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Shura calls for review of SME hiring policy

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour directive requiring commercial establishments operating for more than a year to employ at least one Omani citizen within 30 days of notification came under scrutiny in Majlis A'Shura on Tuesday.

The issue was raised in an urgent statement by Mohammed Nasser al Mahrouqi, representative of the wilayat of Sinaw, during a session chaired by H E Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali on Tuesday.

Mahrouqi said the directive caught many micro, small and medium-sized businesses by surprise, noting that the mandatory hiring requirement, coupled with a minimum monthly salary of RO325, poses a heavy financial burden particularly on firms in rural areas.

While expressing support for Omanisation, Mahrouqi called for a more comprehensive and evidence-based national employment strategy. He urged ex-



Exemption of the directive needed for micro and small enterprises and phased implementation in medium-sized enterprises

MOHAMMED NASSER AL MAHROUQI

emption for micro and small enterprises and phased implementation of the directive in medium-sized enterprises.

In another urgent statement, Mohammed Khamis al Hussein, representative from Samail, highlighted the poor performance of several food security projects despite significant state investment. He attributed the failure to flawed feasibility studies, bureaucratic inefficiencies and weak management.

Hussein called for a full review of government-supported food security initiatives and recommended restructuring, part-

nerships with strategic investors or liquidation of underperforming entities. He noted the increasing importance of domestic food supply constraints and export restrictions.

The session approved two key draft laws with amendments - the Arbitration Law in Civil and Commercial Disputes and the draft Real Estate Registry Law - both referred by the government.

Dr Ahmed Ali al Saadi, Chairman of the Legislative and Legal Committee, said the amendments to the arbitration law aim to streamline procedures, en-

hance fairness and align Oman's legal framework with international standards.

He added that the Real Estate Registry Law will modernise the sector by introducing electronic documentation and ownership systems to ensure transparency and efficiency, while integrating the sector with Oman's broader digital infrastructure.

The session also approved a report by the Public Services and Utilities Committee regarding a draft air transport agreement between Oman and the Kyrgyz Republic. Hamoud Ahmed al Yahyai, chairman of the committee, said the agreement would enhance civil aviation cooperation and support trade and tourism links.

Other draft laws reviewed included the National Spatial Data Law, Unified Industrial Regulation for GCC Countries and the draft Sports Bodies Law. The shura is scheduled to reconvene on Wednesday to review the draft Civil Society Institutions Law.

Dialogue key to ending conflict: Sayyid Badr

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, called for urgent and sustained dialogue on Sunday to address the worsening situation in Palestine, warning against continued violence and the failure of the international community to act decisively.

Speaking at the Tehran Dialogue Forum, H E Sayyid Badr reaffirmed Oman's strong ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran and expressed gratitude to Iranian Foreign Minister Dr Abbas Araghchi for the invitation to participate.

"The Sultanate of Oman attaches great importance to its distinguished relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran," he said, acknowledging Araghchi's role in promoting regional and international dialogue with "candour, precision and flexibility".

H E Sayyid Badr used the platform to focus on what he described as one of the region's most pressing challenges — the Palestinian issue.

"The violence and genocide that the Palestinian people continue to endure is a global tragedy - one that should never have been allowed to occur," he said. "It could have been prevented had the opportunities for dialogue been seized."

He said that since the assassination of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, the Palestinians had been left without a credible partner for dialogue, blaming successive Israeli governments for rejecting serious engagement.

He also criticised the international community for failing to exert "meaningful pressure" to initiate a genuine peace process, while pointing out the damaging role played by actors who imposed rigid preconditions for engagement.

"What has given me some



Even at a time of horrific destruction, there is a renewed appetite for dialogue - one we all recognise as essential, even if Tel Aviv continues to try to avoid it by escalating militarily

H E SAYYID BADR AL BUSAIDI

hope and optimism in recent months," H E Sayyid Badr noted, "is the emergence of signs pointing towards a possible shift in approach from Washington."

Referring to recent developments, he said the United States may be exploring a "more pragmatic and flexible stance" on potential dialogue partners, citing comments from a senior Hamas official who claimed there had been contact with Washington.

"This suggests that even at a time of horrific destruction, there is a renewed appetite for dialogue - one we all recognise as essential, even if Tel Aviv continues to try to avoid it by escalating militarily on multiple fronts," he said.

He expressed confidence that US President Donald Trump could help bring about peace.

H E Sayyid Badr acknowledged the difficulties of diplomatic engagement but warned against the consequences of avoiding dialogue. "Gaza stands as a terrible lesson in what happens when people lack the courage to speak to one another," he said.

He concluded by reaffirming Oman's commitment to diplomacy. "We remain firmly committed to the difficult path of dialogue - including with those we may deeply disagree with," he said, expressing hope that the Tehran forum would help strengthen international resolve for peaceful solutions.



FRANCE CONFERS ORDER ON HEAD OF MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE

The French government has bestowed the Order of Maritime Merit on Commodore Adil Hamoud al Busaidi, Head of Maritime Security Centre, in recognition of his efforts in enhancing bilateral cooperation in the field of maritime security between Oman and France. The medal was conferred by Rear Admiral Hugues Laine, Commander of the French forces deployed in the Indian Ocean, in Muscat on Tuesday (ONA)

3D-printed reefs to boost marine life

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has begun installing 3D-printed artificial coral reef units off the coast of Seeb in partnership with local technology firm InnoTech in an effort to support the fisheries sector and enhance marine ecosystems.

The project uses advanced 3D printing technology to create concrete reef structures that replicate the complexity of natural coral. The artificial reefs are designed to serve as critical habitats for marine life and reinforce coastal resilience.

"InnoTech has developed a 3D concrete printer and used this advanced technology to design artificial coral reefs that contribute to supporting marine biodiversity and providing an ideal environment for marine life," a



ministry official said.

The 3D printing process involves layering concrete with high precision to build detailed reef forms. After printing, the structures are cured to ensure durability and then placed underwater, where these are monitored to assess colonisation by marine species and broader ecological impact.

Installation in Seeb follows earlier phases in Sur and Liwa.

"We began the first pilot phase in Sur with simple installations. The second phase in Liwa saw installation of 17 units at a depth of 25m," the official said.

The reef units deployed in Seeb are designed to anchor firmly to the seabed. Each unit weighs between three and seven tonnes and features multiple openings to facilitate fish movement and coral growth. The structures, measuring between 8m and 36m, are made of compressed, environmentally friendly concrete materials.

The ministry stated that the initiative is aimed at increasing fish stocks, promoting marine biodiversity, supporting local fishing communities and encouraging ecotourism. "The project supports marine sustainability with an innovative and environmentally friendly solution," the official added.



09
Gaza: Over 60 Palestinians killed in Israel's continued deadly attacks



13
Oman improves World Cup League 2 standing with win over Canada



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Authorities urge vigilance against human trafficking



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Social Development, in coordination with the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, organised a workshop on Tuesday aimed at raising awareness of human trafficking, strengthening victim support mechanisms, and promoting community cooperation in addressing the issue.

The workshop on 'Indicators of Human Trafficking, Raising Awareness of its Dangers, and the Importance of Reporting It' brought together child protection delegates, supervisors at the Protection Home, ministry customer service staff, and representatives from the Royal Oman Police involved in anti-trafficking efforts.

A ministry official said the workshop formed part of broader efforts to enhance public awareness and coordination among key stakeholders. "The workshop focused on recognising signs of trafficking and improving the way we support victims," the official stated.

The programme included four working papers. In the first, the Royal Oman Police outlined

common indicators of trafficking, including deprivation of liberty or official documents, labour law violations, forced begging, the presence of women and children in inappropriate locations, physical abuse, poor living conditions, lack of communication, breaches of the Foreigners' Residence Law, money laundering, illegal immigration, and migrant smuggling.

The event is part of an ongoing effort to improve early detection, ensure more effective victim support, and strengthen enforcement of anti-trafficking laws

The second paper, presented by the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, explained the committee's mandate, including the preparation of a national action plan. It highlighted the importance of introducing clear controls and procedures, developing rehabilitation programmes for victims,

and improving coordination with border and transport authorities. The committee also addressed the local and international implications of human trafficking.

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) presented the third paper, detailing its role in identifying cases of forced or compulsory labour. It described such cases as involving work performed under threat and without voluntary consent. Warning signs included unpaid wages, confiscation of passports, excessive working hours without pay, threats of deportation, abuse, restricted movement, and illegal employment of minors.

The final paper reviewed Oman's legal framework for addressing trafficking, with reference to the Basic Law of the State issued under Royal Decree No. 6/2021. It affirmed guarantees of personal liberty, human dignity, and the right to a secure life, while reiterating Oman's commitment to international agreements and anti-trafficking standards.

Authorities said the workshop is part of an ongoing effort to improve early detection, ensure more effective victim support, and strengthen enforcement of anti-trafficking laws.

The management and the employees of
Al Ansari Group
express their heartfelt condolences to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik,
Honourable Lady
Sayyida Ahad bint Abdullah al Busaidi
and the Royal Family
on the passing of Honourable Lady's beloved mother.

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and blesses her with the highest place in paradise.

May her soul rest in peace.



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NCEM finalises food relief baskets for emergencies

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A standardised emergency food basket has been approved for distribution in emergency shelters during natural disasters and crises as part of efforts to enhance national preparedness and humanitarian response mechanisms.

The approval came at the first meeting convened in 2025 by Relief and Shelter Sector of National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM) chaired by H E Sheikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Undersecretary in Ministry of Social Development and head of the sector.

The emergency food basket is designed to meet basic nutritional needs of displaced individuals and families. Its contents



were finalised after reviewing existing provisions and assessing caloric value, dietary requirements and storage availability to ensure efficiency during relief operations.

The meeting also addressed an assessment process for shelters across the sultanate, aimed at ensuring readiness and adher-

ence to national standards. A framework for regular inspections and performance indicators was discussed to improve infrastructure and service quality at these facilities.

“Ensuring the safety, dignity and well-being of citizens during emergencies is our top priority,” H E Shamsi said, stressing the im-

portance of coordination between government entities, civil society organisations and volunteers.

The Relief and Shelter Sector plays a key role in Oman's emergency management system, overseeing logistics and relief services during extreme weather events and other national emergencies.

Haj preparations finalised for Oman’s 14,000 pilgrims

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs (MERA) announced on Tuesday that a total of 13,944 pilgrims from the sultanate have completed formalities to perform haj this year. The remaining 56, from the country's full quota of 14,000, are currently completing procedures.

The figures were released at a press conference on the 2025 haj season held on Tuesday.

H E Ahmed bin Saleh al Rashdi, MERA Undersecretary and Head of Oman Haj Mission, informed that Oman's quota includes 13,530 citizens and 470 expatriates. Allocation across governorates was based on population density of residents aged 18 and above. Muscat received the highest share at 24%, followed by North Batinah with

19%, while Musandam received less than 1%.

According to H E Rashdi, eligibility was determined through an electronic registration system using mathematical models grounded in sharia and jurispru-

Average cost by land this year is RO1,417 and RO2,063 by air

dential principles. The process also took into account social and ethical criteria.

Of the total, 11,780 pilgrims (84%) are undertaking haj as an obligatory religious duty. The remaining are voluntary pilgrims - individuals performing haj on behalf of the deceased, the incapacitated or terminally ill patients.

Thirty-nine per cent pilgrims are in the 30-45 age group, fol-

lowed by those aged 45-60. Pilgrims aged over 60 account for 16%, while 5% are aged between 18 and 30.

Travel preferences showed 63% pilgrims chose to travel by air, while 37% opted for land transport. The average cost by land is RO1,417, compared to RO2,063 by air.

Several new initiatives have been introduced by Oman Haj Mission this year. Beit al Rabat Endowments Initiative is providing support worth more than RO150,000 to over 150 pilgrims from social security categories.

To assist the elderly and disabled pilgrims, vehicles have been introduced for use during the Tawaf and Sa'i rituals, benefiting approximately 450 individuals. Electronic bracelets have also been issued to the elderly and medically vulnerable pilgrims to enhance tracking and safety.

World Bee Day: Honey output surges in 2024

Muscat - Oman joined the global community in celebrating World Bee Day on May 20, reaffirming its commitment to supporting pollinators and raising awareness of their vital role in food security, environmental balance and sustainable development.

Marking the occasion, Min-

istry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources highlighted the country's continued efforts to advance the beekeeping sector through a range of research, advisory and development programmes across governorates. Among its key initiatives are the biannual honey markets held

mid-year and in December.

According to 2024 data, the number of apiarists in Oman rose to 5,352, who managed 178,069 beehives. Total honey production stood at 765,053kg, reflecting a significant increase from 623,313kg recorded in 2023 from 145,485 hives.



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Invitation to attend the chamber's ordinary general assembly meeting

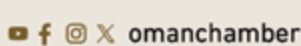
Pursuant to Article (18) of OCCI Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. (56/2022) on invitation of the assembly to ordinary meeting at least once per year,

OCCI Chairman has pleasure to invite the assembly members who paid the annual fees due for the assembly membership to attend the ordinary general meeting to be held at **5 pm, Tuesday, 17 June 2025, at OCCI's head office in Ruwi**, to discuss the following agenda:

- To discuss the annual report on OCCI's work, and the balance sheet of the last fiscal year as well as the auditor's report on the fiscal year ending 31 December 2024 and approve them.
- To consider suggestions of the registered members which are presented to the board at least (15) fifteen days before its meeting.
- To appoint an auditor for the new fiscal year and define his fees.

Important note:

- In accordance with OCCI's law, registered members shall be represented in the general meeting as owner or authorized partner singly or authorized manager singly, in accordance with the commercial register data. Every member shall have one vote. No authorization or proxy may be granted in attendance of the assembly meeting or voting thereat.
- Members shall note that the first meeting shall be valid if attended by at least (200) two hundred registered members. In the event this quorum is not satisfied, the second meeting shall be held within (15) days after the date of the first meeting at the same place and time regardless of the number of attendees.
- The annual report on OCCI's works is available in OCCI's head office and branches.
- The auditor's report on the last fiscal year.
- Please log in for attendance of the meeting via OCCI's website: www.omanchamber.om
- Registration is also available in all OCCI branches in governorates.



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OCCI Chairman

GCC projects pipeline remains strong despite first-quarter dip

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Following a record-breaking year for project awards, the GCC region is projected to experience another year of robust contracts activity, with the outlook for the GCC project market remaining strong for 2025, according to a new report released by Kamco Investment.

Numerous favourable factors across the GCC are expected to support momentum in the project market in 2025. Among these is notable growth in GCC hospitality projects during the year, Kuwait-based Kamco Investment said in its recently released GCC Projects Market report.

Overall, GCC countries hold approximately \$1.54tn in contracts at the pre-execution stage, with Saudi Arabia accounting for the largest share (52.1%), the report said, citing MEED Projects data.

‘A number of these projects are anticipated to be awarded within the next 6–12 months, indicating that 2025 could rival or surpass the award volumes of 2024,’ the report noted. ‘Roughly 34.3% of these contracts are in the design phase, while about 8.1% are currently under bid evaluation.’

Looking at country-specific project pipelines, the report highlighted that Saudi Arabia leads with \$801.2bn in pre-execution stage projects, followed by the



Looking at country-specific project pipelines, Saudi Arabia leads with \$801.2bn in pre-execution stage projects, followed by the UAE (\$312.3bn), Oman (\$169.9bn), and Kuwait (\$130.8bn), respectively

UAE (\$312.3bn), Oman (\$169.9bn), and Kuwait (\$130.8bn), respectively.

According to MEED Projects data, healthcare contracts worth over \$3bn are currently out to bid, signalling a strong project pipeline. Saudi Arabia leads with 51% of the total value of the GCC healthcare pipeline in 2025. In comparison, the UAE has \$6.8bn in contracts under planning and execution, while Kuwait has \$3.6bn in hospitality projects at

similar stages.

Impact of US tariffs

The Kamco Investment report noted that, on the surface, there appears to be no immediate threat of US tariffs impacting the GCC projects market, as most GCC countries have limited trade exposure to the US in both imports and exports.

It further stated that the US maintains trade surpluses with five of the six GCC markets, and

as a result, a basic tariff of 10% has been imposed. In addition, hydrocarbons – the primary export commodity of GCC nations – are among the goods exempted from tariffs.

‘However, declining oil prices, driven by negative global economic sentiment linked to the effects of US tariffs on trade, may have an impact on GCC revenues and, consequently, their project funding capabilities. Reduced oil prices lead to lower government income across the GCC, which in turn may result in reduced spending on projects,’ the report added.

Contracts decline in first quarter

The total value of contracts awarded in the GCC declined after three of the six member

countries recorded year-on-year decreases in project awards during Q1 2025. The total value of contracts awarded in the GCC fell by 26.8% year-on-year in Q1 2025, totalling \$52.4bn – the lowest figure in the past eight quarters – compared to \$71.5bn in Q1 2024.

‘This downturn was primarily attributable to a sharp contraction in Saudi Arabia’s project awards, despite resilient performance from the UAE, which recorded moderate year-on-year growth. The power and construction sectors were the main contributors to the decline in Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia during Q1 2025,’ the report said.

However, despite the significant year-on-year drop in Q1 2025, GCC project awards are projected to align with 2024 levels. MEED Projects, as cited in the Kamco Investment report, estimates that approximately \$235bn worth of contracts are currently tendered or under bid evaluation across the GCC, with Saudi Arabia accounting for nearly two-thirds of this pipeline.

On a quarterly basis, Saudi Arabia’s total contract awards plummeted by 49.9% in Q1 2025 to \$17bn, down from \$33.9bn in Q1 2024. In contrast, Kuwait’s aggregate project awards surged by 197.6% in Q1 2025, reaching \$1.4bn. Meanwhile, the UAE posted an 11.7% increase in contract awards during Q1 2025, totalling \$26.1bn, up from \$23.4bn in Q1 2024.



Tawoos acquires NMC Oman

Muscat – Tawoos Group, one of Oman’s premier business groups, and NMC Healthcare Group, a leading integrated private healthcare provider headquartered in the UAE, have announced that Tawoos Group has entered into a binding agreement to acquire NMC Healthcare LLC Oman and Elegant Medical Center man (NMC Oman). This agreement marks a significant milestone in Tawoos Group’s strategic entry into Oman’s private healthcare sector.

This complex, multiple asset acquisition from NMC Group comprises two hospitals and six clinics/aesthetics centres. This landmark transaction both secures the future of these healthcare institutions and highlights the effectiveness of public-private collaboration.

By consolidating these assets under a trusted Omani brand, Tawoos Group aims to create a resilient and sustainable ecosystem focused on patient care, job creation and operational excellence.

In a press release, Samir J Fancy, Chairman of Tawoos Group, said, “The acquisition is

much more than just securing assets; it is about ensuring continuity of care, upskilling and creating a strong local healthcare brand that benefits Oman. This is just the first step of a journey that will become a larger platform for private healthcare that is affordable yet best in class. This has been a classic case of the public sector partnering with private enterprises for the good of the Omani economy.”

David Hadley, CEO of NMC Healthcare, said, “NMC has been proud to serve communities in Oman through our network of hospitals and medical facilities. At a time when we are strategically focusing on our core operations and planned investments in the UAE, we welcome the acquisition of NMC Oman by Tawoos Group, a leading, trusted, and well-established Omani business with a proven track record of fostering innovation and long-term growth – key drivers of high-quality healthcare delivery. We look forward to working closely with Tawoos Group in the coming months to ensure continuity of care for patients and a smooth transition of ownership.”

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ الْيَمِينِ الْجَمْعِيَّةُ الْإِسْلَامِيَّةُ الْوَحْدَانِيَّةُ الْوَحْدَانِيَّةُ
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The **Khimji Ramdas Group** extends
its deepest condolences to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik,
The Honourable Lady
Sayyida Ahad bint Abdullah Al Busaidiyah
on the demise of Her Highness
The Honourable Lady’s mother

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ أَزْوََالَ الْجَمْعِيَّةِ الْوَحْدَانِيَّةِ الْوَحْدَانِيَّةِ

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**The Board of Directors,
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“Omantel” express their deepest condolences to

**His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and
Her Highness Sayyida Ahad bint Abdullah**

on the sad demise of Her Highness’s revered mother.

We pray that The Almighty will shower His mercy upon
her soul and grant her eternal peace in the highest
levels of Paradise.

May her soul rest in peace.

Nama Water uses drone, radar technology

Driven by a steadfast vision for sustainable water services and robust water security, Nama Water Services has initiated a significant project focused on meticulously surveying its water networks across the sultanate.

This ambitious project employs high-precision systems to generate accurate topographic maps of existing infrastructure, a crucial step in updating the company's Geographic Information Systems (GIS). This initiative underscores Nama Water Services' ongoing commitment to the development and enhancement of water networks, not only within the Muscat governorate but extending to all governorates it serves.

Nihad al Bimani, Assets Data Manager at Nama Water Services, stated, "This project is designed to boost the operational efficiency of our older water networks through highly accurate analysis using cutting-edge technologies.

"We are meticulously surveying and documenting networks that were established in the 1980s and even earlier. These older networks often are imprecise and with limited attribute information."

She further emphasised that this initiative will be instrumental in building an accurate and comprehensive geospatial databases.

"This groundwork is crucial for our future strategic plans to meet NWS obligations and step closer towards the digital transformation to integrate geographical systems with key operational platforms like Netbase, CMMS, and CCB systems. Looking ahead, we also aim to incorporate Internet of Things (IoT) technologies with the GeoArtificial Intelligence (GeoAI) into our daily operations. Ultimately, this will lead to improved resource management and the delivery of smart, sustainable solutions. The data we gathered through this project will empower us to make more informed decisions down the line and directly support the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises sustainability and comprehensive development."

"The comprehensive project encompasses every asset of the water network," Bimaniyah said, adding, "beginning at the primary water source and extending through pumping, vacuum and lifting stations, storage tanks and reservoirs, Tanker filling stations, ultimately reaching individual household connections. Furthermore, a systematic inventory of all network assets will be undertaken, including household water meters, capturing meter details such as serial numbers, consumer account numbers, and meter usage; residential, commercial, or governmental."

Survey work has been completed in the wilayat of Qurayyat and Amerat, and work is in progress in the wilayat Bawsher.

This crucial phase will employ latest technologies to ensure accurate network mapping achieved, by deploying Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for comprehensive aerial data capturing, while Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) technology in areas where existing water network locations are undetermined, enabling precise identification of underground infrastructure.

This strategic approach underscores a commitment to efficiency and accuracy as the project progresses.

This project uses cutting-edge technologies to survey data with remarkable accuracy of down to five centimeters. Our aim is to build a comprehensive, high-precision, and reliable GIS (Geographic Information System) database of water network. This Geodatabase shall be instrumental in elevating the quality of our services for subscribers, streamlining operational efficiency, and tackling the significant challenge of water loss inherent in older water systems.



This project is designed to boost the operational efficiency of older water networks through highly accurate analysis using cutting-edge technologies



ahlibank celebrates graduation of 8th batch of HIMAM programme

ahlibank recently held a ceremony to honor the 8th batch of graduates from its flagship programme, 'HIMAM', one of the bank's key initiatives aimed at developing national talent. The event was held at the bank's head office in Wattayah, attended by several employees and members of senior management.

The HIMAM programme reflects ahlibank's commitment to supporting and empowering Omani youth by enhancing their practical and professional skills, thus improving their readiness for the job market. The programme also contributes to the sultanate's efforts in employment and capacity-building by adopting the highest standards in training and developing national talent.

The ceremony began with a welcome speech, followed by an address delivered by ahlibank's CEO Said Abdullah al Hatmi, in which he highlighted the objectives of the HIMAM programme and its impact on empowering national talent. The event also included an introductory presentation about the programme and the introduction of the 8th batch of participants.

A short video was showcased, highlighting key milestones and achievements of the programme.

The ceremony concluded with congratulations and a recognition segment honouring the graduates for their dedication and perseverance throughout the programme.

In addition, during the ceremony, the launch of the 10th batch of the HIMAM programme was also announced, marking a new step towards continuing the investment in promising national talents.

It is worth mentioning that the HIMAM programme was launched in 2015 and has since contributed to empowering many young Omani men and women. At its core, the programme focuses on refining the skills of the youth, developing their capabilities, and equipping them with the knowledge and tools needed to excel in the banking sector.

Over two years of intensive training and practical engagement, the programme continues to graduate cohorts of qualified professionals capable of taking on key responsibilities within the bank. Many of its graduates now hold prestigious positions at ahlibank, playing a vital role in supporting the sultanate's economic and social growth.

Participants in the HIMAM programme undergo a series of evaluations and specialised interviews designed to select the most qualified candidates from among the applicants, ensuring their readiness to progress to the advanced stages of the programme.

This selective approach focuses on assessing the participants' technical and professional skills, while providing them with knowledge and practical experience that enable sustainable career development and the building of a successful professional path in the banking sector.

At the core of its operations, ahlibank places empowering Omani youth as a top priority, with the HIMAM programme serving as a fundamental pillar in supporting Omanisation efforts by preparing a qualified generation capable of contributing to building a bright and prosperous future for the sultanate.

OAB wins top cybersecurity honour from MEA at Banking Technology Awards '25

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has been awarded Best Cybersecurity and Risk Management Implementation in Oman by MEA Finance at the 2025 Banking Technology Awards.

The award recognises the bank's outstanding achievements in securing its digital operations while meeting the highest standards of regulatory compliance and customer trust.

At the core of this achievement, OAB ensures that its cybersecurity practices are not only robust but fully compliant with national governance frameworks.

Through its risk-aware security architecture, the bank dynamically monitors, assesses, and mitigates cyber risks in real time - demonstrating operational integrity across all channels.

In recent years, OAB has implemented an advanced threat detection and response platform with extended detection and response (XDR) and security orchestration, automation, and response (SOAR) capabilities.

This has enhanced the bank's ability to identify threats in real-time, analyse security events across multiple layers, and respond more effectively to incidents.

Additionally, participation in a global vulnerability research initiative has further reinforced the Bank's defences against advanced persistent threats and zero-day vulnerabilities.

These technology investments have yielded measurable results, with the bank achieving its lowest-ever Cyber Risk Exposure Management (CREM) percentage. This translates to fewer incidents, faster response times, and consistent success in cybersecurity audits.

Beyond technology, Oman Arab Bank continues to foster a cyber-resilient culture through targeted staff training, phishing simulations, and executive-level cybersecurity drills, reinforcing the human layer of resilience and building long-term organisational resilience.

Sulaiman al Harthi, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Arab Bank, commented: "Cybersecurity and risk resilience are no longer back-office functions - they are central to building customer trust and ensuring sustainable growth. This award is a reflection of our technology investment, and also a shared mindset across the bank that prioritises vigilance, accountability, and innovation."



MAFWR, Sohar Aluminium jointly celebrate completion of Falaj Al Rawdah Project

Sohar Aluminium and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR), represented by the General Directorate of Agriculture Fisheries, Wealth and Water Resources in North Batinah governorate, celebrated the completion of maintenance project of 350m of Falaj Al Rawdah in the wilayat of Saham, funded by Sohar Aluminium.

Celebration of the project completion was held under the patronage of Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Abdullah al Battashi, wali of Saham in the presence of Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Nasser al Kharusi, General Manager of HR and Corporate Affairs at Sohar Aluminium.

The event was attended by Ali al Nukhaili, the custodian of Falaj Al Rawdah and officials from Sohar Aluminium and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources.



The maintenance works of Falaj Al Rawdah included the installation of a 350m covered channel in the damaged sections of the falaj, and the excavation of a trench reaching a depth of 120 centimetres and a width of 60 centimetres.

All restoration activities were carried out with the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources and in line with ministry's approved technical standards to ensure the protection of water flow and prevent future damage.

Sohar Aluminium's support to fund the maintenance project of Falaj Al Rawdah reflects its dedication to preserving this vital water resource and ensure its sustainability. This project forms part of the company's broader corporate social responsibility agenda, and its belief in safeguarding Oman's cultural and environmental heritage.

Commenting on the initiative, Ahmed bin Mohammed al Kharusi, General Manager of Human Resources and Corporate Affairs at Sohar Aluminium, stated: "We always strive to ensure our community contributions create a tangible impact. We are proud to have played a role in this key project that contributes to sustaining water resources, increasing green spaces and preserving the environment."

Sheikh Battashi, the wali of Saham, remarked: "Falaj Al Rawdah is a cherished part of Saham's historical memory and environmental identity. Its restoration today is a promise to preserve it for the generations to come. Thanks to Sohar Aluminium for its continuous support extended to give back to the community in various aspects of which environment is given a priority."

Omantel showcases its strategic evolution at annual media meet

In the company's landmark annual media gathering at the Mandarin Oriental Muscat, Omantel convened journalists and industry professionals to showcase its strategic evolution from a conventional telecom provider to a pioneering regional digital technology powerhouse.

This transition aligns with Oman Vision 2040, reinforcing the company's commitment to driving innovation, expanding digital infrastructure, and positioning itself at the forefront of technological leadership in the region.

Omantel's transformation is not merely an evolution in product offerings but a fundamental shift in its core operational model. The company is redefining connectivity by integrating cloud computing, Internet of Things, Generative AI, cybersecurity, and fintech into its portfolio, enabling a more robust digital ecosystem that supports businesses and individuals in Oman.

Omantel's extensive investments in network expansion and digital infrastructure have strengthened its position as Oman's leading connectivity and digital solutions provider. Over the past three years, the company has invested more than RO355mn in infrastructure enhancements, facilitating faster and more resilient connectivity.

With 98% 4G and 92% 5G coverage, Omantel has solidified its role as a key driver of digital transformation. The fibre-optic network spans over 10,000km, covering 92% of households in populated areas, ensuring seam-



Omantel transcends traditional telecom services, evolving into a leading regional provider of Generative AI-driven and advanced technological products and solutions, besides consolidation of the group's technology

TALAL AL MAMARI

less high-speed Internet accessibility. Recent speed tests on Omantel's 5G network recorded 11.5 Gbps, demonstrating unprecedented connectivity performance and capacity.

Omantel has also pioneered Oman's first virtual 5G network, integrating cloud-based computing into its telecom infrastructure. Additionally, Wi-Fi calling has been introduced to enhance seamless communication experiences. Approximately 90% of Internet traffic in Oman is now managed locally, ensuring data security and optimised performance.

Further supporting Oman's digitalisation, Omantel has connected over 500,000 smart electricity meters and 300,000

smart water meters using Internet of Things (IoT) solutions, reinforcing its contribution to smart city initiatives.

Omantel CEO Talal al Mamari said that Omantel transcends traditional telecom services, evolving into a leading regional provider of Generative AI-driven and advanced technological products and solutions, besides consolidation of the group's technology. He highlighted that the number of Omantel subscribers, including Zain, across various markets in the region has surpassed 54mn. The group's revenue has exceeded RO3bn as of the end of 2024. He elaborated that Zain Omantel International (ZOI) - the group's wholesale arm - has expanded its

terrestrial links to 16,000km, covering numerous countries in the Middle East. This expansion contributes significantly to reinforcing the leadership position of Omantel Group and Zain in the business sector.

As part of its ongoing efforts to enhance digital infrastructure, Omantel has recently inaugurated the SN1 Data Center, Oman's second neutral data centre, in partnership with Equinix. Situated in Salalah, this new facility strengthens Oman's connectivity to global networks and reinforces Salalah's emerging status as a promising connectivity hub in the Middle East.

Omantel intends to lay ten international submarine cables in Salalah, positioning it as the sec-

ond most connected city in the region. As part of its efforts to foster innovation and entrepreneurship, Omantel has established Omantel Innovation Labs, an incubator for startups.

In 2024, it supported 30 companies in sectors such as fintech, cybersecurity, and edtech, while also offering advanced funding mechanisms in collaboration with Future Fund Oman. Additionally, Omantel introduced specialised accelerators designed to aid startups in the fields of artificial intelligence and logistics, thereby enhancing digital entrepreneurship within the sultanate. The incubated startups have created 200 new job opportunities, and their market value has reached US\$170mn, underscoring the effectiveness of these labs in achieving their objectives.

Omantel's strategy centres around developing an integrated digital ecosystem, incorporating AI-driven automation, secure cloud solutions, and next-generation cybersecurity to facilitate smarter, more efficient operations. The company's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) division has achieved remarkable success, reporting a 55.5% revenue growth, underscoring Omantel's expansion into enterprise technology services. A pivotal initiative in Omantel's transformation is its investment consolidation strategy, designed to streamline technological products and solutions under a unified platform encompassing cloud, cloud services, cybersecurity and IoT.



Mitsubishi brings cool offers to beat summer heat

General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributor of Mitsubishi Motors in Oman, is bringing the heat down this season with its limited-time summer campaign, offering customers exceptional value and exclusive benefits across the Mitsubishi lineup.

This summer, owning a Mitsubishi comes with added ease and savings, thanks to low EMI options starting from just RO89, making it the ideal time to upgrade your drive.

Along with special financing, customers can enjoy a host of complimentary benefits, including free service packages of up to five years or 100,000km, free insurance and registration, Llumar window tint, a gift voucher of RO50, and Mitsubishi's six-year unlimited kilometre warranty that ensures long-term peace of mind.

"This summer, our goal is to offer customers cool savings and unbeatable value on the Mitsubishi range," said Manoj Ranade, General Manager of GAC.

"Whether you're planning road trips or everyday drives, this

campaign provides the flexibility and support that customers need to make the most of their summer with confidence and comfort."

This exclusive offer is available across Mitsubishi's full range, allowing customers to choose the vehicle that suits their lifestyle best.

From the sleek and spacious Outlander to the rugged Montero Sport built for adventure, each model combines reliability with refinement. The bold new XForce stands out in the compact SUV segment with its stylish design and agility, while the Xpander offers space and practicality for families.

The L200 continues to be a dependable partner for heavy-duty performance, and the ASX and Eclipse Cross deliver sporty, dynamic driving experiences for urban explorers.

Customers can explore the full lineup and take advantage of these limited-time summer offers by visiting their nearest Mitsubishi showroom in Athaiba, Mabela, Barka, Suhar, Nizwa, Ibri, Sur, Jalan Bani Bu Ali, or Salalah.

With deep sympathy, the Oman Arab Bank
conveys heartfelt condolences to

**His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik,
The Honourable Lady Sayyida Ahad bint Abdullah al Busaidi,
and the Royal Family on the sad demise of
the Honourable Lady's beloved mother.**

We pray to the Almighty to envelop her in
His mercy and grant her the highest station in Paradise.

Indeed we belong to Allah and indeed to him we will return.



بنك عُمان العربي
OMAN ARAB BANK

Top court lets Trump end protected status for Venezuelans

Washington, D.C., US - The United States Supreme Court on Monday allowed President Donald Trump's administration to end legal protections for nearly 350,000 Venezuelans that previously shielded them from potential deportation.

The court - with one noted dissent - granted the Justice Department's request to lift a federal judge's order blocking Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem's decision to end deportation protection given to Venezuelan migrants under the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) programme.

The judges did not provide a rationale behind their decision, as is common in emergency applications.

An appeal process is underway in a lower court.

The status allows those already in the United States to live and work legally as their native countries are designated unsafe for return due to a natural disaster, an ongoing armed conflict or other 'extraordinary' conditions.

Former President Joe Biden had extended the protection policy for Venezuelans for 18 months, just a few days before Trump returned to the Oval Office in January, citing ongoing crises in the South American nation under the rule of Nicolas Maduro.

In February, Noem announced that protections for a



specific group of Venezuelans in the US would be revoked at the beginning of April.

A federal court in San Francisco halted the move, after which the Trump administration filed an emergency appeal with the Supreme Court.

Shocking decision, says activists

The Supreme Court's order drew strong reactions from the activists.

"This is the largest single action stripping any group of non-citizens of immigration status in modern US history. That the

Supreme Court authorised it in a two-paragraph order with no reasoning is truly shocking," media reports quoted Ahilan Arulanantham, one of the attorneys for Venezuelan migrants, as saying.

Cecilia Gonzalez Herrera, who sued to stop Trump's administration from terminating legal protections for her and thousands of others like her, told The Associated Press that the decision will 'force families to be in an impossible position, either choosing to survive or choosing stability'.

Talking to news agency AFP, Venezuelan-American activist Adelys Ferro, called out what she deemed 'a xenophobic, discriminatory, racist attack, coordinated for more than a year against a community whose only sin was to run away from a criminal dictatorship'.

Meanwhile, US Homeland Security said in a statement on social media platform X that the Supreme court's decision was a 'win for the American people and the safety of our communities', adding that the Biden Administration 'exploited' the programme to 'let half a million poorly vetted migrants into this country'.

Before being elected, Trump had campaigned hard on the promise to deport millions of undocumented migrants.

DW

Portugal: Chega party's meteoric rise a warning for political centre

Lisbon, Portugal - Portugal looks set to stay under the minority government of the centre-right Democratic Alliance (AD) grouping after elections on Sunday saw the left lose ground to the far-right, ultranationalist Chega party, which emerged as the country's joint second political force with the Social Democrats (PSD).

In the third election in as many years, the AD, which is a permanent coalition of three parties including incumbent Prime Minister Luis Montenegro's PSD, clinched just under a third of votes cast. The grouping won 89 of the 230 seats in the National Assembly.

Snapping at their heels with 58 seats came the ascendant Chega, which first appeared on Portugal's political landscape in 2019.



Portuguese Prime Minister Luis Montenegro seems to have been unscathed by accusations of corruption, which he rejects

Chega placed neck and neck with the Socialists, disrupting decades of stable bipartisan domination. Since the end of the right-wing dictatorship of Antonio Salazar in 1974, the government has virtually always passed back and forth between AD bloc parties and the centre-left. The Socialists saw their seat count decline from 120 in 2022 to 58.

The result echoes the outcome of recent polls in Germany and is part of a general rightward drift across much of Europe.

Instability ahead

The exact path ahead for Portugal is unclear, though the cen-

tre-right looks poised to hold on to power. Montenegro has frequently ruled out teaming up the AD with Chega. Meanwhile, Socialists leader Pedro Nuno promptly resigned, opening up the field for a new leadership.

For Portuguese journalist Paulo Pena, a minority AD gov-

ernment seems the most likely outcome. However, there will also be calls for the centre-left and centre-right to work together, either formally or informally. "The pressure for that big coalition is huge," Pena told DW by phone from the Portuguese capital Lisbon.

"I think the future leadership of the Social Democrats will at least be willing to negotiate some form of stability for the right-wing government because nobody wants to go to elections again in the near future."

Portuguese EU lawmaker Lidia Pereira, a member of the

AD bloc, told DW that the 'results grant the centre-right coalition a reinforced legitimacy to lead the next political cycle'.

Pereira sounded a warning: "The rise of the radical right, also in Portugal, must be approached with seriousness and responsibility by all democratic

I think the future leadership of the Social Democrats will at least be willing to negotiate some form of stability for the right-wing government

PAULO PENA

forces. This phenomenon is not isolated," she said in a written statement.

Immigration, housing, corruption

Montenegro appears to have emerged relatively unscathed by a conflict-of-interest scandal that toppled his government this March, triggering fresh polls a little a year after they

came to power.

Earlier this year, questions were raised in the press about Spinumviva, a consultancy firm he founded in 2021 before he took office, later transferring ownership to his family, according to news agency Reuters.

Montenegro vehemently denied allegations Spinumviva's clients had links to the government that presented conflict of interest concerns, but they were enough to bring about a vote of confidence that he lost.

In recent years, a series of high-profile political scandals have touched both major parties and generally taken their toll on the Portuguese public's perception of politicians.

While the topics of immigration and housing were high on the agenda during the campaign across the board, corruption was one of Chega's major talking points, which seems to have paid off.

The next few days will see exploratory talks between the major parties, bringing more clarity. Things could move quickly, though: after the last election, in March 2024, Montenegro formed a minority government within weeks.

DW

US terminates \$60mn in federal grants to Harvard

Washington, D.C., US - The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said on Monday that it is terminating US\$60mn in federal grants to Harvard University.

"HHS is taking decisive action to uphold civil rights in higher education.

"Due to Harvard University's continued failure to address anti-Semitic harassment and race discrimination, HHS is terminating multiple multi-year grant awards - totalling approximately US\$60mn over their full duration," the department said on X.

It said discrimination will 'not be tolerated' on campus, adding that 'federal funds must support institutions that protect all students'. The Trump administration has already frozen more than US\$2.2bn in federal grants to Harvard and US\$60mn in contracts.

Harvard has sued the administration in response, alleging that the funding freeze violates the First Amendment and fed-



The Trump administration has already frozen more than S\$2.2bn in federal grants to Harvard and US\$60mn in contracts

eral law, which bars the president from directly or indirectly ordering the Internal Revenue

Service (IRS) to conduct or terminate an audit or investigation.

Harvard President Alan Garber announced last week that the university will use US\$250mn of its own funds to support research. The Trump administration has threatened to freeze federal funding for many universities, including Harvard, citing campus protests in support of Palestine and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programmes.

Anadolu Agency

Germany: Report slams Friedrich Merz's new immigration policies

Berlin, Germany - "German refugee policies are not suitable for current global challenges," concluded Benjamin Etzold this week in Berlin, where he presented the 'Global Forced Displacement Report', which he co-wrote along with his colleagues from the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC).

Recalling Germany's recent federal election campaign, which was significantly shaped by the issue of migration, Etzold thinks the debate was too 'heated' and too focused on how migration affects Germany - something he believes is unlikely to change under the new government.

The public debate could do with more interest in facts and scientific findings, the researcher thinks, while the global dimension of displacement is still largely being ignored.

Do border controls deter?

The migration expert also sharply criticised Chancellor



Friedrich Merz's major new policy announcement: The tightening of border controls and turning back of migrants and asylum seekers. The effectiveness of such measures is hugely overestimated, Etzold said.

Franck Düvell, migration researcher at Osnabrück University, agrees: "Whenever someone is turned back, he will try again and again and again, until he is in the country."

This applies both to the European Union's internal borders as well as the bloc's external borders. "Whenever one route is

closed, there is another route nearby. It may be more dangerous, but it then becomes more frequently used," Düvell said, explaining the effect he and other researchers have analysed. This is precisely what brings human traffickers onto the scene.

Smuggling networks making money

Human traffickers specialise in providing irregular, sometimes illegal, and often life-threatening migration routes to desperate people: "That could be using fake documents, that could be being

hidden in trucks, it could be these unseaworthy boats," said Düvell, another of the BICC report's authors. "That is the unwanted side effect, which we repeatedly see with such measures."

Against this backdrop, the asylum and migration experts see the new report as an appeal to the international community to pull together to tackle the problem. "It is urgently necessary that multilateral refugee and migrant policies are resurrected, even without the participation of the United States," said Etzold.

DW

Gaza: Over 60 Palestinians killed in Israel's continued deadly attacks

Gaza City/Ankara - Over 60 Palestinians, including women and children, have been killed in continued Israeli deadly attacks across the Gaza Strip since early Tuesday, targeting homes, tents, and schools sheltering displaced people, according to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa.

Most of the deadly attacks were concentrated in Gaza's central area, including 12 killed in an airstrike on a home for the 'Abu Samra' family in the Deir al-Balah city, Wafa said.

Another airstrike in the western Nuseirat refugee camp left 15 people killed, it also reported.

Meanwhile, the local Al-Aqsa radio reported that nine people were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a home in the Jabalia refugee camp, northern Gaza, while still missing people are under the rubble.

Several more victims were killed in Israeli strikes and artillery shelling on areas in Gaza City and in Khan Younis, the southern Gaza Strip, the Palestinian broadcaster added.

On Sunday, the Israeli army announced the beginning of a broad ground offensive in the war-torn Gaza Strip.

Efforts continue to reach ceasefire

Qatar, Egypt, and the US continue their efforts to reach a ceasefire in Gaza, Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said on Tuesday.

"We are continuing with Egypt and the US for efforts to reach a ceasefire in Gaza," Sheikh Mohammed said in his speech at the opening of the Qatar Economic Forum in Doha.



"We have tried since the beginning of the war on Gaza to mediate an agreement that ends it and allows hostages to return to their families," he added.

The Qatari premier stressed that the only way to end the war was through negotiations, which were always 'sabotaged and manipulated'. Sheikh Mohammed noted that Israel's ongoing military offensive in Gaza had undermined peace efforts after the release of Israeli American captive Edan Alexander.

"When Israeli American soldier Edan Alexander was released, we thought that moment would open a door to end this

tragedy, but the response was a more violent wave of strikes," he said.

Alexander was set free by the Palestinian resistance group Hamas last week following talks led by US President Donald Trump's special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff.

Following his release, the Israeli army intensified its air assaults in Gaza, killing more than 500 Palestinians and injuring hundreds.

Rejecting international calls for a ceasefire, the Israeli army has pursued a brutal offensive against Gaza since October 2023, killing nearly 53,500

Palestinians, most of them women and children.

Israel approves entry of more aid trucks

Meanwhile, the UN's humanitarian affairs office on Tuesday said that Israel has approved the entry of around 100 trucks carrying aid into Gaza, marking a significant increase from the nine cleared a day earlier.

"We have requested and received approval of more trucks to enter today, many more than were approved yesterday," Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA),

told reporters in Geneva.

"And we expect, of course, with that approval, many of them, hopefully, all of them to cross today to a point where they can be picked up and get further into the Gaza Strip for distribution," Laerke said.

When asked for a specific number, he said the figure was 'around 100'.

The announcement came a day after just nine aid trucks were cleared for entry into Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing on Monday - a number that OCHA and other aid groups have repeatedly said is far below what is needed to meet the ur-

gent humanitarian needs of Gaza's population.

Of the nine trucks cleared on Monday, Laerke said only five were actually able to move into Gaza due to logistical challenges at the crossing.

"Out of those nine, five of them actually crossed into Gaza ... for logistical reasons. Four of them were not able to enter," he said, explaining that the crossing involves a complex transfer process. "As you know, the crossing has different stages, and there is a repacking ... from one set of trucks to another set of trucks before it can move in."

Anadolu Agency

Japan blasts Israel's expanded operations in Gaza

Tokyo, Japan - Japan has expressed opposition to Israel's expanded military operations in Gaza, urging all parties to return to the negotiation table to prevent further deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi conveyed Japan's concerns during a press conference, stating: "We oppose any further worsening of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and any movement that goes against the realisation of a 'two-state solution.'"

He emphasised the importance of upholding international humanitarian law and expressed deep concern over the casualties caused by Israel's reoccupation of Gaza.

Commenting on Japan's involvement in a joint statement issued by foreign ministers from various nations urging the UN and humanitarian groups to expand their efforts in Gaza, Hayashi said: "Japan will keep making diplomatic efforts while closely cooperating with the countries concerned."

Regarding the latest developments in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Hayashi voiced his optimism for a diplomatic solution following US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin speaking over the phone on Monday.

Khamenei rules out 'meaningful outcome' from nuclear talks

Tehran, Iran - Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Tuesday that he does not believe the ongoing indirect nuclear negotiations between Tehran and Washington will lead to 'any meaningful outcome'.

He made the remarks during a ceremony marking the first anniversary of the death of former Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash in northern Iran last year.

Khamenei recalled that Raisi, in his first press appearance after taking office in 2021, had categorically stated that he would not engage in direct talks with the US.

While indirect negotiations did take place during Raisi's presidency, Khamenei emphasised they yielded no results.

The late president 'did not allow the enemy to claim that Iran was brought to the negotiation table through threats', Khamenei said.

"Even now, we don't believe any meaningful outcome will emerge, and we do not know what will happen," he noted.

Iran and the US have resumed nuclear diplomacy since last month, with Oman acting as mediator. Four rounds of indirect talks have taken place so far, with the most recent round held in the Omani capital, Muscat, on Sunday.

Earlier on Tuesday, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister and nu-



Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

clear negotiating team member Kazem Gharibabadi said that a new proposal for the next round of indirect talks with the US has been received and is 'currently under review'.

In his remarks, Khamenei also addressed recent statements from US officials demanding that Iran dismantle its uranium enrichment programme.

He dismissed the statements as 'sheer arrogance' and urged US officials to avoid such statements amid the ongoing negotiations. "No one is waiting for anyone's permission."

The Islamic Republic has its own policy and path, and it pursues that policy independently," he said.

On Sunday, Iran's Foreign Minister and chief nuclear negotiator, Abbas Araghchi, said the Iranian enrichment programme will continue 'with or without a deal' with the US.

Anadolu Agency

9 injured in Israeli drone strike in southern Lebanon

Beirut/Istanbul - Nine civilians, including two children, were injured in an Israeli drone strike in southern Lebanon on Tuesday, in the latest violation of a ceasefire agreement, the Health Ministry said.

A statement by the ministry's Emergency Operations Centre said the injuries occurred when an Israeli drone hit a motorcycle on Mansouri-Majdal Zoun road in the Tyre district.

The ministry said three people were in serious condition after the attack.

A local education league said the Israeli strike took place near a school in the area, causing panic among students and teachers.

There was no immediate Israeli comment on the drone



Lebanese authorities have reported nearly 3,000 Israeli violations of truce

strike.

A fragile ceasefire has been in place in Lebanon since November, ending months of cross-border

warfare between Israel and the Lebanese group Hezbollah, which escalated into a full-scale conflict in September.

Lebanese authorities have reported nearly 3,000 Israeli violations of the truce, including the deaths of nearly 200 people

and the injuries of around 500 others.

Under the ceasefire deal, Israel was supposed to fully withdraw from southern Lebanon by

A local education league said Israeli strike took place near a school in the area, causing panic among students and teachers

January 26, but the deadline was extended to February 18 after Israel refused to comply. It still maintains a military presence at five border outposts.

Anadolu Agency

Qatar defends jet gift to US, calls it normal transaction

Doha, Qatar - Qatar defended its decision to gift a Boeing Co. 747 jumbo jet to the US as a routine transaction between partners, calling criticism of the deal a misguided view of the country as an Arab state trying to gain political influence.

"I don't know why people consider it as bribery or Qatar trying to buy influence with this administration," Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said on Tuesday during a panel at the Qatar Economic Forum in Doha. "We need to overcome this stereotype."

"Many nations have gifted things to the US," he said, invoking the Statue of Liberty, which was presented to the US government by France in 19th century.



Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani

President Donald Trump's administration has come under fire from lawmakers for its decision to accept the luxury Boeing 747-8 jumbo jet from the Qatari ruling family. Trump has said it wouldn't

be a personal gift to him and that the Department of Defence would be the recipient, with the President using the aircraft on a temporary basis.

The luxuriously furnished air-

craft is currently sitting at a site in the US. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said that the US Air Force will accept the donation 'according to all legal and ethical obligations'.

The plane would have to undergo an extensive overhaul to meet the requirements for Air Force One, including upgrades to the electrical and safety systems. While the Qatari model comes with lavish private quarters, the plane lacks the classified communication and weapons systems that have delayed the next Air Force One jets.

The Qatari plane will most likely get a lighter upgrade of its defences and anti-jamming devices, meaning that it may only be deployed domestically.

Trump has criticised Boeing for being late on the delivery of two new jumbos that will function as Air Force One planes. The current timeline for those jets is to be delivered in 2027 at the earliest. It's unclear if the Qatari plane would become operational any sooner, given the complex work to add the required features for the presidential plane.

The exact value of the Qatari jet isn't known, and Boeing has discontinued production of its iconic humped-backed jumbos. The plane would likely sell for US\$75mn to US\$100mn, according to the Cirium Ascend Consultancy, while the interior, completed a decade ago, could add on US\$25mn more. (Source: Bloomberg)

Trump says it would be 'great' for Russia and Ukraine to hold talks at the Vatican

Washington, D.C./Moscow - US President Donald Trump said on Monday that it would be 'great' for Russia and Ukraine to hold ceasefire talks at the Vatican.

"I think it'd be great to have it at the Vatican. Maybe it would have some extra significance," Trump told reporters at an event at the White House.

"I think it would be maybe helpful. There's tremendous bitterness, anger, and I think maybe that could help some of that anger. So having it at the Vatican would be - in Rome - would be a very, I think it'd be a great idea," he said.

Earlier on Monday, Trump held a two-hour phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss efforts to reach a ceasefire in the Ukraine war.

Trump said he believes that Putin wants to stop the war.

"I talked to him about it. I said: 'When are we going to end this Vladimir?'...I said: 'When are we going to end this bloodshed, this bloodbath?' It's a bloodbath, and I do believe he wants to end it," he said.

Turning to his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Trump said he is a 'strong person'.

"Zelenskyy, strong guy, and he's not the easiest person to



Earlier on Monday, Trump held a two-hour phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss efforts to reach a ceasefire in the Ukraine war

deal with, but I think that he wants to stop," he added.

Very productive exchange: Putin

Meanwhile, Putin said on Tuesday that the telephone conversation with Trump was extremely

productive.

Putin said that Russia also supports a peaceful settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

"This conversation has effectively taken place and lasted more than two hours. I would like to emphasise that it was both



substantive and quite candid. Overall, I believe it was a very productive exchange," he said.

Putin expressed his gratitude towards the US for attempting to sort the Ukraine-Russia issue.

"First and foremost, I expressed my gratitude to the

President of the United States for the support provided by the United States in facilitating the resumption of direct talks between Russia and Ukraine aimed at potentially reaching a peace agreement and resuming the talks which, as we know, were

thwarted by the Ukrainian side in 2022," he said.

Putin said that Trump shared his views on the cessation of hostilities during the phone call that lasted for over two hours.

"The President of the United States shared his position on the cessation of hostilities and the

memorandum regarding a potential future peace agreement.

This would include outlining a range of provisions, such as the principles for settlement, the timeframe for a possible peace deal, and other matters, including a potential temporary ceasefire, should the necessary

Putin said that Trump shared his views on the cessation of hostilities during the phone call and said that Russia is ready to engage with the Ukrainian side on drafting a memorandum regarding a potential future peace agreement

prospects for a ceasefire. For my part, I noted that Russia also supports a peaceful settlement of the Ukraine crisis as well. What we need now is to identify the most effective ways towards achieving peace," he said.

Putin said that Russia is ready to engage with the Ukrainian side on drafting a memorandum regarding a potential future peace agreement.

"We agreed with the President of the United States that Russia would propose and is ready to engage with the Ukrainian side on drafting a

agreements be reached," he said.

The Russian President said that as the peace talks have resumed, they were now on the right track.

"Contacts among participants of the Istanbul meeting and talks have resumed, which gives reason to believe that we are on the right track overall. I would like to reiterate that the conversation was highly constructive, and I assess it positively," he said.

Putin added that the Ukrainian side must now show their commitment to peace.

Agencies

WHO member states formally adopt first-ever global pandemic agreement

Geneva, Switzerland - The World Health Organization's (WHO) member states, 194, on Tuesday formally adopted the first-ever pandemic agreement, marking a milestone in global public health cooperation.

The consensus decision at the 78th World Health Assembly follows over three years of negotiations sparked by the inequities and gaps exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus hailed the agreement in a statement as 'a victory for public health, science and multilateral action'.

The WHO chief emphasised that it will enhance the world's collective ability to prevent and respond to future pandemics.

"Our citizens, societies and economies must not be left vulnerable again," he said.

Adopted by consensus in plenary following a near-unanimous



committee vote on Monday, which backed approval of the agreement (124 in favour, 0 objections, 11 abstentions), the accord outlines principles and tools to ensure equitable access to vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics during health emergencies. It aims to bolster international coordination and

build a more resilient global health system.

Teodoro Herbosa, the president of this year's assembly, called the deal a 'once-in-a-lifetime opportunity' to apply lessons from COVID-19. He urged the swift implementation of systems to ensure fair access to life-saving tools in future

crises.

The agreement reaffirms national sovereignty, clarifying that the WHO cannot impose domestic policies such as lockdowns or vaccine mandates.

Next steps include negotia-

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus hailed the agreement in a statement as 'a victory for public health, science and multilateral action'

tions on a separate Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) system, seen as crucial to ensuring timely access to biological materials and related benefits during outbreaks.

Anadolu Agency

US bans Indian agencies aiding illegal immigration

Washington, D.C., US - The US State Department has announced a visa ban on owners, executives and senior officials of India-based travel agencies it accused of 'knowingly facilitating illegal immigration to the United States'.

The Monday statement by department spokesperson Tammy Bruce did not mention any details on those hit by the visa restrictions, including their names or the names of the travel agencies they represent. The statement also did not mention how 'illegal immigration' to the US was being facilitated.

What do we know about the ban?

The State Department said its Consular Affairs and Diplomatic Security Service mission in India has identified those 'engaged in facilitating illegal immigration and human smuggling and trafficking operations'.



It vowed to continue imposing visa restrictions on representatives of travel agencies in order to 'cut off alien smuggling networks'.

The visa restriction would even apply to individuals who would otherwise qualify for a Visa Waiver Programme, the State Department said, in reference to those exempt from needing a tourist visa to visit the US for up to 90 days.

"Enforcing US immigration laws and policies is critical to upholding the rule of law and protecting Americans," Bruce said in

the statement.

Since US President Donald Trump returned to the White House this year, his administration has significantly cracked down on migration, deporting thousands of migrants, including in certain cases that defied court rulings.

Social media outfits of US embassies worldwide have been warning US visa holders not to overstay the duration of their visas, and stressing that they would otherwise risk deportation and a permanent ban.

DW

AWAITING INDIA'S FIRST BULLET TRAIN



An aerial view of India's first Bullet Train corridor between Mumbai and Ahmedabad after completion of the 300km viaduct, on Tuesday (ANI)

1st in 18 years, no woman candidate in South Korea's presidential election

Seoul, South Korea - For the first time in 18 years, all seven candidates running in South Korea's June 3 presidential election are men, despite women making up half of the country's electorate.

It marks the first all-male ballot since 2007, when all 12 presidential candidates were also men, the Korea Herald reported on Tuesday, citing data from the National Election Commission's Cyber Election History Museum.

Women's representation peaked in the 2012 election, when Park Geun-hye, the then-leader of the Saenuri Party, became the country's first woman president.

Out of the seven registered candidates that year, four were women, including Park, Lee Jung-hee of the Unified Progressive



Party, and independents Kim So-yeon and Kim Soon-ja.

Since former President Park's impeachment and removal in March 2017 due to a high-profile corruption case, women's participation in presidential elections

has declined.

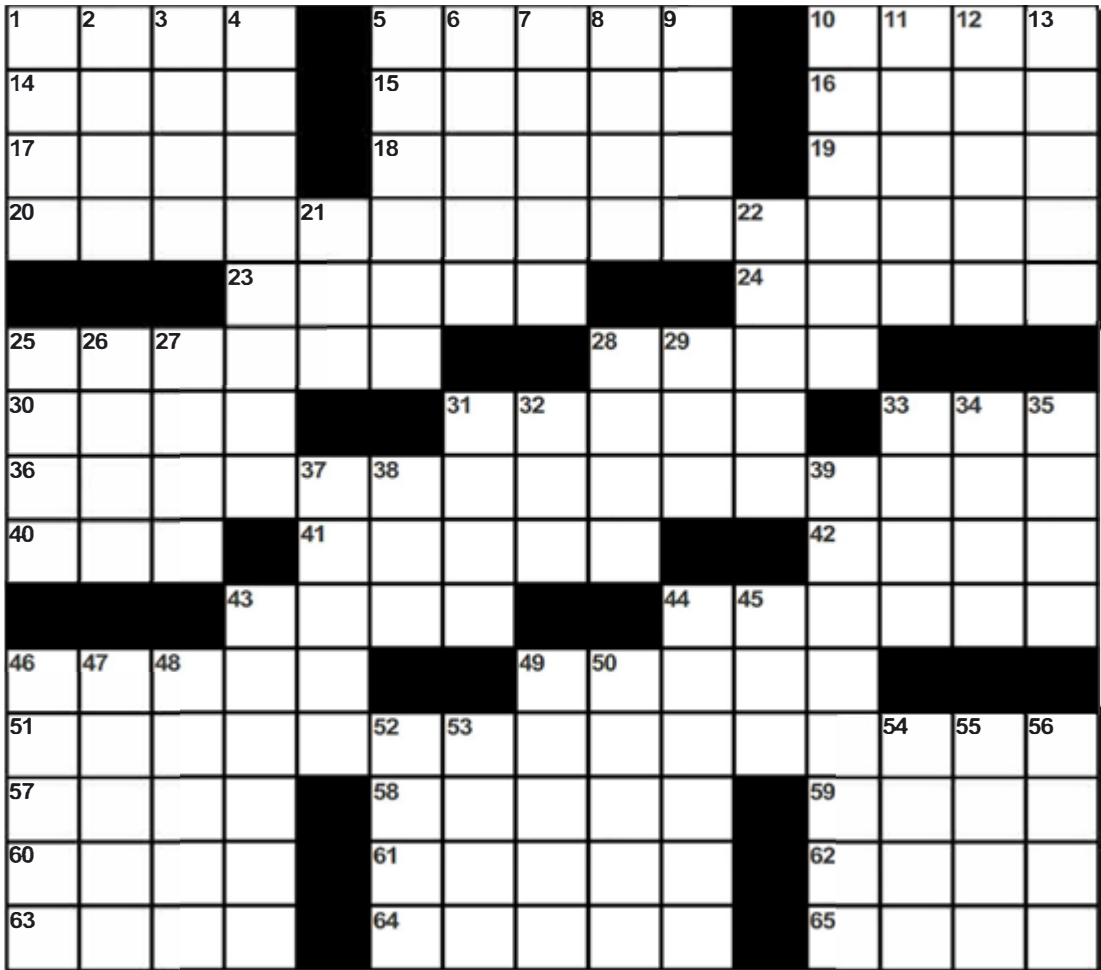
In the snap election held in May 2017, following Park's impeachment, Sim Sang-jung, former leader of the progressive Justice Party, was the only woman candidate among the 15

contenders for the presidency.

South Korea will hold a snap presidential election on June 3 due to the Constitutional Court removing former President Yoon Suk Yeol from office.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) One of the common people
 - 5) Horse habitat
 - 10) Goalie's wear
 - 14) Freight car hopper of old
 - 15) "Sesame Street" resident
 - 16) Cain's victim
 - 17) Clickable item
 - 18) Church tenet
 - 19) Emulate a drunkard
 - 20) Times 3?
 - 23) Short choral composition
 - 24) The nine of some batteries
 - 25) Back out on a promise
 - 28) King of the jungle
 - 30) Brilliant thought
 - 31) Emotionless, as a stare
 - 33) Mr. Potato Head part
 - 36) Times 3?
 - 40) Ambulance letters
 - 41) Tadpoles, in time
 - 42) Lofgren who rocks with Springsteen
 - 43) Friendly ground-up bait?
 - 44) Shape learned in preschool
 - 46) Video game giant,

- once
 - 49) Where babies grow
 - 51) Times 3?
 - 57) Remove, as a knot
 - 58) Rugged box
 - 59) One named in a will
 - 60) Angler's equipment
 - 61) Extreme hardship
 - 62) Cogito-sum link
 - 63) "... quam videri" (North Carolina motto)
 - 64) Board for a manicurist
 - 65) "General Hospital" e.g.
- DOWN**
- 1) Punxsutawney _
 - 2) Mathematical sets of points
 - 3) Black, in poesy
 - 4) Source of some fertilizer
 - 5) Put under
 - 6) Figurative expression
 - 7) Gut-wrenching feeling
 - 8) Certain citrus fruit
 - 9) "Able to _ tall buildings ..."
 - 10) Paying customer
 - 11) Bubbling on the stove
 - 12) Bus station
 - 13) Cold-weather coasters
 - 21) "Put another _ on the fire"
 - 22) Conjure up, as a mem-

- ory
- 25) Customary observance or practice
- 26) Dutch cheese
- 27) Beaks
- 28) Scottish miss
- 29) Pen filler
- 31) "... me up, Scotty"
- 32) "Acid" used in some trips
- 33) Film with many extras
- 34) What cheerleaders do
- 35) Emerald Isle language
- 37) Body of values
- 38) Costello of old comedy
- 39) Betters or improves
- 43) Louisiana cuisine
- 44) Crunchy vegetable
- 45) Anger
- 46) Cloudless sky color
- 47) Firms up, as muscles
- 48) Chilean range
- 49) Electric bill listing
- 50) One-on-one teacher
- 52) 4,840 square yards
- 53) Straitlaced
- 54) "Bies" or "dynamics" prefix
- 55) Baltic port
- 56) Let slip from one's hands

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You take care of your finances and your possessions, so why not treat your health like a valuable investment too? It's important to floss, exercise, eat right, and get plenty of sleep. It's only when it's missing that you realize how important good health is, so make sure that you do everything in your power to keep your mind, body, and soul in top shape.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Ambition is everything today, so go right ahead and flex those muscles to let everyone know that you're a major player. Be careful, though. You don't want anyone in a powerful position to view your actions as disrespectful. Go out of your way to convey the depth of your ideas and the passion behind your actions, and they are sure to be on your side.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
A recent achievement at work is a huge mood lifter, and your good mood should carry over into your home and romantic life as well. That sense of accomplishment works wonders for you and your attitude. Just don't forget to give a round of thanks to everyone who supported you recently. While your efforts may have put you over the top, you definitely used a little help from your friends!



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Your energy has highlighted love and romance. It feels like it's all for you, so go for it! Whether a relationship needs a little zing or you're still on the lookout for the right mate, expect a big treat to come soon. Couples that have been feeling a bit detached should experience a new surge of heat, while singles can make real connections in the unlikelyst of places.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You may have felt emotionally zeroed out recently, but you're just about ready to poke your head out and notice what a vibrant and rich world it really is. That change in attitude might feel like it needs a new look to accompany it, so indulge in remaking yourself from the inside out. There's no better accompaniment to a makeover of the soul than a great new haircut and maybe a kicky new outfit too!



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Step back from any unrealistic expectations and just seek shelter where you know your feelings are safe. You need the space to ensure that that upcoming, life-changing decision is really what you want. It's hard to choose, especially because it looks so good on paper, and all your loyal supporters are cheering furiously for your advancement. Still, you need to make sure that this choice is right for you in the long run.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
You're quite good at taking care of others, but it's about time you put yourself first! Make a point of it today. Otherwise it's too easy to assume the position of martyr and secretly resent other people for not meeting your needs. If you recognize your own requirements and try to meet them, you should defuse any resentment and actually be prepared to give more to those you care about most.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Improving your financial position shouldn't be hard for you right now, because if anyone can play that game and win, it's you. Climbing up the ladder comes especially easy to you since your charm is set to dazzle and you're able to anticipate other people's thoughts before they voice them. Put on your favorite power suit and prepare to up the ante. Before you know it, you're a high roller beyond your wildest dreams.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Big workplace rewards are in store for you, so try not to fret about what might go wrong. You may just get so tied up in knots that you can't move at a time when action is absolutely crucial to success. Push yourself to step out of your comfort zone. Take off in some new direction and show off your skills -- including a few that most people didn't even know you had.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
You should be practically hypnotized today. Someone close to you has all the right moves and is dead set on getting your full attention. You have no problem being an appreciative audience, but make sure you speak up if their antics start to get out of hand. The line between an appreciative and a captive audience can be very thin indeed!



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
You're feeling somewhat vulnerable and may want to protect yourself from things (or people) you perceive as dangerous. This is an important instinct, but you need to remember not to shut things down completely. There are plenty of people out there who care about you, and cutting yourself off from them shouldn't be part of the plan. In fact, someone out there is almost certainly working overtime on your behalf.



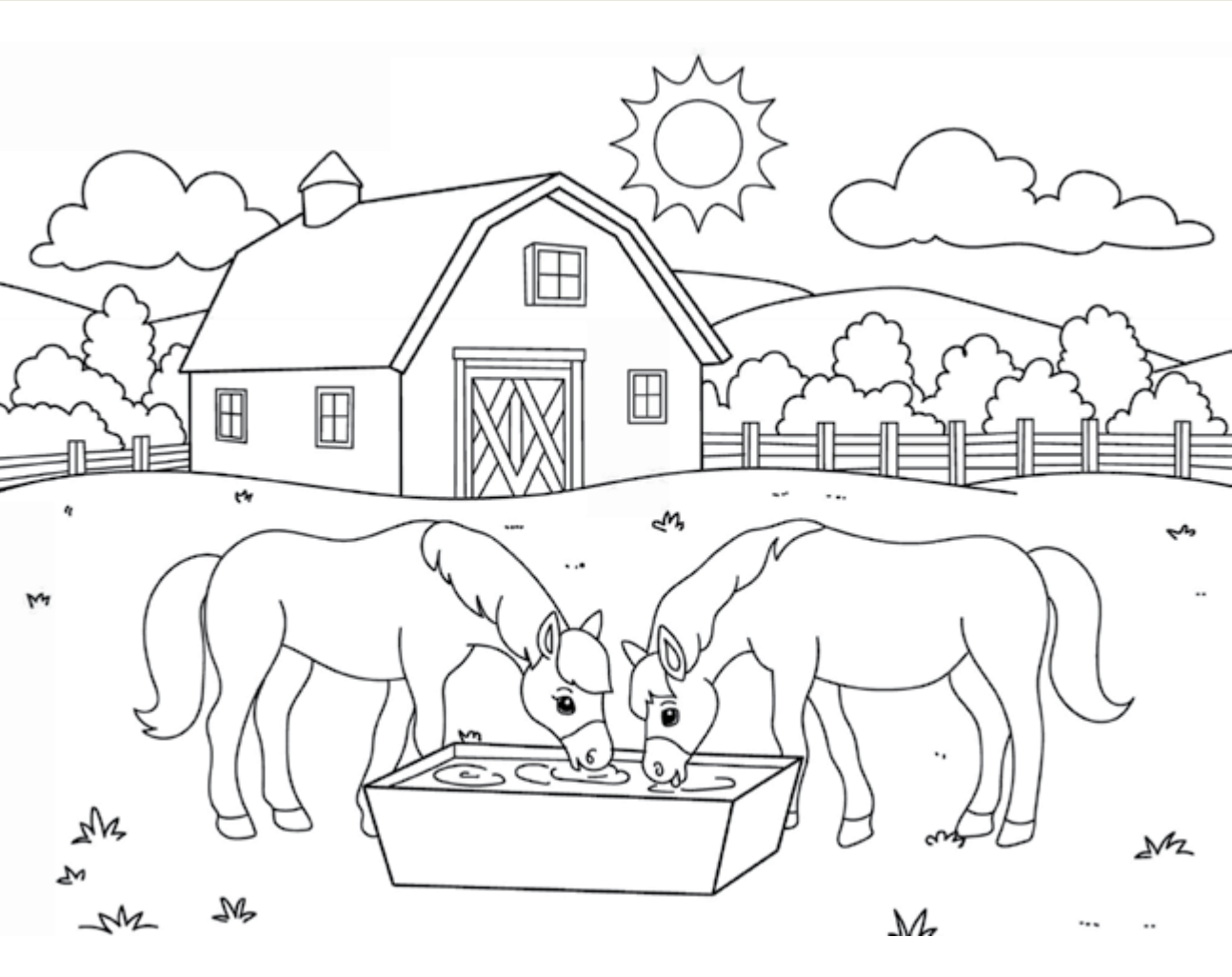
PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You have a deep capacity for intimacy, too much for some (misguided) people, but you need to make sure that you're not sacrificing too much of yourself today. You're a talented diplomat, so it may go against your nature, but it's important to conserve your resources. Talk openly about some tough issue that's lingering between you and a friend or lover, and you may just heal an important emotional rift.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 01. When was the period of English history known as "The Anarchy" or "The Nineteen-Year Winter"?**
- A. 14th century
 - B. 20th century
 - C. 12th century
 - D. 18th century
- 02. Pilgrims visit the city of Santiago de Compostela because it is supposedly the site of the bones of which saint?**
- A. St James
 - B. St Christopher
 - C. St Anne
 - D. St Anthony
- 03. What is Teeline?**
- A. A system to remove trapped air bubbles from water in a cooling system
 - B. A railway in San Francisco
 - C. A form of shorthand
 - D. A tabard
- Answers: 1. C 2. A 3. C**

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

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

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggler 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

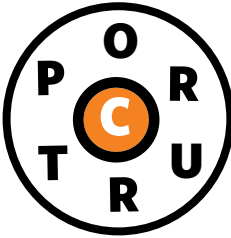
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

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

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

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

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

CRACKERJACK FINISH!

Brighton keep European hopes alive with 3-2 win over Liverpool

Brighton, England - Brighton & Hove Albion substitute Jack Hinshelwood struck a late winner as the hosts came from behind to grab a 3-2 victory over champions Liverpool to keep their slim hopes of playing in Europe next season alive after twice coming from behind.

Battling for eighth place and a chance of playing European football next season if Chelsea win the Conference League, Brighton went behind in the ninth minute when Harvey Elliott scored from close range after a superb Liverpool attack, but midfielder Yasin Ayari levelled in the 32nd minute.

The home side still managed to go in a goal down at the break after Dominik Szoboszlai scored with a dipping cross-shot that flew over keeper Bart Verbruggen and into the net in first-half stoppage time, but Brighton boss Fabian Huerzeler made the right changes after the break to turn the game in their favour.

Japan winger Kaoru Mitoma, who was brought on in the 64th minute, equalised four minutes later, cleverly scoring with a difficult shot off the rebound from a Danny Welbeck effort.

Welbeck wasted a number of opportunities on the night, but with Liverpool looking lacklustre since securing the title on April 28, Brighton kept going in the



Brighton & Hove Albion's Jack Hinshelwood wheels away in celebration after scoring the winner against Liverpool on Monday

I think the ball comes across and it sat up perfectly and I tapped it in - there was a nervous wait until the goal was allowed but when it was allowed it was pure relief

JACK HINSELWOOD

chase for a winner that could see them qualify for Europe if other results go their way.

Offered the chance to become the hero after his introduction in the 84th, 20-year-old Hinshelwood grabbed it with both hands,

firing home the winner from Matt O'Riley's pass a minute later.

The goal was initially disallowed for offside but a lengthy VAR review followed and it was given to leave Brighton eighth on 58 points, three ahead of Brent-

ford and four in front of Fulham, with Bournemouth a point further back with a game in hand.

"Coming off the bench, I wanted to come into the game and make a great impact and work my hardest," Hinshelwood said. "I think the ball comes across and it sat up perfectly and I tapped it in - there was a nervous wait until the goal was allowed but when it was allowed it was pure relief," said Hinshelwood, who credited his cousin Harry Howell for creating space for him to score the goal.

"It was a really nice moment

coming on with my cousin," Hinshelwood, 20, told Sky TV.

"We've been working so hard since we were kids. Playing together since we were just born, kicking balls with each other.

"He made a great run across the front post to open the gap for me, so I'll be thanking him later."

Brighton visit Tottenham Hotspur in their last game of the season on Sunday, while Liverpool will be presented with the Premier League trophy at Anfield after they play FA Cup winners Crystal Palace in their final fixture of the campaign.

Guardiola sure of Champions League spot for Man City

Manchester, England - Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said on Monday that he was "absolutely" confident his side can seal one of the top five spots in the Premier League that will guarantee them Champions League football for next season.

While the Premier League title has been long-wrapped up by Liverpool, and Arsenal assured themselves a top-five finish on Sunday, the race to secure the other three remaining places is wide open.

Newcastle United, Chelsea and Aston Villa all have 66 points after 37 matches, while City are sixth with 65 and have a game in hand over the three clubs.

The last time City failed to



Pep Guardiola with Bernardo Silva

qualify for Europe's elite club competition was in the 2009-10 season.

"If we are not there (Champions League) then we don't deserve it and will be in the Europa League. It is what it is," Guardiola told reporters ahead of Tuesday's home game against 11th-placed Bournemouth.

"I am thinking we are going to qualify. My thoughts and the way I think - I think that. We need four points. That is the main target. I am absolutely (confident of qualifying)."

City are looking to recover from Saturday's shock FA Cup 1-0 loss against Crystal Palace.

"We played a really good final, not enough to win it. And we

have the last two games, we need four points to next year to be in the Champions League. This is enough, and everyone has to be aware of that," Guardiola said. "Newcastle won the Carabao Cup, Liverpool won the Premier League and City won the Community Shield. The other teams didn't win anything," the Spaniard added.

City's game against Bournemouth will be their final home fixture of the season, with the club taking a trip to 10th-placed Fulham for the last Premier League round on Sunday.

The match against Bournemouth will also mark Belgian playmaker Kevin De Bruyne's last home game for City.

Europa League win 'could be a turning point' for Spurs, says Postecoglou

London, England - Tottenham Hotspur have endured their worst domestic season for nearly 50 years, yet on Wednesday in Bilbao's San Mames Stadium all that will be forgiven if they can overcome Manchester United and win the Europa League.

Ange Postecoglou's side were touted, along with United, as one of the favourites when they began Europe's second-tier club competition with a 3-0 home win against FK Qarabag in September.

Both duly reached the final, despite being involved in what looked like an ignominious race to the bottom during a Premier League campaign in which they have lost a combined 39 games.

With one game left Tottenham are 17th with 21 defeats, the same number they suf-

fered in 1976-77 when they were relegated.

Humiliating as that has been for manager Ange Postecoglou and his players, the slate will be wiped clean for 90 minutes in northern Spain as Tottenham seek a first trophy since 2008 and their first European silverware since they won the UEFA Cup, the predecessor of the Europa League, 41 years ago.

Victory would also catapult Tottenham back into the Champions League, the competition they reached the final of in 2019 only to suffer heartbreak against Liverpool in Madrid.

Postecoglou insists victory can change the perception

of a club he says 'does crazy things to people'. He also knows that he has a chance to have the last laugh over his critics.

The pugnacious Australian invited pressure on his shoulders earlier in the campaign by claiming 'I always win a trophy in my second season at a club'.

After a surrender to Liverpool in the League Cup semi-final and the disintegration of their Premier League campaign, that boast has looked increasingly unlikely.

A defeat on Wednesday will likely spell the end of the Postecoglou reign.

Even victory might not save him, but if that does end up being the case then Postecoglou will leave a cult hero among Tottenham fans who have stood behind him, preferring to vent their anger at chairman Daniel Levy.

"For me personally, (winning) the trophy will mean I can reminisce in my old age, but more important is what it means for the club, I think I've always said," he told reporters.

"You look back at the history of the club for the last 20 odd years, I feel this could be a turning point in the way that it's perceived and how it perceives itself."

For me personally, the trophy will mean I can reminisce in my old age, but more important is what it means for the club

ANGE POSTEOGLOU

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Postecoglou insists victory can change the perception

Ange Postecoglou



England's Lineker leaves BBC amid antisemitism row

London, England - Gary Lineker, a former England soccer captain who became the face of the sport on British TV, will leave the BBC after apologising for sharing a social media post about Zionism that drew complaints over antisemitism.

Lineker, 64, the golden boy of English soccer in the 1980s and early 1990s who scored 48 times for his country, moved into broadcasting after hanging up his boots, presenting the BBC's flagship 'Match of the Day' (MOTD) highlights show for 25 years.

The former striker was the broadcaster's highest paid star, but had repeatedly been cautioned by the officially neutral BBC for opining on politics.

Lineker said on Monday he would depart after Sunday's final matches of the season. He

apologised "unreservedly" last week after sharing online material that criticised Zionism and featured a picture of a rat, historically used as an insult against Jews.



Gary Lineker

"Gary has acknowledged the mistake he made. Accordingly, we have agreed he will step back from further presenting after this season," BBC Director General Tim Davie said in a statement.

Lineker, who was paid 1.35 million pounds, was already set to step down from MOTD this year but had been due to carry on fronting the BBC's 2026 World Cup coverage and next season's FA Cup matches.

He repeated his apology for reposting the Instagram post "that contained an emoji that has awful connotations", saying he would never consciously share anything antisemitic.

"It was a genuine mistake and oversight, but I should have been more diligent," he said in a video announcing his decision to leave the BBC.

"I've stood up for minorities and humanitarian issues and against all forms of racism all of my life, including, of course, antisemitism, which I absolutely abhor."

Europa League win could 'change everything' for Manchester United

Manchester, England - While it is hard for Manchester United to salvage a disappointing season, Wednesday's Europa League final will go a long way in dictating the team's future, with Champions League qualification on the line and boss Ruben Amorim in the hot seat.

The once-dominant United are languishing in 16th in the Premier League standings and so winning the Europa League in Bilbao against Tottenham Hotspur is their only route back into European football.

While a loss would be a massive blow for already-reeling United fans, it would also have a huge impact on the team's bottom line with co-owner Jim Ratcliffe estimating the price on Champions League qualification is between 80 and 100 million pounds in broadcast, matchday and commercial income.



Ruben Amorim

"Champions League can change everything," Amorim told reporters recently. "If you look at this moment we are not ready to be really competitive in the Premier League and cope with Champions League. If you are in

Champions League you have a different budget to put a better team for next season."

Hoisting the Europa League trophy would be a reason to celebrate during an otherwise wretched season.

United's 1-0 Premier League defeat by Chelsea on Friday was their 18th loss of the campaign, meaning they will go the entire league season without winning two consecutive games for the first time in club history. Their 18 defeats are the most since losing 20 in 1973-74, the last season in which they were relegated from the top flight. They have also gone eight successive league games without a win.

The 40-year-old Amorim pointed to United's ability to raise their game on the European stage. United are unbeaten in the Europa League this campaign.

Amorim's men were on the brink of elimination against Olympique Lyonnais in their quarter-final before late goals by Kobbie Mainoo and Harry Maguire - the latter coming in the 121st minute - rescued United in dramatic fashion.

OMAN FIRE ON ALL FRONTS

Nadeem, Mirza and spinners star as Duleep Mendis-coached team beat Canada in World Cup League 2

Muscat - A composed, unbeaten 76 from veteran all-rounder Mohammad Nadeem, complemented by a career-best 77 from Hammad Mirza, laid the foundation for Oman's 15-run triumph over Canada at Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium in Lauderdale, USA, on Monday, in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2.

The victory not only secured vital points for Duleep Mendis-coached Oman but also elevated them to fourth place in the standings, surpassing Canada on net run rate.

Oman's innings got off to a stuttering start, reduced to 10/2 inside five overs with Kaleem Sana striking twice. Aamir Kaleem and skipper Jatinder Singh fell cheaply, and Pruthvikumar Machhi's dismissal left the side wobbling at 31/3.

But Mirza anchored the innings with a gritty knock under pressure. Playing in only his eighth ODI, Mirza stitched a 72-run stand for the fifth wicket with Nadeem, who later accelerated superbly in the final ten overs. Mirza crafted a patient 77 off 103 deliveries, including three boundaries and two sixes.

Nadeem's unbeaten 76 - his highest score in ODIs - featured seven boundaries and two sixes



Oman players celebrate the fall of a Canada wicket

Mirza crafted a patient 77 off 103 deliveries, including three boundaries and two sixes while Nadeem's unbeaten 76 - his highest score in ODIs - featured seven boundaries and two sixes off 77 balls

off 77 balls, giving Oman much-needed momentum at the death. Sufyan Mehmood's handy 20* ensured Oman finished strongly at 217/6, adding 50 runs in the final 55 balls without losing a wicket during their 65-run key partnership for the seventh wicket. Nadeem was named Player of the Match.

Despite Canada's varied attack, Oman's calculated middle-overs recovery gave them a total

that kept them firmly in the contest. Kaleem Sana (2/37), Shivam Sharma (2/27), and Dilon Heyliger (2/36) were the pick of the Canadian bowlers.

In response, Canada's innings was anchored by Pargat Singh, who scored 85 off 104 balls, featuring 12 boundaries. However, Oman's spin attack, led by leg-spinner Samay Shrivastava and left-arm orthodox Shakeel Ahmed, applied consis-

tent pressure.

Shrivastava claimed three wickets, including the crucial dismissal of Singh, while Ahmed also took three wickets, effectively dismantling Canada's middle order. Singh was bowled by Shrivastava in the 38th over with Canada at 147 for seven.

Shivam Sharma and Dilon Heyliger, batting at No. 8 and 9, looked to be leading Canada toward the victory target.

But Sharma, on 37, was caught at the boundary in the 46th over with Canada at 190 for eight.

Heyliger followed in the 48th over, dismissed for 18 by debutant Mujibur Ali, who claimed his maiden international wicket.

Canada's chase ended on the last ball of the 49th over when No. 10 batter Kaleem Sana, on four, was caught at the boundary off Sufyan, leaving them all out for 202 with six balls remaining.

The win propels Oman to fourth in the League 2 standings, level on 20 points with Canada but ahead on net run rate.

Oman next face the United States on May 21, aiming to build

on this victory and further solidify their standing in the league.

The World Cup League 2 features eight teams - also including Namibia, Nepal, the Netherlands, Scotland and the United Arab Emirates - with each side playing 36 ODIs spread across nine triangular series through December 2026. The top four teams progress to a 10-nation World Cup Qualifier that will determine the final four entrants for the 2027 World Cup.

The Netherlands (12 wins, 6 defeats, 2 no-results) top the

standings ahead of the USA (12 wins, 5 losses) and Scotland (9 wins, 5 losses, 2 no-results).

BRIEF SCORES:

Oman 217/6 (Hammad Mirza 77, Mohammed Nadeem 77*, Sufyan Mehmood 20*; Kaleem Sana 2/37, Shivam Sharma 2/27, Dilon Heyliger 2/36) **beat Canada 202 in 49 overs** (Pargat Singh 85, Harsh Thaker 33, Shivam Sharma 37; Shakeel Ahmed 3/41, Samay Shrivastava 3/31, Sufyan Mehmood 1/37, Mujibur Ali 1/1).

Varane backs ex-boss Ancelotti to revive Brazil

Hong Kong - French World Cup winner Raphael Varane has backed his former Real Madrid boss Carlo Ancelotti to lift Brazil out of the doldrums when the Italian takes over at the helm of the five-times World Cup winners later this month.

Ancelotti was named Brazil's first permanent foreign coach last week and will start in his new role on May 26 on a contract that runs through to next year's World Cup finals.

The five-times Champions League winning coach will lead the country into June's South American qualifiers, and 2018 World Cup winner Varane believes Ancelotti has the pedigree to reinvigorate the squad following recent struggles.

"What I can say is that in football, in national teams, it's about being at the top level with a very short period of time to prepare yourself to perform," Varane told Reuters on the sidelines of the Hong Kong Soccer Sevens.

"So it's a different challenge that you're facing from the day-to-day with a club.

"But I think if you're capable of



Raphael Varane with Carlo Ancelotti during their Real Madrid days

winning trophies like the Champions League, and if you're capable of raising your level for big games, then you're capable of doing it anywhere, at any time.

"I think Carlo is a great coach. He has a lot of experience, so he knows how to prepare the play-

ers to perform at the right time.

"That's the difficult thing. You have to meet with history. Every time (at the World Cup) it's only one chance, so you can't miss many opportunities. I think at the top level he knows how to do it."

Ranieri urges fans to give one last push

Rome, Italy - AS Roma manager Claudio Ranieri has urged fans to help with one final push as his side look to leapfrog Juventus into Serie A's final Champions League qualifying berth on the last day of the season.

Ranieri, 73, received a dazzling tribute in his final home match at the Stadio Olimpico - Sunday's 3-1 win over AC Milan.



Claudio Ranieri

"It is wonderful, because feeling appreciated by your own people is always something marvellous," a tearful Ranieri said.

"I put my faith in them, because when I arrived, their mood really was rock bottom and they had barely any self-esteem left.

"We needed your love," Ranieri told the fans.



Antonio Conte (R) and Simone Inzaghi

Top bosses Conte, Inzaghi suspended for Serie A finale

Milan, Italy - Napoli and Inter Milan go into the last day of the Serie A season still fighting for the title but have to do so without their managers after Antonio Conte and Simone Inzaghi were handed one-match suspensions by the Italian league on Monday.

Sunday's penultimate round of fixtures was a dramatic one, with emotions and tempers boiling over. Five managers paid the price with red cards and will not be on the bench when their sides take to the pitch for their final league game.

Inter were closing in on a win over Lazio on Sunday which, with Napoli drawing with Parma, would have put Inzaghi's side top of the table, when the referee went to the VAR monitor to

check for a possible penalty for Lazio. Inzaghi and his opposite number Marco Baroni were involved in heated exchanges on the touchline, and were both shown a red card.

The two managers put the argument behind them as they nervously watched the closing minutes side-by-side from the stands.

Napoli, meanwhile, were unable to get the better of relegation battling Parma and in the 90th minute of the scoreless draw Antonio Conte and Parma coach Cristian Chivu were involved in a shouting match and were both sent off.

Independiente edge Boca to reach Apertura semifinals

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Independiente beat hosts Boca Juniors 1-0 in the quarter-finals of the Argentine Apertura tournament on Monday thanks to a second-half strike by defender Alvaro Angulo.

Independiente, who will play Huracan for a spot in the final, struggled in the first half but came alive in the second with Angulo sealing the victory with a superb finish just after the hour-mark at La Bombonera.

As Boca looked to make a quick break from an Independiente corner, the Colombian intercepted the ball and raced back into the box before slipping inside defender Ayrtton Costa and firing high over the goalkeeper's head. Angulo had said before the game that he would score against Boca and was happy to deliver on that promise.

"A promise is meant to be kept, right?" he told TNT Sports.

"A beautiful goal (I heard) from my teammates, I didn't get to see it clearly in my own excitement," he said.

Zverev, Rublev off to strong start at Hamburg Open

Hamburg, Germany - No. 1 seed Alexander Zverev had seven aces and won 31 of 35 first-service points as the German defeated American qualifier Aleksandar Kovacevic 6-1, 7-6 (5) in the first round of the Bit-panda Hamburg Open on Monday.

Zverev won the title in Hamburg in 2023 and advanced to

the final last year before falling to Frenchman Arthur Fils. He wasn't the only high seed in action Monday, as Russian third seed Andrey Rublev defeated Bosnia and Herzegovina's Damir Dzumhur 6-4, 6-3.

American seventh seed Brandon Nakashima led his first set 6-5 when Belgian opponent Raphael Collignon had to retire,

while Justin Engel edged Jan-Lennard Struff 7-6 (4), 7-6 (4) in a battle between German wild cards.

In Switzerland, No. 8 seed Matteo Arnaldi of Italy dropped his first set but clawed back to defeat Frenchman Hugo Gaston 6-7 (6), 6-4, 6-4 in first-round action at Gonet Geneva Open.

Two other matches went the

distance Monday: Japan's Kei Nishikori defeated American Learner Tien 4-6, 6-4, 6-4, and Quentin Halys of France rallied past Spain's Jaume Munar 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (5). Also advancing were British qualifier Cameron Norrie, Austrian qualifier Sebastian Ofner, Hungary's Marton Fucsovics and Great Britain's Jacob Fearnley.

Raducanu stuns Kasatkina

Great Britain's Emma Raducanu defeated sixth-seeded Daria Kasatkina of Australia 6-1, 6-3 on Monday to advance to the Round of 16 at the Internationaux de Strasbourg in France. It was the third straight loss for the Aussie, ranked No. 17 in the world.



Alexander Zverev

KNOCKOUT BLOW

Lucknow's playoff dreams go up in smoke after Abhishek fireworks

Lucknow, India - Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) are out of the IPL 2025 playoffs race, leaving Mumbai Indians (MI) and Delhi Capitals (DC) fighting for the last remaining slot in the top four.

LSG made a storming start to their 12th match, with Mitchell Marsh and Aiden Markram putting on 115 at close to 11 runs an over. But Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH)'s bowlers hit back with clever use of the old ball and limited them to 205, a total that proved inadequate in the face of a thrilling display of six-hitting from Abhishek Sharma.

SRH were already out of contention for the playoffs, but they showed - even without Travis Head, who missed out after a bout of Covid-19 delayed his return to India, that they remain a batting line-up with an immense ceiling, even if the vagaries of form have ensured that they have only reached it sporadically this season.

Abhishek hit six sixes in a 20-ball 59, turning his team-mates' task straightforward; with Ishan Kishan, Heinrich Klaasen and Kamindu Mendis also getting past 30, SRH reached their target with ten balls remaining.

LSG's batting, yet again, was over-reliant on their big three, with Nicholas Pooran scoring 45 off 26 balls on the back of the openers' half-centuries, and no



Abhishek Sharma hit six sixes in a 20-ball 59 to inspire Sun Risers Hyderabad to a six-wicket win against Lucknow Super Giants

SRH were already out of contention for the playoffs, but they showed - even without Travis Head, who missed out after a bout of Covid-19 delayed his return to India, they remain a strong batting force

one else reaching double figures. Having scored 108 for no loss in the first ten overs, LSG only managed 97 for 7 in the back half, as SRH's bowlers pulled them back with their changes of pace.

It's hard to say if conditions changed during the chase, mak-

ing batting a little easier for SRH. But LSG's attack certainly made it appear so; it was an indictment of their resources that the bowler they kept turning to in search of inspiration, Digvesh Rathi, is an uncapped player in his debut IPL season.

Rathi picked up the wickets of Abhishek and Kishan, but SRH were well in control by the time of those strikes. The match officially ended in the 19th over, but its symbolic end came in the 14th, when Kamindu hit Rathi for three clinical, back-to-back fours in his final over.

For the first half hour or so of LSG's innings, after Pat Cummins sent them in, this appeared to be one of the flattest surfaces Ekana has yet produced.

LSG rushed to 69 for no loss in their first six overs, with both openers striking the ball authoritatively. If Marsh dominated the

TODAY'S MATCH

MATCH 63

6 PM



MUMBAI INDIANS VS DELHI CAPITALS

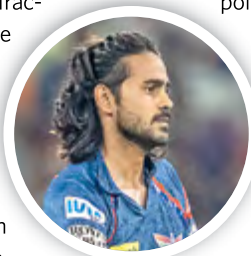
stand, it was only because he had more of the strike. At the six-over mark, he was on 41 off 22 balls, and Markram on 26 off 14.

Rathi suspended for one game after Abhishek incident

Lucknow, India - Digvesh Rathi, the Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) spinner, has breached the IPL's Code of Conduct for a third time this season, leaving him suspended for one game alongside a 50% fine of his match fee.

Rathi picked up the infringement in LSG's game against Sunrisers Hyderabad, following his dismissal of Abhishek Sharma.

The incident happened in the eighth over of the chase after Rathi dismissed Abhishek. He gave the batter a send-off with a wave and an entry in his "notebook" which was followed by an exchange of words with the batter, needing the intervention of umpire Michael Gough. Rathi has now accumulated five demerit points for the season, due to which the suspension has kicked in. He will miss LSG's next game



Digvesh Rathi

against Gujarat Titans (GT) on Thursday.

Rathi's five demerit points this season are all under Article 2.5 of the IPL Code of Conduct. According to the code, four demerit points add up to one suspension point, meaning players are forced to sit out one match when that mark is reached. Since the demerit points remain on an individual's record for a period of 36 months, Rathi will have to be careful even in the upcoming seasons, since eight demerit points would result in a two-game suspension.

Rathi had earlier picked up one demerit point for his celebration and charge towards Punjab Kings' Priyansh Arya on April 1 and two demerit points for his celebration against Naman Dhir of Mumbai Indians on April 4.



Ayush Mhatre hit eight fours and a six in his 20-ball 43 against Rajasthan Royals. Mhatre's knock, along with Dewald Brevis' 42 and Shivam Dube's 39, helped Chennai Super Kings make 187 for 8

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Bella Hadid arrived at the same premiere in a sleek Saint Laurent gown that was a playful wink to the current ban



Halle Berry and Jeremy Strong



The red carpet has officially been rolled out across the Promenade de Croisette, welcoming stars to the French Riviera for the annual Cannes Film Festival. Now in its 78th year, the event is a jewel in the calendar of both lofty cinephiles and polished fashionistas.

Over 12 days (May 13-24), actors, directors, producers, influencers and the like have been descending onto the carpeted steps — not just to promote their latest feature film at the high temple of world cinema, but also to make heads turn.

This year, the fashion stakes were upped before the festival even opened its doors — after a change in the official dress code just hours before kick-off. Nudity has been explicitly banned (presumably also prohibiting the current celebrity favourite ‘naked’ dress trend that has dominated the red carpet in recent years); as has ‘voluminous outfits’ with large trains for the sake of traffic control.

Some, like Halle Berry, dutifully obeyed the restrictions. “I had an amazing dress by (Gaurav) Gupta that I cannot wear tonight because it’s too big of a train,” the actor said at a news conference. “I’m not going to break the rules.”

Others brazenly persevered with their original wardrobe plans. Heidi Klum and Wan QianHui were the first rebels of the year, arriving in high-octane frocks with defiantly cascading trains.

Elsewhere at the opening ceremony, Bella Hadid wore a sleek Saint Laurent dress, debuting honey-blond tresses. Jeremy Strong opted for a dusty rose tuxedo (the Jury photo call earlier in the day revealed he also owns a full tracksuit, and matching bucket hat, in the same colour).

While many regaled the paparazzi with stunning strides on the red carpet, they, however, invited criticism of blatantly ignoring the Cannes dress code this year.

CANNES CODE

CELEBRITIES DEFY NEW RED-CARPET DRESS CODE AT CANNES FILM FESTIVAL 2025



Irina Shayk



Chinese actor Wan QianHui was an early rulebreaker, in a voluminous Wang Feng couture tulle gown



Heidi Klum arrived at the first day of the festival in a defiantly large gown, despite the recent ban on ‘voluminous outfits’

RED CARPET Romance



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