

MoL receives over 17,000 complaints related to salary payments annually

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Labour (MoL) receives between 17,000 and 18,000 complaints annually related to wage payments, highlighting persistent challenges faced by workers in receiving timely and full wages.

Saif Salem al Zaabi, Member of Wage Protection Programme team, acknowledged the scale of the problem and outlined measures being adopted to address it.

The ministry has set up a specialised committee to safeguard workers' wages and re-

solve disputes fairly and transparently.

Central to this effort is the Wage Protection System (WPS), which mandates that private sector employers pay wages through an electronic system regulated by Central Bank of Oman. Under WPS, salaries must be deposited directly into employees' bank accounts on time and in full, as stipulated in employment contracts and Oman's Labour Law.

"The number of wage-related complaints remains consistently high, between 17,000 and 18,000 annually, even after introduction of WPS," said Zaabi.



"The system is designed to improve transparency and ensure compliance across the labour market." Businesses struggling to meet the WPS requirements

Wage Protection System, introduced in 2023, mandates that private sector employers must deposit salaries directly into employees' bank accounts on time and in full

have been given an 18-month grace period to adjust. MoL has also introduced penalties for vi-

olations under Ministerial Decision No 729/2024. Employers who fail to comply with WPS face penalties ranging from warnings to service suspensions and fines of RO50 per affected worker, with repeat offences incurring double the fines.

Introduced under ministerial decision No 299/2023, WPS is part of broader reforms aimed at modernising labour practices, protecting workers' rights and fostering a fairer labour market. The phased implementation of the system allows businesses time to adapt, with sector-specific guidance and technical

support provided by MoL.

The ministry commended companies that have already adopted the system, recognising their role in promoting fairness and fair business practices. It also encouraged employers and workers to use official channels for queries and pledged to work closely with stakeholders to ensure a transparent and equitable labour market.

Through these initiatives, MoL aims to create a work environment where workers' rights are protected, disputes are resolved efficiently, and businesses operate with fairness and transparency.



3.5mn visitors received in 2024 till November

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman recorded over 3.5mn visitors in 2024 between January and November, matching figures from the same period in 2023. The total number of visitors in 2023 was 4mn.

The hospitality sector saw a marked improvement, with 1.929mn guests staying in 3- to 5-star hotels during the same 11-month period - a 4% increase from 2023. Hotel revenues rose to RO212.372mn, representing a 5% increase compared to the previous year. Hotel occupancy rates also climbed to 54.86%, a 1.5% increase, reflecting growing demand for high-quality accommodation.

H E Salim al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, highlighted Oman's tourism recovery and its ambitious targets at an international media forum - 'Oman and the World' - held in Muscat earlier this month. "Oman's stunning beaches, ports, unique topography and adventure tourism opportunities have significantly boosted tourist numbers."

The ministry aims to attract

6mn tourists annually by 2030, a goal it hopes to meet ahead of target. Efforts to reach this number include promoting adventure, marine and culinary tourism, as well as showcasing Unesco-listed archaeological sites. Promotional campaigns have been launched in Europe and Russia, alongside the opening of tourism offices in key markets. Expanding into East Asia is now a priority.

A major challenge to meeting the target is limited direct flight connectivity, which the ministry is actively addressing to ensure smooth access for international tourists.

Oman's cultural and natural heritage continues to captivate visitors. Dhofar, in particular, remains a major draw. Sites within the Land of Frankincense - such as Al Baleed, Samharam Archaeological Parks, Wadi Dawkah Nature Reserve and the Wabar Archaeological Site - welcomed 155,795 visitors in 2024.

With diverse attractions and ongoing efforts to overcome challenges, Oman is positioning itself as a leading global destination for travellers seeking rich cultural experiences and natural beauty.

Oman records 500 tremors annually, strengthens monitoring network

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has bolstered its earthquake monitoring capabilities with the establishment of 26 advanced seismic stations across the sultanate and an average of 500 seismic events being recorded annually.

Equipped with cutting-edge technology, these stations enhance the sultanate's ability to detect and track seismic activity locally and globally, according to Dr Issa al Hussein, Director of Earthquake Monitoring Centre (EMC) at Sultan Qaboos University.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Hussein stressed the importance of the monitoring network in swiftly detecting tremors and ensuring public safety. He noted that the 2.5-magnitude earthquake near Muscat earlier this week, though shallow and perceptible to resi-



seins, caused no damage to infrastructure.

"Oman records an average of 500 earthquakes annually, with most originating in the Zagros Mountains, the Sea of Oman, the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of

In addition to 26 advanced monitoring stations, Oman's network includes nearly 100 seismology stations, of which 75 are fully operational

DR ISSA AL HUSSEIN

Aden. A smaller number of tremors are recorded in the Oman Mountains and along the Masirah Fault. While these quakes are typically light to moderate, the monitoring system evaluates potential risks and impacts," he explained.

In addition to the 26 monitoring stations, Oman's network includes nearly 100 seismology stations, of which 75 are fully operational. The remaining 25 are in the process of installation. Muscat has 22 instruments, and plans are underway to expand the network further, particularly in urban areas for more precise monitoring.

EMC also plays a vital role in

public education, regularly organising workshops and lectures on earthquake preparedness. "Last year, Muscat and surrounding areas experienced five noticeable earthquakes, none of which caused damage."

Hussein highlighted efforts to engage the younger generation, with hundreds of students visiting the centre annually to learn about seismic activities and disaster response.

"The centre remains committed to spreading awareness on earthquake preparedness, ensuring that both the public and private sectors are equipped to respond effectively to seismic events," Hussein said.

TRUMP'S FIRST DAY ON THE JOB WAS GOOD FOR ISRAELI SETTLERS

Israeli settlers in the West Bank set vehicles and property on fire on Monday under the protection of Israeli forces. On his first day in office, US President Donald Trump rescinded sanctions imposed by the former Biden administration on far-right Israeli settler groups and individuals accused of being involved in violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank

See also [Page 09](#)

H M issues Royal Decree

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued **Royal Decree No 15/2025** on Tuesday amending some provisions of Royal Decree No 88/2022 on fixing official holidays. The decree reads as follows:

Article 1 states that the text of Clause 'D', item 'Firstly', 'Article 1' of Royal Decree No 88/2022, will be replaced with the following:

D - The National Day of the Sultanate of Oman to be on November 20 and 21.

Article 2 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of publication.

ONA

03

MTCIT launches programme to advance tech innovations

Oman unveils new Nation Brand at WEF in Davos

Davos, Switzerland - In a significant stride towards enhancing Oman's global presence, Ministry of Economy launched the sultanate's new 'Nation Brand' at World Economic Forum in Davos.

The landmark event marks a pivotal chapter in Oman's journey to strengthen its international partnerships and showcase the rich tapestry of culture and economic potential.

Speaking at the event, H E Dr Said Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, expressed confidence in the brand's ability to enhance Oman's standing on the global stage. "This initiative is a testament to our unwavering dedication and spirit of cooperation and partnership. We present to the world a narrative woven with our cultural richness and strategic foresight, aiming to create impactful global dialogues and partnerships," H E Saqri stated.

Launch of the Nation Brand at

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Launch of the Nation Brand at



Davos represents Oman's commitment to the world as a cooperative and trustworthy partner. Focused on fostering meaningful connections and innovative collaborations, the new brand embodies the core values of warmth, partnership and foresight that define our national identity.

As per a statement, the launch serves not only as an invitation to international investors and media to explore Oman's opportunities but also as a celebration of the in-

novative spirit thriving within communities in the sultanate. 'Focused on sustainable development and economic growth, Oman is poised to become a hub for strategic and meaningful engagements on the global stage. The Oman Nation Brand is a reflection of our collective ambition to build a future where the sultanate plays a central role in addressing global challenges and fostering a sustainable, interconnected world.'

13

Djokovic outshines Alcaraz in thriller to reach Australian Open semifinals



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MHT advances sustainable
tourism with eco-lodges

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With 153 eco-lodges licensed by the end of 2024, the sultanate's commitment to sustainable tourism continues to grow. These eco-friendly accommodations, distributed across the governorates, are central to Oman Vision 2040's emphasis on environmental sustainability, community-driven growth and high-quality tourism development.

The eco-lodges - or green inns - initiative supports environmental goals while fostering local economies. Tourists are offered an authentic experience of Oman's natural beauty and cultural heritage, contributing to the preservation of both. Governorates like South Batinah and Dhahirah, which have the highest number eco-lodges, are becoming popular among eco-conscious travellers drawn to Oman's rural landscapes and responsible tourism practices.

Highlighting the rising popularity of eco-lodges, Ahmed bin Khamis al Saadi, Director of Investor Services Department at Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT), said, "These facilities are now preferred by tourists seeking sustainable lodging. They also provide valuable economic opportunities, es-



These facilities are now preferred by tourists seeking sustainable lodging. They also provide valuable economic opportunities, especially in rural areas

AHMED BIN KHAMIS AL SAADI

pecially in rural areas."

To encourage investment, MHT has reduced the licensing fee for eco-lodges to RO250mn for five years and is working with financial institutions to streamline the documentation process. New standards for eco-lodges are also being developed in collaboration with relevant authorities, focusing on eco-friendly practices, sustainability measures and tourist activities.

Since introducing eco-lodges in 2015, MHT has organised workshops across the country to

promote sustainable tourism practices and encourage investments in green, heritage and guest house projects. These efforts have raised awareness of green tourism's potential, particularly in rural areas, where the initiative has created jobs and boosted local economies.

Visitors to eco-lodges enjoy an immersive experience, with opportunities to savour traditional Omani cuisine, purchase handmade crafts and connect with local communities. This approach strengthens socio-economic ties while preserving Oman's cultural and environmental heritage.

Challenges such as urban sprawl and limited natural resources, including water scarcity, pose hurdles to the initiative's growth. However, the ministry continues to address these issues through education and advocacy for sustainable tourism practices.

MHT is also prioritising expansion of agricultural and rural tourism. Farmers are encouraged to invest in tourism projects that offer unique, eco-friendly experiences, with a focus on renewable resources and social responsibility. These efforts aim to diversify Oman's tourism sector while aligning with environmental goals.



Yanqul residents fund 80% of
flood protection wall project

Our Correspondent
Ibri

Residents of Yanqul have joined forces with the government to finance a flood protection wall to safeguard the wilayat's agricultural lands. Valued at RO365,000, the project will see the local community contributing 80% of the total cost, while Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) will fund the rest.

The ministry signed an agreement for the initiative - which aims to protect fertile soil, prevent crop damage caused by floods and reduce agricultural losses - on Monday.

Salim bin Ali al Amrani, Director General of Agriculture and

Spanning 1,700m in length, the RO365,000 flood protection wall will have a 1.5m deep foundation and width of 2.5m, with the main structure rising to a height of 6.5m

Water Resources in Dhahirah, said, "The wall will preserve agricultural land and ensure vital resources remain available to local farmers."

The structure, designed to strengthen the governorate's re-

silience to flooding, is expected to encourage farmers to increase production, and boost supply of Omani produce in local and international markets.

Spanning 1,700m in length, the flood protection wall will have a 1.5m deep foundation and width of 2.5m, with the main structure rising to a height of 6.5m. Constructed with reinforced concrete, it will adhere to technical standards approved by ministry engineers, who will oversee its construction.

Slated for completion within 300 days, the project is a critical step towards enhancing agricultural sustainability in Yanqul while also providing flood protection for homes and property in the area.

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Surge in seasonal ailments
with cold spell continuing

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat has been experiencing a cold spell and a spike in seasonal ailments in recent weeks.

While slight dips in temperature are common this time of the year, the weather has resulted in noticeable changes, including a rise in flu-like symptoms such as fever and throat pain.

Explaining the weather phenomenon, an official from the Directorate General of Meteorology said, "Cool winds blowing from the Indian Ocean, coupled with low pressure over the seas, have caused temperatures to drop by a few degrees. Mild rains in Oman's interior regions have also contributed to the cooler weather, intensifying the sense of a cold wave."

The official added that this is a seasonal occurrence and is expected to ease in the coming weeks.

The drop in temperature has led to an increase in illnesses, particularly throat infection, cough and fever lasting up to a week. Children and adults alike have been affected, with viral infections spreading easily in



We've seen a significant rise in cases of cold, cough and flu, especially among school-going children. These are primarily viral infections, and unnecessary use of antibiotics should be avoided

DR BASHEER A

schools and crowded places.

Dr Basheer A, Specialist Internist and Head of Department at Badr al Samaa Hospital, Ruwi, highlighted the health risks linked to the cold weather. "We've seen a significant rise in cases of cold, cough and flu, especially among

school-going children. These are primarily viral infections, and unnecessary use of antibiotics should be avoided."

To prevent complications, Dr Basheer suggested, people should focus on warm foods and drinks, maintain good hand hygiene, and avoid cold foods. Sick individuals should rest and avoid close contact for at least 48 to 72 hours to limit the spread of infection.

"Vaccinations for those prone to frequent flu infections can be helpful. If symptoms worsen or persist, medical consultation is essential."

Sharing his experience with the change in weather, businessman Abdullah al Raisi said, "I wasn't expecting the cold to affect me this much. I had a fever and sore throat for nearly a week, but staying hydrated and having warm soups helped me recover."

Recounting her experience, expatriate Meena Sharma said, "My daughter fell ill with a bad cold and took a week to recover. The weather caught us by surprise, but we're being more cautious now, especially about sending her to school when she's unwell."

ROP to host meet
on adventure
activities

Muscat - In collaboration with several government bodies, Royal Oman Police will host a dialogue session on adventure tourism and mountain climbing at the ROP Dakhliyah Headquarters on Thursday. The session will be held under the patronage of H E Azzan Qassim al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Tourism in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

According to a statement issued by ROP, the event will bring together representatives from a wide range of organisations, including Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Department of Environment in Dakhliyah, and Directorate General of Public Prosecution.

The session will focus on discussing the regulatory framework and safety requirements surrounding adventure tourism and mountain climbing in Oman. It aims to raise awareness on potential risks involved in these popular activities, as well as promote best practices for safety and responsible tourism.

This initiative is part of broader efforts to enhance adventure tourism while ensuring the safety and well-being of participants.

Folk shows enthrall audiences at Naseem Park

25-member Sawahil Folk Arts Band's repertoire includes a range of traditional dance forms

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Nights Festival continues to serve as a vibrant platform for celebrating Omani culture, offering visitors a glimpse into the sultanate's rich heritage. Among the standout performers this year is the Sawahil Folk Arts Band. Its performances at Naseem Park are captivating audiences, highlighting the cultural diversity and depth of Omani traditions.

The band comprises 25 members from various places, including Muscat, North Batinah and South Sharqiyah. Band leader Dawood al Muaini said, "Our diversity enables us to present various traditions that attract visitors from all parts of the sultanate."

The group performs a range of traditional dance forms, including Razha, Al Bara'a, Al Madar and Al Wana, each deeply rooted in Oman's cultural identity.

Al Razha, one of the oldest traditional dances in Oman, holds a special place in the nation's history. Known for symbolising strength and unity, it



(Muscat Daily)



involves rhythmic movements accompanied by drums and poetry.

Al Bara'a is particularly popular in Dhofar and the eastern coastal areas

like Sur and Jalan Bani Bu Ali. It typically features one or two dancers performing to the rhythm of drums and wind instruments.



Sawahil Folk Arts Band started with just five friends practising on beaches and in parks. Our diversity enables us to present various traditions that attract visitors from all parts of the sultanate

DAWOOD AL MUAINI

Another significant performance is the Al Azi, a poetry recitation combined with music, often celebrating moral values, national pride and the

Sultan's leadership. "Al Azi showcases our rich poetic tradition and honours our heritage," Muaini explained.

Synchronised dance steps by members standing in two parallel rows are characteristic of the band's performances. Dressed in traditional attire, they play drums such as Al Kaser, Al Rahmani and Al Daf, complementing the beats with vocals to create a mesmerising experience.

Forming Sawahil Folk Arts Band came with challenges. Muaini recalled starting with just five friends practising on beaches and in parks, often struggling for financial support. "With determination and support from our families, we overcame these hurdles," he said. The band's dedication is evident in its rigorous practice sessions, with rehearsals beginning three days before major events to ensure flawless performances.

The troupe has earned recognition both locally and internationally, performing at events such as Salalah Tourism Festival and events in Dubai and Kuwait. Looking ahead, Muaini is hopeful of expanding the band's reach. "We aim to participate in more local and international festivals and eventually establish branches in other governorates to spread the beauty of our authentic folklore," he said.

The band's passion for preserving Oman's cultural heritage ensures that traditional art forms remain a vital part of the nation's identity, captivating audiences and promoting the rich legacy of Omani folklore.



(Supplied photo)

MTCIT launches programme to advance tech innovations

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) launched a programme called 'Deep Technologies' on Tuesday aimed at supporting innovators and start-ups in the sultanate's tech sector. The two-and-a-half-year programme is designed to help transform advanced technological innovations into market-ready solutions.

Khulood bint Ali al Muhaidhri, Senior Technology Projects Specialist at MTCIT, informed that the programme was developed after extensive consultations with universities, experts and specialists in innovation. "We observed that many projects from existing accelerator programmes fail to complete the development cycle. This programme addresses those gaps by offering continuous, sustainable support over a longer period," she said.

Participants of the Deep Technologies programme will receive expert guidance, including creation of clear mar-

keting strategies, financial support and mentoring from industry leaders. The programme will also provide direct access to potential investors keen on the advanced tech sector.

The goal is to promote innovation that tackles real-world challenges while driving technological growth in Oman

KHULOOD AL MUHAIDHRI

Deep technologies, which form the programme's focus, are innovations rooted in scientific discoveries and engineering breakthroughs. These include artificial intelligence, robotics, biotechnology for healthcare and agriculture, and sustainable energy solutions. "The goal is to promote innovation that tackles real-world challenges while driving technological growth in Oman," Khulood added.

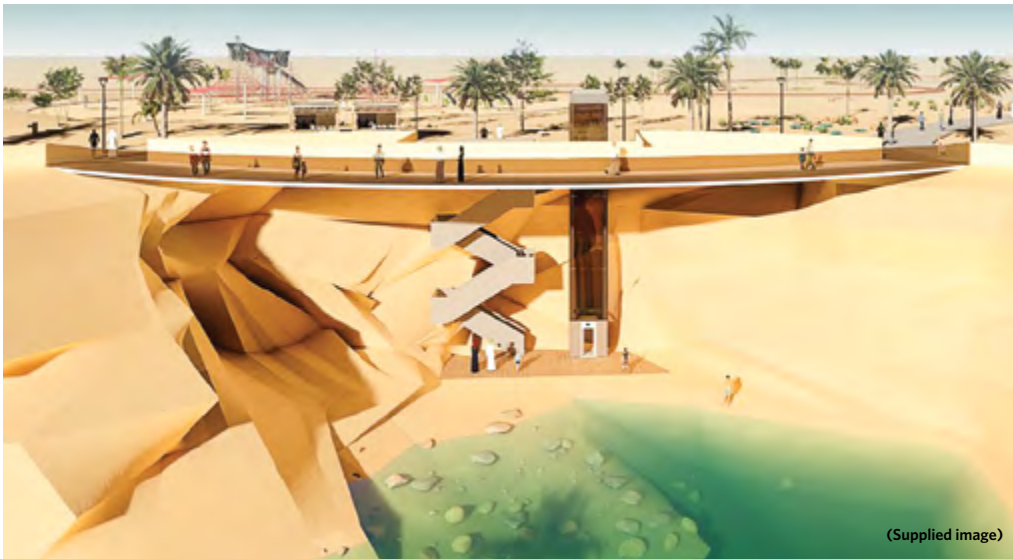
Muscat Municipality launches RO500 contest for creation of Hawiyat Najm Park logo

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has announced a competition inviting creative individuals to design a visual identity for Hawiyat Najm Park (Bimmah Sinkhole) in Quriyat.

The competition is part of broader efforts aimed at enhancing the park's surroundings, organising camping activities, and supporting small and medium enterprises. The winning design will be adopted as the official logo and visual identity of the park. In recognition of their creativity, the winner will receive a cash prize of RO500.

These efforts are part of Muscat Municipality's ongoing work to improve public spaces and



(Supplied image)

create a more organised and sustainable environment at Hawiyat Najm Park.

Submission for design entries

started on January 20 and ends on February 20. For more information, participants can contact Muscat Municipality at

24753454/24753643 or email basma.h.alshuaibi@mm.gov.om or shahad.k.alsabahi@mm.gov.om

400 experts from 30 countries showcase energy solutions

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Energy and Minerals hosted the Middle East Artificial Lift Forum (MEALF) in Muscat on Tuesday, which brought together over 400 specialists from 30 countries and representatives of 106 international organisations.

The forum highlighted advancements in artificial lift technologies, a key component in enhancing oil field productivity and sustainability.

Artificial lift, a process that increases the flow of liquids like crude oil or water from production wells, is integral to optimising oil field operations. Inaugurating the event, H E Mohsen bin Hamad al Hadrami, Undersecretary in Ministry of Energy and Minerals, underlined the forum's significance. "This technical gathering provides a platform for experts to share knowledge and insights on the evolving field of artificial lift, which is essential for extending the productive lifespan of oil fields."



(Supplied photo)

H E Hadrami noted that Oman is increasingly leveraging advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence and carbon capture, to tackle challenges in the energy sector. "Real-time performance monitoring and data analysis are among the solutions we are focusing on to boost production, lower costs and reduce environmental impact," he added.

A critical issue addressed at the forum was methane gas emissions, aligning with global efforts to combat climate change.

H E Hadrami said that advanced artificial lift systems enhance operational reliability in extreme environments, supporting sustainable production and bolstering energy security.

Jassim Ali al Jabri, Chairman of the forum, described the event as a platform for collaboration and innovation. "It is not only about sharing knowledge but also about fostering a collaborative environment where experts can address pressing issues and explore opportunities for the industry," he said.

Oman-Canada Business Forum to be held on Jan 23

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry will host Oman-Canada Business Forum for cooperation in the health sector on Thursday at the OCCI headquarters in Ruwi.

According to a statement, the forum will focus on key topics including health research, health consulting, health technology and devices, and digital health. Additionally, it will explore areas such as medical software and the role of ICT in the healthcare sector.

CONDOLENCES

On behalf of Calvary Fellowship Church Muscat
In loving memory of
Abraham Philip



Died on January 18, 2025
Burial service on January 23, 2025
Prayer & viewing @ PCO old main Hall Ruwi
2 pm onwards
Burial @ PDO Cemetery (Ras al Hamra) - 4 pm

Mourned by his wife Sosamma Philip
Children Sneha, Sen, Sahna & Sanu
Son & daughter-in-laws and grand children

MAY HIS SOUL
REST IN ETERNAL PEACE

MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,612.71
Sensex	75,838.36

FOREX RATES
(RO1 equals)

India	224.96
Pakistan	723.95
Bangladesh	316.25
Philippines	151.85
Sri Lanka	772.56

Rates as on January 21

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Oil prices drop amid shifts in Trump policies

London, UK – Oil prices declined on Tuesday as a result of US President Donald Trump’s energy policies, including boosting fossil fuel production and reversing offshore drilling bans, as well as global factors like the strong US dollar, reduced geopolitical risks, and recession concerns in Europe.

The international benchmark Brent crude fell by 0.3%, trading at \$78.95 per barrel in morning trade in London, up from \$79.22 at the close of the previous session.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) decreased by 0.9%, reaching \$76.33 per barrel, compared to its prior session close of \$76.32. The continued decline in oil prices is influenced by US President Donald Trump’s declaration of a ‘national energy emergency’ at the start of his second term.

GCC bond issuances hit \$103bn in 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The GCC countries recorded a landmark year for fixed income issuances in 2024, with total bond issuance in the region rising to a record high of \$103.4bn. This marks a 71% jump from \$60.5bn worth of bond issuances in 2023, according to the GCC Fixed Income Market 2024 report published by Kuwait-based Kamco Investment.

Corporate issuances led the way, with companies in the GCC raising a total of \$70.1bn, reflecting a remarkable growth of 74% compared to 2023. Meanwhile, government bond issuances in the region also saw a strong year-on-year increase, totalling \$33.3bn, a 65% rise from the previous year.

At the country level, the UAE saw the most significant increase in issuances, with bonds totalling \$49.7bn in 2024, compared to \$31.2bn in 2023. Qatar followed closely, posting a rise of \$13.4bn. The UAE also emerged as the region’s largest bond issuer, followed by Saudi Arabia with \$30.8bn, and Qatar with \$16.8bn.

Bond issuances in the broader Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region also experienced a significant jump in 2024. Issuances reached a three-year high of \$141.1bn, up 39.4% from \$101.2bn in 2023. The sharp rise



Corporate issuances in the GCC led the way, raising \$70.1bn, up 74% from 2023, while government bond issuances also saw a strong increase, totalling \$33.3bn, a 65% rise year-on-year

suances in the GCC. The report cites expectations of moderate oil prices and a strong pipeline of infrastructure projects across the region, which are expected to drive continued government bond issuance.

‘Deficit financing and the refinancing of maturing debt will make up the majority of bond issuances in 2025,’ the report noted. ‘Corporate issuances, meanwhile, will remain sensitive to interest rate movements and will largely depend on the trajectory of global rates in the second half of the year.’

Kamco’s report suggests that GCC central banks are likely to align their monetary policies with the US Federal Reserve’s moves, given the peg of most regional currencies to the dollar. However, Kuwait’s currency, which is pegged to a basket of currencies, may see different monetary policy adjustments compared to its peers.

An elevated maturity profile in 2025, with \$89.8bn in bonds due for refinancing, is expected to dominate both corporate and government issuances in the region. Kamco anticipates that the GCC bond market will be further buoyed by a ‘fund-raising spree’ in the US, as Treasury yields rise. This trend could add further support to bond issuances across the GCC, especially given the on-going diversification and development projects aligned with the region’s long-term goals.

– including Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia, and Lebanon – continued to decline for a third consecutive year, falling to \$37.7bn in 2024 from \$40.7bn in 2023.

Strong prospects for 2025

Looking ahead to 2025, Kamco Investment maintains an optimistic outlook for bond is-



Al Mazunah Economic Exhibition and Forum continues its activities with the participation of over 100 local and international companies

Madayn announces new incentives for investors in Al Mazunah Free Zone

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) on Tuesday unveiled a new package of incentives for investors and business owners in Al Mazunah Free Zone. The announcement was made during the activities of Al Mazunah Economic Exhibition and Forum, reaffirming Madayn’s commitment to enhancing a robust investment environment in the sultanate and attracting new investments.

In a press statement, Eng Ahmed bin Khamis al Kasbi, Director General of Al Mazunah Free Zone, said that the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has approved a set of incentives for the free zone in recognition of the significance of enhancing the investment climate and encouraging investors to expand their operations.

“Among the highlights of these incentives include exempting investors from accumulated debts by 30%, in addition to a 50% reduction in rental costs for

the next five years for existing and new investors. These incentives aim at increasing the free zone’s competitiveness and enhancing investment appeal. In fact, these incentives form a cornerstone of efforts to support economic growth, and promote innovation and sustainability,” Kasbi said.

Al Mazunah Free Zone has achieved significant progress in recent years. In 2024, the volume of goods imported to the free zone reached over 240,000 tonnes, marking an increase of more than 20% compared to 2023

He added that Al Mazunah Free Zone has achieved significant progress in recent years in terms of investment and commercial activity. In 2024, the volume of goods imported to the

free zone reached over 240,000 tonnes, marking an increase of more than 20% compared to the volume recorded in 2023.

“The free zone presents a vital gateway for regional trade and a hub for economic activities with its fully developed infrastructure, essential facilities including road network, electricity, water and telecom networks, electronic services, warehousing spaces, and transportation services,” Kasbi added.

Al Mazunah Economic Exhibition and Forum continues its activities with the participation of over 100 local and international companies. The event provides a platform to explore collaboration and partnership opportunities, and promising investment prospects aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

On the sidelines of the forum, a workshop on ‘Investment Drivers’ was delivered by Ahmed al Hajri, Director General of Labour in Al Batinah North, and a paper on ‘Investment Opportunities in Al Mazunah Free Zone’ was presented by Said Zabanoor, Director of Investor Services in Al Mazunah Free Zone.

Asyad Group delivers major breakbulk shipment for PDO at Duqm Port

Duqm – Asyad Group, alongside Petroleum Development Oman’s (PDO) logistics team, completed a significant breakbulk shipment for PDO, delivering 10 complex items to the Port of Duqm, demonstrating dedication precision and reliability in providing tailored logistics solutions that ensure safe, efficient, and timely cargo delivery.

This milestone also emphasises Asyad’s role in strengthening the Port of Duqm’s logistics ecosystem through seamless cargo flow and strategic connectivity and contributing to the broader national economic growth. The group’s world-class logistics operations, customer focus, and extensive global network have positioned it as a leader in this field, playing a pivotal role in facilitating energy and industrial projects in Oman and beyond.

“Asyad Group is dedicated to delivering excellence in every shipment we handle, and our recent success with PDO is a testament to our expertise in managing complex logistics projects,” said Juma al Maskari, Director of Asyad Logistics.

He added, “This achievement not only highlights our technical capabilities but also reinforces our commitment to providing top-quality logistics services to different sectors in Oman and the region, thereby enhancing the efficiency and reliability of breakbulk supply chains globally.



With Oman at the heart of its strategic global presence, Asyad Group has built a robust global logistics network, anchored by its world class assets that include the state-of-the-art cargo terminal at the Port of Duqm. Its strategically located facilities, at the crossroads of trade between India, MENA, and Europe, enable Asyad to deliver resilient logistics solutions to the global marketplace.

The group also plays a pivotal role in creating In-Country Value (ICV) by supporting local businesses, contributing to the success of key national projects, and driving sustainable growth within Oman.

Nama Water services completes expansion project for two sewage treatment plants

Muscat – Nama Water Services has completed the project of expansion of the two wastewater treatment plants in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah and the Wilayat of A’Suwaiq. The project reflects the company’s commitment to improve the quality of life in services sector.

The project was a step forward in consolidating the pillars of sustainable development in the governorates covered by the company’s services.

Eng Hilal Masoud al Sharji, Acting Manager of Operations Support at Nama Water Services, said that the expansion project of the two wastewater treatment plants adds momentum to the growth of the



wastewater sector’s infrastructure in the two Wilayats.

“The project dealt with treating wastewater and producing regenerated and triple-treated water through the application of the best international practices in this field,” Sharji added.

Nama Water Services Company undertakes the activities of water and wastewater in all governorates of the sultanate, with the exception of the Governorate of Dhofar.

ONA

Global FDI rises 11% to \$1.4tn in 2024

Looking to 2025, moderate growth in foreign direct investment is expected, supported by improved financing conditions and renewed M&A activity. However, risks and uncertainties – including geopolitical tensions and global economic instability – pose significant challenges

Geneva, Switzerland – Global foreign direct investment (FDI) is at a crossroads, according to the latest Global Investment Trends Monitor report released by UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on Monday.

In 2024, global FDI rose 11% to an estimated \$1.4tn but dipped by 8% when excluding flows through European conduit economies – which often serve as transfer points for investments before they reach their final destination – reflecting a world grappling with shifting economic dynamics and persistent uncertainties.

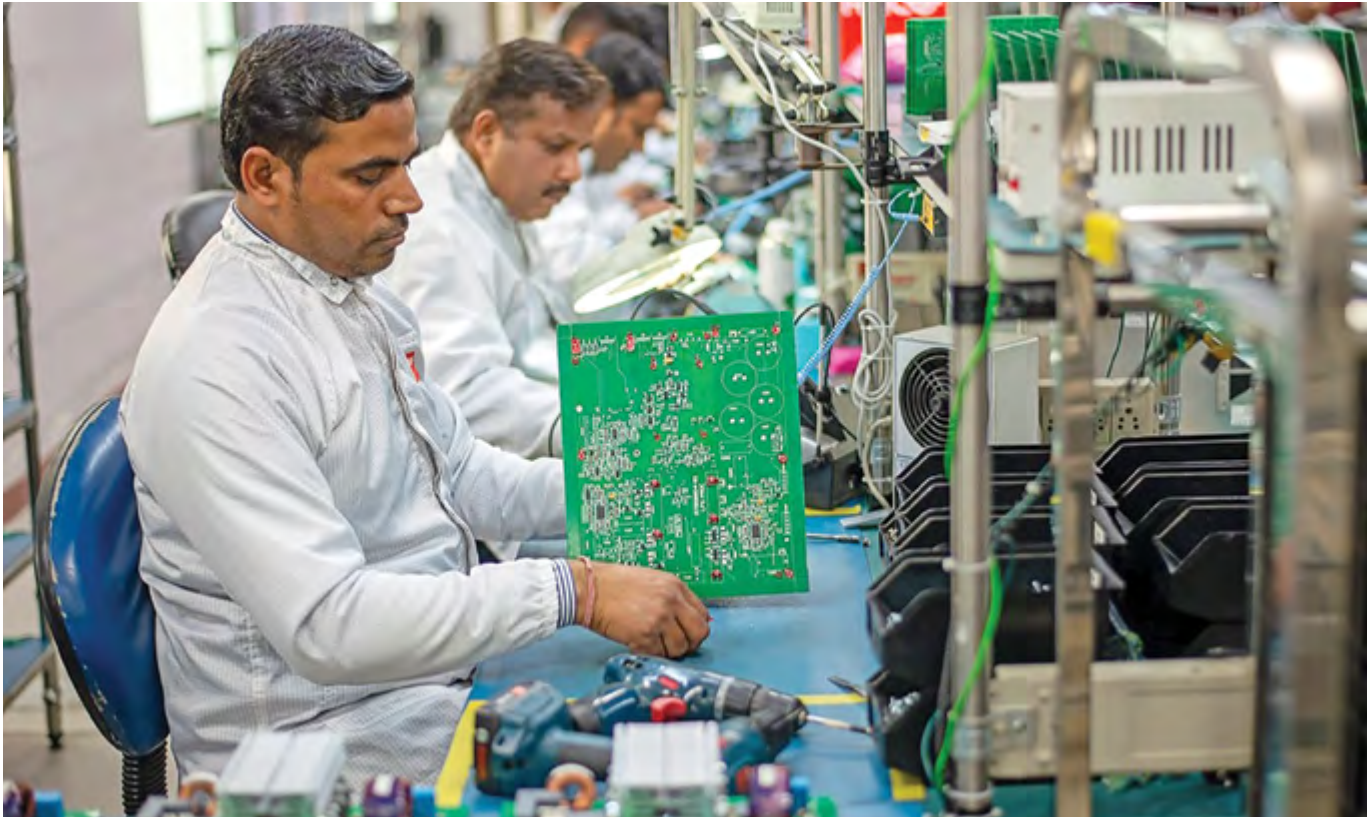
Developed economies: A tale of two regions

According to UNCTAD report, developed economies experienced sharp contrasts. North

America saw a 13% rise in FDI, driven by an 80% increase in US mergers and acquisitions (M&A). The value of greenfield projects – new investments in foreign markets – surged 93% in the US, reaching \$266bn, spurred by semiconductor megaprojects.

The United Kingdom also saw a 32% increase in greenfield investments to \$85bn, and Italy posted a remarkable 71% jump to \$43bn.

Europe, however, faced steep declines. FDI fell 45% when excluding conduit economies, with 18 out of 27 European Union countries seeing drops. Germany's FDI plunged 60% and Italy's fell 35%. Even greenfield investments, vital for future growth, dropped 10% across Eu-



A factory manufacturing integrated circuits in Uttar Pradesh State, India. Megaprojects in semiconductors largely drove global greenfield investments in 2024 (UNCTAD)

rope, though the region saw a 15% rise in total project value, signaling the significance of a few large-scale projects.

International project finance – a key driver for infrastructure and energy investments – also faced challenges, with deals dropping 26% in number and nearly a third in value across developed economies, according to the report.

Developing economies: Mixed signals

In developing economies, FDI fell 2% in 2024, marking the second consecutive annual decline. This dip threatens progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which depend heavily on international finance.

The UNCTAD report showed that the investments in SDG-re-

lated projects fell 11% globally in 2024, with fewer projects in agrifood, infrastructure, and water and sanitation than in 2015, when the goals were adopted.

Asia, the largest recipient of FDI among developing regions, saw inflows decline by 7%. China faced a 29% drop, now 40% below its 2022 peak. In contrast, India recorded a 13%

increase in FDI, boosted by growth in greenfield project announcements.

Meanwhile, ASEAN countries (Brunei Darussalam, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) saw modest growth, with FDI increasing 2% to a record \$235 billion.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, FDI declined by 9%,

with Brazil's inflows falling 5%. However, greenfield project numbers and values rose in Brazil, Argentina and Colombia, signaling potential future recovery. Mexico's FDI rose 11%, despite weaker regional project announcements, showing resilience in the face of broader challenges.

Africa stood out, recording an 84% surge in FDI to \$94bn, largely due to a single megaproject in Egypt. Excluding this project, the continent's FDI rose 23%, though the overall figure remained modest at \$50 billion.

Cautious optimism

Looking to 2025, moderate FDI growth is expected, supported by improved financing conditions and renewed M&A activity. However, risks and uncertainties – including geopolitical tensions and global economic instability – pose significant challenges, according to UNTAD.

The continued decline in greenfield investments and international project finance underscores the need for robust, diversified strategies to attract and sustain investment, especially in sectors critical for sustainable development.

For both developed and developing economies, the stakes are high as they navigate this complex landscape, according to UNCTAD.

Trump avoids big trade tariff actions on day one

Ben Werschkul

Donald Trump's first day back in at the White House was one without major action on his biggest economic initiative – tariffs – but he made clear that historic new duties are coming.

"We are thinking in terms of 25% on Mexico and Canada," he said while signing a slew of executive orders in the Oval Office, and added that they could happen soon.

"I think we are going to do it on February 1," he said.

He also suggested that blanket tariffs remain on the table but could be farther off, saying all countries rip off the United States to some extent.

As for China, he declined to offer details on new tariffs for that country, saying that meetings and negotiations are ongoing. But, again, he made it clear that tariffs are on the table – possibly even as the countries discuss what to do about social media app TikTok.

Trump said that "if China didn't approve [a TikTok divestiture deal], we could put tariffs on China" as he signed an order directing the attorney general not to enforce the law banning the social media app for 75 days. TikTok's parent is a Chinese company, ByteDance.

During the campaign, Trump vowed tariffs as high as 60% on China and up to 20% on other



President Donald Trump signs executive orders in the Oval Office of the White House on Monday

trading partners. After his victory, he vowed an additional 10% duties on China and 25% on Mexico and Canada.

Trump did sign an order Monday on establishing an "America First Trade Policy" that directed various figures in his administration, including his trade representative, to "undertake a review of, and identify, any unfair trade practices by other countries and recommend appropriate actions to remedy such practices."

The initial delay in actually enacting any tariffs on Trump's first day was a move perhaps designed to avert market volatility, even as a range of experts warned it offered little signal that major trade action isn't still in the offing.

And it appears Trump's initial move had a mixed market reaction. While US stock markets were closed on Monday, S&P 500 futures were still open for trading and rose while the US dollar index dropped from a nearly two-year high amid signs tariffs would be delayed but then spiked again on Trump's comments Monday evening.

"Instead of taxing our citizens to enrich other countries, we will tariff and tax foreign countries to enrich our citizens," he added.

Trump himself offered a glimpse of his overall plans in his inaugural address, promising to "immediately begin the overhaul of our trade system to protect American workers and families."

(Source: Yahoo Finance)

US sanctions could hit 1.5mn barrels per day of Russian oil exports

Tsvetana Paraskova

Asian buyers of Russian crude are scrambling for alternative supply amid US sanctions on Russian oil exports. The price of oil has rallied and analyses suggest that more than 1mn barrels per day (bpd) of Moscow's oil export volumes could be severely constrained, at least in the short term.

The US Administration on January 10 imposed the most severe sanctions on Russia's oil yet, designating two major Russian oil companies, Gazprom Neft and Surgutneftegas, as well as 183 vessels, dozens of oil traders, oilfield service providers, insurance companies, and energy officials.

Many of the vessels, specialised tankers, and shuttle tankers transporting Russia's oil from the Arctic and Far East Pacific fields and production clusters to Asia have now been sanctioned. This puts around 1.5mn bpd of Russia's crude flows from its Pacific and Arctic ports at risk, according to a Bloomberg analysis of the tankers now designated by the US.

Most of the flows from the Sakhalin projects require special ice-class tankers – all of these have been sanctioned. The storage tankers and specialised vessels servicing shipments, storage, and loadings at Mur-



Sanctions are already roiling the market. India and China are racing to procure alternative supply while studying wider implications of the US sanctions on Russian oil deliveries

mansk are also under sanctions now. The Gazprom Neft fields on the Yamal peninsula will also find it much harder to export crude – the company itself has been sanctioned, as have all its seven ice-class tankers handling ship-

ments at and through the Arctic Gates terminal.

In the Arctic and Russia's Far East, the crude grades most severely hit by the sanctions are expected to be Sokol, Sakhalin, and ESPO, according to Bloomberg's analysis.

The least affected shipments are likely to be those of the Urals crude grade from the Baltic and Black Sea, which are mostly going to India.

Only a quarter of Russia's shipments of Urals since October were carried on now-sanctioned tankers. That's the smallest share of designated tankers of any Russian crude grade, Bloomberg's analysis showed.

The sanctions are already roil-

ing the market. India and China are racing to procure alternative supply while studying the wider implications of the US sanctions on Russian oil deliveries six months from now.

India's refiners have stopped doing business with the Russian tankers and companies sanctioned by the US, a source at the Indian government told Reuters on Monday. India doesn't expect major disruptions during the wind-down period until March.

But "Going forward, it's early days yet to anticipate the impact, how discounts shape up, if somebody is willing to sell below the \$60 price cap," a source with the Indian government told Reuters earlier this week.

(Source: Oilprice.com)

India's Sensex falls about 1,200 points as investors gauge Trump policy

Mumbai, India – Indian stock markets on Tuesday witnessed a bloodbath, ending on a weak note due to the selling pressure in heavyweight stocks such as Kotak Bank, Zomato, Reliance Industries and US President Donald Trump's aggressive take on the trade tariffs on various countries.

At the close of today's trading, Nifty ended at 23,024.65,

down 320.10 points or 1.37%, while the Sensex was down at 1,235.08 points or 1.6%, at 75,838.36. During the day, around 1,019 shares advanced, 2,552 shares declined, and 79 shares remained unchanged.

At the National Stock Exchange (NSE), stocks of Apollo Hospitals Enterprise, Tata Consumers, BPCL, Shriram Finance, and JSW Steel emerged as the



top gainers while the top losers included Trent, NTPC, ICICI Bank and Adani Ports.

On BSE, the midcap and smallcap indices shed 2 per cent each. Among the sectoral indices, consumer durables and realty indices witnessed a decline of 4% each, while banks, power, telecom, and capital goods were down 2% each.

"Despite starting strong, the

domestic markets ended the day negatively. Nervousness driven by Trump's uncertain tariff plan, a selloff triggered by foreign institutions, and disappointing Q3 earnings weighed on the market," said Ameya Ranadive, Senior Technical Analyst, StoxBox.

VLA Ambala, co-founder of Stock Market Today, said markets experienced a turbulent session as the US President reit-

erated his statement to hike tariffs for BRICS countries.

In the context of the broader market, small-caps and mid-caps bled considerably more compared to the frontlines, led by disappointing earnings during the quarter. The combination of these elements is well reflected in the VIX index, which recorded a six-month high during the day.

ANI

MoH celebrates opening of Maqshan Hospital to serve Wilayat of Maqshan

In conjunction with the celebration of the fifth anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's accession to the throne, and in line with the strategic goals of the health sector in Oman Vision 2040 to provide specialised healthcare institutions, promote the decentralisation of health services, and achieve health security, the Ministry of Health (MoH) on Thursday celebrated the inauguration of the Maqshan Hospital project in Dhofar Governorate under the patronage of H H Sayyid Marwan bin Turki bin Mahmud aL Said, Governor of Dhofar.

The hospital, located on the road between Muscat and Salalah, is set to serve the Wilayat of Maqshan and three neighbouring villages, a press release said.

The inauguration ceremony at the Wali of Maqshan's office was attended by H E Dr Hilal bin Ali bin Hilal al Sabti, Minister of Health, along with a number of MoH undersecretaries, governors, members of the State and Shura Councils, heads of civil and military government agencies.

The hospital provides its services to the residents of the Wilayat of Mucsaan, with a population of 1,267 people (according to 2023 statistics), as well as the three neighbouring villages - Mashash, Marsodid, and Mandar Al Dhabian, in addition to other residential areas in the Wilayat. The hospital was built on an area of approximately 1,883.93sqm with a donation from Oman Oil Company amounting to RO1.5mn.

The ceremony began with a speech by Dr Ali al Maqbali, director general of Health Services for Dhofar Governorate, who



highlighted that Wilayat of Maqshaan includes three health institutions - the former Maqshan Health Centre, the Mashash Health Centre, and the Marsodid Health Centre. These provide essential primary healthcare services, including general medicine, vaccinations, maternal and childcare, home health care for the elderly, pre-marriage, and over-30 screenings, in addition to basic services in pharmacy, laboratory, and radiology.

Muqbali stressed that Maqshan Hospital is one of the important development projects in the Wilayat of Maqshan, aligning with Oman Vision 2040 to achieve the strategic goals and programmes of the health sector. Among these objectives are universal health coverage and decentralisation of service delivery.

The hospital will provide healthcare services to citizens and residents, alleviating the bur-



den of travelling over 300km to Sultan Qaboos Hospital.

Moreover, the hospital is strategically located on the northern border of Dhofar Governorate, near the border with

the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Positioned along Sultan Said bin Taimur Road, it will also play a crucial role in responding to accidents or emergencies along this route.

The DG of Health Services for Dhofar Governorate also pointed out that in line with the directives of the Minister of Health, Maqshan Hospital will integrate with Haima Hospital in Al Wusta

Governorate in several healthcare services such as diagnostic services for precise laboratory tests, computed tomography (CT) scans, specialised ultrasound services, specialised treatment services, complicated childbirth care, critical care, and emergency surgeries.

The hospital includes all primary healthcare specialties, such as general medicine clinics, spe-

tributed across male and female wards, the maternity and post-delivery sections, observation areas, and a recovery room.

Eng Yusuf bin Yaqub Ambo Ali, MoH DG of Projects and Engineering Services, added that this project is part of the ongoing efforts by the government to achieve Oman's renewed vision, which aims to promote sustainable development and enhance

Maqshan Hospital is one of the important development projects in the Wilayat of Maqshan, aligning with Oman Vision 2040 to achieve the strategic goals and programmes of the health sector

PDO hosts media visit to 'green' energy projects

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) demonstrated its commitment to sustainable energy production by hosting a guided tour for Omani journalists, highlighting key projects within its concession area.

The visitors were given an overview of the company's operations and project impacts, as well as the opportunity to learn more about its drive to secure 30% of its power needs

from renewable sources by 2026 and 50% by 2030, a press release said.

During the visit, they explored the Amin Solar Independent Power Producer (IPP) project and the Nimr Reed Beds project, in the South of PDO's Block 6 concession area. The media representatives also had the chance to question PDO decision makers and experts on the Company's role in

the sultanate's economic development and the global Energy Transition from fossil fuels.

PDO External Affairs, Communications and Social Investment Manager Mohammed al Ghareebi said, "This visit has allowed us to highlight PDO's pivotal role in the national economy, community development, and advancing technical excellence.

Adante Realty launches Yenaier Residences in Sultan Haitham City

Adante Realty, the real estate arm of the Al Adrak Group, a leading conglomerate in Oman, announced yesterday the launch of its flagship project, Yenaier Residences, located at the heart of Sultan Haitham City, Oman's first smart city.

The official launch of Yenaier Residences occurred on January 13 at the St Regis Hotel, Muscat, attended by H E Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning and prominent guests from the government and private sector, a press release said.

This landmark development embodies a new beginning in luxury living, rooted in sustainability and designed to foster community and connection. It is named in tribute to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, reflecting the significance of January, the month of his accession. Yenaier aims to set new benchmarks in the Omani real estate sector as a Freehold project for all nationalities.

Dr Shueili said, "Yenaier Residences, being located in the heart of Sultan Haitham City, is at the forefront of sustainable urban development, which aligns with the goals of Oman's Vision 2040 and showcases the nation's commitment to innovation."

Yenaier Residences offers more than just an address - it's a lifestyle destination for discerning homebuyers. Located within Sultan Haitham City in Al Seeb, Muscat, the project is part of a



comprehensive transformation championed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MoHUP). This eco-city spans 2.9 millionsqm and integrates key features, including green spaces, smart city infrastructure, and comprehensive facilities like healthcare, schools, universities, mosques, commercial establishments, souqs, and cultural and daycare centres.

The Yenaier Residences feature six iconic towers interconnected by looping boulevards and greenscapes. The design philosophy is based on Contemporary Fluid Architecture, eco-friendly principles, and smart living.

This landmark development embodies a new beginning in luxury living, rooted in sustainability and designed to foster community and connection

The development includes a range of residences - loggia studios, loggia suites (1 BHK), sky

residences (2 BHK), and sky villas (3 BHKs) and sky palaces (penthouses), with sizes ranging from 71sqm to 462sqm. Yenaier offers a range of amenities that promote an active and connected lifestyle, including fitness and wellness, community and social hubs, convenience, and leisure.

Adante Realty, as the development arm of the Al Adrak Group, brings 39 years of experience in the real estate sector in Oman and the UAE.

This legacy ensures that Yenaier is built with a strong foundation and a commitment to high-quality materials and craftsmanship.

QA Holidays launches Formula 1 'fan packages' to mark 75 years

Qatar Airways, the Global Partner and Official Airline of Formula 1, in partnership with Qatar Airways Holidays, today announced the launch of its 2025 fan packages, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the F1.

After an incredible 2024 season and an exciting Qatar GP race, fans are now able to secure their seats for the upcoming F1 season and the home race - the Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2025.

With more than 150,000 fans attending, the 2024 Qatar GP was the stage of some epic challenges, particularly between McLaren and Ferrari fighting it out for the Constructor Championships. The race was won by Red Bull's Max Verstappen, the 2024



F1 World Champion.

The thrill is back this year, where fans will see Lewis Hamilton in Red racing for his first season with Ferrari, all taking place at the iconic Lusail International Circuit from November 28-30.

The fan packages entail four

categories - Main Grandstand, North Grandstand, T16 Grandstand, and General Admission Lusail Hill.

The packages are designed to inspire fans who will fly to Doha with Qatar Airways and stay in a world-leading 4 or 5-star hotel.



Wassim Daageh

The St Regis welcomes Wassim Daageh as new GM

The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort has welcomed Wassim Daageh as its new general manager, joining the resort from his previous role as general manager in Doha, Qatar.

With over two decades of exemplary experience in the luxury hospitality sector, Daageh is dedicated to further elevate the resort's operations within the region's luxury landscape, a press release said.

Owned by the renowned Al-fardan Group, the resort is a luxurious coastal haven nestled in the heart of Al Mouj Muscat. This exquisite property seamlessly blends Omani heritage with contemporary design, offering guests an unparalleled experience of refined elegance and exceptional service.

Wassim's career spans multiple leadership positions across some of the world's most renowned properties. He has overseen large-scale, high-profile international events - including the FIFA World Cup and Formula 1- and consistently delivered guest experiences defined by personal attention and service excellence.

"I am deeply grateful for the journey that has led me to this moment," said Daageh. "My time in Qatar, a place I have proudly called home, has been invaluable, and I now look forward to this new chapter at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort and The St Regis Residences in Oman. Both destinations will shape my approach to hospitality, and I am honoured to continue contributing to the region's luxury landscape."

Grand Finale of UAE Polo Federation Cup held in Dubai

The UAE Polo Federation Cup, presented by Dubai Polo and Equestrian Club in partnership with Century Financial concluded with a spectacular final at the Dubai Polo and Equestrian Club.

The event, which was the biggest in its history, featured nine elite teams vying for the coveted championship title in an exhibition of world-class polo, a press release said.

The final day tournament kicked off with four teams in action with El Basha Polo playing Bin Draï Polo in the 1st match. The second match was between AM Polo and Abu Dhabi Polo showing remarkable skills from both sides.

The final match saw an exciting clash between AM Polo emerging victorious with a score of 8/7 and Abu Dhabi Polo as runners-up. The match showcased exceptional skills of the players, culminating in a thrilling display that captivated the audience. Polo lovers and guests also enjoyed a range of experiences, including exclusive VIP viewing areas, exclusive dining options, and social interactions with friends and family during the match.

Nayef Bou Hamdan, general manager of Dubai Polo and Equestrian Club said, "This year's UAE Polo Federation Cup exceeded expectations, delivering



not only top-tier polo action but also a comprehensive experience that catered to all attendees. Our club has continuously been at the forefront of combining premier equestrian facilities with luxury lifestyle offerings, and this event was a testament to our commitment to excellence."

Shaheen Akbari, executive di-

rector at Century Financial, expressed his satisfaction with the partnership, saying, "It has been a privilege to partner with the Dubai Polo and Equestrian Club for this prestigious event. The energy and elegance displayed during the finals were remarkable, and we are thrilled to have been part of an initiative that

brings together the community through a shared passion for polo."

Santiago Torreguitar, director of tournaments at Dubai Polo and Equestrian Club, added, "The calibre of the competition this year was truly exceptional. The tournament showcased a remarkable blend of seasoned vet-

erans and promising new talent, each bringing their own unique strengths to the field. Witnessing such fierce matches and the diverse levels of skill displayed by all teams was not only a testament to the growth of polo in the region but also a promise of the sport's bright future here. It was an honour to host such a vibrant

celebration of polo at our club."

The finals day was not just about the sport but also offered a variety of experiences for guests, including unparalleled networking opportunities, exclusive access to the VIP lounge, and the 'Predict and Win' contest, where spectators had a chance to win prizes.

Second Arabic Language programme launched

The second edition of the Arabic Language and Omani Culture programme was launched at SQU under the patronage of HH Sayyid Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, the vice chancellor.

The event was also attended by the ambassadors of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea, a press release said.

The opening ceremony featured a speech by Mahmood bin Abdullah al Kindi, director of the International Cooperation Office, who emphasised the significance

of learning and knowledge in building civilisations.

Highlighting the role of reading and education in fostering intercultural communication, he noted the success of the programme's first edition which involved 80 students from Russia and South Korea. Participants in the inaugural programme gained foundational Arabic language skills, applied them in practical contexts, and explored Oman's rich history and culture through lectures and field trips.



This year's edition includes 77 participants - 61 students from Russia and 16 from South Korea

-running from January 20 to February 20.

Dr Faisal bin Saif al Saadi, as-

sistant dean for Training and Community Service at the College of Arts and Social Sciences,

noted the students' enthusiasm for learning Arabic and immersing themselves in Omani culture. Alongside attending classes, participants will explore Oman's cities, traditions, customs, and heritage through weekly field trips.

SQU, represented by the International Cooperation Office and the Arabic Language and Literature Department of the College of Arts and Social Sciences, will provide comprehensive support to the students.

Kavitha Ramakrishna presents HM portrait to Anil Khimji

In a heartfelt celebration of Oman's renewed renaissance, Dr Kavitha Ramakrishna, a distinguished cultural ambassador, author, yoga exponent, and accomplished painter, presented a portrait of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik al Said to Anil M Khimji, director of Khimji Ramdas Group and head of the Hindu community in Oman.

The special event was held to honour the visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham and the enduring legacy of the sultanate's renaissance, a press release said.

Dr Kavitha's painting captures the essence of His Majesty's wisdom, strength, and vision. A testament to her unparalleled artistry, the portrait seamlessly blends traditional techniques with contemporary finesse, reflecting the deep respect and admiration the artist holds for the Sultan's transformative role in shaping modern Oman. She is renowned for her mastery of the intricate and luminous Tanjore art form, as well as her expertise in other artistic traditions.

The presentation of the painting to Khimji carries profound significance. As a prominent



leader of the Hindu community in Oman and a pillar of the nation's multicultural harmony, Khimji accepted the portrait on behalf of all who cherish and celebrate His Majesty's contributions to Oman's progress and unity. The ceremony symbolised the deep bonds of mutual respect and collaboration that underpin Omani society, further

strengthened under His Majesty's guidance.

"This portrait is not just a tribute to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, but also a celebration of Oman's incredible journey of growth and harmony. It is my honour to present this to Sheikh Anil Khimji, whose leadership mirrors the values of inclusivity."

Saudi minister to lead discussion on Global Tourism at World Economic Forum in Davos

The pivotal role of tourism in driving economic diversification will take centre stage at the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos this week where Saudi Arabia's minister of tourism, Ahmed al Khateeb, will lead a discussion showing how travel and tourism is critical to economic growth and prosperity.

The Saudi delegation is led by Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah, minister of Foreign Affairs, a press release said.

"The Travel and Tourism sector is a cornerstone of global economies and, as we convene in Davos for the WEF Annual Meeting 2025, acknowledging the importance of the sector in discussions is vital," Khateeb said. "I am honoured to be invited to the WEF annual meeting and underscore tourism's potential as a catalyst for inclusive global economic transformation through sustainability, innovation, and collaboration. Saudi Arabia remains committed to strengthening international co-operation and promoting sustainable growth in tourism."

In collaboration with the Saudi Ministry of Tourism with expert



The Travel and Tourism sector is a cornerstone of global economies and, as we convene in Davos, acknowledging the importance of the sector in discussions is vital

AHMED AL KHATEEB

input from the minister, the WEF released a new briefing paper on "The Future of Travel and Tourism: Embracing Sustainable and Inclusive Growth" exploring transformative trends of the sector, destination readiness and the importance of cross-sector collaboration. This paper will help drive Travel and Tourism discussions across the WEF.

The Kingdom has also released an Investor White Paper highlighting Vision 2030 initiatives that are transforming the

tourism sector. The paper highlights the significant strides made in developing state-of-the-art tourism infrastructure, drawing international visitors, and offering unique cultural experiences.

As a result, Saudi Arabia has rapidly become one of the world's fastest-growing tourism destinations, surpassing its 2030 goal of 100 million tourist arrivals in 2023. Strategically located, Saudi Arabia is poised to be a global tourism hub.

Donald Trump orders US exit from Paris climate agreement and WHO

Washington, D.C., US - Donald Trump signed a series of executive orders during his presidential parade at Capitol One Arena on Monday.

It included a withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change. This decision marks a defiant rejection of global efforts to combat climate change as catastrophic weather events intensify worldwide.

According to the agreement's rules, exiting would take about a year after submitting formal notice to the United Nations.

Trump also signed the notice to the UN, informing the world body of the US withdrawal.

In his earlier remarks, Trump said the US, the world's top oil and gas producer, will expand drilling. "Now we are going to drill baby drill," he said.

Order signed to withdraw from WHO
Trump also signed an executive order to withdraw the US from the World Health Organization (WHO).

The US will leave the United Nations health agency in 12 months and will stop all financial support for its work.

Trump criticised the WHO for failing to act independently from the 'inappropriate political influence of WHO member states' and for requiring 'unfairly onerous payments' from the US compared to countries like China.

"World Health ripped us off, everybody rips off the United States. It's not going to happen anymore," Trump said as he



Donald Trump returned to the Oval Office in the White House, signing multiple executive orders to shape his new administration

My Presidential Personnel Office is actively in the process of identifying and removing over a thousand Presidential Appointees from the previous Administration

DONALD TRUMP

signed the order during his first day back in the White House.

The US is the WHO's biggest financial backer, contributing around 18% of its funding.

Trump started the process of quitting the WHO in his first presidential term, but President Joe Biden was able to stop the

process when he took office in January 2021.

Trump starts firing Biden appointees

Trump has sacked four senior government officials appointed by his predecessor, Joe Biden, and warned that more than

1,000 others were about to be dismissed, amid fears in many quarters that he will purge anybody who has not demonstrated complete loyalty to his agenda.

"My Presidential Personnel Office is actively in the process of identifying and removing over a thousand Presidential Appointees from the previous Administration, who are not aligned with our vision to Make America Great Again," Trump said in a post on Truth Social just after midnight.

He named four people - celebrity chef Jose Andres from the President's Council on

Sports, Fitness and Nutrition, Mark Milley, a former top general, from the National Infrastructure Advisory Council, Brian Hook from the Wilson Center for Scholars, and Keisha Lance Botto from the President's Export Council - as having been immediately dismissed.

Trump's post ended with the words "YOU'RE FIRED!", the catchphrase from his days as the boss of the hit TV show The Apprentice.

Aid programmes suspended

Among the executive orders

Executive orders Donald Trump signed on day one

Washington, D.C., US - Donald Trump has been fast to act on promises he made ahead of his inauguration, signing numerous executive orders as he took office as the 47th president of the United States on Monday.

They clearly indicate his priorities and include:

- Rescinding 78 regulations established by his predecessor, Joe Biden
- An order to all federal departments to tackle the

- cost-of-living crisis
- An order to stop government censorship
- The withdrawal of the US from the Paris Climate Agreement
- The withdrawal of the US from the World Health Organization
- The declaration of a national emergency at the Mexican border
- Making it US policy to have only two genders, male and female

signed by Trump on Monday was the one temporarily suspending all US foreign development assistance programmes for 90 days.

The order mandates that all department and agency heads responsible for these programmes immediately pause new obligations and disbursements of development assistance funds.

During the 90-day suspension, the programmes will be reviewed to determine their alignment with Trump's policy goals.

The order, one of many signed on his first day back in office, criticises the 'foreign aid industry and bureaucracy are not aligned with American interests and in many cases antithetical to American values'.

The order even went as far as

stating that these programmes often, 'destabilise world peace by promoting ideas in foreign countries that are directly inverse to harmonious and stable relations internal to and among countries'.

Trump also vowed to sign pardons for 'a lot of people' charged and convicted for the US Capitol attack on January 6, 2021.

He also referred to the rioters as January 6 hostages.

During the election campaign, Trump voiced sympathy for some of the rioters and decried long sentences.

On January 6, 2021, thousands of Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol.

More than 1,580 people have been criminally charged with participating in the riot.

DW

Legal battles erupt over 'DOGE' advisory panel

Washington, D.C., US - Minutes after Donald Trump signed an executive order to establish the Department of Government Efficiency, its creation was challenged in court.

Despite its name, 'DOGE', as it is known, is not a department but rather an advisory panel headed by billionaire Elon Musk.

During the election, it was first proposed that DOGE would find 'drastic' cuts to the federal government. But the executive order said the group's aim was to 'modernise federal technology and software'.

Government employee unions, watchdog groups, and public interest organisations sued within minutes of the announcement. Among them were National Security Counsellors, the American Public Health Association, the American Federa-



Despite its name, Department of Government Efficiency is not a department but rather an advisory panel headed by Elon Musk

tion of Teachers, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, and Public Citizen.

They argue DOGE was breaking a law that governed federal advisory committees and was also suing over the DOGE's uncertain status.

Ramaswamy will not join DOGE

Meanwhile, Vivek Ramaswamy, who was picked by Donald

Trump to co-chair the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, alongside Elon Musk, will not serve in the non-elected team.

"Vivek Ramaswamy played a critical role in helping us create DOGE," said Anna Kelly, who is a spokesperson for the group. "He intends to run for elected office soon, which requires him to remain outside of DOGE."

DW

US Senate unanimously confirms Marco Rubio as Secretary of State

Washington, D.C., US - The US Senate voted to confirm Marco Rubio as Secretary of State on Monday, making him the first official in Donald Trump's administration to be approved on his presidential inauguration day.

The vote, which came just hours after Trump's swearing-in ceremony, was unanimous at 99-0.

Rubio will assume the role amid multiple global crises and conflicts, including Russia's war against Ukraine as well as ongoing wars in Gaza and Lebanon involving Israel.

Rubio, 53, first elected to the Senate in 2010, is known for his hardline stance on Iran, Cuba, Venezuela and China.

Recently, however, he has aligned more closely with Trump's foreign policy, expressing support for his calls for an



Rubio is known for his hardline stance on Iran, Cuba, Venezuela and China

end to Russia's war in Ukraine, which he said has reached a 'stalemate' and 'needs to be brought to a conclusion'.

Rubio, a staunch supporter of Israel, has consistently adopted hardline positions. Earlier this year, he accused President Joe

Biden of appealing to 'anti-semites' in the Democratic Party by criticising Israel's actions in Gaza and urged the administration to revoke visas for foreign students involved in pro-Palestinian protests, labelling them as 'terrorist sympathisers'.

Last November, when confronted by a group of activists in Congress, Rubio opposed calls for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, describing the Palestinian group as 'vicious animals' and saying: "I want (Israel) to destroy every element of Hamas they can get their hands on."

Rubio also led efforts to ban TikTok, arguing that it spreads 'pro-Hamas, anti-Israel propaganda' and poses an 'existential threat to our nation'.

Following an Iranian missile attack on Israel in October, he encouraged a strong Israeli response. "I urge the reimposition of a maximum pressure campaign against Iran and fully support Israel's right to respond disproportionately to stop this threat," he said.

Anadolu Agency

Taliban say 2 Americans released in return for fighter imprisoned in US

Kabul, Afghanistan - Two Americans held in Afghanistan were freed in return for a Taliban fighter serving a life sentence in the US, authorities in Kabul said on Tuesday.

"An Afghan fighter Khan Mohammad imprisoned in America has been released in exchange for American citizens and returned to the country," the Afghan Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Mohammad was extradited to the US nearly two decades ago and imprisoned in California on drug trafficking charges.

The US Justice Department at the time called Mohammed 'a vi-

olent militant and narcotics trafficker' who 'sought to kill US soldiers in Afghanistan using rockets'. He was released in exchange for US citizens Ryan Corbett and William McKenty, US media reports said.

Family expresses gratitude for release

Corbett had been in Taliban custody since 2022 after being abducted during a business trip.

"Our hearts are filled with overwhelming gratitude and praise to God for sustaining Ryan's life and bringing him back home after what has been the most challenging and uncertain



Corbett had been in Taliban custody since 2022 after being abducted during a business trip

894 days of our lives," Corbett's family said in a statement.

The family thanked the administrations of both former President Joe Biden and President Donald Trump for their efforts as well as Qatar for its pivotal role in the negotiations.

Still in Taliban custody

The release of Corbett and McKenty means there are now two Americans - George Glezzmann and Mahmood Habibi - still in Taliban custody.

The Biden administration had been trying to work out a deal to free them in exchange for Muhammad Rahim, one of the

remaining detainees at Guantanamo Bay.

The prisoner swap, finalised during the final hours of the Biden administration, comes at a time of ongoing tensions in US-Afghan relations.

The Qatar-brokered deal marks a rare instance of cooperation between the two countries.

The Taliban praised the 'long and fruitful negotiations' with the US. "The Islamic Emirate looks positively at the actions of the United States of America that help the normalisation and development of relations between the two countries," it said.

DW

66 Palestinians recovered from rubble in Gaza Strip

Civil defence teams and volunteers continue to search for more victims



58 bodies were recovered in southern Gaza on Monday, while eight others were pulled out from under the rubble in northern Gaza

Gaza City, Palestine - Civil defence teams retrieved the bodies of 66 Palestinians from the rubble of destroyed houses in the Gaza Strip, the agency said on Tuesday.

In a statement, the service said 58 bodies were recovered in southern Gaza on Monday, while eight others were pulled out from under the rubble in northern Gaza.

The agency said civil defence teams and volunteers continue to search the rubble for more victims amid a lack of machinery to retrieve them.

A Gaza ceasefire agreement took effect on Sunday, suspending Israel's genocidal war that has killed nearly 47,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured over 110,700 others since October 7, 2023.

The 3-phase ceasefire agreement includes a prisoner exchange and sustained calm, aiming for a permanent truce

and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

The Israeli onslaught has left more than 11,000 people missing, with widespread destruction and a humanitarian crisis that has claimed the lives of many elderly people and children in one

Meanwhile, the Israeli army rounded up at least 20 more Palestinians in fresh military raids in the occupied West Bank, according to prisoners' affairs groups on Tuesday

of the worst global humanitarian disasters ever.

Israel arrests 20 more in West Bank

Meanwhile, the Israeli army rounded up at least 20 more Palestinians in fresh military raids in the occupied West Bank, according to prisoners' affairs

groups on Tuesday.

Two women were among the detainees in the raids that targeted Hebron, Qalqilya, Nablus, and Ramallah, the Commission of Detainees' Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoner Society said in a joint statement.

Israeli soldiers interrogated dozens of Palestinians in several towns during the raids before releasing them, the statement said.

The new arrests brought the number of Palestinians detained by the Israeli army in the West Bank since October 2023 to over 14,300, including those who were released after being ar-

rested, according to Palestinian figures.

The figure does not include those arrested from the Gaza Strip whose numbers are estimated to be in the thousands.

Over the past few years, the Israeli military has conducted regular raids in the West Bank, which have escalated with the beginning of the war on Gaza on October 7, 2023. Palestinians have also been violently attacked by illegal Israeli settlers.

At least 860 Palestinians have since been killed and over 6,700 others injured by Israeli army fire in the occupied territory, according to the Health Ministry.

Besides, a Palestinian fisherman was injured on Tuesday by Israeli fire on the third day of a ceasefire deal that halted Israel's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, a medical source said.

The source said the fisherman sustained serious injuries after Israeli gunboats opened fire on

Palestinian fishing boats off the coast of Gaza City.

The attack came shortly after Israeli army spokesman Avichay Adraee warned Palestinians against entering the sea along Gaza's coast.

On Monday, two Palestinians were killed, including a child, by Israeli snipers in central Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi announced on Tuesday that he will resign in March, citing military failure in preventing the October 7 Hamas attack.

In a statement, Halevi said he notified Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz that he intends to resign on March 6.

His resignation will come about 10 months earlier than the standard three-year term after serving two years and two months in office.

Anadolu Agency



Illegal Israeli settlers attacked two Palestinian towns near the city of Qalqilya, northern occupied West Bank

Palestine flays US order to lift sanctions on violent settlers

Ramallah, Palestine - The Palestinian Authority on Tuesday condemned US President Donald Trump's decision to cancel sanctions imposed on illegal Israeli settlers accused of violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

On his first day in office, Trump signed an executive order rolling back the sanctions imposed by his predecessor Joe Biden last year.

"This decision encourages settlers to commit more crimes," Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman of the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority, said in a statement.

He called on the new US administration to 'intervene to stop these crimes and Israeli policies that will not bring peace and security to anyone'.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry also denounced the US move. "Lifting sanctions on extremist settlers encourages them to commit more crimes against our people," it said in a statement.

"Our efforts continue to stop settler terrorism and remove barriers," it added.

Trump's decision is a reversal of a major policy action by Biden, who had slapped sanctions on several Israeli settler groups and individuals, freezing their US assets and barring Americans from dealing with them.

Illegal settlers attack towns

As many as 21 Palestinians sustained injuries late on Monday as illegal Israeli settlers attacked two Palestinian towns near the city of Qalqilya, northern occupied West Bank.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said its medical teams treated those injured by the settlers' attacks in the towns of Jinsafut and Al-Fanduq. The victims suffered bruises as they were beaten by the settlers, and also suffered from teargas inhalation fired by the Israeli forces, the humanitarian group said.

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa quoted Jalal Bashir, head of the Jinsafut municipal council, as saying that the settlers set fire to three homes, a nursery, a carpentry workshop, and also torched several vehicles owned by Palestinians.

Loui Tayem, the mayor of Al-Fanduq, told Anadolu that 'dozens of illegal settlers attacked citizens' homes and vehicles on the outskirts, burning a car and several other vehicles, as well as damaging multiple shops'.

He described the situation as 'tense', adding: "We hear gunfire from time to time, but we cannot identify its source." Violence perpetrated by settlers and Israeli security forces in the occupied West Bank has increased since the Gaza war on October 7, 2023. A ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement in the enclave took effect on Sunday.

Anadolu Agency

Xi, Putin hold video call after Donald Trump's inauguration

Istanbul, Turkey - China's President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin held on Tuesday a video conference call, a day after Donald Trump was inaugurated for a second time.

During the call, a portion of which was shared by the Kremlin, Putin said the basis of cooperation between Moscow and Beijing is a 'broad community of national interests and a coincidence of views on what relations between major powers should be'. Expressing that Russia and China are building their ties on the basis of matters such as friendship and mutual trust and benefit, Putin said these relations are 'self-sufficient' and do not depend on domestic political factors or the current global situation.

"Their comprehensive strengthening fully meets the objectives of the integrated development of Russia and China, improving the well-being of the peoples of both countries," Putin added. He said both countries co-



ordinate at international platforms such as the UN, SCO, G20, and APEC, jointly advocating for the construction of a 'more just multipolar world order' and work to ensure 'indivisible security' in Eurasia and the world.

"It is safe to say that foreign policy ties, the joint work of Russia and China objectively play an important stabilising role in international affairs," the Russian leader said. For his part, Xi said Beijing is preparing to take Russian-Chinese relations to a 'new height' together with Putin, expressing that both countries will defend the UN-centric interna-

tional system.

China, meanwhile, called for a 'new starting point' in ties with Washington under newly inaugurated US President Donald Trump, state media reported.

Beijing is 'willing to work with the new US administration... in line with the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, maintaining communication, strengthening cooperation, properly managing differences, and driving greater progress in China-US relations from a new starting point', Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said.

Turkey: 66 killed in ski resort hotel fire

Bolu, Turkey - At least 66 people died and 51 others were injured in a fire that broke out at a hotel in Kartalkaya ski resort in northern Turkey, local authorities said on Tuesday.

The fire broke out at around 0027GMT in the restaurant area of the hotel, quickly engulfing the building, according to Bolu Governor Abdulaziz Aydin.

Emergency teams from neighbouring cities, including firefighters, disaster response units, and medical teams supported by helicopters were dispatched to the scene.

Authorities evacuated around 230 guests from the hotel as firefighting efforts continued.

Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc said a judicial investigation was initiated by the Bolu Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, with six public prosecutors assigned, and a five-person expert committee formed.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he had been following the incident closely through relevant institutions since the first moment. "I wish Allah's mercy to our citizens who lost their lives ... and wish a



Authorities evacuated around 230 guests from the hotel as firefighting efforts continued

speedy recovery to our wounded," he said in a post on X.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also expressed sadness over the incident. "I extend my heartfelt condolences to my dear brother President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish nation, especially, the bereaved families who lost their loved ones

in this accident & pray for the swift recovery of the injured," he said on X.

Hadja Lahbib, the EU commissioner for equality, preparedness, and crisis management who is currently in Turkey, also expressed her 'deepest condolences' to Turkey and to the families of the victims. "The EU

stands in solidarity & offers support through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism," she said on X.

Kartalkaya in the province of Bolu is one of Turkey's premier winter tourism destinations, attracting thousands of visitors during the ski season. The resort lies around 295km (183 miles) east of Istanbul.

Donald Trump says he will meet with Russia’s Putin; no time set yet

Washington, D.C., US - US President Donald Trump said on Monday that he will meet with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

“I’ll be meeting with President Putin,” he told reporters while signing executive orders after returning to the Oval Office.

Trump was sworn in for a second term, heralding a major shift in the US government that is widely expected to send shockwaves through American

society and the world.

Asked when the meeting will take place, he said: “I don’t know,” but added that he could speak to Putin ‘very soon’.

“I have to speak to President Putin, we’re gonna have to find out. He can’t be thrilled. He’s not doing so well. I mean, he’s grinding it out,” Trump said, reiterating his wish to end the Ukraine war as soon as possible.

Asked whether he will also speak to Ukrainian President



Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump

Volodymyr Zelensky, he said: “He told me he wants to make a deal. Zelensky wants to make a deal. I don’t know if Putin does. He might not.”

Trump said a deal should be made. “I think he’s destroying Russia by not making a deal. I think Russia’s gonna be in big trouble. You take a look at their economy. You take a look at the inflation...I would hope he wants to make a deal,” he added.

Meanwhile, Ukraine’s military

attacked a Russian aviation plant in Smolensk region in western Russia, said Andriy Kovalenko, head of the Centre for Countering Disinformation at Ukraine’s National Security and Defence Council, on Tuesday.

Kovalenko said the plant participates in the production of military aircraft, particularly Su-25 attack aircraft, and is also involved in the overhaul and maintenance of aviation equipment. “This plant is closely con-

nected to other enterprises of the Russian defence industry, supplying components or participating in cooperation to create modern aviation systems,” he said.

Kovalenko did not disclose the means used in the attack.

Separately, drones attacked an oil depot in Russia’s western Voronezh region on Monday night, the Ukrainian media outlet reported.

Agencies

WHO regrets US decision to withdraw

The agency exuded hope that the US will reconsider its decision and said it looks forward to engaging in ‘constructive dialogue’

Geneva, Switzerland - The World Health Organization (WHO) has expressed regret over the United States’ announcement to withdraw from the global health agency and emphasised the importance of WHO in safeguarding the health and security of people worldwide, including Americans.

However, the agency does hope that the United States will reconsider its decision and looks forward to engaging in ‘constructive dialogue’ to maintain the partnership between the US and the agency for the health and well-being of millions around the globe.

The statement from WHO came after US President Donald Trump signed an executive order



WHO’s Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said WHO plays a crucial role in protecting the health and security of the world’s people

on Monday, announcing the withdrawal of the US from WHO. According to the order, the withdrawal was due to the organisation’s mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic and other global health crises.

The statement shared by WHO’s Director-General, Tedros

Adhanom Ghebreyesus, on X reads: “The World Health Organization regrets the announcement that the United States of America intends to withdraw from the Organization. WHO plays a crucial role in protecting the health and security of the world’s people, including Ameri-

cans, by addressing the root causes of disease, building stronger health systems, and detecting, preventing and responding to health emergencies, including disease outbreaks, often in dangerous places where others cannot go.”

The global health agency

noted that the US was a founding member of WHO in 1948 and has been involved in shaping and governing the organisation’s work ever since, alongside 193 other Member States, including through its active participation in the World Health Assembly and Executive Board.

In the statement, WHO said: “For over seven decades, WHO and the US have saved countless lives and protected Americans and all people from health threats. Together, we ended smallpox, and together we have brought polio to the brink of eradication. American institutions have contributed to and benefited from membership in WHO.”

WHO further stated that, with the participation of the US and other states, it has implemented

withdrawing US from WHO reads: “The United States noticed its withdrawal from the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2020 due to the organisation’s mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic that arose out of Wuhan, China, and other global health crises, its failure to adopt urgently needed reforms, and its inability to demonstrate independence from the inappropriate political influence of WHO member states.”

The global health agency noted that the US was a founding member of WHO in 1948 and has been involved in shaping and governing the organisation’s work ever since, alongside 193 other Member States

the largest set of reforms in its history over the past seven years to transform its accountability, cost-effectiveness, and impact in countries. The organisation added, “This work continues.”

WHO concluded the statement by saying: “We hope the United States will reconsider and we look forward to engaging in constructive dialogue to maintain the partnership between the USA and WHO, for the benefit of the health and well-being of millions of people around the globe.”

The order signed by Trump

Additionally, Trump stated that the WHO continues to demand payments from the US that are disproportionate to those required from other countries, criticising the financial demands, stating that the payments required of the US are significantly higher than those of other nations. “In addition, the WHO continues to demand unfairly onerous payments from the United States, far out of proportion with other countries’ assessed payments.”

ANI

16 killed in shelling in western Sudan

Khartoum, Sudan - At least 16 people were killed and 18 injured in artillery shelling by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on the Abu Shouk displacement camp in western Sudan, activists reported on Monday.

The Abu Shouk Emergency Committee, composed of activists and relief volunteers, issued a statement describing the attack as a ‘tragic event’ in which RSF forces shelled the camp in El Fasher with heavy artillery.

It said the shelling ‘primarily targeted a market inside the camp, causing significant civilian casualties, including 16 deaths and 18 injuries’.



The Committee urged human rights organisations to ‘ensure the necessary protection for displaced persons in the Abu Shouk camp to stop the bloodshed among civilians’.

Similarly, the General Coordi-

nation for Displaced Persons and Refugees in Darfur, a civil society entity, condemned the attack as a ‘new massacre’ caused by RSF heavy artillery fire. The group reported additional casualties and injuries but

did not specify numbers.

The RSF had not commented on the reports. El Fasher, a key hub for humanitarian operations across Darfur’s five states, has been a flashpoint for violence since May 10, despite international warnings against further escalation

The conflict between the Sudanese army and the RSF, which began in mid-April 2023, has claimed more than 20,000 lives and displaced 14mn people, according to the UN and local authorities.

A study by US-based universities estimates the death toll at around 130,000.

Anadolu Agency



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders launch the party’s ‘Sankalp Patra Part -II’ in New Delhi on Monday (ANI)

India: BJP gears up for mega rallies ahead of Delhi polls

New Delhi, India - The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is all set to carry out huge rallies in Delhi, featuring top leaders including PM Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, J P Nadda, Manohar Lal Khattar and Nitin Gadkari.

Chief Minister and leaders of various states will also be joining the campaign ahead of the upcoming Delhi assembly elections, including Yogi Adityanath, Pushkar Singh Dhami, Himanta Biswa Sarma, and Deputy CM Bihar Samrat Choudhary.

PM Modi’s rallies are likely to be held in the last week of January. He is expected to address three to four rallies, a senior party source said.

The BJP is set to launch a series of rallies from January 23 to

attract Purvanchali voters, featuring Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath as the main face. Adityanath will address 14 rallies in various locations across Delhi, including Kirari, Outer Delhi, Keshav Puram, North West Delhi, Shahdara, Karol Bagh, Najafgarh, Mehrauli, Sahadara, South Delhi, and Mayur Vihar.

‘Dangerous for Delhi, country’

Meanwhile, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday launched a scathing attack against the BJP, saying that the election manifesto released by the ruling party in the centre was ‘dangerous’ for the national capital and country.

“BJP has released two Sankalp Patras so far, both are dangerous

for Delhi and the country. We are constantly saying that we have made education free, if they come to power, they will stop free education and free electricity. Four days ago, in the first Sankalp Patra, they said that they will stop mohalla clinics,” Kejriwal said during a presser.

Kejriwal, the former Delhi Chief Minister, said that the BJP would stop education in government schools if they are voted to power.

“In today’s Sankalp Patra, they are saying that they will stop education in government schools. They have said that they will give free education only to needy students. I want to warn the people of Delhi that this is a very dangerous party,” he added.

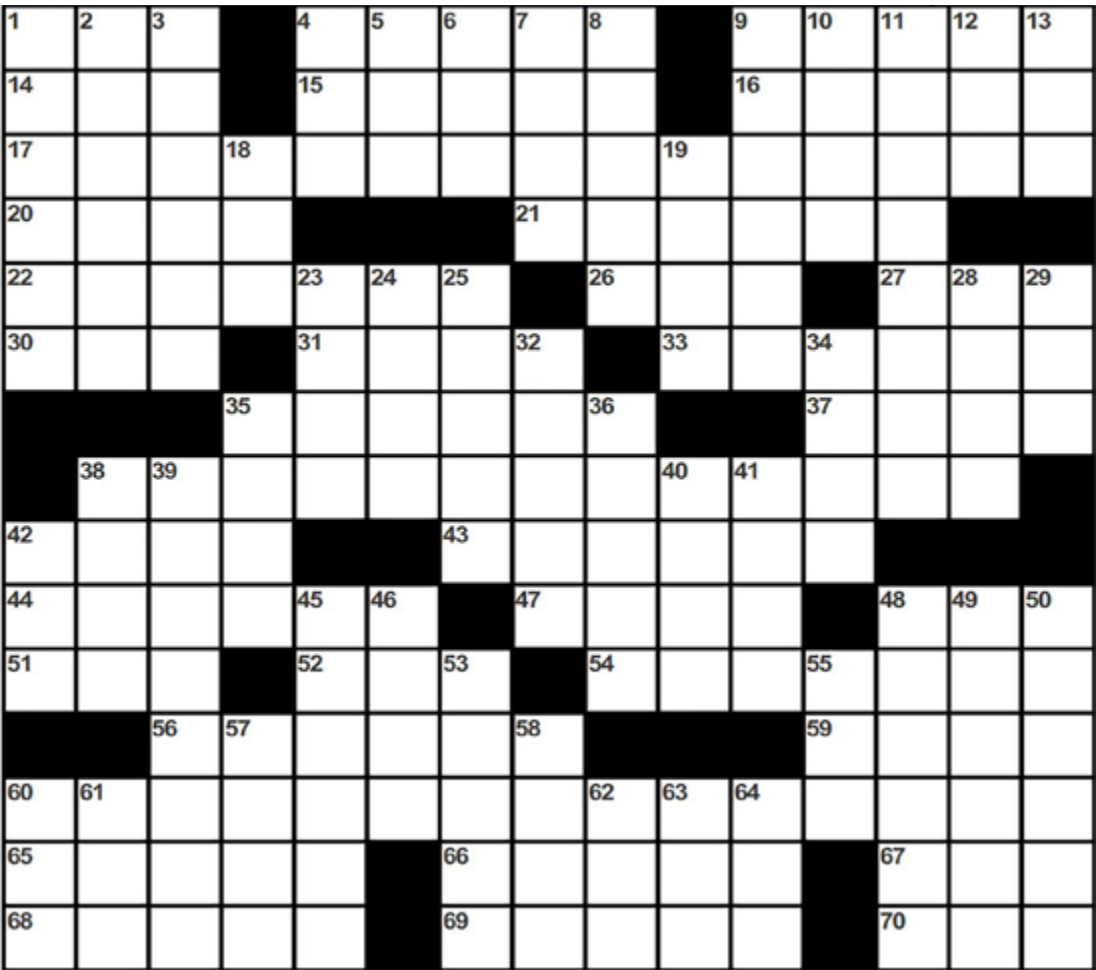
ANI



CATS' DAY OUT IN BAGHDAD

Customers play with cats at a cat cafe in Baghdad, Iraq on Monday (Xinhua)

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Karim of the Khans, for one
 - 4) City on the Missouri
 - 9) Folklore heavies
 - 14) Wager
 - 15) Twofold
 - 16) Nigerian currency
 - 17) Crazy, proverbially (with "has")
 - 20) Toledo's lake
 - 21) Having no feet
 - 22) Knuckle under
 - 26) Embrace
 - 27) Finale
 - 30) Health resort
 - 31) Fodder holder
 - 33) First- (novice jailbird)
 - 35) Show-off scholar
 - 37) Plural suffix with "auction" or "musket"
 - 38) Sure thing, it's said
 - 42) Dalai_
 - 43) Syndicate
 - 44) "Delicious!"
 - 4 7) Composes
 - 48) Ozone layer pollutant, for short
 - 51) Tokyo, formerly
 - 52) Beaver's work
 - 54) Toast
 - 56) Registers, as a complaint
 - 59) "What's gotten_ you?"
 - 60) Backstabber
 - 65) Flower-petal oil
 - 66) Attack on a fort, e.g.
 - 67) It's spotted in casinos
 - 68) Cheese byproducts
 - 69) Firebug's doing
 - 70) "Go on ..."
- DOWN**
- 1) Mother superior
 - 2) Get ready for action
 - 3) Infamous prison
 - 4) _-Wan Kenobi
 - 5) Time div.
 - 6) Kitchen pest
 - 7) "Funny_ or funny strange?"
 - 8) Beth's preceder
 - 9) Antsy
 - 10) Apple variety
 - 11) Sharpshooters
 - 12) "To_ is human ..."
 - 13) Utter
 - 18) "Hold on a_!"
 - 19) Boxing match
 - 23) Brought into play
 - 24) Calf-length skirt
 - 25) Mont or Mel
 - 28) Uncool sort
 - 29) Members of the AMA
 - 32) Ready to serve, as beer
 - 34) Authentic
 - 35) Beseech
 - 36) Hurled
 - 38) Data-speed unit
 - 39) Kill in a sacrifice
 - 40) Sicilian peak
 - 41) BP alternative
 - 42) Soapmaker's need
 - 45) Milk containers
 - 46) O. Henry's "The Gift of the_"
 - 48) The Great White North
 - 49) Has a sense of belonging
 - 50) Barred to entry
 - 53) Bright group
 - 55) "Dear" one
 - 57) Approve
 - 58) Cookbook direction
 - 60) Adage
 - 61) Mathematician's ordinal
 - 62) "For_ ajolly ..."
 - 63) Diva's problem
 - 64)_-Xers (Boomers' kids)

NOTE PAD

DELTA CBS BRAVO
USERS LAC EIDER
MANAS AGO SPIRE
BUDDYS SYSTEM ONO
ERE TRESSES
BEFRIEND GALA
AIR APERY ROMPS
IRIS SAYER BIRO
TEEMS PUTIN GOO
NOTE PIPEDOWN
ENDGAME EWE
NOS RUNNINGMATE
ABHOR TON AURAL
CLINE END TRAMS
TYPED ROO ESTEE

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Better tidy up and make sure everything at your place is exactly where you want it and how you want it. By the end of today, and it's going to be a busy one, you could have some company you weren't expecting. Don't even bother trying to guess who it might be. That would take all the fun out of it. Instead, just enjoy it. And don't feel like you can't surprise someone yourself. You might call first, though, just to be polite.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Your creativity has been on quite a roll lately, but are you giving your imagination enough breathing room? Let things in your life be messy for a while instead of sticking to a certain schedule. Doing so will encourage improvisation and keep you on your toes. Being confused wouldn't even be a bad thing today, because in the process of trying to make sense of something you'll discover a new way of putting it all back together again.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Sacrificing some of your privacy won't be hard today, because the alternative will be so exciting. You might be slow to come to this conclusion, but as the day progresses you'll soon see how much more you have to gain by joining in on the game rather than watching from the sidelines. Your presence will be in high demand, so supply it as often as you can. Even if you're feeling more introverted than usual.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What is the world's longest mountain range, that lies as a continuous chain of highland along the western coast of South America?
A. Urals
B. Alps
C. Caucasus
D. Andes

02. Which country officially observes the Shalivahana Shaka alongside the Gregorian Calendar?
A. India
B. Pakistan
C. Burma (Myanmar)
D. Bangladesh

03. Among the changes announced to the rules for the World Netball Series in October 2009, the length of each quarter was changed from 15 minutes to how many minutes?
A. 20
B. 6
C. 3
D. 10

Answers: 1.D 2.A 3.B

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
It's time to make up, mend fences, and break bread. Whatever you want to call it, be sure you do it. This minor dispute has been going on for long enough, hasn't it? Now it's time to do the adult thing and put it to rest. The heavens are in the perfect frame of mind to help you out, and your place would definitely be the best venue for the event. Ready? Now grab that phone and start dialing.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
There could be a lot of erratic energy in the lives of people you love today, but you can't let it get in the way of your plans. Friends and family members know that you care about them, but they also know that you have a life, so if you change your plans just to come to their aid, you're only going to make them feel guilty. Just because they're going through some emotional upheaval now doesn't mean they expect you to drop everything and come running.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You're not quite sure what's going on between you and a dear one, but it has been difficult, and you're not happy about it. This doesn't mean it's over. It could be just entering one of those "challenging" phases that make or break a relationship. Decide which path you'd like to follow, have a sit-down meeting, and discuss everything. You can probably work this out if you want to.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Your creativity has been on quite a roll lately, but are you giving your imagination enough breathing room? Let things in your life be messy for a while instead of sticking to a certain schedule. Doing so will encourage improvisation and keep you on your toes. Being confused wouldn't even be a bad thing today, because in the process of trying to make sense of something you'll discover a new way of putting it all back together again.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Don't let them get to you. Sure, that's easier said than done, especially when the person you're up against knows exactly how to push your buttons with maximum efficiency. Still, if you give in and get nasty, you'll be letting them win. And while you have a reputation for being fair, that doesn't mean you like to lose. Do what comes best and easiest to you and kill them with kindness.

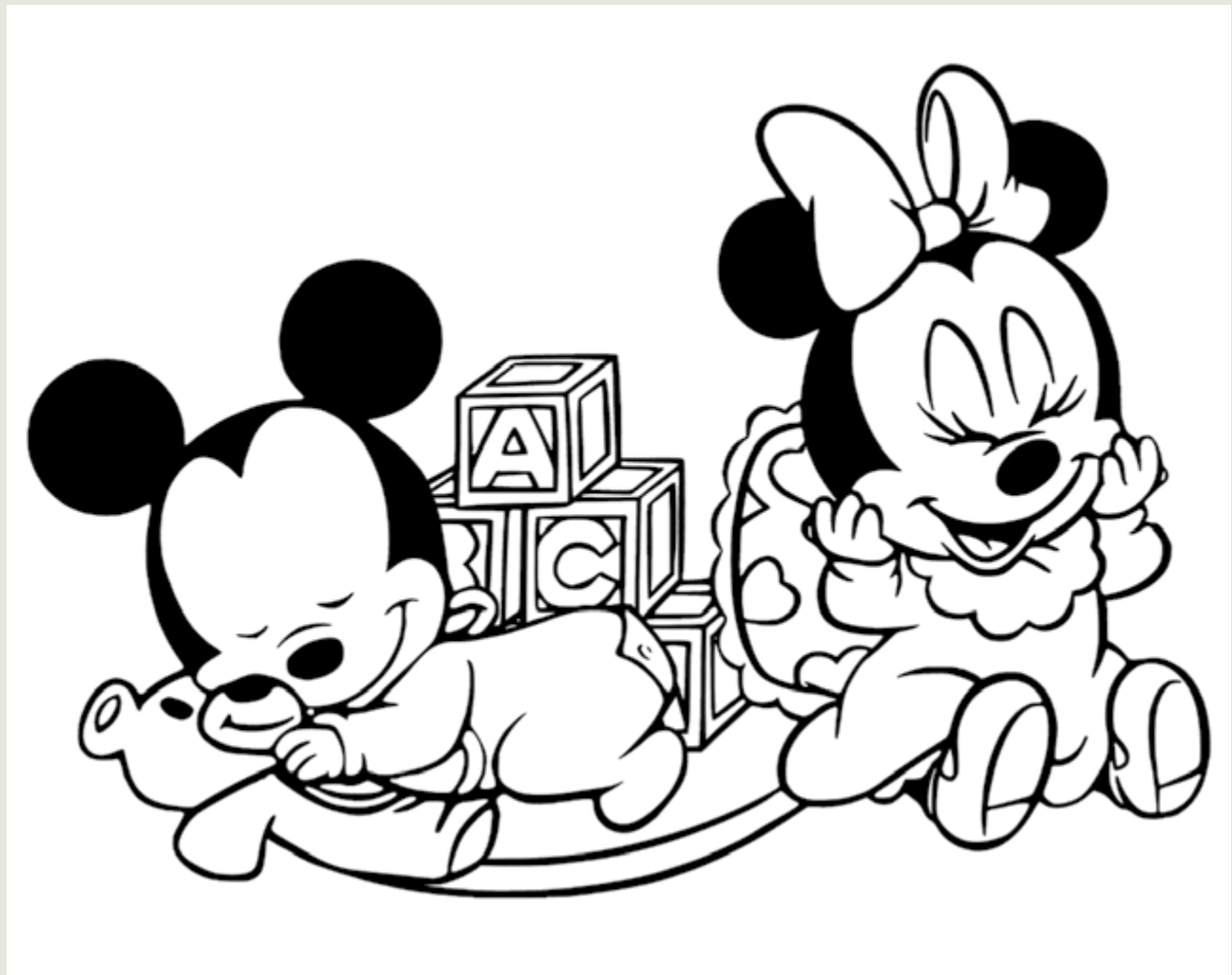
AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
You're not quite sure what's going on between you and a dear one, but it has been difficult, and you're not happy about it. This doesn't mean it's over. It could be just entering one of those "challenging" phases that make or break a relationship. Decide which path you'd like to follow, have a sit-down meeting, and discuss everything. You can probably work this out if you want to.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Your emotions are just pouring out of you, yes, even more than usual. You're not feeling sniffily or sentimental, though. You're adamant about everything you feel. You may be surprising a few people as a result, especially those who know you well and really haven't seen you act like this before. Too bad. It's good to keep them on their toes, and it's time to let the world know what you're really made of. Vent at will.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
You deserve to indulge in a bit of silly distraction. You've been itching for some fun shenanigans for a while but haven't had the time or opportunity until today. Let your mischievous side come out to play for a little while, and you'll soon be able to cook up some interesting capers. As long as you're not hurting anyone's feelings, you have a green light for practical jokes and even a little teasing. Try to get others in on the fun.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You're known for your modesty, prudence, and discretion, so once you're trusted with a secret, keeping it is something you take very seriously, and that goes double for confiding one. At the moment, however, you've been put in a position you don't like. You might need to tell someone something you never thought you'd utter to a single soul. There's only one thing to do, and it all comes down to what you know in your heart is right.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

R	G	U	O
K	G	E	S
F	A	E	Y
E	R	A	H

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

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

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

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

Blues back to winning ways

Chelsea beat Wolves to climb to fourth in Premier League table

London, England - Chelsea won for the first time in six Premier League matches when they beat relegation-threatened Wolverhampton Wanderers 3-1 at home on Monday with goals from defenders Tosin Adarabioyo and Marc Cucurella and a third from winger Noni Madueke.

The win pushed Chelsea - who had been second as recently as last month - above Manchester City and Newcastle United into fourth place, while Wolves remained out of the bottom three only on goal difference ahead of

I said sorry to Trevoh after. I had to put this in the net for sure. He was saying ‘No way you took my goal’ but I said ‘You have to understand, this is what they pay me for’

NONI MADUEKE

Ipswich Town.

The hosts, seeking to get back on track for a place in next season's Champions League, went ahead in the 24th minute when Tosin sidefooted home from close range. But goalkeeper Robert Sanchez gifted Wolves an equaliser in first-half stoppage time when he dropped a corner and Matt Doherty stabbed the



Chelsea's Marc Cucurella celebrates his goal against Wolverhampton Wanderers on Monday

ball in.

The home fans were fearing a repeat of recent games when Chelsea threw away leads until Cucurella popped up in attack to score after Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall - in his first league start for the Blues - flicked on a Madueke cross on the hour.

Five minutes later, Madueke nodded in to make sure a header from Trevoh Chalobah - returning to Stamford Bridge after being recalled from a loan spell at Crystal Palace - crossed the line.

"It's instinct. Attacker's instinct," Madueke told Sky Sports. "I knew it was going over the line. I said sorry to Trevoh after. I had to put this in the net for sure.

"He was saying 'No way you took my goal' but I said 'You have to understand, this is what they pay me for'."

Madueke was full of praise for Chalobah, though, as he produced a superb performance in his first appearance after returning from his loan at Crystal Palace.

"Unbelievable. Leadership, character, bravery on the ball. He slotted in seamlessly so I am delighted for him," Madueke added.

"It is no coincidence with players like him and Reece [James] back in we won the game. They are Chelsea through and through and they helped us tonight with their leadership for sure."

Chalobah also received plaudits from his centre-back partner Tosin Adarabioyo, who added: "Trevoh Chalobah came straight back in and did an amazing job. He did everything flawlessly from a tactical point of view, so I am very happy for him."



Enzo Maresca with Trevoh Chalobah after the match

Maresca pleased with Chelsea show against Wolves

London, England - Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca was pleased as his side returned to winning ways with a 3-1 victory over Wolverhampton Wanderers on Monday, with his players regaining the lead after a late first-half equaliser.

Chelsea snapped a five-game winless run in the Premier League thanks to second-half goals from Marc Cucurella and Noni Madueke after Tosin Adarabioyo's opener was cancelled out by Matt Doherty's goal for the visitors.

Following two draws in their last two games after throwing away early leads, Maresca praised his team's reaction to take the home win that lifted them into fourth place.

"The performance until 40 minutes was very good, then the last five minutes we struggled. They scored a goal and we lost a bit of confidence, which was something that has happened a few times this season," Maresca told BBC.

"We need to learn to manage these situations better. In the second half we started well and scored the goals. Overall I think we deserved to win the game. We reacted well in the second half. After five games without a win it is not easy to do that. So it was important to win the game."

Chelsea, who had been second as recently as last month,

are now on 40 points, four points behind Nottingham Forest in third and second-placed Arsenal.

When asked about defensive miscues, the Italian manager denied that the 27 goals they have conceded in the Premier League had prevented his side from fighting higher up the table.

"If I'm not wrong only four

They scored a goal and we lost a bit of confidence, which was something that has happened a few times this season

ENZO MARESCA

or five teams in the league have conceded less than us. So why (ask about) a defensive problem?" Maresca said.

"I think the balance is quite good between offensive and defensive. Then you can concede a goal in any way."

Maresca also stood up for goalkeeper Robert Sanchez after the Spaniard gifted Wolves the equaliser by dropping a corner that led to Doherty's strike.

"Is part of our job when you make some mistakes," he said. "Robert has saved us many times, it happens, no problem."

Man City sign Uzbek defender Khusanov

Manchester, England - Manchester City have signed Uzbekistan central defender Abdukodir Khusanov from Ligue 1 side Lens on a four-and-a-half-year deal, the Premier League club announced on Monday.

City also signed defender Vitor Reis from Brazilian Serie A side Palmeiras on a four-and-a-half-year contract on Tuesday.

The 19-year-old joins for a fee British media reports said was 29.6 million pounds (\$36.20 million) from Palmeiras, who were reluctant to part with Reis, as they hoped to have him available

for this year's Club World Cup.

"Vitor Reis is one of the most promising young defenders in the world and we're delighted to be able to bring him here," City's Director of Football Txiki Begiristain said in a club statement.

British media said City had paid a transfer fee of 40 million euros (\$41.56 million) for 20-year-old Khusanov.

"For such a young defender, Abdukodir is already very intelligent, as well as being strong, aggressive and extremely quick," City said in a statement.



Abdukodir Khusanov (L) Vitor Reis during a team training session

The centre-back is the Premier League's first player from Uzbekistan.

"This squad is full of the best players in the world, and I can't wait to meet them and play alongside them," Khusanov said on the club's official website.

"And of course Pep Guardiola is one of the greatest coaches ever and I am so excited to learn from him and improve my game even more. This is a very proud moment for me and my family to be joining a great Club like Manchester City and I'm more than ready for this challenge."

Porto sack coach Vitor Bruno

Porto, Portugal - Porto have sacked coach Vitor Bruno, the Portuguese club said on Monday after back to back losses to lowly Nacional and Gil Vicente, with the two-time Champions League winners third in the Primeira Liga standings after 18 matches.

Bruno was hired in June, 2024 signing a two-year deal to replace Sergio Conceicao who had left the club after seven seasons in which he won 11 titles, including three Portuguese league championships.

Porto are the 12th club to change manager this season, which also includes Benfica, who sacked German Roger Schmidt after two campaigns in August, and Sporting who lost Ruben Amorim to Manchester United in November.

Bruno's relationship with the players turned sour after Porto were knocked out of the League Cup following a 1-0 loss to Sporting in the semi-final, with midfielder Pepe criticising the coach on social media.

Porto are one of the 32 teams to have qualified for the ex-

panded 2025 Club World Cup to be held in the United States from June 15 to July 13.

Porto's academy director, Jose Tavares, will take over as coach on an interim basis, with his first match coming in the Europa League against Olympiacos on Thursday.



Vitor Bruno

Pelicans stage stunning comeback to beat Jazz

New Orleans, US - CJ McCollum scored six of his 45 points in overtime and the host New Orleans Pelicans set a franchise record by overcoming a 25-point deficit in defeating the Utah Jazz 123-119 on Monday night.

Dejounte Murray had 26 points and 11 assists, Trey Murphy III scored 24 points and Jordan Hawkins added 18 for the Pelicans, who had beaten the Jazz 136-123 on Friday night.

Keyonte George scored 23 points to lead Utah. Isaiah Collier added 20 points and 11 assists, Walker Kessler had 19 points and 13 rebounds and Svi Mykhailiuk also scored 19 points.

McCollum made a layup to start the scoring in overtime, and he scored four more points to help the Pelicans take a 118-113 lead. George made a layup and added two free throws to get Utah within one with 49.7 seconds left, but Murphy answered with a 3-pointer to put the game on ice.

Utah scored the first 14 points of the game, led 38-19 after one quarter, took its largest lead at 46-21 early in the second and led by 20 at halftime.

Jayson Tatum led six Boston scorers in double figures with a game-high 22 points as the Celtics steamrolled Golden State in San Francisco as part of the NBA's Martin Luther King Jr. Day slate.

Kristaps Porzingis chipped in 18 points and Jaylen Brown scored 17 for Boston. Golden State had not lost by 40 at home since Jan. 15, 1985. Stephen Curry led the Warriors with 18 points but was just 4-for-12 from 3-point range.

The Warriors were held to 34.8 percent shooting overall and 26.4 percent shooting from deep, connecting on just 14 of 53 3-point tries. Andrew Wiggins really struggled for Golden State, missing all four of his 3-point attempts and finishing just 1-for-11 from the floor in a four-point effort.

Cade Cunningham scored 19 of his game-high 32 points in the third quarter and Jalen Duren added a double-double without



CJ McCollum scored 45 points including six in overtime as New Orleans Pelicans overcame a 25-point deficit to beat Utah Jazz

missing a shot to help visiting Detroit Pistons beat Houston Rockets 107-96.

Cunningham added nine rebounds and seven assists to offset his 10-turnover performance. Duren posted 16 points on 8-of-8 shooting to go along with 14 rebounds plus four steals and two blocks for the Pistons, who snapped a two-game skid.

Fred VanVleet led the Rockets with 20 points and tied his season best with six steals. Jalen Green added 19 points as Houston lost for the second time in three games.

LaMelo Ball and Miles Bridges each scored 23 points and Charlotte Hornets defeated visiting Dallas Mavericks 110-105 to notch their first three-game winning streak of the season.

Nick Smith Jr. finished with 19 points and Mark Williams scored 10 of his 13 points in the fourth quarter for the Hornets, who hit 17 shots from 3-point range. Reserves Moussa Diabate and Cody Martin each added 10 points. Kyrie Irving's 33 points and Daniel Gafford's season-high 31 points were tops for the Mavericks.

SUPERNOVAK!

Djokovic outshines Alcaraz in thriller to reach Australian Open semifinals

Melbourne, Australia - Novak Djokovic beat young rival Carlos Alcaraz 4-6 6-4 6-3 6-4 in a gladiatorial battle worthy of a title clash to charge into the Australian Open semi-finals on Tuesday and remain in the hunt for a record 25th Grand Slam title.

In the latest chapter of a generational rivalry that has played out on the biggest stages, including last year's Olympic final in Paris which Djokovic won, it was the 37-year-old who maintained his hardcourt dominance over Alcaraz.

Defeat was a blow for the 21-year-old Spaniard as the French Open and Wimbledon champion's bid to become the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam went up in flames, and he was left to digest his third loss to Djokovic on the surface.

"I wish this match today was the final," said Djokovic, who next takes on German second seed Alexander Zverev in what would be a men's record 50th major singles semi-final for the Serb.

"It's just one of the most epic matches that I've played on this court, on any court, really. So thank you all for staying at 1 a.m. to watch us and support the players."

Some loose shots at the start of the match put Alcaraz on the back foot but he fired a magnificent backhand winner to pull back a break and was rock solid from there, vaulting to a 5-4 lead in a physical opening set after Djokovic made an error.

Having dropped his serve for a second time, Djokovic took an off-court medical timeout and returned with his left thigh taped up, but the seventh-seeded Serb could not prevent Alcaraz from holding to love with a big ace at the end to clinch the set.

"Since I'm still in the tournament, I don't want to reveal too much, obviously," Djokovic said. "The medication started to kick in, and they helped. No doubt, I had to take another dose. I mean, this sounds awful. Me taking another dose. If I lost that second set, I don't know if I

I wish this match today was the final. It's just one of the most epic matches that I've played on this court, on any court, really.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

would continue playing, but I felt better and better."

Djokovic was far more aggressive in the second set and made several forays towards the net to reel off the first three games before producing a spectacular backhand overhead smash assisted by the net cord at one point, but Alcaraz pulled level at 3-3.

The momentum shifted again as Djokovic heaped the pressure on the third-seeded Spaniard with heavy ball-striking to claim the second set and drew massive

cheers from the Rod Laver Arena crowd when he broke for a 4-2 and then 5-3 lead in the third.

Playing like a much younger version of himself, 10-times Melbourne Park champion Djokovic showed surgical precision to claim the set before breaking early in the next one to tighten his grip on the match.

Alcaraz won an incredible 33-shot rally to rescue a break point while down 4-2 in the fourth set and smiled as he gasped for air but Djokovic used all his experience to seal the win in the early hours of Wednesday morning.

"God knows when we're going to go to sleep," said Djokovic.

"I guess the key is recovery for me. To be honest, that's all I'm thinking about. The extra day with no match comes at the perfect time for me.

"Let's see if it's going to be good enough on Friday, hopefully I can come out and feel my best because Sasha (Zverev) is playing some of the best tennis he has played.

"We have an agreement, as long as I play he's going to let me win Grand Slam matches," Djokovic said with a smile.



Novak Djokovic exults after his win against Carlos Alcaraz in the Australian Open quarterfinals on Tuesday



Spain's Paula Badosa struggles to hide her joy after defeating Coco Gauff

Badosa marches into semis with win against Gauff

Melbourne, Australia - Spain's Paula Badosa stunned error-prone third seed Coco Gauff 7-5 6-4 in the quarter-finals of the Australian Open on Tuesday to reach the last four of a Grand Slam for the first time at the third attempt.

It was a thoroughly deserved victory for Badosa on a sun-bathed Rod Laver Arena as she set up a meeting with double defending champion Aryna Sabalenka or Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

The 11th seed's two previous Grand Slam quarter-finals had resulted in disappointing defeats and she sank to her knees in disbelief after sealing the victory with her 15th winner. "I'm a bit emotional, as you know, I'm a very emotional person," said the 27-year-old after securing her first win over a top 10 seed at a major.

"The last Slams, the quarter-finals were very tough, so today I wanted to play my best game. I

think I did it ... I'm super proud of the level I gave today.

"This is a dream come true." Gauff's bid to reach her fifth Grand Slam semi-final, and second in a row at Melbourne Park, foundered on her fragile serve and no fewer than 28 unforced errors on her forehand.

The last Slams, the quarterfinals were very tough, so today I wanted to play my best game. I think I did it...

PAULA BADOSA

"Paula was playing great," Gauff said after her first loss in 10 matches in 2025.

"I think it's just a lot more work to do, but I'm obviously disappointed, but I'm not completely crushed. I'm looking forward to a lot."

Ivanisevic leaves Rybakina's coaching team

Melbourne, Australia - Goran Ivanisevic said he has ended his short stint as coach of former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina after the Kazakh went out in the fourth round of the Australian Open.

Rybakina hired Ivanisevic, who ended a five-year spell as Novak Djokovic's coach last year, for the 2025 season last November after she split with long-time mentor Stefano Vukov just days before the U.S. Open.

"After our trial period that finished with the Australian Open, I wish Elena



Goran Ivanisevic

and her team best of luck moving forward," 2001 Wimbledon champion Ivanisevic said on Instagram on Tuesday.

Rybakina had added Vukov back into her team earlier this month before the governing WTA said he was provisionally suspended for a potential code of conduct breach and cannot obtain a credential to its tournaments while being investigated.

Zverev beats Paul to enter last four

Melbourne, Australia - Alexander Zverev played his best tennis when it mattered most to down Tommy Paul 7-6(1) 7-6(0) 2-6 6-1 on Tuesday and reach his third Australian Open semi-final in five years, keeping alive his dream of finally landing a Grand Slam title.

The 27-year-old German was unable to find his peak level for much of a match played in the stifling afternoon heat on Rod Laver Arena but dominated his American opponent in tiebreaks to lock up the first two sets.

Paul bagged the third set but second seed Zverev upped his intensity to whip through the fourth and set up a meeting with the winner of the later blockbuster clash between Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz.

"To be honest, I should have been down two sets to love, he



Alexander Zverev hits a return to Tommy Paul

played better than me. I was not playing great," Zverev said after reaching his ninth Grand Slam semi-final, the most among active players who have not won a major.

"(Somehow) I'm up two sets to love and all of a sudden, I need only one more set, and the fourth set was definitely the best that I've played."

Paul, also 27, had beaten Zverev in their two previous meetings and worked assiduously to gain the upper hand in the first two sets only for the German to raise his game to drag him back into a dog fight.

Paul, the semi-finalist in 2023 converted his fourth break point to take a 6-5 lead in the opening set but Zverev returned the favour in the next game before racing away with the tiebreak, winning it 7-1.

Sabalenka gets the better of Pavlyuchenkova to make semis

Melbourne, Australia - Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka reached the semi-finals of the Australian Open with a battling 6-2 2-6 6-3 win over Russian 27th seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, as her quest for a third straight title at Melbourne Park gained momentum.

Sabalenka had looked shaky early in her quest to become the first woman to complete a "three-peat" since Martina Hingis from 1997-99 and the top seed had to manage gusty winds and a gutsy opponent to extend her Melbourne win streak to 19 matches.

"Honestly, I was just praying today. I was just trying to put the ball back in these tough conditions," Sabalenka said.



Aryna Sabalenka is looking to become the first woman to complete a 'three-peat' since Martina Hingis, who won it from 1997 to 1999

"We both were trying to put the ball back. It was very difficult to play. She played amazing tennis, aggressive. I'm super happy I was able to somehow magically win this match."

After three straightforward holds of serve at the start of the match, Sabalenka displayed the variety she has added to her game with a drop shot from deep to earn break points and then converted it with a more familiar backhand bullet.

Pavlyuchenkova, who has the word "MEOW" tattooed on her leg in sharp contrast to the tiger on Sabalenka's arm, attempted to claw her way back in a tight game that followed but only found herself in more trouble down 4-1 after a shot into the net.

Pant to captain Lucknow side in IPL

New Delhi, India - Stumper-batsman Rishabh Pant will take over from KL Rahul as Lucknow Super Giants captain in this year's Indian Premier League.

Lucknow bought the 27-year-old for an eye-watering \$3.21 million in the players auction in November in a record deal for the world's richest Twenty20 competition.

Rahul captained Lucknow in their first three seasons.

Pant, who led Delhi Capitals across three seasons, told reporters in Kolkata on Monday that he would do everything in his power to repay the faith Lucknow had shown in him.

"Looking forward to have a new beginning with new energy and just have a blast out there, and have lots of fun," Pant added.

Lucknow made the IPL playoffs in their first two seasons but did not advance last year.

"Yes this is a new team and a new set-up, but my ideology of captaining a side doesn't



Rishabh Pant

change," Pant said.

"If you give confidence and trust in a player, he will do things you can't even imagine. That's the ideology we will try to have. We will give them trust, clear communication and lay out what role we have for them.

"One thing we will stress on is a never-say-die attitude. You fight till the last ball, that's what I emphasise on.

"Performances will come and go, but are you fighting enough? Are you giving your 100% on the field? And that is something you can control as an individual."

'SANJU HAS SHOWN WHAT HE'S CAPABLE OF'

India captain Suryakumar Yadav says Samson has sealed his spot as India's T20I wicketkeeper



180.16

was Sanju Samson's T20I strike rate in 2024, during which he scored three centuries.

Kolkata, India - Dashing wicket-keeper-batsman Sanju Samson has sealed his place behind the stumps in India's T20I team, says Suryakumar Yadav. The Indian captain was talking to the media on the eve of their first T20I against England in Kolkata.

Neither Rishabh Pant nor KL Rahul is part of this T20I squad, with Samson - who scored three T20I centuries and maintained a strike rate of 180.16 in 2024 - the incumbent gloveman and Dhruv

IPL, will be captaining Suryakumar.

Not at all, Suryakumar said. He might not have the tag of vice-captain, but his "good friend" Hardik remains a key member of India's T20I leadership group, Suryakumar said.

"The relationship with him has been really great. We've been playing [together] for a really long time. I still remember that from 2018, when I went back to Mumbai Indians [we first played together] and [it's the same] till today," Suryakumar told the media in Kolkata. "It's just that the added responsibility that I've got [here]. When we go back to franchise cricket, I can get to be quiet and relax for a little bit.

"But we've been good friends on the field and we know what we want going forward with the India team.

Suryakumar - who also took his first steps towards being one of the great T20I batters of his generation under Gautam Gambhir's captaincy at Kolkata Knight Riders - feels the working relationship he has with Gambhir is rock-solid.

Since Gambhir took over as coach in mid-2024, India have T20I series wins in Sri Lanka, at home against Bangladesh, and in South Africa, losing just one game across those three series. While their Test form might be under scrutiny, in T20Is, Suryakumar believes they are moving in the "right direction" with Gambhir.

"I've played under Gambhir for

It's what we want from all our players, not just wicketkeepers but from everyone - to keep the team first. He (Samson) got that opportunity, he's made full use of it

SURYAKUMAR YADAV

Jurel his understudy. Suryakumar said that's a position which is sealed for now.

"Currently, there's no question mark on the wicketkeepers," he said. "Sanju has done really well in the last 7-10 games and has shown what he's capable of. It's what we want from all our players, not just the wicketkeepers but from everyone - to keep the team first. He's got that opportunity, he's made full use of it. And I'm happy for him," said Yadav.

Axar Patel is promoted to being India's vice-captain, and Hardik Pandya is no longer the team's deputy but Yadav said it would not affect his dynamics with the latter, who, come the

four years, so I know how he works," Suryakumar said. "Even without speaking to him, we know what we need to do. He wasn't there on the tour of South Africa since he was preparing with the Test team, but we are moving in the right direction with him. He gives freedom, he allows players to express. He keeps things simple, he knows what is going inside a player's head. He keeps things light and maintains a good atmosphere.

"For me it is important that the T20 World Cup is one year away but I don't want to think about that," he said. "We want to enjoy the journey to that event instead."

Ferrari move a dream come true for Hamilton

Maranello, Italy - Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, Formula One's most successful driver of all time, arrived for his first day at Ferrari on Monday, and said it was a dream come true to race for the Italian team.

Almost a year since Hamilton announced his decision to leave Mercedes, where he won six of his seven F1 world titles, for Ferrari, the 40-year-old is at the team's headquarters at Maranello for his first official day.

"There are some days that you know you'll remember forever and today, my first as a Ferrari driver, is one of those days," Hamilton wrote on Instagram.

"I've been lucky enough to have achieved things in my career I never thought possible, but part of me has always held on to that dream of racing in red. I couldn't be happier to realise that dream today."

Hamilton's first day included a seat fitting followed by the simulator, but due to weather conditions he is not likely to have a first outing at the Fiorano test track until Wednesday.

The Briton had his worst sea-



Lewis Hamilton

son in Formula One last year, in terms of championship position, finishing seventh overall but did win two races after two seasons without a victory. Hamilton's last championship win came in 2020.

Hamilton will partner Charles Leclerc at Ferrari, who are without a driver's title since 2007, taking the place of Spaniard Carlos Sainz, who has joined Williams, and the 2025 season begins with the Australian GP from March 14-16.

"Today we start a new era in the history of this iconic team, and I can't wait to see what story we will write together," Hamilton added.

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German National (Male, 31), multi-talented and fast learner, with technical background is look-

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MILAN
MEN'S
FASHION
WEEK

FASHION SANS FLOURISH



WITH MORE NOTABLE
ABSENCES THAN THE
PRESENCE OF NEW
PROMINENT NAMES, THE
MILAN MEN'S FASHION
WEEK LAST WEEK WAS A
CATWALK THAT, DESPITE
EVERYTHING, ONCE AGAIN
ATTRACTED THE
ATTENTION OF ALL
PROFESSIONALS LINKED TO
THE WORLD OF FASHION



In the meantime, and until then, putting the spotlight on the always-awaited catwalk shows, of the 15 scheduled, the house of Pierre-Louis Mascia will be in charge of inaugurating the fashion show calendar for this January edition of Milan Men's Fashion Week, from what will also be its debut on the Milan Fashion Week calendar, where it will present a mixed proposal made up of designs for men and women.

From here, Milan will be the scene of shows by houses such as Pronounce, which is returning to Milan after swapping its catwalk for the London one for the presentation of its latest collection, Dolce & Gabbana, Jordanluca, Emporio Armani, Simon Cracker, Magliano, Prada, Dhruv Kapoor - who will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the firm's founding, Saul Nash - in his debut in Milan, Dunhill, Giorgio Armani - who will once again do a double show - and Zegna, which will thus be in charge of putting the finishing touch to the physical presentations and catwalk shows of this January edition of Milan Fashion Week.

A catwalk from which, along with the absences of Gucci, Fendi, Dsquared2 or Moschino, the British firm JW Anderson, by the British designer and also creative director of Loewe, Jonathan Anderson, will also be absent. An absence which, added to that of Loewe itself from the calendar of the next edition of Paris Men's Fashion Week, has only served to support the growing rumours that point to a more than imminent change at the head of the creative direction of Loewe, with Jonathan Anderson who the fashion gossip mills say will take Maria Grazia Chiuri's place at the head of Dior, leaving vacant a chair for which replacements have been suggested.

(Courtesy: wallpaper.com)

We can now say that fashion, in capital letters, is making its way in 2025, with the first major catwalk of the year last week unleashing some stunning looks and lures for the world of fashion.

A Fashion Week that, taking over from the celebrations of this last edition of the international trade fair specialising in men's fashion Pitti Uomo, turned Milan into the capital of international fashion, for at least the next five days. It now moves to the next edition of Paris Men's Fashion Week, scheduled for January 21 to 26.

A series of platforms, all of these well highlighted within the calendar of the major fashion events of 2025, a year that seems to be starting in a markedly relaxed manner, if we look at how it is beginning to take off, starting with this edition of Pitti Uomo, under whose umbrella no high-impact activation has yet taken place, and with this new edition of Milan Men's Fashion Week.

A catwalk to which the great Italian fashion houses will once again show their loyalty, namely Dolce & Gabbana, Armani, Prada and Zegna, whose participation and presence will nevertheless not serve to cover up the great and notable absences from this first edition of the year of the event.

In this regard, it is enough to look back at the January and June editions of 2024 to discover how, regardless of the one or the other, the official calendar of this same Milan Men's Fashion Week was packed with prominent names in the industry, all of them absent in this first edition of 2025.

Names such as Gucci, Fendi, Dsquared2 or Moschino that, for one reason or another, will not participate in this January edition, having in their

cases already expressed their intentions to move the presentations of their men's collections to the celebrations of the next edition at the end of February of Milan Women's Fashion Week.

In the case of Gucci, as a response to its new strategy aimed at presenting its men's and women's collections in a 'unified' way; in the case of Fendi, to kick off the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of the founding of the firm with a single show; at Dsquared2 to celebrate its 30th anniversary; and at Moschino, in its case, to follow the same strategy it followed last year, when it partici-

pated in both women's editions of the Milanese catwalk, but only presenting its men's collection alone during the June edition.

Once again structuring its programme around a total of three different presentation formats, a total of 60 fashion houses took part in this new edition of Milan Fashion Week. Of these, 15 took part in a catwalk format, with Armani participating in this new edition with its Emporio Armani and Giorgio Armani lines.

Meanwhile, four houses did so through an exclusively digital presentation, with the remaining 41 opting for an alternative presentation format, for the presentations in all cases of men's collections and men's and women's collections, for the upcoming Autumn/Winter 2025/2026 season.

Starting with the last of these groups, from an alternative presentation format to the traditional catwalk show, and focused essentially on international buyers who are flocking to Milan these days, firms such as Federico Cina, Brunello Cucinelli, La Martina, CP Company, Fay, Brioni, Kiton, Ralph Lauren Purple Label, Church's, Pal Zileri, Corneliani, Canali and Tod's presented their proposals from the capital of Lombardy. Firms among which we can discover new additions to the official calendar of presentations of Milan Fashion Week, such as Rubinacci, Federico Cina, Maragno, Qasimi, Rold Skov and the American Blauer, the label through which they will present their collaboration with Pirelli.

From an exclusive format of digital presentations, and all of them concentrated around January 21, this group made up of four fashion houses presented their collections. The firms Carnet-Archive, KML, Rkive City and Victor Hart, with their digital presentations concluded this new edition of Milan Men's Fashion Week.





Mary Todd Lincoln

It's not confirmed what, exactly, Mary Todd Lincoln wore to the inauguration celebration in 1861, but it's believed that she wore the same dress in this photo taken after the event. It features the highly fashionable crino-line skirt of the mid-19th century, which is festooned with ruffles and a florets pattern. She accessorised with fresh flowers, worn like a garland sash across her bodice and in her hair.



Nancy Reagan

A Hollywood figure before becoming first lady, Nancy Reagan understood what it meant to be in the public eye. Her appreciation and eye for fashion positioned her as a style maker, though she's remembered mostly for her anti-drug programs. At Ronald Reagan's first swearing-in ceremony in 1981, Nancy wore a coat and hat in a colour dubbed Reagan red. It was designed by Adolfo. Four years later, at Ronald Reagan's second swearing-in ceremony, Nancy wore a collarless electric blue suit and hat, with gold chain jewellery and button earrings.



Laura Welch Bush

Before she was first lady, Laura Bush was an educator, and she took up literacy as one of her many initiatives. Bush brought a no-fuss flair to her time in office, and the public responded to her reassuring presence. In 2001, Laura looked to Dallas couturier Michael Faircloth, who is largely unknown outside of that city, to costume her for the inauguration. She wore a single-breasted, peacock blue coat and skirt to the day ceremony. Four years later at George . Bush's second inauguration in 2005, she wore an elegant winter white cashmere coat and dress.

INAUGURATION ATTIRE **FIRST LADY** *Styles*

"People have been watching the first lady and what she wears since Martha Washington," says Lisa Kathleen Graddy, curator of American political history, reform movements, and women's political history at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. For more than a hundred years, the institution has worked to conserve and restore fashions worn by the first ladies.

"People have always had an opinion about [their clothes], and that's something we've tried to address in the exhibition," she says. "Why do we care what the first lady wears? She is considered to be the first lady of American society. She's going out and representing us across the country and around the world, so people tend to feel that they have a right to have an opinion."

Since 1789, the symbolism behind the clothes worn by presidents' wives on Inauguration Day have been read like a press release on their intentions. When Caroline Lavinia Scott Harrison publicised her dress as being American-made, it bolstered the America-first policy. With her Eurocentric fashions, Jackie Kennedy signalled her plans to infuse the White House with high culture. And when Michelle Obama wore J Crew gloves, she communicated that she was a first lady for the people.



While most people focus on the message that newly inaugurated presidents of the United States deliver in their inaugural addresses, there are scores of others who train their guns on the attire of the First Lady at each inauguration which, through history, have seemed (in some strange way) to attest the presidential speech



Hillary Clinton

Before her time in pantsuits as secretary of state, Hillary Clinton more often wore dresses and skirts as first lady. At Bill Clinton's swearing-in ceremony in 1993, Little Rock-based designer Sarah Phillips created both of Clinton's inaugural looks, which began with a blue suit (and Darcy Creech hat) and ended with a beaded violet evening gown made with costume creator Barbara Mat-era Ltd. At Bill Clinton's 1997 inauguration, Hillary wore Oscar de la Renta's coral-coloured dress and coat.



Michelle Obama

Come 2009, Michelle Obama, the first Black first lady, was a breath of fresh air. At Barack Obama's 2009 swearing-in ceremony, Michelle exercised her knowing fashion eye in selecting a lemongrass-coloured Isabel Toledo wool and lace dress and jacket with a pair of olive green J Crew gloves. At the ceremony, she was a vision in a white one-shouldered silk chiffon gown embellished with organza flowers with Swarovski crystal centers.

Four years later, in 2013, Michelle appeared the modern woman in a Thom Browne coat and dress set in a navy-silk, checkered-pattern fabric. The look was finished off with a matching belt embellished with metallic paillettes.



Melania Trump

With her eyes almost entirely obscured by the rim of her wool boater-style hat, Melania Trump stood behind President-elect Donald Trump on stage at the United States Capitol Rotunda as he pledged the oath of office.

Designed by New York-based milliner Eric Javits, Trump's hat was an austere flourish to a neat, military-style ensemble. Her navy silk wool double-breasted coat was nipped at the waist and worn with bare legs and stiletto heels. The piece was designed by Adam Lippes.

Dr Jill Biden

At Joe Biden's swearing-in ceremony in 2021, Dr Jill Biden wore a robin's egg blue coat from the young New York-based label Markarian, created by designer Alexandra O'Neill. The coat was custom-made and embroidered with Swarovski crystals for added sheen. Of course, the look came with an accessory never before worn at an inaugural ceremony - a face mask - a reminder of the unprecedented pandemic.

Later that Inauguration Day, Dr Jill Biden wore a coat and dress set by Gabriela Hearst. Both pieces were white, featuring embroideries representing the federal flowers of every state and territory within the United States of America.

Barbara Bush

Coming after Nancy Regan, Barbara Bush's personal style was less fashion-forward and in line with her down-to-earth sensibilities. At the 1989 inauguration ceremony of George H. W. Bush, she wore a deep turquoise coat designed by Bill Blass and paired it with a multistrand pearl necklace. That night, she wore a wonderful royal blue gown by Arnold Scaasi, constructed in velvet at the bodice, with a draped satin skirt.