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Oman ranks 50th in Human Development Index

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has improved its ranking by nine places to 50th in the latest Human Development Index (HDI) released last week by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The 2025 Human Development Report, titled 'A Matter of Choice: People and Possibilities in the Age of Artificial Intelligence', reveals an unprecedented slowdown in human development

progress. It analyses progress across a range of indicators, including health, education and income, which form the basis of the index. Projections for 2024 indicate stalled progress in all regions globally.

Oman is classified among countries with 'Very high human development'. The sultanate's HDI now stands at 0.858, up from 0.819 last year. Life expectancy at birth has risen to 80 years from 73.9 years in 2024 and expected years of schooling



have increased to 13.4 years from 13 years, while mean years of schooling remain 11.9 years. Gross national income per capita is now US\$36,096, up from US\$32,967 last year - all key components of HDI.

Among Gulf Cooperation

Council states, the UAE leads at 15th place, followed by Saudi Arabia (37th), Bahrain (38th), Qatar (43rd), Oman (50th) and Kuwait (52nd).

Globally, the highest-ranked countries are Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Australia, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, and Belgium. The lowest-ranked are Niger, Chad, the Central African Republic, Somalia and South Sudan.

The report highlights how ar-

tificial intelligence could potentially reignite development, but warns of weak progress despite the world moving past the crises of 2020-2021. Excluding these crisis years, the projected increase in global human development for 2025 is the smallest since 1990.

"For decades, we have been on track to reach a very high human development world by 2030, but this deceleration signals a very real threat to global progress," said Achim Steiner,

UNDP Administrator. "If 2024's sluggish progress becomes 'the new normal', the 2030 milestone could slip by decades making our world less secure, more divided, and more vulnerable to economic and ecological shocks."

The report also highlights growing inequality between countries with 'Low HDI' and 'Very High HDI' for the fourth consecutive year, reversing a long-term trend of narrowing gaps between wealthy and poor nations.



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ASMED to launch national programme on Monday to boost handicrafts sector

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) will launch a national programme on Monday to support the sultanate's handicraft industry and empower local entrepreneurs. It aims to enhance the sector's contribution to economic diversification and aligns with Vision 2040 objectives.

The programme will equip Omani artisans with the skills and tools needed to compete in modern markets while preserving traditional craftsmanship.



ASMED is working to unify national efforts to develop the crafts industry under the programme, focusing on technical development, investment opportunities and market access. The goal is to

elevate the capabilities of artisans and promote high-quality products that reflect Omani heritage and innovation.

As part of its broader efforts, ASMED has also introduced the Riyada Academy, an online training platform designed to equip entrepreneurs and craftsmen with essential business skills.

The academy offers courses covering feasibility studies, market analysis, marketing strategies and finance management. It caters to a diverse audience, including students, government and private sector employees, entrepreneurs and retirees look-

ing to develop new skills. The platform is also part of the government's digital transformation efforts, ensuring that Omani businesses remain competitive.

ASMED recently issued new regulations to support the crafts sector and identified 20 key crafts, including production of Omani daggers, pottery, leatherwork, palm-frond weaving, gypsum carving, incense preparation, and traditional fishing tools.

According to the authority's estimates, more than 23,000 craftsmen are currently engaged in these industries across the sultanate.

Gaza health system at breaking point: WHO

Gaza City, Palestine - Gaza's healthcare system is on the verge of collapse amid intensified Israeli military operations, widespread displacement and critical shortages of basic supplies, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned on Friday.

Only 19 of the territory's 36 hospitals are still partially functioning, WHO said, and many are struggling to provide even emergency services.

'At least 94% of all hospitals in the Gaza Strip are damaged or destroyed,' the UN health agency said in a statement.

Four major facilities - Kamal

Adwan, Indonesian Hospital, Hamad Hospital for Rehabilitation and Prosthetics, and European Gaza Hospital - have suspended services in recent days due to attacks or their location within evacuation zones.

WHO recorded 28 attacks on health facilities in Gaza in the past week alone, bringing the total to 697 since fighting began in October 2023.

'The increased hostilities and new evacuation orders in northern and southern Gaza threaten to push even more health facilities out of service,' the agency warned.

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MoCIIP crackdown on hidden trade enters new phase

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) is intensifying efforts to combat hidden trade practices as part of a broader strategy to improve Oman's business climate and attract long-term investment.

MoCIIP announced it will soon launch nationwide awareness campaigns targeting these practices, following a meeting of the National Team to Combat Hidden Trade held on Thursday.

The team, established under a ministerial decision (No 412/2023), reviewed progress from the first phase of a commercial registration audit. Officials said the audit uncovered several violations, particularly by entities operating in sectors previously restricted to foreign investors.

"The results reflect a clear commitment to addressing these illegal practices that negatively impact the business environment in the sultanate," the ministry said in a statement.

Hidden trade typically involves foreign individuals or entities operating businesses through local intermediaries without proper li-



The second phase focuses on developing oversight methodologies and expanding the scope of auditing to include the largest number of governorates

NASRA BINT SULTAN AL HABSI

censing or legal oversight.

Nasra bint Sultan al Habsi, Director General of Commerce and head of the national team, said the success of the first phase demonstrated the importance of joint efforts between government and private entities. "The second phase focuses on developing oversight methodologies and expanding the scope of auditing to

include the largest number of governorates, while involving all relevant sectors in these national efforts," she said.

She added that the next phase will also include awareness campaigns to inform the public and business community about the risks posed by hidden trade, including its negative impact on competitiveness and investor confidence.

MoCIIP's plan includes stricter enforcement of the Foreign Capital Investment Law, outlining conditions, licensing requirements, and procedures for foreign entities to legally operate in Oman.

The national team includes representatives from the Ministry of Labour, the Government Communication Centre at the Ministry of Information, the Tax Authority, the Central Bank of Oman, the Royal Oman Police, the Public Authority for Consumer Protection, and the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development.

The ministry said the goal is to create a fair and competitive commercial environment that protects consumer rights and supports both local and foreign investors.

Nationwide survey on radio, TV content launched

Our Correspondent Muscat

The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) has launched a nationwide survey to assess public satisfaction with the content aired on Oman's radio and television channels.

The survey, which began on May 18 and is to run till June 18, is being conducted via phone calls from the number 24070515, between 8am and 2pm.

The initiative aims to evaluate the quality and diversity of programming, gauge audience preferences, and assess engagement levels with existing content. It also seeks to determine how well the programmes reflect public expectations.

According to NCSI, the survey is part of efforts to strengthen communication between the Ministry of Information and the public by involving citizens directly in the development of media content. The poll targets Omani citizens aged 18 and above, across all governorates, and includes both men and women.

ICAI OMAN CHAPTER AND OCCI LAUNCH OMANI CFO MENTORING PROGRAMME AT SUR

In a significant move to empower the next generation of financial leaders in the Sultanate, the Oman Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) (Under the sponsorship of the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS)) in collaboration with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), South Sharqiyah branch, officially launched the Omani CFO Mentoring Programme at Sur.

This launch marks the continuation of ICAI Oman Chapter's flagship initiative, which has already been successfully implemented in Salalah, Muscat, Barka and Sohar.. The initiative is a step in alignment with Oman Vision 2040, focusing on human capital development, leadership building, and financial empowerment.

"The programme represents a strategic investment in Oman's human capital, with a focus on building a pipeline of capable, ethical, and visionary CFOs who can lead public and private enterprises in the future. It marks yet another milestone in the ICAI Oman Chapter's commitment to building a resilient and financially empowered Oman. The curriculum encompasses intensive mentorship, practical exposure, and leadership-building modules in finance and accounting," said CA Gaurav Kapoor, Chairperson of ICAI Oman Chapter, who led the opening session of the programme.

"The advanced phase of the Omani CFO Program, in partnership with ICAI, underscores our commitment to nurturing Omani talent and promoting financial leadership in line with Oman Vision 2040," said Dr. Abdullah Masoud Al Harthy, Board Member of OCCI and Chairman of the CFO Mentoring Programme Committee.

Mr. Anwar bin Hamad Al-Sinani, Chairman of the OCCI branch in South Sharqiyah Governorate, added: "Such programmes fulfill many of the Chamber's core objectives by enhancing knowledge, scientific understanding, and practical experience among finance professional and business leaders."



Dr. Abdullah Masoud Al Harthy, Board Member of OCCI and Chairman of the CFO Mentoring Programme Committee



CA Gaurav Kapoor, Chairperson of ICAI Oman Chapter



Mr. Anwar bin Hamad Al-Sinani, Chairman of the OCCI branch in South Sharqiyah Governorate



The Omani CFO Mentoring Programme at Sur features a robust structure spread across eight week-ends, involving more than seventy Omani participants and around fifty mentors from the ICAI Oman Chapter. For the first time, the Sur programme has introduced interactive group discussions, MCQ-based as-

sessments, real-life case studies, and One-on-One Mentoring sessions to simulate real CFO-level decision-making challenges. Participants will be assessed on their performance in technical sessions, case-solving abilities, communication, and overall leadership acumen.

Dr. Zahran Al Salti, Dean of CBFS,

stated: "The Omani CFO Mentoring Programme is playing a critical role in building local financial capacity. The sponsorship of ICAI Oman Chapter is central to CBFS's vision of industry and community engagement, local capacity building and strategic collaboration."

Since its establishment in 2008

under the sponsorship of CBFS, the ICAI Oman Chapter has grown into a prominent platform for financial professionals in Oman. With a membership base exceeding 350 professionals, the chapter is actively involved in mentoring, knowledge-sharing, and leadership development initiatives across the Sultanate.

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MAFWR to invest RO243mn in 4 major dams

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has announced that four major dams will be constructed in Muscat and North Batinah as part of a national strategy to boost water self-sufficiency and mitigate flooding caused by heavy rainfall.

According to a ministry official, the RO243mn initiative will be implemented under four agreements signed last week in collaboration with Ministry of Finance and Islamic Development Bank.



The four new dams will be on Wadi al Khoudh in Seeb, Wadi Majlash in Quriyat, Wadi Rajma in Shinas and Wadi Ahan in Saham



Two dams will be located in Muscat - Wadi al Khoudh dam in Seeb will span 1,170m in length and 46m height, with storage capacity of 77mn cubic metres, and Wadi Majlash dam in Quriyat, measuring 520m in length and 95m height, will have storage capacity of 140mn cubic metres.

In North Batinah, the Wadi Rajma dam in Shinas will stretch 2,480m and stand 25m high, capable of holding 14.5mn cubic metres of water. The Wadi Ahan dam in Saham will be 1,024m long and 42m high, with a storage volume of 26.3mn cubic metres.

"These projects aim to protect populated and agricultural areas downstream from flood risks while supporting national water security goals," the MAFWR official said.

Oman currently faces an annual water deficit of 316mn cubic metres, according to ministry data. Renewable water resources contribute about 1,318mn cubic metres per year, but growing demand - especially from agriculture, which consumes around 83% of available supply - is straining existing resources.

Karwa unveils vehicle line-up for defence, logistics sectors

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Karwa Motors has launched a new range of vehicles in a strategic partnership with Impel and technical cooperation with MAN designed for logistics, military and public transport at its factory in Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

Developed to meet needs of local, regional and international markets, the vehicles highlight Karwa Motors' efforts to align with modern transport technologies. The project supports both government and private sector requirements, while reinforcing the company's focus on enhancing local automotive manufacturing in the sultanate.

The company is currently producing a variety of vehicles developed to meet high safety and efficiency standards, targeting transport needs across cities and remote areas.



remote areas. The line-up underscores Karwa's contribution to Oman's transport infrastructure.

Karwa Motors also confirmed its continued collaboration with Oman-based Armored Group to produce armoured vehicles for special applications. The partnership aims to expand the company's product portfolio to serve key sectors requiring specialised transport solutions.

Ibrahim bin Ali al Balushi, CEO of Karwa Motors, said the new vehicles launched reflect ongoing efforts to strengthen the automotive industry in Oman. "The goal is to serve domestic markets and expand exports to regional and global destinations, while supporting industrial self-sufficiency."

He added that such vehicle manufacturing developments enhance the presence of Omani industries in wider markets and support national economic diversification objectives.

"Production of these vehicles represents a major step in our industrial and technological expansion," Balushi said. "It consolidates Oman's position as a centre for specialised vehicle manufacturing, leveraging the infrastructure available at SEZAD."

2025 khareef preparations reviewed

Our Correspondent
Salalah

H E Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, visited Dhofar on Thursday to oversee tourism and development projects and assess the governorate's readiness for the 2025 khareef season.

During the tour, H E Mahrouqi reviewed ongoing projects aimed at upgrading hospitality facilities, heritage sites and public services. He underscored the importance of cooperation between government entities and private sector partners to provide quality services that meet visitor expectations and boost the local economy.

As part of the visit, the minister inspected Salalah Port to review expansion work and evaluate its capacity to receive cruise ships. Salalah has been



H E Mahrouqi expressed satisfaction with the pace of infrastructure upgrades and expressed confidence in Dhofar's preparedness for the season. He reaffirmed the ministry's focus on improving the visitor experience through innovation, cultural heritage and environmental stewardship.

The khareef season, which runs from June 21 to September 20, is a major draw for nature lovers and adventure seekers who are attracted by Dhofar's cool climate, green landscapes and cultural activities.

Meanwhile, senior officials in Dhofar met on Thursday to evaluate overall readiness for the season. The meeting, chaired by H H Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, discussed coordinated planning across all sectors to deliver a seamless tourism experience.



إعلان مناقصة

Tender Announcement

تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة الشركات المختصة للمشاركة في المناقصة أدناه

SOHAR Port and Freezone invites specialised companies to the following tender

No رقم	Tender Ref الرقم المرجعي	Title العنوان	Tender Fee OMR الرسوم
1	SIPC 2025-052	Chemical Washing for External Wall of SOHAR Port Admin Building	26.25

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3101-007970-500	Account Number رقم الحساب
Oman Arab bank SAOC - Main Br بنك عمان العربي ش.م.ع.م - الفرع الرئيسي	Bank Name اسم البنك
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Trump helps Gulf states become AI powers amid US-China tech tensions

Arthur Sullivan

One of the marquee events of US President Donald Trump's recent trip to the Middle East was a high-powered lunch at the royal court in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh.

The guest list of those joining Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman caught the eye. Alongside Tesla chief confidante Elon Musk were some of the biggest names in global artificial intelligence (AI) – Nvidia's Jensen Huang, Sam Altman of ChatGPT parent OpenAI, Google president Ruth Porat and Amazon CEO Andy Jassy, to name a few.

Their collective presence soon made sense, when several US tech firms announced a range of deals with Saudi Arabia on AI funding worth tens of billions of dollars during the Trump visit.

Among the most eye-catching: Nvidia agreed to sell hundreds of thousands of high-end chips to Humain, a new state-back Saudi AI venture unveiled the day before Trump arrived. Meanwhile the chip designer Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) and chipmaker Qualcomm also made major commitments.

China hawks on alert

It comes as Saudi Arabia ramps up investment in artificial intelligence and as the Trump administration seeks to cement US supremacy in machine learning and the production of high-end semiconductors.

Karen E Young, a Middle East expert at the Columbia University Center on Global Energy Policy in New York, believes the US and Saudi Arabia are natural partners when it comes to artificial intelligence, due to Riyadh's capacity to build and run data centers.



Donald Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia was marked by several AI investment deals

Donald Trump's recent visit to the Middle East was defined by a flurry of artificial intelligence investment deals involving Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Critics say it could help China gain access to critical technology

"They are able to deploy enormous electricity supply from gas and solar power and they do not hesitate in regulatory issues or citing for data centers or power plants and can deploy quickly. This gives them an advantage," she told DW.

Yet the deal spree has led to criticism in Washington, including from within Trump's administration. The critics' argument is that providing high-end chips to Middle Eastern countries could ultimately benefit China in the global race for AI supremacy with the US.

China has deep commercial and political ties in the Middle

East and some believe chips sold by the US to the region could end up finding their way to China.

In order to sell AI-capable chips to the Middle East, the Trump administration scrapped rules introduced by former US President Joe Biden towards the end of his time in office in 2024 prohibiting their sale to certain countries, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Companies such as Microsoft and Nvidia had criticised this so-called AI Diffusion Rule, saying it stifled innovation.

However, the widespread fears over possible Chinese ac-

cess is reflected in the fact that the US House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party has introduced new legislation "to stop advanced US AI chips from falling into the hands of adversaries like the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)."

Martin Chorzempa, an expert on China with the Peterson Institute for International Economics, says whether China benefits depends on whether it is "able to access the chips or the models they produce or run."

"There is a concern that China may be able to either divert the chips themselves or gain access remotely to them," he told DW.

David Sacks, chair of Trump's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology and the self-styled White House AI czar, pushed back strongly against criticism that the Gulf deals could benefit China in a post on messaging platform X.

The alternative was to "exclude critical geo-strategic, resource-rich friends and allies from our AI ecosystem," he wrote, adding: "Every country will want to participate in the AI revolution. If we align with them, we will pull them into our orbit. If we reject them, we will drive them into China's arms."

Gulf states get serious about AI

Whatever about China, it is clear that Saudi Arabia and the UAE have major AI ambitions as they look to reduce their economic dependence on oil.

"Saudi Arabia is very serious about AI as a strategic sector for diversification," said Karen E Young. "It plays to its assets in abundant energy supply, and it allows the kingdom a bridge to future energy demand."

She considers the UAE "likely more advanced" in AI develop-

ment than Saudi Arabia, having pushed it from an earlier date.

Another deal announced during Trump's Gulf tour saw the US and UAE agree to build the largest AI campus outside the US, with the agreement giving the UAE access to US-made advanced chips.

The UAE has established a technology group called G42 as its main AI outlet, with Microsoft having already invested more than \$1.5bn.

For US companies seeking investment, the Gulf states increasingly represent an attractive opportunity given their own enthusiasm to develop and their control of some of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds.

Humain, the new Saudi vehicle, is entirely owned by the county's Public Investment Fund (PIF) which has close to \$1tn at its disposal. The PIF previously launched other AI ventures, while state oil company Saudi Aramco has struck partnerships with US chipmakers Cerebras and Groq.

"These places have two of the most important ingredients to become major AI powers, and are lacking now just computing and talent," said Martin Chorzempa. "But with enough power, capital, and it appears soon chips, the talent may flock there."

According to Karen E Young, access to advanced tech is a "national priority" for Saudi Arabia, and Trump's willingness to engage as a "transactional issue rather than a security issue or policy challenge" helps that goal.

Yet, while the flurry of investment appears to put the Gulf states on a solid footing to become vital AI hubs of the future, experts believe it is not automatically going to be "win-win." DW



Maros Sefcovic

EU urges 'respect' after Trump threatens 50% tariffs

Brussels, Belgium – The European Union's Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maros Sefcovic said the bloc is committed to securing a trade deal that "works for both" and that is based on "respect, not threats" after US President Trump threatened a 50% tax on all imports from the European Union.

"The EU's fully engaged, committed to securing a deal that works for both," EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic said after a call with US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick.

"EU-US trade is unmatched and must be guided by mutual respect, not threats. We stand ready to defend our interests," he said.

President Trump recommended Friday a 50% tariff on the European Union after complaining that negotiations were not going well and Brussels was "difficult to deal with".

Trump took to social media to share his thoughts, suggesting that the elevated duties should start on June 1, in less than a month.

Agencies

Bitcoin hits new record high as crypto industry scores US legislation win

Tina Teng

Bitcoin surged to a fresh record high on Friday, fuelled by optimism that the US Congress will soon pass a bill ill for stablecoin-the GENIUS Act, which is set to be the first regulatory framework under the Trump Administration.

During Thursday's Asian session, the world's largest cryptocurrency soared past \$111,000, surpassing its previous all-time high of over \$109,000 set during President Trump's inauguration on January 20.

The rally was supported not only by legislative developments but also by increasing institutional interest. Crypto guru Michael Saylor's firm, Strategy, disclosed a further aggressive Bitcoin purchase worth \$765mn on Monday, bringing its total holdings to over \$63bn. Major financial institutions, including JP-Morgan Chase, Morgan Stanley and BlackRock, have also expanded crypto offerings to clients.

"Perhaps the most crucial shift is who's buying. This is the first real bull market where institutional participation is front and centre," said Josh Gilbert, market analyst at eToro Australia.

Stablecoins are cryptocurrencies designed to maintain a stable value by being pegged to reference assets such as the US

dollar, the euro or commodities like gold.

On Monday, a group of Senate Democrats dropped their opposition to the legislation, allowing it to clear a key procedural vote and raising hopes that the Senate will pass it as early as this week. The bill is expected to include provisions aimed at protecting stablecoin holders and regulating potential abuse for criminal or terrorist financing.

Previously, the bill had stalled over concerns about potential conflicts of interest, stemming from President Trump's and his family's involvement in the cryptocurrency.

Trump launched his own meme coin in January, while the Trump family business supported the launch of a new stablecoin, USD1, in March. USD1 is pegged to US dollar deposits and backed by short-term US Treasuries.

David Sacks, the White House's crypto tsar and a senior AI adviser to Trump, said in an interview with CNBC that the bill's passage would boost demand for US government debt. "If we provide the legal clarity and legal framework for this, I think we could create trillions of dollars of demand for our Treasuries practically overnight," he said.

(Source: Euronews.com)



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Profit and Loss account for the year ended 31st December 2024		
(R.O. '000)		
Details	Current Year	Previous Year
Gross interest income	1,498	2,097
Interest Expense	(1,257)	(1,571)
Net Interest Income	241	526
Other operating Income :		
1. Dividend Income	-	-
2. Net Fees and Commission Income	72	353
a) Fee and commission Income	241	504
Less: b) Fee and commission Expense	(169)	(151)
3. Net Foreign Exchange Income	119	230
a) Income	119	230
Less: b) Expense	-	-
4. Net Income from dealing in Securities	-	-
a) Gain / (Loss)	-	-
Less: b) Expense	-	-
5. Net Income from Investment Securities	1,039	497
a) Income	1,111	497
Less: b) Expense	(72)	-
Gross Income	1,471	1,606
General Administrative Expenses	(2,510)	(2,983)
Depreciation	(294)	(360)
Total Operating Cost	(2,804)	(3,343)
Net operating Profit (Profit on ordinary activities before provisions)	(1,333)	(1,737)
Income from subsidiaries	-	-
a) Income from associate companies	-	-
a) Income from other Licensed Activities	-	-
a) Investment Activities	-	-
Other Income	769	963
Profit from sale of non-banking assets	-	-
Bad debts written off	-	-
ECL Allowance(net) charged for Loans & Advances	2,575	(9,907)
ECL Allowance(net) charged for Investments	-	4
ECL Allowance(net) charged for Placements	-	-
ECL Allowance(net) charged for Off Balance Sheet Items	20	104
ECL Allowance(net) charged for Others(if any)	(1)	2
Provision for diminution in value of investments	-	-
Provision for crystallized un-booked risks & commitments	-	-
Profit for the year after loan loss provisions	2,030	(10,571)
Taxation	-	(2,043)
Net Profit After Tax	2,030	(12,614)
Other Comprehensive Income for the Year		
- Movement in fair value of available for sale /FVOCI investments , for the year	-	-
- Effects of currency translation for the year	-	-
- Any other comprehensive income for the year (Please Specify)	-	-
Total Comprehensive income for the year	2,030	(12,614)

Balance Sheet as on 31st December 2024		
(R.O. '000)		
Assets (Net of total ECL)	Current Year	Previous Year
1. Cash	496	182
2. Balances with Central Bank of Oman	3,933	4,559
3. Capital Deposit with CBO	500	500
4. Government & Other Securities	-	-
5. Treasury & Other Bills	26,560	15,000
6. Balances due from H.O., Branches, Principal shareholders & Affiliates abroad	557	591
7. Due from Banks		
(i) Placements	2,107	3,846
(ii) Loans & Advances	-	-
8. Other Money Market palcements	-	-
9. Investments	-	122
10. Loans, Advances & Overdraft (Net of loan loss provision and reserve interest)	22,148	34,565
11. Tangible fixed assets	2,374	2,572
12. Losses carried forward	-	-
13. Other assets	2,596	2,408
Total assets	61,271	64,345
Liabilities	Current Year	Previous Year
1. Deposits (incl. Govt.)	28,698	34,007
a) Demand	6,570	9,247
b) Savings	3,826	4,243
c) Time	18,302	20,517
2. Certificate of Deposits	-	-
3. Due to HO branches, principal shareholders & affiliates abroad	73	27
4. Due to Banks :		
(i) Placements	68	515
(ii) Borrowings	-	-
5. Other Money Market Deposits	-	-
6. Borrowings from CBO	-	-
7. Assigned Capital	40,500	40,500
8. Reserves	-	-
9. Retained Earnings	(9,849)	(11,879)
10. Other Liabilities	1,781	1,175
Total Liabilities	61,271	64,345

Changan Eado Plus brings versatility and refinement at RO110 per month

The Changan Eado Plus brings together performance, style, and innovation in a well-rounded sedan designed for today's drivers. Available in two well-equipped variants, Limited and Trend, the Eado Plus caters to different preferences without compromising on technology, safety, or value.

Both share the same powerful 1.5L Turbo GDI engine producing 170hp and 260Nm of torque, paired with a 7-speed dual-clutch transmission, delivering smooth power with excellent fuel efficiency at 18.3km/litre.

The Trend variant makes a strong case for everyday comfort and convenience. It features 17-inch dual-tone alloy wheels, LED headlights and taillights, a sunroof, and rain-sensing wipers. Inside, it includes leather seats, a 13.2-inch touchscreen infotainment system, a 10.25-inch digital instrument display, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, and remote engine start.

Safety is well-covered with ABS, traction control, four airbags, hill-start and descent control, rear parking sensors, and a right-front blind spot camera.

For those seeking an extra layer of technology, comfort, and safety, the Limited variant builds on the Trend with a comprehensive upgrade in features and sophistication. Visually, it stands out with 18-inch alloy wheels, a panoramic sunroof, exterior welcome lights, and electronically foldable rearview mirrors. Hidden electronic door handles and a fixed tail wing give it a sleek,



This EMI is based on a 20% down payment and a six-year financing plan, available through participating banks and subject to credit approval for salaried individuals

modern touch.

Inside, the Limited offers ventilated leather seats, 6-way power adjustment for the driver, a rear armrest with cup holders, wireless charging, and power windows with anti-pinch function. It also boasts a sound system with six speakers and features a fully digital 10" instrument cluster.

Where the Limited truly excels is in its safety and driver assistance features. These include Forward Collision Warning, Active Emergency Braking, 540° panoramic camera, Blind Spot Detection, Lane Departure

Warning and Lane Keeping Assist, Traffic Jam Assist, and ADAS Level 2 driving support; features that put it in league with more premium sedans.

The Eado Plus Limited also offers exceptional value with

monthly installments starting at just RO110. This EMI is based on a 20% down payment and a six-year financing plan, available through participating banks and subject to credit approval for salaried individuals.

With both variants offering compelling features, the Changan Eado Plus delivers versatility and refinement tailored to

a wide range of drivers.

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE) offers state-of-the-art showrooms located in Qurum, Mawaleh, Suhar, Ibri and Salalah, along with additional new showrooms in Nizwa, Barka and Sur.

In addition, AGAE has established fourteen service centres across Oman.

New initiative to support visually impaired in Oman

Al Noor Blind Association, in partnership with Oman Refreshment Company (REFCO), has launched a new initiative to support individuals with visual impairments in Dakhliyah governorate.

The community initiative includes the distribution of key assistive tools such as white canes, Braille paper, tactile watches, specialised sports balls, and glucose monitors - resources that can help people lead more independent lives.

The equipment was distributed during a community gathering hosted at Al Noor's centre in Nizwa, Dakhliyah governorate, bringing together members of the blind and low-vision community, volunteers, supporters, and representatives from Oman REFCO.

Sultan bin Ahmed al Sabahi, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Al Noor Blind Association, said, "This collaboration reflects our shared commitment with Oman REFCO to social responsibility and inclusion. Together, we're helping more people across

Al Noor Blind Association and Oman REFCO collaborate to provide essential tools that promote greater independence

Oman access the tools they need to pursue education, employment, and fuller participation in society."

Sulaiman bin Abdulla al Salmi, Director of People, Culture and Corporate Services at Oman REFCO, added, "As a company deeply connected to the communities we serve, we are grateful to support Al Noor Blind Association, whose work addresses real needs with care and consistency. As a company with deep roots in Oman, we're glad to contribute to efforts that strengthen our local communities."

This initiative falls within the ongoing collaboration between Al Noor Blind Association and Oman Refreshment Company (REFCO), reflecting both entities' commitment to supporting and empowering individuals with visual impairments, and enhancing their role in society by providing tools that improve quality of life and promote meaningful inclusion across all aspects of daily life.

Ominvest publishes third Sustainability Report

Ominvest announced the release of its third Sustainability Report for the fiscal year 2024, marking a transformative year of progress across its sustainability journey.

This report underscores the Group's deepened commitment to responsible investing practices, transparent disclosure, and alignment with international recognised ESG standards.

The 2024 report details key strategic milestones, including the alignment of Ominvest's ESG strategy with MSX and relevant global frameworks. Notably, Ominvest integrated ESG due diligence into its investment process, conducted its first double materiality assessment, and completed a comprehensive review of its sustainability strategy and related policies.

The company also launched its first recycling partnership, and implemented Group-wide ESG training and ISSB capacity-building initiatives, reinforcing its commitment to fostering a sustainability-conscious organisation. Abdulaziz al Balushi, Group CEO of Ominvest, commented: "The publication of our third Sustainability Report marks a significant



step forward in Ominvest's ongoing sustainability journey. This report reaffirms our steadfast commitment to responsible investing, transparent disclosure, and alignment with global ESG benchmarks. The milestones achieved in 2024 reflect our proactive approach to cultivating a more sustainable and resilient future for all our stakeholders."

Waleed al Yarubi, Chief People, Corporate Communication and Sustainability Officer at Ominvest, added: "Our achievements in 2024 underscore Ominvest's ambitions to establish new standards for ESG excellence within the region, and

demonstrate the effectiveness of cross-functional collaboration across the Group. From preparing for ISSB adoption to refining our policies, we are building a more agile and accountable ESG foundation, with the objective of driving positive impact and sustainable growth throughout our portfolio and beyond."

As the sustainability landscape continues to evolve, Ominvest remains committed to lead the drive towards sustainable investment and setting benchmarks for the regional investment ecosystem - further reinforcing its role as a responsible investor and corporate leader.

Meethaq team assists pilgrims at Muscat Airport, Ibri border

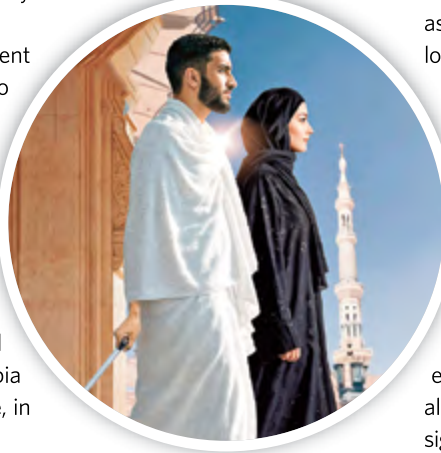
As part of its commitment to enhancing its role in social responsibility and community service, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat is launching an initiative focused on supporting pilgrims and facilitating their experience during their journey to perform hajj.

This initiative is a testament to Meethaq's dedication to strengthening its community engagement across various religious, national and social occasions.

From May 25 to June 4, Meethaq will deploy dedicated teams at Muscat International Airport and Rub' al Khali border with Saudi Arabia in Ibri, Dhahirah governorate, in partnership with Ibri Charity.

These teams will distribute gifts to the pilgrims, including a specially designed Hajj bag with essential supplies that will support them throughout their journey. In addition, the teams will assist pilgrims by providing information about available benefits and addressing any inquiries about Meethaq's services, ensuring a smooth and supportive

journey. Ali Ahmed al Lawati, Assistant General Manager - Meethaq Islamic, said, "We are delighted to celebrate this important religious occasion with our valued customers. This initiative offers an opportunity to enhance



services and support pilgrims with financial facilities.

"Our presence at Muscat International Airport and Rub' al Khali border reaffirms our commitment to customer care and providing a comfortable experience. We also extend our sincere gratitude to Ibri Charity and other partners for their continu-

ous support and efforts."

During the hajj season, Meethaq is offering tailored banking services for pilgrims. The services include Travel Finance at a competitive profit rate and a wide range of credit card benefits. These perks include travel assistance, exclusive airport lounge access, cashback rewards and much more, ensuring a seamless and rewarding experience for customers.

Meethaq's Travel Finance solution features 100% financing, easy installment plans, competitive pricing, minimal charges, and partnership with top travel operators in Oman. Pensioners can also avail Travel Finance by assigning their pension to Meethaq. Notably, The Travel Finance offering operates under the principle of service ijarah.

Meethaq Islamic also offers a wide range of credit cards designed to meet the diverse needs of customers. These include the Meethaq Lulu Credit Card, Visa Platinum Credit Card, Visa Gold Credit Card and Hafawa Visa Signature Credit Card.

Al-Futtaim IKEA announces further reductions in its sale, now up to 75% off

Al-Futtaim IKEA, the leading Swedish home furnishing retailer, has launched Oman's biggest sale of the year - and now, even further discounts have been announced.

With discounts up to 75% on everything from dreamy sofas to functional home essentials, there's never been a better and more affordable time to refresh one's space.

"Whether you're reimagining your living space, tackling the lit-

tle one's nursery or reorganising the kitchen, Al-Futtaim IKEA is making it easier and more accessible than ever," the company stated.

Smart solutions

Al-Futtaim IKEA believes that smart solutions should be accessible to everyone, combining clean design with everyday functionality. 'Explore affordable tech that enhances your daily routine, like sleek wireless chargers and



convenient plug-in outlets that seamlessly elevate your space,' it asserted. These practical, mini-



malist solutions are thoughtfully designed to simplify life without disrupting your aesthetic.

Sleep sanctuary

A good night's sleep is essential for a happy and healthy life, and Al-Futtaim IKEA is making it more convenient than ever to create the perfect sleep environment for the whole family.

'Find incredible deals on everything from comfortable mattresses to stylish bed frames, safe baby cribs, and soft bedding that will help you unwind in comfort. Whether upgrading your own bedroom, transforming a

tween haven, or preparing a nursery for a new arrival, you'll find everything you need to create a peaceful and comfortable space for everyone at home.'

Living space

The living room is the heart of the home, and Al-Futtaim IKEA is here to help you keep it fresh, stylish, and uniquely yours. Discover incredible savings on furniture pieces including sofas, armchairs and coffee tables, as

well as accessories like stylish rugs, cushions, décor accents and more.

Whether you're after a warm, cozy space for family gatherings, or a chic and modern setup for entertaining guests, you'll find everything you need to bring your vision to life at unbelievable prices.

Al-Futtaim IKEA is here to help you make the most out of every corner of your home, no matter how small.

Sohar International, Sohar Islamic launch credit card campaign

Reinforcing their customer-first philosophy and commitment to delivering superior banking experiences, Sohar International and Sohar Islamic have recently launched a Credit Card Acquisition and Spend Campaign aimed at enhancing value, convenience, and access for both new and existing clients.

The campaign encourages customers to apply for and actively use their Visa Credit Cards, unlocking a suite of exclusive benefits and a



chance to win premium prizes through monthly raffle draws.

Commenting on the launch, Abdul Qader al Sumali, Chief Retail and Premier Banking Officer at Sohar International, stated, "At Sohar International, we firmly believe that banking excellence is not merely about delivering financial solutions, it's about enriching our customers' lives through exceptional value-added benefits. Our credit card packages are thoughtfully designed to address a wide range of needs, from

comprehensive insurance and 24/7 global assistance to concierge services, travel and shopping privileges, and exclusive deals from leading international brands. These distinctive offerings reflect our unwavering commitment to delivering a holistic banking experience that places our customers at the forefront of distinction and exclusivity."

To incentivise engagement, Sohar International and Sohar Islamic are offering a com-

total of over 400 smart devices as part of this campaign. Winners will be selected through monthly raffle draws, with 30 winners from Sohar International and ten from Sohar Islamic each month. The prizes will be distributed on a rotating basis to maintain excitement and encourage sustained participation.

Anchored in a customer-centric product offering, the campaign highlights the compelling credit card proposition designed to meet the various needs and preferences of consumers.

ISG lifts Ambassador's Rolling Trophy at Mon Avis 2025

Indian School Al Ghubra organised the Mon Avis 2025 - the Inter School Debate Competition under the aegis of the Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman on May 18, a release stated.

The chief guest for the event was H E G V Srinivas, the Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman. The event was also graced by the presence of Syed Ahmad Salman, Chairman-Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, Vinoba M P, Senior Principal and Education Advisor, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, members of the School Management Committee of Indian School Al Ghubra and distinguished guests.

In his address, H E Srinivas stated that AI must be used with care and effectively by human beings as it has the knowledge of the entire world. He also emphasised on the concept of healthy debate which has been an integral part of the Indian tradition of "Vaad Vivaad".

Syed Ahmad Salman, Chairman-Board of Directors opined that debate is more than just words; it is about understanding perspectives, sharpening of logic and building confidence in each other. Omar al Bahri, a motivational speaker and organisational transformation consultant; Dr Geethu Anne Mathew, an eminent academician, researcher and writer; Dr Gurpreet Kaur, a



scientist and avid public speaker; and Sunil Sadasivan, an accomplished Toastmaster and Project Management Consultant comprised the esteemed panel of Judges.

Among the 15 schools across the sultanate that competed for the coveted Ambassador's

Rolling Trophy, Indian School Al Ghubra, emerged the overall champions. The young, prolific debaters expressed their views on the pressing topic 'Artificial Intelligence is a threat to human creativity and originality'.

Students actively exchanged their views on the topic. While

the team supporting the motion argued that AI undermines human ingenuity by generating art, music and writing with minimal human input, the team opposing the motion countered that AI can enhance creativity by serving as a tool for inspiration and innovation.

H E Srinivas and Syed Salman gave away the certificates and trophies to the winners. Brijesh Chowdary Mupparaju of Indian School Al Ghubra was adjudged the Best Rebuttal Speaker and Best Speaker.

Nathania Maria of Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir was the first runner-up and Janaki Aneesh of Indian School Sur was the second runner-up.

The team from Indian School Al Ghubra comprising Brijesh Chowdary Mupparaju and Aayath Khanum was declared the winner of the coveted Ambassador's Rolling Trophy for Mon Avis 2025.

This platform showcased the analytical skills and argumentative prowess of the students who confidently demonstrated their opinions with conviction.

SICO with MENA's best fixed income strategy award

SICO BSC (c), a leading regional asset manager, broker, and investment bank, with direct presence in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, has been honoured with the prestigious award of Best MENA Fixed Income Strategy over 1 Year for 2024 by Global Banking & Markets Middle East Awards.

The strategy achieved a remarkable net return of 5.4% in 2024, significantly outperforming the FTSE MENA Broad Bond Index, which recorded a return of 3.4%. This recognition marks the second time that SICO has received this esteemed award, following their recognition in 2022.

As of March 2025, SICO has US\$7.9bn in assets under management including six main GIPS Composites, alongside other customised management portfolio

lios and three public funds in fixed income and money market strategies.

Ali Marshad, Group Head of Fixed Income Asset Management at SICO, expressed his pride in receiving the award. "We are honoured to have once again received this prestigious recognition, which reflects our commitment to excellence in delivering value to our clients. This achievement is a testament to our investment philosophy, strong trading infrastructure, and dedicated team, especially in a year that proved challenging for this asset class.

"Additionally, our strategic presence in Saudi Arabia through SICO Capital further enhances our ability to support clients in the region and drive impactful investment outcomes. Our goal is



to build on this success by helping our clients achieve consistent and sustainable above-average returns, ensuring they benefit from our expertise in the evolving market landscape, while offering better protection on the downside."

Manuel al Mutawa, Vice President of Fixed Income Asset Management at SICO, highlighted the strategic approach that led to this success. "What helped us last year despite the market volatility was that we focused on maintaining a neutral duration with a skew towards non-investment grade assets, an overweight position in Egypt and Saudi, as well as particular security selection in high-yield corporates. Our regional diversification and active management allowed us to capture attractive opportu-

nities across both sovereign and quasi-sovereign and corporate issuers, while maintaining a strong risk-adjusted return profile for our clients."

Following the success of its SICO Fixed Income Fund, which was launched in 2013, SICO expanded its offerings by introducing the sharia'a-compliant Elzaad Sukuk Fund in 2023, which complements the existing SICO Capital Murabaha Fund for sharia'a investors. These initiatives allow clients to capitalise on short-, medium-, and long-term market opportunities while providing numerous customized products yielding high single-digit returns.

"Congratulations to SICO on this well-deserved recognition," said Victoria Behn, Managing Director of Global Banking & Markets.

OPINION

SALEH MIRI, MUSCAT DAILY COLUMNIST, IS AN ARCHITECT WHO CAME TO OMAN IN THE EARLY 1980S



Omani national population has surpassed 3mn, with an average age of 29.7 years

The Sultanate of Oman recently announced that its Omani national population has surpassed 3mn, with an average age of 29.7 years.

This figure aligns closely with the average age across the GCC, while in comparison, the average ages in France, the UK, the US and Iran are 42, 40, 38 and 34 years, respectively.

While Oman's youthful population benefits from substantial government support, with an annual national spending of RO1.1bn - a 23% increase over the previous year - the country must remain vigilant about potential health risks.

In Oman, 187 out of every 100,000 people die from non-communicable diseases, amounting to 5,600 deaths in 2024.

Raising awareness about healthy lifestyles is crucial for this young population, encouraging choices such as

using electric vehicles over conventional petrol-powered ones, adopting healthier diets, and reducing junk food consumption.

Additionally, the prevention and treatment of genetic disorders like thalassemia, which affects many in Oman, should be prioritised.

Inter-tribal marriages are a significant factor in the spread of such hereditary diseases. However, advancements in genetic therapies now offer hope, potentially benefiting 3% of the global population affected by similar conditions. Establishing a regional centre for genetic disorders would significantly enhance awareness and treatment options in Oman.

The same proactive approach applies to the treatment of cancer and diabetes, which also have a high prevalence in the sultanate. Innovations like proton beam therapy, a form of high-precision radiotherapy, have emerged in recent years, offering more targeted and effective cancer treatment. Further investments in artificial intelligence and digital health could revolutionise medical outcomes, delivering better results than conventional treatments and saving countless lives.

TOMORROW'S HEALTH

Overall, the long-term health and prosperity of a nation depend on preventive healthcare and innovative medical technologies. Oman, with its extensive international relations and commitment to health, is well-positioned to become a regional leader in this field, setting a benchmark for neighbouring countries.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Press & Publishing



Al Injaz International Private School celebrates graduation ceremony

Al Injaz International Private School hosted an unforgettable graduation ceremony, marked by joy, pride, and inspiring moments. The auspicious occasion was graced by the presence of Dr Badriya bint Ibrahim Al Sheehiya, adding a special touch of distinction and encouragement for the graduating students.

The ceremony featured a variety of engaging activities to evoke cherished memories, most notably the 'Trip Down Memory Lane' sessions, that showcased photos and videos highlighting the students' journey through their academic years, eliciting nostalgic smiles from all in attendance. Graduands and their parents

expressed overwhelming emotions as they watched the proud students receive their certificates. Tears of happiness and cheers filled the auditorium as families celebrated years of hard work and dedication. Many parents shared how proud they felt witnessing their children reach this significant milestone, emphasising the importance of education in shaping bright futures.

Dr Sheehiya's inspiring speech encouraged students to pursue their dreams with confidence and resilience. As the event concluded, the atmosphere was filled with optimism and hope for the graduates' bright futures ahead.

Ethnic Hungarian, Moldovan voters bailed out Romania's democracy

Without them, Nicusor Dan might not have become president of Romania

Bucharest, Romania - Last week, just before midnight on Sunday, an important piece of news spread quickly around the world: The hard-right candidate George Simion has been defeated, democracy in Romania is safe, and the liberal, pro-European mayor of Bucharest, Nicusor Dan, will be the next president of Romania.

Another-important piece of news followed, which came as a surprise to many Romanian observers but was not as widely reported internationally: Romania's ethnic Hungarians and Moldovan citizens who also hold Romanian passports voted in record numbers for Nicusor Dan, making a decisive contribution to his victory.

Conservative estimates say that over 500,000 - perhaps even over 700,000 - of these voters voted for Dan, which would account for a large proportion of his 830,000-vote lead over his opponent.

In short, without the votes of these two groups, Dan could have lost the election.

Hungarian and Moldovan votes
Ethnic Hungarians in Romania?



Supporters of Nicusor Dan celebrate on the streets of Bucharest

Moldovans with dual citizenship? For those who do not know Romania well, this might sound like a niche issue to be discussed by election buffs.

This probably explains why it received little international attention on the evening of the election.

The fact is, however, that both groups play an important role not only in domestic politics in Romania, but also, by extension, in Europe.

Hungarians have been a national minority in Romania since the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War I, when Transylvania and other regions became part of Romania.

There are currently around one million ethnic Hungarians

in Romania, which accounts for about 5.5% of the total population. Most of these ethnic Hungarian Romanians support Viktor Orban, the autocratic prime minister of neighbouring Hungary.

Just a week before the second round of Romania's presidential election, Orban gave his backing to hard-right candidate George Simion, even though Simion has an explicitly anti-Hungarian stance and was in the news several years ago for violent actions that targeted the Hungarian minority.

Orban likes to portray himself as the protector of all ethnic Hungarians outside Hungary. Nevertheless, from his perspective, backing Simion in Romania's presidential election was

Nicusor Dan received about 53.6% of the total vote, about 830,000 votes more than George Simion. The vote for Dan in all districts with a larger ethnic Hungarian population was massive

logical and of a higher priority because a Simion victory would have strengthened the 'sovereignist' camp - in other words, the autocratic, pro-Rus-

sian, anti-EU camp - in Europe.

For Romania's ethnic Hungarians, however, following Orban's lead and backing Simion was not an option. It would have meant voting for a politician with deep-seated anti-minority attitudes and, ultimately, against themselves. So, they didn't.

Outstanding result for Dan

This became clear on Sunday evening, when Romania's central electoral commission, the BEC, published the figures for each district (judet).

Nicusor Dan received about 53.6% of the total vote, about 830,000 votes more than George Simion. The vote for Dan in all districts with a larger

ethnic Hungarian population was massive.

Although there are no exact statistics on ethnic voting patterns, experts like the Transylvanian Hungarian sociologist Nandor Magyari estimate that Dan got between 550,000 and 600,000 votes from Romania's Hungarian minority.

"In this way, Romanian Hungarians voted for the preservation of liberal democracy and the continuation of Romania's Euro-Atlantic path," Magyari told DW.

Some fascinating records were broken in Sunday's election: In the Romanian district of Harghita, where 85% of residents are ethnic Hungarian, an incredible 91% voted for Nicusor Dan, his best result in any

Romanian district.

Moldovans vote in record numbers

Many Moldovans hold dual Moldovan-Romanian citizenship and are entitled to vote in elections in Romania.

These voters also voted for Dan in record numbers. The president-elect received about 135,000 votes in Moldova - some 88% of all votes cast there.

Most of what is now the Republic of Moldova and the Romanian region known as Moldavia were once both part of the Principality of Moldavia.

Three-quarters of the people in the Republic of Moldova are Romanian-speakers, and the country is occasionally referred to as the 'second Romanian state'.

Of the country's 2.45mn inhabitants, 640,000 hold dual Moldovan-Romanian citizenship. Many of this group live in western European countries and it is likely that they voted in large numbers for Nicusor Dan there, too.

The reason for this is that Dan's opponent, George Simion, is in favour of the reunification of Moldova and Romania and the creation of a 'Greater Romania' - an idea that is not very popular in Moldova.

Besides, Simion has been barred from entering Moldova since 2014.

What's more, Simion adopts a paternalistic tone towards Moldovans, which does not go down well with most of them. DW

THE SNOW WALKERS



People walk in a snowfall in the Northern Velebit National Park, Croatia, on Friday (Xinhua)

Haiti: At least 50 killed in attack by armed gang

Port-au-Prince, Haiti - At least 50 people, including children, were killed when an armed gang attacked the town of Preval in central Haiti, media reports said on Friday.

The assailants set fire to homes, raided a church and killed civilians in what witnesses described as a massacre. Among the victims was 86-year-old pastor Jockes Brutus, who was reportedly beheaded by attackers at the Maranatha Church.

"At least 50 bodies were found. Reaching the massacre site is almost impossible because the gangs still hold control. Fourteen of the bodies were found decapitated and burned," a witness told Spain's EFE news agency. The gang is believed to be operating under the name 'Self-Defence Coalition', according to initial claims.

The Haitian Bishops' Conference expressed 'deep sorrow' about the brutal killings and



At least 50 bodies were found. Reaching the massacre site is almost impossible because the gangs still hold control. Fourteen of the bodies were found decapitated and burned

A WITNESS

urged authorities to take immediate action.

Haiti has been plagued by a deepening crisis, with the capital, Port-au-Prince, now mostly under gang control and food in-

security threatening more than 11mn people.

More than 5,600 people were killed in gang violence in Haiti in 2024, according to UN figures.

Anadolu Agency

'Harvard will have to change its ways'

Washington, D.C., US - US President Donald Trump said on Friday that Harvard University will 'have to change its way' after his administration attempted to halt university's ability to enrol foreign students.

"Billions of dollars have been paid to Harvard. How ridiculous is that? Billions. ...And they have US\$52bn as an endowment. ...So, Harvard is going to have to change its ways," Trump told reporters at the White House.

His remarks came a day after Secretary of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Kristi Noem said the department would take away the university's ability to admit foreign students.

Noem said the Trump administration is holding Harvard



US President Donald Trump

accountable for 'fostering violence, antisemitism, and coordinating with the Chinese Communist Party on its campus'. However, a US judge on Friday temporarily blocked the Trump administration from re-

voking the university's ability to enrol foreign students.

When asked whether he is also considering stopping other universities from accepting foreign students, Trump said: "We're taking a look at a lot of

things."

The Trump administration has threatened to freeze federal funding for many universities, including Harvard, citing campus protests in support of Palestine and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programmes.

The administration has pulled US\$3bn in funding and threatened to take away Harvard's tax-exempt status.

Harvard has sued the administration in response, alleging that the funding freeze violates the First Amendment and federal law, which bars the president from directly or indirectly ordering the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to conduct or terminate an audit or investigation. Anadolu Agency

US to not reduce troops in South Korea: Pentagon

Washington, D.C., US - Pentagon chief spokesman Sean Parnell on Friday denied reports that the US is considering withdrawing thousands of American troops from South Korea.

"Reports that the DoD (Department of Defence) will reduce US troops in the Republic of Korea (ROK) are not true," Parnell wrote on X, linking a Wall Street Journal report.

His remarks came one day

after the newspaper reported that the DOD was developing an option to pull out roughly 4,500 troops and move them to other locations in the Indo-Pacific region, including Guam, citing officials and a person familiar with the matter.

"Anyone who's covered the Pentagon knows that we always evaluate force posture. That said, the US remains firmly committed to the ROK. Our alliance is iron clad," Parnell said.

About 28,500 US troops are currently stationed in South Korea.

Last month, US Indo-Pacific Command Commander Admiral Samuel Paparo Jr opposed any troops withdrawal from South Korea and warned it would jeopardise their ability to prevail against North Korea and in other possible conflicts against China and Russia.

Anadolu Agency



Turkish foreign minister to visit Russia next week

Ankara, Turkey - Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan will pay an official visit to Russia on May 26-27 at the invitation of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, according to foreign ministry sources on Saturday.

During the visit, Fidan will be received by Russian President Vladimir Putin and will hold a meeting with Lavrov.

He is also expected to hold bilateral talks with other senior Russian officials, including Russian presidential aide Vladimir Medinsky - who led the Russian delegation at the Russia-Ukraine talks held in Istanbul on May 16 - as well as Defence Minister Andrey Belousov.

In his meetings, Fidan is expected to discuss in detail issues related to bilateral relations between Türkiye and Russia.

Two key regional actors will review the current status of cooperation in key areas such as trade, energy, and tourism, and evaluate potential future steps.

Fidan is expected to reiterate Türkiye's commitment to achieving a just and lasting peace in the Russia-Ukraine war, as well as express satisfaction with recent critical developments that indicate progress in that direction.

He is also expected to reaffirm Türkiye's readiness to continue playing a facilitating role in the negotiations between the parties, as it did in 2022 and also on May 16.

Sides will also exchange views on regional and international issues, including Syria, Gaza, and the South Caucasus.

Fidan last visited Russia on June 10-11, 2024, to attend the BRICS+ meeting.

He also accompanied Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the BRICS Summit held on October 24 last year.

Fidan's most recent meeting with Lavrov took place on April 12 on the sidelines of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Türkiye.

During the visit, Hakan Fidan will be received by Russian President Vladimir Putin and will hold a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

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US issues immediate sanctions relief for Syria

Washington, D.C., US - The US issued a general license providing immediate sanctions relief for Syria, the Treasury Department said on Friday.

"As President Trump promised, the Treasury Department and the State Department are implementing authorisations to encourage new investment into Syria.

"Syria must also continue to work towards becoming a stable country that is at peace, and today's actions will hopefully put the country on a path to a bright, prosperous, and stable future," Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent said in a statement.

During a visit to the Middle East last week, President Donald Trump said he would order the removal of 'brutal and crippling' US sanctions on Syria to give that country 'a chance at greatness'.

The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said in a statement that the general license authorises transactions prohibited by the Syrian Sanctions Regulations, effectively lifting sanctions on Syria.

The general license will enable new investment and private sector activity, it said.

"The US Department of State is concurrently issuing a waiver under the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act (Caesar Act) that will enable our foreign partners, allies, and the region to further unlock Syria's potential.

"This is just one part of a broader US government effort to remove the full architecture of sanctions imposed on Syria



due to the abuses of the Bashar al-Assad regime," it added.

The US is committed to supporting a Syria that is 'stable, unified, and at peace' with itself and its neighbours, it said,

Syria must work towards becoming a stable country that is at peace, and today's actions will hopefully put the country on a path to a bright, prosperous, and stable future

SCOTT BESSENT

adding the sanctions relief was extended to the new government with the understanding that the country would not offer a 'safe haven' for terror organisations and will ensure the security of its religious and ethnic

minorities.

The authorisation is also intended to help rebuild Syria's economy, financial sector and infrastructure, according to the statement.

vance Syria's recovery and reconstruction efforts.

"These waivers will facilitate the provision of electricity, energy, water, and sanitation, and enable a more effective humanitarian response across Syria," he said in a statement.

Rubio said the actions represent the 'first step' in delivering on Trump's vision of a new relationship between Syria and the US.

Trump is providing the Syrian government 'with the chance to promote peace and stability, both within Syria and in Syria's relations with its neighbours', he added.

"The President has made clear his expectation that relief will be followed by prompt action by the Syrian government

on important policy priorities," Rubio said.

Meanwhile, the Syrian Foreign Ministry on Saturday welcomed the US decision to immediately remove sanctions on Syria, considering it a move in 'the right direction to relieve the humanitarian and economic suffering in the country'.

The Foreign Ministry's statement affirmed that it extends its hand for cooperation to all countries 'on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs' of Syria.

It also stressed that the 'coming period will be a period for rebuilding what was destroyed by the deposed regime, and to restore Syria's normal position in the region and the world'.

Anadolu Agency

Germany: Police chief warns of radicalisation

Berlin, Germany - The head of Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), Holger Münch, has warned that young people within right-wing extremist circles are becoming increasingly radicalised.

"For about a year, we've increasingly seen very young people with right-wing views becoming more radicalised and forming, at times, well-organised groups to carry out serious crimes," Münch told the Funke media group of newspapers in remarks published on Saturday.

He said the internet was a major factor aiding the far-right scene to spread its network.

"Radicalisation, recruitment and mobilisation increasingly



happen via social networks and right-wing forums," Münch said.

The BKA head said right-wing crime was posing a 'major challenge' to security agencies but that general society also had a big role to play in reducing the threat.

His remarks follow the arrests this week of five male suspects aged 14 to 18 who were members of a far-right extremist cell alleged to have plotted violent attacks on migrants.

Meanwhile, train services at Hamburg's main station have resumed normal operations

after a knife attack on Friday that left 18 injured, a spokeswoman for train operator Deutsche Bahn told the DPA news agency.

A 39-year-old woman was arrested at the scene on suspicion of carrying out the attack.

She is to come before a magistrate on Saturday.

Four of the 18 wounded suffered life-threatening injuries, while six were seriously hurt, officials said.

So far, police do not believe the attack was politically or ideologically motivated but was rather the result of some kind of psychological distress on the part of the attacker.

DW

Lebanon holds local elections in south

Beirut, Lebanon - The fourth and final phase of Lebanon's municipal elections kicked off on Saturday in Lebanon's southern governorates, amid ongoing attacks by Israel and ceasefire violations.

This marks Lebanon's first local elections in nearly a decade, with the last one held in 2016 before being postponed three times due to political and security crises.

Polls opened at 7am local time (0400GMT) and will close at 7pm (1600GMT), followed by vote counting, state-run Lebanese News Agency (NNA) reported.

The elections come after Israeli warplanes and drones conducted heavy strikes on Friday, violating the ceasefire agreement. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam condemned the attacks, warning that they occurred at a 'critical time' ahead of the southern vote.

The elections' first phase began on May 4 in the Mount Lebanon governorate, followed by the second phase on May 11 in North Lebanon and Akkar, and the third phase on May 18 in Beirut and Bekaa, according to the Lebanese Interior Ministry.

Israeli forces have conducted near-daily attacks in southern Lebanon, claiming to target Hezbollah activities, despite the ceasefire that was reached in November.

The truce ended months of cross-border warfare between Israel and the Lebanese group Hezbollah, which escalated into a full-scale conflict in September last year.

Anadolu Agency

Gaza death toll exceeds 53,900 as Israel kills 79 more Palestinians

Gaza City/Ankara - At least 53,901 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's genocidal war since October 2023, the Health Ministry said on Saturday.

A ministry statement said that 79 bodies were brought to hospitals in the last 24 hours, while 211 people were injured, taking the number of injuries to 122,593 in the Israeli onslaught.

At least 19 more Palestinians were killed on Saturday morning in Israel's deadly strikes across the Gaza Strip, according to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa, which quoted local sources as saying that seven people were killed and 60 others injured in an Israeli airstrike on the Al-Mawasi area of Rafah, the southern Gaza Strip.

Five more people were killed in a deadly drone strike on a



home of the 'Al-Sharif' family in the northwestern area of Khan Younis, southern Gaza, it also reported.

Earlier, the Palestinian news

agency said an entire family of a father, wife, and their two children were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a home of the 'Al-Madhoun' family in the Al-Amal

neighbourhood, western Khan Younis.

Another airstrike on a home for the 'Jouda' family in the Nuseirat refugee camp, central

Gaza, left two people killed, along with others injured.

Also in Nuseirat, one man was killed, while five others were injured, including a 1-month-old baby, in an Israeli airstrike on a home for the 'Al-Majdalawi' family, Wafa also reported.

Meanwhile, Israel's Channel 12 reported on Saturday that there is a consensus among the security agencies on the possibility of striking a prisoner exchange deal with Hamas, even as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hardened his positions and recalled his negotiators from Doha.

According to unnamed sources, Israeli army chief Eyal Zamir stated in closed discussions that 'military pressure has created suitable conditions' to return the captives, and that Is-

rael should exploit this window of opportunity to advance a deal.

Zamir's remarks came after Netanyahu withdrew Israel's negotiation team from Qatar on Thursday, citing Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya's insistence on the US-backed war-ending guarantees.

The Palestinian group Hamas has yet to confirm the report.

Despite the talks' collapse, the channel reported 'consensus within Israeli security agencies that a deal remains achievable currently'.

Netanyahu reiterated at a press conference on Wednesday that Israel would only accept 'a temporary ceasefire' for hostage returns, while imposing new conditions for ending his war on Gaza.

Anadolu Agency

UN fears 427 Rohingya perished at sea in search of safe shelter

Dhaka, Bangladesh - The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, feared on Friday that 427 Rohingya perished at sea after two boat tragedies off the coast of Myanmar earlier this month in search of safe refuge.

Reports suggested that 514 Rohingya were traveling on two boats. Details are still being confirmed, UNHCR said in a statement.

The first boat carried 267 people. Among them, more than half reportedly left from refugee camps in southeastern Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh while the remainder departed from Rakhine State in Myanmar.

The boat sank on May 9, with 66 survivors.

Bangladesh is hosting more than 1.3mn persecuted Rohingya Muslims since they fled a Myanmar military crackdown in August 2017.

The second boat carried 247 Rohingya, also refugees from Cox's Bazar camps and those fleeing Rakhine State, and capsized on May 10, with 21 survivors.

Nearly 1 of 5 people attempting perilous sea movements in the region have been reported dead or missing in 2025, making the waters of the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal among the deadliest in the



world. UNHCR said there were reports of a third boat carrying 188 Rohingya, which was intercepted leaving Myanmar on May 14.

"The dire humanitarian situation, exacerbated by funding cuts, is having a devastating

impact on the lives of Rohingya, with more and more resorting to dangerous journeys to seek safety, protection and a dignified life for themselves and their families," said Hai Kyung Jun, director of UNHCR's regional bureau for Asia and the Pacific.

The annual monsoon season has arrived in the region, bringing strong winds, rainfall and rough seas, saw the boats traveling at a particularly dangerous time, reflecting the desperation of those making the journeys.

UNHCR calls on authorities in the region and the global community to take urgent action to prevent future tragedies as saving lives and rescuing those in distress at sea is a humanitarian imperative and a longstanding duty under international maritime law.

It also sought financial assistance to provide life-saving assistance to Rohingya refugees as UNHCR only received 30% of what it requires to stabilise the lives of refugees and their host communities across Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and those displaced inside Myanmar.

UNHCR requires US\$383.1mn in 2025 to so far, it added.

Anadolu Agency



Australia: 10,000 properties affected by massive floods

NSW, Australia - Australian authorities said on Saturday that 10,000 properties were damaged by record flooding in New South Wales (NSW) while 50,000 people were affected.

NSW State Emergency Service (SES) said it started damage assessments after conditions eased.

"Flood waters in some locations are starting to subside, however are also still rising in other areas as flows move downstream," it said.

Emergency warnings remain in place at several locations, including Taree, Kempsey and Port Macquarie.

"I reiterate this is still a dangerous situation where significant impacts to infrastructure and properties are likely to have occurred. Unfortunately, it is not possible to let people return to their homes until water further subsides and we're sure they can access their homes and communities safely," said NSW SES Chief Superintendent Paul McQueen.

The death toll from the floods in NSW rose to five on Friday, as another man was confirmed dead after being reported missing on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his government is working closely with state and local governments to make sure Australians get the support they need now and through recovery. "Conditions remain critical with flood and evacuation warnings in place," he wrote on X.

In affected areas, thousands are without power and many remain isolated, while the weather agency warned that strong winds can be expected on Monday and Tuesday, according to ABC News.

Anadolu Agency

Ukraine, Russia swap hundreds more POWs

Kyiv/Moscow - Russia and Ukraine on Saturday said another 307 prisoners of war (POWs) had been swapped in the second day of the largest exchange since the start of the war.

"Among those who returned today are soldiers from our army, the State Border Service, and the National Guard of Ukraine," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on his official Telegram channel.

Meanwhile, Russia's defence ministry added that it expected the exchange of prisoners to continue, without offering more details.

On Friday, Zelenskyy and Russia's Defence Ministry said they had each handed over 390 POWs.

The Russian Defence Ministry added each side released 270 soldiers and 120 civilians.

The prisoner swap is the first stage of the '1000-for-1000' exchange agreement reached during the Russian-Ukrainian talks in Istanbul, Zelenskyy wrote on X.

After more than three years of fighting, both countries are holding thousands of prisoners of war. Russia is believed to hold the larger share, with an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 Ukrainian captives.

The swap comes amid renewed diplomatic initiatives to end the war.

Russian and Ukrainian officials held face-to-face negotiations in Istanbul last week for the first time since 2022, the year Moscow launched its invasion.

Russian attack injures several

Meanwhile, Kyiv came under a



After more than three years of fighting, both countries are holding thousands of prisoners of war. Russia is believed to hold the larger share, with an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 Ukrainian captives

large-scale Russian drone and missile attack early on Saturday morning.

Blasts and machine gun fire were heard across the Ukrainian capital, forcing many residents to

Air defences activated: Mayor

"Explosions in the capital," Klitschko wrote on Telegram. "Air defences have been activated. The city and the region are under a combined enemy attack."

Klitschko said fragments from one drone hit the top floor of an apartment block in the Solomyanskyi district of the Ukrainian capital. One apartment block was ablaze in the area as was one non-residential building.

At least eight people were wounded in the 'massive' attack, Klitschko said.

The head of the capital's civil and military administration, Tymur Tkachenko, reported two blazes in the Sviatychynskyi district, missile debris falling in the Obolonskyi district, and drone debris falling on a residential building in the Solomianskyi area, which lies in the city's west.

On Friday, Russian missiles killed two people and wounded several others in city of Odesa.

DW

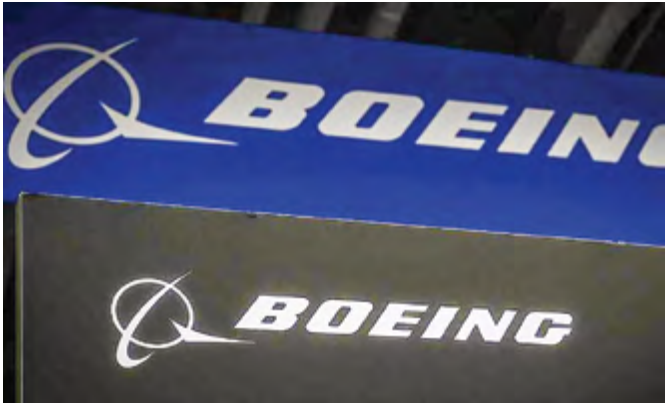
Boeing, US DOJ reach \$1.1bn deal for 2 deadly crashes

Houston, US - Boeing reached a deal on Friday with the US Department of Justice (DOJ) to pay a US\$1.1bn settlement for two deadly 737 Max jetliner crashes that will allow the airline manufacturer to avoid criminal prosecution, according to media reports.

The agreement stems from the crashes of Lion Air Flight 610 in 2018 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 in 2019 where a total of 346 people died.

A majority of the settlement will go toward improving Boeing's compliance, safety and quality programme and US\$445mn will be set aside to provide compensation to the families of the victims, according to the Justice Department.

Court documents revealed



This unprecedented deal is obviously wrong for the deadliest corporate crime in US history

PAUL CASSELL

that the deal will allow the company to avoid criminal prosecution for allegedly misleading US regulators about the safety of the 737 Max jetliners before the crashes.

Some of the victims' family members blasted the deal, saying they felt 'tremendous grief and

even anger' about the agreement.

"This kind of non-prosecution deal is unprecedented and obviously wrong for the deadliest corporate crime in US history," Paul Cassell, who represents some of the families, said in a statement.

"The families that I represent contend that it is more important for Boeing to be held accountable to the flying public," said Cassell. "My families will object and hope to convince the court to reject it."

Boeing declined to comment on the settlement, but the Justice Department defended the agreement.

"After careful consideration of the families' views, the facts and the law, the department's principles of federal prosecution and the professional and ethical obligations of prosecutors, it is the

government's judgment that the agreement is a fair and just resolution that serves the public interest," officials said in court filings.

Despite the families spending years pushing for a public criminal trial, the prosecution of former Boeing officials and steeper financial consequences for the airline manufacturer, Justice Department officials insisted: "We are confident that this resolution is the most just outcome with practical benefits."

"Nothing will diminish the victims' losses, but this resolution holds Boeing financially accountable, provides finality and compensation for the families and makes an impact for the safety of future air travellers," said the officials.

Anadolu Agency

South Africa: Trapped gold miners rescued

Johannesburg, SA - Nearly 300 miners were successfully rescued on Friday from a gold mine in South Africa after they were trapped the previous day because of a shaft incident.

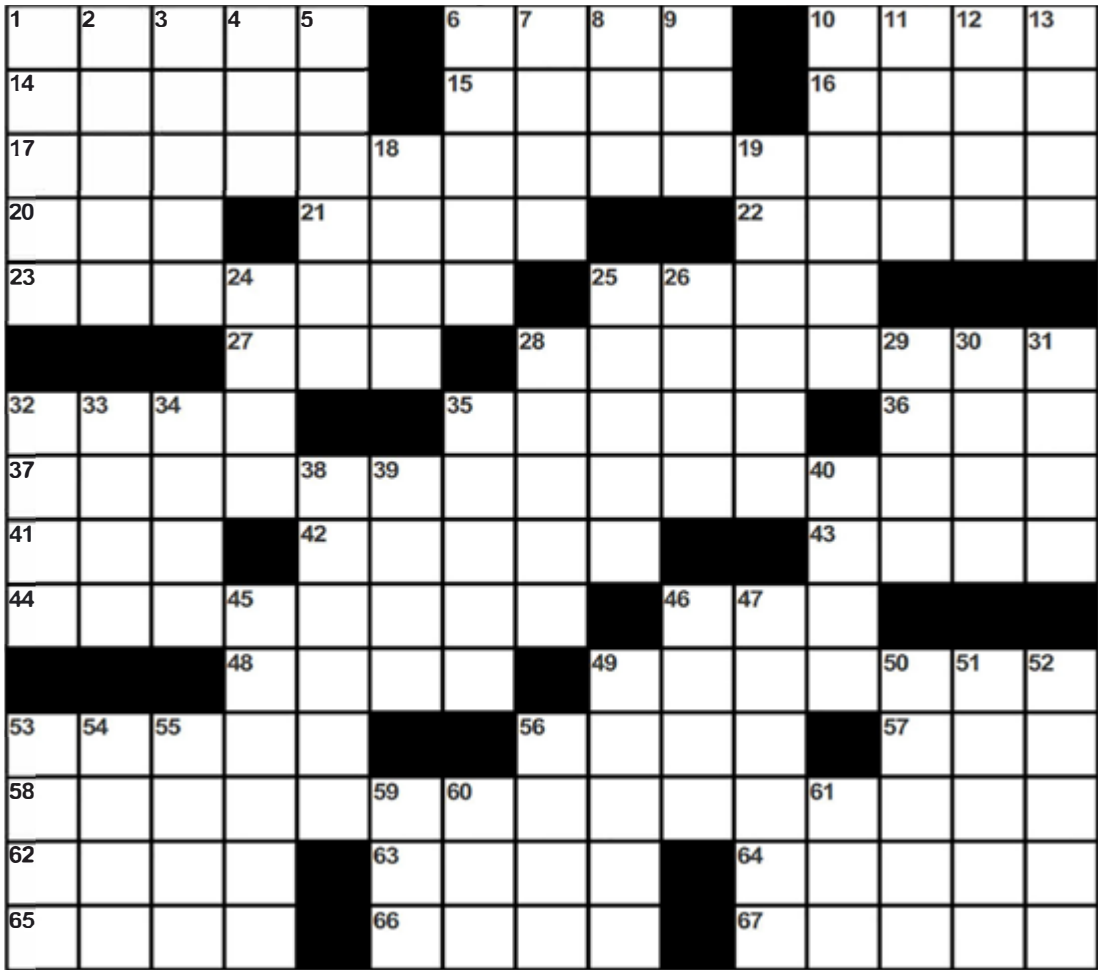
"Sibanye-Stillwater can confirm that all 260 employees have safely returned to surface following the shaft incident at Kloof-seven on May 22. At no point was there any risk of injury to employees during the incident which occurred when the skip door of the Kloof-seven sub-shaft rock winder opened at the loading point level-39, impacting levels 40, 41 and below," the Gauteng-Johannesburg based miner said in a statement.

It said comprehensive safety inspections and a shaft integrity assessment, along with necessary repairs were carried out before the miners could be safely brought to the surface.

"The first group of employees surfaced today (Friday) at 13:30 CAT (1130GMT) with the remaining employees returning safely from about 19:30 CAT tonight. Based on these safety evacuations, a decision was made for the employees to remain at their respective stations underground rather than use emergency escape routes," said Sibanye-Stillwater.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1) Like a girl looking for a buoy?
6) Prefix for "bucks" or "bytes"
10) Hybrid citrus fruit
14) Tendencies
15) March 15, to Caesar
16) It may be out on a lime?
17) Winning big, real big
20) It's over a king
21) Stodgy old-timer
22) Geeky types
23) Sunday deliveries
25) Tiny aquatic organism
27) Tax form addressee
28) Finishing off a tile job
32) Confessional admissions
35) Natural rope fiber
36) Bronx cheer
37) Five o'clock, for many
41) What clinks in drinks
42) Hunter among the stars
43) " ... with 1,001 _"
44) Put a curse on
46) Place for experiments
48) Underwriter's concern
49) Prehistoric male
53) Sleeping problem
56) Dish with many ingredients
57) Palindromic Beatles figure

58) It's drawn on
62) "Beetle Bailey" cartoonist
Walker
63) Having trouble deciding
64) Happen next
65) "The Dukes of Hazard"
spin-off
66) Small amount of residue
67) Overflows
DOWN
1) Successor to Arafat
2) Canonical hour
3) Scoffing look
4) Forecast from the flight deck
5) Request, in negotiations
6) Valuable Chinese vases
7) Tense or irritable
8) Procure
9) Deciduous hardwood tree
10) Certainly cheery
11) Trucker's choice
12) Circulate, as library books
13) Varieties or types
18) Electrically charged particles
19) Overwhelm, as flames
24) Category for odds and ends, briefly
25) Felon's burning ambi-

tion?
26) Bread unit
28) Leg-of-mutton sleeve
29) Shorebird with a curved beak
30) Place for the Iditarod finish line
31) Leaves
32) Milk type
33) Andean civilization
34) "Silent Night," for one
35) Slight cut
38) Biggest brown bear
39) Eye piece
40) Bike tire's innards
45) Puts up, as a skyscraper
46) Not part of the clergy
47) Another shorebird with a curved beak
49) Trolley bell sound
50) It makes a clicking noise
51) Per_ (yearly)
52) Staff additions?
53) Climber's goal
54) Sound unit
55) Infamous fiddler
56) Monstrous villain
59) " _ be my pleasure!"
60) "Neither rain, _ sleet ..."
61) Small integer

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Living in a dreamworld isn't your style. They're only dreams if you choose not to act on them, and that almost never applies to you. Right now you're ready for a change, a big, active, self-motivated change. You'd never admit it in a million years, but there is something you've been secretly thinking about that might be inspiring you to take a new path. That's entirely different from dreaming!

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Your mindset helps you focus on health and wellness, so get in touch with your body and start paying closer attention to anything that doesn't quite feel right. You may feel the need to change your diet or activity level for the better. It's the perfect time to improve your energy level. Remember to keep your body moving, eat right, and get plenty of sleep.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
You're awfully proud of yourself today when you say or do something that shocks and amazes the throngs around you, so much so that you aren't embarrassed. The more the merrier! When you give into the urge to just say or do whatever crosses your mind, no matter where you are or who you happen to be with, make sure to tell your people to relax and smile for the cameras. It may be your fifteen minutes, but it's only fair to share.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
You've done everything right, even in the eyes of the superiors who may have been looking to find fault. You've been tested and found to be at the top of your game and on top of everyone else's too! If those in charge seem to be acting a bit oddly at the moment, you need to force yourself to stop worrying. Who knows what's going on in their minds?

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You are not exactly known for recklessness, so you're totally correct to feel a little worried about what might come of today's situation, especially because things have been so erratic lately. You don't need to take your worries any further, though. Things are so unlike anything you have ever experienced before that it may be your dreams are close to coming true!

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You may wake up with the feeling that you're going to be lucky, though not in the monetary sense, and you might also have the urge to spend some cash to grease the karmic wheels. There's no talking you out of it! Still, take a loved one with some common sense along for the ride. They can convince you to think before whipping out the plastic at the drop of a hat!

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
You're all too familiar with irritation, frustration, and aggravation, especially due to things that are beyond your control. Of course, you can always make the best of just about any situation, and the good news is that today's energy takes you well beyond mere luck. Go about your business with confidence, and know that no matter what happens next it will turn out to be positive.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Whether or not you're ready for love, it's looking for you. It may be someone quite unusual but also somehow giving off reassuringly grounded vibes. Whether you're interested in them for friendship or romance, you're fascinated enough to invest some time and energy to see what happens. Relationships come naturally to you, so get to work. And don't forget to smile when you introduce yourself!

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Whatever you're feeling is pretty obvious to those around you, so don't bother trying to hide it. That just makes them wonder what you're up to. Of course, your behavior may also be a bit off, more so than usual, in the minds of those you see every day. Get them ready for something big, and spend some time in front of the mirror preparing yourself as well.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Now that someone who was pretty much nothing but trouble has officially moved on and out of your life, you may be a bit worried that the other shoe is just about to drop. Though you never know what the Universe has up its sleeve, there's really no doubt that it's getting better, if not instantly, then at least in the long run. Keep your hopes up where they belong.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
You are an undisputed expert when it comes to secrets. Still, when a particularly delicious mystery comes your way today, the kind you're sure can make the people you care for happy, you may need to enlist a dear friend for a rather unusual favor. You need them to duct-tape your mouth closed so you can keep that secret safe. Some others may still be able to spot that rather smug look on your face. If they do, try your very best to keep quiet.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
If you can imagine it, you can make it so, or at least that's what you've always been told. You're about to prove something similar to those among your friends who've never really believed in the concept of luck. If your already substantial psychic powers aren't enough to convince them, another friend with serious intuition is about to let them know how it all works.

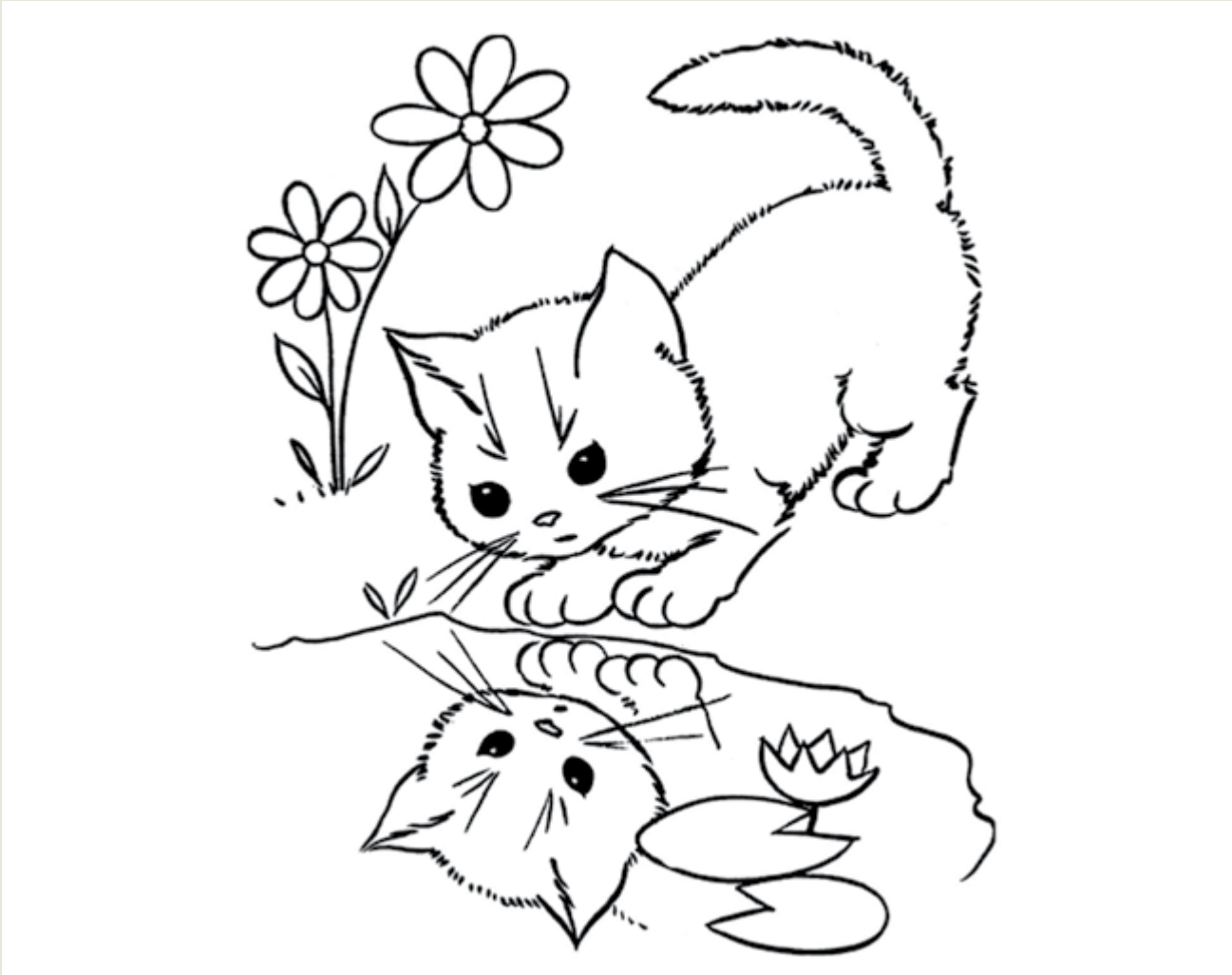


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 01. What is the nickname of Nike's company logo?**
A. The "tick"
B. The "swoosh"
C. The "check"
D. The "wing"
- 02. Which of these do "Le pigeon aux petits pois" by Pablo Picasso, "La Pastorale" by Henri Matisse, "L'Olivier Près de l'Estaque" by Georges Braque, "La Femme a l'Eventail" by Amedeo Modigliani and "Nature Morte aux Chandeliers" by Fernand Léger have in common?**
A. Deciding factors in awarding the Légion d'honneur to the artists
B. Stolen from Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
C. They are all by French artists
D. They all feature horses
- 03. How many decades are there in a millennium?**
A. 1000
B. 100
C. 50
D. 25

Answers: 1.B 2.B 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

N	T	E	U
R	E	R	O
P	A	E	R
S	E	K	S

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

PARADISE REGAINED

Napoli bag second Serie A title in three years after win against Cagliari



Napoli players celebrate with the Serie A trophy on Friday

Naples, Italy - Napoli secured the Serie A title in style with a dominant 2-0 home win over Cagliari on Friday, thanks to goals from Scott McTominay and Romelu Lukaku.

Napoli celebrated their second Italian crown in three years — and fourth overall — after a thrilling battle with Inter, whose 2-0 win at Como thanks to goals from Stefan de Vrij and Joaquin Correa left them one point adrift of their rivals.

McTominay opened the scoring for Napoli three minutes before the break with a stunning bicycle kick from Matteo Politano's cross, sending the home crowd into a frenzy.

Lukaku doubled the lead six minutes after the restart by latching on to a long ball, shrugging off a defender and calmly finishing past Cagliari keeper Alen Sherri.

The rest of the match turned into a celebration at the Diego Armando Maradona Stadium as flares and smoke filled the pitch before the final whistle blew and fireworks lit up the Naples sky.

For manager Antonio Conte, the victory represented another milestone in his career, securing the Serie A title with a third different club, having previously achieved the feat with Juventus and Inter.

"It happened again, and it's something wonderful. When we got to the stadium, it was honestly difficult to get in, as I don't know how many people were there. I had a slight thought, if we let these people down, it'd be something we carried with us for a long time," he told reporters.

Conte was absent from the touchline for the final match due to suspension, but Napoli completed their task. "All the credit goes to the boys. Winning in Naples is difficult, these boys are doing it for the second time in two years," he said. "They are serious boys, you don't leave in a team that always plays to win."

In front of a buzzing crowd brimming with nerves, Napoli flew out of the blocks as Giacomo Raspadori pounced on a rebound from a corner and drilled a low shot inches wide. Two minutes later, a teasing cross floated just too high for Andre Frank Zambo Anguissa to meet cleanly with a free header much to the chagrin of the home crowd.

The chances kept coming as a blistering Napoli counter sent Raspadori through, only for Sherri to deny him smartly before Politano blasted the rebound over.

The Albanian keeper played the party spoiler in most of the first half, pulling off a string of stunning saves that left Napoli's players frustrated.

The mood dipped around the 20th minute as word spread that Inter had taken the lead in Como, sapping the energy from the stands and halting Napoli's momentum along with the match's intensity.

Winning in Naples is difficult, these boys are doing it for the second time in two years. They are serious boys, you don't leave in a team that always plays to win

ANTONIO CONTE



Napoli's Scott McTominay celebrates his goal against Cagliari

McTominay named Serie A player of the season

Naples, Italy - Napoli talisman and Serie A champion Scott McTominay was named Italian Serie A's player of the season on Friday.

The Scotland midfielder has been vital for Napoli, scoring 12 goals and providing six assists in 34 league matches, and he started the title celebrations in Naples with a stunning bicycle kick that sealed a 2-0 win over Cagliari.

The 28-year-old former Manchester United player has emerged as a key member of the Napoli team after Khvicha Kvaratskhelia moved to Paris St Germain in January.

"The sacrifice of every single player in this group is just incred-

ible. The people deserve it, as they've been behind us from day one. For me to come here and experience this, it's just a dream," McTominay told DAZN.

In Naples he now goes by the name "McFratm" among supporters, a playful fusion of his name and "Fratm", the Neapolitan word for "my brother".

"My Italian is OK, I can understand, but speaking it takes more confidence and it's not easy. It is much easier to do it with people who don't speak any English. I can feel a lot of love," McTominay said, adding that he just had learned the words "festeggiamo, andiamo", meaning "let's go celebrate".

Napoli outlast Inter through strategy and consistency

Naples, Italy - Napoli claimed their second Scudetto in three seasons on Friday, a triumph shaped as much by their own consistency as a light fixture list and the growing fatigue that sapped the strength from their closest rivals Inter Milan.

The battle went to the final round of fixtures in which Napoli kept Inter at bay with a 2-0 home win over Cagliari as hundreds of thousands of fans celebrated across the Campania coastal city.

The numbers do not lie. After a lacklustre last season, Napoli entered the campaign free of European distractions, while Inter juggled the demands of the Champions League with their domestic commitments.

With 41 matches played after an early cup exit, Napoli had a far lighter schedule compared to Champions League finalists Inter, who have played 58 games.

The season began on a sour note for new coach Antonio Conte's side, as they suffered a 3-0 defeat at Hellas Verona on the opening day. However, two key signings helped overcome that early setback and sparked a turnaround in fortunes.

Conte brought in striker Romelu Lukaku from Chelsea and midfielder Scott McTominay from Manchester United, completing both deals within 24 hours.

The pair went on to play a pivotal role, becoming the decisive forces that shifted the Serie A title race in favour of Napoli.

They have scored 26 league goals between them, rekindling memories of the dynamic partnership between Victor Osimhen and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia two seasons ago.

Since Kvaratskhelia's departure in January, McTominay has taken on greater responsibility, emerging as a key figure both on the pitch and among the fans.

While the pair have not had quite the same impact that Osimhen and Kvaratskhelia did, their efforts were enough to carry the team across the finish line as they both scored in the final victory over Cagliari.

The race for the league title was until March a three-way battle, with Atalanta pushing to keep pace with Inter and Napoli.

Atalanta's momentum, however, faltered shortly after long-time manager Gian Piero Gasperini announced in February he would not renew his contract.



Antonio Conte brought in Romelu Lukaku and Scott McTominay in August and both have been instrumental in their title triumph

We must now focus on European dream, says Inter assistant coach

Como, Italy - As Inter Milan came to terms with the disappointment of losing the Serie A title on the final day, assistant coach Massimiliano Farris said the team had must now shift full focus to the Champions League final against Paris St Germain.

Despite a heavily rotated Inter side securing a 2-0 win at Como on Friday, last season's Scudetto winners fell short in their title defence as Napoli were crowned champions after beating Cagliari 2-0. Farris, speaking in place of suspended head coach Simone Inzaghi, urged the team to move on quickly ahead of the final against PSG on May 31.

"The mood is that of a team that has done its duty. It's a shame because it's been a long journey, and we've had to let the title slip away," Farris said.

"But we're sportsmen, and we congratulate Napoli. Their players are very strong, and we wish them all the best. But football gives you the immediate opportunity to go and chase a dream. This year, we've had an extraordinary Champions League campaign, and our desire and determination is to win the trophy."

Farris defended Inter's decision to leave out key players including forwards Lautaro Martinez and Marcus Thuram.

"We fielded a competitive team. Congratulations to Como and (coach Cesc) Fabelegas for their work. Our thinking was not to risk any players, a rotation was planned, which is what happened," he said.



Massimiliano Farris with Simone Inzaghi

Salah named Premier League player of the season

London, England - Mohamed Salah was named the Premier League player of the season on Saturday after a stellar individual campaign as Liverpool cruised to their second Premier League title while his team mate Ryan Gravenberch was named the young player of the season.

Salah scored 28 goals and provided 18 assists to guide the Anfield club to the title, with Arne Slot's side winning it with four games to spare.

Having also earned the award in 2017-18, Salah became only the fifth player to win it twice after Thierry Henry, Cristiano Ronaldo, Nemanja Vidic and Kevin De Bruyne.

The 32-year-old Egyptian is on course to win another Golden Boot for most goals in a season and is five strikes ahead of Newcastle United striker Alexander Isak going into the final day of the season on Sunday.

No player before has had 46 goal involvements in a 38-game season and Salah could even break the record of 47 held by Alan Shearer and Andrew Cole,



Mohamed Salah with the Premier League player of the season award

who achieved the feat in a 42-game campaign, when Liverpool host Crystal Palace at Anfield.

With six more assists than any other player, Salah can become the first footballer to win the Golden Boot, Golden Playmaker and player of the season awards.

Gravenberch became one of the first names on the team sheet under Slot, who deployed the Dutchman as a deep-lying midfielder, and the 23-year-old has become a crucial part of Liverpool's spine, making 36 appearances this season.



Shubman Gill

Gill named India Test captain, Pant vice-captain

New Delhi, India - India named Shubman Gill as their new test captain on Saturday, picking the top-order batter over pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah ahead of their five-test series in England beginning on June 20.

India were forced into a transition after Gill's predecessor in the role, Rohit Sharma, quit the format earlier this month with batting stalwart Virat Kohli following suit.

Bumrah, 31, has been Rohit's deputy and captained India in two tests in Australia last season but chief selector Ajit Agarkar said they could not risk burdening the pace ace with leadership.

"I think he's more important to us as a player. We want him fit," Agarkar told a press conference in Mumbai.

"There's always that extra burden when you are leading and managing 15-16 people, it takes a lot out of you.

"We'd rather have him bowling as well as he does than putting that extra burden on him. He's aware of it.

"We had a chat with him and he's okay with it."

India will begin a new World Test Championship cycle under the 25-year-old Gill, who has impressed as captain of the Gujarat Titans in the ongoing Indian Premier League.

Agarkar said he hoped the captaincy would inspire Gill, an all-format international, to grow even better.

"You can look at it as a burden or you can look at it positively," former India pacer Agarkar said.

"In franchise cricket, he's obviously relishing the role. It's obviously going to be a lot harder but those are the chal-

lenges you face playing international cricket.

"He's been around for two to three years in all formats. He can fall back on that experience. I'm sure he's relishing the opportunity. I mean who would not want to captain India in test cricket?"

Bumrah was unlikely to play all five tests in England, Agarkar said, while fellow seamer Mohammed Shami had been left out following a late injury setback.

We'd rather have him (Bumrah) bowling as well as he does than putting that extra burden on him. He's aware of it

AJIT AGARKAR, INDIA CHIEF SELECTOR

Wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant has been named Gill's deputy in the test squad, while Kuldeep Yadav is the lone specialist spinner.

Sai Sudharsan will hope to make his test debut in England while fellow batsman Karun Nair is in line to play his first test since 2017.

SQUAD:

Shubman Gill (captain), Rishabh Pant (vice captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Sai Sudharsan, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Karun Nair, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Ravindra Jadeja, Druv Jurel, Washington Sundar, Shardul Thakur, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Akash Deep, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav.

OMAN MARCH ON

Duleep Mendis' men defeat Canada in rain-affected match for hat-trick of victories in ICC League 2

Muscat - Oman continued their impressive form in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 with their third consecutive win, defeating Canada by 18 runs via the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method at the Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium in Lauderdale, USA, on Friday.

The result not only reinforced Oman's momentum but also helped them solidify third place in the standings with 24 points from 19 matches, level with the second-placed USA but trailing on net run rate, while the Americans still have a game in hand.

Opting to bat first after winning the toss, Canada struggled to build momentum against a disciplined Omani bowling attack and were bowled out for 212 in 48.4 overs. Captain Navneet Dhaliwal anchored the innings with a patient 73 off 120 balls, while Mansab Gill chipped in with a solid 59 from 65 deliveries.

Oman's bowlers shared the spoils, with Shakeel Ahmed impressing with 2 for 21 in his nine overs. Mujibur Ali also picked up two key wickets, while Mohammad Nadeem struck twice in the death overs to prevent any late surge. Canada lost their last three wickets for just one run, slipping



Oman's Mujibur Ali took two wickets and scored an unbeaten 23

from 211 to 212 all out.

In response, Oman looked composed in the chase, reaching 108 for 3 in 23.1 overs before heavy rain forced a premature end to the game. At that stage, they were ahead of the DLS par score (91), securing an 18-run victory.

Top scorer Hammad Mirza struck 31 off 33 balls, including

five boundaries, while skipper and previous match centurion Jatinder Singh added 27. Mujibur Ali remained unbeaten on 23, playing a steady hand in the middle. Debutant Aryan Bisht was unbeaten on 11 when match was called off.

It was Oman's second win over Canada this week, having already beaten them by 15 runs on

The result not only reinforced Oman's momentum but also helped them solidify third place in the standings with 24 points from 19 matches, level with second-placed USA but trailing on net run rate

Monday. Mendis' men will play hosts USA in the concluding match of the series on May 27.

Earlier, on Wednesday, Jatinder Singh produced a master-class under pressure, scoring a sublime century and later finishing the job in the Super Over as

Oman edged hosts USA.

Jatinder's knock of 100 from 101 balls laid the foundation for Oman's total of 266. But it was his nerveless striking in the one-over shootout, where he smashed 13 off just 4 balls, that sealed a thrilling win.

Al Rawahi eyes victory as he leads Oman's challenge at Jordan Rally

Dead Sea, Jordan - Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi is targeting a second victory in the Jordan Rally when he rekindles his FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC) campaign at next week-end's event in blistering heat at the Dead Sea (May 29th-31st).

Oman's Zakaria al Amri and Abdullah al Zubair are also ready to fight for honours in Jordan.

Oman Rally Team's Al Rawahi, the 2023 regional champion, won the event outright with local co-driver Ata al Hmoud in their title-winning season. The pair resume their partnership at the lowest point on earth after Al Hmoud had been forced to miss the last round in Saudi Arabia while his wife gave birth to twins. In Al Hmoud's absence, Al Rawahi teamed up with British navigator Ross Whittock to finish fifth in



Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi in action at the MERC in Saudi Arabia

his Autotek Škoda Fabia RS. He now holds third in the Drivers' Championship with three rounds to run in Jordan, Lebanon and Cyprus.

Speaking ahead of starting his two-day recce of the route, Al Rawahi said: "Jordan Rally is a really important one for me. This is where I started my journey. It is like my home rally. I think we

have a huge chance to maybe fight for the win.

"Last year, we were leading and I went off the track and we were not able to continue. This year, I am hoping we are ready. We will give our best. And I would like to thank the supporters and sponsors."

Competitors will tackle a dozen special stages and 196.30

competitive kilometres in the Dead Sea and Jordan Valley areas.

Nasser al Attiyah heads the 22-car FIA field after winning the opening three rounds of the season in Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. He will be aiming to defend a 31-point lead over Rakan al Rashed in the Drivers' Championship.

Al Rawahi faces competition from seven Rally2 machines. Other rivals include defending regional champion Abdulaziz al Kuwari, Nasser Khalifa al Atya, Bassal Abu Hamdan and the Jordanian duo of Sheikh Bader al Fayeze and Ihab al Shorafa.

The Oman Rally Team has backing from Al Manar Investments, the Oman Automobile Association, WMS, Zamakan, OQ, Strike, Size, the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture of Oman and National Finance.

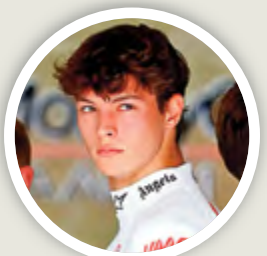
Bearman handed 10-place grid penalty for red flag breach

Monaco - Haas Formula One rookie Oliver Bearman was handed a 10-place grid drop for ignoring red flags during Friday's Monaco Grand prix practice.

The Briton also collected two penalty points on his licence for the breach.

Stewards found that the 20-year-old overtook Williams' Carlos Sainz after the session was stopped and red flag warnings issued.

"It is clear from the video footage that there was a light panel directly in front of the driver which showed



Oliver Bearman

the red flag; and the dashboard also indicated the red flag well before the overtaking took place," they said.

"The driver claimed that he saw the red flags but decided not to slow down abruptly because he felt that slowing down abruptly would have been more dangerous and that what he did was a safer way of handling the situation."

The stewards disagreed with Bearman's stance and said drivers could not know, on a tight and narrow track like Monaco, what might be ahead.

Postecoglou promises more success for Spurs after Europa League win

London, England - Manager Ange Postecoglou promised Tottenham Hotspur fans greater success next season after making good on his pledge of always winning a trophy in his second year at a club with a triumph at the Europa League.

Thousands of fans joined an open-bus victory parade on Friday to celebrate Spurs ending a 17-year trophy drought by beating Manchester United 1-0 in Wednesday's final.

"I told them and they laughed. I told them and they didn't believe. And here we are," Postecoglou told the crowd to



Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou celebrates with the Europa League trophy

roaring applause.

"I'll leave you with this: all the best television series, season three is better than season two."

Djokovic quells Norrie challenge to reach Geneva Open final, eyes 100th Tour title

Geneva, Switzerland - Novak Djokovic moved to the brink of his 100th tour-level title after recovering from a second-set blip to beat British qualifier Cameron Norrie 6-4 6-7(6) 6-1 in the Geneva Open semi-finals on Friday.

Victory in Saturday's final against Polish sixth seed Hubert Hurkacz would be the perfect end to the record 24-times Grand Slam champion's preparations for the French Open starting on Sunday. Djokovic holds a commanding 7-0 career win-loss record over Hurkacz.

Djokovic, who turned 38 on Thursday, unleashed 11 aces and



Novak Djokovic

34 winners in a match against Norrie lasting two hours and 15 minutes. After two tightly-fought sets, Djokovic was ruthless in the decider as he raced into a 3-0 lead before former world number eight Norrie got on the board.

Djokovic won the next three games, however, to reach his 143rd ATP Final.

"It was the toughest match of the tournament for me so far, three sets," Djokovic said.

"(In) the second set, he was a break up and I managed to come back to the tiebreak... But I'm really glad how I regrouped in the third and played the best set of the tournament."

BENGALURU ON SLIPPERY SLOPE

Kishan and Hyderabad pacers dent Royal Challengers' chances of top-two finish

Lucknow, India - Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) proved to be the banana peel they were feared to be for Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), who still remained one point behind the table-leaders Gujarat Titans with Punjab Kings (PBKS) now breathing down their necks with one game in hand.

Ishan Kishan, who had fizzled out after his century in the first match with just 125 runs off 117 in ten innings since then, anchored a hyper-aggressive SRH to 231. He was as efficient an anchor could be: scoring an unbeaten 94 off 48, including 54 out of the last 86 runs SRH made as he ran out of hitting partners.

Led by Phil Salt, RCB stayed abreast with the asking rate for 14 overs, but then endured a collapse of 7 for 16 to lose by 42 runs, a net-run-rate blow that could dent their chances of ending in the top two. They have fallen below PBKS' net run rate,



Pat Cummins (L) and Ishan Kishan were the chief architects of Royal Challengers Bengaluru's defeat on Friday

who are level with them on points.

The pitch looked tricky to everyone, but within one over of batting there, Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma decided this was perhaps the best pitch they had batted on all year. They decided they needed 230-240 and went looking accordingly. Abhishek started the charge with 34 off 17, hitting three sixes and

perishing trying to hit a fourth. Head was slightly slower in his 17 off ten, and was outdone by a Bhuvneshwar Kumar knuckle ball.

Two wickets down in the powerplay, SRH saw no reason to slow down. Heinrich Klaasen got a couple of gifts from Suyash Sharma and smacked 24 off 13 before mis-hitting a third gift. Aniket Verma made

TODAY'S MATCHES

MATCH 67

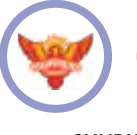
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GUJARAT TITANS VS CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

MATCH 68

6 PM



SUNRISERS HYDERABAD VS KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

all this look pedestrian as he hit sixes off even good balls in his nine-ball 26.

The only problem was, none of them could carry on, leaving SRH at 145 for 4 in the 12th over.

Kishan takes over
He looked sedentary in comparison but Kishan was 40 off 22 when Aniket got out. Especially with Nitish Kumar Reddy and Abhinav Manohar falling in quick succession to Romario Shepherd, it was on Kishan to make sure SRH had a finishing kick. Kishan took charge, faced 12 balls out of 18 in his seventh-

wicket stand of 43 with Pat Cummins, and ended up one hit short of another century. The hitting was clean but he had to dial down the risk a little. He did play a ramp in between.

Aware of the behaviour of the pitch, SRH looked to go into the pitch and run their fingers on the ball often. RCB, though, showed why they were so close to the top of the table. Each of the first 14 overs featured at least one boundary. Virat Kohli started the charge with 43 off 25, Salt took over spectacularly with 62 off 32, and SRH were just hanging in.

Reddy hasn't had the best season with the bat, was untidy in the field, but then started the turnaround with the wicket of Mayang Agarwal in the 11th over. Cummins came back with the wicket of Salt, but RCB stand-in captain Jitesh Sharma hit a six first ball, and Rajat Patidar looked in decent touch. Even with those two wickets falling, RCB kept the asking rate under two runs a ball.

Reddy came back to bowl the first over without a boundary in the 15th, and then Eshan Malunga delivered the big blows. Banging the ball in in the first half had probably aided a bit of reverse. He kept nailing the yorkers, changing up with the odd slower ball.

He ran out Patidar, drew a return catch from Shepherd, and handcuffed the injured Tim David, who seemed to have done his hamstring when fielding.

Sai Sudharsan ready to bat anywhere for India

Ahmedabad, India - B Sai Sudharsan has said that it feels "surreal" to receive his maiden Test call-up for India's upcoming five-match series in England.

"It obviously feels great. Feels very special to be honest, and surreal also. Any cricketer, any young cricketer who starts playing cricket, wants to play Test cricket, wants to play for the country," he said on the eve of Gujarat Titans' match against Chennai Super Kings, a few hours after the India Test squad was announced. "The ultimate goal is always to play Test cricket. So really happy for that."

Following the retirements of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, Sai Sudharsan is set to be a part of India's new-look top four. Sai Sudharsan usually opens the batting for Tamil Nadu in the Ranji Trophy, India's domestic first-class tournament, but he is ready

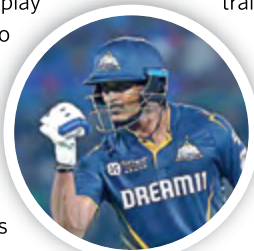
to bat at any position for India.

He has batted in the middle order for Surrey in county cricket and overall has scored 1957 runs in 29 first-class games at an average of just under 40, including seven hundreds and five fifties. The most recent hundred came at No.3 for India A against Australia A in Mackay in November last year.

"Sir, I think playing for the country itself is a very big privilege for a cricketer. So I don't think I am in a position to choose where I want to play," Sai Sudharsan said

when asked about his preference in the batting line-up. "Wherever the coaches tell me to play, I think I will be mentally and obviously skillfully, you know, try and be ready for the opportunity."

"I have a lot of likings. I think I will have to be ready for whichever [position] the team gives me. I will be ready for that."



B Sai Sudharsan



Marcus Stoinis blasted an unbeaten 16-ball 44 while captain Shreyas Iyer top-scored with a 34-ball 53 as Punjab Kings made 206 for 8 against Delhi Capitals on Saturday

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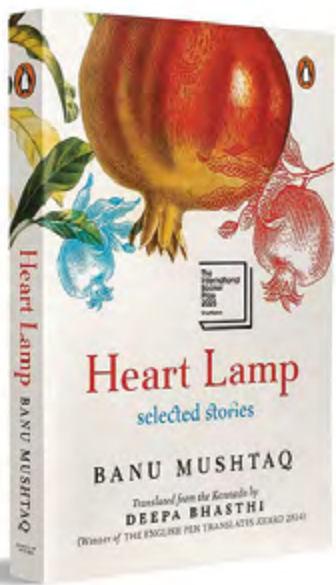
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Banu Mushtaq



WITTY WRITER

Heart Lamp has received widespread praise for its dry and gentle humour. The portraits of family and community tensions testify to Banu Mushtaq's years as a journalist and lawyer, in which she tirelessly championed women's rights and protested all forms of caste and religious oppression.

Written in a style that's witty, vivid, colloquial, moving and excoriating, it's in her characters - the sparky children, the audacious grandmothers, the 'buffoonish maulvis' and thug brothers, the oft-hapless husbands, and the mothers above all, surviving their feelings at great cost - that Mushtaq emerges as an astonishing writer and observer of human nature, building disconcerting emotional heights out of a rich spoken style.

"My stories are about women - how religion, society, and politics demand unquestioning obedience from them, and in doing so, inflict inhumane cruelty upon them, turning them into mere subordinates," says Mushtaq. "The daily incidents reported in the media and the personal experiences I have endured have been my inspiration. The pain, suffering, and helpless lives of these women create a deep emotional response within me, compelling me to write."



Deepa Bhashthi

ERUDITE TRANSLATOR

Deepa Bhashthi's columns, essays and cultural criticism have been published in India and internationally, including a novel by Kota Shivarama Karanth and a collection of short stories by Kodagina Gouramma, both in Kannada.

"For me, translation is an instinctive practice in many ways, and I have found that each book demands a completely different process. With Banu's stories, I first read all the fiction she had published before I narrowed it down to the ones that are in *Heart Lamp*. I was lucky to have a free hand in choosing what stories I wanted to work with, and Banu did not interfere with the organised chaotic way I went about it," she admits.

Conscious of the fact that she knew very little about the community Mushtaq placed her stories in, Bhashthi asserts that she only experienced art that was either set in or was about the milieu that Mushtaq writes about. She further admits, "During the period I was working on the first draft, I found myself immersed in the very addictive world of Pakistani television dramas, music by old favourites like Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and I even took classes to learn the Urdu script. I suppose, these things somehow helped me get under the skin of the stories and the language she uses," since the book contains a lot of colloquial words in Kannada, Arabic and Urdu.

2025 WINNER

THE BOOKER COOKER

Indian author **Banu Mushtaq** wins the International Booker Prize 2025 for her short story collection titled 'Heart Lamp' - a collection of 12 short stories - that broke new ground for the coveted award while also bringing instant recall of a similar venture by Oman's **Jokha al Harthy** in 2019



Jokha al Harthy

Hubert Vaz

Five years after Oman's popular author Jokha al Harthy won the Man Booker International prize for her novel 'Sayyidat al-Qamar' (translated by Marilyn Booth as *Celestial Bodies*), Indian author Banu Mushtaq won the International Booker Prize for her short story collection in Kannada language 'Hridaya Deepa' translated into English as *Heart Lamp*, by Deepa Bhashthi... Somehow, there is a common chord that binds these two vernacular ventures that struck gold in their English versions five years apart.

Budding/established writers and novelists aiming for a Booker might now be able to get into the mindset of the jury who seem to accord adequate weightage for regional sagas of struggle and survival, related with a tinge of history and a good measure of colloquialism that not only enlightens global readers but also opens doors for social change. As for format, the stereotype has also now been broken.

Heart lamp is a collection of 12 short stories written over a period of more than 30 years (between 1990 and 2023) by Mushtaq, which chronicle the everyday lives and struggles of women in southern India. The stories, as the author asserts, 'are about women - how religion, society and politics demand unquestioning obedience from them, and in doing so, inflict inhumane cruelty upon them, turning them into mere subordinates.'

On the other hand, *Celestial Bodies* (the original title of which translates as 'Ladies of the Moon') is a 2010 novel by Jokha al Harthy which follows the lives of three sisters and their unhappy marriages in Oman. It is a family saga of Salima and her three daughters - Mayya, Asma and Khawla - and their various trials in love. Set in 20th century Oman, amid colonisation and slavery, this book is considered a political commentary of the sweeping changes in Omani society that brought globalisation and consumerism into conflict with traditionalism.

Mushtaq's book comprises 12 poignant stories that explore the resilience, resistance, and wit of women liv-

ing within patriarchal South Indian communities. The stories portray the plight of various mothers and daughters struggling with societal expectations and injustices. The characters include husbands, grandmothers, children, and other family members who play significant roles in shaping the lives and struggles of the women characters.

Celestial Bodies involves many main characters, including Abdullah's father, the Merchant Sulayman and his mistress/slave Zarifa, Salima's uncle - a ruler of one of the local clans, besides the three daughters of Salima. The book profiles the lives of Mayya, who marries Abdullah after a heartbreak, Asma, who marries from a sense of duty, and Khawla who rejects all offers while waiting for her beloved who emigrated to Canada. The tales of the three sisters, in its wake, also showcases the evolution of Oman from a traditional society to the crossroads of its complex present.

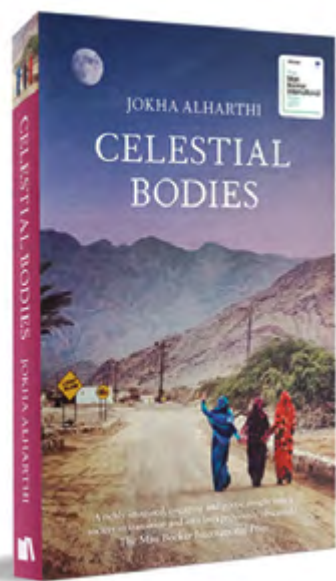
The award for 2025 was announced at a ceremony at London's Tate Modern on May 20. It is the first time the award has been given to a collection of short stories. And while Deepa Bhashthi is the first Indian translator to win the prize since it took on its current form in 2016, Mushtaq is the sixth female author to be awarded the prize since then.

"These beautiful, busy, life-affirming stories rise from Kannada, interspersed with the extraordinary socio-political richness of other languages and dialects," said author Max Porter, chair of the 2025 judges. It speaks of women's lives, reproductive rights, faith, caste, power and oppression" - the essence of both the books.

The International Booker Prize is awarded every year and is run alongside the Booker Prize for English-language fiction, which will be handed out in the fall. The 50,000-pound (US\$66,000) prize money is to be divided equally between author and translator while each is also presented with a trophy.

Mushtaq and her translator, Deepa Bhashthi, were present together to receive the honour which the author described as 'a victory for diversity and a powerful moment for regional literature'.

(Inputs: cnn.com; thebookerprizes.com)





STALIN SCULPTURE

Subway sensation

A NEW STALIN MONUMENT INSTALLED IN A MOSCOW SUBWAY HAS NOW STIRRED A DEBATE, WEIGHING HIS ROLE IN WORLD WAR II AS WELL AS HIS ‘GREAT TERROR’ ACT IN 1937

A monument to Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin erected in Moscow’s subway is stirring debate, with some Russians welcoming it as a historical tribute, but others saying it’s a mistake to commemorate someone who presided over so much suffering.

The life-size wall sculpture in Moscow’s Taganskaya metro station depicts Stalin standing on Moscow’s Red Square surrounded by a crowd of Soviet citizens looking at him in admiration, and is a recreation of a monument that was unveiled in the same station in 1950, three years before Stalin died.

The Moscow metro said that the original monument to Stalin had been ‘lost’ in 1966 when the Taganskaya metro station hosting it had been re-configured. The new monument is a recreation of one that was unveiled in the same station in 1950.

Nearly 700,000 people were executed in Stalin’s 1937-38 Great Terror amid show trials and purges of his real and perceived enemies. Many other Soviet citizens were sent to the gulag, a grim network of prison camps, spread across the world’s largest country.

The Moscow metro said in a statement that the new version of the monument, which was presented to the public on May 15, was one of its ‘gifts’ to passengers to mark the 90th anniversary of the sprawling, ornate and famously efficient transportation system.

The work’s original title, ‘Gratitude of the People to the Leader and Commander’, was dedicated to Stalin’s role in

delivering victory for the Soviet Union in World War II, the 80th anniversary of which Russia marked with pomp this year.

“This man (Stalin), he created a lot,” said Yevgeny Ivanov, a Moscow resident, who had come to look at the new monument on Wednesday.

“He has something to be proud of. And it is not for us to tear it down. We must respect what he did.” Kirill Frolov, another resident of the capital, said he accepted that Stalin’s record was mixed and that you couldn’t call him ‘good’.

But he said that Stalin’s role as a victor in World War II and his successful industrialisation of the Soviet Union meant he had achieved real results and deserved to be remembered.

“This man did more for our country than anyone else. That’s why I think that this new monument is good and there should be more... Because the generation of the 2000s and later don’t really understand at all who this is.”

metro focus on commemorating the victims of Stalin’s repressions instead.

“The return of symbols of Stalinism to Moscow is spitting in the face of history and an act of mockery against the descendants of the repressed,” Yabloko said in a statement.

Unidentified individuals initially left two signs at the monument containing quotes from Russian President Vladimir Putin and former president Dmitry Medvedev that were critical of Stalin. They were later removed.

De-Stalinisation

Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin for his brutality and crimes in 1956 and images of Stalin would later be systematically removed as part of a de-Stalinisation campaign. In recent years, some monuments to Stalin have begun to reappear in some places, though his legacy remains deeply divisive.

Alexander Zinoviev, a researcher and expert on Soviet architecture, said he felt the new monument and the period it evoked had some parallels with the current mood inside Russia at a time when it is locked in a standoff with the West over the war in Ukraine.

“It is the same self-isolation, it is the same conservative ideology and reliance on our own strength,” he said.

“And this theme with Stalin, with his aesthetics...that we need to trust our leader and be happy and not criticise those in power, it is very in tune with our time.”

(Courtesy: cnn.com)

A tyrant and a dictator

The Moscow branch of the liberal Yabloko party, however, issued a formal protest against what it called the return of a monument to ‘a tyrant and a dictator’ and demanded that the Moscow

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