge in this vibrant experience featuring heritage-inspired activities, workshops, traditional treats, engaging entertainment and plenty of sweets.

Guests will be transported to an authentic Emirati setting, where the celebration space will be adorned with traditional decor, featuring palm fronds, woven mats, lanterns and majlis seating. Adding to the charm, elderly women dressed in heritage attire will share folklore stories, songs and proverbs while distributing Hag Al Leila candy and sweets, enriching the experience for all. Children, captivated by the melodies, will joyfully listen, sing along "Aatona Hag Al Leila" and collect their treats, making cherished memories of this tradition.

BankDhofar engages with Al Riadah Customers in Al Wusta

BankDhofar hosted an exclusive reception for its premier banking customers in the Wilayat of Duqm, Al Wusta Governorate.

The event was held under the patronage of Sheikh Bader bin Nasser al Farsi, Wali of Duqm, and was attended by senior bank officials, representatives from local government agencies, and key executives from major companies in Oman, a press release said.

As the first event of its kind in Al Wusta Governorate, this gathering aimed to build stronger connections with BankDhofar's elite clientele and corporate executives. Attendees were introduced to the bank's suite of tailored financial solutions, particularly its newly launched Private Banking Services division, which is dedicated to helping premium customers and their families manage their wealth with confidence and expertise.

Amjad Iqbal bin Hassan al Lawati, chief retail banking officer at BankDhofar, commented, "BankDhofar is committed to deepening relationships with our valued customers by engaging with them directly, understanding their needs, and incorporating their feedback into our service offerings. This meeting with our esteemed clients in Al Wusta, particularly in Wilayat of



Duqm, reflects our dedication to customer satisfaction."

Attendees were also introduced to the exclusive benefits of BankDhofar's Al Riadah Privilege Banking Account, designed to complement their modern and fast-paced lifestyle. Features include attractive monthly interest rates on high-yield savings accounts, a variety of loan and deposit products, a robust rewards program, and seamless banking through the mobile application.

BankDhofar offers Al Riadah customers a range of premium financial services, including the Visa Infinite Debit Card, Visa Signature Debit Card, Visa Signature Credit Card, Visa Infinite

Credit Card, and MasterCard World Credit Card. These cards provide customers with benefits such as hotel bookings, shopping protection, purchase security, access to international business lounges, and more. Additionally, the exclusive BankDhofar Rewards Program allows customers to earn and redeem points through the bank's mobile banking application, enhancing their overall banking experience.

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. The bank continues to lead in digital trans-

formation, being one of the first in Oman to introduce Apple Pay and Samsung Pay. Its commitment to modernization is further reflected in the deployment of wholesale cash deposit machines and the launch of Easy Biz, a digital collection and settlement platform. Additionally, BankDhofar continues to make significant strides in cybersecurity, reinforcing its dedication to safeguarding customer transactions and data.

BankDhofar remains committed to providing a comprehensive range of banking solutions tailored to all segments of society, including women, youth, children, and high-income groups.

Meethaq Islamic launches special offer

In line with its strategy to provide special benefits to its customers and credit card holders, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, has announced the launch of a special offer on its credit cards. The offer includes an annual fee reversal for the first year valid until March 31.

The offer has been introduced to further reinforce Meethaq's commitment to providing outstanding banking offerings for customers. To avail this offer, customers need to activate their credit cards within 90 days of issuance and use the card at any of their preferred shopping destinations for transactions, a press release said.

Meethaq Islamic Banking provides a diverse range of credit cards to cater to the various needs of its customers. These include the Meethaq Lulu Credit Card, Visa Platinum Credit Card, Visa Gold Credit Card and Hafawa Visa Signature Credit Card. Customers can get the privilege of paying for their purchases over a period of 12 months at 0% interest with the Easy Payment Plan.

Additional features include free issuance of supplementary cards for family members, secured online shopping and global acceptance, allowing customers to access a world of offers and many other benefits.

Sami Bait Rashid, assistant general manager - Meethaq Personal Banking, said, "The introduction of this offer was met with great enthusiasm last year, reflecting the value and benefits Meethaq's credit cards provide. We are delighted to extend this offer to even more customers this year. This initiative underscores Meethaq's unwavering commitment to enhancing its products.

Oman Ominvest Masters 2025 Golf Tournament concludes

Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest), a leading investment company in the region, announced that the second edition of the Oman Ominvest Masters Golf Tournament concluded at the prestigious LA VIE Club, Muscat Hills, Madinat Al Irfan, solidifying Oman's position as a premier destination for sports tourism.

The tournament, which ran from January 23 to 25, featured outstanding performances from 83 elite golfers from across the GCC and beyond, a press release said. Over three days of spirited competition, the event showcased exceptional talent and



provided a platform for athletes to achieve international recognition.

H H Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al

Said, chairman of the Oman Golf Association alongside Nasser al Shibli, chief real estate officer at Ominvest, presented the cham-

pionship trophy to Mousa Shana'a from Jordan. Mousa earned a coveted spot in the Clutch Pro Tour Events at LA VIE

and Al Mouj, scheduled for March and April 2025.

Reflecting on the Masters, AbdulAziz al Balushi, Group CEO

of Ominvest said "The Oman Ominvest Masters exemplifies our commitment to promoting Oman as a global hub for sports and tourism. Events like these align with Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to enhance the country's economic and cultural growth while inspiring a healthier, more vibrant society. We are immensely proud to support initiatives that bring international acclaim to Oman."

The 2025 tournament attracted participants from countries including the GCC, Europe, the USA and Asia, further cementing its reputation as one of the region's most prestigious golfing events.

Colombian president Gustavo Petro orders Cabinet to resign

Bogota, Colombia - Colombian President Gustavo Petro announced on Sunday afternoon that he has formally requested the resignation of his entire Cabinet.

"There will be some changes in the cabinet to achieve greater compliance with the programme mandated by the people. The government will focus completely on following the programme," Petro wrote on X.

Earlier in the day, Environment Minister Susana Muhamad confirmed in an interview that she had stepped down. Labour Minister Gloria Ines Ramirez soon followed, announcing her resignation as well.

A total of four Cabinet members have now left their posts, including Jorge Rojas, the head of the presidency's administrative department, and Culture Minister Juan David Correa.



Gustavo Petro

The resignations followed a tense six-hour Cabinet meeting broadcast live on Tuesday.

During the meeting, Muhamad suggested she would step down if Armando Benedetti, a former ambassador to Venezuela, was appointed head of the presidential office. Benedetti's return to government has drawn criticism from Muhamad, Vice President Francia Marquez, and other officials

due to his ties to domestic violence cases and an ongoing investigation into irregularities in presidential campaign financing.

They also objected to the appointment of Laura Sarabia as foreign minister, citing her involvement in a case of alleged illegal wiretapping against her nanny. Petro's call for mass resignations came just hours before he departed for Dubai to attend the World Government Summit

2025. He is accompanied by three ministers and two interim ministers, while the remaining 14 ministries remain in Colombia with their formal resignations in Petro's hands.

Interior Minister Juan Fernando Cristo, who was absent from Tuesday's meeting, had proposed the Cabinet's collective resignation on Wednesday, calling its current composition 'unsustainable'. So far, Sarabia,

who has held the foreign minister post for less than a month, is the only one to have formally submitted her resignation.

"I have repeatedly expressed that there is no greater privilege or honour than serving the Colombian people. In order for him to be able to make the decisions he considers most appropriate, I allow myself to present my formal resignation to President Petro," she wrote on X.

Trump declares February 9 as 'Gulf of America Day'

Washington, D.C., US - United States President Donald Trump signed a proclamation on Sunday (local time) declaring February 9 as 'the first-ever Gulf of America Day', celebrating the renaming of the area formerly known as the Gulf of Mexico.

Trump was on his way to the New Orleans for the Super Bowl 59 and signed this proclamation as Air Force One flew over the area he was renaming.

This follows the signing of Executive Order 14172 on January 20, 2025, which mandated the renaming of the US Continental Shelf area.

As part of the order, the Secretary of the Interior was directed to take the necessary actions to rename the area bounded by Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, and extend to the seaward boundary with Mexico and Cuba.

In a statement, President Trump explained his decision: "I took this action in part because, as stated in that Order, the area formerly known as the Gulf of Mexico has long been an integral asset to our once burgeoning Nation and has remained an indelible part of America."

"Today, I am very honoured to recognise February 9, 2025, as the first-ever Gulf of America Day," according to the White House.

"On January 20, 2025, I signed Executive Order 14172 ('Restoring Names That Honor American Greatness'). Among other actions, that Executive Order required the Secretary of the Interior, acting pursuant to 43 U.S.C. 364 through 364f, to 'take all appropriate actions to rename as the 'Gulf of America' the U.S. Continental Shelf area bounded on the northeast, north, and northwest by the State of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama



Sunday marked President Donald Trump's first visit to the Gulf of America since the renaming

US President Trump also confirmed on Sunday that he is serious about his repeated remarks that Canada should become his country's 51st state

and Florida and extending to the seaward boundary with Mexico and Cuba in the area formerly named as the Gulf of Mexico," the statement added.

Sunday marked the President's first visit to the Gulf of America since the renaming. "As my Administration restores American pride in the history of American greatness, it is fitting and appropriate for our great Nation to come together and commemorate this momentous occasion and the renaming of the

Gulf of America."

In his proclamation, Trump also said: "I call upon public officials and all the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate programmes, ceremonies, and activities."

Sharing the map, the White House wrote on X: "The Gulf of America".

Trump shared a video on X, signing the proclamation and stated: "Make America great again, right. That's what we care about."

In an X post on January 27, Google Maps had said it will change the name of 'Gulf of Mexico' to 'Gulf of America' once it is officially updated in the US Geographic Names System.

The change will be visible in the US, but it will remain 'Gulf of Mexico' in Mexico.

Outside of the two countries, users will see both names.

Trump 'serious' about Canada

Meanwhile, Trump confirmed on Sunday that he is serious about his repeated remarks that Canada should become his country's 51st state.

In an interview with Fox News, he was asked whether Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

was correct in saying the idea was 'a real thing'.

"Yes, it is," Trump responded.

He argued that Canada 'would be much better off' as part of the US and criticised the US\$200bn the US spends annually on its neighbour to the north.

He claimed this amount, which his administration previously linked to defence costs and trade deficits, was effectively a 'subsidy' to Canada. "I'm not gonna let that happen," Trump said regarding the payments, adding: "Now, if they're the 51st state, I don't mind doing it."

Trump has made similar remarks in recent months, referring to Trudeau as a 'governor' rather than a prime minister.

Agencies



Scholz edges out Merz in German pre-poll debate

Berlin, Germany - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz outperformed his Conservative rival Friedrich Merz in a televised debate on Sunday evening two weeks ahead of February 23 parliamentary elections.

During the 90-minute debate broadcast on public networks ARD and ZDF, Social Democrat Scholz gained 37% viewer approval, slightly ahead of Merz's 34%, while 29% of viewers rated both candidates equally.

The incumbent chancellor particularly resonated with women voters, gaining 43% support among female viewers, while Merz led among male viewers with 40%.

Scholz also performed exceptionally well with the younger demographic, winning 47% approval from voters aged 18-34 compared to Merz's 25%.

The debate centred on migration, economic policy and foreign affairs, with a heated exchange over potential cooperation with the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.

Scholz criticised Merz for departing from a longstanding principle in German politics by accepting AfD votes in parliament to pass controversial migration legislation earlier this month. He raised doubts about whether Merz's Chris-

tian Democrats would honour their pledge to reject any coalition talks with the AfD after the parliamentary elections.

In response, Merz emphasised that his CDU/CSU alliance would neither cooperate nor seek a coalition with the AfD.

"I want to make it clear here once again that we will not do that," he said, adding that 'there is no common ground'

Debate centred on migration, economic policy and foreign affairs, with a heated exchange over potential cooperation with AfD party

between Christian Democrats and the AfD on issues concerning the European Union, NATO and future relations with the US.

A survey conducted for ZDF during the TV debate showed Scholz scoring significantly higher on credibility, with 42% of viewers finding him more trustworthy compared to 31% for Merz.

Anadolu Agency

HANDICRAFTS EXPO HELD IN TASHKENT



People visit a traditional handicraft exhibition in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on Sunday, which attracted more than 100 artisans from across the country who brought a variety of handicrafts (Xinhua)

Kosovo ruling party set to come first in poll

Pristina, Kosovo - Kosovo's ruling party appeared set to secure the most seats in Sunday's parliamentary elections, according to preliminary results.

The result would be a drop from the over 50% that Prime Minister Albin Kurti's party won in 2021.

This means the Vetevendosje (Self-Determination Movement) party would need to form a coalition to stay in power in a country whose politics are dominated by the relationship with neighbouring Serbia and Serbs within its borders.

Kurti proclaimed victory for his Vetevendosje (Self-Determination Movement) party late on Sunday.

"We are the first party, the winning party that will create the next government," Kurti told reporters. "We will continue to finish the work that we have



started."

He said he will form the new government without hinting who could be a potential coalition partner.

The election was conducted 'without problems that could violate its integrity', according to the Central Election Commission.

It said voter turnout was over 40%.

Preliminary results published by the election commission, with more than 73% of the votes counted, gave Vetevendosje 41.99%, according to AP news agency. Democratic Party of Kosovo, the PDK, came second with 22.68%.

In third place was the Democratic League of Kosovo, or LDK, with 17.9%.

The LDK conceded Vetevendosje victory on Sunday evening, according to Kosovo news site, Prishtina Insights and Reuters news agency.

As per Kosovo's constitution, 20 of 120 seats in the parliamentary assembly are reserved for non-Albanian communities, such as Serbs, Bosniaks and Turks.

DW

Israeli army arrests 580 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank in January

Ramallah, Palestine - The Israeli army detained 580 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank in January, prisoners' affairs groups said on Monday.

Most of the detainees were taken into custody in the northern city of Jenin and its refugee camp, where Israel has launched a deadly onslaught since January 21, the Commission of Detainees' Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoner Society said in a joint statement. According to the rights groups, 17 women and 60 children were among the detainees in the occupied territory.

Hundreds of Palestinian residents were also interrogated by the Israeli forces in the field during military raids in the West Bank, the statement said.

The rights groups said that four Palestinian detainees died in Israeli detention in January.

Tension has been running high across the occupied West Bank, where at least 910 Palestinians have been killed and nearly 7,000 others injured in attacks by the Israeli army and illegal settlers since the start of the Gaza war on October 7, 2023, according to the Health Ministry.

Renaming of West Bank

Meanwhile, Palestine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounced a move by Israel's parliament on Sunday to approve a bill to re-



According to the rights groups, 17 women and 60 children were among the detainees in the occupied territory

place the term 'West Bank' with 'Judea and Samaria', calling it a serious escalation aimed at annexing the occupied territory.

In a statement, the ministry condemned the approval by the Knesset's Cabinet Committee for Legislation of the draft law.

The ministry described the bill as 'a dangerous escalation of Is-

rael's illegal unilateral actions, paving the way for the full annexation of the West Bank, the imposition of Israeli law by force, and a systematic undermining of the possibility of establishing a Palestinian state and resolving the conflict through peaceful political means'.

"This legislation, along with

other occupation measures, does not create any legitimate right for Israel over the land of the State of Palestine. It is null and void, illegal, and a blatant violation of international law and UN resolutions, posing a direct threat to regional and global security and stability," the statement added.

The ministry called for urgent

international intervention 'to stop Israel's attempts to alter the political, legal, and geographical status of the internationally recognised State of Palestine'.

It also urged all countries to condition their relations with Israel on its adherence to international law and compliance with UN resolutions. On January 29,

the Knesset passed a preliminary reading of a bill allowing illegal Israeli settlers to register themselves as legal landowners in the occupied West Bank.

Palestinians and Israeli left-wing organisations argue that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government is accelerating efforts to impose Is-

raeli law on the West Bank in preparation for full annexation.

Raids continue

Israeli police raided two Palestinian bookstores in occupied East Jerusalem on Monday and arrested their owners on charges of 'disturbing public order'.

According to *Haaretz*, police confiscated several books from the stores and detained the owners on suspicion that 'the books sold there constituted incite-

Tension has been running high across West Bank, where at least 910 Palestinians have been killed and nearly 7,000 others injured in attacks by the Israeli army and illegal settlers since October 7, 2023

ment'. Police later changed the charge from 'incitement to violence' to 'disturbing public order', the daily said.

The Israeli newspaper, citing the bookstore owners, said police 'used Google Translate on the books, and they confiscated anything they didn't like'.

A defence lawyer for the owners told *Haaretz* that he 'had never encountered a case where someone is held in custody overnight for suspicion of disturbing public order'.

Anadolu Agency



Turkish president in Malaysia

Kuala Lumpur/Ankara - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was in Malaysia on Monday for an official visit as the first stop of his three-nation tour of Asia.

Erdogan was welcomed at Kuala Lumpur International Airport by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and his wife, Wan Azizah Ismail, Turkey's Ambassador to Kuala Lumpur Emir Salim Yuksel, Malaysian Defence Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin, embassy staff, and other officials.

Accompanying the Turkish president were first lady Emine Erdogan, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Energy and Natural Resources Minister Alparslan Bayraktar and National Defence

Minister Yasar Guler.

Industry and Technology Minister Mehmet Fatih Kacir, Agriculture and Forestry Minister Ibrahim Yumakli, Trade Minister Omer Bolat, Chairperson of the Council of Elders of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) Binali Yildirim, and Presidential Advisor Akif Cagatay Kilic are also accompanying Erdogan. The Turkish president met with Sultan Nazrin Shah of Perak in the Malaysian capital, his office said.

At a ceremony was held at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre to award Erdogan an honorary doctorate, he expressed his pleasure at being in Malaysia again after five years, saying: "May our solidarity and affection

remain strong."

Erdogan emphasised that friendship and brotherhood between Turkey and Malaysia despite their geographical distance, noting that the bilateral partnership was elevated to a comprehensive strategic level in 2022.

Highlighting the significance of education and academic cooperation, Erdogan stated: "Today, we proudly see more Turkey and Malaysia graduates contributing to our nations."

He expressed gratitude for the honorary doctorate, considering it 'a reflection of Malaysia's appreciation for Turkey and its people', and extended his heartfelt thanks to Malaya University and Sultan Nazrin Shah of Perak.

Scholz proposes to increase NATO military presence in Greenland

Berlin, Germany - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced on Sunday his proposal for NATO allies to strengthen their military presence in Greenland, countering US President Donald Trump's suggestion to acquire the territory for security purposes.

"When we say borders must not be moved by force, that of course applies even more to our partners," Scholz said, reiterating Berlin's support to Denmark in its dispute with the new US administration over its autonomous territory Greenland.

The Social Democrat chancellor made the remarks during the first televised debate with his



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz

conservative challenger Friedrich Merz ahead of February 23 parliamentary elections, where they discussed several foreign policy

issues, including Trump's insistence on gaining control of Greenland.

Scholz emphasised that European states must maintain a unified position on this issue and confirmed recent media reports about Germany's proposal to increase NATO's military presence in Greenland.

"I have developed a proposal, and we are currently working on it together with other countries within NATO. It's about increasing NATO's presence in Greenland so that we can counter the argument that there are not enough soldiers there," he said.

The chancellor acknowledged

that some concerns about Greenland's security were valid, as climate change and melting ice are reshaping the region's geopolitical landscape.

He refrained from a confrontational tone towards Trump and said he already had a 'friendly and frank' phone conversation with the new president and Germany wants to have good working relations with the new administration.

"Without the US, we would not have been able to win our democracy after fascism. That is why it is very important that we maintain the transatlantic partnership," Scholz said.

Russia says awaiting details of Trump's Gaza plan

Moscow, Russia - Russia on Monday said it is awaiting further details regarding US President Donald Trump's reported plan to take over and rebuild the Gaza Strip.

Speaking to reporters in Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov noted that there

are many unanswered questions about the proposal. "We need to wait for some details if this is a consistent action plan. There are nearly 1.2mn Palestinians living there - that is the main issue," Peskov said.

He added that these people were promised a statehood so-

lution under relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

"There are many such questions. We do not know the details yet, and we need to be patient," the spokesman added.

On February 4, Trump said Washington would 'take over' Gaza and resettle Palestinians

elsewhere under an extraordinary redevelopment plan that he claimed could turn the enclave into 'the Riviera of the Middle East'. His proposal was met with widespread condemnation from the Palestinians, Arab countries, and many other nations across the world.

South Africa calls for withdrawal of 'uninvited' foreign forces from DRC

Istanbul, Turkey - South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Monday that a process should be set in place for the withdrawal of 'uninvited foreign armed forces' from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

"We have a responsibility to support all efforts to bring peace and stability to our fellow African nation, which has been racked by war for more than three decades," Ramaphosa said in a statement after a joint summit of the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African

Development Community held on Friday and Saturday.

He highlighted that several EAC countries, including Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania and Rwanda, share borders with Congo and are 'directly impacted' by the escalation in the east of the country.

The joint summit 'affirmed the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the DRC', said Ramaphosa. "This means that a process must be developed for uninvited foreign armed forces to withdraw from the



DRC."

While Ramaphosa did not single out any specific country, Kin-

shasa blamed Rwanda for backing the M23 rebels and accused Kigali of sending its forces to

eastern Congo when the latest offensive began. Kigali has repeatedly denied allegations of

backing M23. He also said that measures taken in the summit would 'finally lead to the draw-down' of the troops from the SADC mission in Congo.

The unprecedented summit, hosted by Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's largest city, brought together heads of state from the six-member EAC and the 16-member SADC.

Defence chiefs of the two African blocs were asked to meet within five days to provide technical direction to implement

a ceasefire and secure Goma.

The joint meeting of the ministers will be convened within 30 days to review the progress of the defence chiefs' directives.

The M23 rebels now claim control of Goma and have declared their own administration in the city.

Since January 26, more than 3,000 people have been killed, 2,880 injured, and over 500,000 displaced, adding to the 6.4mn already internally displaced people, according to the UN.

Anadolu Agency

President Cyril Ramaphosa stressed on the responsibility to support all efforts to bring peace and stability to DR Congo

Indian PM departs for France-US visit

During his four-day trip, Modi will engage in talks with President Emmanuel Macron and President Donald Trump

New Delhi, India - Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday departed from the national capital for a four-day trip to France and the United States, where he will engage in talks with President Emmanuel Macron and President Donald Trump.

Modi will be in France till February 12, where he will be co-chairing the AI Action Summit.

Macron and Modi will also travel to the historic French city of Marseille to inaugurate the first Indian Consulate in France and also visit the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor project, in which India is a member of the consortium of partner countries including France, to harness energy for the global good.

From France, he will proceed



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves as he emplanes for France, in New Delhi, India on Monday (ANI)

Indian PM Narendra Modi will be in France till Wednesday, where he will be co-chairing the AI Action Summit along with Macron and address the India-France CEOs forum

on a two-day visit to the United States at the invitation of President Donald Trump.

After his arrival in Paris on Monday evening, Modi will attend a dinner that is being hosted

by Macron at the Elysee Palace in honour of visiting heads of government and heads of State.

The dinner is also likely to be attended by a large number of CEOs from the tech domain and a number of other distinguished invitees to the summit. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said recently at a special media briefing that Modi will co-chair the AI Ac-

tion Summit along with President Macron on Tuesday.

After the AI summit, there will be a bilateral component to the visit and Modi and Macron will address the India-France CEOs forum.

The Indian PM will travel to Marseille on the evening of Tuesday. The French president will also host a dinner, and on

Wednesday the two leaders will visit the war cemetery and there they will pay tribute to the sacrifices made by Indian Soldiers in World War 1.

The two leaders will jointly inaugurate the newest Consulate General of India in Marseille and will pay a visit to Kadash which is the site of the international thermal nuclear experimental reactor.

After concluding the France visit Modi will depart for the US to meet with President Donald Trump and interact with senior leaders of the US administration.

This will be the first meeting between the two leaders after President Trump assumed office for his second term.

Previously, the Indian PM visited the US in June 2017 and hosted President Trump for a state visit to India in February 2020.

The two leaders have also spoken on the phone twice since November 2024 (on November 6, 2024 and January 27, 2025).

During his visit, Modi will review the progress on the 2047 Horizon Roadmap for India-France strategic partnership and will develop an agenda to further elevate and deepen partnership with the US in areas such as technology, trade, defence, energy, and supply chain, the Prime Minister's Office said in a release.

ANI

US spent \$60mn in NYT, AP subscriptions

Istanbul, Turkey - The US government has spent a total of US\$60mn on subscriptions to *The New York Times* and The Associated Press, according to the Department of Government Efficiency's (DOGE) Live Tracker, which revealed the figures on Monday.

The tracker, which provides updates on daily savings based on the department's statements, showed that cancelled *New York Times* subscriptions account for US\$40mn, while Associated Press subscriptions total US\$20mn.

It also revealed that cancelled Politico subscriptions amounted to US\$500,000.

These revelations follow criticism from tech billionaire and Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) head Elon Musk, who has accused certain media outlets of receiving payments from federal institutions, particularly agencies such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Musk recently shared a post claiming that Politico had received US\$8.1mn from USAID.

Reacting to reports of payments to The Associated Press, Musk wrote: "Not for long. This is obviously a huge waste of taxpayer money!" He also took aim at *The New York Times*, calling it "government-funded media".

In response, *The New York Times* stated that the funds received were payments for government subscriptions, totalling less than US\$2mn last year.

According to USA Spending, an official government website tracking federal expenditures, other major US media organisations, including Bloomberg, have also received payments from various federal institutions.

Ecuador presidential election heads to runoff

Bogota, Colombia - Ecuadorians cast their ballots on Sunday in a presidential election, with incumbent Daniel Noboa and leftist candidate Luisa Gonzalez emerging as the top two candidates, forcing a second round of voting.

With 82% of the votes counted, Noboa secured 44.5% of the vote, although not enough to win the presidency outright.

A presidential candidate in Ecuador must obtain 50% of the vote or achieve 40% with a 10-point lead over the nearest rival to win. Noboa will contest a runoff election on April 13 against Gonzalez, who took 44.1% of the votes, according to the country's electoral authority.

Indigenous leader Leonidas Iza



trailed in third place, having garnered 4.76% of votes. The country's worsening security crisis has dominated the election campaign, with voters deeply concerned about escalating violence linked to cocaine trafficking.

Noboa, the 37-year-old son of a billionaire banana magnate, has staked his political future on a hardline approach to crime, declaring a state of emergency, deploying the military across the country, and building new maximum-security prisons.

Despite the country experiencing 14-hour daily blackouts and a diplomatic spat with Mexico during his presidency, Noboa remains remarkably popular.

Gonzalez, the 47-year-old

protege of former President Rafael Correa, has pledged to provide human rights training for security forces, while also supporting tougher policing and militarisation. She celebrated her advancement to the runoff. "It is a great victory, we have won ... we are almost in a technical tie."

Noboa had previously defeated Gonzalez in an October 2023 runoff election, which followed the impeachment process against former President Guillermo Lasso. Lasso had dissolved Congress to avoid impeachment hearings, prompting the Ecuadorian electoral authority to call for early elections, which Noboa ultimately won.

Anadolu Agency

More than 600 arrested for working illegally in UK during raids in January

London, UK - British officials made over 600 arrests for working illegally in the United Kingdom in January, a 73% increase from 352 in the same period last year, according to an official statement on Monday.

A total of 609 arrests were made in January by Immigration Enforcement teams during raids on 828 premises - marking a 48% rise compared to previous January - including nail bars, convenience stores, restaurants, and car washes, the Home Office said in a statement.

This came as the government's landmark Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill returns to parliament for its second reading on Monday.

It noted that a renewed crackdown on those 'attempting to undermine the UK's borders' last month saw the highest January in over half a decade for enforcement activity.

"More broadly, between July 5 last year and January 31, both illegal working visits and arrests have soared by around 38% compared to the same 12 months prior."

During the same period, since the current Labour Party came in power, the Home Office issued a



The number of migrants arriving in the UK via the English Channel increased by 25% in 2024

A total of 609 arrests were made in January by Immigration Enforcement teams during raids on 828 premises

(over US\$74,000) per worker if found liable.

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said the immigration rules must be respected and enforced. "For far too long, employers have been able to take on and exploit illegal migrants and too many people have been able to arrive and work illegally with no enforcement action ever taken," she noted.

Cooper added: "That's why, as part of our Plan for Change, we are boosting enforcement to record levels alongside tough

new legislation to smash the criminal gangs that undermine our border security and who have been getting away with it for far too long."

The number of migrants arriving in the UK via the English Channel increased by 25% in 2024 compared to the previous year, according to the Home Office.

A total of 36,816 people made the perilous journey by small boats in 2024, up from 29,437 in 2023.

Anadolu Agency

China: Fossils found identified as that of duck-billed dinosaur

Beijing, China - Scientists have confirmed that a set of skeletal fossils discovered in southern China belonged to duck-billed dinosaurs from over 70mn years ago, expanding the region's fossil record of these large, toothy creatures that likely migrated from North America.

The bones were found in May 2009 by a Chinese amateur fossil hunter at a construction site in Taipinggang, Sihui City, Guangdong Province, and he donated them to a local museum.

After cleaning and restoration, researchers in 2020 identified the fossilized skeleton comprising dorsal and caudal vertebrae, a humerus, ilium, femur and tibia. They believe the fossils belong to the tribe Lambeosaurini, a sub-family of plant-eating Hadrosauroidea dinosaurs that lived during the Cretaceous period. The study, led by palaeontologists from China and Canada, was published in the journal *Historical Biology* in late January.

According to the research team, Hadrosauroidea is renowned for its distinctive duck-billed mouth structure. These dinosaurs had thousands of teeth well arranged within their jaws, enabling them to exhibit strong



The set of skeletal fossils discovered in Guangdong Province, China (Xinhua)

chewing efficiency and viability.

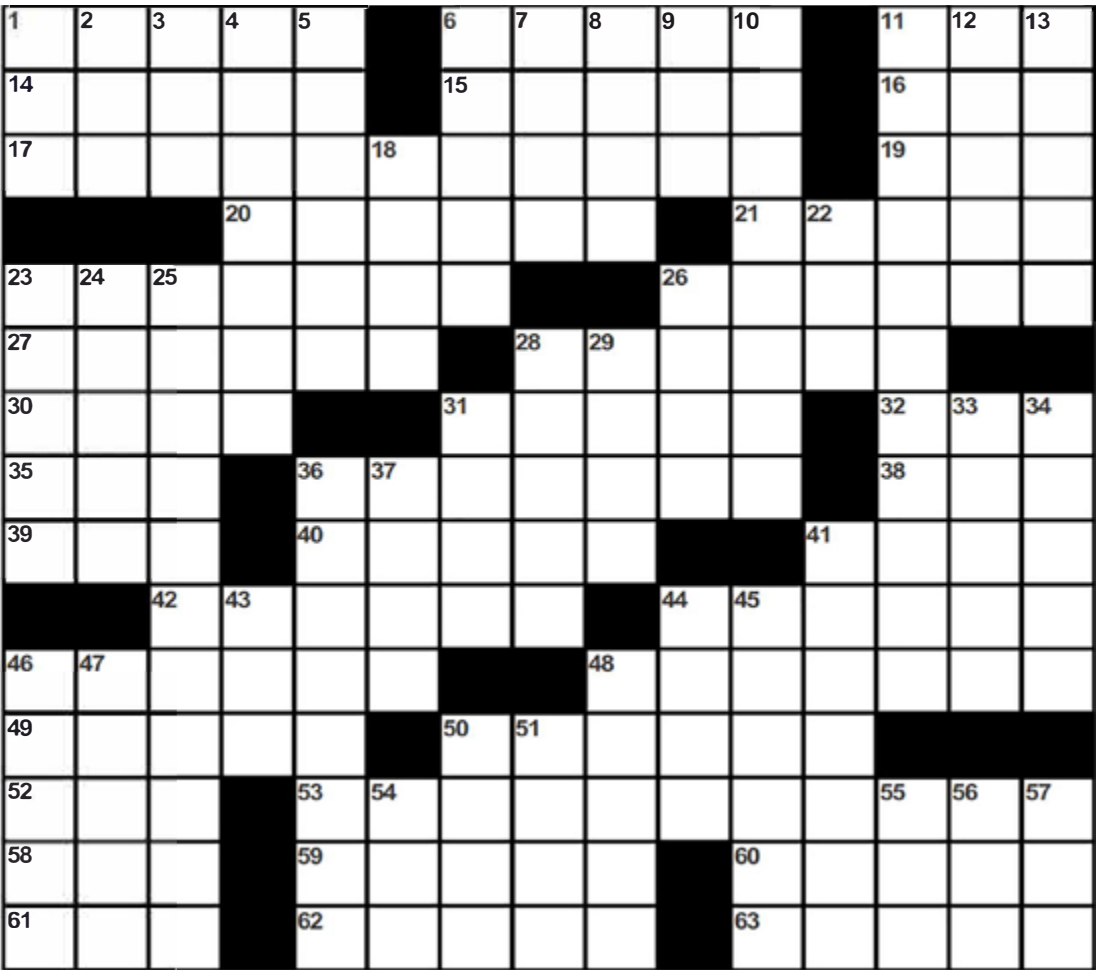
Lambeosaurini also possesses a unique cranial structure featuring narrow hollow nasal bones, which is likely responsible for their ability to make trumpet-like sounds that they use for communication.

First author Wang Donghao, a PhD student from China University of Geosciences (Beijing),

noted that the research team had identified long and narrow neural spines on the fossil specimen, which is an extremely rare feature. However, the fossils are mainly fragmentary bones and were not well-preserved, lacking substantial biological information about the dinosaur's cranial structure.

Xinhua

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Biting remarks
- 6) Improvise
- 11) Loser's place?
- 14) Certain Alaskan
- 15) Exotic jelly flavor
- 16) Homophone for "hymn"
- 17) Turns a registered nurse into a RN?
- 19) Genetic info carrier
- 20) Auto radiator cover
- 21) Revises, as copy
- 23) Marching rhythm
- 26) Casual slacks
- 27) Disinclined
- 28) Satellite connection
- 30) Barely beats
- 31) Flogging whip
- 32) Name passer, perhaps
- 35) It paves the way
- 36) Frigid spikes
- 38) Couple in Rome
- 39) Early afternoon
- 40) "Forget it!"
- 41) Do, for example
- 42) Angora attractor
- 44) Drunk, in slang
- 46) Fence openings
- 48) Verbal nouns

- 49) Committee head
- 50) Magellan or Bering
- 52) No longer in the USAF
- 53) Construct on a smaller scale
- 58) Munched
- 59) How many respond to an insult
- 60) Low point
- 61) _ de deux
- 62) Varieties
- 63) Forgo a big wedding

DOWN

- 1) Cry heard during wool shearing
- 2) Priest's wear
- 3) Soldier in Lee's army, briefly
- 4) Fast food staple
- 5) Rears of ships
- 6) Catlike
- 7) Kind of income
- 8) Like some shows
- 9) " _ been meaning to tell you ... "
- 10) Inning extenders
- 11) Becomes constricted
- 12) It's spotted in West-erns
- 13) Accumulate
- 18) Bad habit, so to speak
- 22) Kipling's "Gunga _"
- 23) Part of a Pound poem
- 24) Birdlike
- 25) Undervalues
- 26) Board game name
- 28) Open, as an aspirin bottle
- 29) "Roly" follower
- 31) New Zealand bird
- 33) Exposed
- 34) Can't forgo
- 36) Pause at intervals
- 37) Bamboozles
- 41) On the fence
- 43) "Aladdin" prince
- 44) Airplane assignment
- 45) Like the Godhead
- 46) Leftover piece
- 47) Certain sorority member
- 48) Asa and Spalding
- 50) Impertinent person
- 51) Game piece, often
- 54) Like some wintery roads
- 55) Altar avowal
- 56) Energy
- 57) " _ ... _ he drove out of sight"

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You're still feeling solid, practical, responsible, and grounded. Good. Considering what might tumble out of your mouth today, you're going to need a healthy dose of confidence. What's it going to be? It's tough to say, but it won't be something you or anyone around you could ever have predicted. Almost sounds like fun, doesn't it?



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Everyone's going to be quite chatty today, no doubt about it. But you? You're going to be even more verbally reckless than usual. It's not like you've ever needed any help getting inspired to say exactly what you want to say, and the heck with the consequences, so just imagine what today's verbosity will bring. You'd better warn anyone who startles easily. Or not.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You have some crazy friends, but one in particular stands head and shoulders above the rest. Should you dismiss them entirely, help this person find some psychological counseling or just pretend it never happened? Weigh the seriousness of the situation before you do anything at all. Sometimes it's best just to coast and let the Universe work it out.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. In 2016 UNESCO marked a four-cave complex in the sheer limestone cliffs of eastern Gibraltar as a World Heritage Site for its place in preserving and demonstrating what?
- A. Record of bird life over 100 million years
 - B. Evolution of prehistoric cave painting
 - C. The culture and life of Ne-anderthal humans over a span of 100,000 years
 - D. Late Iron Age religious communities

02. The computer game, the aim of which is to peel something (usually a fruit or vegetable), is known as what?
- A. Peelers
 - B. Peel the Apple
 - C. Peel-I-Span
 - D. I Peel Good

03. If an animal bears live young it is termed what?
- A. Vital
 - B. Vivid
 - C. Vituperative
 - D. Viviparous

Answers: 1.C 2.D 3.D



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

It's just your nature to wonder. But when you do too much of it, it can easily turn into an obsession. Keeping that in mind, could it be time to stop worrying if a deeper meaning was behind that comment a loved one recently made. You're a natural-born detective, but some clues just aren't worth following. And some folks aren't clever enough to insert actual meaning into everything they say.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Telling you not to go out and spend your every dime on a lark, with absolutely no thought for the future, just isn't going to work. Asking you not to won't work either. What if someone who loves you reminds you of the bills that will be turning up right around the same time your mortgage payment's due? That might work, but there are still no guarantees. This time you just may need to muster up the willpower yourself.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

They'll sit down across from you, or stand right there in front of you, cross their arms, and look you straight in the eye. Then they'll ask if you'd please share your opinion of the current situation with them, one-on-one, as a favor and in confidence. Try not to be rude. You were already getting ready to let the world know your take, but it wouldn't hurt to let them think they were responsible for the big revelation.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

At this point, your friends are pretty well trained. Most of them don't even bat an eye when you get going on one of your favorite subjects, even if it's in a public place. They've learned that resistance is futile, and besides, you're usually quite entertaining to watch. Today, however, even the most seasoned among them will be hard-pressed to keep a straight face. Of course, you may have an equally hard time too.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You've been waiting for the right moment to let someone know you're not a child any more. You're perfectly capable of making your own choices and you don't need their advice. And you had just about decided to make the announcement when you realized they actually had something quite valuable to share. Better hold off on the declaration of independence for a bit.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Your spiritual and psychic qualities are running on high right now. So if you suddenly get the feeling you don't want to be where you are, or that you'd like someone else to be there with you, don't even bother resisting. Do what it takes to make yourself comfortable and happy. You've connected with the powers that be, and they're directing you. Sure, it sounds corny, but just go with it.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

From the very moment you got up this morning, you've been in a rather odd mood. You don't want to do anything the way you used to do it, and you don't particularly care if that offends anyone. You're not even trying to compromise. Since this is an unusual attitude for you, don't be surprised if your loved ones are a bit stunned. They're sure to get a big kick out of it, though!



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You're done talking about the issue that's been making you crazy for weeks, if not months. You're so done that even when a certain someone who's ordinarily quite good at pushing your buttons starts to subtly poke at you, you won't bite. It wouldn't be fair, and it wouldn't even be fun. You know you can win, and win easily, but you can't justify the energy. It's just as well. You have bigger fish to fry.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You've never been fond of blind dates. But now, after one too many interesting experiences, to say you're less than fond of them wouldn't quite cover your sentiments. For some darned reason, though, a friend or family member is insisting there's someone you "just have to meet." Who knows? They could be right this time. Just don't sign up for dinner. Suggest coffee or drinks, and duck out early if you need to.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

S	O	T	J
A	E	I	M
O	U	L	A
D	K	A	R

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

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

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

GREENS GIVE REDS THE BLUES

Plymouth stun Premier League leaders Liverpool in FA Cup

Plymouth, England - A much-changed Liverpool were dumped out of the FA Cup by struggling second-tier side Plymouth Argyle, who pulled off a stunning 1-0 fourth round win at Home Park on Sunday that put an end to the visitors' hopes of a quadruple.

The hosts took the lead in the 53rd minute after they were awarded a penalty for a handball by midfielder Harvey Elliott and Ryan Hardie stepped up to send Liverpool goalkeeper Caoimhin Kelleher the wrong way.

"We all came here today with a dream and we have done it. I don't know what to say," forward Hardie told ITV. "There is obviously a lot of pressure. It is about picking your side, and I committed to it," he said when asked about his penalty.

Premier League leaders Liverpool were bereft of ideas and had just one shot on target in the opening half, with Plymouth keeper Conor Hazard making a diving save in the 36th minute to keep out James McConnell's long-range shot.

Ahead of the Merseyside derby against Everton on



Plymouth Argyle's Ryan Hardie celebrates with teammates after scoring against Liverpool on Sunday

Wednesday, Liverpool made wholesale changes with Mohamed Salah, Virgil van Dijk, Alisson Becker and Alexis Mac Allister among the big names rested and left at home.

Liverpool, who were also forced into an early change when defender Joe Gomez went down injured, failed to create many chances in a scrappy encounter

as Plymouth, who sit bottom of the second-tier Championship, gradually grew in confidence.

Arne Slot's side switched gears after going down but Hazard proved to be the hero for Plymouth as the Northern Irishman brilliantly kept out Diogo Jota's volley in added time, as well as a header from Darwin Nunez.

"At the end of the day, it is my

job. So I am delighted with that," Hazard said when asked about the Jota save.

With Liverpool top of the Premier League, having strolled into the Champions League's last 16 and reached the League Cup final, some fans and pundits had begun to speculate about a potential quadruple.

Plymouth's remarkable vic-

tory, however, brought a shuddering halt to talk of a clean sweep of silverware for Slot's side, who had only lost three games all season, prior to Sunday.

Having made 10 changes to the side that hammered Tottenham Hotspur 4-0 in the League Cup semi-final second leg at Anfield on Thursday, Slot had no re-

The result is obvious, a big disappointment. Way we played, not a lot to be happy about. The boys kept fighting for 100 minutes

ARNE SLOT, LIVERPOOL

grets over his team selection against Plymouth.

Nunez was the only established first-team player the Dutchman brought off the bench as Liverpool chased an equaliser at Plymouth, with the Uruguayan striker coming on in the 58th minute.

"(No regrets) because we've seen a few times already, it's a playing style that is difficult. I think today showed why we played with who we used, they need momentum to be ready for the upcoming months. We saw it today," Slot told reporters.

"The result is obvious, a big disappointment. Way we played, not a lot to be happy about. The boys kept fighting for 100 minutes. They kept fighting but credit to Plymouth, a good game-plan, worked hard and it was a clear penalty, correct decision."

Meanwhile, there was no surprise in another FA Cup fourth-round tie with Premier League club Wolverhampton Wanderers beating Championship side Blackburn Rovers 2-0 at Ewood Park.



Miron Muslic

A magical day for us, says Plymouth coach Muslic

Plymouth, England - Plymouth Argyle head coach Miron Muslic was lost for words after his struggling second-tier side knocked out Premier League leaders Liverpool from the FA Cup with a 1-0 win on Sunday.

A much-changed Liverpool side's hopes of a quadruple were dashed at Home Park by Plymouth after Scottish forward Ryan Hardie converted a 53rd-minute penalty following a Harvey Elliott handball.

Plymouth, who are rooted to the bottom of the Championship, had also stunned Premier League side Brentford in the previous round of the FA Cup and Muslic was proud his team's efforts.

"I'm speechless, and normally they tell me I'm eloquent! It's a big moment, day for us," Muslic told ITV.

"Another chapter in Argyle's history. Showing this performance, desire and joy to defend against Liverpool, who will be on you. The lads did it fantastic today.

"A big moment and I think I will realise that when I go back to my apartment and have a moment."



Samay Shrivastava took four wickets for Oman

Namibia get the better of Oman in low-scoring thriller

Muscat - Oman's four-match winning streak at home in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League (WCL) 2 came to a halt on Monday as Namibia defeated them by 23 runs in a low-scoring thriller at the Oman Cricket Academy ground Al Amerat.

This was Oman's first defeat in five WCL2 games at home, leaving them with 14 points from 13 matches, while Namibia's win closed the gap with Oman to just two points, with 12 points from 14 matches.

Oman's chase of Namibia's modest score of 169 faltered early with the dismissal of opener Aamir Kaleem (15). Skipper Jatinder Singh (25) and Ashish Odedara (11) couldn't build a lasting partnership either, leaving Oman at 58/4 with Wasim Ali out for a duck.

ODI debutant Hashir Dafedar (15) and experienced Sufyan Mehmood (11) were then dismissed in quick succession by Gerhard Erasmus, and the Omani middle order found it difficult to cope with the pressure

from Namibia's spin attack.

Vinayak Shukla (17), one of the three ODI debutants of Oman, along with Hassnain Shah (16*) did hold on to offer some resistance along with the last batter, Shakeel Ahmed (13) but the hosts were eventually bowled out for 146 in 37.2 overs to lose by 23 runs.

Spinners Bernard Scholtz (2/26) and Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton (2/18) led the way with the ball, while another tweaker Gerhard Erasmus (2/42) and Ruben Trumpelmann (2/32) supported well.

Earlier, Namibia found themselves in early trouble as Oman's spinners ran riot on a slow pitch. Namibia managed just 24 runs in the first 10 overs and lost wickets at regular intervals after the mandatory powerplay.

Zane Green (21) was run out, but JP Kotze (29) provided some resistance before being sent back by Sufyan Mehmood. Captain Gerhard Erasmus (0) fell cheaply, the first of Samay Shrivastava's four victims.

Villa knock Tottenham out of FA Cup

Birmingham, England - Aston Villa's Jacob Ramsey struck inside the first minute and Morgan Rogers added a second-half goal to secure a 2-1 win over Tottenham Hotspur and lift their side into the FA Cup fifth round for the first time in 10 years on Sunday at Villa Park.

Villa took 58 seconds to score when Rogers waltzed forward virtually unchallenged before sending the ball into Ramsey's path. The 23-year-old fired straight at Antonin Kinsky who got two hands on it but the ball slipped through them into the net.

"I've been in the first team for four or five years and we have been getting knocked out (of the FA Cup) in the first or second game," Ramsey told the BBC. "So, we wanted to put on a performance for the fans and we did that today."

Rogers doubled the lead in the 64th minute when Pedro Porro could not clear Leon Bailey's cross and Rogers was there to slot home the loose ball from close range for his 11th goal this



Aston Villa's Morgan Rogers scores against Tottenham Hotspur in their FA Cup fourth-round match

season in all competitions for Unai Emery's team.

"The second goal was important, we played well but we hadn't killed the game off," Rogers said. "We probably could have scored a few more but overall we are happy with the performance and the win."

Villa's Manchester United

loanee Marcus Rashford, who had not played since December 12, came on to make his debut two minutes after the second goal to loud cheers from the home fans.

Spurs' new signing Frenchman Mathys Tel from Bayern Munich pulled one back in the 91st minute with his first goal for

the club when he flicked home Dejan Kulusevski's cross but despite some late pressure the hosts held out to claim the victory.

"Really was a fantastic match against a very difficult team," Emery said. "We played really, very well, and after a long time we weren't achieving to be in the

Marcus Rashford came on to make his Villa debut two minutes after the second goal to loud cheers from the home fans

fifth round, of course very happy and very happy for our supporters."

Premier League leaders Liverpool were dumped out of the FA Cup with a shock 1-0 loss at second-tier side Plymouth Argyle earlier on Sunday, while Premier League club Wolverhampton Wanderers beat Championship side Blackburn Rovers 2-0 away.

Tottenham's loss leaves the Europa League as their only hope of a trophy this season after they were dumped out of the League Cup by Liverpool, who progressed 4-1 on aggregate to the final with Newcastle United.

Turkish league match abandoned as Adana Demirspor walk off the pitch

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkish side Adana Demirspor walked off the pitch 30 minutes into their Super Lig clash at Galatasaray on Sunday as they trailed 1-0 to a penalty and the game was later abandoned.

The decision to walk off was taken to protest to Turkey's referees committee and football federation, Adana Demirspor President Murat Sancak said according to news website T24.

Sancak said smaller clubs



Adana Demirspor players walk off the pitch during their match against Galatasaray

were treated unfairly and their issues were not resolved, T24 reported, without giving details.

Bottom side Adana Demirspor were losing to a 12th minute spot kick by Galatasaray's Spanish striker Alvaro Morata.

Adana Demirspor chairman Bedirhan Durak announced his resignation on Monday morning, a day after the Turkish side walked off the pitch in protest during their Super Lig clash against Galatasaray.

BARCA RIGHT IN THE MIX

Catalans hot on heels of LaLiga leaders Real and Atletico with convincing win against Sevilla

Seville, Spain - Ten-man Barcelona earned a hard-fought 4-1 win at struggling Sevilla with goals by Robert Lewandowski, Fermin Lopez, Raphinha and Eric Garcia on Sunday to edge closer to the top of LaLiga.

The win lifted third-placed Barca to 48 points, one behind Atletico Madrid in second and two off leaders Real Madrid after the capital rivals drew 1-1 on Saturday.

Sevilla, without a win in three league games, are in 13th spot on 28 points.

Lewandowski gave Barcelona the lead from close range in the seventh minute but Ruben Vargas hit straight back to equalise for the home side from a quick counter a minute later.

Lopez came off the bench and put Barca in front again two minutes after the break and Raphinha extended their lead in the 55th minute with a brilliant strike from outside the box.

Five minutes later, the visitors were reduced to 10 men when Lopez was shown a straight red card for a studs-up challenge on

Djibril Sow, but they held off Sevilla and managed to score their fourth through Eric Garcia's header in the 89th minute.

"Today we had to win to be in the mix for the title race. We're putting pressure on," Barca defender Inigo Martinez told DAZN.

We're putting pressure on. We are working well. The result is perfect for us. We have a very good feeling right now and we're enjoying the way that we are playing

INIGO MARTINEZ

"We are working well. The result is perfect for us. We have a very good feeling right now and we're enjoying the way that we are playing.

"We suffered with one less player but held on well and even scored a goal ... This is the way," Martinez said.

Lewandowski opened the scoring after a short corner routine as Raphinha lifted a cross to



Barcelona's Raphinha celebrates his goal against Sevilla on Sunday

the far post where defender Martinez headed the ball back across goal where the Polish striker was waiting to steer it into the net.

But straight away Sevilla launched a quick counter-attack with Saul beating the offside trap to receive a through ball in his stride and after a great run up the right channel he crossed to the unmarked Vargas who tapped into the empty net.

Both teams had chances to grab the lead but in the first action of the second half substitute Lopez scored Barca's second with a towering header from a brilliant cross by Pedri.

In the 55th minute Sevilla were left fuming over a push from behind on Djibril Sow inside the box by Jules Kounde and appealed for a penalty. But the referee did not consider the contact enough to be an infringement and let play continue.

That allowed Barca to launch a quick counter attack that ended with Raphinha unleashing an unstoppable low drive into the corner from outside the box to extend the visitors' lead.

Sevilla tried to capitalise on their man advantage but seemed anxious and paid the price when Garcia scored to wrap up a victory that kept Barcelona firmly in the title race.

Brilliant Barcelona 'showed a lot of character and guts'

Seville, Spain - Barcelona manager Hansi Flick said he was proud of his players' effort in Sunday's 4-1 victory at Sevilla, praising their maturity in controlling the match and scoring a late goal despite playing over 30 minutes with 10 men.

After Fermin Lopez and Raphinha scored early in the second half to put Barca 3-1 ahead, Lopez was sent off with a straight red card after a nasty tackle on Djibril Sow in the 60th minute.

But Barca, who had opened the scoring through Robert Lewandowski, held off Sevilla and managed to score their fourth through Eric Garcia's header in the 89th minute to edge closer to the top of LaLiga.

"I value this victory so much, they were brilliant out there and showed a lot of character and



Hansi Flick

guts," Flick told DAZN.

"In the first half we played well and in the second half we were doing also a good job but after the red card we had to fight. It was great to see that we did it and we got the win.

"The players showed maturity and that's fantastic. We defended well and I am happy about that. We were able to contain their players on the flanks, they are a dangerous team to play against. I think we were really good."

The win lifted third-placed Barca to 48 points, one behind Atletico Madrid in second and two off leaders Real Madrid after the capital rivals drew 1-1 on Saturday.

Udinese frustrate Serie A leaders Napoli in 1-1 draw

Naples, Italy - Napoli missed the chance to move a provisional six points clear atop Serie A after being held to a 1-1 draw at home to Udinese on Sunday, their second successive stalemate.

Napoli, who had to settle for a 1-1 draw at AS Roma last week, now have 55 points, four clear of second-placed Inter Milan, who host Fiorentina on Monday. Udinese are 10th on 30.

In an eventful first half, both teams had chances to break the deadlock but Scott McTominay opened the scoring for Napoli in the 37th minute with a pinpoint header from close range following a corner by Matteo Politano.

It was the sixth league goal this season for the Scottish midfielder.

However, Udinese hit back three minutes later as Jurgen Ekkelenkamp equalised with a swerving long-range shot that deceived goalkeeper Alex Meret and flew into the bottom corner.

"I must say that the trajectory was very strange. It's a pity because we gave the ball away... Congratulations to Jurgen be-



Jurgen Ekkelenkamp of Udinese celebrates with teammates after scoring against Napoli on Sunday

cause he scored a great goal," Meret told DAZN.

"We don't think about Inter, we think match by match as always. Today was important. We didn't get the three points but the path is good and we have to look for victory against Lazio," the goalkeeper added about next

week's fixture.

The visitors dominated the second half and came close to taking the lead when Sandi Lovric's effort from outside the area was saved by Meret.

They went close again when Lorenzo Lucca's right-foot shot from the left of the area was

blocked following a pass from Jesper Karlstrom.

Antonio Conte's Napoli side struggled to find their rhythm, although forwards Romelu Lukaku and David Neres went close. They continued to push in the dying minutes but Udinese held out.

We deserved more than a point: Conte



Antonio Conte

field drained tonight, they gave everything to get the victory. It was our ninth game unbeaten, so trust me from the heart when I say this is extraordinary."

Scott McTominay's superb header opened the scoring for

Napoli, but his effort was cancelled out by Jurgen Ekkelenkamp's swerving strike from outside the area, and Conte pointed to Udinese's physicality and skill.

"Udinese are a very physical

team with some real quality players who I believe will soon move to big clubs. We did what we always do, press high, but they had players like Lorenzo Lucca who dominate in the air and are always a threat," said Conte.

With their second successive stalemate, following a 1-1 draw at AS Roma last week, Napoli missed the chance to move six points clear at the top of Serie A.

However, they have 55 points, four clear of Inter Milan, who host Fiorentina on Monday, while third-placed Atalanta, who thrashed Verona 5-0 on Saturday, are on 50.

"I can't ask the boys to do any more than that, otherwise we risk the machine going off the rails and the engine breaking down."



Lucas Vazquez

Hamstring injury rules Real's Vazquez out of Man City clash

Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid's Lucas Vazquez will miss at least the first leg of their Champions League knockout phase playoff against Manchester City on Tuesday due to a hamstring injury, the Spanish club said on Sunday.

The 33-year-old right back played in the 1-1 draw with against rivals Atletico Madrid in LaLiga on Saturday but subsequent tests found an injury in his left leg.

"Following tests carried out on Lucas Vazquez today by the Real

Madrid Medical Services, he has been diagnosed with a muscle injury in his left hamstring," Real said in a statement.

"He will not be in the squad to travel to Manchester," the Champions League holders added.

Carlo Ancelotti's side are already without Eder Militao, Dani Carvajal, David Alaba, and Antonio Ruediger due to various injuries, leaving the Spanish giants with only Raul Asensio as a centre back, alongside Fran Garcia and Ferland Mendy..

Monza recall Nesta after sacking Bocchetti

Monza, Italy - Monza have recalled Alessandro Nesta to take over as manager following the sacking of Salvatore Bocchetti, the Serie A club said on Monday, after a heavy defeat at the weekend kept the club rooted at the bottom of the standings.

Bocchetti replaced Nesta in December, signing a contract until June 2027, but his side registered only one win in seven league games, and Sunday's 5-1 loss at Lazio was Monza's fourth consecutive defeat.

Monza also exited the Coppa Italia, losing 4-0 to

Bologna, during Bocchetti's time in charge, and Nesta, a former Italy international and defender with Lazio and AC Milan, now returns to the bench seven weeks after his sacking.

Nesta originally took charge when Raffaele Palladino left for Fiorentina at the end of last season, but his first managerial role in Serie A initially ended after Monza managed one league win in the opening 17 games.

Monza, with two league wins this season, have 13 points from 24 games, and host Lecce on Sunday.



Matthew Breetzke

South Africa's Breetzke breaks ODI record

Lahore, Pakistan - South Africa opening batter Matthew Breetzke broke a 47-year-old record when he made the highest score on one-day international debut with 150 in a losing effort against New Zealand in a Tri-Nations fixture at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Monday.

Breetzke, 26, struck 11 fours and five sixes in his 148-ball innings as South Africa, battling first, amassed 304 for six in their 50 overs.

New Zealand chased their target down with eight balls to spare thanks to an unbeaten 133 from Kane Williamson to win by six wickets.

Breetzke's score beat the previous best mark of West Indian Desmond Haynes who made 148 on debut against

Australia in Antigua in 1978. The South African record had been 124 by Colin Ingram against Zimbabwe in 2010.

"It hasn't sunk in yet and I'm a bit tired," Breetzke said. "The pitch was tacky and (New Zealand seamer Will) O'Rourke was really tough to face.

"My mindset was to bat as long as possible and give myself a chance at the end."

Breetzke, who is not part of South Africa's Champions Trophy squad, batted until the 46th over.

He has played 10 Twenty20 internationals and a single test, making his ODI debut in a weakened line-up missing several leading batsmen who are not available for the series.

Assess and explode

Rohit, back in form, says set batsmen need to play long innings

New Delhi, India - A month after his poor form forced Rohit Sharma to drop himself from a test match in Sydney, the India captain can finally breathe easy after producing a faith-restoring hundred in Sunday's second one-day international against England.

Rohit quit T20 Internationals minutes after leading India to their second 20-overs World Cup title last year and has struggled in tests.

The Mumbai player turns 38 in April and media reports claim the selectors have asked him about his future plans beyond the Champions Trophy beginning later this month.

Rohit scored two in the opening ODI against England, but Sunday's 119 off 90 balls was a timely reminder that the elegant opener is not a spent force yet.

One of the cleanest strikers of the ball, Rohit clobbered seven effortless sixes and the familiar sweet sound of the bat whacking the ball announced the 50-overs stalwart was back in his element.

"I really broke it down into pieces about how I wanted to bat," player-of-the-match Rohit said of his approach.

"It's a 50-over format ... but you still need to break it down and assess what you need to do at regular intervals and that is what I kept doing.

"It was important for a batter who gets set to bat as deep as possible and that was my focus."

It has been Rohit's template in ODIs - assessing before exploding, an approach that has fetched him three 200-plus scores, the most by a batsman, including a 264 that remains the highest individual score in this format.

In Cuttack on Sunday, it was a typical Rohit knock where he shunned the cross-batted shots early in his knock before hitting the English bowlers all over the park at Barabati Stadium.

"When you play on black soil, (the ball) tends to skid on a bit, so it's important that you show



Rohit Sharma plundered 12 fours and seven sixes in his knock of 119 off 90 balls

I really broke it down into pieces about how I wanted to bat. It's a 50-over format ... but you still need to break it down and assess what you need to do at regular intervals

ROHIT SHARMA

the full face of the bat when you're batting initially," the right-hander said.

"Once I got into my innings, I understood what they were trying to do - bowling into our body and trying to not give any room, keeping it on the stumps.

"That's where I prepared my plan as well, what I wanted to do with those kind of deliveries, trying to access the gaps which were there. It's about under-

standing what you want to do as a batter."

With Shubman Gill, his opening partner, Rohit added 136 in just under 17 overs, eating into a large chunk of India's 305-run target, which they eventually got to in the 45th over to win the three-game series with a match in hand.

Gill, who Rohit called "a very, very classy player" who "doesn't seem to get overawed" by the

situation, was effusive in his praise for his captain.

"He makes things much easier than what it is," Gill, who scored 60 in 52 balls - his second half-century in the series - said. "The way that he took on the bowlers... we have seen that over the past couple of years, how he's been batting in the ODIs, and the way he dominated the fast bowlers today was just a treat to watch from the non-striker's end."

It's good portents for India ahead of the Champions Trophy, which starts on February 19. Their captain, who has been struggling for runs in Tests - he has retired from T20Is - is as good as he always was in ODIs. That's one piece of the jigsaw that's firmly in place.



Carlos Alcaraz

Alcaraz overcomes De Minaur challenge to win in Rotterdam

Rotterdam, Netherlands - World number three Carlos Alcaraz claimed his first indoor title when he beat Australian third seed Alex de Minaur 6-4 3-6 6-2 in the Rotterdam Open final on Sunday.

The four-times Grand Slam winner, who began the 2025 season with a quarter-final defeat by Novak Djokovic at the Australian Open, won his 17th ATP Tour career title, his first indoor.

It was the Spaniard's first title since winning in Beijing in October as he again wore a nasal strip having suffered with a cold all week. He also became the youngest man in history to win a title on clay, grass, hard court, and indoor hard court.

The Spanish top seed broke De Minaur in the third game of the ATP 500 tournament showpiece clash, before losing serve himself as the opening was levelled at 4-4. Alcaraz, however, broke in the next game and then took the first set.

De Minaur powered to a 3-0 lead in the second, which went with serve until the Australian levelled the match.

Alcaraz, pushed into a decider for the third time this week, took control when he broke for a 4-2 lead and proved ruthless as he took the title on his debut event in Rotterdam.

"It has been a really good week," Alcaraz said.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

German National (Male, 31), multi-talented and fast learner, with technical background is looking for any suitable position to improve his intermediate English. Six years experience at ALDI, one of the largest supermarket chains in Germany as Replenishment Dispatcher for around 120 branches. Available in Muscat till Jan 30 with one year multiple-entry visa to Oman. Contact Number: 96756864

Indian male graduate with 14 years of Sales & Marketing experience looking for suitable position with valid D/L. Ready to join immediately. Contact : 95136784

Indian male 'Application and Business Intelligence Developer' with 22+ years' experience and expert in PowerBI, PowerApp, PowerAutomate, ASP.NET, MVC, dot-NET, C#, SQLServer, SSIS, SSRS, NintexWorkflow, looking for suitable position. Currently available in Muscat. Contact 92056372, gsprimotvla@gmail.com

Looking for Immediate Job opportunity in Accounts. I am Shoaib Shaikh, with 2.5 years of experience in Accounts, specializing in bank reconciliation, accounts payable, and receivable. Additionally, I have 6 months of experience in the travel industry in Muscat. I am available to join immediately and seeking a position with a salary expectation of RO450-550. For more details, contact: 93267786

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RUHI
FEBRUARY 11
Happy Birthday to our wonderful daughter Ruhi! Your laughter and joy light up our lives every day. On this day, we celebrate the amazing person that you are and all the incredible things you'll achieve.

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I stared at the X-rays on my computer screen, my fingers resting on the keyboard. Twenty years of orthopaedic surgery had taught me to read not just the images, but the stories etched within them...

The knee joint before me spoke volumes: severe medial compartment deterioration, practically bone-on-bone contact. It was a sight I'd seen countless times, but the patient's age, just forty-four, made me pause.

Aisha sat across from my desk, absently rubbing her right knee. The examination couch behind her creaked as she shifted, its paper covering slightly crumpled from our earlier examination. I could hear the gentle hum of the air conditioning, and see the slight grimace cross her face with each movement.

My mind drifted to another patient from five years ago, Samira. Similar presentation, similar age, similar decisions to make. I'd gone ahead with the surgery then. The technical outcome was perfect – textbook joint replacement. But what followed still haunts me. Blood clots formed in her calf veins, a silent threat at first. Then that terrible day in the scanning room – Samira turning blue, losing consciousness while being moved to the scanning table. The following weeks in intensive care, watching her fight for every breath as the blood clots had travelled to her lungs, were agonising. Even now, the memory makes my stomach clench.

The laboratory results popped up on my screen, a stark reminder of Aisha's current health status. I clicked through them methodically: total cholesterol 6.8, triglycerides 3.2, HDL barely 0.9, blood pressure 158/94, BMI 42.3. The numbers painted a clear picture of metabolic syndrome creeping up alongside the joint deterioration. This wasn't just about a knee anymore; it was about a life at risk.

"The X-rays confirm what we suspected," I began, turning my screen so Aisha could see. "The cartilage in your right knee is severely damaged, particularly on the inner side." I pointed to the narrowed joint space. "This explains the pain you're experiencing."

Aisha nodded, a flicker of both relief and anxiety crossing her face. "So, surgery will fix it, right? I can't... I can't live like this anymore. My daughter's getting married in six months, and I can barely help with

THE WEIGHT WE CARRY



(Photo for illustrative purpose only)



Dr Biswajit Dutta Baruah
Consultant orthopaedic surgeon,
KIMS Oman

the preparations."

The hope in her voice made my next words harder. I pulled my chair closer, establishing eye contact. "Surgery is an option, but it's not that simple. Joint replacement isn't just about replacing parts. It's about giving your body the best chance to heal and adapt to the new joint. Right now, there are significant risks we need to discuss."

"Because of my weight?" she asked quietly, looking down at her knees.

"Yes, but not just that." I turned back to my screen, pulling up her lab results. "Every extra kilo puts three times that force through your knees when walking. But it's more than mechanical stress. Your cholesterol levels are high, your blood pressure is elevated – these factors increase your risk of complications. Serious complications."

I thought of Samira and her difficult post-operative course. "While not every patient develops complications, being overweight does increase the risks of blood clots, wound healing problems, and infections. These are serious concerns we need to consider."

Aisha's shoulders slumped. "So, you won't do the surgery?" she asked.

"I'm saying we have a choice to make." I leaned forward. "I could operate now. Technically, I can give you a new joint. But you need to understand and accept the increased risks. Or we could take a different approach. Work with our dietician for six months. Get your body in better condition for surgery. Improve not just the odds of success, but your overall health."

"Six months?" Her voice cracked. "But the wedding..."

"Think about it this way – do you want to be at your daughter's wedding in pain, or working towards being able to dance at her recep-

tion?"

The silence stretched between us, broken only by the steady hum of the AC. These moments – these pauses heavy with possibility – were often where real change began.

Finally, Aisha spoke, her voice tinged with frustration. "But how can I exercise when I'm in so much pain? Every step hurts!"

"That's where proper guidance comes in," I replied. "We don't start with walking or standing exercises. Our physiotherapy team has specific programmes for patients in your situation. We could begin with water therapy, where the pool supports your weight while you move. Combined with appropriate pain medication and knee supports, we can help you exercise comfortably. As you get stronger and lighter, we gradually add more activities."

Aisha studied the images intently. "And if... if I can't lose the weight?"

I met her gaze steadily. "Then we'll proceed with surgery. We'll take all necessary precautions, but you need to understand and accept that there are increased risks involved. While serious complications are uncommon, they can occur, and your weight does increase those chances."

The next few minutes were spent outlining both possibilities – the weight management plan and the surgical pathway. As Aisha left my office, moving carefully but with a thoughtful look in her eyes, I turned back to my computer to document our discussion.

Sometimes the hardest part of being a surgeon is knowing when not to operate. The easy path would have been to simply schedule the surgery – one more case, one more statistic.

But medicine at its best isn't about quick fixes, it's about making the right decisions, even when they're difficult.

I began typing my notes, already planning the coordination with our dietician. In six months, I might be performing a knee replacement. Or, may be, I'd be seeing a different Aisha, one who had found her own path to healing. Either way, today's decision wasn't just about surgical timing – it was about practising medicine with both skill and wisdom, about remembering that sometimes the most important surgical decisions are the ones that keep patients safe, even if that means keeping them off the operating table for a while.

(Do you need new insights to any medical concern? Write to Dr Biswajit at: bdbaruah@orthodoc.in)

One of the most common questions people with arthritis ask is, "Is there a special arthritis diet?" While there's no miracle diet for arthritis, many foods can help fight inflammation and improve joint pain and other symptoms.

For starters, a diet rich in whole foods, including fruits, vegetables, fish, nuts and beans, but low processed foods and saturated fat, is not only great for overall health, but can also help manage disease activity. If this advice sounds familiar, it's because these are the principles of the Mediterranean diet, which is frequently touted for its anti-inflammatory and disease-fighting powers.

Mediterranean diet

Studies confirm that eating foods commonly part of the Mediterranean diet have the following benefits:

- Lower blood pressure
- Protect against chronic conditions, ranging from cancer to stroke
- Help arthritis by curbing inflammation
- Benefit your joints as well as your heart
- Lead to weight loss, which can lessen joint pain

Here are key foods from the Mediterranean diet and why they're so good for joint health. Find more information to man-

Arthritis Diet

SOME FOODS FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET CAN HELP FIGHT INFLAMMATION CAUSED BY ARTHRITIS

age pain with our pain resources.

Fish

Health authorities like the American Heart Association and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommend three to four ounces of fish, twice a week. Arthritis experts claim more is better.

Some types of fish are good sources of inflammation-fighting omega-3 fatty acids. One study found those who had the highest consumption of omega-3s had lower levels of two inflammatory proteins: C-reactive protein (CRP) and interleukin-6.

More recently, researchers have shown that taking fish oil supplements helps reduce joint

swelling and pain, duration of morning stiffness and disease activity among people who have rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

Best sources: Salmon, tuna, sardines, herring, anchovies, scallops and other cold-water fish. Hate fish? Take a supplement. Studies show that taking 600 to 1,000mg of fish oil daily eases joint stiffness, tenderness, pain and swelling.

Nuts and Seeds

Eat 45g of nuts daily (one ounce is about a handful). "Multiple studies confirm the role of nuts in an anti-inflammatory diet," explains José M. Ordovás, PhD, director of nutrition and genomics at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition



Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston.

One study found that over a 15-year period, men and women who consumed the most nuts had a 51% lower risk of dying from an inflammatory disease (like RA) compared with those who ate the fewest nuts. Another study found that

subjects with lower levels of vitamin B6 — found in most nuts — had higher levels of inflammatory markers.

Nuts are jam-packed with inflammation-fighting mo-

nounsaturated fat. And though they're relatively high in fat and calories, studies show noshing on nuts promotes weight loss because their protein, fibre and monounsaturated fats are satiating.

Best sources: Walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios and almonds.

Fruits and vegetables

Aim for nine or more servings daily (one serving equals one cup of most veggies or fruit or two cups of raw leafy greens).

Fruits and vegetables are loaded with antioxidants. These potent chemicals act as the body's natural defence system, helping to neutralise unstable molecules called free radicals that can damage cells.

Research has shown that anthocyanins found in cherries and other red and purple fruits like strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries have an anti-inflammatory effect.

Citrus fruits — like oranges, grapefruits and limes — are rich in vitamin C. Research shows getting the right amount of that vitamin aids in preventing inflammatory arthritis and maintaining healthy joints. Other research suggests eating vitamin K-rich veggies like broccoli, spinach, lettuce, kale and cabbage dramatically reduces inflammatory markers in the blood.

Best sources: Colourful fruits and veggies — the darker or more brilliant the colour, the more antioxidants it has. Good ones include blueberries, cherries, spinach, kale and broccoli. (Courtesy: arthritis.org)

WORK SIESTA

SHOULD WE ALL BE NAPPING ON THE JOB?
THERE ARE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF A WORK SIESTA,
ACCORDING TO STUDIES



Napping during the day is a cultural norm in some parts of the world, but could it transform your work day? Experts are debating the potential benefits.

They snooze in parking garages, on side streets before the afternoon school run, in nap pods rented by the hour, or stretched out in bed while working from home. But are people who nap during the day or on the job getting any health benefits?

Several research studies have found there are benefits from napping, such as enhanced memory and focus.

A mid-afternoon siesta is the norm in parts of Spain and Italy, while in China and Japan, napping is encouraged since working to the point of exhaustion is seen as a display of dedication, according to a recent study in the journal Sleep.

Here are some tips about napping during the day and potentially reaping its benefits:

Keep naps short

Sleep is as important to good health as diet and exercise, but too many people don't get enough of it, according to James Rowley, programme director of the Sleep Medicine Fellowship at Rush University Medical Center.

"A lot of it has to do with electronics. It used to be TVs, but now cell phones are probably the biggest culprit. People just take them to bed with them and watch," Rowley said. For instance, a 2021 study found that young adults who used their phones before sleeping were more likely to report trouble sleeping.

The key to effective napping is to keep the snooze sessions short, Rowley said, adding that short naps can be restorative and are more likely to leave you more alert.

"Most people don't realise naps should be in the 15- to 20-minute range," Rowley said. "Anything longer, and you can have problems with sleep inertia, difficulty waking up, and you're groggy".

Individuals who find themselves consistently relying on naps to make up for inadequate sleep should probably also examine their bedtime habits, he said.

When to take a nap

Mid-afternoon is the ideal time for a nap because it coincides with a natural circadian dip, while napping after 6 pm

may interfere with nocturnal sleep for those who work during daylight hours, said Michael Chee, director of the Centre for Sleep and Cognition at the National University of Singapore.

When people nap for too long, it may not be a sustainable practice, and also, really long naps that cross the

two-hour mark affect nighttime sleep.

"Any duration of nap, you will feel recharged. It's a relief valve. There are clear cognitive benefits," Chee said.

A review of napping studies suggests that 30 minutes is the optimal nap length in terms of practicality and benefits, said Ruth Leong, a research

fellow at the Singapore centre.

"When people nap for too long, it may not be a sustainable practice, and also, really long naps that cross the two-hour mark affect nighttime sleep," Leong said.

Experts recommend setting an alarm for 20 to 30 minutes, which

gives nappers a few minutes to fall asleep. But some say even a short nap can be restorative.

Creating space for sleep

Naps are accepted and even a necessity in some occupations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages naps for nurses who work night shifts. But many nurses can't sleep at the hospitals where they work because they're too busy and aren't given access to beds.

Nurses "regularly struggle to have sufficient time to use the bathroom or go outside for fresh air, no less take a nap," said a spokesperson for the National Nurses United union.

Some companies are trying to fill the void. Inspired by his mother who worked as a nurse, Neil Wong founded Nap York, which offers sleeping pods in Manhattan and Queens that can be rented for about US\$27 an hour.

His regular customers include super-commuters, UPS drivers, a security guard who works two full-time jobs, and doctors who work at nearby hospitals.

Nap York also gives half-off prices to essential workers such as police officers, firefighters and emergency medical service personnel.

"In this society, you really only have two places to sleep - you have your bed at home and you have a hotel room you can probably get for 100 bucks," Wong said. "There's really no third space that's quiet, that provides some privacy, where you can also rest."

Courtesy: euronews.com

WEEKEND NAPS

A recent study found that people who slept extra hours on weekends were up to 20 per cent less likely to develop heart disease compared to those who didn't.

Catching up on missed hours of sleep during the weekend might be more beneficial than it seems.

A large new study revealed that sleeping in on weekends may help mitigate risks associated with sleep deprivation.

The new findings, which were presented at a meeting of the European Society of Cardiology, showed that people who got extra sleep lowered their risk of heart disease by up to 20 per cent.

