

Oman CFO Forum unites finance leaders to shape future strategies



Muscat - The inaugural Business Today Oman CFO Forum & Awards brought together over 250 financial experts and industry leaders in Muscat on Tuesday. The event, hosted by Interactive Apex, focused on the evolving role of CFOs in navigating today's financial landscape, discussing topics such as business transformation, emerging technologies, and strategic financial management. Panel discussions and expert presentations highlighted the need for collaboration, innovation, and adapting to new trends to drive value and business growth in Oman.

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Oman, UK discuss GCC free trade agreement

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, on Monday met with Douglas Alexander, the United Kingdom's Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security, to explore ways to strengthen cooperation between the two countries in commerce, industries and investments.

Their discussions focused on

increasing trade and investment, enhancing inter-trade growth, and advancing negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the UK.

The meeting had an audiovisual presentation on the depth of Omani-British relations, Oman Vision 2040, and an overview of the investment environment in Oman, including economic developments and investment incentives offered by the ministry.

The meeting was attended by

H E Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Pankaj Khimji, MoCIIP's Advisor for Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, alongside UK representatives including Trade Commissioner to the Middle East, the UK's Chief Negotiator for FTA, and the British Ambassador to Oman.

The UK accounts for nearly half of the entire foreign direct investment in Oman creating jobs and opportunities on both sides.

Oman is a valued investor in the UK in turn, signing major deals in areas like green energy with UK companies.

UK ministers are in the Gulf this week to boost trade and investment and hold talks for an FTA with the GCC.

UK Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds and Douglas Alexander met their counterparts in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Monday to discuss as how to grow the UK economy by boosting trade with the region.

EA partners with South Korea to boost green growth initiatives

Muscat - Environment Authority (EA) has signed a five-year cooperation programme with the Seoul-based Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) to focus on nature-based solutions, land reclamation, and access to green finance. The partnership aims to promote environmental sustainability and tackle climate change challenges in Oman, an official informed.

The agreement was signed by

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of EA, and Mo-hamadou Tounkara, Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa at GGGI.

The programme will see both sides sharing information, legislation, and best practices in climate change adaptation and mitigation. It will also promote climate-smart technologies and improve resource efficiency.

It will also seek to strengthen

the resilience of human and natural ecosystems, promote sustainable pastoralism through nature-based solutions, and restore biodiversity. It aims to create green jobs and support green entrepreneurship.

An additional focus will be on providing assistance to Omani entities in securing access to the Green Climate Fund, which supports developing nations in their climate efforts.



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Paul Callaghan (left) moderates the first panel discussion on 'Leading Through Change - Redefining the CFOs' Role in Business Transformation'

TOP FINANCE MINDS CONVERGE AT BUSINESS TODAY OMAN CFO FORUM

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The inaugural edition of the Business Today Oman CFO Forum & Awards - by Interactive Apex (Apex Media) - was held at the Sheraton Oman Hotel in Muscat on Tuesday.

The forum highlighted the evolving role of Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) in navigating the complex financial landscape, with a focus on emerging trends, technological advancements, and business transformation needs.

The forum brought together a diverse group of over 250 delegates, including senior officials, CFOs, CEOs, finance heads, and industry professionals from sectors such as oil and gas, banking, finance, investments, consulting, insurance, manufacturing, telecom, logistics, etc., along with top government officials.

H E Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority, graced the forum and awards ceremony with his presence as the chief guest.

In his welcome address, Saleh Zakwani, Executive Chairman of Apex Media, said that his company's initiatives are strategically designed to align with the broader objectives of the nation, as outlined in Oman Vision 2040. Noting that the CFOs play a critical role in managing financial risks and driving their companies toward success, Zakwani said, "This forum serves as a platform for finance leaders to exchange ideas, discuss emerging trends, and share best practices that can help shape the future of the finance function."

Saif al Harthi, Finance Functional Director at Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), opened the forum as the keynote speaker with a thought leadership presentation titled 'Finance of the Future'.

He said businesses are facing growing uncertainties, and the finance function needs to evolve to manage these uncertainties and capture value from new opportunities. "We are living in an era characterised by a growing 'stack of uncertainties'. These uncertainties span geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, technological advancements, socio-economic shifts, and health crises."



Saleh Zakwani (left) with H E Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi

Harthi said, "While we cannot always predict these events, it is crucial to establish systems within our organisations to anticipate and swiftly respond to the crises that can come from any direction. The finance function has a critical role to play in establishing such systems and managing uncertainties."

He pointed out that various finance organisations and institutions in Oman - both government and private - need to work in close collaboration to navigate growing uncertainties. "The key to navigating these uncertainties is to foster collaboration across companies and institutions. By working together, we can better understand and anticipate potential risks and collectively mitigate them."

Harthi further said that the role of finance is evolving, and the finance function now needs to play the role of a 'value driver' within organisations, focusing on value-adding tasks.

"Traditionally, the finance function has been focused on managing financial statements, numbers and budgets. However, today's business landscape requires a more integrated role for finance. CFOs need to be closely involved with the CEO and the board, contributing to strategic decisions beyond just revenue generation. The role of finance is to bring value - whether through cost reduction, optimisation, or investing in opportunities that yield high returns."

For organisations to remain competitive, Harthi advised that



We are living in an era characterised by a growing 'stack of uncertainties'. These uncertainties span geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, technological advancements, socio-economic shifts, and health crises

SAIF AL HARTHI

it is crucial to embrace AI and other emerging technologies, and swiftly invest in their implementation within Omani organisations. Failing to do so may result in falling behind, he added.

Panel discussions and presentations

The Business Today Oman CFO Forum & Awards, a premier event, united top finance executives, industry experts, and thought leaders for a day of stimulating conversations and an exchange of expertise.

The forum featured two engaging panel discussions. The first panel - on 'Leading Through Change - Redefining the CFO's Role in Business Transformation' - featured Ali Hassan Moosa, Advisor-Estidamah, Ministry of

Finance and Member of the Finance and Insurance Committee, Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry; Muhsin al Rustom, Group CFO, Asyad; Lamees al Lawati, CFO, Shell Oman Marketing Company; Khamis al Hashmi, CFO, Oman LNG; Ahmed al Shuaili, CFO, Vodafone Oman; Diren Dorai Raj, Group CFO, Towell Group; and Hiriyanna Narayanaswamy, CFO, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing.

The first panel discussion was moderated by Paul Callaghan, Partner - Risk Advisory and Consulting, Moore Stephens. The discussion was on the role of CFOs in creating value and driving business transformation, embracing emerging technologies such as AI and machine learning, and devel-



Gaurav Kapoor



Rashad al Musafir

oping new skills.

The second panel discussion on 'Strategic Responses & Compliance: Navigating the Evolving Tax Landscape & Emerging Trends' explored the complexities of regulatory compliance in today's shifting tax environment.

Panelists included Said Ahmed al Shanfari, Director General of the Second Department of Taxes (Large Taxpayer), The Tax Authority of Oman; Fatick al Balushi, CFO, Oman Cement Company; Aabha Lekhak, Tax Partner, KPMG Oman; Ghalia al Sharji, Tax Director, PwC; Manjot Singh Chug, Tax Partner, Deloitte Middle East; and Asrujit Mandal, Tax Partner, BDO Oman.

This session was moderated by Unmesh Bhome, Vice Chairman of the Muscat Chapter of

the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India. The discussion delved into the intricacies of regulatory compliance in the face of a changing tax environment. The panelists also discussed the role of technology in streamlining tax processes, improving accuracy, and enhancing compliance, including the use of data analytics and AI.

Adding further depth to the event, the forum featured two thought-provoking presentations, starting with Gaurav Kapoor, Chairman of the Muscat Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, who explored the evolving role of the CFOs in transformational leadership in his presentation 'Aspiring CFOs'.

This was followed by a presentation on 'Realities of Debt Management in Challenging Times' by Rashad al Musafir, Founder and Managing Partner of FinScope, who shed light on the importance of debt management, debt discipline, and financial prudence for businesses.

The event was backed by prominent industry bodies and institutions, including the College of Banking & Financial Studies (CBFS), the Muscat Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (sponsored by CBFS), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants - Middle East, Oman Banks Association, Oman American Business Council, Al Mouj Muscat, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing, Oman LNG, Mazda, Taageer Finance, Shell Oman Marketing Company, Vodafone Oman, Dhofar Insurance, Oman Qatar Insurance Company, Mubashir, and Concept Communications.

Driving financial innovation

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2024 **MUSCAT DAILY** 03



BT OMAN CFO AWARDS

The Business Today Oman CFO Awards on Tuesday honoured the exceptional contributions of CFOs and finance teams who have demonstrated excellence and innovation. The awards recognised 15 top performers across a range of sectors, highlighting their significant contributions to their organisations.

The trophies were handed over to the winners by the chief guest H E Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority and Saleh Zakwani, Executive Chairman of Apex Media.

01 Finance Team of the Year - Oil & Gas
Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing

02 Finance Team of the Year - Finance Sector
Taageer Finance

03 CFO of the Year - Real Estate
Ahmed al Massan Al Mouj Muscat

04 CFO of the Year - Telecom
Ahmed al Shuailli Vodafone Oman

05 CFO of the Year - Manufacturing
Fatick al Balushi Oman Cement Company

06 CFO of the Year - Insurance
Venkatachalam Sekar Dhofar Insurance

07 CFO of the Year - Insurance
Mohamed Jawad Oman Qatar Insurance Company

08 CFO of the Year - Diversified Business
Diren Dorai Raj WJ Towell Group

09 CFO of the Year - Utilities
Hussain al Balushi Nama Water Services

10 CFO of the Year - LNG
Khamis al Hashmi Oman LNG

11 CFO of the Year - Oil & Gas
Lamees al Lawati Shell Oman Marketing Company

12 CFO of the Year - Banking
T Ganesh Bank Muscat

13 CFO of the Year - Logistics
Muhsin al Rustom Asyad

14 Lifetime Achievement
Lakshmi Rajan Abraj Energy

15 CFO of the Year
Saif al Harthi Petroleum Development Oman



Umesh Bhome (left) conducts the second panel discussion on 'Strategic Responses & Compliance: Navigating the Evolving Tax Landscape & Emerging Trends'



Finance Team of the Year - Oil & Gas - Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing



Finance Team of the Year - Finance Sector - Taageer Finance



CFO of the Year - Real Estate - Ahmed al Massan Al Mouj Muscat



CFO of the Year - Telecom - Ahmed al Shuailli Vodafone Oman



CFO of the Year - Manufacturing - Fatick al Balushi Oman Cement Company



CFO of the Year - Insurance- Venkatachalam Sekar Dhofar Insurance



CFO of the Year - Insurance - Mohamed Jawad Oman Qatar Insurance Company



CFO of the Year - Diversified Business - Diren Dorai Raj WJ Towell Group



CFO of the Year - Utilities - Hussain al Balushi Nama Water Services



CFO of the Year - LNG - Khamis al Hashmi Oman LNG



CFO of the Year - Oil & Gas - Lamees al Lawati Shell Oman Marketing Company



CFO of the Year - Banking - T Ganesh Bank Muscat



CFO of the Year - Logistics - Muhsin al Rustom Asyad



Lifetime Achievement - Lakshmi Rajan Abraj Energy



CFO of the Year - Saif al Harthi Petroleum Development Oman

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Al Mazyouna Hospital opens in Dhofar

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman's healthcare sector took a significant step forward with the opening of Al Mazyouna Hospital in Dhofar governorate, a major development in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The hospital, part of the Ministry of Health's ongoing efforts to decentralise healthcare services and improve access to specialised care across the country, was inaugurated on Tuesday.

The opening ceremony was held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, and was at-



tended by H E Dr Hilal Ali Sabti, Minister of Health, along with other senior officials.

Covering an area of 13,649sqm and costing over

RO15mn, the hospital was set up to provide a wide range of healthcare services to both citizens and residents of the region. The facility houses clinics for

general medicine, internal medicine, paediatrics, surgery, dentistry, ENT, ophthalmology and gynaecology, among others. It also features an expanded im-

munisation programme clinic.

The wards of the 50-bedded hospital have been divided among male and female internal medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, and surgery. Additionally, it has critical care units for both adults and newborns, an emergency department, a dialysis unit, a delivery room, and an operation theatre.

The hospital's diagnostic services include a radiology department with both CT scan and X-ray facilities, as well as a central sterilisation unit, a medical warehouse and other support services.

Dr Ali Abdullah al Muqbali,

Director General of Health Services in Dhofar, highlighted the importance of the hospital, noting that it would significantly enhance healthcare quality in the region. "Al Mazyouna Hospital is only the second major hospital in the governorate, after Sultan Qaboos Hospital. It will play a key role in reducing the need for patients to travel long distances for medical care."

Eng Yusuf Ya'qub Amboali, Advisor to the Minister of Health for Engineering Affairs, added that the new hospital reflects the Ministry of Health's strategy to improve healthcare infrastructure and provide specialised ser-

vices closer to local communities.

He stressed that the hospital was built to match modern standards, ensuring a high level of care in a comfortable environment.

The addition of Al Mazyouna Hospital brings the total number of healthcare institutions in the wilayat to six, contributing to the 45 institutions serving the entire Dhofar governorate.

The facility is expected to serve as a crucial hub for healthcare in the region, offering both primary and specialised medical services in line with the growing needs of the population.

Oman to host Arab tourism forum

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman, represented by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), will host the Second Arab Tourism Statistics Forum, in Muscat from October 14 to 16.

The forum, to be organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the League of Arab States, will focus on various aspects of regional tourism, with Oman being at the

centre of it.

Dr Khalifa bin Abdullah al Barwani, CEO of NCSI, highlighted the aim of this forum, which seeks to enhance cooperation among Arab nations in tourism statistics.

"The forum will advance Oman's tourism objectives and reinforce its status as a leading regional destination," he added.

Oman's bright position in the tourism map of the region got recognition with the wilayat of Sur being named Arab Tourism

Capital for 2024.

Barwani underlined the forum's role in improving statistical indicators for tourism, fostering knowledge exchange, and supporting effective decision-making.

The event will feature global experts and representatives from regional and international organisations, discussing the latest trends, technologies, and challenges in the tourism sector, as they gather to closely review various statistics related to tourism.

Nama organises conference to discuss Oman's energy transformation plans

Our Correspondent Muscat

Nama launched the third edition of the Oman Electricity and Energy Conference on Tuesday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), with a focus on advancing Oman's energy transformation plans.

The three-day conference was inaugurated by Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, head of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, with local and international experts taking part in this crucial meeting.

Ahmed bin Amer al Mehrazi, CEO of Nama Group, highlighted the sector's shift towards renewable energy and the ongoing challenges, such as climate change and increasing energy



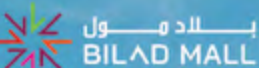
demand. He stressed the importance of collaborative discussions to find innovative solutions.

Abdullah al Wahaibi, Chairman of the Power and Energy Society IEEE, outlined the agenda of the meeting, which includes discussions on energy sector developments, transmission and

distribution systems, efficiency, and sustainable technologies. The conference aims to highlight Oman's efforts in energy transformation, carbon reduction and economic diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The event will feature working papers, visual presentations,

specialised discussion sessions, and workshops on network flexibility, energy storage, smart grids, and hydrogen energy. An accompanying exhibition will showcase the latest technologies and provide a platform for research and studies in the energy sector, the organisers said.



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MTCIT achieves 166% of 2024 job targets

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MTCIT) has surpassed its 2024 employment target by achieving 166% of its goal for technical and specialised jobs in road projects.

Till date, 333 jobs were offered to Omanis in various road sector companies, exceeding the 200-job target set for 2024.

The ministry has launched several initiatives to enhance job opportunities across different fields and sectors, focusing on the Omanisation of technical, specialised and administrative positions.

The Labour Market Regulation Committee in the logistics sector is actively working towards the targets outlined in the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit's objectives.

BRIEFS

Oil prices rise on US supply disruptions

Oil prices increased on Tuesday, driven by concerns over US supply disruptions following Hurricane Francine and growing expectations that the US Federal Reserve may cut interest rates.

International benchmark Brent crude rose by 0.26% to \$72.94 per barrel, up from the previous session's close of \$72.75.

US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) increased 0.42% to \$69.31 per barrel after closing at \$69.02 in the prior session.

Oil prices extended their gains on Tuesday after Hurricane Francine disrupted a significant portion of US oil and gas production.

The storm, which hit the US Gulf Coast last week as a Category 2 hurricane, curtailed energy output in the Gulf of Mexico – a key region for US oil and natural gas supply.

According to the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, about 12.18% of oil production and 16.02% of natural gas output in the Gulf remains offline as of Monday due to the storm's impact.

These production cuts are intensifying supply concerns in the market, further pushing oil prices upward.

Omani delegation concludes US visit

Our Correspondent
Muscat

An Omani trade delegation, led by H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, concluded its visit to the United States after holding bilateral meetings with several US officials and representatives from leading American companies in sectors such as manufacturing, energy, healthcare, information technology, tourism, and financial services.

The meetings were attended by H E Anas Escrohejima, US Ambassador to Oman; H E Dr Mohammed bin Awad al Hassan, Oman's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York; and Sabira bint Ahmed al Houtiya, Deputy Head of the Omani Embassy in the US, along with officials from the Oman-American Business Council, Oman's Ministry of Commerce, and the Omani Embassy in the US.

The visit aimed to strengthen Oman's commercial ties with the US, leveraging regional and international experiences to develop Oman's trade, industry, and investment frameworks. It was also part of ongoing efforts to expand investment and trade partnerships between the two nations, while exploring opportunities aligned with Oman's Vision 2040.

Furthermore, the visit highlighted the significance of the Oman-US Free Trade Agreement, which marked its 15th anniversary since its implementation in 2009.



The visit highlighted the significance of the Oman-US Free Trade Agreement, which marked its 15th anniversary since its implementation in 2009

The visit began in New York, where H E Yousef and his delegation met with partners in financial services, investment, and companies from target sectors. The delegation also met with Omani students studying in New York and Massachusetts.

Next, the delegation travelled to Washington, DC, where they met with US officials from the US

State Department, the Office of the US Trade Representative, the Department of Commerce, and members of Congress.

Discussions focused on maximising the benefits of the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement and enhancing various programmes.

The delegation also visited the World Bank, where they re-

viewed joint projects, particularly those related to the World Bank's Business Readiness Index. Oman is set to be evaluated under this index by 2025, with oversight from Oman's National Competitiveness Office through the national programme 'Nezdeher', which focuses on private sector growth and foreign trade. Cooperation with the World Bank was also discussed, especially in appointing experts to improve Oman's business environment and boost its exports.

During the Washington, DC visit, the Omani Embassy hosted a reception at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center, attended by US

government representatives, investors, and Omani students. Dr Majid al Khalili, Director of the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center, gave a welcome speech, highlighting Oman's ongoing efforts to strengthen international relations, including with the US.

The delegation also visited Arizona, where they met with the state's trade authority to explore investment opportunities and ways to promote bilateral trade and investments between Oman and Arizona. Field visits to several companies took place, with many expressing interest in investing in Oman's energy, hydrogen, medical, advanced

industries, and information technology sectors.

In addition, the delegation visited the University of Arizona, where they met with Omani students and learned about the university's role in partnering with the government and private sector for economic development projects.

The visit concluded in California, where the Omani delegation examined the success of a leading Omani IT company that has expanded its operations across several US states. The delegation discussed ways to leverage the Free Trade Agreement to attract diverse investments into Oman.

Asyad drives regional e-commerce growth with strategic global alliances

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Asyad Express, part of the Asyad Group, has forged a series of strategic partnerships with prominent global e-commerce and retail companies. These collaborations link Asyad Express's robust regional network with established global players, fostering seamless delivery solutions for businesses of all sizes.

Providing local, regional, and global express delivery services and e-commerce solutions, Asyad Express plays a key role in fulfilling the company's mission to reshape the regional e-commerce landscape, according to a company press release.

By partnering with renowned brands such as Amazon, ASOS, Shein, iHerb, Evri, Landmark Group, and Mumzworld, Asyad Express leverages its extensive logistics capabilities to stream-



Asyad Express expects to attract a broad range of international online businesses, further cementing Oman's position as a leading global logistics hub

line online purchasing processes, ensuring faster and more reliable delivery services throughout the region.

These alliances are designed to enhance the efficiency of online retail operations and improve customer service standards, positioning Asyad

Express as a central figure in the growth of regional e-commerce.

In 2023 and early 2024, Asyad Express supported three major fashion brands – ASOS, Shein, and Landmark Retail – with over \$12mn in logistics support and delivery services, covering Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE.

Teaming up with Evri, the UK's largest retail and e-commerce parcel delivery company, marks a significant step towards transforming e-commerce and e-fulfillment logistics across the Middle East. This partnership offers substantial opportunities for major online companies from the UK, Europe, the US, and China, capitalising on Asyad Express's extensive logistics network and infrastructure.

Leveraging its strategic geographical location and state-of-the-art logistics infrastructure, Asyad Express is poised to at-

tract a broad range of international online businesses, further cementing the sultanate as a leading global logistics hub.

Key initiatives like Asyad Express's collaborations are instrumental in driving the growth of e-commerce in the MENA region, which is experiencing rapid expansion. The e-commerce market in MENA is projected to reach nearly \$57bn by 2026, driven by increased internet penetration, the popularity of digital payment platforms, and a tech-savvy demographic.

These strategic partnerships not only strengthen Asyad Express's competitive position but also aim to establish Oman as a key hub for online shopping in the Middle East. Through joint ventures and continuous innovation, Asyad Express is set to lead the transformation of the regional e-commerce landscape, contributing to Oman's vision of a thriving digital economy.

Gold price nears record highs ahead of Fed rate decision

London, UK – Gold prices hovered near all-time highs ahead of key central bank rate decisions this week. Gold futures surpassed \$2,600 per ounce for the first time last Friday and maintained that level on Tuesday, despite a slight pullback.

Meanwhile, spot gold reached a high of \$2,589 per ounce before easing to \$2,577 during Tuesday's Asian session. The precious metal has surged over the past seven months, gaining more than \$500 per ounce, or 24%, since breaking through the critical \$2,080 mark in March.

This week's focus will be on interest rate decisions from three major central banks: the US Federal Reserve, the Bank of England, and the Bank of Japan. Gold is likely to remain in the spotlight, as ongoing uncertainties around global economic growth could further influence its momentum.

The US dollar's recent weakness has been a key driver behind the surge in gold prices over the past few months. This is due



to the inverse relationship between gold prices and the value of the US dollar, as well as interest rates. A weaker dollar makes gold more affordable in other currencies, driving up demand.

Additionally, lower interest rates reduce the appeal of interest-bearing assets like cash, making gold a more attractive store of value.

Furthermore, progress by the Bank of Japan in tightening its monetary policy could strengthen the Japanese yen and further weaken the US dollar. This could lead to heightened market volatility and an increased demand for safe-haven assets such as gold.

Gold is widely regarded as a

traditional safe haven asset, known for maintaining or increasing its value during periods of economic uncertainty, market volatility, or geopolitical instability. Recent events, such as the conflicts in the Middle East and the ongoing war in Ukraine, have further contributed to these uncertainties, driving demand for gold.

The global economic landscape has also played a crucial role in supporting its price surge. As highlighted by the World Gold Council: "An increasingly complex geopolitical and financial environment is making gold reserves management by central banks more relevant than ever." Euronews.com

A larger Fed rate cut wouldn't spark worry, but a smaller one might

Josh Schafer

The debate about just how deep the US Federal Reserve will cut interest rates continues to heat up. And in a late-breaking swing, team 50 basis points is leading over team 25.

There's been a prevailing thought over the past month, which we've noted before, that if the central bank does opt for the larger of the two interest rate cut scenarios, it could prompt panic in markets.

It may be a good sentiment to consider, but markets are all about expectations. Panic usu-

ally comes when something unexpected happens, and the Fed – even as it keeps a healthy distance from the daily swings of the stock market – is more likely to play within the lines.

"I think the Fed would be reluctant to surprise the market," Deutsche Bank chief US economist Matthew Luzzetti told Yahoo Finance.

As of Monday, that bigger cut would now be anything but unexpected: Markets were pricing in a 61% chance the Fed opts for a 50 basis point interest cut on Wednesday, per the CME FedWatch tool. With odds



like that, it's hard to argue that's going to spring outright panic.

From Monday's view, in fact, you can even argue that the Fed

would actually be tightening policy by opting for a 25 basis point cut, given how things are priced in.

"Unless something changes, going 25 will tighten financial market conditions, pushing interest rates up," Renaissance Macro's head of economics Neil Dutta wrote in a note to clients on Monday morning. "Monetary policy works through the financial markets. Tighter financial conditions should be avoided when the balance of risks between growth and inflation have shifted as they have now."

EY chief economist Gregory Daco offered a similar opinion on Yahoo Finance's show Catalysts on Monday morning.

"People are saying, well, 25 basis points doesn't really matter," Daco told Yahoo Finance, pointing to the small numeric differences we'd see on the Street with interest rates.

"But," he continued, "the risks are asymmetric. If the Fed does not ease monetary policy by as much as markets are anticipating, then you'll actually see a repricing of rates and you're going to see upward movement in terms of rates."

Movement that damages consumer spending, sentiment, and potentially the economy, as per Daco.

In a note to clients on Friday, Goldman Sachs chief US equity strategist David Kostin wrote that his team sees the S&P 500 hitting 6,000 in the next 12 months, with the make-or-buy of that target all about whether the Fed's moves can keep the current economic growth story intact.

"While some investors believe the speed of Fed cuts will be the key determinant of equity returns in coming months, the trajectory of growth is ultimately the most important driver for stocks," Kostin wrote. (Source: Yahoo Finance)

MoH and Nizwa University sign agreement

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Monday signed a cooperation agreement with Nizwa University at the ministry's headquarters on the conduct of laboratory analyses of herbal medicines at the Daris Laboratory for Drug Analysis.

The agreement comes as part of efforts to enhance collaboration between academic institutions and health authorities and to provide an advanced scientific environment for analysing herbal medicines and ensuring their quality and safety.

The agreement was signed by H E Dr Ahmed Salem al Mandhari, Undersecretary for Planning Affairs and Health Regulation, on behalf of the Ministry of Health, and by Dr Ahmed Khalfan al Rawahi, chancellor of Nizwa University.

Dr Mohammed Hamdan al Rubai, director general of the Drug Safety Center at the Ministry of Health, stressed that this



agreement reflects the importance of enhancing collaboration between academic institutions and the Ministry of Health. It will facilitate laboratory analyses of herbal medicines at the Daris Drug Laboratory, contributing to ensuring the quality and safety of these medicines, as well as expediting the procedures for their registration and licensing before they are allowed to be marketed in the local market.

Dr Rawahi pointed out that the laboratory will conduct the necessary analyses of herbal medicines according to the highest scientific standards.

Alila Hinu Bay appoints new GM



Ozan Ozdemir

Alila Hinu Bay announced the appointment of Nebi Ozan Ozdemir as the new general manager of the five-star hotel. Bringing a distinguished career in hospitality, Ozdemir is well-recognised for his ability to take award-winning properties to even greater heights.

Most recently, Ozdemir served as multi-property manager for Absheron Hotel Group across Azerbaijan, where he demonstrated exceptional leadership and strategic acumen. Prior to this, he was the general manager at Six Senses Kocatas Mansions in Istanbul, a role in which his vision and commitment to excellence garnered several prestigious industry accolades. Ozdemir's career in the MENA region also includes achievements such as spearheading the Food & Beverage development at Al Bustan Palace - A Ritz Carlton Hotel and at W Doha, where he oversaw award-winning dining options.

Bank Muscat holds Educational camp

Bank Muscat recently held the second edition of its BM Educational Camp - Ideathon Competition for more than 60 employees' children aged 12 to 15 years. The event was well-attended and interactive, with participants from across Oman.

The organisation of this camp aligned with Bank Muscat's commitment to executing financial literacy programmes that focus on benefitting various segments of the society, including children. This year's camp focused on teaching youngsters the basics of entrepreneurship and innovation, as well as how to nurture and develop their skills, a press release said.

Topics discussed included learning to earn money, savings and budgeting, setting SMART goals, and giving back to society. Aside from the educational component, the main part of the event was the Ideathon Competition, which focused on setting up the best business, while considering its social impact. The winners were announced and awarded at the end of the event.

This camp complements the ongoing work Bank Muscat's 'Maliyat Academy' upholds, which highlights financial literacy as an important concept to enhance planning and saving



Reflecting on their participation, a number of children expressed their enthusiasm to be part of Bank Muscat's Educational Camp, which gave them an opportunity to broaden their knowledge managing their finances and setting up a business idea.

18-month warranty on Mitsubishi batteries

General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributor of Mitsubishi Motors in Oman, announced that it is offering, for the first time in Oman, an industry-leading 18-month warranty on genuine Mitsubishi Motors batteries.

This offer highlights GAC's confidence in Mitsubishi Motors' batteries and underscores their dedication to ensuring top-tier quality and unwavering reliability for every customer, a press release said.

Genuine Mitsubishi Motors batteries are renowned for their



superior performance, durability, and long-lasting power. Engineered to meet the power requirements of all passenger vehicles, these batteries ensure optimal engine startup, efficient electrical system operation, and overall vehicle performance, offering peace of mind like no other.

With their advanced technology and rigorous testing, Mitsubishi Motors batteries are engineered to withstand even the most toughest conditions and provide consistent power delivery.



KitchenomiKs, OTC sign training MoU

KitchenomiKs, Oman's fastest-growing FoodTech company, has signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Oman Tourism College that aims to hone the skills of hospitality students and promote the hospitality and tourism industry as a preferred career choice among the youth.

KitchenomiKs will collaborate with Oman Tourism College for the next two years to provide students with training and work experience across various hospitality sectors and empower them to enter the workforce with enhanced skills. KitchenomiKs will also work closely with Oman Tourism College to develop a new course and provide feedback on the existing courses to help the students enter the Omani workforce with significant training, a press release said.

"Our collaboration with Oman Tourism College is an important step in developing the next generation of talent in the hospitality industry. Our mission is to equip young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the ever-evolving world of hospitality," said Sultan al Rubaii, general manager, KitchenomiKs. "The partnership with Oman Tourism College is a big step towards the In-Country Value programme we are committed to, which prioritises local talents, helps enhance the skills of the Omani workforce, and creates job opportunities."

One of the leading young FoodTech companies in Oman, KitchenomiKs is on a mission to revolutionise the food and dining space using innovative technological practices. KitchenomiKs goals include innovations in the food industry using emerging technologies, creating notable multi-cuisine F&B brands, providing remarkable food production spaces, and designing a seamless food delivery ecosystem.

Al Injaz International Private School holds investiture ceremony

The annual investiture ceremony of Al Injaz International Private School, which officially appointed the student leadership team for the academic year 2024-2025, was marked by a sense of pride and responsibility in the air.

Leadership, discipline, and dedication to the school community were emphasised at the event graced by Mohammed bin Abdullah al Hinai, assistant director general for Scouting Affairs at the Ministry of Education, other distinguished guests, parents, teachers and by students.

The principal, Radhwan al



Leadership, discipline, and dedication to the school community were emphasised by Mohammed bin Abdullah al Hinai, assistant director general for Scouting Affairs

Hasani, delivered an uplifting speech, and the newly appointed student council members were presented with badges and

sashes, recognising their exemplary conduct, academic achievements, and leadership qualities. Mohammed bin Abdullah al Hinai, emphasised the importance of leadership, empowering others, staying grounded, and leading by example.

The newly elected Head Boy, Hamed al Katri, and Head Girl, Maha Haider, gave speeches in which they discussed their goals for the upcoming year and vowed to lead with justice and tenacity, saying, "It is an honour to be entrusted with this role, and we are ready to serve our school with dedication, enthusiasm, and passion."



MoE launches second phase of Education Tools

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Curricular Development, launched the second phase of the Educational Tools Convoy Initiative 'Innovation and Communication'.

The Initiative is for innovating educational tools that aim to encourage creativity and innovation amongst the cadre in the educational field through developing low-cost educational tools that enable teachers to improve their educational means specifications and technical quality to achieve ideal learning in all its aspects, a press release said.

The main committee supervising the initiative has prepared a timeline to implement the initiative and target schools have been informed to submit their initial works during the period from October 20-24. The final evaluation will conclude in November 7.

The implementation of exhibitions and accompanying events will be during the month of November and December in three stops that include five governorates. The first stop will be in North Sharqiyah Governorate with the participation of schools from the North and South Sharqiyah Governorates. The second stop will be in Dhofar Governorate with the participation of Al Wusta and Dhofar Governorates. The third and final stop will be in Musandam Governorate with the participation of the Governorate's schools.

Dr Sultan al Kindi, assistant director-general for educational resources at the Directorate-General of Curricular Development and head of the Main Committee, clarified that the idea of the initiative stems from the importance of educational tools and their profound impact on elements of education.



Al Mouj Muscat launches new, elegant Golf Link Residences

Al Mouj Muscat, Oman's premier lifestyle destination has set a new standard in golf course living by introducing the Golf Link Residences, a collection of elegant apartments and residences nestled on the lush fairways of Al Mouj Golf.

The highly anticipated neighbourhood is set to become one of the most desirable residential options as it redefines luxury living with breathtaking views, premium amenities, and unmatched benefits, a press release said.

Featuring only 28 luxurious four-bedroom residences and a range of one to three-bedroom



Nasser al Sheibani

apartments, the exclusive neighbourhood seamlessly integrates 'the luxury of nature' into every detail of its design to catch the eye of today's discerning homebuyers and investors.

The bespoke residences are designed for medium to large families, and are spread over two floors with living, entertainment, and workspaces. Catering for smaller families, individuals, and astute investors, the apartments offer spacious and adaptable spaces, ensuring ample convenience and comfort for residents.

The Residences' exceptional list of amenities include a fitness centre, an infinity pool overlooking the Al Mouj Golf, a state-of-the-art golf simulator room and a mini-golf course, as well as indoor and outdoor kids play areas. Other exclusive benefits include a free Social Golf Club membership to Al Mouj Golf Club.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, "The Golf Link Residences epitomise the perfect blend of resort living within vibrant natural surroundings, well-connected community. This latest offering is unparalleled in the market, catering to buyers looking to live or invest in a property that combines elegance and convenience. The unique location of these properties provides easy access to a variety of culinary, entertainment and relaxation options. Our commitment to delivering exceptional living experiences remains steadfast, and we look forward to welcoming new residents."

ISB holds UDAAN for Grades 6-12

Indian School Bousher celebrated its much-anticipated UDAAN - Annual Sports Day for students of Grades 6-12 on August 29, coinciding with National Sports Day, observed in remembrance of the legendary hockey player Major Dhyan Chand.

The day marked a tribute to his contributions to Indian sports and aimed to foster a spirit of athleticism, fitness, and teamwork among students, press release said.

The event commenced with the reception of the chief guest, Ismail al Ajmi, National Football Team Player of the Sultanate of Oman and the guest of honour, Priyanka Edna Mendonca, captain of the Oman Women's Cricket Team, along with the esteemed members of the School Management Committee. The principal, Prabakaran P led the dignitaries for the Troop Inspection, setting the tone for a disciplined and energetic day.

The March Past of the four house teams, accompanied by the athletic Oath, was a sight to behold, followed by a band display. The Chief Guest then officially declared the Sports Day open, signalling the start of various sporting events. Races like the 100m sprints for boys and girls across Grades 6-12 drew much excitement.

In his address, the chief guest praised the school's initiative to celebrate the Sports Day to instill the values of discipline, perseverance, and teamwork among students. The event also featured impressive Mass PT displays, a showcase of strength and coordination.



The event commenced with the reception of the chief guest, Ismail al Ajmi, National Football Team Player of the Sultanate of Oman

Omantel to partner with Oman Science Festival 2024

Omantel is proud to announce its role as a technical partner for the upcoming Oman Science Festival 2024, to be held from November 4 to 11.

This partnership underscores Omantel's ongoing commitment to fostering interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) among youth, encouraging the development of their scientific and innovative capabilities, a press release said.

Aligned with the company's vision of leveraging digital technology to support education, Omantel will collaborate with the Ministry of Education to implement advanced technical programmes tailored for students at various educational levels. The company will provide state-of-the-art technologies, including artificial intelligence, robotics, and virtual reality, to enhance students' learning experiences and open new avenues for scientific exploration.



Talal bin Said al Mamari, CEO of Omantel, emphasised the company's dedication to nurturing technical skills among young individuals, viewing this as a critical national investment in developing future talent and building capacity.

"The Oman Science Festival offers an excellent platform to empower students and equip them with the skills needed to face future challenges. Through our collaboration, we aim to inspire students to integrate science and technology into their educational journeys," he said.

These initiatives aim to cultivate a forward-thinking generation adept at innovation and proficient in utilising technology to enhance various aspects of daily life.

The partnership between Omantel and the Oman Science Festival is expected to significantly enrich the scientific knowledge of youth, inspiring them to delve deeper into the realms of science and technology through engaging and interactive activities.

MHD Automobiles hosts test drive event at Salalah during Khareef

MHD Automobiles, the exclusive distributor for Jeep, Dodge, RAM, and Alfa Romeo in Oman, has successfully concluded its first-ever Test Drive Event in Salalah.

Held during the Khareef season, the event took place at the prominent Belad Bont Hotel and showcased the latest models from these iconic brands. The event received an overwhelming response from residents in Salalah, as well as visitors from other parts of Oman, who were in town to experience the monsoon season, a press release said.



The three-day event featured a range of models, including the rugged Jeep Wrangler, the luxurious Jeep Grand Cherokee, the powerful Dodge Durango, the sophisticated Alfa Romeo Tonale, and the robust RAM 1500 Limited. Customers were invited to book their test drives online in advance, arriving at their appointed times - many with their families and friends. This allowed them to learn more about the models and enjoy the unique experience of test driving their favourite vehicle in the refreshing Khareef weather, making for a truly memorable

experience.

Commenting on the success of the event, Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles, said, "We are thrilled with the incredible turnout at our first Salalah Test Drive Event. The Khareef season provided the perfect backdrop for customers to experience the exceptional performance, advanced technology, and unique features of our Jeep, Dodge, RAM, and Alfa Romeo vehicles. This event is a testament to our commitment to bringing unparalleled automotive experiences to our customers in Oman."

Myanmar: Death toll from Yagi-triggered floods rises to 226

Naypyitaw, Myanmar - The death toll from flooding in Myanmar triggered by Typhoon Yagi has spiked to 226 in just over a week, state media reported on Tuesday. About 77 people are still missing, state media in the junta-ruled Myanmar said.

Areas including the capital, Naypyitaw, the second largest city of Mandalay and parts of Shan state were among those hit hardest by the floods.

Relief efforts hindered

The flooding has affected approximately 631,000 people across the southeast Asian country, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) disaster response agency said.

The agency added that blocked roads and damaged bridges were all severely hindering relief efforts even as food, drinking water, shelter and clothes were urgently needed.

Over 150,000 homes were flooded, Global New Light of Myanmar, the newspaper of the military government, reported.

“A total of 388 relief camps were opened in nine regions and states, and the well-wishers donated drinking water, food and clothes,” the state newspaper



About 77 people are still missing, state media in the junta-ruled Myanmar said

said. Myanmar's state TV said nearly 260,000 hectares (640,000 acres) of rice paddies and other crops had been destroyed in the flooding.

Roughly a third of the country's 55mn people already need humanitarian aid in the wake of the conflict triggered by a 2021 coup that saw the powerful military overthrow the civilian government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. “Affected areas include camps for displaced people, including children, who were already struggling with limited services due to ongoing conflict,” The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said in a state-

ment.

Southeast Asia battered

Typhoon Yagi is the strongest storm to strike Asia this year.

Hundreds of thousands of people across southeast Asia have been forced to flee in the past week as rains from the typhoon cause rivers and creeks to swell beyond bursting point.

In Vietnam, the storm killed 292 people and 38 are missing.

Authorities said over 230,000 homes have been damaged and 280,000 hectares of crops destroyed.

DW



Japan: Number of centenarians climbs to 95,000

Tokyo, Japan - The number of Japanese aged 100 and above has increased for 54 consecutive years to a record high.

The Health Ministry released the Respect for Aged Day national holiday data, saying that the number of centenarians climbed by 2,980 compared to last year, Tokyo-based Kyodo News reported on Tuesday.

Women accounted for 83,958, or 88.3% of the 95,000 centenarians, while men totalled 11,161. Japan has one of the oldest populations in the world.

The ministry also released data showing that Japan's total elderly population, aged 65 and above, was recorded at 36.25mn last year, with 25.2% employed.

Tomiko Itooka, a 116-year-old Japanese woman, was recognised as the world's oldest person by the Guinness World Records last month, while 110-year-old Kiyotaka Mizuno is the oldest man in Japan.

Labour shortages

Meanwhile, amid labour shortages, Japan's working elderly

population has hit an all-time high, according to new data.

The country's elderly working population stood at a record 9.14mn last year, according to the country's Internal Affairs Ministry. Some 15.72mn of the total elderly population were men.

The ministry data showed that the number of working elderly men shrank by 40,000 from the previous year to 5.34mn, while the number of working women rose by 50,000 to 3.8mn.

As Japan marked Respect for the Aged Day on Monday, the country recorded its largest population decrease in history last year, with a significant drop of 861,000 residents.

This demographic shift, observed across various provinces, highlights the nation's ongoing challenges with an aging population and declining birth rates.

The population decreased from 122.42mn in 2022 to 121.56mn in 2023, said the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications early this year in July.

Anadolu Agency

Germany pledges \$111mn to Ukraine as winter aid

Berlin, Germany - German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has promised Kyiv an extra €100mn (US\$111mn) in aid to help Ukraine see through the winter.

“Clearly, autumn is coming, winter is knocking at the door,” Baerbock said on a trip to Moldova, adding that Russia is planning a renewed ‘winter war, to make the lives of people in Ukraine as miserable as possible’.

In the past, Russia has stepped up attacks against energy infrastructure in Ukraine ahead of plunging temperatures.

Local authorities reported that Russian forces had attacked the energy infrastructure in Ukraine's northeastern Sumy region. Power was cut to several districts, with the affected areas now relying on backup grids.

Power was also cut to Sumy water supply facilities, which also had to switch to emergency power supply.

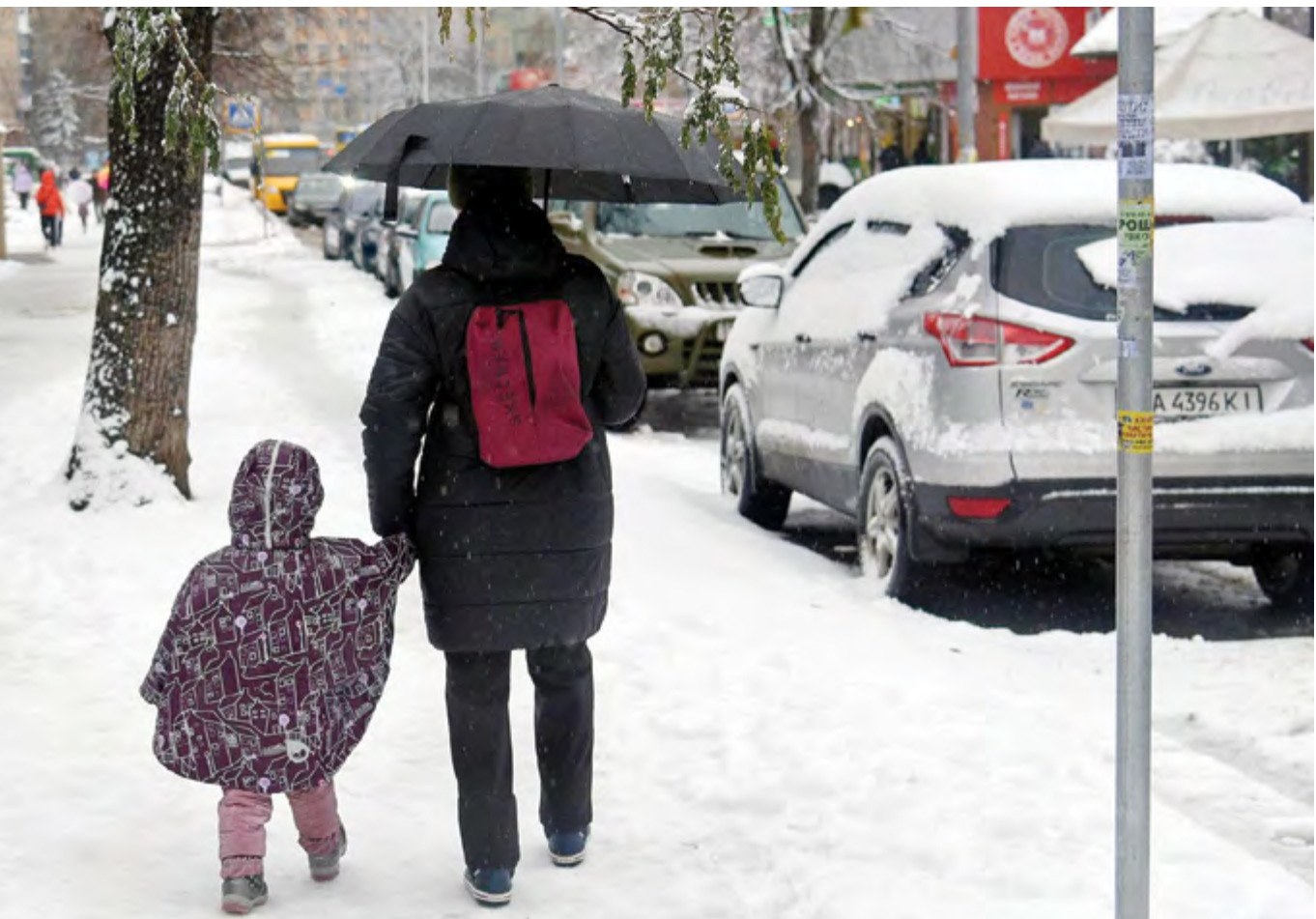
Sumy's acting mayor, Artem Kobzar, said there were no reports of casualties and that work was being done to bring the grid back online.

The attacks on critical infrastructure affected the Sumy, Konotop, and Okhtyrka districts.

A statement by the Sumy Regional Military Administration said on Telegram that the overnight attack affected settlements in the region's Konotop, Okhtyrka and Sumy districts.

“Objects of critical infrastructure - water canals, hospitals and others - are connected to backup power systems,” the statement added.

Russia's barrage of drone attacks continued overnight into



Temperatures can be well below freezing through most of Ukraine in the winter months

Local authorities reported that Russian forces had attacked the energy infrastructure in Ukraine's northeastern Sumy region. Power was cut to several districts

Tuesday morning. The Ukrainian military said it was able to shoot down 34 of 51 drones.

According to officials, the Russian strikes targeted five different regions of the country.

At the same time, the Kremlin said it had shot down some 16 drones near the border region of Kursk, where Ukrainian forces have captured several Russian towns and settlements in the last two months.

Ukraine's 'victory plan' laid out

Ukraine's victory plan against Russia is 90% complete and is

ready to be presented to its allies next week, President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Monday.

“Throughout the day, we held various meetings to prepare our Ukrainian Victory Plan. Each point is filled with real substance -military, political, diplomatic and economic. Key figures for every area have been involved. The necessary steps for Ukraine are already clearly defined,” Zelensky said in a video message shared on X.

These steps will give Ukraine the ‘strongest possible positions’ to bring about peace, he added.

“For every step, we have a clear list of actions - what exactly is needed and what will strengthen our efforts. There is nothing impossible in this plan. Over 90% of it is already laid out,” he said.

The president also stressed that this ‘comprehensive package’ will ensure the right development of the situation not only for Ukraine but for everyone around the world who values international law.

Agencies

LEARNING TO MAKE MOONCAKES



A girl learns to make mooncakes at China Cultural Centre in Hawalli Governorate, Kuwait, on Monday (Xinhua)

FBI treating apparent assassination attempt on Trump as ‘extremely serious’

Washington, D.C., US - The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is treating the apparent attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump as ‘extremely serious’, an agent said on Monday.

“We view this as extremely serious and are determined to provide answers as to what led up to the events which took place,” Jeffrey Veltri, the FBI special agent in charge of the Miami field office, told a briefing.

He was joined by Acting Secret Service Director Ron Rowe, Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw and Markenzys La-pointe, US attorney, for the Southern District of Florida, who provided further details regarding the incident on Sunday.



Law enforcement personnel investigate around Trump International Golf Club

Veltri also said the suspect, Ryan Wesley Routh, had an ‘active online presence’ and that the agency is going through all of his posts and online search history.

“We’re going through media reports and public statements he made that he wanted to recruit Afghan soldiers and others to

fight for Ukraine. The FBI has sent multiple requests to companies for returns on the subject's phone and social media accounts,” he said. The bureau is still exploring whether Routh acted alone.

“Our investigation will determine that,” he said.

Bradshaw said that security at

Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida is the ‘highest it can possibly be’ and added that he will give ‘every possible resource’ to the Secret Service as the investigation remains ongoing.

Rowe said President Joe Biden made it clear that he wanted the ‘highest levels of protection’ for former President Trump and for Vice President Kamala Harris.

“The Secret Service moved to sustain increases in assets and the level of protections sought. And those things were in place yesterday,” he added. Rowe also said the suspect ‘did not fire or get off any shots at our agent’.

Routh was earlier charged with possession of a firearm as a convicted felon.

Anadolu Agency



Antony Blinken

Blinken to head to Egypt to discuss Gaza ceasefire

Washington, D.C., US - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to Egypt this week to attend the US-Egypt Strategic Dialogue and discuss ongoing efforts to reach a Gaza ceasefire and hostage deal.

Blinken will depart on Tuesday for Egypt, where he will co-chair the opening of the US-Egypt Strategic Dialogue with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, aiming to 'strengthen the bilateral relationship and deepen economic development', State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement.

"In addition to co-chairing the strategic dialogue, the Secretary will meet with Egyptian officials to discuss ongoing efforts to reach a ceasefire in Gaza that secures the release of all hostages, alleviates the suffering of the Palestinian people, and helps establish broader regional security," he added.

The visit, Blinken's 10th to the Middle East since October 7 last year, comes as the US, along with Qatar and Egypt, are working to secure a ceasefire and hostage swap deal between Israel and Hamas.

US President Joe Biden said on May 31 that Israel presented a three-phase deal that would end hostilities in Gaza and secure the release of hostages held in the coastal enclave.

The three-phase deal includes a ceasefire, a hostage-prisoner exchange, the Israeli military's withdrawal from Gaza, a surge in aid and a permanent end to hostilities.

A bridging proposal put forward by the US, Egypt and Qatar on August 16 aimed to bridge the gaps over the prisoner exchange.

Anadolu Agencies

Scores killed, injured in Israeli airstrikes on Gaza refugee camp

Gaza City, Palestine - Scores of people were killed and injured in Israeli airstrikes on the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip early on Tuesday, the Civil Defence Service said.

Israeli warplanes bombed several houses on the eastern side of the camp as dozens of people were inside, the service said. "More than 50 people are estimated to have been inside these houses during the Israeli attack," it added in a statement.

The service said four people, including a child, had so far been recovered, while scores of people remained under the rubble of destroyed houses.

Witnesses said Israeli drones and military vehicles opened fire on ambulances and civil defence teams as they tried to approach the area to help the victims.

"The scene is catastrophic in the area struck by the Israeli army as there are a large number of victims still under the rubble," an eyewitness told Anadolu.

"It is a new massacre committed by the Israeli army, which destroyed three houses in the area," he added.

Gaza death toll surges to 41,252

At least 26 more Palestinians lost their lives in relentless Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip, taking the overall death toll since last October 7, to 41,252, the Health Ministry in the battered territory said on Tuesday. A ministry statement added that some 95,497 others have been injured in the ongoing assault. "Israeli forces killed 26 people and injured 84 others in three 'massacres' of families in the last 24 hours," the ministry said.



Four people, including a child, had so far been recovered, while scores of people remained under the rubble of destroyed houses

Witnesses said Israeli drones and military vehicles opened fire on ambulances and civil defence teams as they tried to approach the area to help the victims

Meanwhile, an Israeli soldier was critically injured in clashes in the southern Gaza Strip, the military said on Tuesday.

A military statement said the soldier, from the Givati Brigade's Reconnaissance Unit, was in critical condition after he was

wounded last night.

The soldier was hospitalised, the statement said, without providing further details.

According to Israeli military figures, at least 709 soldiers have been killed and 4,448 others injured since the outbreak of the

Gaza war on October 7, 2023.

China blames US

Meanwhile, China held the US responsible for the failure to reach a ceasefire in Gaza as the Israeli war on the besieged Palestinian enclave nears one year.

"Had the US not shielded one side time and again, multiple resolutions of this council would not have been flagrantly rejected and defied," Chinese Ambassador Geng Shuang told the UN Security Council on Monday.

Noting that the Israeli war on

Gaza that began on October 7 last year was nearing one year, Geng said: "Over the past year, despite strong joint international calls for a ceasefire and the cessation of killings, Israel has not halted its military operations, which have led to the death of over 41,000 Palestinian civilians. This is alarming. This is past belief."

The Security Council was holding a briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, according to a statement by the Chinese diplomatic mission to the UN.

Reminding the Security Council of its 'primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security', the Chinese diplomat questioned: "Why has it been unable to stop this human tragedy, the worst of its kind to this day?"

"As the analysis points out, had the United States not stood in the way on all those occasions, the council could have adopted a resolution demanding a ceasefire early on after the conflict erupted," Geng observed.

Anadolu Agency

Kazakhstan hosts second Germany-Central Asia summit

Astana, Kazakhstan - Kazakhstan on Tuesday hosted the second Germany-Central Asia summit in the capital Astana, which saw the participation of all five presidents from the region and visiting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Ahead of the meeting, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev welcomed Scholz to the Independence Palace hosting the summit, in addition to his Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, and Uzbek counterparts. Speaking in an opening address to the summit, Tokayev thanked Scholz and his Central Asian counterparts for their participation in the meeting, and that dialogue in the format, which was first launched in Berlin last



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz meets Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on Monday

September, has 'become regular and trusting', said a statement by the press service of the Kazakh presidency.

"I consider this evidence of the interest and desire of the Central Asian states and Germany to comprehensively develop a re-

gional strategic partnership," Tokayev was quoted as saying.

Expressing that Germany's socio-economic, scientific, and

technological progress is a good example for many countries, Tokayev said they highly appreciate Germany's commitment to developing an equal partnership with all countries in Central Asia.

He further said that increasing trade turnover and expanding cooperation in energy are two major priorities for them, indicating that Kazakhstan is ready to increase oil exports to the German market and develop green energy.

"Our country, together with Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, is developing a project to build a line for the transmission of green energy along the bottom of the Caspian Sea and further to European countries. We invite German partners to con-

sider the possibility of participating in this strategic project," Tokayev also said. He went on to note the bolstering of industrial cooperation, strengthening transport and logistics interconnectivity, and the development of scientific and educational ties as other key priorities.

"Our countries closely interact in a multilateral format, including within the framework of the United Nations. We intend to continue to resolutely support the efforts of this uncontested universal organisation in the fight against terrorism, extremism, illegal migration and climate change, and peacekeeping and disarmament," he added.

Anadolu Agency

EU Commission chief unveils designated commissioners for next 5 years

Brussels, Belgium - The president of the European Commission on Tuesday revealed the proposal for new commissioners.

Ursula von der Leyen, at a news conference, unveiled suggestions for the new composition and structure of the commission after weeks of looking to find gender balance.

Each proposed commissioner must be approved by the EU Parliament following a questioning before parliamentary committees, a process that could stretch until late October, according to estimations.

Von der Leyen announced that the new commission will have four women and two men among executive vice presidents.

Amid debates about her insisting on gender equality, the

commission chief said that when she received the first nominations, there was a 'share of 22% women and 78% men'.

"So you can imagine that this was completely unacceptable. So I worked intensively with the member states, and we were able to improve the share to 40% women and 60% men. And it shows that as much as we have achieved, there is still so much more work to do," she explained.

Outgoing French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne, who was nominated as a candidate by France on Monday following Commissioner Thierry Breton's sudden resignation, was proposed as executive vice president for prosperity and industrial strategy. Sejourne was also proposed



to handle the Industry, SMEs, and the Single Market portfolio.

Breton, France's European commissioner for the internal market, accused von der Leyen of undermining him by asking

France to withdraw his name 'for personal reasons'.

He said von der Leyen had 'offered, as a political trade-off, an allegedly more influential portfolio for France in the future

The president of European Commission, at a news conference, unveiled suggestions for the new composition and structure of the commission after weeks of looking to find gender balance

College'.

Asked about her alleged intervention in the withdrawal of Breton's candidacy, Ursula von der Leyen dodged the question, praised Sejourne, and said: "So

the French president has made the decision, you know, after having consulted the new French Prime Minister Michel Barnier, he has proposed Stephane Sejourne as France's new candidate."

Former Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas was designated High representative for Foreign and Security policy, Spain's Teresa Ribera was nominated to work on Clean, Just, and Competitive transition, while Finnish Henna Virkkunen was selected to handle Tech Sovereignty, Security, and Democracy. Romania's Roxana Minzatu will be responsible for People, Skills, and Preparedness.

Raffaele Fitto from Italy, for his part, was nominated to handle Cohesion and Reforms.

Commissioners

Marta Kos, who is awaiting approval from the Slovenian parliament for her appointment, was designated the commissioner responsible for Enlargement.

Belgian Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib is a nominee for the Preparedness and Crisis Management portfolio, as well as Equality.

Poland's Piotr Serafin will be responsible for the Budget, while Austria's Magnus Brunnes will have the Internal affairs and Migration portfolio.

Lithuania's Andrius Kubilius was nominated for commissioner for Defence and Space.

According to von der Leyen's plans, Denmark's Dan Jorgensen will handle Energy and Housing.

Anadolu Agency

INDIA

J&K election brings hope to restive region

Jammu and Kashmir is set to hold its first regional assembly elections in a decade

Jammu and Kashmir - At a campaign rally in southern Kashmir, 45-year-old Shameema Jan raises her voice and joins dozens of other women in singing traditional songs in support of their preferred candidate ahead of the Jammu and Kashmir regional election due to start on Wednesday.

The hopes held by these women are simple. They want a representative, preferably a woman, who can address their everyday concerns, such as water scarcity in the village, the imprisonment of local boys in jails outside Kashmir, and the growing issue of youth unemployment in the Muslim-majority region controlled by India.

To them, this candidate is Iltija Mufti, the daughter of former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, who served as the head of Jammu and Kashmir government until 2018.

"She is young and energetic," Jan told DW of Iltija Mufti. "If we vote for her, she will listen to us. We have so many young people in jails outside Kashmir, and we want them to be released," Jan added, while Mufti addressed the rally from atop her SUV.

"This election might change our situation," Jan said, with women around her nodding in



Polling officials along with security personnel leave for polling stations after collecting EVMs ahead of the first phase of the J&K Assembly elections, in Kishtwar on Tuesday (ANI)

agreement.

Jammu and Kashmir is set to hold its first regional assembly elections in a decade. The last such ballot was held in 2014 when Indian PM Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the regional Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) formed a coalition government.

However, the coalition collapsed in 2018 when the BJP withdrew its support and New Delhi took direct control of the region troubled by separatist violence.

Now, the upcoming ballot offers a chance for the people of Kashmir to elect a new government after years of political un-

It is the first regional election since the region was stripped of its special status and divided into two union territories

certainty. It is also the first regional election since the region was stripped of its special status and divided into two union territories Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Regional parties like the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (NC) and

the PDP, along with bigger national parties such as the BJP and the Indian National Congress (INC), are all contesting these elections.

But there are also many separatists running as independents, marking a significant shift from their previous stance of boycotting the polls altogether.

The national election held this spring has already hinted at a new generation of leaders, including Abdul Rasheed Sheikh, better known to his supporters as 'Engineer Rasheed'.

The former civil engineer ran for the national parliament from jail after being detained on suspicion of funding terror. He still

managed to score a resounding victory. His Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) is expected to pose a strong challenge to traditional political parties in the upcoming ballot. "We are participating in the poll as we don't want to live in perpetual fear," Manzoor Ahmad, a participant of a pro-AIP rally in the Kashmiri town of Tral told DW. "We came out in large numbers to listen to Rasheed as his speeches resonate with our ideas and thoughts," he added.

Sheikh was granted interim bail in September, allowing him to participate in the campaign.

Another one of his supporters, Atiqah Jan, told DW her son

is in jail and she wanted him out.

"My son has been in jail for the past year and I wanted to tell this to Rasheed as he can understand my pain," she said.

Sheikh's AIP has also formed a pre-election alliance with the banned Jamat-e-Islami faction, whose candidates officially run as independents in the upcoming election.

Narendra Modi's BJP has been struggling to gain support in the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley.

However, it has a significant voter base in the Hindu-majority Jammu region. Moreover, Jammu is a key constituency for the BJP where it can capitalise on

its nationalist rhetoric, security concerns, and pledges of development projects.

On September 14, Prime Minister Modi told a political rally in the Doda district of Jammu that BJP has made the entire region prosperous. "We and you together will make Kashmir a secure and prosperous part of the country," he said.

He also pledged that terrorism was 'breathing its last' in Jammu and Kashmir - despite the separatist violence.

However, local political leaders dismiss the BJP's claims of change as 'fake'.

"It is a matter of shame for the BJP that has been saying the situation has improved, but they could not hold elections in Jammu and Kashmir in the last 10 years. People are annoyed, they are suffocating," said former Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti.

The newly elected government will have restricted powers due to Jammu and Kashmir's current status as a Union Territory after the political changes in 2019. Many important areas, such as law and order and land issues, remain under the control of New Delhi where the local government cannot make any changes.

"The elections are significant and non-significant at the same time," Professor Noor Muhammad Baba, a regional political analyst, told DW. "They are significant because they are being held after a long time and people will get to elect their representatives, and also because this will serve as a message of how people are angry and rue the changes."

DW

Delhi: Atishi to form new govt

New Delhi - Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor Arvind Kejriwal resigned as Delhi Chief Minister on Tuesday and the party's newly-elected legislative party leader Atishi has staked claim to form the new government.

Kejriwal tendered his resignation to Delhi LG Vinai Kumar Saxena.

Talking to reporters, AAP leader and Delhi minister Gopal Rai said that Kejriwal had stated after getting bail in the Delhi excise case that he will take the post of Chief Minister only after he gets a renewed mandate from the people of Delhi in the assembly poll.

"Accordingly he gave his resignation. AAP MLAs met in the morning and elected Atishi as their leader. We have conveyed



Atishi (left) will take over as Delhi's new chief minister

this to the LG. Atishi has staked claim to form the government. We have requested that the date of swearing is decided at the earliest so that works related to the two crore residents of Delhi are taken forward," he said.

Rai said the new government will work to protect the initiatives taken by Kejriwal for the people

of Delhi.

Kejriwal was released from Tihar Jail in the national capital on September 13 after the apex court granted him bail the Delhi excise policy case.

The apex court also imposed certain conditions for Kejriwal's release, including that he must refrain from making public com-

ments about the case and must attend all hearings before the trial court unless exempt.

Kejriwal said that he would not return to the post of the chief minister till his party is re-elected in an upcoming state election. "I will go to every street, I will go to every house and until the public gives its verdict that Kejriwal is honest, I will not sit on the CM's chair," he said on Sunday while speaking to party workers at AAP headquarters.

Kejriwal also urged the country's Election Commission to hold an early election, calling for the vote to be held in November instead of February 2025. The opposition leader and his party have denied the graft allegations and claim the arrests of AAP leaders as 'politically motivated'.

Agencies



Security personnel conduct a search operation in the fringe and vulnerable areas in Manipur on Saturday (ANI)

Roadmap created to resolve Manipur issue: Amit Shah

New Delhi - Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said that the BJP-led central government is working to control the situation in Manipur and has created a roadmap to resolve the issue.

He added that the violence in Manipur is racial and can only be solved through dialogue between the affected groups, and the central government is in talks with both the Kuki and Meitei groups to find a solution.

Addressing a press conference on the first 100 days of the third term of the PM Modi government, Shah said: "Recently, violence went on for three days, other than that, in the last 3 months, no major incident took place... We are hopeful to bring the situation under control. We are in talks with both the local tribes. Because this is racial violence, there cannot be any solution until there is a dialogue between them... We are speaking to the Kuki groups and the Meitei groups... We have created a roadmap to solve the

issue," he said.

Shah said that the main cause of the problem in Manipur is the India-Myanmar border. He added that the central government has started fencing this border and has completed 30km so far, with CRPF deployed at key points to prevent

The Union Home Minister said the violence in Manipur is racial and can only be solved through dialogue between the affected groups

infiltration.

"We have started the fencing of the root cause of the problem, the India-Myanmar border...30km of the fencing has been completed. The central government has approved a budget to fence the whole 1500km border. We have suc-

cessfully deployed CRPF at strategic locations. To stop the infiltration, we have nullified the agreement between India and Myanmar which allowed the movement of the people, and now entry into India is allowed only by visa," Shah said.

Earlier, the Union government decided to provide essential commodities to the people of Manipur at reasonable prices by opening Kendriya Police Kalyan Bhandars, announced Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

In addition to 21 existing Bhandars, 16 new facilities will be opened, he said.

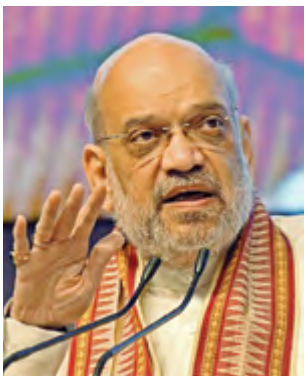
"The MHA is launching an initiative to provide commodities to the people of Manipur at reasonable prices," Shah wrote on X. "Now the Kendriya Police Kalyan Bhandars will be open for common people from Tuesday. In addition to 21 existing Bhandars, 16 new ones will be opened. Among the 16 new centres, eight will be in the valley, and remaining eight in the hills," ANI

'Waqf (Amendment) Bill to be passed'

New Delhi - Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said that the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which addresses the management, preservation, and misuse of Waqf properties, will be passed in Parliament in the coming days.

Addressing a press conference on the first 100 days of the third term of the PM Modi government, Shah said: "Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 is committed to the management, preservation and misuse of Waqf properties. It would be passed in the Parliament in the coming days."

Earlier, the Lok Sabha Secretariat, in an official statement,



Union Home Minister Amit Shah

said that a meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, will be held on September 18, 19 and 20 at the Parliament House Annexe in the capital city

of New Delhi.

During the meeting on September 18, representatives from the Ministry of Minority Affairs will record oral evidence before the committee on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

On September 19, the committee will hear the views or suggestions of some experts and stakeholders, such as Prof Faizan Mustafa, Vice Chancellor, Chanakya National Law University, Patna; Pasmanda Muslim Mahaaz and All India Muslim Personal Law Board, on the bill.

On September 20, the Joint Parliamentary Committee will hear the suggestions of All India

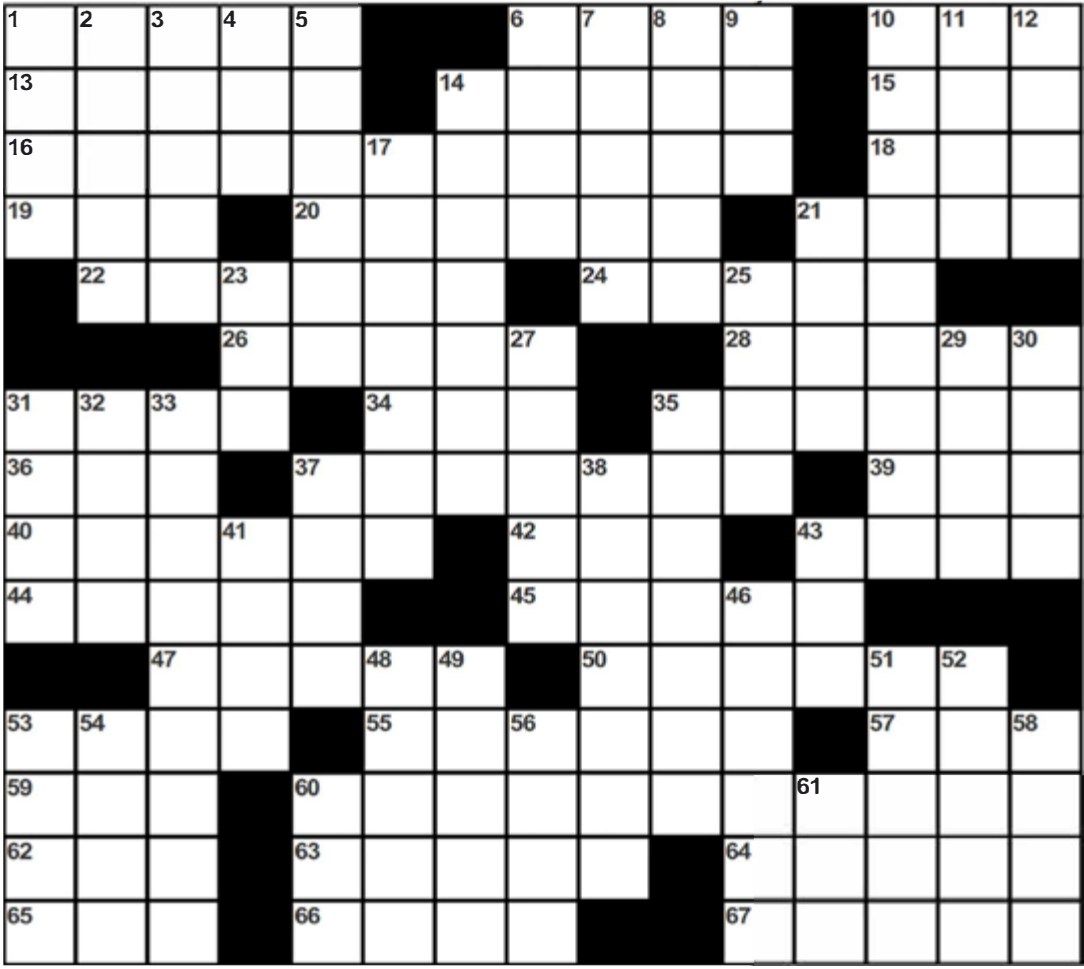
Sajjadanashin Council, Ajmer, Muslim Rashtriya Manch, Delhi and Bharat First, Delhi, on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Earlier this week, a group of Muslim social workers and Islamic scholars during a meeting in Delhi expressed their support to the government, emphasising that doubting the government's intentions is not appropriate.

Speaking to ANI, Islamic scholar Mufti Wajahat Qasmi said that a meeting was called to remove the confusion created by some political parties against the government, saying that the land of Muslims will be snatched away.

ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Hinge holder
6) Clock feature
10) "Brainiac" author Jennings
13) Crockett's last stand
14) Volunteer's cry
15) Senate vote
16) Barbarian who creates a buzz?
18) Mardi Gras king
19) B'way "no seats" sign
20) Chest part
21) Lyricist Lorenz_
22) Wipes clean
24) Matt of "The Martian"
26) Greenish-blue shades
28) Very quickly
31) Tool with teeth
34) "Good Will Hunting" sch.
35) Sci-fi master Isaac
36) Lawyers' org.
37) Waiting uncomplainingly
39) Mined asset
40) Loss caused by a pot-hole strike
42) Phone no. adjunct
43) Hawaiian strings
44) Waited in line, say
45) Tread heavily
47) Welles who played Kane

- 50) Difficult burdens
53) Private employer
55) Ghostly
57) P on a frat pin
59) "Chocolate" dog, for short
60) Worthless stock contract?
62) Swelled head
63) Grueling exams
64) Hurricane of 2011
65) Kinsey research topic
66) Truth or... (party game)
67) Slackens off

DOWN

- 1) Fifth A venue retailer
2) Author_ Boothe Luce
3) Barbering tool
4) Comedian Phillips
5) Like a pine fragrance
6) Shorthand similar to "IMO"
7) Prepared to shoot
8) Barton of the Red Cross
9) Right angle
10) Dress designer Donna in a frenzy?
11) Admirer from afar, maybe
12) Deli counter call
14) Ticked off
17) Walking tour carry-along

- 21) Pueblo tribe
23) Super serve
25) Crow's nest support
27) Farm enclosures
29) Apple throwaway
30) Times to revel
31) Cheers from the grandstands
32) Border on
33) Crate of exploding cigars?
35) "The Four Seasons" composer Vivaldi
37) Elbow guards
38) Shakes down
41) "Glee" actor Monteith
43) Favorable times
46) Rich, chocolaty dessert
48) Tara family name
49) Stock valuation phrase
51) Great Lakes tribe members of old
52) Performed brilliantly
53) Brewpub offerings
54) Word after "road" or "roid"
56) Be the king
58) Vending machine inserts
60) Dropped for a 10-count, for short
61) "La-la" lead-in

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Right now, you are craving substance over style. Gossiping about the latest celebrity news or shopping for new shoes is simply not an interesting activity for a brain like yours. Instead, it's a good day to check out places that are likely to make you think about confusing or challenging ideas. Forget about any expectations regarding what kind of experience is in store for you. Open your mind.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Today is all about taking time to establish things. You can't be in a hurry if you want to get anywhere. So go slowly and take your time to explore what other people are looking for in life. Ask questions about your friend's goals and you just might be able to help them out. And that sense of satisfaction is just what you need right now. You have a lot to share, a lot to teach, and an awful lot to learn from others. This is a day for letting new ideas sink in.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Your dull routine won't seem so dull today. The Universe has a few surprises in store for you, and you are going to enjoy every single one of them! So reach out and embrace all the chaos as it comes. After all, it isn't boring. It is stimulating your mind in a brand-new way. If you get too anxious about how things are going to work out, you'll be putting yourself through emotional distress for no reason.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Which of these National

Parks was created last?

- A. Yellowstone, USA
B. Kakadu, Australia
C. Peak District, UK
D. Pyrénées, France

02. Which of these is a tragic heroine in Irish mythology?

- A. Ydun
B. Flora
C. Deirdre
D. Demeter

03. In the number 255 how many digits are there?

- A. 4
B. 1
C. 2
D. 3

Answers: 1.B 2.C 3.D



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Someone you work with is all excited about their latest idea, but after taking a closer look at what they want to do, you are going to see big holes in their plan. You owe it to them to speak up and voice your concerns. Use your tact and charm to get them to reevaluate their suggestion and help them fine-tune it. They need a dose of reality, and you are just the person to give it to them.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Today, you might want to make room in your contact list because you are going to be meeting a lot of new acquaintances today. New names and faces will be filling your day with excitement and possibility. If you are interested in growing your social scene or expanding your career networking connections, this is going to be a banner day. But if you are fine with where you are and who is in your life right now, simply take all this new energy for what it is.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You had your eyes wide open when you took on this situation, but now you're afraid that it might not be worth the effort. After all, what's the point of pouring your heart and soul into something that may never happen in just the way you envisioned? Before you convince yourself that the battle is lost, however, the other party might agree to a mutually satisfactory compromise. If you agree, you might end up coming out ahead.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

With a strong, bright energy driving the day, you're bound to attract more attention than usual today, so don't you dare be shy! Share what you think and who you really are with people. Everyone you'll encounter is in an usually receptive frame of mind, so it's a great day to make new friends or romantic conquests. You can change important minds today without preaching or being too dogmatic about how you feel.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Valuable things can be found in some surprising places, so be very careful that you don't throw out the good with the bad today. Sort through the things that are making you unhappy. But remember - something of worth is in there too. Perhaps there's some sort of lesson to learn? Be sure to retain a relationship, lesson, or idea that makes you a little uncomfortable right now, because those are the things that will prove themselves most useful in your future.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You can't be all serious all the time, and you need to start having more fun. It's okay! Luckily, there should be many opportunities for fun today, so don't turn off your sense of humor or your curiosity. New members of your social group or work team may be particularly fun: New people are an excellent source of good times because they offer ideas and experiences you haven't encountered before. Open up. Listen to what the newbies say.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You always behave well around your boss, but how well do you act when you are around your coworkers? A spy among them is a possibility, so make sure you are being careful today. You should definitely avoid getting involved in any idle office gossip. Steer clear of people who just love to complain but hate to offer suggestions about how to make things better. Changing your tune is easy when you realize that a better attitude equals a better career.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

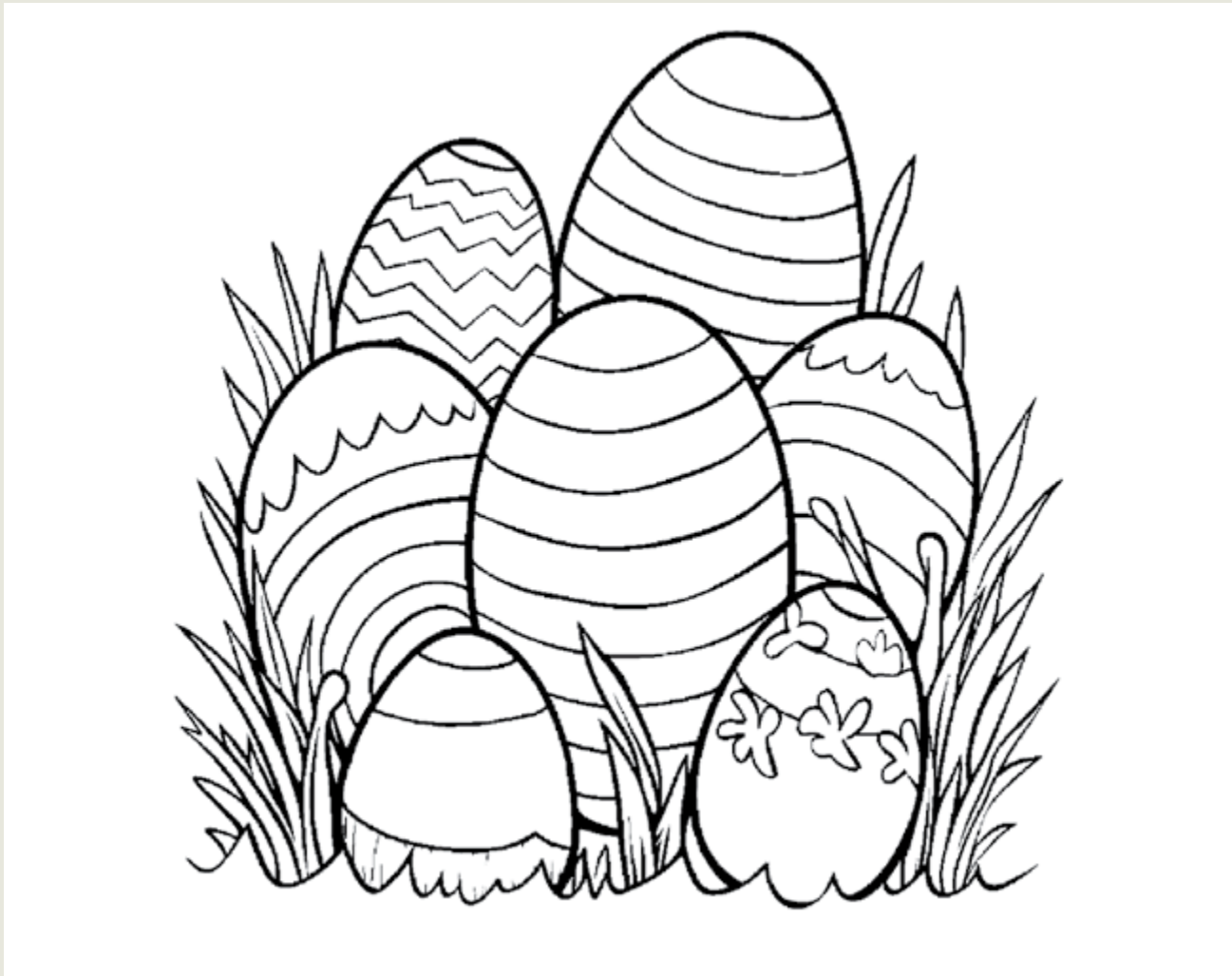
Whenever you're in doubt about how you should act today, just talk your way through it! Your way with words will turn the key and unlock many exciting new opportunities. It is about time you took a larger role in leading your circle, and your attitude will be the perfect thing to motivate people who aren't usually team players or cheerful participants. You will be able to lighten the mood and motivate some important people.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You may have thought that hitting the books and doing homework was behind you, but educating yourself should always be a part of your life's journey. Open your mind, accept that you don't know it all, and learn something new today. Equip yourself with facts and you'll always be able to state your case and back up your argument. Things will go much more smoothly if you have logic and lots of information on your side. After all, it's not who you know, it's what you know.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

I	C	E	I
S	D	C	T
O	T	N	E
I	M	I	A

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

SOLUTION

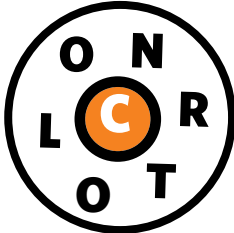
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

PALACIOS TO AL AIN'S RESCUE

Argentine midfielder scores from distance as reigning champions hold Qatar's Al Sadd

Al Ain, UAE - United Arab Emirates' Al Ain left it late to secure a 1-1 draw against Qatar's Al Sadd SC in their AFC Champions League Elite 2024/25 opener at the Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium on Monday.

Akram Affif gave Al Sadd the lead in the closing stages of the first half before Matias Palacios equalised for defending champions Al Ain in the 80th minute for a share of the points.

Both sides wasted early chances with Al Sadd's Akram Afif pulling his shot wide in the third minute, while Al Ain's Soufiane Rahimi miscued a volley two minutes later.

Al Ain threatened again in the 11th minute when Rahimi beat the offside trap, only for his shot to bounce off the left post before he was denied again by Al Sadd keeper Meshaal Barsham in the 21st minute.



Matias Palacios (R) equalised for Al Ain in the 80th minute after Akram Afif had given Al Sadd the lead

Al Sadd came close to breaking the deadlock in the 20th minute, Afif timing his dummy run before setting up Mohamed Camara for a powerful strike that forced a save from Khalid Eisa. Barsham kept Al Sadd in the game with a string of fine saves, including parrying away a dangerous effort from Matias Palacios in the 29th minute.

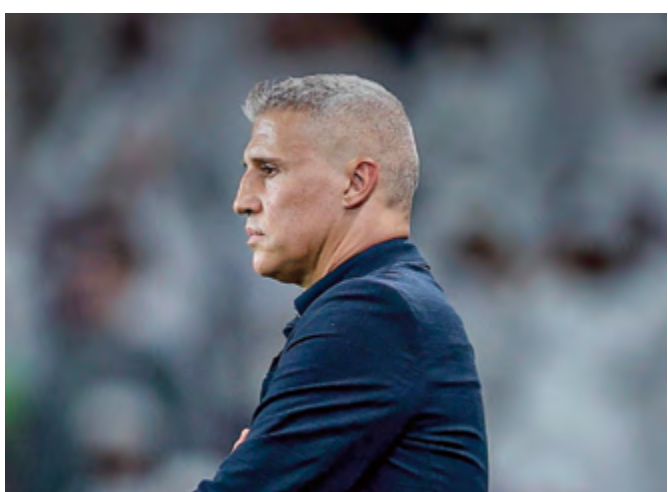
The breakthrough finally came a minute into added time, when Afif weaved his way through the Al Ain defence. His initial effort was blocked by Fabio Cardoso, but the rebound fell kindly for the Al Sadd captain, who calmly slotted the ball into an empty net.

Al Sadd started the second half on the front foot with Paulo Otavio setting up Rafael Mujica, who pulled his effort just wide, while Al Ain played in patches, with Fabio Cardoso, Kodjo Laba Kaku Romero all missing their chances.

The Qatar champions came close to doubling their advantage in the 64th minute after Otavio

opened up play on the left before teeing up Mujica, whose effort bounced off the bar.

With 10 minutes remaining, Al Ain equalised through Palacios, whose initial effort was blocked before the Argentine midfielder struck a long range shot which took a deflection before settling into the back of the net.



Hernan Crespo

We deserved to win, says Al Ain's Crespo

Al Ain, UAE - Head coach Hernan Crespo was left to rue Al Ain's missed opportunity following their 1-1 draw with Qatar's Al Sadd in their AFC Champions League Elite 2024/25 opener at the Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium on Monday.

Crespo felt two-time AFC Champions League winners Al Ain were unlucky not to take all three points.

"We definitely deserved to win but conceded a goal due to an individual mistake. We came back in the second half and showed our strong character and scored the equaliser," said Crespo. "The decision to keep Kodjo Laba on the bench came because I'm required to make technical decisions and set the appropriate strategy for each match separately."

"Anyone who watched the first half will find that we imposed absolute control over the course of the game and conceded the goal due to an individual mistake. I believe that the second half was the right time to bring Laba on.

"We gave everything in the match but we needed the luck

factor and sometimes such things happen in football."

Al Sadd head coach Felix Sanchez was satisfied with his side's performance but acknowledged the physical demands in the second half.

"We played a very difficult match against Al Ain in front of their fans. We had the advantage and possession in the first half and scored the opening goal in the last minutes," said Sanchez. "In the second half, we retreated despite our efforts and it was difficult to maintain the same rhythm until Al Ain succeeded in scoring the equaliser."

"There was great physical cohesion from the players of both teams and this helped increase the physical performance of the players in the second half.

"We were seeking to win but there were some circumstances that prevented that, the team is developing from one match to another and the result is considered good after getting a point from last season's title holders.

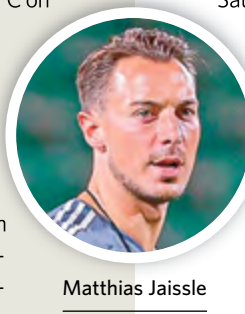
"We got an important point and I congratulate my team and players on their performance today."

Opening with a win matters, says Al Ahli's Jaissle

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - It was a case of job done as far as Matthias Jaissle was concerned after his Al Ahli Saudi FC opened their AFC Champions League Elite campaign with a 1-0 win over Persepolis FC on Monday.

Frank Kessie's second minute goal eventually settled the contest but both sides had numerous opportunities, with Jaissle admitting it had been a tough and nervy contest.

"It was a difficult match as expected against a strong team in terms of fitness and power, and the most important thing in this tournament is to get the points at the beginning."



Matthias Jaissle

Al Nassr held to 1-1 draw by Al Shorta

Baghdad, Iraq - Iraq's Al Shorta held Al Nassr Club of Saudi Arabia to a 1-1 draw in their opening AFC Champions League Elite League Stage match on Monday.

Missing Cristiano Ronaldo and Aymeric Laporte, Al Nassr found the going tough at Al Madina International Stadium and in the end, had to settle for a point.

It was a nervy start for the Saudi side with goalkeeper Bento's misplaced pass going straight to Bas-sam Shakir but luckily for Al Nassr, Mohamed Simakan managed to block the Al Shorta midfielder's shot.

Luis Castro's men recovered to strike the first blow in the 14th minute after Sultan al Ghannam latched onto Otavio's delightful pass, with the Al Nassr captain calmly picking his spot in the bottom corner.

The home side found their way back into the game in the 24th minute when Mohammed Dawood benefited from a mix-up between Simakan and Salem



With stars like Cristiano Ronaldo and Aymeric Laporte absent, Al Nassr found the going tough against Al Shorta despite having players of Marcelo Brozovi's quality in their ranks

al Nadji to plant a precise shot into the top corner. Al Shorta were then awarded a penalty in the 40th minute after Simakan blocked Dawood's run, however, it was changed to a free-kick after a VAR check deemed the foul occurred outside the box.

Al Nassr started the better of the two sides in the second half,

Despite being on the back foot, Al Shorta did well to deny further opportunities for Al Nassr to start their campaign with a solid point

a first-time pass from Sadio Mane in the 50th minute found Anderson Taslica in space and the Brazilian's shot required a fingertip save from Ahmed Basil.

Despite being on the back foot and forced to defend in numbers, Al Shorta did well to deny further opportunities for Al Nassr to start their campaign with a solid point.

Al Nassr sack Castro after Al Shorta draw

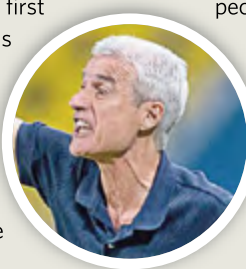
Al Nassr Saudi Club announced the dismissal of coach Luis Castro from his position after a tough start to the season.

"Al Nassr have officially terminated the contractual relationship with the first team coach, Luis Castro, the club said in a statement.

"The club appreciates all the efforts he made with Al Nassr, and wishes him success."

Stefano Pioli is one of the favourites to take over as coach of Al Nassr.

Al Nassr were head to a 1-1 draw in their opening AFC Champions League Elite League Stage match on Monday.



Luis Castro

Castro admitted after the match that Al Nassr paid the price for poor finishing.

"We could have performed better but we faced tough opponents on their home ground, who fought hard, especially in the middle of the field," said Castro.

"The atmosphere was difficult and the pitch conditions were challenging but even with these difficult conditions, we succeeded in controlling the ball and threatened the opponents with many attacks."

"Our finishing was not good while Al Shorta used the opportunities that they got, including the equaliser."

Esteghlal's resilience pleases Nekoman

Qods, Iran - Head coach Javad Nekoman heaped praise on his Esteghlal players following their convincing 3-0 win against Qatar's Al Gharafa in their AFC Champions League Elite™ 2024/25 opener at the Shahr-e Qods Stadium on Monday.

Esteghlal took the lead thanks to an own goal in the first half before seeing off Al Gharafa with strikes from Ramin Rezaeian and Arash Rezavand.

"I congratulate the fans and all those who helped us. I told the players that we should play at

the level of Esteghlal," said Nekoman. "This win is for those who worked hard. I was just by their side and they showed that they have a high position in Iranian football.

"The condition of the team is getting better day by day. The players overcame the difficult conditions we faced in the last few days and I am really happy for the fans who are going home happy."

Pedro Martinez admitted Esteghlal deserved full points given his side's performance.

Kessie strike hands Al Ahli win against Persepolis

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli Saudi FC secured a winning start to their AFC Champions League Elite League Stage campaign by defeating Persepolis FC of Iran 1-0 on Monday.

Frank Kessie's early goal settled the contest at Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Stadium in a game which saw both teams creating plenty of chances only to be let down by poor finishing.

Al Ahli needed only two minutes to storm into the lead when Riyad Mahrez picked out the run of Kessie, who controlled the ball

without breaking stride before slamming an unstoppable shot past Alexis Guendouz.

Persepolis gradually gained a foothold in the match with Soroush Rafiei and Vahid Amiri starting to win the midfield battles while Oston Urunov was a menace on the left flank.

Persepolis came close to drawing level in the 35th minute when Ali Alipour's downward header forced Edouard Mendy into a reflex save with Uronov dragging his attempt just wide on the rebound.

Late in the first half, Persepolis



Frank Kessie scored the winner for Al Ahli against Persepolis on Monday

were awarded a penalty following Merih Demiral's foul on Uronov but referee Adam Makhadneh changed his decision following a VAR review.

The home side threatened to double their lead after the break but Ivan Toney was denied by a smart Guendouz save while Roger Ibanez headed wide from a Demiral pass.

Al Ahli were handed a golden opportunity to get a second after Toney was brought down by Hossein Kanani in the box but Mahrez's spot-kick was well saved by Guendouz.

'IT'S TOO MUCH'

Man City's Rodri says players are close to strike over congested schedule

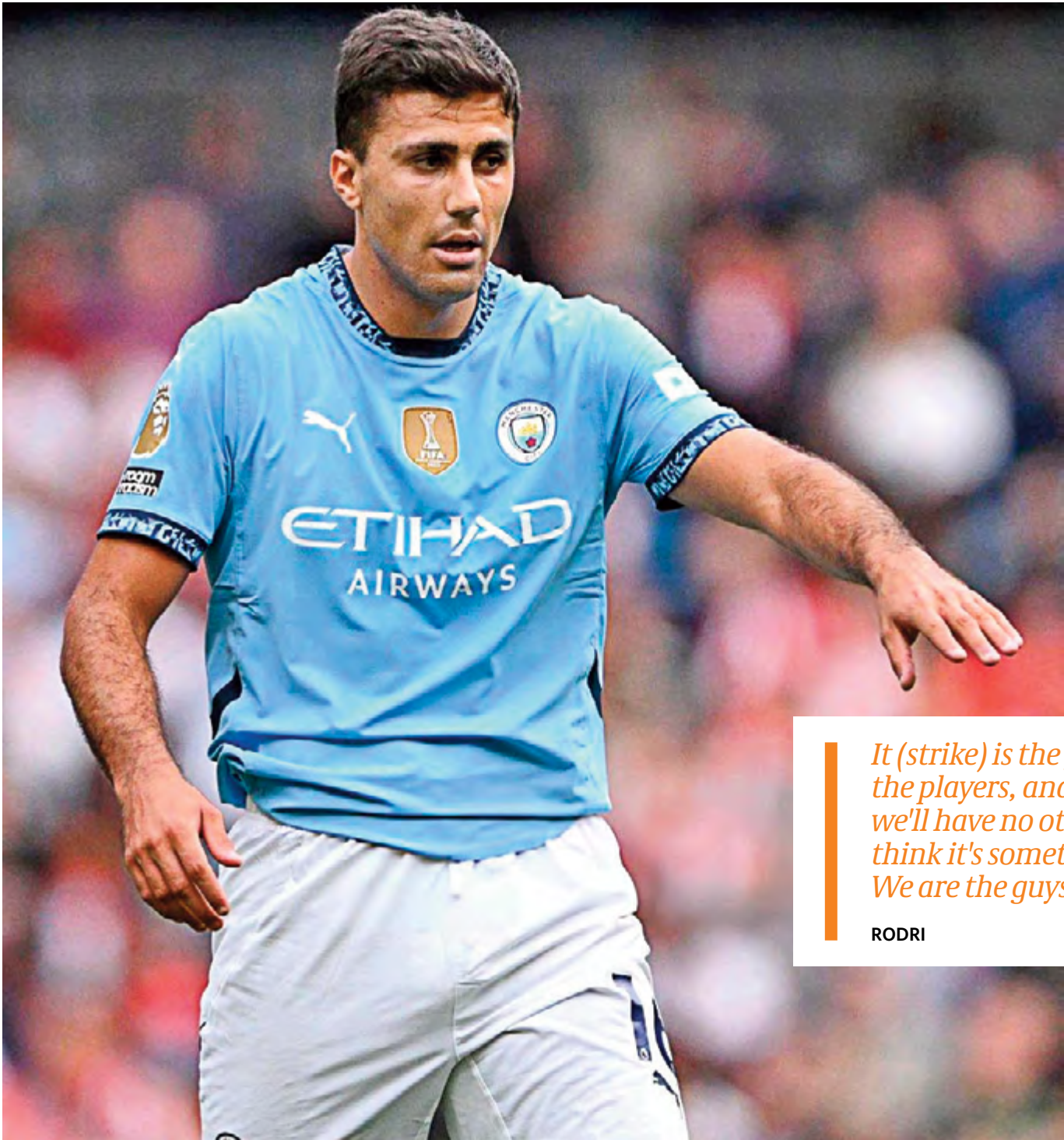
Manchester, England - Players could be close to strike over the amount of games they are required to play, Manchester City midfielder Rodri warned on Tuesday on the eve of their Champions League opener against Inter Milan.

Expanded Champions League and FIFA Club World Cup formats alongside enlarged national team competitions have made for a greater number of games for top teams and players, and Rodri is the latest to say the workload is too great.

"I think we're close to that (striking)," Rodri told reporters. "It's the general opinion of the players, and if it keeps this way, we'll have no other option. I really think it's something that worries us. We are the guys who suffer."

The optimal number of games "in which a player can perform at the highest level," the Spaniard said, is between 40 and 50.

"After that, you drop because it's impossible to sustain the physical level," he added. "This year, we're going to go until 70, maybe 80 (games), depends on how far you go into competitions."



Rodri

It (strike) is the general opinion of the players, and if it keeps this way, we'll have no other option. I really think it's something that worries us. We are the guys who suffer.

RODRI

"I think it's too much. We have to take care of ourselves, because we are the main characters of this sport or business. Not everything is money or marketing, it is also the quality of the show. When I rest, when I'm not tired, I perform better. And if people want to see better football, we need to rest."

Last season, the 28-year-old's campaign extended through to Spain's European Championship victory on July 14, along with City teammates Kyle Walker and Phil Foden, who finished runners-up with England at the tournament in Germany.

City defender Manuel Akanji half-joked recently that he may have to retire at 30 because of the gruelling schedule.

"It's so tough," the Swiss player said. "You don't just think about this season -- but also next season. Let's say we win the league or cup, then go to the final of the Club World Cup; the Com-

munity Shield is three weeks after. So when do we have holidays?"

City host Inter Milan in a repeat of the 2023 Champions League final, won by the English side as part of their first-ever treble.

Arsenal unfazed by City's Haaland's relentless form, says Jorginho

London, England - Arsenal players are unfazed by Manchester City striker Erling Haaland's goal-scoring rampage, midfielder Jorginho said vouching for the Gunners' confidence ahead of Sunday's Premier League clash with City.

City have had a perfect campaign in the league so far, while Arsenal secured three wins and a draw. Fresh off nine goals in four league games, including two hat-tricks, Haaland has scored 99 goals from 103 appearances for City across all competitions.

The Norwegian aims for his century in Wednesday's Champions League clash against Inter Milan, while



We watch City as well. It doesn't get to our head. We need to focus on us and that's what we are trying to do

JORGINHO

Arsenal begin their European campaign at Atalanta on Thursday and prepare to meet City at the Etihad on the Sunday.

"Erling scoring again... it is starting to make us laugh," the 32-year-old Italian said. "We look because we watch all the games and we love the Premier League."

"We watch (City) as well, which is normal. It doesn't get to our head. We need to focus on us and that is what we are trying to do."

Jorginho praised Arsenal's mentality, saying it has improved since last season, pointing to their gritty 1-0 win over Tottenham Hot-Spur despite missing key players like captain Martin Odegaard and Declan Rice.

"You learn more about each other... everyone wants to improve and wants the best for the team. When you put the team in first place I think just good things can happen," he added.



Antony has fallen down the pecking order this season

Antony has to bounce back and he has the ability to do it, says Man United's Ten Hag

Manchester, England - Manchester United winger Antony must earn his spot on the team by showing consistency in training, the Premier League club's manager Erik ten Hag said.

Antony, signed from Ajax Amsterdam in 2022 for a reported initial fee of 80.75 million pounds (\$106.57 million), has failed to impress at Old Trafford.

The Brazilian international has fallen down the pecking order, making just one appearance this season, with Ten Hag opting to field former academy players Amad Diallo and Alejandro Garnacho instead.

Asked about Antony's lack of playing time, Ten Hag told reporters on Monday: "That is professional football, that is top football. Those are the laws. You

pick the team that you think has the most chance to win a game

"The players have to fight for their positions. You pick the 11 who have the best dynamic, the best chemistry," the Dutch manager added, speaking ahead of United's League Cup game at home to Barnsley on Wednesday.

"Now he (Antony) has to bounce back and he has the abilities to do it. If he is doing the right thing, he can compete with them. He is fighting for his position. That's what we expect from every player in the squad at Manchester United, what they should do.

"We have training every day and the players have to earn the right. When the attitude is good and (they) show performance in training then they will play."

We need to create our own stars, says Luis Enrique

Paris, France - Paris St Germain's young team may be less experienced than their previous sides but they are full of energy and primed for success as they begin their Champions League campaign without striker Kylian Mbappe for the first time in seven years.

After joining the club in 2017 Mbappe helped PSG reach the final in 2020 when they lost to Bayern Munich.

PSG are set to host Spain's Champions League debutants Girona on Wednesday boasting an impressive attack with the likes of Bradley Barcola, Ousmane Dembele and new signing Joao Neves, 19, who already has four assists in four league games.

"I have always wanted my players to be motivated for every game. I can use each of the six forwards we have," manager Luis Enrique said on Tuesday.

"They are ready, and we're a versatile team and it's great to have all those options because the season is going to be long.

"We need to create our own



Luis Enrique with Bradley Barcola

I can use each of the six forwards we have. They are ready, and we're a versatile team and it's great to have all those options because the season is going to be long

LUIS ENRIQUE

stars. We need to adapt, convince the players of the way to play. I'm very motivated and I'm delighted to have the club's trust and I'm trying to repay them by delivering results. We have a clear project that was set out last season.

PSG captain Marquinhos added: "We always have the target of going deep into the competition. I think my teammates are the best in the world, even if there are no big names or stars, I am proud of my team."

Midfielders Warren Zaire-Emery and Vitinha have returned from injury, though goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma has been ruled out with a thigh injury and 25-year-old Russian Matvey Safonov could therefore be handed his first start.

Spaniard Luis Enrique added that he was pleased with the squad and it was too early to jump to conclusions about their lack of experience. "I don't put any limits on my players. Experience is important but I see many experienced players making the same mistakes."

Tottenham's Postecoglou backs second-season silverware claim

London, England - Tottenham Hotspur manager Ange Postecoglou's assertion that he always wins a trophy in his second season at a club means the spotlight will be focussed firmly on his side when they face Coventry City in the League Cup third round on Wednesday.

The Australian was in typically pugnacious mood on Tuesday as he clarified the comments he made after his side's 1-0 defeat by Arsenal in the Premier League 48 hours earlier, a result



Ange Postecoglou

that left Tottenham in 13th place in the standings after four games.

Speaking to reporters at the club's training ground, Postecoglou said he had simply been stating facts, having won silverware in his second seasons with Australia's Brisbane Roar, Japan's Yokohama F Marinos and Scotland's Celtic.

"I just stated a fact and it seems like, am I supposed to just lie or just say it never happened?" Postecoglou said.

"It's just confusing to me that

people are making a big deal out of something.

"I'm not sure how I'm supposed to answer something that is true. I've just said something that's true, and it seems like it's upset a lot of people for some reason.

"But do you really think it's me sort of boasting? How am I supposed to answer something that's true. Is it to say 'well, actually, no, it wasn't that important, they were easy competitions and they don't mean anything'."



Rohit Sharma

We need to start the season on a high, says India’s Rohit ahead of Bangladesh series

Chennai, India - India are focused on making a strong start to their home test season and will not view their two-match series with Bangladesh merely as preparation for their tour of Australia later this year, skipper Rohit Sharma said on Tuesday.

Rohit’s side begin a busy schedule with the opening match against Bangladesh starting on Thursday, after which they will host New Zealand in three games and then head to Australia in November for five more tests.

"Every game is important while playing for the country," Rohit told reporters in Chennai.

"It's not a dress rehearsal for the Australia series. There are World Test Championship points at stake and we need to start the season on a high.

"The focus is on winning the Bangladesh series rather than looking too far ahead."

India last lost a home test series in 2012 when they fell 2-1 to England and have since won 17 consecutive series, losing only four out of 51 matches, but Rohit

said his players cannot get complacent.

"We're resuming after a long time," added Rohit, whose side completed a 4-1 win over England in March.

"When it (the series) starts, we have to see where we stand and take it from there."

It's not a dress rehearsal for the Australia series. The focus is on winning the series rather than looking too far ahead.

ROHIT SHARMA

Rohit threw his weight behind batsman KL Rahul, who made 86 and 22 in the first match against England in January but missed the rest of the series with injury.

"Everybody knows the quality Rahul has. We want him to play all the games to bring the best out of him," he added.

JABEUR ENDS SEASON

Tunisian out for the rest of the season due to shoulder injury

London, England - Tunisia's Ons Jabeur has been forced to end her season prematurely due to a niggling shoulder injury, the three-time Grand Slam runner-up said.

The 30-year-old has slipped to 22nd in the world rankings this year amid fitness struggles and pulled out of Cincinnati, Washington and the U.S. Open with the shoulder problem after missing the Paris Olympics due to concerns over her knee.

"This year has been extremely hard for me and as athletes, we know that recovery is part of the journey," Jabeur said on social media. "Due to my ongoing shoulder injury, my medical team and I have made the difficult decision to step off the tennis circuit



Ons Jabeur

for the rest of the season."

The former world number two said she will dedicate her time to charitable projects while recovering and return to action in Australia early next year.

Raducanu wins

Britain's Emma Raducanu recorded a 7-6 (4), 7-6 (5) win over Peyton Stearns in the first round of the Korea Open on Tuesday in Seoul.

Raducanu, who was playing for the first time since losing in the first round of the U.S. Open, opened a 4-1 lead in the first set before ending the session in 74 minutes. The 2021 U.S. Open champion needed 89 minutes to dispatch Stearns in the second set to secure a second-round match with China's Yuan Yue.

Australian Ajla Tomljanovic overcame 16 double faults to notch a 7-6 (4), 4-6, 6-3 victory over South Korean Su Jeong Jang and Amanda Anisova ousted No. 6 seed Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan 6-3, 7-6 (5).

ICC increases Women's T20 World Cup prize money

Dubai, UAE - Next month's Women's T20 World Cup will offer a record total of \$7.96 million in prize money, organising body the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Tuesday.

The winners of the tournament will receive \$2.34 million, more than double the \$1 million awarded to Australia for winning the previous edition of the tournament in 2023.

India received \$2.45 million earlier this year for winning the men's T20 World Cup, which handed out a total of \$11.25 million.

"This move is in line with the ICC's strategy to prioritise the women's game and accelerate its growth by 2032," the ICC said in a statement.

Sinner adds former trainer and physio of Djokovic to his coaching team

New York, United States - World number one Jannik Sinner has added fitness coach Marco Panichi and physiotherapist Ulises Badio to his staff following the dismissal of two members after he escaped a doping ban despite failing two drug tests in March.

The Italian confirmed the appointment in a social media post on Monday, with Panichi and Badio bringing vast experience after having worked with 24-times Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic.

Sinner had tested positive for the steroid clostebol, which can be used to build muscle mass, after his physio Giacomo Naldi applied an over-the-counter spray to a cut on his own hand



Jannik Sinner (L) with Ulises Badio (C) and Marco Panichi

before carrying out treatments on him.

The spray was given to Naldi by trainer Umberto Ferrara.

Sinner fired both team members last month, before winning the U.S. Open title to make it two Grand Slam trophies in 2024 following his breakthrough Australian Open triumph.

The 23-year-old was cleared of fault or negligence last month by an independent tribunal which accepted the explanation that he had inadvertently been contaminated with the drug by Naldi, the International Tennis Integrity Agency said.

The World Anti-Doping Agency had said it would review the decision and reserved the right to appeal.

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The hidden costs of Fashion Week prove to be a barrier for young designers who find it difficult to keep pace with established brands

CATWALK COSTS

As London Fashion Week (LFW) reaches its final days before the calendar moves to Milan, there is no doubt the city's fashion week stands as a beacon of creativity and innovation. Yet, beneath the surface lies a stark reality - the prohibitive costs of runway presentations are increasingly pushing young designers to the margins of this influential event.

While data from the British Fashion Council (BFC) does not cover the average cost of staging a runway show at LFW, independent designers who are looking to produce a show outside of the LFW show space, and who don't have access to financing, will need a minimum of 50,000 to 100,000 pounds to put on an event.

This substantial investment covers venue hire, production, models, hair and makeup teams, and a myriad of other expenses essential to creating the spectacle buyers and press have come to expect.

For established luxury houses, these costs are often absorbed as part of sub-

Innovation

This financial barrier is not merely a loss to the designers, it threatens the very diversity and innovation that have long been hallmarks of British fashion. The BFC has long championed that those designers who successfully show at LFW see increases in stockists and a boost in press coverage. Yet without access to these opportunities, young talents risk being overshadowed in an increasingly competitive global market.

Alternative formats

In response, many emerging designers are pivoting to alternative presentation formats. Digital show-cases, intimate salon-

Designers opting out

Thankfully, the once-sacrosanct runway show during Fashion Week is no longer considered an absolute necessity for designers. This change in perspective represents a significant departure from long-held industry norms and reflects broader transformations in the fashion business model.

The decision to forgo a runway presentation during Fashion Week, once viewed as a potential career mis-step, is now increasingly seen as a strategic choice. This shift in attitude is driven by several factors, chief among them the substantial costs associated with mounting a full-scale fashion show.

ion show.

During the pandemic many designers questioned the return on investment of these extravagant presentations. Moreover, the rise of digital platforms and social media has provided alternative avenues for designers to showcase their collections. Virtual presentations, look books, and direct-to-consumer marketing strategies offer more cost-effective options that can, in some cases, provide greater reach and engagement than traditional runway shows.

This trend is not limited to emerging designers. Established brands, too, are reassessing the frequency and format of their fashion week participation. Some are opting for intimate, salon-style presentations or allowing for more flexibility in their creative and production timelines.

Sustainability

The industry's acceptance of this new paradigm reflects a broader recognition of the need for sustainability - both financial and environmental - in fashion. By reducing the pressure to produce multiple collections per year and stage elaborate shows, brands can focus on creating higher quality designs.

However, this shift does not signal the death knell for Fashion Week. Rather, it points to a more diverse and flexible approach to fashion presentation. The catwalk remains a very powerful marketing tool and a vital platform for many brands and occasions.

As the fashion calendar continues to evolve, the industry's increasing flexibility regarding show formats and timing may well lead to more innovative and sustainable practices. In this new landscape, a designer's success is measured not by their adherence to traditional schedules, but by their ability to connect with their audience and create desirable products - whether on or off the runway.

(Courtesy: fashionunited.com)



stantial marketing budgets, paling in comparison to the extravagant spectacles mounted by industry titans like Burberry and Tommy Hilfiger, who invest millions in lavish productions to satisfy customers' growing appetite for 'fashiontainment' - immersive experiences that transcend mere clothing displays.

For emerging designers, even the minimal sums required can represent an insurmountable hurdle. Many young designers cite financial constraints as the primary obstacle to officially showing during fashion week.

style presentations, and collaborative group shows are becoming more prevalent. While these adaptations demonstrate the resilience and creativity of the UK's fashion ecosystem, they also underscore the need for structural change.

As the industry grapples with issues of sustainability and inclusivity, addressing the financial barriers at entry level at events like LFW must be part of the conversation. While there are funding opportunities and platforms like Fashion East that cater to emerging brands, a more established business, or

a designer that may have had a challenging season and cannot afford to host a runway show, would find it more challenging to participate under current norms.

The future of British fashion depends not just on the established names that dominate the headlines, but on nurturing the next generation of design talent. As the costs of traditional runway shows continue to escalate, finding innovative ways to showcase emerging designers will be crucial to maintaining London's status as a global fashion capital.

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