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45,000 new jobs in 2025

Waiting list initiative to streamline jobs via smart system

Job security programme benefited 17,215 in 2024

Private sector workers - expats 2mn, Omanis 265,000

2,800 placed in leadership roles in localisation drive

Our Correspondent Muscat

Ministry of Labour (MoL) has introduced a waiting list initiative, a smart system aimed at streamlining job opportunities as part of broader employment policy reforms. Officials also announced completion of a review of the minimum wage structure.

At its annual conference on Monday, MoL unveiled plans to create 45,000 job opportunities in 2025. This includes 11,000 training and qualification placements, 10,000 government sector jobs and 24,000 positions in private enterprises.

H E Mahad bin Saeed Baowain, Minister of Labour, said the ministry is focused on employment-linked training programmes, wage support and on-the-job training. "These efforts will cater to jobseekers across multiple sectors, including



small and medium enterprises, large companies, startups, freelance work and temporary government contracts," he said.

The ministry has also launched the pilot phase of a project called 'Smart Management' in collaboration with the private sector to enhance digital governance in human resource management. The project integrates artificial intelligence-driven applications

MoL is focused on employment-linked training programmes, wage support and on-the-job training. These efforts will cater to jobseekers across multiple sectors

H E MAHAD BAOWAIN

and a digital knowledge base to improve workforce planning.

According to H E Baowain, companies participating in the training-linked employment programme have achieved a compliance rate of over 82%. The ministry surpassed its 2024 employment target of 35,000, successfully placing 36,615 workers, achieving 104% of its goal. By the end of 2024, 17,215 individuals,

including 11,758 men, had benefited from the government's job security programme.

As part of ongoing digital transformation efforts, MoL has introduced a platform to monitor termination requests. In 2024, termination requests for Omani workers fell significantly. Of 5,402 requests from private sector companies, only 87 were approved through labour negotiations and economic committees, allowing 4,892 Omani employees to retain their jobs.

The ministry has also rolled out a system called 'Individual Excellence' across 67 government entities, incorporating 45 new features to enhance work efficiency, leadership performance and job satisfaction. Government agencies will be assessed on their operational speed and leadership effectiveness.

H E Baowain informed that the number of expatriates working in the private sector surpasses 2mn, while Omanis in the sector is around 265,000.

As part of workforce localisation efforts, 2,800 Omanis have been placed in leadership and mid-management roles in industrial cities in collaboration with Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn). The National Employment Programme continues to align educational programmes with labour market needs, and work is underway to establish specialised companies to help job seekers enter emerging sectors, including information technology and industrial maintenance services.

To support entrepreneurship, MoL has introduced a freelance work package offering financing, training, social protection and consulting services. The initiative aims to empower Omani entrepreneurs and strengthen the gig economy.

Team reviews smart vehicle regulations

Our Correspondent Muscat

The National Team for Smart Vehicle Regulation convened on Tuesday to address the key issues surrounding the rapidly advancing automotive technology landscape.

Held under the chairmanship of Imad bin Khamis al Shukaili, Director General of Standards and Metrology at Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the meeting delved into crucial aspects of smart vehicle regulation, including regulatory compliance and global standards.

The primary focus of the session was to discuss measures to ensure Oman's vehicle industry remains in line with international best practices, especially regarding vehicle cybersecurity and protection of electronic systems.

With growing integration of smart technologies into vehicles, including autonomous systems and connectivity features, ensuring robust security frameworks is essential for safeguarding safety and privacy of consumers.

With growing integration of smart technologies into vehicles, ensuring robust security frameworks is essential for safeguarding safety and privacy of consumers

"The rapid evolution of automotive technology, especially in the fields of cybersecurity and system protection, demands a proactive approach to regulation. Our goal is to ensure that Oman remains at the forefront of global standards while safeguarding our national interests and ensuring public safety," Shukaili said.

The meeting's outcomes are expected to inform future policy and regulatory updates aimed at fostering innovation in the automotive sector, while simultaneously ensuring compliance with global safety and security standards.







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SEZAD completes first phase of fisheries, food complex master plan

Our correspondent
Duqm

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) has completed the first phase of the detailed master plan for the Fisheries and Food Industries Complex as part of its efforts to encourage investment in the sector and establish new projects.

Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, CEO of SEZAD, said the first phase covers 95 hectares of the total 750-hectare area designated for the complex. The facility will eventually house 60 separate structures, with provisions for future expansion. “The detailed plan for the fisheries and food industries complex was created with a focus on encouraging sector investment and ensuring service corridors are efficiently integrated with the area’s roads, factories, and other infrastructure.”

The project, which will be developed in multiple phases, includes key facilities such as a



Ahmed bin Ali Akaak

cold chain complex, red meat industrial complex, public utility complex, central market, fresh produce outlets, and various residential, commercial, and recreational spaces.

A commercial and administrative service area will be located outside the complex near the main entrance, featuring shops, a mosque, a guest house, public service centres, a fuel station and vehicle service centres.

Akaak stated that the planning process involved information gathering, site studies and mar-

ket research. The first phase saw the completion of the initial master plan and infrastructure network designs, while the second phase will focus on architectural designs for service buildings.

Located about 3km from the multi-purpose fishing port, the complex benefits from multiple access points to facilitate smooth traffic flow and efficient import-export activities.

“The Fisheries and Food Industries Complex plays a critical role in the region’s economy and has already accommodated several fisheries-related projects,” Akaak said. SEZAD is working with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones to promote the complex both locally and internationally.

Akaak noted that the completion of the first phase of the detailed plan marks a milestone in the development of Duqm’s fisheries and food industries, which is expected to attract further investment.

Thawani ranked among top 50 fintech firms in ME

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Thawani Technologies has secured a place for the second consecutive year among the top 50 fintech companies in the region.

The company climbed four spots in the Forbes Middle East Fintech 50 2025 list, rising to the 36th place from the 40th in 2024, reflecting growth and success for both Thawani and Oman’s fintech sector.

The list serves as a key reference for identifying leading fintech companies across the region. It evaluates firms based on factors such as financing value, transaction volume, app downloads, user activity, and the

impact of services on both consumers and businesses. Geographical expansion and growth rates are also considered in the rankings.

Majid al Amri, CEO of Thawani Technologies, expressed his pride in the achievement, stating, “Our improved ranking on the Forbes list for the second consecutive year is a testament to our commitment to delivering innovative financial solutions that meet market demands and drive digital transformation in Oman.”

He further noted that the recognition represents not just a success for Thawani, but also for Oman’s fintech sector, highlighting the country’s increasing

competitiveness in the regional market.

This achievement aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which focuses on building a diversified and advanced digital economy. Amri added that the recognition motivates the company to continue innovating and expanding its digital financial services, contributing to greater financial inclusion in Oman.

Oman’s growing leadership in fintech is supported by several government initiatives designed to foster innovation and strengthen digital infrastructure. These include the development of a regulatory sandbox for testing innovative financial products and services.

MAFWR launches drive to combat red palm weevil in Yanqul

Our Correspondent
Yanqul

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has launched a campaign to combat the red palm weevil, a serious threat to agricultural crops, in Dhahirah governorate.

According to a statement from the ministry, the Department of Agricultural Resources and Water Resources in the wilayat of Yanqul, launched the five-day campaign on March 16 in six villages covering close to 50 hectares of land.

As part of this campaign, the team is conducting surveys in date palm fields to identify infestations, with treatment applied to lightly affected palms and removal of severely infested trees. Additionally, awareness sessions are being organised to educate local communities about the risks posed by the red palm weevil.



INVITATION TO TENDER

OMIFCO invites all reputed and specialized companies with relevant experience to provide the required services mentioned against the below tenders for Fertilizer/Oil and Gas/Refinery/Petrochemical Industries to submit their best proposal for the tender:

Tender No	01/14953/2025
Tender Description	Catering Services Contract for OMIFCO Plant at Sur
Brief Details	Catering Services contract is a 4 years (Extendable for 1 year) period contract for providing meals as per required menu at canteen located at OMIFCO, Sur.
Tender Collection	19 th March – 27 th March 2025
Tender Fees (Non-Refundable)	OMR. 250/= (Omani Rial Two Hundred Fifty, only).
Bid Bond	OMR. 5,000/= (Omani Rial Five Thousand, only)
Minimum Experience	Ten (10) Years of experience in the subject field in similar scope of work and scale.
Bid Submission due date	Not later than 12:00 pm on 01 st June 2025 (Oman time)

All bidders shall submit their offer in THREE (3) separate file as following:

- Technical Bid and Un-Priced Commercial Bid.
- Commercial Priced Bid.
- Bid Bond valid for 120 days, with total amount as mentioned above.

All three files shall be sealed and tagged with the File Title, Tender Title and Tender Number and Password Protected in case of Online submission. Also, the company profile, registration documents and latest audited financials should be submitted along with the Technical Bid. All three files should be submitted at OMIFCO Head Office in Sur - Tender Box at the Main Gate or through a link sent to purchase@omifco.com.

Further details can be obtained from OMIFCO Purchase and Contracts Department at Sur Industrial Estate
Tel: +968 2553 2077 / 2553 2178 | E-mail: jumaalamri@omifco.com / sista.pavankumar@omifco.com
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MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,362.03
Sensex	75,301.26
FOREX RATES (RO1 equals)	
India	224.80
Pakistan	727.43
Bangladesh	315.766
Philippines	148.68
Sri Lanka	769.31
*Rates as on March 18 Source: xe.com	

BRIEFS
Saudi Arabia's total bank credit surpasses SAR3tn mark

The total bank credit granted to the public and private sectors in Saudi Arabia reached its highest level at SAR3tn by the end of January 2025, according to the monthly statistical bulletin issued by the Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) for January 2025.

According to Saudi Press Agency (SPA), this marks an annual growth of 15% and an increase of over SAR348bn compared to the same period in 2024, when it stood at SAR2,621,726 million.

Meanwhile, the total bank credit recorded a monthly growth of 2% by the end of January 2025, increasing by approximately SAR50.395bn compared to December 2024, when it stood at SAR2,955,550 million.

Last week, S&P Global upgraded Saudi Arabia's local and foreign currency credit rating to A+ with a stable outlook. The upgrade reflects the kingdom's continued progress in economic diversification, sustained growth of the non-oil sector, and development of the local capital market.

GCC economy seen growing by 4% in 2025 despite global trade uncertainty

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The GCC economy is expected to show resilience in the face of rising global protectionism and geopolitical tensions, according to the latest ICAEW Economic Insight report, prepared by Oxford Economics.

Despite the uncertain global trade and economic outlook, the report forecasts that GCC economies will grow by 4% in 2025, up from an estimated 1.8% in 2024.

While US President Donald Trump's tariff policies have created uncertainty over external demand, the GCC remains largely insulated from direct tariff impacts. The region's non-energy sectors are projected to grow by 4.4% this year, up from an estimated 3.9% in 2024, with regional PMI data firmly in expansionary territory, according to the ICAEW report.

GCC growth to withstand tariff headwinds

Following recent OPEC+ policy shifts, oil production will gradually increase from April, boosting oil-sector growth to 3.2% after two years of contraction. Saudi Arabia's oil output is expected to reach 9.3mn barrels per day, driving oil sector growth of 1.9%, while the UAE's higher quota of 3.5mn barrels per day will support 4.8% growth.

Oil prices have fallen sharply in recent weeks due to tariff threats and increased OPEC+



According to ICAEW, the aggregate GCC inflation projection for 2025 remains at 2.3%, with inflation expected to stabilise around 2% in the medium term

supply, with prices forecast to average \$70.5 per barrel this year, down from \$80.5 in 2024.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE are expected to lead non-oil sector growth with 5.8% and 4.8%, respectively. Tourism – the fastest-growing sector across the region in 2024 – will remain a key driver of growth, with Saudi Arabia expecting continued expansion, supported by the GCC-wide visa initiative.

Qatar's GDP is forecast to expand by 2.1% this year, with

East, said, "The GCC's projected 4% growth in 2025 highlights the region's ability to withstand external pressures while advancing its diversification efforts. Despite softer oil prices, the gradual easing of OPEC+ production cuts will support energy sector growth after two years of contraction."

According to the ICAEW report, the aggregate GCC inflation projection for 2025 remains at 2.3%, with inflation expected to stabilise around 2% in the medium term. Recent readings show inflation is below 1% in Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar, while in Saudi Arabia – the region's largest economy – inflation averaged 1.7% in 2024, driven al-

most exclusively by rising housing rents.

Regional budgets this year continue to balance fiscal discipline with sustainable economic growth, with a strong focus on social development, including education and healthcare.

"Given our oil price and production forecasts, and expectations of a modest rise in government spending, we anticipate the aggregate GCC budget position will be broadly balanced, thanks to surpluses in Qatar and the UAE," ICAEW said.

Meanwhile, the report expects Saudi Arabia to run a budget deficit of 3% of GDP as the government pursues strategic investments.

Alara dispatches 13th shipment from Oman copper mine

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Alara Resources Limited, an Australian base and precious metals producer and explorer with projects in Oman, has announced the dispatch of the 13th shipment of copper concentrate from its Al Wash-hi – Majazza copper-gold mine in Oman.

The Al Wash-hi – Majazza mine is operated by Alara's joint venture company, Al Hadeetha Resources, in which Alara holds a 51% interest.

The Al Wash-hi – Majazza copper-gold plant has produced 1,461.6 wet metric tonnes of concentrate in its latest shipping cycle, containing approximately 255 metric tonnes of copper metal and around 5.5kg of gold. This shipment, the 13th parcel of

copper-gold concentrate exported from the plant, departed from Sohar Port on March 15.

Alara Resources is an Australian-based producer and explorer of precious and base metals. The company is currently focused on operating the Al Wash-hi – Majazza copper-gold mine and concentrate production facility in Oman.

Alara Resources is also continuing exploration activities at its other Omani projects, including the Block 7 exploration licence under the Daris JV, the Mullaq and Al Ajal exploration licences under the Al Hadeetha JV, the Block 8 exploration licence under the Awtad Copper-Power Metal JV, and the recently awarded Block 22B exploration licence under the Al Hadeetha Mining JV.

Omantel unveils API services platform

Muscat – Omantel has announced the launch of its game-changing API monetisation platform in collaboration with Google Apigee, a leading API management platform that enables businesses and developers to seamlessly access and utilise Omantel's services and data through APIs.

The new platform, powered by Google Apigee's advanced API management capabilities, allows Omantel to deliver a highly scalable and secure solution for developers, partners, and clients. With comprehensive tools for API analytics, security, and developer engagement, the platform is designed to provide seamless integration and support for businesses looking to grow and innovate.

The benefits of Omantel's API services include seamless integration with Omantel's ecosystem, allowing businesses to develop complex applications with ease. Companies will also enjoy increased flexibility and



The new API platform, powered by Google Apigee's advanced API management capabilities, allows Omantel to deliver a highly scalable and secure solution for developers, partners, and clients

adaptability, enabling them to quickly combine various functions and respond efficiently to changing market demands.

By accelerating development processes, these APIs help reduce both time and costs associated with creating new applications. Additionally, the integration of multiple services into a single application enhances overall user satisfaction. Finally, businesses can build on existing platforms to drive innovation and open up new revenue opportunities.

"We are thrilled to partner with Google to roll out our API monetisation platform. This partnership enhances our ability to offer cutting-edge digital solu-

tions, expand our API ecosystem, and empower our clients with new business models that drive growth and innovation," said Jassim al Masfari, VP of Digital and Applications at Omantel.

"This launch highlights Omantel's strong commitment to driving technological advancement and providing our customers with the essential tools to thrive in the digital era. Our APIs offer industry-standard integration, scalability, and security, meeting the evolving challenges of today's dynamic business landscape. Moreover, this initiative will empower the broader community, university students, and startups to innovate and create new products, setting a benchmark for innovation and growth."

Tailored to address specific use cases across various sectors, including banking and financial services and e-commerce and food delivery, Omantel's API services enable businesses to enhance customer experiences and streamline operations.

UK businesses ramp up Middle East investment as regional interest surges

Dubai, UAE – UK businesses are increasingly viewing the Middle East as a prime investment destination, with interest in the region doubling in recent years, according to new survey research published by Pagefield.

More than a third (36%) of UK business leaders now consider the Middle East a key investment hub for the next five years – up from just 18% who have previously invested there. Asia is also emerging as a hotspot, with interest rising from 22% to 32%, as UK firms seek to strengthen their global market

presence.

Europe remains the top priority, with 55% of UK firms identifying it as their primary overseas investment destination. Investment in the US remains steady (42% current vs 45% prospective investors), but new trade tariffs under President Donald Trump's administration have introduced uncertainty, potentially deterring future deals.

In a press release, Christopher Clark, Partner at Pagefield, said, "The data shows a clear shift in UK businesses' global outlook. While Europe remains a top pri-



ority, the sharp rise in interest in the Middle East and Asia signals a growing appetite for new, high-potential markets. Businesses are looking beyond traditional hubs and seeking opportunities in regions that offer both economic dynamism and strategic advantages."

Pagefield's research – conducted among senior UK and US business leaders – highlights the increasing demand for government action to boost British investment overseas. A striking 83% of UK firms believe the government must do more to sup-

port international expansion, with nearly a third (31%) identifying Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) as the single most important mechanism.

Tax incentives are another key factor, with 19% of UK businesses emphasising the role of enterprise zones and tax carve-outs in driving investment.

Unsurprisingly, economic stability (34%), workforce quality (29%), and a strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) (28%) also rank highly among investment priorities.

John Alty, Pagefield Senior Adviser and former Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Trade (DIT), added, "UK businesses are ready to invest overseas, but they need the right conditions to do so. The government should stand ready to support outward as well as inward investment, as it will strengthen UK businesses and the economy. Businesses are looking to the Government to facilitate supply chains through free trade agreements and provide in-country support to boost business confidence."



Consumer sentiment in US drops to lowest level since 2022

Terry Lane

For American consumers, it's starting to feel like 2022 again as inflation worries mount and uncertainty over the economy grows.

The Michigan Consumer Sentiment index fell to 57.9 in its preliminary March survey, down from 64.7 last month. It was the lowest reading since November 2022, after inflation spiked as the economy reopened following the pandemic shutdowns.

Economists surveyed by The Wall Street Journal and Dow Jones Newswires expected a more modest decline in March. Optimism rose following the November election but has since fallen as tariff threats from President Donald Trump have rattled markets. This is the third month that consumer sentiment has declined.

"Consumer sentiment fell further in March as rising uncertainty in the economy threatens to take the wind out of the sails of the consumer sector," wrote Nationwide Economist Daniel Vielhaber.

Inflation expectations are

helping to drag down sentiment as consumers have factored in higher-than-usual price increases for the year ahead in each of the past three months. Consumers anticipated annual cost increases of 4.9% in March, compared to 4.3% in last month.

While consumers' view of current economic conditions dipped only slightly from last month, their economic expectations for the future fell sharply. Survey respondents raised worries about their personal finances, the labour market, inflation, business conditions and stock markets, said Surveys of Consumers Director Joanne Hsu.

"Many consumers cited the high level of uncertainty around policy and other economic factors; frequent gyrations in economic policies make it very difficult for consumers to plan for the future, regardless of one's policy preferences," Hsu said.

Consumer sentiment has been in focus lately as retailers report softening spending while inflation expectations continue to rise.

(Source: Investopedia.com)

OECD warns of slowing global growth amid trade tensions

Paris, France - The global economy has been resilient in 2024, but some signs of weakness are appearing against a backdrop of slower growth, lingering inflation and an uncertain policy environment, according to the OECD's latest Interim Economic Outlook.

The Interim Economic Outlook projects global growth slowing to 3.1% in 2025 and 3.0% in 2026, with important differences across countries and regions.

GDP growth in the United States is projected at 2.2% in 2025 before slowing to 1.6% in 2026. In the euro area, growth is projected to be 1.0% in 2025 and 1.2% in 2026. China's growth is projected to slow from 4.8% this year to 4.4% in 2026.

Inflation is projected to be higher than previously expected, although still moderating as economic growth softens. Services price inflation is still elevated amidst tight labour markets, and goods price inflation has begun picking up in some countries, although from low levels. Annual headline inflation in G20 economies is projected at 3.8% in 2025 and 3.2% in 2026. These projections have been revised upwards by 0.3 percentage points compared to our Economic Outlook in December. "The global economy has shown some real resilience, with growth remaining steady and inflation moving downwards. However, some signs of weakness have emerged, driven by heightened policy uncertainty," OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said.

"Increasing trade restrictions



OECD projects global growth slowing to 3.1% in 2025 and 3.0% in 2026. US GDP growth is projected at 2.2% in 2025 before slowing to 1.6% in 2026. China's growth is projected to slow from 4.8% this year to 4.4% in 2026

will contribute to higher costs both for production and consumption. It remains essential to ensure a well-functioning, rules-based international trading system and to keep markets open."

The OECD report highlights a range of risks, starting with the concern that further trade fragmentation could harm global growth prospects.

The report also draws attention to the risk of macroeconomic volatility. An unexpected downturn, policy change or deviation from the projected disinflation path could trigger market corrections, significant capital outflows, and exchange rate fluctuations, particularly in emerging markets. High public debt levels and elevated asset valuations further

heighten these risks.

Given these challenges, the OECD highlights key policy priorities. Central banks should remain vigilant given heightened uncertainty and the potential for higher trade costs to push up price pressures. Provided inflation expectations remain well anchored, and trade tensions do not intensify further, policy rate reductions should continue in economies in which underlying inflation is projected to moderate and aggregate demand growth is subdued.

Decisive fiscal actions are needed to ensure debt sustainability, preserve room for reacting to future shocks and generate resources to meet large impending

spending pressures. Stronger efforts are needed to reallocate spending towards activities that support longer-term growth, set within credible medium-term adjustment paths tailored to country-specific circumstances.

With potential output generally weakening across both advanced and emerging economies since the global financial crisis, ambitious structural reforms are needed. OECD further said that the governments must enact reforms to improve productivity and enhance the adoption of new technologies by boosting market competition and eliminating excessive regulatory burdens on firms.

Donald Trump and Big Tech: What can happen when business and politics mix?

Tina Teng

Tesla CEO Elon Musk is one of the most prominent supporters of US President Trump, donating millions to his presidential campaign and heading up DOGE, the administration's job-cutting initiative.

While big tech firms in the US have made efforts to improve relationships with the Trump administration, political controversies can spell danger for businesses.

Major US tech companies have been making efforts to strengthen ties with President Donald Trump's administration. However, these political manoeuvres have sparked backlash, raising ethical concerns and even leading to business setbacks. From direct political endorsements to policy shifts influenced by Trump's agenda, industry leaders are facing increasing scrutiny, and in some cases, declining sales.

The "Magnificent Seven" tech stocks saw their sharpest sell-off in three years last week amid fears of shrinking profit margins due to rising import costs and shifting consumer sentiment in key international markets.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk is one of the most prominent supporters of US President Trump, donating millions to his presidential campaign and heading up DOGE, the administration's job-cutting initiative. However, Musk's political entanglements have triggered widespread backlash, impacting several of his businesses. Tesla sales have been declining in numerous markets, which analysts link to Musk's controversial rhetoric.

Meanwhile, Musk's SpaceX is losing a \$100mn deal with On-



tario for its Starlink services due to Trump's tariffs on Canadian goods. "Ontario won't do business with people hell-bent on destroying our economy," Premier Doug Ford said.

Musk's endorsement of Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party may also have negatively affected Tesla's European sales. According to the German Federal Motor Transport Authority, Tesla's car registrations plunged 76% in February, even as overall electric vehicle registrations in Germany increased by 31%. Sales in other European markets also suffered last month, with Tesla deliveries dropping 53% in Portugal and 45% in France, as reported by Reuters.

In China, Tesla faces regulatory headwinds as trade tensions with the US escalate. The company has yet to receive approval for its autonomous driving technology, while its biggest Chinese competitor, BYD, is likely to gain

favour with Beijing, particularly with its adoption of DeepSeek's AI model as China prioritises domestic demand.

Among the Magnificent Seven stocks, the underperformance of Tesla's share price shows the potential risks of mixing business and politics. The electric carmaker's share price has been on a rollercoaster ride since November last year - tumbling 53% from its peak in mid-December after nearly doubling since Trump's victory in the US election.

Fact-checking at Meta

Musk isn't the only entrepreneur seeking to improve relations with President Donald Trump. Meta ended its third-party fact-checking programme and reintroduced political content in January, including previously restricted topics such as immigration and gender. Meta also donated \$1mn to Trump's inauguration, adding

to contributions from firms like Amazon and OpenAI's CEO Sam Altman.

Meta's social apps, including Facebook, Instagram, and Threads, have long faced controversy over the spread of misinformation on politically sensitive topics. In 2016, Facebook was widely criticised for facilitating the spread of misinformation during Trump's first presidential campaign, contributing to the creation of fact-checking policies in the following years. The integration of artificial intelligence in content moderation is now expected to introduce more ethical and legal layers to this debate.

Mark Zuckerberg's efforts to woo the new US administration also marks a change of tack. Meta Platforms had previously suspended Trump's Facebook and Instagram accounts for two years in 2021 following the Capitol riot on January 6. Trump had referred to Facebook as an "enemy of the people".

Alphabet faces employee scrutiny

Google, a subsidiary of Alphabet, also sparked outrage when it renamed the "Gulf of Mexico" the "Gulf of America" on Google Maps. This came in response to an executive order from Trump - calling for the body of water to be renamed. Additionally, Alphabet's decision to abandon its policy prohibiting the use of AI for military applications has raised serious ethical concerns, triggering widespread resignations and employee-led petitions against the change.

Meanwhile, Washington Post owner Jeff Bezos, who founded Amazon, has faced criticism for shifts in the paper's editorial stance. The outlet's opinion section now focuses on views supporting "personal liberties and free markets," while pieces opposing this stance aren't published.

(Source: Euronews.com)

Gold likely to hit fresh all-time highs of \$3,300

London, UK - Gold's seemingly unstoppable surge is likely to push prices to fresh all-time highs, with global financial advisory and asset management giant deVere Group now forecasting the metal to hit \$3,300 per troy ounce before the end of the second quarter of 2025.

The bullish projection follows an extraordinary rally that saw gold breach the \$3,000 mark for the first time on Friday, as fears over the threat to global growth from Donald Trump's trade war push investors into the safe-haven precious metal.

Nigel Green, CEO of deVere Group, said, "With tariffs being expanded, trade policies zigzagging, and concerns over inflation and an economic slowdown intensifying, capital is flooding into gold as a trusted store of value.

"Geopolitical flashpoints also continue to reinforce gold's ap-

peal. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine, renewed instability in the Middle East, and mounting tensions in the South China Sea are contributing to a risk-laden global landscape.

"As military conflicts and diplomatic standoffs escalate, in-

vestors are increasingly viewing gold as an essential hedge against uncertainty.

"Meanwhile, disruptions in global trade routes, including those in the Red Sea, are further heightening inflationary risks, adding another layer of urgency to gold's rapid ascent."

In addition, central banks across the globe are accelerating their gold purchases, signaling a profound shift in international reserve strategies.

Adding to the momentum, China's latest financial reforms are expected to unleash a tidal wave of fresh demand.



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ahlibank in 2024 achieves significant financial growth

ahlibank, 'Your Partner in Excellence', has reaffirmed its leadership in the banking sector, achieving remarkable financial results for 2024.

This year marked a pivotal chapter in the bank's journey, with notable advancements in innovation, customer-centric solutions, and sustainable growth.

As Oman's economy continues to show resilience amid global challenges, with growth projected for 2024-25 driven by fiscal policies and reforms, ahlibank has strategically aligned its initiatives to support the sultanate's economic stability. By leveraging diversified revenue streams and embracing innovation, the bank has contributed to Oman's robust fiscal outlook.

Celebrating 17 years of excellence, ahlibank has achieved steady performance across its key financial indicators for the year ended December 2024. The bank's net loans, advances and financing witnessed a 12.2% growth, reaching to RO3,022.3mn till the end of December 31, 2024, over the corresponding period in 2023. Customers' deposits increased by 11.6% to reach RO2,762.8mn, compared to the corresponding period of last year; total assets increased by 13.2%, reaching to



Through strategic foresight and a strong commitment to innovation, we have not only sustained our growth trajectory but also set new industry benchmarks

SAID ABDULLAH AL HATMI

RO3,754.9mn. Operating income increased by 9.9% to reach RO108.31mn. Operating expenses increased by 7.6% to reach RO46.40mn. Profit for the period grew by 14.3% to reach RO41.66mn, demonstrating the bank's sustained growth strategy.

CEO Said Abdullah al Hatmi commented on the results stating, "2024 has been a defining year for ahlibank. Through strategic foresight and a strong commitment to innovation, we

have not only sustained our growth trajectory but also set new industry benchmarks in financial excellence. Our focus remains on enhancing customer experiences, fostering innovation, and solidifying our position as a leader in Oman's banking sector."

ahlibank strengthened its market position in the banking sector with significant milestones aligned to the sultanate's economic goals. The bank played a key advisory role in fundraising RO40.6mn for The Sustainable City, Yiti project, and supported the second phase of Khazaen Economic City, advancing Oman Vision 2040. Financial closure for the Industrial Waste Treatment Facility at Sohar Port was also achieved, reducing Oman's reliance on hazardous waste exports. During the year, the Bank successfully issued Additional Tier 1 (AT1) Bonds, raising RO40mn to enhance capital adequacy.

The bank expanded its retail and Islamic banking offerings, launching ahli islamic's Al Majd segment for upper-mass customers and the premium Al Shumookh centre in Shatti al Qurm for high-net-worth individuals. New branches in Suwaiq and Al Khoudh expanded access to sharia'-compliant banking products.



Meethaq joins hand with Ministry of Endowments for zakat campaign

As part of its commitment to Islamic finance and social responsibility, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, participates in the zakat campaign organised by the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs.

In line with its strategic partnerships with the ministry, Meethaq plays a vital role in facilitating the seamless collection of zakat funds through Internet banking, mobile banking, ATMs and CDMs, ensuring accessibility and convenience for customers and the general public.

Those wishing to fulfil their zakat commitments can do so through the General Admin Account of Zakat (0611006600660016), ensuring it reaches those in need during the holy month of Ramadan.

Ali Ahmed al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq - Corporate Banking, said: "Meethaq is keen to enhance Public-Private Partnership in various fields and sectors in the sultanate to provide the best banking services and facilities which are compliant and in ac-

cordance with the principles of sharia'a. Meethaq plays a pivotal role in the campaign, ensuring the timely and efficient collection of zakat funds to support the ministry's efforts in promoting social welfare. The holy month of Ramadan represents the pinnacle of this effort, witnessing a substantial increase in zakat contributions; reaffirming our dedication to this noble cause."

Meethaq continues to expand its footprint in the Sultanate, supporting individuals, corporates and SMEs with innovative

sharia'a based financial solutions. With 32 branches across various governorates, Meethaq stands as the leading Islamic financial services provider in Oman, providing financial expertise to all customer segments and reinforcing its role as the sultanate's premier Islamic financial services provider.

Every Meethaq product goes through the process of sharia'a-compliance certification by its Sharia'a Supervisory Board and is created in line with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman.



'Together in Muttrah for Sustainable Health' initiative

Within the framework of strengthening cooperation and partnership between the Muttrah Health Committee and health sector institutions in Muscat governorate, Sheikh Dr Hamad bin Saeed al Mamari, wali of Muttrah, held a meeting with representatives of several private health institutions.

The meeting aimed to discuss enhancing cooperation between

the public and private sectors to face emergency and exceptional situations and improve the health services to the community.

During the meeting, a health initiative entitled 'Together in Muttrah for Sustainable Health' was announced to promote collaboration between government and private entities to achieve sustainable health objectives in Muttrah. This initiative includes

awareness programmes to support health campaigns conducted by the Ministry of Health, such as pre-marriage screening, anti-smoking and reducing the narcotics and psychotropic substances.

The wali highlighted the important complementary role of private health institutions to support the government health system.

NBO expands Shahr Al Atta campaign to strengthen community support

The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has launched its annual Shahr Al Atta campaign for Ramadan, reflecting its commitment to supporting the less privileged and fostering the spirit of giving while contributing to corporate social responsibility.

The campaign encompasses a series of initiatives designed to serve those in need and make a positive impact on the nation's growth. It began with an in-house bake sale, where proceeds were donated to charity, reaffirming NBO's dedication to giving back.

As part of the initiative, food hampers were distributed to low-income families across the country in collaboration with



zakat committees and charitable organisations. This initiative, a cornerstone of NBO's CSR efforts for several years, aims to provide essential sustenance and support to those in need during

the holy month of Ramadan.

Building on this, the campaign extends its reach through various activities that provide essential support and bring joy to different segments of society. In collabora-

tion with the Cultural Citizenship Salon, NBO is organising a special event for children from the Child Care Centre to celebrate Islamic Orphans Day, offering engaging activities that promote happiness and inclusion.

Additionally, in partnership with the Oman National Autism Center, NBO is hosting a Qaransho celebration for children on the autism spectrum, fostering inclusivity and awareness.

Furthering its outreach, NBO has partnered with the Seeb Zakat Committee to support Kaswat Al Eid, providing children from low-income families with new clothes, enabling them to celebrate Eid with joy.

Embassy of Bangladesh Muscat, Oman

JOB VACANCY

Bangladesh Embassy in Muscat requires a driver (only Bangladeshi citizens aged between 23 to 35 years as on 25-03-2025) having SSC/Equivalent Certificate, 05 (five) years driving experience in Oman and fluent in Arabic & English. Pay and allowance and terms of the job will be as per the existing rules of the Government of Bangladesh. Candidates may apply to the Embassy with signed application, photographs, CV, copy of driving license, passport, Visa/ID card, educational and experience certificates submit either by post or e-mail at the following address by 25-03-2025:

Mail Address: P.O. Box no. 3959, PC. 112, Ruwi, Muscat, Oman. e-mail: mission.muscat@mofa.gov.bd

Badr Al Samaa hospitals receive ACHSI certificates

The official accreditation certificate handing over ceremony was recently conducted in Muscat.

The chief guest of the event was H E Dr Ahmed Salim Saif al Mandhari, Undersecretary for Planning and Health Organisation in MoH, while Dr Qamra al Sariri, Director General Quality Assurance Centre, MoH, was the guest of honour.

In the presence of Abdul Latheef, Managing Director of Badr Al Samaa; Moiden Bilal and Firasath Hassan, Executive Directors of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals; and Dr Said al Mughairi, Director of Quality Assurance and Patient Safety, Directorate General of Private Health Establishment; ACHSI Regional Director Bassel el Sayegh presented the Quality Accreditation Certificates to the branch heads of the six accredited hospitals. He also presented corporate certificates to the executive directors.

Notably, all the six hospitals of Badr Al Samaa met 100% of the criteria outlined in the accredita-



Badr Al Samaa hospitals in Ruwi, Al Khoud, Barka, Suhar, Salalah, and Nizwa have achieved accreditation from the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards International - an organisation dedicated to improving quality in health care

tion process, reflecting their unwavering commitment to excellence and patient safety & quality in healthcare.

The ACHSI assessment survey lasted for five days and was conducted by nine assessors from the Australian council.

In his keynote speech, Abdul Latheef said that the quality accreditation is not mandated or made compulsory in Oman but

being the largest private healthcare group in Oman Badr Al Samaa Group felt that it is its responsibility to take such initiatives in the interest of the deserving patients and ensure the best quality and safe healthcare practices.

H E Dr Ahmed Salim Saif al Mandhari said, "There are key success factors when we talk about excellence and getting the accreditations like Badr Al Samaa did is the good example of excellence." He appreciated Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals, its leadership; teamwork and empowered workforce for achieving the feat of getting six hospitals accredited at one go. "There has been a complete transformation in the way we deliver healthcare services to community. In this new age we need to adapt to innovation, ensure availability of services and continuously improve the quality of the services. And we are proud that Badr Al Samaa is continuously progressing in all fields."



Oxy Oman hosts general manager's forum

Oxy Oman recently held its annual General Manager's HSE Forum in Muscat, bringing together colleagues and service providers to celebrate and reflect on Health, Safety, and Environmental (HSE) achievements in 2024 and discuss goals for 2025.

Oxy Oman's senior leadership detailed substantial investments towards improved welfare and wellbeing, the creation of activity centres, recreational fields, and OPAL certification of all personnel camps

Oxy Oman's senior leadership congratulated the attendees for achieving the best HSE performance in the company's four decades operating in the sultanate, and detailed substantial investments towards improved welfare and wellbeing, including the creation of activity centres, recreational fields, and OPAL certification of all personnel camps in Oxy Oman concessions in 2024.

The importance of Oxy Oman's Zero-Harm value and culture - which prioritises the safety and wellbeing of all employees and service providers - were a recurring theme throughout the forum and were included within the ongoing HSE Focus Areas for 2025, encouraging everyone to embody this value in every aspect of their work.

The highlight of the event was the annual awards presentation, which recognised the outstanding safety performance of exceptional contributions towards Zero Harm culture. The company awards included categories such as Zero Harm, Zero Road Traffic Accidents, and Better Mousetrap (BMT) innovations. Companies were celebrated for their top-tier safety performance and contributions to a safer workplace. This year, Oxy

Oman also unveiled a new award to recognize individuals for their exceptional contributions towards Zero Harm culture. Steven Lauver, President and General Manager of Oxy Oman, remarked, "The General Manager's HSE Forum is a testament to our unwavering commitment to health, safety, and environmental excellence. It is through the collective efforts of our colleagues, partners, and service

providers that we continue to strive for a remarkable safety performance and foster a culture of Zero Harm. We look forward to building on these successes in 2025 and beyond." Oxy Oman is dedicated to fostering a safety culture that prioritises safety, well-being, and innovation, and is committed to driving positive change for employees, stakeholders, and the environment.

Oxy Oman celebrates opening of Green Walk Park it sponsored

Oxy Oman representatives recently celebrated the opening of the Green Walk Park, a landmark project that the company exclusively sponsored under the supervision of Muscat Municipality. The Green Walk park, located in Maabillah, spans an impressive 157,000sqm and offers a wide array of recreational, sports, and interactive activities for the local community. Green Walk Park features a 3km path with separate lanes for walking and cycling, promoting active and healthy lifestyles. The park also includes safe play areas for children, multipurpose sports courts, a dedicated skateboarding zone, fitness areas, and cafés. Green Walk also boasts over 1,800 trees and 36,000sqm of grass areas, and includes two underpasses that significantly improve accessibility, along with a newly constructed side road running alongside the residential areas, ensuring seamless connections for all visitors and residents. The opening ceremony was held at the Green Walk park, under the auspices of H E Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and the attendance of Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality. Steven Lauver, President and General Manager of Oxy Oman, attended the opening event along with senior representatives of the company. The opening event included a tour of the park, where attendees explored its various features and enjoyed a live roller blading performance, showcasing the diverse range of park activities for all ages. "We are extremely proud to celebrate the opening of Green Walk Park, a project that enhances the city's green spaces and reflects our continued commitment to championing sustainability and well-being," said Lauver. "This landmark initiative is in line with our ongoing efforts to create long-lasting, positive change in places where our company is located. Through our partnership with the Muscat Municipality and the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, we are excited to see Green Walk Park become a cornerstone of the community for years to come." Oxy Oman is a wholly owned subsidiary of Occidental (Oxy), an international energy company.



Omantel has announced a partnership with TeKnowledge, a global leader in AI, Customer Experience, and Cybersecurity solutions, to launch an advanced AI and data science skilling programme for its employees. This initiative aims to equip Omantel's workforce with advanced digital skills, supporting digital transformation, economic diversification, and future technology capabilities development. By investing in AI, data analytics, and digital skills training, Omantel continues to strengthen its position as the sultanate's leading technology and innovation company. The collaboration with TeKnowledge will accelerate AI and data science training across Omantel's technology, operations, and commercial divisions, enabling employees to tackle real-world challenges and explore new opportunities. The programme combines onsite training at Omantel's headquarters with virtual learning, ensuring an interactive and hands-on experience for all participants. Mohammed Ahmed al Riyami, General Manager of Talent Management at Omantel, emphasised the importance of this initiative. "AI and data science are at the core of Omantel's strategy to lead in AI-driven solutions, foster innovation, and enable sustainable digital transformation. By equipping our teams with future-ready AI capabilities, we are not only enhancing customer experiences but also positioning Oman as a leading digital economy," Riyami informed. "This initiative reaffirms our commitment to building an AI-driven ecosystem that accelerates technological advancement and unlocks new opportunities for growth." Ayman Majzoub, VP of Sales META at TeKnowledge, commented saying: "This collaboration with Omantel demonstrates how digital skilling should be done - learning, innovating, and applying AI solutions to real-world business challenges. We appreciate Omantel's trust in

Omantel, TeKnowledge to enhance employee skills

TeKnowledge and share their commitment to driving sustainable innovation and economic growth." As Oman accelerates its transition into a digital economy, Omantel is proactively upskilling its workforce, positioning itself as a regional leader in AI-powered services, while driving sustainable growth and innovation. As a global partner of Microsoft, TeKnowledge is dedicated to advancing AI and digital skills training in Oman alongside its comprehensive technology services. Through its global partnership with Microsoft, TeKnowledge delivers large-scale skilling programs, including national Copilot skilling initiatives, enabling businesses and government entities to leverage AI-driven digital transformation in the workplace. Founded in 2010, TeKnowledge provides expert technology services for AI, Customer Experience and Cyber Security that empower businesses and governments through technology.

Photo Society organises 28th Photography Week in Sultan Qaboos University

The 28th Photography Week, titled *Bawn*, commenced in the Conference Hall under the patronage of Dr Abdulmunim bin Mansour al Hasani, former minister of Information. Organised annually by the Photo Society at the Deanship of Student Affairs, the event fosters an atmosphere of artistic expression and creativity. The opening ceremony featured a speech by the society's president, Ali al Ruqaishi, who expressed gratitude to our beloved Oman for the blessings it has bestowed upon us and continues to provide. He emphasised the role of the Photo Society in nurturing students' talents since its establishment in 1991 and its commitment to developing their skills. He further noted that this week is the culmination of continuous hard work and dedication by the society's members and affiliates. Following the speech, a series



of video clips and presentations were showcased, including a montage depicting the society's journey leading up to the launch of the week, excerpts from its annual trip, a visual display of the exhibited photographs, and the announcement of this year's winning images in the open category. The first-place prize was awarded to the photograph *Asjadi* by Al Hasan al Yaarubi. Doctoral student Manal al Kindi secured second place for her photograph *Fudhul*, while the third-place award went to Sadeem al Jibal by Al Khalil al Saqri. In the project category, the winning team comprised Hiba al Jabri, Kawthar al Jabri, Hajar al Nabhani and Yumna al Gharbi for their project *Tajallad*. The theme of Photography Week is encapsulated in the word *Bawn*, which is synonymous with 'contrast'. It highlights the interplay between light and shadow, where neither can exist meaningfully without the other. This contrast defines nature's features and gives each individual their unique identity while simultaneously uniting them. Stepping back to observe, one realises that our differences ultimately connect us, forming a singular yet diverse entity. In its 28th edition, the Photo Society celebrates contrast as an idea, a universal principle, and a visual philosophy that encourages an appreciation of true beauty - the harmony between opposing elements that blend and diverge to create a striking sensory and visual experience. The event aims to expand this dialogue through a variety of artistic works. The accompanying exhibition includes 15 portrait photographs, five nature-themed images, 15 photographs capturing everyday life, as well as images showcasing architectural beauty, wildlife, and abstract photography.

Serbian government denies use of ‘sonic weapon’ at protest

Belgrade, Serbia - Serbia’s president Aleksandar Vucic has denied that his police forces used a banned ‘sonic weapon’ to disperse protesters in Belgrade.

“It is a vile lie,” he said in an address to the nation.

“I have had the opportunity to see this weapon abroad, and it emits a strong, piercing sound. That sound was not heard on the streets of Belgrade on Saturday night.” He added that an investigation will be opened, but warned ‘they should also prosecute those who went public with such a notorious lie’.

During a fifteen-minute commemorative silence, eyewitnesses reported hearing a sudden piercing noise, causing the crowd to scatter in a panic.

Speaking to local media, military analyst Aleksandar Radic said the sound must have originated from a Long Range Acoustic Device (LRAD), commonly known as a sonic weapon. The



Months of student-led movement led to nation’s largest protest in history

device is ‘primarily used for incapacitation’, according to Radic.

The Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, a Serbian NGO, condemned the government for allegedly using the weapon.

“This act represents a blatant display of force and an attempt to incite chaos, aiming to delegitimise protests and criminalise peaceful citizens,” they said in a statement. They also noted that use of such a weapon is illegal under Serbian police law.

The protests in Belgrade saw the largest crowds in the nation’s history. Official police estimates count just over 100,000 people, while independent monitors place the total at over 300,000.

The Saturday march is seen as a culmination of a months-long protest movement spearheaded by Serbian students. The protesters demanded accountability for the deaths of 15 people in Novi Sad who were killed by falling rubble as the outdoor roof section of a train station caved in on them.

In a wider sense, the movement has also encapsulated a whole range of complaints against Vucic and his government, including allegations of widespread corruption, nepotism, mismanaging natural resources, voter fraud, media control and muddled responses to previous deadly incidents linked to government officials.

DW

Germany ‘monitoring’ US detentions of its citizens



Three German passport holders were detained by US Immigration and Customs enforcement officials in recent weeks

Berlin, Germany - Germany is ‘monitoring’ how its citizens are treated when traveling to the United States, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Monday.

The announcement comes after the recent detention of three Germans in separate incidents. Two have been deported, but one person is still being detained.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Sebastian Fischer said Germany was trying to assess ‘whether this represents a change in American immigration policy or whether these are isolated cases’.

“Once we have a clear picture, we will then, if necessary, adjust our travel and security advice,” he said.

Green Card holder held by ICE

Fabian Schmidt, the German still in detention, was arrested at Logan Airport in Boston last week after returning from Luxembourg.

He is being held at the Donald W. Wyatt Detention Facility in Rhode Island.

Schmidt is an electrical engineer who has been living in the US since 2007.

It’s unclear why Schmidt, a US Green Card holder, was detained. A Green Card allows noncitizens to live and work permanently in the US, but it can be revoked.

The German Foreign Office told the German press agency, dpa, that the consulate general in Boston is handling the case and is in contact with Schmidt, his relatives and local authorities. Tourists from EU countries such as Germany typically have visa-free access to the United States for up to 90 days. Two German tourists said they tried to enter the US legally but were detained

and eventually sent back home.

Lucas Sielaff, a 25-year-old German, was detained by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials on February 18 as he and his US fiancée were crossing the border from Mexico, according to *Der Spiegel*. He spent two weeks in detention after his entry permit was cancelled at the Mexican border.

Jessica Brösche, a 29-year-old tattoo artist from Berlin, was also taken into custody at the Mexican border as she tried to cross with a US friend in late January, the magazine said. Brösche originally planned to stay in LA until mid-February, according to her Instagram profile. She was also returned to Germany last week.

Both were held at the Otay Mesa Detention Center, a prison in San Diego, California, before being sent back to Germany.

Trump’s crack down on immigration

Tourists from other Western countries have reportedly also been detained by US immigration authorities recently.

It appears to be a result of the strict immigration policies implemented by President Donald Trump.

During his campaign, Trump repeatedly suggested he would invoke extraordinary powers to address illegal immigration, further laying the groundwork with a series of executive orders on January 20.

Over the weekend he invoked the Alien Enemies Act for the first time since World War II, granting himself sweeping powers under a centuries-old law to deport people who officials said were associated with a Venezuelan gang.

DW



M23 fighters, backed by Rwanda, continue to advance into eastern DR Congo

Belgium, Rwanda expel diplomats over DR Congo conflict

Brussels, Belgium - Belgium and Rwanda are expelling each other’s diplomats in tit-for-tat moves as part of an escalating dispute over the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Rwanda announced on Monday that it had severed diplomatic ties with Belgium, giving Belgian diplomats 48 hours to leave the country.

Belgium’s foreign affairs minister, Maxime Prevot, described the move as ‘disproportionate’, adding that Brussels would declare Rwandan diplomats persona non grata.

Since January, the Rwandan-backed M23 rebel movement has seized two of eastern Congo’s largest cities. The international community condemned this as an escalation of a long-running conflict rooted in Rwanda’s 1994 genocide and the battle for Congo’s mineral resources.

Rwanda denies backing M23 but does not deny having its own troops in Congo. The United Nations estimates that Kigali has around 4,000 troops in Congo.

Belgium, the former colonial power in Congo and Rwanda, led calls for the EU to suspend the 2024 raw materials agreement with Rwanda.

“Belgium has clearly taken sides in a regional conflict and continues to systematically mobilise against Rwanda in different forums, using lies and manipulation to secure an unjustified hostile opinion of Rwanda, in an attempt to destabilise both Rwanda and the region,” Kigali said in a statement on Monday.

The Congolese government and M23 rebels said they would send delegations to peace talks in Angola on Tuesday.

DW

Rwanda denies backing M23 but does not deny having its own troops in Congo. The United Nations estimates that Kigali has around 4,000 troops in Congo

Mass deportations: Afghan women activists in Pakistan fear for their lives

Islamabad, Pakistan - Zahra Mousavi, a women’s rights activist, fled from Afghanistan to neighbouring Pakistan in March 2022 after months of fighting and protesting the oppressive Taliban regime.

She now lives in hiding and constant fear of being apprehended by Pakistani police and deported to her home country.

Mousavi actively participated in street protests against the Taliban regime after the Islamic fundamentalist group seized power in the war-ravaged country in August 2021.

She advocated for women’s rights by taking part in public gatherings and demonstrations, and tried to make the voices of Afghan women heard in the rest of the world.

But with the Taliban slapping broad restrictions on women and girls and gradually squeezing them out of public life, Mousavi was forced to leave.

Once in Pakistan, however, she has struggled to secure necessary documents to stay in the country.

“I could not obtain a valid Pakistani visa for myself and my family due to high costs and Pakistan’s strict visa policies,” the 29-year-old told DW.

“This led to my arrest by Pakistani police on February 22. They entered my home in plain clothes, conducted an intense search, and arrested both me and my young daughter, taking us to a deportation detention camp,” she said.

“We were kept there in extremely harsh conditions for two days and one night, and we were only released after providing guarantees and due to the pressure of human rights activists.”

Activists fear for their lives

Mousavi’s is not an isolated case.

DW spoke to several other Afghan female activists who are now living in hiding as Islamabad looks to accelerate deportations to Afghanistan.

Jamila Ahmadi, 27, said many of her fellow Afghan women have already been sent back to Afghanistan. She warned that their lives are now in danger.

“My activism, especially my efforts toward women’s capacity-building before the Taliban takeover, my reporting on Taliban crimes, and my involvement with the National Directorate of Security (NDS), has placed me in significant danger,” Ahmadi said.

“If I am compelled to return to Taliban rule, it would clearly be a certain death.”

Many women’s rights activists only sought asylum in Pakistan after escaping life-threatening situations in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

“In February 2021, I was at-



Pakistan is carrying out a huge drive to repatriate the roughly 4mn Afghans

tacked, resulting in a broken leg, but my determination remained unshaken,” said Ahmadi. “Again, in September 2021, we were brutally beaten by the Taliban.”

A huge repatriation drive

Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees for decades.

But over the last three years, Pakistan’s relationship with Afghanistan has deteriorated.

Islamabad is angry with the Taliban authorities in Afghanistan over the operations of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a militant group that formed in 2007 and has conducted numerous attacks on Pakistani security forces.

As cross-border tensions with the Taliban regime escalate, concerns were also raised about the well-being of Afghans in Pakistan.

Islamabad is currently carrying

out a huge drive to repatriate the roughly four million Afghans who crossed the border in the past four decades.

Pakistan had already repatriated over 800,000 Afghan refugees between September 2023 and the end of last year, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

Legal experts and refugee rights activists have criticised the Pakistani government’s deportation plans, particularly when it comes to deporting Afghan women’s rights activists.

“Sending activists back to Afghanistan, where they are very likely to be subjected to torture at the hands of the Taliban regime, would put them in greater risk,” Osama Malik, a refugee lawyer in Islamabad, told DW.

Growing worries about deportations

Ahmadi said her health has been affected by the deportation drive.

“Unfortunately, for more than a month, the Pakistani police have made life difficult for refugees, including issues with visas and visa extensions. My visa expired on February 25,

2025. My personal, psychological and emotional problems are due to not having a visa and being unable to extend it,” Ahmadi said.

While rights groups have accused Pakistani authorities of harassing Afghan refugees, Islamabad has denied the allegations and stressed that the removals were part of a 2023 campaign called the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan.

There ‘is no specific category for activists among those being deported’, a Pakistani official, who asked not to be named, told DW. “The responsibility of hosting Afghan refugees should not fall solely on Pakistan, as other countries can also accommodate them,” the official added.

Qaiser Khan Afridi, spokesperson for the UNHCR in Pakistan, said the agency is worried about the deportations.

“UNHCR is especially concerned for Afghans who face a risk of harm upon return, such as ethnic and religious minorities, single women, journalists, human rights activists, and members of artistic professions like musicians.”

DW

Over 400 killed, 560 injured as Israel resumes its genocidal war on Gaza

The Israeli army said it conducted airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, the largest since the ceasefire with Hamas

Gaza City, Palestine - The Gaza local authorities on Tuesday morning said that over 400 Palestinians were killed and many 562 others injured in a matter of five hours across the Gaza Strip as Israel resumed its genocidal war, breaking a ceasefire that lasted nearly two months.

The Israeli army said early on Tuesday that it conducted airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, the largest since the ceasefire with the Palestinian group Hamas took effect on January 19.

Gaza's Health Ministry said the bodies of 254 Palestinians have so far been transferred to hospitals, along with 440 injured people.

"Many victims remain under the rubble as efforts are underway to recover them," the ministry added in a statement.

The Gaza Government Media Office said entire families are among the victims, who were killed together in the Israeli attacks, noting that ambulances and civil defence teams are unable to bring all victims to hospitals.

"These brutal massacres confirm once again that the Israeli occupation army only knows the language of killing, destruction, and genocide," the statement said.

It added that the resumption



Gaza's Health Ministry said the bodies of 254 Palestinians have so far been transferred to hospitals, along with 440 injured people. The resumption of the massacres in Gaza comes along with the ongoing siege imposed on Gaza

of the massacres in Gaza comes along with the ongoing suffocating siege imposed on Gaza and the complete closure of the crossings, exacerbating a humanitarian crisis in Gaza and depriving over 2.4mn Palestinians of the basic necessities.

The media office urged the in-

ternational community, including the UN Security Council and rights groups, to break the state of inaction and immediately act to ensure an end to these massacres in Gaza.

Earlier, the Israeli army said it is attacking Hamas targets in the Strip 'to achieve the objec-

tives of the war as they have been determined by the political echelon, including the release of all of our hostages, the living and the deceased'.

The Hamas group, for its part, said the Israeli government has declared war on Gaza by breaking the ceasefire agreement.

"We demand that the mediators hold (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu and the Zionist occupation fully responsible for violating and overturning the agreement," it said in a statement. Despite the ceasefire, local authorities in Gaza had reported almost daily violations by the Israeli army.

Israel consulted with US: White House

A White House spokesperson confirmed on Monday that Israel consulted with the US on its airstrikes in Gaza.

"As President (Donald) Trump has made it clear: Hamas, the Houthis, Iran, all those who seek to terrorise not just Israel, but also the United States of America, will see a price to pay. All hell will break loose," Karoline Leavitt told Fox News.

Ahead of a meeting on Tuesday of the UN Security Council on Gaza, Israeli ambassador to the UN Danny Danon said the country will show 'no mercy' against its enemies.

"Let me be very clear: Israel will not stop until all of our hostages are back home. We will make it very clear to the Security Council that if they want to stop the war in Gaza, they have to ensure that the hostages are coming back to Israel," Danon said.

Anadolu Agency

White House denies violating court order on deportations

Washington, D.C., US - The White House has denied claims that it defied a judge's order halting the deportation of alleged Venezuelan gang members to El Salvador.

If such deportations did occur, it could escalate legal battles over the administration's assertions of broad presidential authority, potentially pushing the situation toward a constitutional crisis.

The controversy centres on the deportation of Venezuelan migrants under the rarely invoked 18th-century Alien Enemies Act - an unusual and contentious move that could signal an overreach by US President Donald Trump, CNN reported.

US District Judge James Boas-



berg temporarily halted the deportations on Saturday to assess the legality of using the act, instructing that any flights already in progress should return to the US.

On Sunday however, the administration confirmed that 250

deportees reportedly linked to the Tren de Aragua gang were already in custody in El Salvador.

White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt issued a statement later that evening, further fuelling speculation about whether officials had disregarded

the judge's order.

"The administration did not 'refuse to comply' with a court order," Leavitt said. "The order, which had no lawful basis, was issued after terrorist (Tren de Aragua) aliens had already been removed from US territory."

"A single judge in a single city cannot direct the movements of an aircraft carrier full of foreign alien terrorists who were physically expelled from US soil," she added.

Leavitt's focus on the judge's 'written' order and her mention of the migrants having already left US soil - without clarifying when they arrived in El Salvador - raised questions.

Anadolu Agency

Denmark's F-35 fighter jets set to enter service on April 1

Copenhagen, Denmark - Denmark's newly acquired fleet of F-35 fighter jets will officially enter service on April 1, nearly nine years after the government approved their purchase, Chief of Defence Michael Wiggers Hyldgaard announced at Skrydstrup Air Station, state news outlet DR reported on Monday.

Denmark has procured 27 F-35 Lightning II jets built by Lockheed Martin to replace its aging F-16 fleet. Of these, 21 will be stationed in Denmark, while six will remain in the US for pilot training, Wiggers Hyldgaard confirmed.

The deployment represents a major enhancement to Denmark's air defence capabilities



and its role in NATO's regional security strategy.

"We have now reached a point in the phase-in of the F-35 where it is not just about education and training. Now the aircraft can contribute to solving operational tasks," said Jan Dam, head of the Air Force Command.

Calling it a historic moment,

Wiggers Hyldgaard highlighted the significance of the transition.

"It's a big day. Denmark should be proud. The Armed Forces should be proud.

"We are not quite there yet, but we are moving in the right direction, with the F-35 aircraft taking over responsibility for the air defence of Denmark."

Anadolu Agency

REMINDERS OF PAST GLORIES



Tourists visit an ancient stage in Shaxi Town, Jianchuan County, China's Yunnan Province on Monday. Shaxi was once an important trading hub for tea, herbs, silk and salt on the ancient Tea Horse Road (Xinhua)

Israeli airstrikes kill 2 civilians in Syria

Damascus, Syria - Israeli warplanes killed two civilians and wounded 19 others in airstrikes on the southern Syrian city of Daraa late on Monday, according to Syria's official SANA news agency.

"Israeli occupation aircraft launched airstrikes targeting the vicinity of Daraa," the agency said on X.

A follow-up statement confirmed the casualties, adding that 'two civilians were martyred and 19 others injured with varying degrees of wounds' from the raids.

The Daraa Governorate, in a post on its Telegram channel, said the Israeli strikes targeted 'housing in the city of Izra and Regiment 175 with several hits'.

Israel's military claimed in a statement that it is 'currently striking military targets in southern Syria, including command centres and military sites con-



taining weapons and military vehicles belonging to the old Syrian Regime, which they are attempting to make reusable."

The army alleged that the presence of military assets in southern Syria 'poses a threat to the State of Israel. The IDF (army) will not allow the pres-

ence of military threats in southern Syria and will operate against it."

Israeli daily Israel Hayom reported the assault targeted three bases near Daraa, likely tied to the Assad army, though it offered no further details.

As of 1930GMT, no official

Syrian response had emerged.

After the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime, Israel expanded its occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights by seizing the demilitarised buffer zone, a move that violated the 1974 disengagement agreement with Syria.

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Can Canada and India patch up relations?

Ottawa, Canada - A thaw between Canada and India might be on the horizon with Justin Trudeau stepping down and being replaced by Mark Carney as Canada's prime minister.

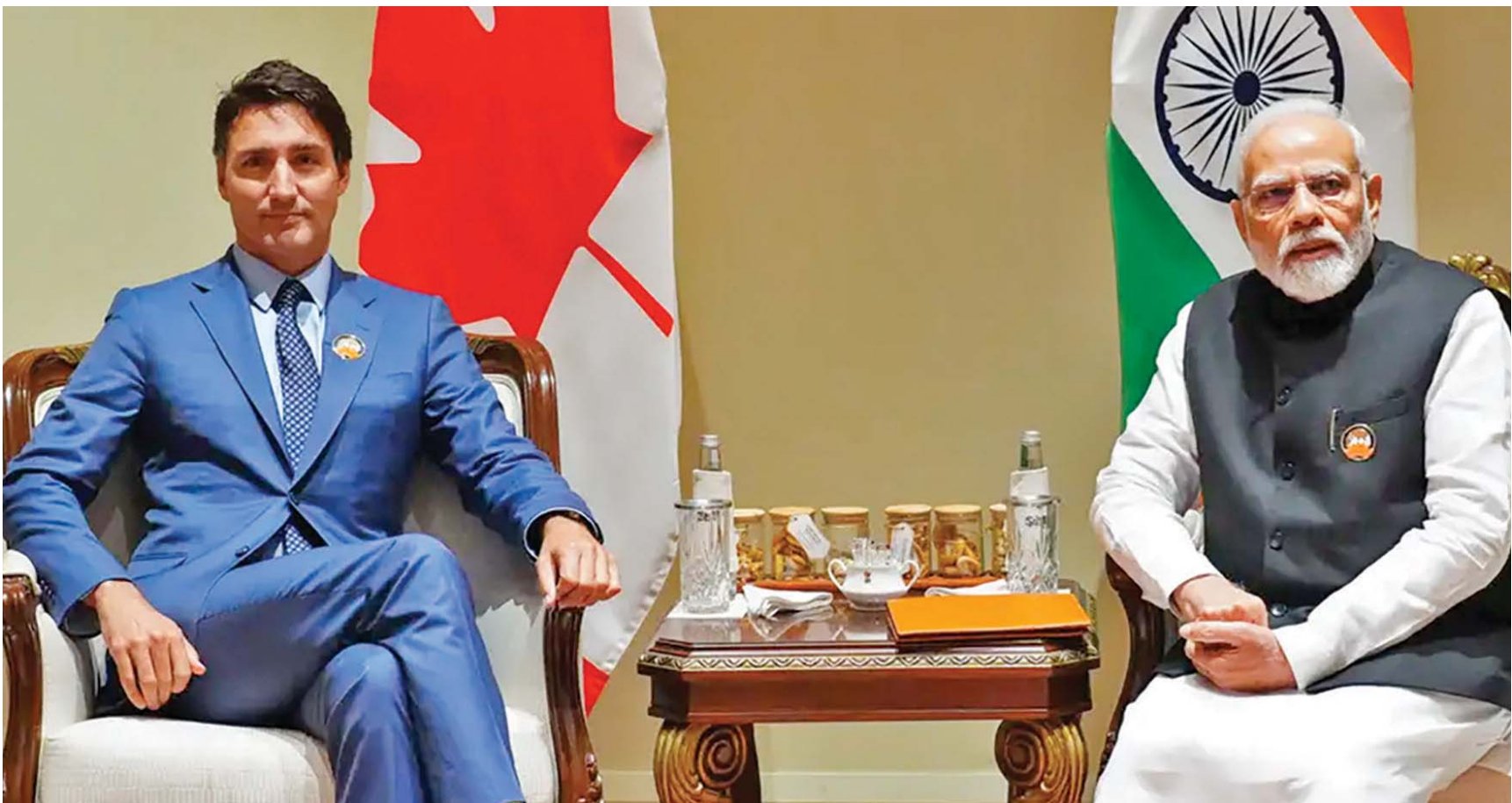
Trudeau had openly clashed with New Delhi since September 2023, when he linked the death of a Sikh separatist leader and Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar to Indian government agents. New Delhi angrily denied any involvement in the killing, which took place near Vancouver, and the ties between the two countries plunged to historic lows.

But Trudeau is now out of office, and his successor Carney is seen as having a technocratic and globally oriented perspective on foreign ties, including Ottawa's relationship with the world's most populous nation. Providing, of course, that Carney survives Canada's upcoming parliamentary election.

"There are opportunities to rebuild relationships with India, there needs to be a shared sense of values around commercial relationships and if I am the prime minister, I look forward to the opportunity to build that," said Carney, before being elected as the leader of the governing Liberal Party.

In another sign of rapprochement, Daniel Rogers, the head of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, visited New Delhi this past weekend for a meeting of international intelligence heads hosted by India's National Security Council Secretariat. The US and the UK intelligence chiefs also attended the conference, which was held behind closed doors.

New Delhi angry
In the wake of the Nijjar row,



This file photo shows Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the G20 Summit in New Delhi, India on September 10, 2023

Trudeau had openly clashed with New Delhi since September 2023, when he linked the death of a Sikh separatist leader and Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar to Indian government agents. New Delhi angrily denied any involvement

both countries expelled each other's top diplomats - known as high commissioners - and suspended trade negotiations. But even before the row went public, New Delhi had complained to the Canadian government about the activities of Sikh hard-liners in the diaspora, accusing the activists of trying to revive the insurgency in India's Punjab state.

Canada is home to the world's largest Sikh diaspora community, with about 800,000 people, roughly 2% of

the national population.

Nijjar himself was a proponent of the 'Khalistan Movement', which calls for a Sikh homeland by carving out an ethno-religious state in the Punjab region. But recent informal contacts between former diplomats and experts from both nations suggest there is momentum to put these controversial issues aside, and instead focus on mutual interests such as trade, investment and fighting climate change.

The Trump factor

David McKinnon, a former senior Canadian diplomat, believes the new US administration might inadvertently help Ottawa and New Delhi to bury the hatchet.

"Quite apart from whether Mark Carney or Pierre Poilievre is prime minister by mid-2025, the more compelling driver for a reset in the relationship with India is the upending by President Trump of Canada's relationship with the US and the international order more gener-

ally," McKinnon told DW.

Canadians, according to McKinnon, are now focused on a future that is not so dependent on the US and keen on expanding relations with the Indo-Pacific and Europe.

"India is an obvious partner for this given our complementarities in resources, technology, education and investment - not to mention our shared democratic legacies, and interest in a functioning global order," said McKinnon.

"Canada has a lot to do to rebuild the relationship, but it will take pragmatic approaches at both ends, including when it comes to addressing serious disagreements. How Ottawa and Delhi respond to significant de-

velopments in coming months in the Nijjar murder case or the Khalistan issue more generally will be important to watch," he added.

Caught between US, China and India

Ajay Bisaria, India's former envoy to Canada, agrees that Carney's arrival is a 'natural inflection point' to reset ties as Canada prepares for an election later this year.

"The pathway could include resuming high commissioners, inviting India to a G7 summit that Canada will host in June and progressing a trade agreement. All this should become politically more attractive, given the broader geopolitical problems

that Canada now has with the US and continues to have with China," said Bisaria.

However, he warned that Canada's new leadership might be so focused on economic challenges triggered by Donald Trump's tariffs and trade demands that the diplomatic reset with India takes a back seat.

Who will make the first move?

Carney is a citizen of Canada, the UK and Ireland, although he has recently signalled he would renounce his British and his Irish passport. He has formerly served as governor of the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England, and stabilising Canada's trade ties is likely to be high on his list of priorities.

"Canada needs India to diversify its economic profile, and New Delhi would also benefit from a trade treaty with Canada," Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, founder of Indian independent research forum Mantraya, told DW.

"While establishing such a treaty may take time, one way to assess whether progress is being made is to observe how quickly India appoints its high commissioner to Canada," she said.

This move would allow Canada to reciprocate and restore its diplomatic presence in New Delhi, she added.

"Given the low level of relations between the two countries, any potential change is likely to be positive. However, for improvements to occur, the new prime minister must address India's primary concern with Ottawa: the perceived leniency towards Sikh militancy," said D'Souza.

DW

Yemen's Houthis attack US aircraft carrier in Red Sea

Istanbul, Turkey - The Yemeni Houthi group said on Tuesday that it attacked the USS Harry Truman aircraft carrier in the Red Sea, the third such attack in 48 hours.

Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said his group also targeted a US destroyer in retaliation for US airstrikes on Yemen, without giving details. "The American aggressor bears the full responsibility for the consequences of militarising the Red Sea and expanding the scope of confrontation," Saree said.

He warned that continuing US airstrikes on Yemen 'negatively impact international maritime navigation'.



Washington launched a fresh wave of airstrikes on Yemen on Monday, targeting an iron factory in the province of Al-Hudaydah

Washington launched a fresh wave of airstrikes on Yemen on Monday, targeting an iron factory in the coastal province of Al-Hudaydah. More than 50 people were killed and nearly 100 others injured in US strikes this week-

end, as US President Donald Trump warned that 'hell will rain down' if the Iranian-backed group continues its attacks on Red Sea shipping.

The Houthis have been attacking Israeli-linked ships passing through the Red and Arabian seas, the Bab al-Mandab Strait and the Gulf of Aden with missiles and drones since late 2023, disrupting global trade for what it said was a show of solidarity with the Gaza Strip. The group halted attacks when a Gaza ceasefire was declared in January between Israel and Hamas, but it threatened to resume the attacks when Israel blocked all aid into Gaza on March 2.



Russia should prove it wants peace: Macron

Paris, France - France's president called on Russia to prove that it wants peace by accepting a US-backed proposal for a 30-day ceasefire after speaking on Monday with his Ukrainian counterpart.

"President (Volodymyr) Zelensky demonstrated the courage to accept the US proposal for a 30-day ceasefire. It is now up to Russia to prove that it truly wants peace," Emmanuel Macron said on X after announcing that he had spoken with Zelensky and on Sunday with US President Donald Trump.

He reiterated the need for the war to stop while underlining that 'atrocities and sabotage' must also come to an end.

"These are all conditions that Russia must fulfil. And I am confident in President Trump's commitment to this cause," Macron underscored.

He also urged all parties to present a 'concrete peace plan', a 'peace plan that provides strong security guarantees for Ukraine. A peace plan that ensures lasting peace in Ukraine and Europe. A peace plan that prevents Russia from attacking again'.

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No Secret Service protection for Biden's children, says Trump

Washington, D.C., US - US President Donald Trump said on Monday that Secret Service protection for former President Joe Biden's children Hunter Biden and Ashley Biden has been revoked.

"Please be advised that, effective immediately, Hunter Biden will no longer receive Secret Service protection," Trump said on his Truth Social platform.

"Likewise, Ashley Biden, who has 13 agents, will be taken off the list," he added.

Trump said Hunter Biden has had Secret Service protection for an extended period of time, all paid for by the US taxpayer.

"There are as many as 18 people on this Detail, which is ridiculous! He is currently vacationing in, of all places, South Africa, where the Human Rights of people has been strenuously questioned. Because of this, South Africa has been taken off our list

of Countries receiving Economic and Financial Assistance," he said.

Just hours before Trump's inauguration on January 20, Biden granted pardons to several of his family members, including James B Biden, Sara Jones Biden, Valerie Biden Owens, John T Owens and Francis W Biden, citing what he called 'unrelenting' politically motivated attacks against them.

Biden's first major pardon was in December, for his son Hunter, who was found guilty of federal gun charges stemming from his possession of a firearm while addicted to drugs in 2018. After a plea deal in that case was rejected, critics said the president's son was being prosecuted in a case where any other person would have not been charged.

Trump's Republican Party often lashed out at Hunter Biden, trying to link him to a complex web of conspiracies.



Former US President Joe Biden's children Ashley Biden and Hunter Biden

Biden helped FBI in case against Trump

Officials under Biden helped the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) build out its election tampering case against Donald Trump by turning over government-issued cell phones belong-

ing to the 45th president and former Vice President Mike Pence, according to news reports on Monday.

The new revelation was made in whistleblower disclosures released by Senators Chuck Grassley and Ron Johnson on Friday,

which were related to the FBI's so-called 2022 'Arctic Frost' investigation into Trump, which they say was improperly opened by 'anti-Trump' former Assistant Special Agent in Charge Timothy Thibault.

"The American people deserve to know the complete extent of the corruption within the DOJ and FBI that led to the investigation into President Trump," said the senators in a letter to Attorney General Pam Bondi and FBI Director Kash Patel. "We are making this information public for purposes of public accountability and to provide specific examples of past behaviour at your institutions that must not be repeated," they continued. "Quite simply, the public has a right to know what happened in Arctic Frost, and based on what we've exposed to date, the American public deserves better from its law enforcement agencies."

According to sources close to the investigation, it appears that the FBI did not require a warrant when it obtained the Trump and Pence cell phones, which were in the possession of Biden's White House counsel. The public disclosure released the email from Thibault with the subject line 'Arctic Frost Update 5 17 2022'.

"On May 4, 2022, CR-15 agents took possession of two phones belonging to former President Donald Trump and former Vice President Mike Pence," wrote Thibault. "The phones were entered into evidence and will not be processed until search warrants are obtained."

A source familiar with the investigation told Fox News that 'the Biden White House played right along with the FBI's 'gotcha' scheme against Trump' and 'gave its blessing and accommodation for the FBI to physically obtain Trump and Pence's phones'.

DAILY CROSSWORD

1 O 2 P 3 T 4 I 5 C 6 C 7 H 8 A 9 F 10 F 11 P 12 T 13 A
14 A 15 R 16 E 17 N 18 A 19 A 20 U 21 D 22 I 23 O 24 I 25 O 26 N
17 F 18 E 19 E 20 L 21 N 22 O 23 T 24 H 25 I 26 N 27 G 28 A 29 P 30 T
20 A 21 I 22 R 23 S 24 O 25 I 26 L 27 N 28 E 29 E
23 A 24 G 25 E 26 N 27 D 28 A 29 S 30 T 31 A 32 T 33 O 34 R 35 S
28 S 29 L 30 I 31 D 32 C 33 B 34 S 35 E 36 M 37 I 38 T
33 S 34 A 35 G 36 S 37 L 38 E 39 T 40 S 41 P 42 L 43 U 44 M 45 E
39 A 40 S 41 H 42 D 43 E 44 N 45 O 46 T 47 E 48 S 49 N 50 A 51 B
43 I 44 S 45 T 46 L 47 E 48 Z 49 O 50 O 51 M 52 D 53 E 54 C 55 O
47 H 48 E 49 F 50 T 51 L 52 A 53 B 54 I 55 R 56 A 57 N
51 M 52 A 53 N 54 I 55 L 56 A 57 S 58 R 59 H 60 E 61 S 62 U 63 S
56 E 57 D 58 O 59 A 60 L 61 A 62 K 63 Y 64 A 65 T
59 W 60 I 61 T 62 T 63 E 64 L 65 L 66 N 67 O 68 T 69 A 70 L 71 E 72 S
65 L 66 E 67 E 68 E 69 N 70 S 71 U 72 E 73 C 74 R 75 E 76 E 77 P
68 S 69 U 70 S 71 S 72 T 73 A 74 G 75 E 76 H 77 Y 78 D 79 R 80 A

- ACROSS**
- 1) Eye-related
 - 6) Harvest leavings
 - 11) Bake-sale org.
 - 14) Sports venue
 - 15) Part of a TV feed
 - 16) Charged item
 - 17) Be completely numb
 - 19) Quick on the uptake
 - 20) Puts on television
 - 21) Contents of some barrels
 - 22) Born, in bios
 - 23) Meeting notes
 - 26) Motor parts
 - 28) Used a firehouse pole
 - 29) ABC competitor
 - 32) Give vent to
 - 33) Droops
 - 34) "We should do it!"
 - 36) Feather in one's cap?
 - 39) Hearth residue
 - 40) Is a sign of
 - 42) Catch red-handed
 - 43) Basketmaking need
 - 45) Type of lens
 - 46) Art_
 - 47) Lift with effort
 - 49) Chemist's hangout
 - 50) Persia, now
 - 51) Some envelopes
 - 54) Kind of monkey
 - 56) Tokyo, till 1868
 - 57) Menu phrase
 - 58) Burmese currency
 - 59) Mental ability
 - 60) What dead men do
 - 65) Actor Majors
 - 66) Take place as a result
 - 67) Repulsive person
 - 68) Prefix with "pend"
 - 69) Oater transport
 - 70) Many-headed monster of myth
- DOWN**
- 1) No exemplar of grace
 - 2) Prefix meaning "before"
 - 3) Links prop
 - 4) Noncoastal regions
 - 5) Fox, wolf or dog, e.g.
 - 6) Feline musical
 - 7) "Come again?"
 - 8) Farewell, in Cancun
 - 9) Having limits
 - 10) Kin of headlights
 - 11) Grand masters?
 - 12) Boozehound
 - 13) Chips in
 - 18) One with a vision
 - 23) Allegro_ (very fast)
 - 24) Drinking vessel
 - 25) Parts of scores, often
 - 27) " _ death do us part"
 - 30) Auto pioneer Karl
 - 31) "Cheers" chair
 - 35) Ancient colonnade
 - 37) Former Portuguese territory in China
 - 38) Black hues, in old poems
 - 40) Lets the air out
 - 41) Mammal, before birth
 - 44) Waikiki wear
 - 46) Kind of supplement
 - 48) Kind of show or scout
 - 51) Baby's cries
 - 52) Word on the way out?
 - 53) Chip dip
 - 55) Emerge from the egg
 - 58) Place for a pad
 - 61) Wheel nut
 - 62) Acted as point man for
 - 63) Suffix with "pamphlet"
 - 64) Healthful retreat

NOTE PAD

OPTIC CHAFF PTA
ARENA AUDIO ION
FEEL NOTHING APT
AIRS OIL NEE
AGENDA STATORS
SLID CBS EMIT
SAGS LETS PLUME
ASH DENOTES NAB
ISTLE ZOOM DECO
HEFT LAB IRAN
MANILAS RHESUS
EDO ALA KYAT
WIT TELLNOTALES
LEE ENSUE CREEP
SUS STAGE HYDRA

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You've just about had it with that certain individual who's had it in for you. You're perfectly prepared to handle this face-to-face with the authority figures. The problem this individual may have, and may not have thought of before they started this campaign against you, is that you've been following all the rules and they haven't. Should you have mercy on them? It depends on the quality of their groveling.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
You've probably gotten yourself into a bit of trouble lately, you and that impetuous way you have of saying exactly what's on your mind. And you've been even more rash than usual lately, which is really saying something. But suddenly today you're all smiles and willing to do whatever it takes to soothe the troubled waters. No, you're not feverish. You're human. And changeable.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
If you're out shopping, you'd better have company, the kind that's big enough to wrestle that plastic out of your hands. You'll feel darned near compelled to buy whatever makes you feel the way you want to feel. Remember, though, you'll only achieve this kind of fulfillment from within. If this purchase is not legitimate, it won't mean a thing in a week's time.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
You could spot this situation a mile away. Someone is beginning to feel threatened and worried that they might be losing yet another close friend or loved one. Well, you can be sure that the green-eyed monster isn't far away. If you're an outside observer, you might want to have a nice, objective chat with all parties concerned. If not, issuing a warning might work. A nice, stern one.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You have something to say or do that's going to leave a bad taste in your mouth, but you have to go for it nonetheless. So what good will guilt do? None at all. Do what it takes to make things right. You can always confess to an unbiased third party later. Just keep in mind that dealing with schemers often means you have to scheme. Let your conscience guide you and the ends will justify the means.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You've had just about all the fun you can stand with these feelings you've been keeping to yourself, and you're finally ready to talk about everything. If someone else will be affected, consider that before you start. If not, the decision is yours alone. But if this is a truly personal issue, something you'd prefer not become grist for the gossip mill, be sure not to confide in anyone who hasn't already proven their loyalty.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Your passions are running on high today, very high. Which could be good or bad, depending on what you're feeling. If everything is going smoothly, you'll want to be as close to your special someone as possible. Just be careful not to smother them. You know how you get when you're excited about something. And if you're feeling a bit cranky? Be sure to keep that under control too. There's no point in ruining a relationship for one passing mood.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Someone out there is positively steaming mad, not at you, exactly, but certainly about you. They're upset because you have something they want, something they feel they deserve more than you do. You can't help but pick up the vibes, and one more icy stare might just turn you into a pillar of stone. If they initiate a discussion, be sure to have witnesses handy. Jealousy can warp even the most objective brain.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Someone has to start the ball rolling, and it might as well be you. If you can feel the tension in the air, and you know how to get rid of it, do what you do best and be honest. Encourage everyone to cut through the BS and get straight to the point. Don't worry. You'll be there to referee the conversation if it gets ugly. Once it's all out on the table, you can help everyone move toward a solution.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Every now and then you use your talents to manipulate things to your favor. What's the big deal? Everyone does it, especially in the defense of someone or something that can't defend itself, like now, for example. Think of it as the "iron fist in a velvet glove" syndrome. You've been called on to slip your hand into a well-disguised glove. Do it guiltlessly, because you know you're doing it for the right reasons.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
A trace of tension is in the air. Okay, more than just a trace. And you're not quite sure what comes next. Obviously, you can only do one thing: sit tight and see what happens. This is potentially volatile stuff, and you know how you feel about melodrama, not good. If you really have to make a move, convince your dear ones to keep cool. That will help more than anything.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
The green-eyed monster is here yet again. You've been feeling it coming for a while, and you've tried your best to help a dear one see the error of their ways. But sometimes you just have to give in and let people feel what they want to feel. On the positive side, you should realize that if they didn't care, they wouldn't be jealous at all. Think of it as a backhanded compliment and be patient.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What award is the equivalent of the Oscars for the music industry?
A. BAFTAs
B. Emmys
C. Tonys
D. Grammys

02. The legendary Hercules was said to have what quality?
A. Strength
B. Mischief
C. Eloquence
D. Musicianship

03. The white fumes that form when hydrogen chloride dissolves in water consist of what?
A. Methane
B. Hydrochloric acid
C. Arsenic
D. Helium

Answers: 1.D 2.A 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

S	L	D	A
L	I	E	S
V	V	E	E
U	A	Q	E

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

LEAGUE CUP

HOWE'S THAT FOR A STATEMENT!

Newcastle boss flies the flag for English managers in the Premier League

London, England - Newcastle United's League Cup final triumph over Liverpool was not only a landmark moment for the club, it was also a throw-back to a time when English managers regularly stocked up the trophy cabinets of the country's top clubs.

Eddie Howe still has a long way to go to emulate the likes of Bob Paisley, Brian Clough, Howard Kendall and Bobby Robson, and remains something of an anomaly in the Premier League where only two of the 20 current managers are English.

But in becoming the first home coach to win one of England's top domestic honours since 2008, Howe's feat is a shot in the arm for English coaches plying their trade in the lower leagues.

Londoner Harry Redknapp, who won the 2008 FA Cup for Portsmouth and took Tottenham Hotspur into the Champions League for the first time, hopes Howe's rise changes perceptions but laments the lack of home-grown managers.

"It's sad that there's only two English managers in the Premier League," 78-year-old told reporters at Charlton Athletic's Valley during the launch of the inaugural North versus South game in which he will return to the touchline.

"It's sad that they don't get the opportunities. The only way you tend to get there now is to take a team up. In (Howe's) case, it was different."

By his own admission, the

47-year-old Howe's playing career was unremarkable. He came through the ranks at Bournemouth where Redknapp was cutting his teeth as a manager, and made nearly 300 appearances in the lower rungs of the Football League before injury forced his retirement in 2007.

A year later, with Bournemouth in financial turmoil and heading out of the Football League, Howe became manager, led them to safety and then to promotion the following season.

After a short spell at Burnley, Howe returned to take Bournemouth to the Premier League for the first time in 2015 and kept them up against the odds for five seasons.

"Taking Bournemouth from nearly going

out of the league into the Premier League, it was crazy what he achieved there really," Redknapp added.

Howe's reputation as an articulate, fiercely-driven and progressive coach attracted Newcastle in 2021, shortly after they were bought by a Saudi Arabia-backed consortium.

Newcastle had managed five points from 11 games before he was appointed but he led them to safety. The following season they finished fourth and reached the Champions League.

On Sunday, Howe made sure he will enter Newcastle folklore as his side won the club's first domestic trophy for 70 years.

But could Howe's breakthrough on Tyneside persuade England's top clubs, and even the national team, to look closer to home for managers?

"You'd hope so," Redknapp said.

When the England job came up recently, I'm wanting to see an English manager. I'll be honest, I only saw Eddie. I didn't see anybody else

HARRY REDKNAPP

"But it's all foreign owners now. They come in, they get brought into clubs by agents who probably recommend some manager to them.

"It's certainly getting tougher, but I think given the opportunity, there's lots of good lads out there who could do the job. But I don't know, there's such a shortage.

"When the England job came up recently, I'm wanting to see an English manager. I'll be honest, I only saw Eddie. I didn't see anybody else. I thought Eddie was the only one. No one else jumped out at me as a real candidate."

It feels like I'm dreaming, says Burn

London, England - Newcastle United defender Dan Burn has described the feeling of ending the club's 56-year wait for a major trophy as a "dream" following their 2-1 EFL Cup final win over Liverpool.

Boyhood Newcastle fan Burn, born in Blyth, scored the opener and won Player of the Match, days after being picked in Thomas Tuchel's first England squad.

"I've had worse weeks," Burn told Sky Sports. "I don't want to go to sleep because I feel like I'm dreaming and it's all going to be a lie.

"I don't get many [goals] so I saved it for a big occasion. I feel strange, I feel numb at the minute.

"I'll be first there tomorrow [at England training] at 8 o'clock."

A letter written by Burn's father ahead of the EFL Cup final two years ago, when Newcastle lost 2-0 to Manchester United, provides an insight into his son's incredible journey to the top.

Newcastle head coach Eddie Howe was full of praise for Burn, who has played all but one of the Magpies' 28 Premier



Newcastle United's Dan Burn scores against Liverpool on Sunday

League matches this season, only missing the 2-0 defeat to West Ham United in November due to suspension.

"What a few days for Dan," said Howe. "His performance today was colossal at the back.

"We were working on those corners tirelessly for two weeks. He's delivered one from long range. Incredible header. So fitting it's him."

More than 20 English clubs

have won a major trophy since Newcastle last did, including Oxford United, Norwich City and Luton Town, and Howe was emotional when speaking of his mum, Anne, who passed away 13 years ago, following yesterday's cup win.

"You end up thinking of the people that aren't with you," said Howe. "Like for me, my mum. You just think of all the hard sacrifices, hard work that

they gave you as a child.

"With such a long wait for a trophy, I'm sure everyone will never forget it. There are different ways to win trophies - today was the best way to win it.

"We played the best team in the Premier League by a long way and we were the better team."

Howe explained that the approach for yesterday's final

was different to that of two years ago against Man Utd.

"The first time we got to Wembley was very emotional," Howe added.

"You could sense that in the players and the crowd. I don't think it helped our performance.

"This time we tried to take away distractions and make it similar to a Premier League build-up," Howe said.



Chris Wood has scored 18 goals in the Premier League so far this season

New Zealander Wood open to playing club football in homeland

Nottingham, England - Chris Wood has helped bring Nottingham Forest to the brink of Champions League football with 18 goals in an extraordinary Premier League season but the hulking hitman sees himself playing on a quieter stage in his native New Zealand.

Wood, who is contracted to Forest until at least the end of the 2026-27 season, has long-term plans to return to his home nation with English wife Emma for a year and hopes a stint playing club football might also be on the agenda.

"I've spoken to the wife about this, where we're definitely going to come back and live in New Zealand and be a part of New Zealand for a year, because I want to experience being back home," the 33-year-old told New Zealand news website Stuff. "If that's to do with football at the same time, that'd be fantastic."

New Zealand have two pro-

fessional clubs competing in the mainly Australian A-League - Wellington Phoenix and high-flying expansion team Auckland FC. With 41 goals in 80 appearances for New Zealand, the country's most prolific goalscorer would likely be welcome at both. Born and raised in Auckland, Wood was not leaning toward either side.

"I love both cities very much," he said. "100% I will sit on that fence and it's football at the end of the day."

Wood will look to lead New Zealand to victory against low-ranked Fiji in Wellington on Friday and secure a place in the final of Oceania qualifying for the 2026 World Cup. The All Whites have been the dominant force in Oceania football since Australia moved to the Asian confederation in 2006 but have fallen short in playoffs in their last three attempts to qualify for the World Cup.

Premier League 'appalled by racist abuse directed at Fofana'

London, England - The Premier League said it was appalled by the racial abuse suffered by Chelsea centre back Wesley Fofana on social media after his side's 1-0 defeat by Arsenal on Sunday.

The 24-year-old France international posted on his Instagram story the screenshots of racist messages he received and said "stupidity and cruelty can no longer hide".

"The Premier League is appalled by the abuse suffered by Chelsea's Wesley Fofana after their match against Arsenal. We will offer our full support to Wesley and the club," the Pre-



Wesley Fofana

mier League said in a statement. "We work with the social media platforms and the authorities to ensure any individuals found guilty of abuse face the strongest possible consequences."

Fofana said on Monday that social media platforms had to take steps to prevent abuse.

"It's not just football; it's not just a 'game' when some believe that their skin colour makes them superior to others," he added. "It's time for things to change, for platforms to take action, and everyone to take responsibility."

Bayern did not properly protect Kim, says South Korea coach

Soul, South Korea - South Korea coach Hong Myung-bo has accused Bayern Munich of not looking after Kim Min-jae properly after he withdrew the central defender from his squad for two World Cup qualifiers to receive treatment on an Achilles injury.

Kim was named in Hong's 28-man squad last Monday for the qualifiers against Oman and Jordan but withdrawn on Saturday for "treatment on his left Achilles tendonitis and rehab".

Hong told reporters that the national team coaching staff had been aware for a while of "warning signs" that the injury might



Kim Min-jae

flare up. "Unfortunately, Bayern Munich did not properly protect the player to prevent injury so we've ended up in a situation where we have to play these important matches without a key player," Hong said.

Wide discrepancy in women’s pay and attendance, says FIFA report

Manchester, England - The average annual salary for a female professional soccer player globally is \$10,900, says FIFA’s annual report on the women’s game, a figure skewed by a small number of top clubs.

Among the teams FIFA designated as Tier 1, which includes 41 clubs from 16 countries, the average salary was around \$24,030, although 16 of those top clubs paid an average gross salary of over \$50,000, according to the “Setting the Pace, FIFA Benchmarking Report on Women’s Football” released on Monday.

The highest of those salaries was approximately \$120,000.

The average gross salary, however, at Tier 2 and 3 clubs was \$4,361 and \$2,805, respectively.

“There is a need for players of a certain standard to earn a reliable and sufficient income solely from playing, reducing their dependence on secondary sources of income and allowing them to dedicate the time required to play at a higher level,” the report



An Arsenal-Man United match attracted a record 60,160 fans at Emirates Stadium last year

said. Tier 1 clubs also featured the longest player contracts, most commonly between one and three years, with salaries highest for contracts of two to three years, while Tier 3 teams were most likely of the tiers to offer contracts under three months.

“A longer contract enables players to commit to a club and a location, giving them more stability so they can focus on their footballing careers,” said the report.

It also highlighted attendances as an area of concern.

While Arsenal hosted Manchester United in front of a Women’s Super League record 60,160 fans at Emirates Stadium last year, Tier 1 teams averaged 1,713 fans, while Tiers 2 and 3 were 480 and 380, respectively.

Arsenal were among the 23% of clubs that played some matches at a stadium other than their regular ground, playing five home league games at The Emirates and the rest at Meadow Park, which has a seating capacity of 1,700 and total capacity of 4,500.

Injured Messi out of Argentina’s World Cup qualifiers

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Lionel Messi was not included in Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni’s squad for the 2026 World Cup qualifiers against Uruguay and Brazil, with the forward missing out due to a muscle strain.

Messi scored a stunning goal in Inter Miami’s 2-1 win at Atlanta United in Major League Soccer (MLS) on Sunday but felt a muscle discomfort, local media reported.

As a consequence, the 37-year-old was left out of the Argentina squad on Monday, and will remain in the United States to recover. “It’s sad to miss these two very special matches with the National Team against Uruguay and Brazil. As always, I wanted to be there, but at the last moment, a not-so-serious injury that forces me to stop for a while before returning to play left me out,” Messi explained on his Instagram account.

Argentina, who lead the CONMEBOL qualifying standings with 25 points after 12 games, travel to second-placed Uruguay on Friday.



Lionel Messi

EXILE ENDS BUT DOUBTS LINGER

Belgium goalkeeper Courtois’s return after a lengthy absence sparks debate

Brussels, Belgium - Belgium goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois said on Tuesday he had thrashed out the circumstances of his lengthy exile from the national side with teammates on his return and hoped the controversy over his almost two-year absence was now settled.

Courtois, 32, has not played for Belgium since June 2023 when he walked out ahead of a European Championship qualifier in Estonia, but after a change of coach he is back in the squad for this week’s Nations League playoffs against Ukraine.

The Real Madrid keeper, who has 102 caps, said his walkout had nothing to do with being denied the captaincy, as was reported at the time, but a breakdown in his relationship with coach Domenico Tedesco, who has been replaced by Rudi Garcia.

Courtois conceded he might have better handled the confrontation with Tedesco and regretted misunderstandings with his teammates.



I’m relieved that we were able to talk everything out. Everything is clear and now we’re looking ahead. I know I made my mistakes. At that time, I wasn’t mentally 100% ready to play

THIBAUT COURTOIS

However, he said he felt there was no way back with Tedesco after their relationship broke down.

Courtois faced a barrage of questions over his lengthy stay away, which has divided opinion in Belgium, at a press conference on Tuesday, striking a conciliatory tone but insisting he would remain opinionated. “I am who I am,” he said.

Courtois spoke to teammates on Monday after joining up with the squad in Belgium.

“There were a lot of misunderstandings, half truths, so I was able to explain what happened. The teammates were able to ask their questions,” Courtois said.

“I’m relieved that we were able to talk everything out. Everything is clear and now we’re looking ahead. I know I made my mistakes. At that time, I wasn’t mentally 100% ready to play.

“After a long season, you sometimes have impulsive reactions and that was not smart of me, that was not the best thing

for the team and the supporters.

“I still think the football association could have handled it better afterwards, but I also suffered a serious knee injury. I wasn’t ready to play at the European Championship anyway. And when a relationship with a coach breaks down it’s also difficult.

“A lot had been written that I left because I didn’t get the captain’s armband, but that’s not true. That’s the biggest disinformation.

“I understand it was hard for

the fans at the time. I hope that they can accept me again. I understand it’s not easy, but I hope that they will support the team,” he added.

Belgium teammate Youri Tielemans, who also addressed the press conference, said it was good Courtois explained matters.

“The most important thing is that he realises that some things went down badly with the group of players, but he said that he had not meant it that way,” said the midfielder.

Koen Casteels, who has been Belgium’s regular goalkeeper over the last two years, has quit the national team in protest and other teammates have offered veiled criticism of the Real Madrid goalkeeper’s stayaway.

“I would not have called him up yet. I would have let these two matches pass,” said former coach Marc Wilmots, under whom Courtois earned 41 caps between 2012 and 2016 of Belgium’s two legs against Ukraine in the Nations League playoffs in Murcia, Spain on Thursday and in Genk on Sunday.

“I would have first seen, heard and felt within the squad what they think of the issue. I would have spoken to Casteels, shown respect to the players who were there and who did it without Courtois and only then I might have integrated Courtois,” Wilmots told Belgian radio.

Former Belgium defender Philippe Albert, who now works as a television pundit, was more critical of Courtois.

“He still slammed the door on the national team, a week before his wedding,” Albert said. “He did our national team a disservice.”



Denzel Dumfries

Injured Dumfries pulls out of Netherlands squad

Amsterdam, Netherlands - Denzel Dumfries has pulled out of the Netherlands squad for the Nations League quarter-final tie against Spain and there are doubts over the fitness of Frenkie de Jong, the Dutch football association said on Monday.

Dumfries was injured playing for Inter Milan in Sunday’s Serie A triumph at Atalanta and has been replaced by 22-year-old Ajax Amsterdam defender Youri Baas who received a first national team call-up on his birthday.

Dutch coach Ronald Koeman also added Mats Wieffer of Brighton & Hove Albion as cover for key midfielder De Jong, who missed Barcelona’s win at Atletico Madrid on Sunday because of illness.

De Jong joined up with the Dutch squad on Monday but did not train.

The Netherlands host Spain in the first leg of their quarter-final tie in Rotterdam on Thursday with the return in Valencia on Sunday.

Indoor, outdoor 1,500m gold ‘definitely the goal’ for Ingebrigtsen

Nanjing, China - Despite the incredible success he has enjoyed so far in his career, Jakob Ingebrigtsen has never won a world title in the 1,500 metres and that is something he is determined to put right, indoors and out, in Nanjing and Tokyo this season.

The Norwegian arrived in China at the weekend for next week’s world indoor championships

and will return to Asia in September for the outdoor edition at Tokyo’s National Stadium, where he won Olympic gold in the event in 2021.

“That’s definitely the goal for the season,” he told reporters from China on Monday.

“I try to do as well as I can, try to participate as much as possible, but ultimately the 1,500 metres is my main event and my favourite event. So that’s always going to be the main focus and the main goal.

“I’ve been fortunate enough to have visible improvement in my personal best in the last couple years, and I’m still a big believer that I can continue that going for many years in the future.”

Ingebrigtsen won silver behind Samuel Tefera in the 1,500 at his



Jakob Ingebrigtsen

I try to do as well as I can, try to participate as much as possible, but ultimately the 1,500 metres is my main event and my favourite event

JAKOB INGEBRIGTSEN

only previous indoor worlds in Belgrade in 2022, missing out on last year’s edition in Glasgow because of an Achilles injury.

In the last two outdoor world 1,500s he was beaten into silver in almost identical circumstances by British duo Jake Wightman, in Eugene 2022, and Josh Kerr in

Budapest 2023.

The 24-year-old also failed in his attempt to retain his 1,500 title at the Paris Olympics last year, but did go home with a gold in the 5,000 to add to the back-to-back outdoor world titles he won in the longer event in 2022 and 2023. He has been in impressive indoor form this year, setting world records for the mile and 1,500 in France in February and taking the 1,500-3,000 double for the third time at the European Championships in the Netherlands earlier this month.

“I feel strong, I feel good. I’m improving,” he said. “I think that’s a good way to kind of conclude that we’re definitely on the right path and doing some right things and hopefully improving in general.”



Tim Seifert (L) and Finn Allen put on a 66-run opening partnership for New Zealand

NEW ZEALAND OUTPLAY PAKISTAN

Seifert, Allen star as Black Caps win second T20I by five wickets

Dunedin, New Zealand - New Zealand's powerful powerplay performances with both ball and bat comfortably dispatched Pakistan by five wickets in the second T20I in Dunedin to give the hosts a 2-0 lead in the five-match series.

Jacob Duffy, Ben Sears and Ish Sodhi pinned Pakistan early to cripple their batting effort, forcing the visitors to make only 135 in the 15-overs-a-side contest, after which openers Tim Seifert (45 off 22 balls) and Finn Allen (38 from 16) killed the chase off early, adding 66 in just 28 deliveries.

Salman Agha's 46, and economical spells from Khushdil

It was a better game than last - lot of positives - but few things more to do. We batted better but we need to finish better. Bowling was decent but we need to be more consistent

SALMAN AGHA, PAKISTAN CAPTAIN

Shah and Haris Rauf, were the positives from the Pakistan camp. But, overall, they were outplayed by the hosts, although the gulf between the two sides was lesser than in the first T20I. The teams now move to Auckland, with the visitors one defeat away from losing the series.

After New Zealand stand-in captain Michael Bracewell opted

to bowl, Duffy's rising delivery had opener Hasan Nawaz miscuing a shot to backward point in the first over itself. Sears then dismissed an aggressive Mohammad Haris for 11 when he slashed the bowler to deep third.

Agha, Pakistan's captain, then counterattacked to give the visitors' innings some impetus, but Bracewell's introduction of Sodhi

crippled them. Irfan Khan's leading edge off Sodhi saw him holing out at backward point, and two balls later, Khushdil was walking back after being trapped in front of the stumps by the wristspinner.

Agha's 28-ball 46 threatened New Zealand in the middle overs, but when he fell in the tenth over to Sears in his second spell, Pakistan lost steam. However, Shadab Khan's 14-ball 26, and Shaheen Shah Afridi's 14-ball 22, added some late impetus to lift the visitors to 135 for 9 in 15 overs. James Neesham, playing his first T20I in nine months, finished with 2 for 26, both wickets coming in the 13th over.

"The guys bowling into the wind bowled particularly well," Bracewell said after the game. "I think when the wicket's been under covers for a day or so and offering extra bounce, our bowlers used the surface well. We were pretty happy with the score at half-time."

Pakistan captain Agha said their own powerplay performances were a let-down.

"It was a better game than last game - lot of positives - but few things more to do," Agha told the broadcasters.

"We batted better but we need to finish our batting better. Bowling was decent but we need to be more consistent."

ECB rejects T20 League backed by Saudi Arabia

Melbourne, Australia - England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chief executive Richard Gould said they would not support a proposed global Twenty20 league bankrolled by Saudi Arabia as there was not enough room in the calendar for it.

A Sydney Morning Herald report on Saturday said the event would be backed by the sports arm of Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund and feature eight teams playing in four different locations. "With the busy international calendar, a host of established franchise leagues around the world, and existing concerns about player workloads, there is no scope or demand for such an idea," Gould told the same newspaper. "It's not something that we would support."

The ECB is keen to protect its own 100-ball format league, The Hundred, having raised \$1.27 billion last month after selling franchise stakes to private investors.

The Indian Premier League remains the benchmark in franchise cricket, while

Australia, Pakistan, West Indies, South Africa and the UAE also have their own T20 leagues.

The Australian Cricketers Association has backed the proposed league.

"The ACA's early interest in exploring this concept is motivated by a desire to develop and normalise best-practice collective bargaining and an international gender-equity pay model for male and female cricketers," the player's union was quoted as saying in the report.



Richard Gould



Mirra Andreeva

LeBron 'happy to have helped' Andreeva to Indian Wells win

NBA star LeBron James said he was happy to have helped Mirra Andreeva after the Russian teenager credited one of his past interviews where he talked about the importance of mental strength for inspiring her to victory at Indian Wells on Sunday.

Andreeva said in an interview with Tennis Channel on Monday that she had taken James' com-

ments to heart. "He was saying that even if you don't play 100% or even if you don't feel 100% physically, I'm going to choose to be 100% mentally," she said.

James congratulated the 17-year-old on her win and urged her to keep going.

"Congratulations! Happy to have helped," James wrote on Instagram late on Monday.

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SHIRTS

MAN

style

DIFFERENT OCCASIONS AND SEASONS WARRANT DIFFERENT TYPES OF SHIRTS AND YOUR FASHION GAME IS ABOUT TO GO TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL AS YOU CRACK THIS STYLE CODE

Flanel Shirt

Cool, casual, and chequered is a spiffy style statement. The utility of flanel shirts makes them a closet compulsion. These types of shirts are used for layering and to pack in some warmth. Woven from cotton or wool, these shirts are extremely soft and comfortable to wear. Flannels make for stylish shirt and t-shirt combinations. These shirts are perfect for picnics, hangout sessions with friends and family, or travel. You can also pair flannels with denim for a classy look. The flannel radiates a chill vibe and is best to wear in a non-formal setting. To have a more lumberjack look, pair the flannel shirt with ripped denim pants, boots and a hat.



Getting ready for an important meeting at work or for a rendezvous with friends, your stack of shirts has got your back! A staple in every wardrobe, people often underestimate the power of a well-fitted shirt. Your attire makes up for your first impression and boosts your confidence, and thus, needs to be properly planned. To create a wardrobe catering to all your needs, let's take a tour of six different types of shirts for men:

Oxford Button-down Shirt

Made with a kind of basket weave fabric, the Oxford cloth is thicker than a formal shirt. An Oxford button-down shirt is a must in your wardrobe as it is a perfect balance between casual and smart. The rich texture of the shirt makes it a sumptuous addition to your closet. This men's shirt looks refined in pastel shades but you'll find it in a variety of colours and can choose the one to your liking. The shirt also usually has a hanger loop at the back yoke making it easy to store. The Oxford button-down shirt, known for the buttons holding the collar in place, is a versatile type of shirt for men. It can be paired with chinos and brogues for grabbing dinner and drinks with friends or family.



Dress Shirt

You won't hear the end of compliments with the right dress shirt tucked in a smart tuxedo. One of the most sought after men's shirt styles, a dress shirt will be your partner in crime as you smile your way through important events. Featuring a cutaway collar and French cuffs, a dress shirt is a no-brainer for important celebrations. Jazz up your formal outfit with cufflinks and formal dress shoes. The bib in front of the dress shirts will give it a smooth look when worn under the tuxedo jacket. Don't forget an elegant tie or bow to bring your look together. Pamper yourself with a crisp white dress shirt and be a catch at social events.



Linen Shirt

Debonair and dashing, linen shirts will be your next fashion obsession. The airy and breathable fabric is your summer season bonanza. Investing in a linen shirt is definitely worth it because of the sheer elegance of the fabric. You can wear your linen shirt during summer getaways. Pastel linen shirts look suave when paired with khakis or solid jeans. Linen shirts are light and comfortable and will be your favourite pick for relaxing on hot days. Out of different types of shirts, linen always looks flattering. With a linen shirt, you can rarely go wrong because we know you won't pair it with denim. You can also wear a white shirt for a summer day wedding - it is one of the best shirts to wear with a blue suit for an unconventional festive outfit.



Polo Shirt

A polo shirt is a wardrobe wizard that can be worn with anything and everything. The iconic brand has made an individual place for their shirts in the fashion world. Available in a multitude of colours, you can choose your favourite ones. These shirts are not strictly formal but can graciously clean up nicely at parties or small festivities. From shorts to sweatpants, a polo shirt is stitched for your comfort. Amongst shirts for men, a solid polo shirt is a limitless item of clothing. You can fashion it as you like and it will not fail to make you look good. The woven fabric of a polo shirt with the pointed collar sets it apart from more casual shirts.



Mandarin Collar Shirt

Bring on your classy game with a mandarin collared shirt. The band collar shirt looks exceptionally sophisticated at formal events. Be it an engagement party or your own engagement, the mandarin collar shirt will be a fine choice. This modern men's shirt style keeps you away from the hassles of ties and bows. These types of shirts can be worn with crisply creased trousers for a professional look. For a semi-formal gathering, pair the shirt with chinos or fitted jeans and you are all set. A white shirt with blue jeans is a classic look you cannot go wrong with. Worn with a pair of dress shoes, your mandarin collar look will steal a lot of attention. And, rolling up your sleeves towards the end of your party will be an alpha move!

Courtesy: bewakoof.com



INTERIOR motives

THE LIVING ROOM IN MOST HOMES IS A BUSY PLACE - IT'S USUALLY THE PLACE VISITORS SEE FIRST. UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S TOO EASY TO MAKE DESIGN MISTAKES IN THIS SPECIAL AREA AS GETTING A GOOD BALANCE OF LOOKS AND FUNCTIONALITY CAN BE TRICKY. LET'S LOOK AT SOME OF THE MOST COMMON STYLING ERRORS THAT PEOPLE MAKE AND WAYS TO AVOID THEM

Have you often found guests leaving your home sooner than intended after a visit? Do you find it difficult to unwind and relax at home despite conjuring up all the comforts you desire? The answer might lie in your interiors - the way you've set up your living room without much thought.

Designing your living space may not be the sole task of a professional interior designer, it also requires your very own inputs in setting up what suits your lifestyle, what makes you feel comfortable, and what comes across as beckoning to guests.

Always choose comfort and utility when assembling your living space. We love comfy sofas and chairs that fit our lifestyle. If you have kids and pets, your choice in a sofa or chair is different from a single retiree. Don't be afraid to mix a new item with old cherished ones. Create a space that reflects you and your family.

Here are some of the most common mistakes people make while furnishing their living rooms:

Rug is too small

A great rug can make your living room come alive. It grounds your furniture and, in an open-plan space, defines the living area. Measure your living room and the main pieces of furniture in it before you shop. Ideally, the rug you choose should be big enough to allow the key pieces of furniture to sit on top of it. If your living room is not big enough to allow every-

thing to sit fully on your rug, choose a style that is slightly wider than your sofa and allows for the front legs of your sofa and any smaller furniture pieces (such as side tables and stools) to sit on it.

Using matching furniture

Buying a matched set of furniture is one of the most common living room design mistakes. Yes, it is easy to fill the room and not have to decide on what goes with what. If you accept the challenge you can mix pieces that complement each other. Just use colour and print to tie the look together - that's the magic element. Remember that mismatched sofas and chairs are a modern look in design. Since my taste is eclectic, that really appeals to me.

Pushing all the furniture against the wall

Instead of the wall, move your single or pair of sofas into the middle of the living room with a coffee table. Symmetry is your friend here. Note that two chairs together create an impactful space with the



sofa as the visual anchor. This way you can walk around the seating with space to spare. Although having a sofa pushed up against the wall may seem logical when the room is small, having it in the middle creates the illusion of space.

Selecting a sofa too big or too small

Selecting a sofa that's the wrong scale for your living room is the biggest blunder people make. Best rule - measure, measure, measure. Measure up your living room, the other furniture in the room, and the sofa you have your eye on before you buy. Always start with a floor plan first to ensure that the scale and proportion of the piece works in the space and provides enough room to move around with ease. If you want a black sofa, remember it can look visually larger than one in a lighter colour.

Also, consider the style of sofa. In a compact living room, a sofa on legs, with narrow arms, gives the illusion of more space. If you have a large room, you might consider a more substantial sofa, such as one with wide arms that sits close to the ground. Use painter's tape to mark off where your selected sofa will sit before

you buy. And check if you have space to walk around.

Following the latest design trends

Try to create an ageless space that doesn't follow design trends or a specific time period. It will be just as beautiful in 10 years as it was the first day. For a feeling of luxury, include furniture with character and include some luxurious materials like a touch of velvet. Mixing old and new pieces makes a room more individual and can reflect who you are. Create a statement with the arrangement and colours.

It's never a mistake to love your design

Choose quality furniture and accents that you love. If you want to throw in one inexpensive 'latest' decoration, that's okay. Avoid going matchy-matchy with any trend. You'll be replacing them in a few years. If a couch or chair resonates with you, take it home. If your living room has hardwood floors or stone tile flooring and lots of glass surfaces, super plush seating and rich materials like velvet soften the feel and warms up the room.

All in all, while avoiding trends or too much of matching stuff, do not end up with every piece standing on its own with no connection with the rest of the stuff around. Designs, colours, textures as well as feels need to complement each other to justify their existence together.

Inputs: comfortspringstation.com

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