

28 new activities banned from foreign investment

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has issued Ministerial Decision No 435/2024 to amend certain provisions of Ministerial Decision No 209/2020, which lists the activities prohibited for foreign investment, restricting these to Omani investors only.

The decision aligns with Article 14 of the Foreign Capital Investment Law issued via Royal Decree No 50/2019.

The decision aims to balance attracting qualitative investments with encouraging entrepreneurial projects, in line with the government's priority to empower small and medium enterprises that enhance the Omani economy. It serves as an incentive for Omanis to establish their own businesses and create new job opportunities for citizens. Omani investors are allowed to invest in all activities where foreign investment is prohibited. The decision also seeks to provide opportunities for Omani-owned SMEs in these



sectors and ensure that projects and activities related to national identity and Omani heritage are not affected. This list will be updated according to circumstances of each phase to keep pace with economic developments.

The decision added 28 activities to the list reserved for Omani investors only, prohibiting for-

eign investors from engaging in these, taking the total number of such activities to 123. Article 2 of the ministerial decision stated that any provision that contradicts this decision is nullified.

Article 3 confirmed that the decision would take effect the day after its publication, excluding existing investment projects at the time of its implementation,

which cannot be transferred to others without written approval from the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion or his delegate, as stated in Article 2 of Ministerial Decision No 209/2020.

The newly prohibited activities include production of handicrafts by distilling flowers and herbs, production of frankin-

cense water and oil, leather handicrafts, palm leaf handicrafts, wood handicrafts, traditional handmade cosmetics and perfumes, pottery and ceramics, stone and gypsum handicrafts, silver handicrafts, copper and metal handicrafts, aluminum handicrafts, traditional fishing tools, bone-derived handicrafts, and production and preparation of incense.

The decision includes activities such as skin care services, event and furniture rental, retail in specialised stores for construction scrap materials (including scrap iron trade), retail in specialised stores for drinking water (excluding production and transportation), cultivation of plants for decoration and seedlings (nurseries), sale of used vehicles, mobile cafes, freshwater aquaculture, mailbox rental services, public scribe services, Sand Services Centre, management and operations of liquefied petroleum gas filling stations (cooking gas), collection of used batteries and oils, and grocery stores.

More jobs Omanised

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Labour has issued Ministerial Resolution No 501/2024 amending regulations on professions available to non-Omani workers. This new resolution updates the earlier Ministerial Resolution No 235/2022 expanding the list of professions now prohibited for non-Omani nationals.

The updated resolution restricts the jobs of computer engineers, systems analysts and various roles within hotel management and transportation - among many more - to Omanis.

The resolution introduces a phased implementation for certain professions. For systems analysts and information systems network specialists, the restric-

tions will be effective from January 1, 2025. For jobs of computer programmers and computer engineers, the restrictions will be effective from January 1, 2026. The restrictions for the positions of web designer and operations analysts will come into force from January 1, 2027.

Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology announced that Omanisation of refrigerator vehicle driver positions came into force on September 1.

Through its land transport inspectors, the ministry will oversee compliance and address violations of the new regulation. Businesses and individuals benefiting directly or indirectly from refrigerator services are urged to cooperate by reporting noncompliance.

NEW OMANISED JOBS

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| ● Refrigerated food and medical supplies trailer and locomotive driver | ● Drilling measurement engineer | ● Flatbed crane driver |
| ● Water tanker and trailer driver | ● Quality controller | ● Forklift driver |
| ● Hotel reception manager | ● Aircraft loading controller | ● New vehicle salesman |
| ● Lifeguard | ● Marketing specialist | ● Used car dealer |
| ● Travel agent | ● Ship lashing and fixing worker | ● New parts seller |
| ● Room service supervisor | ● Labour supervisor | ● Used parts dealer |
| ● Quality control manager | ● Loading and unloading supervisor | ● Systems analyst |
| ● Quality officer | ● Commercial promoter (sales representative) | ● Information systems network specialist |
| ● Drilling fluid engineer | ● Commercial broker | ● Marine observer |
| ● Drilling officer | ● Goods arrangement specialist | ● Ship traffic controller |
| ● Electrician/general maintenance | | ● Computer maintenance technician |
| ● Mechanical technician | | ● Computer programmer |
| | | ● Computer engineer |
| | | ● Computer operator |
| | | ● Web designer |
| | | ● Operations analyst |

OIA announces Nitaj, FDO merger to enhance food security

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has announced the merger of Oman Food Investment Holding Company (Nitaj) and Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) into a unified business entity. This strategic move is designed to bolster the food security sector in the sultanate

and aligns with OIA's mission to improve efficiency and optimise expenditure within this crucial sector, reflecting a unified vision.

The merger is a significant step towards achieving enhanced performance, delivering high-quality products and ensuring cost efficiency. It will support effective decision-making and alignment with Oman Vision 2040's national priorities. The

process will be carried out according to a well-defined action plan and timeline, in coordination with relevant public entities.

This initiative falls within OIA's mandate, established under Royal Decree No 57/2021, which governs the establishment, merger, liquidation and sale of its companies. The merger is expected to drive revenue growth through the inte-

gration of value chains and consolidation of procurement, contracts, logistics and business activities.

Both companies' Boards of Directors will keep employees informed and facilitate open discussions regarding the merger's implications to address the concerns of employees of both Nitaj and FDO.

The Boards of Directors will

engage with their respective financial institutions to ensure transparency and adherence to legal and contractual obligations throughout the merger process.

Additionally, the merger will be carefully managed to ensure that ongoing projects and existing contracts with contractors remain unaffected, safeguarding current commitments and project continuity.



04 MEM, Petrogas sign oil & gas exploration deal for Block 15



15 Staycation at Al Waha - Family fun and frolic





Regional workshop focuses on desert locust control

Our Correspondent Muscat

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources opened a regional workshop on the Desert Locust Pesticide Management System on Sunday, attended by representatives of 11 Arab and Horn of Africa countries.

The five-day workshop, inaugurated by H E Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Undersecretary for Agriculture in Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, aims to improve the use of the Desert Locust Pesticide Management System and bolster early response to locust outbreaks

while mitigating risks to human health and the environment.

Mamoon Aisarai al Alawi Executive Secretary of Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region, emphasised the fact that the system is a digital tool designed to collect, analyse and report field data. It aims to create a comprehensive database to assist countries in managing pesticide stocks and equipment used in locust surveys.

The system facilitates national locust control centres in recording essential information about pesticide warehouses, conducting risk analyses, listing usable products and equipment, and

monitoring pesticide and equipment movements between warehouses. By using QR codes, the system helps prevent the accumulation of old stocks and ensures efficient pesticide distribution.

According to Alawi, the workshop goals include raising awareness on the dangers of desert locusts and the importance of managing chemical pesticides safely and effectively. It is focused on several key aspects - necessary equipment and materials for warehouses, organising pesticide storage, monitoring warehouse conditions, and adhering to national requirements for implementing these procedures.

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RUSH HOUR WOES

Back to school after vacation is always exciting. However, with children returning to school, the number of vehicles on roads swells, leading to traffic congestion in the morning and lunch time. What measures should be taken to reduce rush hour traffic in Muscat? Here's what *Muscat Daily* readers said -

Jatin Kumar Sangani
Senior accountant

To ease morning traffic in Muscat, schools should start at different times, carpooling should be encouraged, and school bus services improved. Safe walking and biking routes are also important. Expanding public transport, better managed drop-off zones, and improving traffic management can help. Raising community awareness, too.

Mohammad al Hinai
Government employee

There's chaos on the roads, especially between Qurum to Ruwi. By assigning different timing for schools across the city, traffic flow would be spread out and bottlenecks reduced. I also feel that offices can have flexible hours to ease the pressure on parents, students and office workers alike.

Qaseem al Balushi
Salesman

Parents can encourage carpooling; fewer cars on the road would mean less congestion and stress. Schools could organise more buses, and promote carpooling for children living in the same neighbourhoods. These measures would definitely ease traffic and also be economical for parents.

Mahesh Jain
Businessman

One of the easiest and fastest ways is to invest in and promote public transportation, which is crucial to easing morning congestion. By having more bus services and expanding the network to cover school routes, more students can travel via public transport instead of private vehicles.

Mohammad al Abri
Government employee

There must be strict traffic regulations near school zones to help manage congestion. Creating drop-off and pick-up points a little further away from school entrances, monitored by traffic authorities, could help flow of cars. Also, I feel that school and office time must not clash with one another.

Chaamu
Fitness coach

Let children have a good breakfast and relax in the morning hours. I propose that schools start at 9am or 10am, not just for traffic problems but so parents and children can also have a stress-free morning.

YOUR SAY

Ministry of Health has announced that it is gearing up to launch a heart transplantation programme. In the buildup to the programme, what should be done to encourage more people to donate organs?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om You can also log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue.

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MoH takes steps to cut waiting time in Khoula, Al-Nahda

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH), represented by the Directorate General of Khoula Hospital, on Sunday launched several health initiatives to be implemented at Khoula and Al-Nahda hospitals over the next one year.

These initiatives were chosen to address existing challenges in the sector and reduce waiting time for various medical services at these hospitals.

The launching ceremony was held under the patronage of H E Dr Hilal Ali Hilal al Sabti, Minister of Health, in the presence of Undersecretaries in the Ministry of Health and Dr Siham bint Salem al Sinani, Chair of the University Medical City.

One of those initiatives targets to conduct 12,000 MRI scans at Khoula Hospital over the next one year. This focused-drive will reduce the waiting time for MRI appointments to less than four weeks, compared to up to 16 months experienced in 2021 and 2022.

The ministry also made arrangements for 1,000 tonsil and adenoid removal surgeries; 1,000 knee replacements; and 1,500 cataract surgeries within one year.

MoH has decided to activate the operating rooms in the Day



Care Building at Khoula Hospital to facilitate these procedures, an official informed.

As per the plan, the waiting time for knee replacement surgeries will be reduced from 700 days to 120 days, while the waiting time for cataract operations will be reduced by 50%, the official added.

One of the eight announced initiatives is also for the reduction of waiting time for endoscopies. The ministry has decided to expand the endoscopy unit at both Khoula and Al-Nahda hospitals from one room to three in order to shorten the waiting period from one year to two months.

In the second phase of this initiative, waiting time will be further reduced to four weeks for

routine appointments.

Among the other initiatives is the activation of the evening clinic for the Dentistry and Oral, Maxillofacial Surgery Department at Al-Nahda Hospital. More than 900 patients will be treated over three months, which will bring down the waiting time for emergency cases to a maximum of two weeks, and less than six weeks for routine appointments.

Dr Rashid al Alawi, Director General of Khoula Hospital, explained that these initiatives play a significant role in encouraging innovation and improving operational efficiency. "This is in line with the long-term national goals for a healthy and sustainable society as envisioned in Oman Vision 2040," he added.



SCHOOLS REOPEN

The academic year for 2024-25 officially began on Sunday with schools across the sultanate reopening their doors. A total of 811,679 students attended schools nationwide on the very first day of the new session. Excitement was palpable as the school bells rang, welcoming students back for a new year of learning and growth. This photo shows the first day assembly at the Imam Jaber bin Zaid School in Wattayah (v K Shafeer)

Smart Cities Conference starts in Salalah

Our Correspondent
Salalah

The Smart Cities Conference, organised by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and Dhofar Municipality, in collaboration with Oman Society of Engineers, started in Salalah on Sunday.

The two-day conference was inaugurated by Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, in the presence of several senior officials, experts and specialists.

Fouad bin Abdullah al Kindi, Chairman of Oman Society of

Engineers, delivered the opening speech in which he said this year's conference focuses on concepts, trends and future visions of smart cities, urban development and infrastructure sustainability in Oman, with attention on Dhofar in particular.

Kindi highlighted the conference's objective to review the latest technologies and innovations aimed at enhancing urban life and sustainability. It will also focus on developing policies that support sustainable urban growth through smart city initiatives and projects, including strategies for urban develop-

ment and infrastructure.

Day 1 featured a visual presentation on sustainable smart cities, along with presentation of six working papers addressing flexible and sustainable transportation systems and their integration into Oman's smart cities framework. Additionally, there were discussions on green buildings and strategies for building comprehensive smart cities and incorporating these into Oman's urban ecosystem.

The day also had a dialogue session that explored emerging technologies in sustainable smart cities, showcasing global

experiences in smart city development and the establishment of infrastructure that aligns with the latest technologies and practices, while emphasising sustainability and environmental preservation.

The conference is part of the third edition of the Salalah Engineering Forum. Its goal is to facilitate exchange of experiences and knowledge among participants, explore the latest methods in developing sustainable smart cities, and foster partnerships between government and academic institutions as well as private sector entities.

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MEM, Petrogas sign oil & gas exploration deal for Block 15

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Mazoon Petrogas, a subsidiary of Petrogas E&P, along with its partner China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), has signed an agreement with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals for the exploration and production of oil and gas in Oman's Block 15 concession area.

Petrogas E&P is the exploration and production arm of the Mohammed Al Barwani Group (MB Group). Over the years, the company has grown steadily, earning a reputation as a global player in oil and gas exploration and production.

The agreement was signed by H E Salim al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals; Dr Mohammed al Barwani, Chairman and Founder of MB Group; and Zhang Yu, Vice President of CNODC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of CNPC.

Through this agreement, Petrogas aims to continue its successful collaboration with Oman's government, demonstrating its commitment to the local economy and community. Petrogas, through its joint venture Daleel Petroleum, will explore Block 15 for potential oil and gas reserves. If successful, the company plans to swiftly ex-



The agreement also includes continuation of foreign direct investment through Petrogas's ongoing partnership with CNPC, a major Chinese oil and gas company

ecute fit-for-purpose development plans to ensure efficient operations, optimising production and resource recovery, according to a press statement.

The agreement also includes the continuation of foreign direct investment (FDI) through Petrogas's ongoing partnership with CNPC, a major Chinese oil and gas company. This marks a sig-

nificant milestone following previous successes in Block 5, operated by the Petrogas and CNPC joint venture, Daleel Petroleum.

Petrogas has achieved significant successes in Egypt, the Netherlands, and the UK. The company has also delivered exceptional value on behalf of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) in the Rima Small Satellite

Fields in Oman, where it consistently increased production and reserves.

Commenting on the agreement, H E Afi said, "This new agreement represents a significant investment in Oman, driving economic growth, job creation, and the delivery of FDI through Petrogas's partners in this project. It aligns with our goal to em-

power local energy providers and reinforce their critical role in advancing Oman's economic prosperity."

Usama al Barwani, Vice Chairman of MB Group and Managing Director of Petrogas E&P, said, "We deeply value the trust placed in us by the Omani government and cherish our long-standing partnership with CNPC. This new agreement underscores our commitment to exploring further opportunities in Oman. We aspire to continue contributing significantly to the growth of Oman's energy sector through safe and efficient operations, as well as the positive impact we have on the local communities in which we operate."

Kingsuk Sen, CEO of Petrogas E&P, added, "We are thrilled with this award and remain steadfast in our commitment to swiftly deploy the latest technology and innovative approaches to unlock the block's resource potential. We are grateful to the government for their continued trust and support. With a proven track record of safe and efficient operations, along with significant investments in Oman that have consistently enhanced production and reserves, we remain committed to driving further value-added growth."



Amigo LNG signs gas supply deal with OQT

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Mexico-based Amigo LNG, a subsidiary of LNG Alliance, Singapore, announced that it entered into a binding heads of agreement with OQ Trading (OQT), the trading arm of Oman's OQ Group, to supply LNG from its liquefaction facility in Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico.

Amigo LNG said that this key milestone paves the way for the long term supply of LNG targeting the rapidly growing Asian market.

In a press statement, Muthu Chezian, CEO of LNG Alliance, said, "Securing the offtake agreement with a leading national oil company partner like OQ Trading strengthens our position as a reliable and responsible global energy provider. We are advancing rapidly in delivering the strategically located

Amigo LNG project, expanding our portfolio of lower-carbon energy solutions to drive the energy transition, and we remain committed to supporting our customers and partners every step of the way."

Wail al Jamali, CEO of OQ Trading, said, "We are pleased to enter into this agreement with a trusted project developer in Amigo LNG. The offtake represents a significant step in the growth of our LNG portfolio, allowing us to deliver LNG to our customers within the Asia Pacific region."

OQ Trading has successfully established a global presence as one of the world's major participants in the commodities trading industry - trading more than 40mn tonnes of energy products each year.

The company has a global network of trading offices, ideally located in all the major energy trading regions.



Saudi Arabia posts SAR98bn trade surplus in second quarter

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - The trade balance of Saudi Arabia reached a surplus of SAR98.368bn in the second quarter of 2024, reaching its highest level during the current year, according to the preliminary data released by the General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT).

This represents a quarterly growth of 13.2%, with an increase of SAR11.495bn compared to a surplus of SAR86.873bn in the first quarter of the same year.

The kingdom's international trade surpassed SAR490.657bn, with merchandise exports totaling SAR294.512bn, comprising 60% of the overall trade. Merchandise imports amounted to SAR196.144bn. Non-oil domestic exports reached SAR51.400 billion, accounting for 17.5% of the total exports.

Petroleum exports reached SAR220.784bn, accounting for 75% of total exports, while re-exports amounted to SAR22.327bn, representing 7.6% of total exports.

The Asian group of countries, excluding Arab and Islamic countries, topped the group of importing countries, accounting for 50.1% of the kingdom's total goods exports, with a value of SAR147.622bn.

The European Union group of countries was second, accounting for 15.6% of total goods exports, with a value of SAR46.010bn. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) group of countries was third, accounting for 13.3% of total goods exports, with a value of SAR39.198bn.

In terms of exports by country, China was the largest importer, accounting for 16.2% of Saudi

Saudi Arabia's petroleum exports in the second quarter of 2024 reached SAR220.784bn, accounting for 75% of total exports, while re-exports amounted to SAR22.327bn

Arabia's total goods exports, with a value of SAR47.588bn, while the Republic of Korea followed with a value of SAR26.408bn and a share of 9% of the total goods exports.

Japan was the third-largest importer, with a value of SAR25.950bn and a share of 8.8% of total goods exports. SPA

Bank Muscat launches Al Tharwa Fund

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Bank Muscat has launched the Al Tharwa Fund, aimed at offering individual and institutional investors stable returns through regular dividend distributions and capital appreciation.

The primary goal of the new fund is to generate consistent income and capital growth by investing in a diversified portfolio of equities and fixed-income instruments across GCC and international markets.

The fund's asset allocation between equity and fixed-income classes will be actively managed by Bank Muscat's experienced asset management team, adapting to prevailing market conditions and the fund's objectives, according to a press release.

Al Tharwa Fund is the first of its kind in Oman, providing investors with the opportunity to invest in both equity and fixed-income securities, similar to a balanced fund, across regional and international markets. The fund is open-ended, regulated by the Financial Services Authority, and available for investment to



both individual and institutional investors.

The initial public offering (IPO) for the fund will open on September 1 and close on September 12, 2024. The initial offer price is set at 101bz per unit, including issue expenses of 1bz per unit.

Al Tharwa Fund offers daily liquidity with no minimum holding period. Investors can subscribe to the fund with a minimum investment of RO50, with no maximum investment

limit.

Bank Muscat customers interested in subscribing during the IPO period can download the subscription form from the bank's website and submit it to their nearest Bank Muscat or Meethaq Islamic Banking branch. Customers can also subscribe via the Bank Muscat internet banking platform.

The investment strategy of the Al Tharwa Fund is to maintain an optimal mix of equities and fixed-income securities,

based on current market conditions, offering investors both regular dividends and capital gains. Additionally, the fund's design allows for regular rebalancing of the allocation between equities and fixed-income securities, providing diversification benefits and better management of market volatility. This makes the fund a comprehensive investment solution, allowing investors to minimise portfolio volatility while receiving regular dividends and capital appreciation.

tion through optimal asset allocation.

Khalifa bin Abdullah al Hatmi, Deputy General Manager, Investment Banking and Capital Markets, Bank Muscat, said, "We are extremely delighted to introduce the Bank Muscat Al Tharwa Fund to the market. This launch of the fund is a testament to our commitment to offering innovative and unique investment solutions that cater to the evolving needs of our investors. With the fund's objective and focus on generating stable returns and capital appreciation through investing in equities and fixed-income instruments in the GCC and international markets, we are confident that it will offer individuals and institutions alike a compelling investment opportunity to generate income and capital appreciation."

He added, "Al Tharwa Fund offers an attractive and innovative investment option for investors to benefit from the investment expertise of Bank Muscat's asset management team and a dynamic allocation to both equity and fixed income to benefit from various market opportunities."

Elon Musk, Tesla cleared in \$258bn Dogecoin lawsuit

New York, US - Billionaire Elon Musk and his electric vehicle firm Tesla were cleared Friday in a \$258bn Dogecoin class action lawsuit.

The lawsuit, filed in 2022, alleged that Musk's comments on Twitter, now known as X and owned by Musk, manipulated Dogecoin's price and harmed cryptocurrency investors.

The investors claimed that Musk's statements, including that Dogecoin might be his favourite currency, the people's crypto, and the future currency of Earth, were misleading.

They also cited claims that Dogecoin might become the



Elon Musk

standard for the global financial system and the currency of the internet, while Musk put a literal Dogecoin in SpaceX and fly it to

the moon and that Dogecoin would pay for the mission, and Tesla vehicles could be bought with Dogecoin, according to the

court documents.

"These statements are aspirational and puffery, not factual and susceptible to being falsified," US District Judge Alvin K Hellerstein of the Southern District of New York wrote in his ruling.

"As for Musk and Tesla's alleged 'pump and dump' scheme, it is not possible to understand the allegations that form the basis of Plaintiffs' conclusion of market manipulation, a 'pump and dump' scheme, a breach of a fiduciary duty amounting to insider trading, or the state law claims," he added.

A number of plaintiffs who

joined the class action lawsuit sought \$86bn in damages, in addition to triple damages of \$172bn.

Once an obscure cryptocurrency created as a joke, Dogecoin has quickly become a top-10 crypto asset at the beginning of 2021 as Musk, the world's richest person then, repeatedly posted tweets in favour of it.

It ranked 8th among crypto assets as of Friday with a market cap of \$14.7bn.

Unlike Bitcoin, the world's biggest crypto, Dogecoin does not have any limit on its mining, or the amount that is created.

Anadolu Agency

Eurozone economic sentiment lifts as services rebound



Brussels, Belgium – Economic sentiment in the eurozone and the European Union picked up in August, spurred by a robust performance in the services sector and a recovery in employment prospects.

The Economic Sentiment Indicator edged higher in both the European Union, rising by 0.4 points to 96.9, and the euro area, increasing by 0.6 points to 96.6, according to data released by the European Commission.

The eurozone's figure exceeded economists' predictions of 95.8, reaching its highest point since May 2023, though it still falls short of its pre-pandemic average.

The Employment Expectations Indicator also posted a more substantial increase in both regions, reversing several months of decline. In the European Union, the employment gauge rose by 0.9

points to 99.6 while, in the euro area, it climbed by 1.3 points to 99.2. Nevertheless, the Commission noted that the employment gauge remains slightly below its long-term average of 100.

Consumer confidence steady

The broad improvement in economic sentiment was driven by heightened confidence in industry, services, and retail trade, while confidence among consumers and in the construction sector remained largely unchanged. Among the EU's largest economies, France posted the most significant gain, with a 4.3-point rise.

This improvement aligns with August business surveys, such as the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), which highlighted a substantial expansion in France's services sector. Activity reached

its highest level since May 2022, supported by the upcoming Olympic Games in Paris.

Economic sentiment also strengthened in Spain (+1.3) and the Netherlands (+0.9), while Poland saw a modest uptick (+0.3). However, the sentiment deteriorated in Germany (-1.7) and Italy (-1.2).

Services confidence improved by 0.6 points, driven by a sharp rise in managers' demand expectations and a more optimistic view of the past business situation.

Industry confidence edged up slightly in August (+0.4), buoyed by a marked improvement in managers' production expectations and a modest boost in their assessment of finished product stocks. However, these gains were partly offset by a worsening evaluation of current order books. (Source: Euronews.com)

Fed's preferred inflation gauge on track for September rate cuts

Taylor Tompkins

The US Federal Reserve's preferred measure of inflation showed price growth continued to lose steam, likely reaffirming the central bank's path ahead on interest rates.

Friday's release of the Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) index showed inflation rose 0.2% over the month of July, just 0.1 percentage point higher than in June. That made the annual inflation rate 2.5%, the same as the previous month and still just above the Fed's goal of 2%.

The data matched what economists surveyed by Dow Jones Newswires and The Wall Street Journal expected.

"Weakening inflation gives the



Fed plenty of room to begin cutting rates, while still resilient household spending is the recipe for a soft landing," wrote David Alcaly, lead macroeconomic strategist at Lazard Asset Management.

The PCE report was similar to another measure of consumer in-

flation released earlier this month, the Consumer Price Index. Both reports show a slowly increasing cost of living after a worrisome uptick in the first quarter.

The good news on inflation reinforces the expectation that the Fed will cut its influential federal funds rate at the next policy

meeting in mid-September. At this point, inflation data's influence will likely only help inform the outlook for how fast and far the Federal Reserve will cut its key interest rate fall in the coming months, barring any major re-ignition of price pressures.

"The further cooling of inflation could give the Fed leeway to be more aggressive with rate declines at coming meetings, especially if the labor market shows a steep deterioration," wrote Nationwide Senior Economist Ben Ayers.

Much of the Fed's – and, in turn, market watchers' – attention has turned to the labour market, as central bankers monitor weakness for signs of a recession. (Source: Investopedia)

India's foreign exchange reserves hit \$681bn

New Delhi, India – India's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$7.023bn, reaching a fresh record high of \$681.7bn, during the week that ended on August 23, according to data released by the Reserve Bank of India. The previous record high was \$674.9bn.

The reserves have been on an upward trend for some time. In 2024 alone, they have risen by approximately \$60bn cumulatively. This buffer of foreign exchange reserves helps insulate domestic economic activity from global shocks.

According to the latest data from the RBI, India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the largest



component of forex reserves, rose by \$5.983bn to \$597.552bn.

Gold reserves during the week increased by \$893mn, bringing the total to \$60.997bn. As per estimates, India's foreign ex-

change reserves are now sufficient to cover about a year of projected imports.

In the calendar year 2023, India added about \$58bn to its foreign exchange reserves. In contrast, India's forex reserves

saw a cumulative decline of \$71bn in 2022. Forex reserves, or foreign exchange reserves (FX reserves), are assets held by a nation's central bank or monetary authority.

These are generally held in reserve currencies, typically the US Dollar and, to a lesser extent, the Euro, Japanese Yen, and Pound Sterling.

The RBI closely monitors the foreign exchange markets and intervenes only to maintain orderly market conditions, aiming to contain excessive volatility in the exchange rate without reference to any pre-determined target level or band.

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TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) announces the following tenders:

TENDER NO.	TENDER NAME	LAST DATE FOR OBTAINING THE DOCUMENTS	BID SUBMISSION DATE	REQUIREMENTS FROM PARTICIPATORS	TENDER DOCUMENT'S FEES (INCLUDING VAT) (R.O)	
1	93/2024	Provide Litigation and Legal Advisory Services	09/09/2024	01/10/2024	Local Companies with Experience in the Same Field, and Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	52/500
2	94/2024	Provide Website Hosting Services for OETC Website with AMC for 3 Years.	16/09/2024	15/10/2024	Local Companies with Experience in the Same Field, and Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	26/250
3	96/2024	Supply of 36kV Cable Box Surge Arrestors for Power Transmission at Muscat Governorate.	16/09/2024	15/10/2024	Local Companies with Experience in the Same Field, and Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	52/500
4	97/2024	Consultancy Services for Design and Supervision of Grid Station Civil Improvement Work.	16/09/2024	15/10/2024	Local Companies with Experience in the Same Field, and Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	52/500

Participation:	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity Apply on E-tendering
Buying the Tender:	By E-Tendering System.
Fees:	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document: (Payment Through Bank Transfer), SMEs are exempted from tender's fees.
The deadline for clarification:	Before (21) Days from bid submission date.
Submission:	The submission of hard copy will be only for Bid Bond & other documents by E-Tendering
Terms and conditions:	- Specifying the name of the Company or whatever refers to in the Bid Guarantee Envelope. - The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from bid submission date. - The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from bid submission date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). Small & Medium Enterprises are exempted from the submission of 1% of the bid bond. - Any bid not comply with the required guarantee will not be accepted. - OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.
Offer:	The bid bond should be submitted in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.
Company Address:	Muscat - Al Mawaleh Read No: 2153 - Building No. 4230 Block No: 321 Contact Details: 92217856 , 91491551
Email Website:	tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com / link of E-Tendering System https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx

إعلان طرح مناقصات

تعلن الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء ش.م.ع.م عن طرح المناقصات التالية:

رقم	رقم	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	لمن الوثيقة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (أ.ع.)
1	93/2024	تقديم خدمات التقاضي والاستشارات القانونية.	09/09/2024	01/10/2024	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها سجل تجاري ساري المفعول.	52/500
2	94/2024	تقديم خدمات استضافة المواقع الإلكترونية للشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء مع عقد للصيانة والدعم لمدة ثلاث سنوات.	16/09/2024	15/10/2024	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها سجل تجاري ساري المفعول.	26/250
3	96/2024	توريد ماعى الصواعق لصناديق الكابلات جهد 36 كيلو فولت لمحولات الطاقة في محافظة مسقط.	16/09/2024	15/10/2024	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها سجل تجاري ساري المفعول.	52/500
4	97/2024	الخدمات الاستشارية والإشراف على أعمال التحسين المدني لمحطات الشبكة.	16/09/2024	15/10/2024	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها سجل تجاري ساري المفعول.	52/500

الإشترك	يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة بعد تقديم الطلب عن طريق نظام التنافس الإلكتروني.
طريقة البناء	من خلال نظام التنافس الإلكتروني.
الرسوم	مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة. لا ترد. (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي). تُعفى المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة من دفع ثمن الوثيقة.
آخر موعد للإستفسارات	قبل (11) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات.
تقديم العرض	يتم تسليم النسخة الأصلية فقط من الضمان البنكي للعطاء في الصندوق. أما العرض فيتم تسليمه من خلال نظام التنافس الإلكتروني. - تحديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على المظروف. - أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (90) يوماً من تاريخ تقديم العطاء. - رفاق تأمين في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (1%) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (90) يوماً من تاريخ تقديم العطاء. ومعلنون باسم الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء. تُعفى المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة من تسليم الضمان المصرفي. - كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه. - الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مفيدة بقبول أقل العروض أو أي عطاء آخر.
العرض المقدم	يجب وضع الضمان البنكي للعطاء فقط في صندوق المناقصات رقم (1) بمعنى الشركة قبل الساعة (11 صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات محافظة مسقط - الموالح
عنوان الشركة	رقم السكة 2153 - مبنى رقم 4230 تفاصيل التواصل: 92217856 , 91491551
البريد الإلكتروني والموقع الإلكتروني	tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com / link of E-Tendering System https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx



OETCOMAN



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Bank Muscat expands network with new Asalah centre inaugurated in Al Khuwair

In line with its strategic plan to enhance and expand its branch and centres network, Bank Muscat, Oman's leading financial service provider, inaugurated a new Asalah Priority Banking Centre and a service centre at the bank's branch in Al Khuwair-33, a prominent neighbourhood in Muscat.

The inauguration was patronised by Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamed bin Ali al Ghazali, along with several esteemed customers and members of the bank's executive management team. The decision to open this centre in Al Khuwair-33 was driven by the area's significant population growth and thriving commercial activity. The area has recently witnessed the launch of various commercial projects and the development of public spaces, making it an ideal location for the new facility.

The new centre is a valuable addition to the Asalah centre network across branches, which spans across the sultanate, now totalling 50 centres. Bank Muscat recently launched several new centres, including those at



its branches in Al Mouj Street, Al Hail, and Al Khoudh-6 in Muscat governorate.

Other centres have also been opened in Sinaw, North Sharqiya governorate; Izki and Adam, Dakhliya governorate.

The Asalah centre at Al Khuwair-33 branch is equipped to offer priority banking customers with a range of tailored solutions within a modern and comfortable environment. Dedicated relationship managers and experienced staff are on hand to provide personalised assistance, reflecting Bank Muscat's commitment to delivering exceptional customer service and keeping pace with the latest developments in the banking sector.

In addition to the Asalah centre, the new service center within the branch offers a variety of banking services, including account opening and delivery of debit cards. The centre is outfitted with advanced technology to ensure quick and high-quality service, supported by a team of skilled employees.

This expansion aligns with Bank Muscat's vision of continuously enhancing its customer service capabilities across its branches and service centres nationwide.

On the occasion, Saleh Mohammed al Maaini, Deputy General Manager Capital Regions, Bank Muscat, expressed pride in the ongoing expansion of the bank's Asalah centres. "The new centre in Al Khuwair-33 will serve a large segment of priority banking customers in Bausher, providing a range of services and facilities designed to meet their needs and aspirations. Bank Muscat is dedicated to strengthening its presence in key areas experiencing rapid commercial, economic, and urban growth. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all our customers for their continued trust in our services across the Sultanate. We remain committed to delivering the best banking experience to our valued clients."

Asalah Priority Banking Group offers many exclusive benefits to customers, including a large number of dedicated relationship managers located in various governorates.



ISM hosts refreshers' course for scout masters, guide captains

Indian School Muscat, an exemplar of effective event organisation, hosted a refreshers' course for scout masters and guide captains of all Indian Schools in the Sultanate of Oman on Saturday.

Bharat Scouts & Guides is a globally visible, consistently growing, self-reliant premium youth movement that is gender balanced, vibrant and responsive to trends. The purpose of the movement is to contribute to the development of young people by helping them achieve their full physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual potential as individuals, responsible citizens, and members of local, national and international communities.

With this objective in mind,

the refresher course was conducted at the school's new multipurpose hall, a release stated.

The school's philosophy goes beyond academic teaching to focus on comprehensive personal growth. It strives to reach this goal through various initiatives. The event, marked by vibrant enthusiasm, witnessed the active participation of educators across Indian schools in Oman.

The presence of Vinoba M P, senior principal and educational advisor to the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman, as the chief guest; along with Rakesh Joshi, principal of Indian School Muscat; senior vice principal administration, vice principals, assistant vice principals and other

dignitaries marked the significance of the day.

Chief guest Vinoba M P, in his inaugural address, urged the educators to motivate students to join scouts and guides movement to reap its valuable benefits. He further advised the educators to serve as role models, guiding students to develop mental resilience and effectively navigate life's challenges.

Lavene Passanha, district secretary, Bharat Scouts & Guides - Oman Chapter; and Bharati Banerjee, district assistant organising commissioner - guides, Bharat Scouts & Guides, both acclaimed educators from Indian School Muscat, led the session on the refreshers' course.

Kia brings season of celebrations with incredible gifts and savings

Spring into the season of celebration with Kia and win incredible gifts, discover unbeatable savings and surprises with Kia's latest promotional offer. Head to your nearest Kia showroom to find the best of Kia's line-up. Check out the amazing incentives such as 1st year free registration, insurance, service & upgrade your deal through Scratch & Win Coupons.

It is all about winning at Kia. Get a chance to win 10-gram 24-carat gold coins, the latest iPhone 15s and service upgrades of up to 200,000km as assured scratch and win prizes, everybody at KIA is a winner. Take advantage of Kia's promotional offer, valid for its dynamic sedans and SUVs range until the offer ends on October 23.

"Seeing you driving our vehicles brings us immense joy. But our main objective is to provide a unique, comfortable, enjoyable and safe driving experience for people from all walks of life," said a representative from Kia Oman.

"We're offering a chance to upgrade the service benefits of up to 200,000 km, which means



One has a chance to win 10-gram 24-carat gold coins, the latest iPhone 15s and service upgrades of up to 200,000km as assured scratch and win prizes till October 23

your vehicle will be under the expert care of Kia's team, without any additional cost or hidden charges," he further shared.

Kia's diverse SUV range includes the AWD Kia Telluride 3.8L and Sorento 3.5L V6 with 7 and 8-seater options. For five-seater options, customers can select Sportage 2.0/1.6L Turbo, Seltos 1.6L 5-seater, and Sonet 1.5L. Explore more with Kia's MPV range: the new Carnival 3.5L in 8-seater, Carens 1.5L 7-seater, the PC segment Picanto 1.25L 4 Cyl, Pegas 1.4L, K3 1.6L 5-seater sedan, Cerato 1.6L/2.0L, K5 2.0/2.5L DOHC CVT Engine, and K8 3.5L GDL SPL.

The all-electric range of EV6 and EV9 showcase its versatility and the enhanced ability to satisfy customers' needs. Kia's

strategy of blending technological innovation with a customer-centric approach has been a consistent focus for the brand. Abiding by their motto, Kia offers a ride for everyone.

Venture out with friends for fun hangouts with our new Kia K3. The sedan becomes your everyday companion that makes city hustles easy. Powered by a 1.6 Litre engine it delivers 120 hp at 6300 rpm paired with 6-speed transmission. The K3 comes with a modern smart keyless entry system for easy access. For enhanced safety, it features the Parking Reverse warning camera (RVC).

8th Indian School Muscat Model United Nations Conference held

The eighth edition of the Indian School Muscat Model United Nations Conference (ISMMUN-2024) took place from August 22 to 24.

This year's event brought together over 750 delegates, along with 45 DAIS members and 4 Secretariat Members, for a two-day immersive experience of debate, diplomacy, and problem-solving.

ISMMUN serves as an academic simulation of the United Nations, where students step into the shoes of diplomats from different countries to tackle real-world issues. The conference encourages young minds to think critically, develop negotiation skills, and engage in meaningful discussions.

The opening ceremony set the tone for the conference, with Imran Khan, Treasurer of the School Management Committee,



delivered a speech that underscored the importance of unity and mutual respect in addressing global challenges.

Rakesh Joshi, the Principal, also shared his thoughts, praising the delegates for their enthusiasm and dedication to promoting peace and cooperation on a global scale. The Secretary-General, Aman Tandon, officially

opened the conference, highlighting the power of diverse perspectives in creating innovative solutions.

The heart of ISMMUN 2024 lay within its 20 committees, UNHRC, UNW, UNODC, UNSC, DISEC, SPECPOL, WHO, UNICEF, AIPPM, ECOSOC, ICJ, UNTC, LAS, FAO, CWoN, UEFA, CCC, PRESS CORPS, JJK, and

SPIDER-MAN.

From the UNHRC to SPIDER-MAN, each committee offered a unique platform for delegates to express their views and propose resolutions on topics ranging from media representation to combating societal prejudices. Delegates in committees like DISEC and SPECPOL engaged in rigorous discussions about

global security, while those in WHO and UNICEF focused on health and humanitarian issues. The innovative addition of committees like JJK and SPIDER-MAN added a creative twist, encouraging participants to think outside the box.

As the conference progressed, it became evident that the delegates were not just there

to debate but to actively seek solutions to some of the world's most complex problems. The debates were intense, with delegates passionately defending their positions and negotiating with their peers to reach common ground. The spirit of diplomacy was palpable in every committee room, as participants worked tirelessly to draft resolutions

that were both practical and visionary.

The closing ceremony was a celebration of the delegates' hard work and dedication. Subrahmanian Muthuraman, Chair of the Academic Subcommittee of the School Management Committee, praised the delegates for their commitment to learning and leadership.



Mercedes-Benz Oman launches all-electric range with cutting-edge technology, luxury

Mercedes-Benz Oman is excited to announce the arrival of the highly anticipated all-electric range in its showrooms starting from Sunday.

This milestone marks a significant step forward in sustainable mobility in Oman, offering customers the perfect blend of cutting-edge technology, luxury, and environmental consciousness.

Oman's new all-electric range lineup includes the EQA, EQB, EQE Sedan, EQE SUV, EQS Sedan, EQS SUV, and the all-new Mercedes-Benz G 580 with EQ Technology. Each model caters to different preferences and lifestyles, ensuring every customer can find an electric vehicle (EV) that suits their needs.

The EQA and EQB offer compact versatility ideal for urban driving, while the EQE and EQS Sedans set new standards for business sophistication and luxury. For those seeking power and elegance in a commanding form,

the EQE and EQS SUVs deliver an unmatched driving experience.

The G 580 with EQ Technology brings unparalleled off-road capabilities to the EV market, combining rugged durability with advanced electric technology.

"We are thrilled to bring the future of mobility to Oman by introducing our all-electric range by Mercedes-Benz," said Shaun Michael, Mercedes-Benz Oman CEO. "This launch is a testament to our commitment to sustainability and innovation, aligning with global efforts to reduce carbon emissions and promote environmentally friendly transportation options. The electric range represents the pinnacle of EV technology, and we are confident that our customers will be as excited as we are to experience the future of driving."

The all-electric range by Mercedes-Benz is powered by advanced electric motors paired with next-generation batteries.

MoE begins training programme in preparation for national tests

The Ministry of Education (MoE), represented by the Measurement and Evaluation Centre is implementing a training programme in preparing the national tests to measure basic skills in the subjects of Arabic, English, Mathematics, Science.

The programme targets 81 trainees from teachers, senior teachers, subject evaluation specialists, and supervisors from the educational directorates in the governorates of Dhofar, Al Wusta, South Sharqiyah, North Sharqiyah and Buraimi.

The training programme, which continues until Thursday, includes a number of working papers. The first day of the programme included a session on 'The concept of national tests, their objectives, and the difference between them and general exams'.

A second session discussed the mechanism for formulating the test vocabulary, and training on formulating the test vocabulary from multiple choice.

On the second day of the programme, two working papers were presented on difficulty levels, describing them, building a test network, using the national test network, and preparing vocabulary.

The third day included a working paper that covered a number of topics, including: vocabulary review criteria, correction model, and evaluation of the test paper. The training program concludes with training the trainees on the national tests platform and entering vocabulary into the platform.



The goal of this training programme is to raise the level of awareness among teachers about the mechanism of evaluating students

Fathia al Maawali, Director of the Department of Studies and

Statistical Data, said that the goal of this training programme is to raise the level of awareness among teachers about the mechanism of evaluating students, and the mechanism of preparing vocabulary that measures a set of skills according to levels.

"Through teachers training last year, we were able to come up with a number of vocabularies, which will be used in national tests after reviewing and auditing them," Maawali informed.

"One of the goals of the national tests is the digital transformation in their application, as a tender was granted to one of the companies to enter the vocabulary prepared during the training period into the question bank; to be used in subsequent training," he added.

This training continues for 12 training days in the ministry's General Diwan, and targets evaluation specialists to review the vocabulary, and link it to the cognitive levels within the platform,

while identifying the type of questions, and how to present them.

The training programme aims to spread awareness of the importance of national tests in evaluating the educational system in the Sultanate of Oman, build technical cadres capable of preparing national test items based on the specifications published in the general framework for national tests, and create a question bank for national test items.

Indian School Sur opens playground, lays foundation for hall

Indian School Sur marked a significant milestone in its history with the grand inauguration of its new playground and the foundation stone laying ceremony for its upcoming multipurpose hall and additional classrooms.

The event, which took place on Friday, saw a gathering of proud parents, enthusiastic students, and distinguished dignitaries.

The ceremony commenced with the foundation stone laying for the multipurpose hall and additional classrooms, officiated by Dr Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman. This was followed by a plaque unveiling ceremony, symbolizing the

beginning of a new chapter in the school's development.

A highlight of the evening was the inauguration of the school's long-awaited playground. Syed Salman, Vice-Chairman & Director In-Charge of Indian School Sur, had the honour of cutting the ribbon to officially open the playground.

The ceremony also featured a symbolic balloon released by Dr Manickam, representing the soaring aspirations of the school community.

In his address, Dr Manickam emphasised the crucial role of playgrounds in a child's holistic development. He commended the efforts of the current and previous school management com-



mittees, the principal, parents, and all stakeholders for their contributions to the school's progress.

Dr Manickam notably referred to Indian School Sur as "a jewel among all the Indian schools in Oman", highlighting its signifi-

cance in the community. Nishreen Basheer, Treasurer of the School Management Committee, delivered a warm

welcome address, setting a positive tone for the evening's proceedings.

The event was graced by several distinguished guests, including, Syed Salman, Vice-Chairman & Director In-Charge, Indian School Sur, Krishnendhu S, Chair-Grievance Committee & Director In-Charge of Indian School Sur, Nidheesh Kumar P P, Finance Director, Indian Schools in Oman, Vinoba M P, Sr. Principal and Educational Advisor, Dr Gokuldas, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, Vijay Saravanan, Director, Indian Schools in Oman, Mohammed Ali Musalam al Alawi, Section Head, Dept of Lands, Ministry of Education, Ifthikar Ali Khan, Director Oper-

ations, OMIFCO, Mohammed Ameen, Managing Director, Sea Pride LLC, and other invited special invited guests

The School Management Committee, led by Jami Srinivas Rao (President), Dr Ramkumar Lakshmi Narayanan (Convenor), Nishreen Basheer (Treasurer), and members Pradeep Kumar A V, Saeed T P, Shabeeb Mohammed and Pramod V Nair, were in attendance, along with Dr S Srinivasan, the Principal of Indian School Sur, who has been instrumental in the school's ongoing development.

The ceremony featured a variety of cultural performances, including welcome dance, group songs, yoga demonstrations, etc.



ISWK launches 'SHE: Show Her Empowerment' campaign

The Business & Entrepreneurship (B&E) Club of the Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir (ISWK) launched its groundbreaking charity drive - 'SHE: Show Her Empowerment' - which aims to empower women by raising awareness about menstrual health and hygiene.

As the first of its kind at the secondary and senior secondary levels, 'SHE' is dedicated to breaking the stigma surrounding menstruation and advocating for women's health.

The primary goal of the 'SHE' drive is to collect donations of hygiene products related to menstrual health, generously contributed by both the student and parent community of ISWK.

The event was inaugurated by Rashna Saher. She praised the student officials of the B&E Club for their commitment to this crucial cause. She emphasised the importance of sensitising society to the issues surrounding menstrual health.

Guest speaker Dr Kirtan Kr-

ishna, a renowned gynecologist from Aster Al Raffah Hospital, delivered an insightful presentation on menstrual health, debunking common myths and offering practical hygiene tips.

The first day concluded with an informal football match between the Science and Commerce departments. The match not only engaged participants in a fun and active way but also underscored the drive's underlying goal of community's support for the empowerment of women.

Agility contributes to WFP's Gaza relief efforts

The World Food Programme (WFP) has welcomed a new financial contribution from their longstanding partner Agility, a supply chain services, infrastructure and innovation company, to support WFP's operations in Palestine.

This donation will contribute to WFP's efforts to provide essential food assistance to those suffering in one of the worst hunger crises the world is facing today.

With this latest contribution from Agility, WFP will be able to provide nearly 779,000 hot meals in Gaza ensuring that the most vulnerable populations receive the necessary support amidst ongoing challenges. This will bring the total donations by Agility and its employees to 1 million meals since the start of the current crisis in October last year.

"Agility's generous contribution comes at a crucial time for Palestine, where food insecurity and humanitarian needs are es-



A WFP staffer hands food to a Palestine child in Gaza (WFP)

Company's donations have provided roughly 1mn meals since start of the conflict

calating. This support will have an impact on our efforts to provide life-saving assistance to those who need it most," said Mageed Yahia, WFP Representative to the GCC.

"The involvement of the private sector, particularly leaders

like Agility, is vital in helping us address these challenges and achieve our mission of zero hunger," he added.

The latest WFP Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report finds that 96% of the population is facing acute

food insecurity at crisis level or higher (IPC Category 3+), with almost half a million people in catastrophic conditions (IPC Category 5).

Adequate and sustained levels of humanitarian assistance must be provided, including more fresh food, better nutritional diversity, clean water and sanitation, access to health care and the rebuilding of clinics and hospitals.

"Agility supports WFP's efforts to save lives by delivering critical humanitarian assistance around the world. We've worked closely with WFP in more than 20 countries since we became a WFP partner in 2008, focusing our support on WFP's food assistance programme and supply chain services that provide logistics resources to the broader humanitarian community," said Tarek Sultan, Agility Vice Chairman, adding that in Gaza, WFP is leading efforts to prevent famine and further suffering.

Will continue to engage with all stakeholders in Afghanistan: UN

Kabul, Afghanistan - Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, reaffirmed the United Nations' commitment to ongoing engagement with all stakeholders in Afghanistan, including the Taliban-led interim government, TOLO News reported.

The remarks by Dujarric came while he attended a press conference on Saturday. He also called on the interim government of Afghanistan to open up more avenues for diplomatic engagement.

During the press conference, Dujarric told reporters: "In terms

of the contacts with the de facto authorities, I mean, we will continue to engage with all stakeholders in Afghanistan, including the Taliban. And we've always done so following our mandate and I would say impartially and in good faith, always upholding the norms of the UN, pushing the messages of human rights and equality," according to TOLO News.

The spokesman further said: "And we will continue our work as mandated by the Security Council. And I think we would urge the de facto authorities to, in fact, open more avenues for



Stephane Dujarric, the spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General

diplomatic engagement." Notably, the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan had expressed deep concern on August 25 regarding the new morality law imposed by Afghanistan's de

facto authorities, which imposes restrictions on personal conduct, and said that the law is a distressing vision for Afghanistan's future. Taliban authorities had announced the ratification of a Law on the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, with 35 articles detailing restrictions on the Afghan population with arbitrary and severe enforcement mechanisms.

In a statement, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) had said: "UNAMA is concerned by the promulgation by Afghanistan's de facto authorities of a morality law which imposes wide-ranging and far-reaching restrictions on personal conduct and provides morality police with broad powers of enforcement."

"It is a distressing vision for Afghanistan's future, where moral inspectors have discretionary powers to threaten and detain anyone based on broad and sometimes vague lists of infractions," said Roza Otunbayeva, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNAMA.

Otunbayeva emphasised that the law imposes intolerable restrictions on the rights of Afghan women and girls. "It extends the already intolerable restrictions on the rights of Afghan women and girls, with even the sound of a female voice outside the home apparently deemed a moral violation," she said.

"After decades of war and in the midst of a terrible humanitarian crisis, the Afghan people deserve much better than being threatened or jailed if they happen to be late for prayers, glance at a member of the opposite sex who is not a family member, or possess a photo of a loved one," Otunbayeva had added.

ANI

Donald Trump's Arlington visit 'a political stunt', says Harris

The visit had sparked a controversy as federal law does not allow political activities at the cemetery

Washington, D.C., US - US Vice President and Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris lambasted former President Donald Trump on Saturday for a visit he made this week to soldiers' graves at the Arlington National Cemetery.

She said the visit was disrespectful and a political stunt.

Arlington cemetery 'not a place for politics', Harris says

"It is a solemn place; a place where we come together to honour our American heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service of this nation. It is not a place for politics," Harris wrote in an X post.

Trump was at the cemetery on Monday to take part in a wreath-laying ceremony honouring the 13 service members killed during the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

During the visit, the former president posed with relatives of the service members, and his campaign team took videos and used them in advertisements.

This sparked controversy as federal law and Pentagon policies do not allow political activities at the cemetery and bar photogra-



US Vice President and Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris

It is a solemn place; a place where we come together to honour American heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service of this nation. It is not a place for politics

KAMALA HARRIS

phy for political purposes.

"Let me be clear: the former president disrespected sacred ground, all for the sake of a political stunt," Harris wrote.

On Thursday, the US Army issued a rare statement saying that a cemetery staff member had

member had 'acted with professionalism' and was being unfairly attacked.

'This is nothing new from Donald Trump'

In her post, Harris also referred to Trump's history of insulting military veterans.

"This is nothing new from Donald Trump. This is a man who has called our fallen service members 'suckers' and 'losers' and disparaged Medal of Honor recipients," she wrote.

A 2020 article published by US outlet 'The Atlantic' said

Trump had called fallen soldiers 'suckers' and 'losers', but the former president has denied making the comments.

Trump defends actions during visit

Trump's Arlington visit also drew criticism from some veterans and soldiers' relatives.

At a rally on Friday night, Trump said it was families of fallen troops who asked to have their picture taken with him.

"I said 'Absolutely'. I wasn't doing it for - I don't need publicity, I get a lot of publicity. I would like to get a lot less publicity," Trump said in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

Trump blamed the White House for the criticism he is drawing. Trump has also often criticised the Biden-Harris administration's handling of the US pullout from Afghanistan.

He has argued that he would have managed the withdrawal better.

Campaign rhetoric heats up as November 5 election looms

Trump has also repeatedly mocked Harris' performance as vice president and racial identity.

In response, Harris has characterised the former president as 'weird' and 'out of his mind'.

As the November 5 election is only a few short months away, both Harris and Trump are competing for voters of different categories, such as veterans.

It was unclear whether incidents such as the one at Arlington would sway how veterans vote. In an April report, the Pew Research Centre found that military veterans favour the Republican Party.

DW



Beijing's population kept below 23mn cap for six years

Beijing, China - Beijing, China's first megacity to achieve population reduction, has kept its permanent population below the 23mn cap for six consecutive years since 2017, according to a municipal conference held on Thursday.

According to a report by the research team of the Beijing Municipal Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, while Beijing's population remains stable, its distribution is becoming more balanced.

The capital's core functional areas and central urban districts have witnessed constant population declines, while the city's sub-centre, new towns, and ecological conservation areas have experienced population growth, according to the report.

According to Xinhua, the report showed that this shift is creating a more distributed population structure, with the proportion of residents in the six central districts decreasing from 60 per cent in 2015 to 50 per cent by 2023, while the share of the ten outlying districts increased accordingly.

Beijing also stands out for its high concentration of talent, boasting the highest density of talent in China. Three-quarters of this talent pool are concentrated in the six central districts. Additionally, the city's life expectancy in 2020 reached 82.49 years, which is 4.56 years higher than the national average.

The research team emphasised that Beijing should continue its dual approach of relieving overburdened areas while supporting emerging ones. Coordination between central urban districts and new towns as well as integration within the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region is crucial.

Gu Shuzhong, a researcher at the Development Research Centre of the State Council, suggested that achieving a balanced distribution of work and residential areas across the city is essential, and the city should orderly relocate municipal universities and state-owned enterprises from central districts to outer areas.

WAM

BONSAI EXHIBITION IN INDONESIA



Visitors view bonsai works displayed at a bonsai exhibition in Pamulang, Indonesia, on Sunday (Xinhua)

Traces of settlement dating back about 6,000 years discovered in Turkey's eastern Erzurum

Erzurum, Turkey - Traces of a settlement dating back about 6,000 years have been found during excavations at Degirmenler Mound in Turkey's eastern Erzurum.

Starting on July 1, the two-month excavation in the area has uncovered settlement layers, human and animal bones, and ceramics, which are being analysed.

The site has been determined to have been inhabited as far back as 6,000 years ago, and further deepening of the excavation is expected to reveal even older layers.

As a result of the excavations, the area is planned to be transformed into an archaeological park.

Mehmet Isikli, a professor at Ataturk University in Erzurum and the scientific adviser of the pro-



Further deepening of the excavation is expected to reveal even older layers

ject, told Anadolu that a different period began in Eastern Anatolia after the Kura-Araxes culture.

Isikli said that the first state and writing tradition in Eastern Anatolia came with Urartu, adding: "This was about 3,000 years ago, but we are still trying to understand the 2,000-year period in between, who lived during

4,000 years ago, they encountered a strong societal structure in the region that lived on animal husbandry and agriculture.

'Trying to reach earliest settlement'

Associate Professor Gulsah Altunkaynak, who is the archaeologist at Erzurum Museum and also the excavation coordinator, said that the archaeology of the region has been developing mostly on rescue excavations for many years.

Highlighting the valuable results from their findings, Altunkaynak said: "Here, we are actually trying to reach the earliest settlement as quickly as possible. Our goal is to leave a step in each layer using the step trench method and to uncover the periods and building phases."

Anadolu Agency

Israel killed hostages in Gaza: Hamas

Israeli army claimed that Hamas executed six hostages while they were in captivity

Gaza City, Palestine - A senior Hamas official stated on Sunday that the six Israeli hostages recently found in Gaza were killed as a result of ongoing Israeli airstrikes, challenging the Israeli army's claim that Hamas executed the hostages while they were in captivity.

Izzat al-Rishq's remarks came shortly after the Israeli army announced that it had discovered the bodies of six hostages in Gaza, asserting that they had been killed by Hamas.

"The ones who kill our people daily are the Israeli colonisers with American weapons. The hostages found in Gaza were not killed by us but by the relentless Zionist bombardment," Rishq said in a statement.

He further criticised the US, saying: "If President (Joe) Biden truly cares about the lives of Is-



A senior Hamas official stated on Sunday that the six Israeli hostages recently found in Gaza were killed as a result of ongoing Israeli airstrikes

The ones who kill our people daily are the Israeli colonisers with American weapons. The hostages found in Gaza were not killed by us

IZZAT AL-RISHQ

raeli hostages, he should cease his support for this enemy with money and weapons and pressure Israel to end its aggression immediately."

Rishq emphasised that Hamas had been more concerned about the lives of the hostages than Biden himself, citing Hamas' agreement to a ceasefire proposal and the UN Security Council's resolution, both of which were rejected by

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Earlier on Sunday, the Israeli army reported finding the bodies of six hostages in Gaza, adding to the ongoing tension as the war enters its eleventh month. Before the discovery, Israel had stated that 107 hostages remained in Gaza, some of whom were believed to have already been killed.

Hamas has said that dozens

of hostages were killed by Israeli airstrikes targeting Gaza.

'Israel would not rest'

Meanwhile, Netanyahu on Sunday denied responsibility for the deaths of six Israeli hostages. "Israel would not rest until it catches those responsible for the murdering of six hostages," he said in a statement.

Netanyahu condemned Palestinian group Hamas for its al-

Several killed in fresh Israeli strike on Gaza school

Gaza City, Palestine - Several Palestinians were reported dead in a new Israeli airstrike on a school sheltering displaced people in Gaza City on Sunday, according to a medical source.

The attack targeted Safad School in the Zeitoun neighbourhood in Gaza City, the source said, adding that several people were also injured in the airstrike.

Israel has systematically targeted civilian facilities, including schools, hospitals, and places of worship, amid its ongoing offensive on the Gaza Strip despite a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire.

Under the rules of war, targeting such civilian facilities can constitute a war crime.

Last month, at least 100 people were killed and dozens injured in an Israeli strike on the Al-Taba'een School in Gaza City, where over 6,000 displaced people have sheltered.

Anadolu Agency

Zelensky seeks long-range missiles from Western allies

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky has called upon Western allies - the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany - and emphasised Ukraine's urgent need for authorisation to access long-range capabilities, including their critical long-range shells and missiles to protect people.

Sharing a post on X, Zelensky said: "These days, a Ukrainian delegation, including the First Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, representatives of the General Staff, and the Head of the Office of the President, is working in Washington."

Zelensky further emphasised Ukraine's top priority is to equip its defence forces with long-



Volodymyr Zelensky

range capabilities to prevent Russia's terror attacks.

"There have been meetings at various levels, and one of our top priorities is securing long-range capabilities for our Defence Forces. This is crucial to preventing the terror that our

Kharkiv and other cities across Ukraine are forced to endure. Clearing Ukrainian skies of Russian guided bombs is a powerful step toward forcing Russia to seek an end to the war and a just peace," the post by Zelensky said on Saturday.

He further said: "Our representatives have provided all the necessary information and details to our partners. I am calling on the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany - we need the means to fully and effectively protect Ukraine and its people. We need permissions for long-range capabilities, as well as your long-range shells and missiles."

ANI

Doctors in Bangladesh begin strike

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Doctors across Bangladesh launched an indefinite nationwide strike on Sunday, severely disrupting the country's healthcare system and leaving patients in distress.

The strike was triggered by an incident on Saturday night at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), the largest healthcare facility in Bangladesh, where the emergency department was vandalised by relatives and friends of a student protester who had been injured during recent demonstrations that led to the ousting of the Hasina regime. The injured student later succumbed to his injuries, with some of his peers accusing the attending physicians of neglect.

In response to the attack and to demand justice and improved safety measures, doctors at



The indefinite nationwide strike disrupted the country's healthcare system

DMCH suspended emergency medical services Sunday morning. Attempts by hospital authorities to negotiate with the doctors were unsuccessful, leading to the escalation of the protest into a nationwide strike.

On Sunday afternoon, Dr Abdul Ahad from DMCH's Neurosurgery Ward announced the strike, outlining four key demands: the arrest of those responsible for the assault on doctors, the establishment of a safer working environment, restrictions on unauthorised access to hospital premises, and the resolution of any alleged neg-

rosurgery Ward announced the strike, outlining four key demands: the arrest of those responsible for the assault on doctors, the establishment of a safer working environment, restrictions on unauthorised access to hospital premises, and the resolution of any alleged neg-

ligence by doctors through proper channels, rather than through violence.

The striking doctors have vowed to continue the shutdown until their demands are met.

The strike has left many patients without care. Nayan Mia, who brought his injured brother to DMCH on Sunday morning, was told to seek treatment elsewhere. "If I can't get healthcare here, where else can I go? I can't afford treatment at private clinics," Mia told Anadolu, expressing the dire situation faced by many in the wake of the strike.

The protesting doctors have stated that any deaths resulting from the lack of treatment during the shutdown should be attributed to the administration's failure to address their concerns.

Anadolu Agency

Afghanistan struggles with nation-rebuilding 3 years after war ends

Kabul, Afghanistan - Three years after the US-led troops withdrew from Afghanistan, the country remains deeply scarred by 20 years of war and struggles to rebuild amid an economic collapse exacerbated by international sanctions.

In Kabul, the Afghan capital, hundreds of trucks lined the road leading to the southern city of Kandahar. In a makeshift tent, Zubair, a truck driver, clutched a number card, waiting for a job assignment. It had been over 40 days since his last trip.

Despite surviving the war, he and many other long-haul drivers now face a different struggle - economic hardship.

On August 30, 2021, the United States terminated its 20-year military presence in Afghanistan, a conflict devastated the nation.

While the US exit brought an end to active warfare, it also led to severe economic sanctions that have pushed the war-torn country to the brink of collapse, making the path to reconstruction fraught with challenges.

Zubair recalled that 10 years ago when he first started hauling freight across Afghanistan, he had three close friends with whom he often travelled. Five years ago, as their trucks crossed a bridge, a US bomb struck, killing his three friends instantly. Zubair narrowly escaped death.

"We were in fear day and night, there was war in every district and every village, there were mines in every area, and 10 drivers were killed in a day," he said.

Many Afghan truck drivers share similar harrowing experiences. Some survived the conflict, only to suffer from severe psychological trauma.

The 20-year conflict inflicted by US forces caused incalculable damage to Afghanistan and its people. Over 174,000 Afghans, including more than 30,000 civilians, lost their lives during the war, and nearly a third of the population was displaced.

According to the Cluster Munition Coalition, from 2001 to 2002 the US forces dropped



Two Afghans look at the city of Kabul, Afghanistan, a country which remains deeply scarred by 20 years of war

1,228 cluster bombs containing 248,056 bomblets in Afghanistan. Some unexploded bombs are still posing a big threat to Afghan civilians and reports of children being killed by them can be heard every month.

Afghanistan's infrastructure was destroyed by the war, making economic development difficult and leaving millions struggling to survive. According to the International Monetary

Fund, Afghanistan's per capita GDP never exceeded US\$700 during the 20 years of US military occupation.

Since the war ended, Afghanistan has experienced a significant reduction in violence and a relative period of peace. According to the Global Terrorism Index, terror deaths fell by 519 in Afghanistan in 2023, an 81per cent improvement. This was the first year since 2019 that Afghanistan has not been

the country most impacted by terrorism.

Najibullah Arman, a veteran Afghan journalist and political analyst, remarked that during the 20 years of US occupation, media coverage was dominated by reports of bloodshed and violence. The end of the war has brought a noticeable improvement in the country's security situation, and domestic news is no longer as oppressive.

"When we're on the road

now, there are no US warplanes overhead, and we don't have to fear the explosions and gunfire that were a constant threat during the war," Zubair said, reflecting on the peace that has emerged over the past three years.

Despite the end of active conflict, Afghanistan's reconstruction faces immense challenges. The country urgently needs rebuilding, but US sanctions and other economic pressure have made the task even more daunting, as they have led to a brain drain, a shortage of foreign currency and severe constraints on Afghanistan's economic development.

A World Bank report in April highlighted the country's sluggish economic performance, noting that food prices had dropped by 14.4 per cent year on year in February, while non-food prices fell by 4.4 per cent - a sign of deflation in an economy already struggling to recover. Arman pointed out that US sanctions on the banking sector have made it difficult for foreign capital to enter the

country, stalling large-scale investment projects and severely hindering the national reconstruction process.

US President Joe Biden in 2022 issued an executive order allocating half of the US\$7bn in frozen Afghan central bank assets in their country to compensate victims of the 9/11 attacks. This move has been widely criticised in Afghanistan, where many see it as an unjust act that has exacerbated the hardships faced by ordinary Afghans.

An estimated 23.7mn Afghans require humanitarian aid in 2024 - more than half of the country's population, with a staggering nine out of 10 people living in poverty. The Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2024 necessitates US\$3.06bn to 17.3mn Afghans targeted for assistance, but it had only received 16.2 percent of the required funds as of May 15.

"The real victims of these sanctions are the Afghan people," Arman said. "It's simply unfair."

Xinhua

INDIA

Rains wreak havoc in Andhra Pradesh

The India Meteorological Department has also issued a weather warning for the next five days

Vijaywada, Andhra Pradesh - Heavy rainfall on Sunday led to severe flooding in the Rama Krishna Puram area of Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh, submerging houses and cars.

Police and NDRF teams have initiated rescue and relief operations, relocating affected residents to rehabilitation centres.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has also issued a weather warning for the next five days.

IMD forecasted heavy rainfall accompanied with thunderstorms and lightening for Sunday.

For the following four days, isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam are expected to experience thunderstorms with lightning.

On Saturday, a house in Mogalrajapuram collapsed due to a rock falling from a hill, resulting in the death of a woman. Two other women were hospitalised and their condition was said to be stable.

According to the officials, the house collapsed after a rock fell from the top of the hill amid heavy rainfall.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu held a review meeting on Saturday, instructing officials to remain vigilant and alert in rain-affected areas.

He also directed the declaration of school holidays in re-



An aerial view of a partially submerged area following heavy rainfall at Rama Krishna Puram in Vijayawada on Sunday (ANI)

Police and NDRF teams have initiated rescue and relief operations, relocating affected residents to rehabilitation centres

gions experiencing heavy rainfall, the installation of warning boards near overflowing streams and rivers, and the issuance of alert messages to mobile phones.

Naidu warned of potential hazards, including falling power lines and trees due to strong winds and rain.

Parts of Vijayawada and Warangal in Telangana were

affected by rain on Saturday, leading to waterlogging in several areas.

Hyderabad: Schools to remain shut

Meanwhile, all primary and secondary schools in Hyderabad will remain closed on Monday amid a forecast of heavy rainfall in Telangana, officials said on Sunday.

The Hyderabad district col-

lector announced the closure as a precautionary measure to ensure the safety of students.

"Due to the forecast of heavy rains in Hyderabad District, all primary and secondary schools, under all managements (government, aided, and private), are hereby declared a holiday on Monday, 02-09-2024, as a precautionary measure to ensure the safety of the children," the district collector

said in a post on X.

Meanwhile, in Khammam, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu visited flood-affected areas and relief shelters in his constituency, specifically Vagavedu village and Madhira Mandal, during the early hours. He also directed officials to make necessary arrangements for flood victims.

The water flow of Hussain

Sagar Lake in Hyderabad has increased.

Earlier, CM Revanth Reddy instructed all government department officials to be on high alert.

According to the latest weather update from Telangana, Dr K Nagaratnam, the director of the Hyderabad Meteorological Centre, said the state is likely to experience light to moderate rainfall over the next three days.

"Red warnings have been issued for today and tomorrow in Telangana. East and north-east districts are under red warnings, while north and south districts have been issued orange warnings for the same period. All districts are under heavy rainfall warnings. GHMC is expected to see moderate to heavy rains at times. Hyderabad is under an orange warning for today and tomorrow," he said.

The IMD's press release on Saturday said that the South-west monsoon has been active over Telangana, adding that very heavy rainfall occurred at isolated places in Narayanpet and heavy rainfall occurred at most places in Mahabubabad, a few places in Warangal, isolated places in B Kothagudem, Khammam, Mahabubnagar, Mulugu, Nagarkurnool, Suryapet, and Wanaparthy districts of Telangana.

ANI

There is no 'powergroup', says Mammooty

Kochi, Kerala - Veteran actor Mammooty on Sunday shared his thoughts on the ongoing controversy in the Malayalam film industry following sexual harassment allegations made by actresses and also reacted to the Justice Hema Committee report that was recently made public.

In a post on Facebook, Mammooty penned a long note that read: "This post is based on the current developments that Malayalam cinema is facing. The organisational method is that the organisation and leadership of the actors react first. Waited this much because I believe that I should give my opinion as a member only after such professional responses.

"Cinema is the epitome of



Veteran actor Mammooty

society. All the good and bad in society is in the movie. The film industry is something that society pays close attention to. Therefore, all the small and big things that happen there will be a big discussion.

"In order to prevent anything unpleasant from happening,

filmmakers need to be careful and vigilant so that nothing untoward happens in this sector."

Praising the initiative of the Hema Committee, he stated: "The Justice Hema Committee was formed by the government to study the film industry and prepare a report to suggest so-

lutions and recommend measures after something happened that should never have happened.

"We wholeheartedly welcome and support the recommendations and solutions outlined in that report. It is high time that all associations in the film industry join hands without distinction to implement them.

"The police investigation is proceeding vigorously on the complaints that have been raised. The full version of the Justice Hema committee report is before the court.

"There is no 'powergroup' in cinema. Cinema is not an arena where such things can exist... Ultimately the film must survive," he said.

ANI

'Expect operation of Vande Bharat sleeper in 3 months'

Bengaluru, Karnataka - Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw conducted an inspection of the Vande Bharat sleeper coaches at BEML in Bengaluru on Sunday.

"We expect the passenger operation of Vande Bharat sleeper trains in three months from now...This is a full sleeper version," Vaishnaw told reporters after the inspection.

The Minister said that the manufacturing of the Vande Bharat sleeper coaches have been completed and they will come out from the BEML factory in the coming few days.

"We are starting on a very important journey today as you are aware after the success of



Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw speaks to the media

the Vande Bharat chair-car, the manufacturing and designing of the Vande Bharat sleeper was something for which all of us were waiting. We all were working on the manufacturing of it. That manufacturing is complete. Vande Bharat sleeper coaches will come out from the

BEML factory in the coming days," Vaishnaw said. "It was a long journey. Designing a new train is complex work. There are a lot of new features in Vande Bharat Sleeper," he added.

He said that the Vande Bharat chair-car, Vande Bharat sleeper, Vande Bharat metro, and Amrit Bharat will change the way people travel in India.

"These projects reflect the aspirational India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

Earlier in the day, Vaishnaw laid the foundation stone of a new hangar for standard and broad gauge rolling stock manufacturing at BEML.

ANI

Philippines detects 3 more mpox cases

Manila, The Philippines - The Philippines has reported three new mpox cases, bringing the total number of active cases in the country to eight this year, the Health Ministry announced on Sunday.

According to a report from the *Manila Times*, mpox surveillance systems identified two cases in Metro Manila and one in the Calabarzon region. All three cases involve the milder MPXV clade II variant. Since July 2022, the Philippines has recorded a total of 17 mpox cases.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has classified the global mpox situation as a 'public health emergency of international concern'.

In 2024, more than a dozen African countries have

Mpox surveillance systems identified 2 cases in Metro Manila and one in Calabarzon region. All three cases involve the milder MPXV clade II variant

reported mpox outbreaks, with the Democratic Republic of Congo accounting for over 90 per cent of the reported cases. The variant circulating in Africa is believed to be both more contagious and more deadly than the 'clade II' variant.

Anadolu Agency

Pakistan: Nawaz Sharif proposes across-the-board dialogue

Islamabad, Pakistan - Amid political turmoil, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif has said that an across-the-board dialogue should be created, which would involve all major political parties, including Imran Khan-founded Tehreek-e-Insaf, according to ARY News.

He said that the dialogue should also involve the state institutions to steer Pakistan out of crises.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif attempted to woo their former ally, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), who had declared a solo flight against the government earlier this month, when they proposed to bring everyone on board.

The top brass of the PML-N met at the Model Town headquarters on Saturday to discuss a wide range of topics, such as



Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif

the recent relief provided to electricity users, the reforms being implemented by local authorities in Punjab, and the restructuring of the ruling party in Punjab, according to ARY News.

The rival PTI, which is being targeted by the authorities in the wake of the May 9 riots, was the subject of discussion during the

conference as well.

Following the meeting, PML-N issued a statement, which quoted Nawaz Sharif as saying: "All political parties, governments, and institutions should join hands in decision-making. (They)...need to sit together to steer the country out of crises."

The PML-N supremo's state-

All political parties, governments, and institutions should join hands in decision-making... need to sit together to steer the country out of crises

NAWAZ SHARIF

ment came amid reports that PML-N Punjab President Rana Sanaullah has been tasked to approach Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai.

Achakzai notably heads the PTI-dominated opposition alliance for constitutional supremacy for talks. He is the leader of Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party and is the head of the Tehreek-e-Tahaffuz-e-Ain, comprising PTI, the SIC, the

MWM, and the BNP-M. Imran Khan's party later proposed to include all opposition parties in this alliance.

Meanwhile, Sanaullah clarified, saying: "I met Achakzai sahib as he is a veteran politician who stood with the PML-N leadership during testing times."

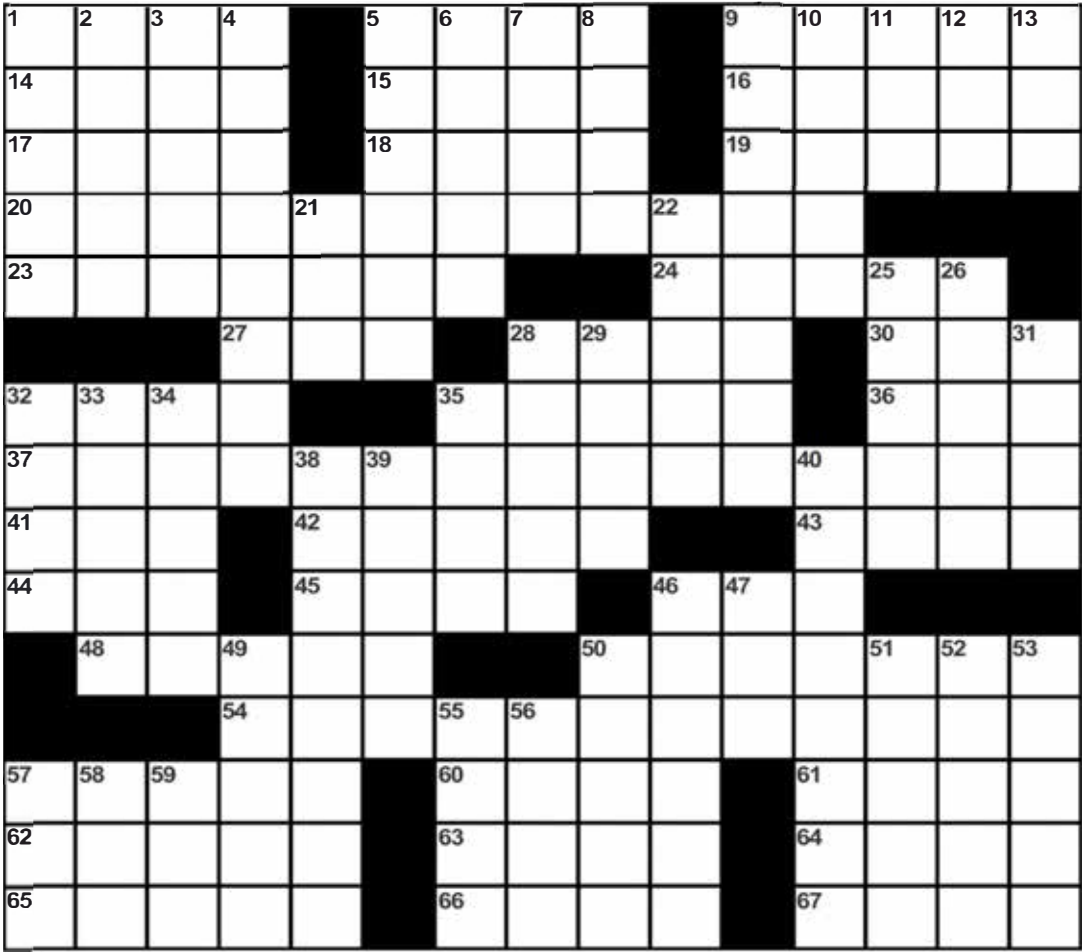
"I relayed to him Nawaz Sharif's regard for him and asked him to get along with the PML-N," Sanaullah told Dawn.

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif expressed his reservations against holding talks with Imran Khan's party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Pakistan-based daily, The Express Tribune reported. Speaking at a party meeting in Lahore on Saturday, Asif said: "I am not in favour of talks with PTI."

Asif added that he was not involved in any teams which are in talks with PTI through Mahmood Khan Achakzai.

ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Deadly shark
- 5) Up to the task
- 9) Poker challenge
- 14) "The Good Wife" actor Cumming
- 15) Postal delivery
- 16) Freak out
- 17) Skimpy skirt
- 18) "... la Douce"
- 19) Amherst sch.
- 20) Exceeding one's wildest dreams
- 23) Harmony, to a zen master
- 24) " Bye Bye Bye" group
- 27) "Who.?" (slangy query)
- 28) D.C. baseball team
- 30) "Got it!"
- 32)_ Spumante
- 35) Strikes out
- 36) New Jersey's Fort_
- 37) Stay out of public view
- 41) Chemical suffix
- 42) Hard as_ (tough)
- 43) Like the Sahara
- 44) Court divider
- 45) Justice Dept. employee

- 46) Stubborn beast
- 48) Scarlett's guy
- 50) Serving dish
- 54) 2010 Denzel Wash- ington thriller
- 57) Come clean?
- 60) Tulsa's state (Abbr.)
- 61) Oil cartel
- 62) Elite military unit
- 63) Face-to-face exam
- 64) Sty cry
- 65) Oscar winner Davis
- 66) Indian bride's dress
- 67) June 6, 1944
- 21) PBS funder
- 22) Lay to rest
- 25) Very bottom
- 26) Cook-off dish
- 28) In recent days
- 29) Skiers' paradise
- 31) Unceremoniously let go
- 32) Related (to)
- 33) Passover meal
- 34) Gear parts
- 35) "No dawdling!"
- 38) Object of loathing
- 39) Coffee bar order
- 40) Whoppers and Big Macs, e.g.
- 46) High-pH substance
- 47) _ Paulo, Brazil
- 49) Hawke of Hollywood
- 50) Of the Arctic
- 51) Not so hot?
- 52) Justice Kagan
- 53) Lucy's sitcom husband
- 55) Hecklers' chorus
- 56) Cajun veggie
- 57) Groceries holder
- 58) Chowd down
- 59) Pigskin prop

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Talking you into parting with your hard-earned cash won't be an easy task at the moment, even for the most skilled sales clerk. Of course, if you do see the perfect item, heaven help anyone who tries to come between you and your purchase. You're famous for going through obstacles, not around them. Impulse may be your middle name, but for the time being, determination will run a close second.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Ready to be the boss? To pass out tasks, delegate authority, and make sure everyone under you is toeing the line? Of course you are. You've been studying for the part your entire life. Well, it's showtime. Don't let anyone who's jealous undermine you, whether it's by tossing you a demeaning glance or making a snide comment. You know you're good, and you know the higher-ups know that or they wouldn't have chosen you. Ignore the intruder. They'll definitely be gone soon.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Fevers aren't just physical in nature, as you already know. They can also be emotional, spiritual, and intellectual. At the moment, you're feeling warm to the touch, and it's not just your forehead that will tell the tale. You're hot because you're running on high, emotionally speaking, and even if you could take something to make it stop, you'd pass.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Regardless of what the Universe tosses your way or how suddenly it's tossed, you've always been much more liable to wait, think, and consider what to do next than to react immediately. That trait has come in handy more than once, but it won't do the job now. What's called for at the moment is the ability to act quickly and be bold enough to make the consequences of those actions stick, both of which you definitely have covered.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Ordinarily, you're quite merciful when it comes to verbal debates with those who obviously aren't in your intellectual league. You'll do that now for as long as you possibly can, but if they push the envelope, let's just say you'll not only win the debate (if you can call it that) hands down, but you'll also be able to walk away with your head held high and your pride intact, which is much more than your adversary will be able to say.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Regardless of the time spent together, there are ups and downs in every relationship. You, of course, know that. You understand the importance of time spent together, so you're less likely than most to leave a relationship when times are tough. Now, when times are anything but tough, you're also more likely to express your gratitude and appreciation in a wonderful, thoughtful, yet practical way. Just don't be too practical. A nice long hug is priceless.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You've done your best to keep a delicate issue under wraps for some time, but it's become a lot more difficult lately, mostly because of one particular person who's managed to burrow quite deeply into not just this particular situation, but others as well. When it becomes clear that they're going out of their way to make things melodramatic, don't be afraid to give them their walking papers. The Universe is most definitely on your side.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Some secrets just won't stay hidden no matter how hard you try, and apparently you've run into one of them. Now, when this issue just refuses to stay put, your mission will be to put on a happy face, the kind of face that tells the world at large you're absolutely delighted about all this, and act, perhaps, as if you thought everyone already knew anyway.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Change is necessary for several reasons, and you completely understand that. After all, change is second nature to you, and the more sudden the better. Still, even you occasionally have a problem adapting, especially if it happens without your input. Fortunately, everything that's going on now was more or less personally orchestrated by you. Count your blessings and resolve to be patient if it's not always this way.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

A while back, someone happened to mention to you that keeping things peaceful between friends and family members was something you were pretty darned good at. The nurturer in you loved that, and ever since, you've done your best to foster that reputation. A serious challenge is en route now, one that will take all your best efforts to resolve. Your antennae are keen, however, so you probably already know what's coming. Start work on that project now.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

If you haven't yet had the chance to walk on fire, physically, that is, that doesn't mean you haven't done it in a hundred other ways, symbolically speaking. When the person you adore asks for something they think is so above and beyond the call of duty that even you might not be able to pull it off, you'll be just tickled to announce that doing something like this for someone like them is nothing at all. For someone like you, anyway.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You've never been especially fond of idle chatter. It's not that you don't like chatting with friends. You just don't like wasting your time on conversation that means nothing at all. In fact, you don't like participating in anything that doesn't have a meaningful ending. You've been dealing with that type of thing for days and you're tired of it, but there's light at the end of this tunnel now, and you know it, the kind that will actually show you something.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

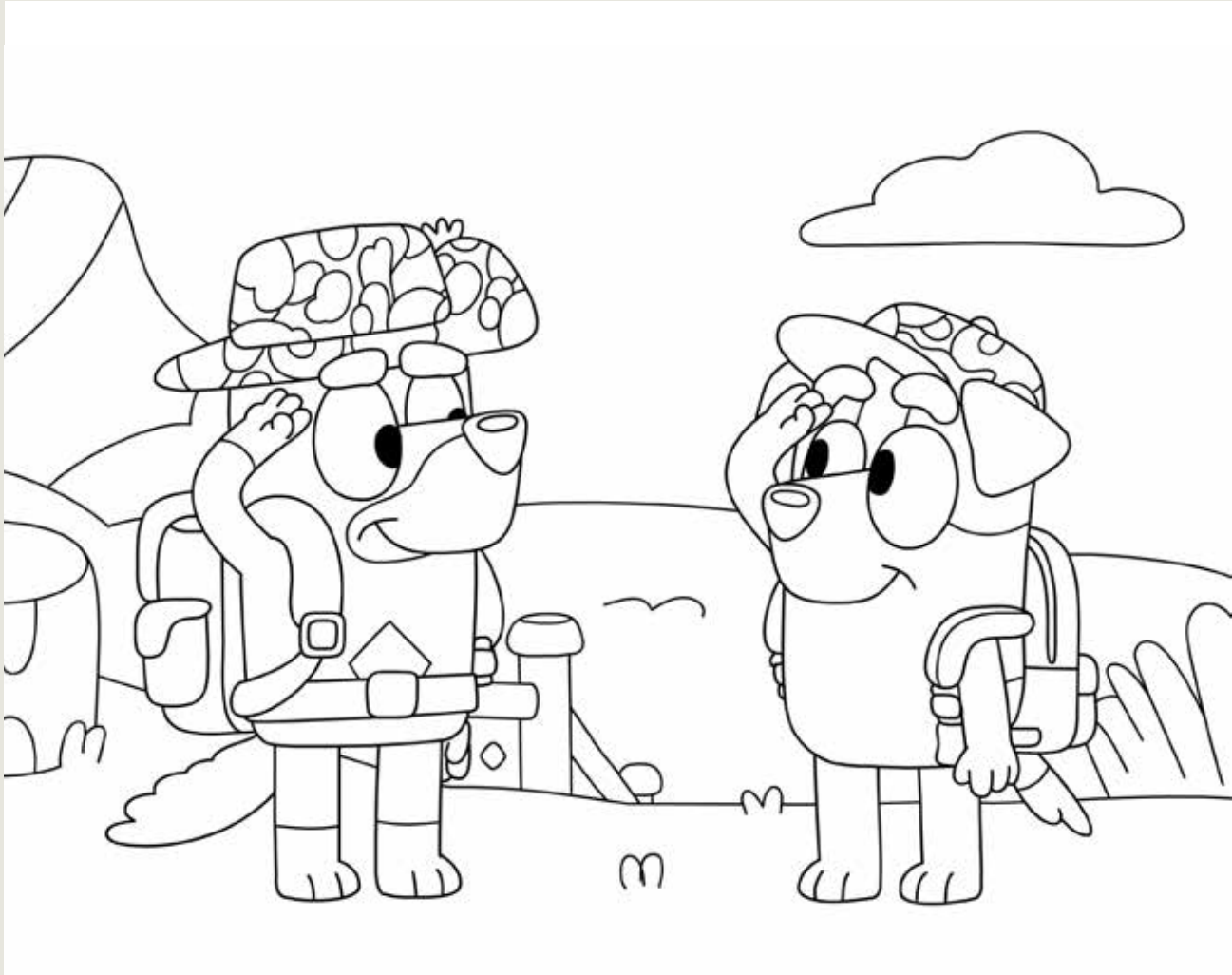
1. What 1973 film starring Al Pacino, John Randolph and Tony Roberts is based on the true story of New York City policeman who went undercover to expose the corruption of his fellow officers?
- A. Rain Man
 - B. Serpico
 - C. The French Connection
 - D. The Third Man

2. Where did Mulligatawny enter the world cuisine from?
- A. Northern Ireland
 - B. Sri Lanka
 - C. Scotland
 - D. Pakistan

3. One of the cratons, or relatively stable areas, in the South American tectonic plate is known as the what Shield?
- A. Atacama
 - B. Brazilian
 - C. Guiana
 - D. Altiplano

Answers: 1.B 2.B 3.C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

A	T	S	R
R	A	R	V
K	R	I	E
S	E	F	A

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



Xabi Alonso

‘We didn’t do well in defence’

Leverkusen, Germany - Bayer Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso asked for more unity in defence after the German champions saw their impressive unbeaten run in the Bundesliga end with a 3-2 defeat by RB Leipzig on Saturday.

Leverkusen were up 2-0 after goals by Jeremie Frimpong and Alejandro Grimaldo but let the advantage slip as Kevin Kampl pulled a goal back for Leipzig in first-half stoppage time and Lois Openda added a brace following halftime.

“We’ll take a lot of positives and negatives from this game,” Alonso told a press conference.

“We played a good game in the first half. We were happy with that and wanted to build on it in the second.

“We had no control in the second half and gave Leipzig too much space. We didn’t do well in the back line.

“We will learn from these mistakes. It’s not good to let an opponent come back after leading 2-0. But it’s a process, we’re still early in the season.”

Leipzig snapped Leverkusen’s 35-game unbeaten streak, leaving them one result away from

matching Hamburg’s tally of 36 games unbeaten in 1982-83 - Bundesliga’s second-longest run after Bayern Munich’s record of 53 under Pep Guardiola.

“We were in a good flow after taking a 2-0 lead, but we then have to be ready to defend,” Alonso added.

“We want to attack together, but we also have to defend together. We’ll work through the game after the international break.”

Leverkusen were the better side and could have gained a bigger advantage before the break with early chances through Edmond Tapsoba and Piero Hincapie, the latter hitting the bar with a header.

“Of course it hurts because we didn’t take our chances today,” said Frimpong, who gave Leverkusen the lead on the night.

“In the end we lost because Leipzig took their chances better. It was a good game, but we have to score goals. We will continue to work on that in training.”

Leverkusen next visit Hoffenheim on Sept. 14 before travelling to Feyenoord for their Champions League opener five days later.

OPENDA SHUTS LEVERKUSEN UP

Belgian striker scores brace as Leipzig end champions’ 35-game unbeaten run

Leverkusen, Germany - Bayer Leverkusen’s 35-game unbeaten Bundesliga run ended on Saturday when visiting RB Leipzig came from two goals down to snatch a 3-2 win helped by a Lois Openda double.

Champions Leverkusen dominated from the start and Jeremie Frimpong opened the scoring in the 38th minute with a low strike from close range before Alejandro Grimaldo doubled the lead just before the break.

Leipzig pulled a goal back through midfielder Kevin Kampl deep in first-half stoppage time, however, and Openda levelled in the 57th minute before he fired home an unstoppable shot from distance which gave Leverkusen keeper Matej Kovar no chance.

The game was halted for a late penalty check for Leverkusen but the referee decided Castello Lukeba’s challenge on Patrik Schick did not merit a spot-kick after consulting with VAR.

Leipzig are the first team to beat Leverkusen in the Bundesliga for 462 days, since VfL Bochum did so 3-0 on the last day of the 2022-23 season.

Xabi Alonso’s side were one result away from matching Hamburg’s tally of 36 games unbeaten in the 1982-83 season.

It is the second-longest run in history after Bayern Munich’s record 53 under Pep Guardiola



RB Leipzig’s Lois Openda celebrates with teammates after scoring against Bayer Leverkusen on Saturday

We had the chance to finish the game, but the goals we conceded were far too easy. We defend as a team, but we fell asleep a few times and of course we’re going to be punished

JONATHAN TAH



from 2012 to 2014.

Leipzig moved to the top of the table on six points with Leverkusen in ninth on three.

“We had the chance to finish the game, but the goals we conceded were far too easy,” said Leverkusen captain Jonathan Tah. “We defend as a team, but we fell asleep a few times and of course we’re going

to be punished.”

Frimpong netted the opener after Tah sent in a long ball and the defender squeezed the ball into the net inside the near post.

Grimaldo struck with his first touch and Victor Boniface missed an excellent chance to make it 3-0 following a corner in first-half stoppage time.

But Leipzig gained confidence

after Kampl scored with a diving header and Openda equalised before the hour mark from a long Benjamin Sesko pass and he nutmegged Tapsoba to find the net again in the 80th minute.

“We knew it was going to be very hard to play here, Leverkusen play lethal football. We wanted to be courageous and get on the front foot,” said Kampl.



Sol Bamba

Former Ivory Coast defender Sol Bamba, 39, passes away

Istanbul, Turkey - Former Ivory Coast defender Sol Bamba has died aged 39, Turkish club Adanaspor, where he was technical director, said on Saturday.

Bamba played for Cardiff City, Leeds United and Leicester City. He also had spells with Italian side Palermo, Scottish clubs Dunfermline Athletic and Hibernian, and Turkish side Trabzonspor.

He made 46 appearances for his country, scoring one goal and retired in January 2023 and went into coaching, serving as assistant manager at Cardiff before taking up the role of technical director at Adanaspor. “Our technical director Souleymane Bamba, who fell ill before yesterday’s match against Manisa Football Club, was taken to Manisa Celal Bayar University Hospital and sadly lost his battle for life,” Adanaspor said in a statement.

Lukaku scores as Napoli secure last-gasp win against Parma



Napoli’s Romelu Lukaku celebrates with Giovanni Di Lorenzo after scoring against Parma

Naples, Italy - Napoli’s Romelu Lukaku and Andre Zambo Anguissa scored in stoppage time to snatch a dramatic 2-1 comeback win over promoted Parma in Serie A on Saturday.

Antonio Conte’s side moved up to fourth in the standings following their second victory of the campaign.

Feisty Parma, who beat Milan last week, looked to be on their way to a second win of the season thanks to a 19th-minute penalty from Ange-Yoan Bonny.

The visitors had chances to extend the lead but Napoli looked more threatening after the break when new signing Lukaku came on to the pitch.

The momentum changed significantly when Parma keeper Zion Suzuki was shown a second yellow card for a foul on David Neres, causing defender Enrico Del Prato to take over in goal with

no further substitutions available.

Napoli thought they had won a penalty for a foul on Giovanni Simeone, only for it to be overturned by VAR in the 90th minute.

But Lukaku grabbed the equaliser two minutes later with a low shot from 12 yards from a Leonardo Spinazzolla through ball before Zambo Anguissa’s header sealed the win in front of an ecstatic home crowd in the 96th minute.

Osimhen out of Napoli squad

Victor Osimhen has not been included in Napoli’s official 23-man Serie A squad for this season, after the Nigerian striker’s expected move away from the club failed to materialise.

Osimhen’s 26 goals helped Napoli to their Scudetto win two seasons ago, but it has all turned

sour since and although the want-away player is still at the club, for now he plays no part in their plans.

The 25-year-old signed a contract extension with Napoli last December, keeping him at the club until 2026 and with a reported release clause of 130 million euros. A month later, club president Aurelio De Laurentiis said Osimhen would leave at the end of the season, and in recent days his expected destination appeared to be Chelsea or Saudi Pro League club Al-Ahli.

Negotiations went on until the transfer window closed in both Italy and England on Friday, but with Osimhen’s wage demands apparently not met by Chelsea it appeared he was on his way to Saudi Arabia. Napoli, however, did not accept the offer from Al Ahli, who then signed Ivan Toney from Brentford.

Sahin: Dortmund have to improve

Bremen, Germany - Borussia Dortmund were held to a 0-0 draw by Werder Bremen in the Bundesliga on Saturday, and coach Nuri Sahin was quick to point out that the lack of pace was not the way to play and that his side needed to improve.

Dortmund failed to pose any real threat aside of a 20-yard effort from substitute Karim Adeyemi in the second half, and centre-back Nico Schlotterbeck was sent off in the 73rd minute after picking up a second yellow card for a tackle on Bremen striker Justin Njinmah.

“As Borussia Dortmund, we



Nuri Sahin

have to perform differently, even if the team has undergone changes and has a new coach,” Sahin, who was appointed in June, told a press conference.

“It would be a very cheap ex-

cuse to say it is because of the transfer window. We have worked very well in the market. Still, we are expected to play better,” the coach added.

The 35-year-old boss recognised the defensive processes are already working well, as Dortmund have not conceded a goal after two games following their 2-0 home victory to Eintracht Frankfurt last week.

They will look to extend their unbeaten run at the German top flight when they host Heidenheim on Sept. 13 before facing Club Brugge for their Champions League opener five days later.

Leao comes to the rescue of Milan

Rome, Italy - Rafael Leao came off the bench to earn AC Milan a 2-2 draw with Lazio at the Stadio Olimpico on Saturday, but Paulo Fonseca’s side are still without a Serie A win this season.

Milan were in front at the break through Serbian defender Strahinja Pavlovic’s eighth-minute goal, but Lazio hit back in the second half as Valentin Castellanos and Boulaye Dia scoring in quick succession.

Fonseca reacted by sending on four substitutes, which had an immediate impact with Leao netting two minutes after coming on as the game came to life after an opening half light on entertainment. Another substitute Tammy Abraham had a late chance to grab a win for the visitors but his effort was saved and Milan are 14th in the standings with two points from three games, with



AC Milan’s Rafael Leao celebrates with Tammy Abraham after scoring against Lazio on Saturday

Lazio in eight place on four.

Fonseca sent a strong message to his side, dropping Leao and Theo Hernandez and making

four changes from the team who lost at Parma last weekend, but in the end he had the Portuguese forward to thank.

HAALAND HAT-TRICK FEST CONTINUES

Norwegian striker scores all three goals as Manchester City quell West Ham’s challenge

London, England - Erling Haaland’s second successive hat-trick propelled Manchester City to a 3-1 win at West Ham United on Saturday, maintaining the champions’ perfect start to the Premier League season.

The Norwegian striker missed an early chance but made no mistake with the second, calmly slotting past Alphonse Areola to put City ahead in the 10th minute after Bernardo Silva dispossessed Lucas Paqueta in midfield.

West Ham equalised against the run of play after 18 minutes, when Ruben Dias deflected Jarrod Bowen’s cross into his own net, before Haaland restored City’s lead on the half-hour mark, smashing a vicious shot beyond Areola from close range.

Haaland almost turned provider in the 38th minute, playing a lovely cushioned pass into the path of Rico Lewis but the full back blazed his shot over the bar.

Kevin De Bruyne nearly added a third just before the break as

City threatened to extend their lead, but his free kick from the edge of the box skimmed the roof of the net.

West Ham almost levelled shortly after halftime through a quick break as Mohammed Kudus hit the post, with the chance galvanising the home crowd and West Ham’s players.

But Haaland secured the win with another cool finish in the 83rd minute, charging on to Matheus Nunes’ through ball and lifting his shot over substitute keeper Lukas Fabianski.

The striker followed up last week’s treble against Ipswich Town to record his seventh goal in three games this season and his 70th Premier League strike in 69 appearances.

He nearly scored a fourth in the fifth minute of added time but Fabianski saved his shot from a tight angle before Ederson denied Crysencio Summerville a late consolation.



Palace hold Chelsea

Chelsea had to settle for a 1-1 home draw against Crystal Palace after a second-half equaliser by Eberechi Eze gave the visitors their first point of the Premier League season on Sunday as they bounced back from a poor start in a much-improved second half. The hosts broke the deadlock in the 25th minute when Noni Madueke surged down the right before picking out Cole Palmer, whose deft pass found Nicolas Jackson steaming through the centre to score with ease from close range.

Palace found their mojo as Eze equalised in the 53rd, picking up the rebound from Cheick Doucoure’s blocked shot and curling the ball beautifully into the net from outside the box.

In another match, Newcastle United’s striker Alexander Isak secured a 2-1 win against Tottenham with a simple tap-in as they weathered a second-half storm.



Manchester City’s Erling Haaland scores against West Ham United on Saturday



Pep Guardiola

Guardiola: Haaland is unstoppable, ‘even with a gun’

London, England - Erling Haaland’s scoring exploits already made him a daunting prospect for Premier League defenders but the Norwegian striker’s second hat-trick in as many games against West Ham United on Saturday suggests he may have got even better.

The 24-year-old Norwegian scored his 11th hat-trick for City to extend the champions’ perfect start to their title defence, notching up his seventh goal in three league games this season.

Haaland’s first was a sublime finish past Alphonse Areola after Bernardo Silva played him in one-on-one while his second was a close-range thunderbolt that almost broke the net.

When he charged towards goal late on there was no doubting the outcome, so much so that City boss Pep Guardiola thinks defenders cannot deny him even

with extreme measures.

“The first goal, Bernardo wins the ball, pass the ball and finish or the third goal, with the space behind, it’s unstoppable,” Guardiola told reporters.

“There is no central defender, not even with a gun – it’s impossible, so fast, so powerful.”

Guardiola said Haaland had struggled with niggles last season, when he was still the league’s top scorer with 27 goals, and was now an even more devastating player.

Haaland, who recorded his 70th Premier League goal in his 69th game, said he was feeling the benefits of having a rest.

“I feel good, I feel energised,” he told Sky Sports. “I had a long vacation and pre-season. I feel good. The years I’ve been here have been really fast. Now I’ve got some rest in my body and my feet. Now I’m ready for more.”

Benfica fire coach Schmidt after poor start to season

Lisbon, Portugal - German Roger Schmidt has been sacked as head coach of Portugal’s Benfica, the club said on Saturday.

Schmidt had a contract until June 2026, but he has faced strong opposition from supporters as Benfica won only two of their first four games of the season.

Benfica initially stated on their website that discussions

had begun with Schmidt regarding the immediate termination of his contract.

Shortly thereafter, President Rui Costa announced the separation. “The coach has been informed that he is no longer the coach of Benfica,” he said.



Roger Schmidt

On Friday, Schmidt’s team managed only a 1-1 draw at Moreirense. Benfica have only garnered seven points from the first four league matches.

“We wanted stability, but after four match

days, our results and performances have led us to the conclusion that we need to change the coach. We want to present the new coach soon,” Costa said.

According to the Portugal’s biggest sports paper, A Bola, former Benfica coach Bruno Lage is the favourite to succeed Schmidt.

Schmidt had been Benfica

coach since July 2022, with a contract running until June 30, 2026. The 57-year old German coach had failed to win a major title with the success-spoiled Benfica team last season. At that time, the former Bundesliga coach still had the backing of President Costa, who believed in the coach’s qualities despite strong criticism from Benfica fans.

Raphinha hits hat-trick as Barca thump Valladolid

Barcelona, Spain - Forward Raphinha scored the first hat-trick of his career and delivered two assists to guide an imperious Barcelona to a 7-0 rout of Real Valladolid in LaLiga on Saturday.

Barcelona will go to the international break on top of the standings on a perfect 12 points from four games, five ahead of second-placed Villarreal and seven clear of bitter rivals Real Madrid in fourth, both of whom have a game in hand.

Facing a Valladolid who gave champions Real Madrid a tough game last weekend, Barcelona were ruthless and showed from the start why they have been Spain’s most impressive side this season under new manager Hansi Flick.

Raphinha and Robert Lewandowski gave the host a two-goal lead within four minutes with similar efforts from counter-attacks, controlling long balls by Pau Cubarsi and Lamine Yamal before tidy finishes past the goalkeeper.

Jules Kounde extended the lead striking a rebound from a

corner in added time before the break and, after Lewandowski hit the post, Raphinha scored twice from close range to extend Barca’s lead.

The Brazil international continued his masterclass with an

assist to new signing Dani Olmo who, after hitting the post twice and missing an absolute sitter from close-range, finally managed to score in the 82nd minute in his first start for Barca.

Substitute Ferran Torres completed the drubbing from another assist by Raphinha who is second in the LaLiga top-scorer race with three goals, one behind Lewandowski.

Raphinha said that starting the season with four consecutive wins is a statement the players’ needed to make to prove their worth. “Today’s game has shown that there is no need for anyone else to come. We are very happy because of that,” Raphinha told Movistar Plus.

“We are in very good shape. The team is working hard. Today’s result shows what we are working for. We saw that the coach (Hansi Flick) was in the sideline asking for more (goals) and that’s our mentality.

“We are hungry and want to score as many goals as we can. When we are dominant like we have been, the best way to respect our rivals is not taking the foot off the gas.”



Barcelona’s Raphinha celebrates after scoring a hat-trick against Real Valladolid on Saturday



Atletico Madrid’s Angel Correa celebrates after scoring against Athletic Bilbao

Correa late goal hands Atletico win at Athletic

Bilbao, Spain - Angel Correa’s strike from a counter-attack in stoppage time gave Atletico Madrid a hard-fought 1-0 LaLiga victory at Athletic Bilbao on Saturday.

In an entertaining game in which both teams struggled to find a clinical edge despite plenty of attacking quality on show, the visitors finally broke the deadlock two minutes into added time.

Atletico forward Alexander Sorloth stole the ball from defender Inigo Lekue on the halfway line and set up substitute Correa who, four minutes after coming off the bench, took it past the goalkeeper before tapping into the empty net.

Sorloth missed an absolute sitter two minutes later, but his mistake ended up not costing Atletico their second win of the

season.

They climbed to second in the standings on eight points, four behind leaders Barcelona. Last season’s Copa del Rey champions Athletic Bilbao are 10th on four points.

Diego Simeone’s Atletico travelled to Bilbao under duress after a dour scoreless home draw with promoted Espanyol on Wednesday and were forced to make a late change with goalkeeper Jan Oblak ruled out due to illness.

Facing the team who knocked them out of the Copa del Rey at the semi-final stage last season, Atletico were solid in defence.

Clearcut chances were rare for either side, although the hosts controlled possession and forced replacement goalkeeper Juan Musso to make a brilliant save from an Oihan Sancet strike.

SINNER MARCHES ON

World No. 1 underlines title credentials with straight-set win against O’Connell

New York, US - Jannik Sinner avoided the fate of his top rivals, reaching the fourth round of the US Open while fellow top seed Iga Swiatek gained momentum in her quest for a sixth Grand Slam title after a pep talk from Serena Williams on Saturday.

With defending champion Novak Djokovic forced out by a shock loss to Alexei Popyrin in the third round on Friday and another title contender, Carlos Alcaraz, sent crashing by Botic van de Zandschulp in round two a day earlier, all eyes were on Sinner.

The Italian, who has managed the intense scrutiny following a doping controversy in the build-up to the tournament, thumped Christopher O’Connell 6-1 6-4 6-2 to underline his credentials as the outright favourite at the year’s final major.

“This sport is unpredictable, no? Whenever you drop a little bit of your level, you know, if it’s mental, if it’s tennis-wise or physical, at the end it has a huge impact on the result,” Sinner said about the exits of Djokovic and Alcaraz. “Both opponents who they lost against played incredible tennis. And it happens. So I just watch on my side what I have to do, you know, that I guess I’ve done, and then we’ll see what I can do.”

Up next for the Australian Open champion is Tommy Paul, who is among a group of players keen to end a 21-year American wait for a homegrown major win-



Jannik Sinner had no problems defeating Christopher O’Connell

ner, since Andy Roddick claimed the title in New York.

Paul, the 14th seed, recovered from a first-set wobble to overcome Canadian Gabriel Diallo 6-7(5) 6-3 6-17-6(3) and hoped to counter Sinner’s “bang-bang tennis” when they clash. “He’s probably the best ball striker on tour and I’m not,” Paul said. “I don’t want to go toe to toe just banging on the baseline with him. I want to try and mix things up.”

Paul’s compatriot and sixth

Whenever you drop a little bit of your level, you know, if it’s mental, if it’s tennis-wise or physical, at the end it has a huge impact on the result

JANNIK SINNER



seed Jessica Pegula advanced in the women’s draw with a 6-3 6-3 win over Jessica Bouzas Maneiro, but Ashlyn Krueger fell 6-1 6-1 to Liudmila Samsonova.

French Open champion Swiatek later swatted aside Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-4 6-2 with a near-flawless performance after a chat with 23-times major winner Williams, who returned to the U.S. Open as a fan having stepped away from tennis in 2022.

“It was really nice to see her. She has a lot of positive energy. It’s nice that she came onsite and she was chatting with the players,” a star-struck Swiatek said.

“It was nice that she approach me, because I wouldn’t, for sure, find the courage to do that if it was the other way round. But, yeah, she’s really nice and really positive.

“I’m happy she’s following tennis and my game, because she told me she’s cheering for me.”

Roland Garros and Wimbledon runner-up Jasmine Paolini beat Yulia Putintseva 6-3 6-4 as the diminutive Italian continued to fly under the radar, but she could face a big hurdle with Czech Karolina Muchova up next.

Muchova, who is rediscovering her best form after 10 months out with a wrist injury, outclassed Anastasia Potapova 6-4 6-2.

Australian Alex de Minaur’s injury problems are more recent, but the 10th seed shrugged off a frustrating hip issue that has dogged him since Wimbledon to outlast Briton Dan Evans 6-3 6-7 (4-7) 6-0 6-0.

Evans beat Karen Khachanov in the longest U.S. Open match of the professional era on Tuesday but finally ran out of gas.

Caroline Wozniacki showed she had plenty left in the tank since her comeback in 2023 after a three-year break following the births of her two children as the 34-year-old Dane eased past Jessica Ponchet 6-3 6-2.



Ferrari’s Charles Leclerc celebrates after winning the Italian Grand Prix

Leclerc wins Italian GP

Monza, Italy - Charles Leclerc gave Ferrari a stunning home Italian Grand Prix victory and sent the crowd wild with delight after nursing his tyres on a bold one-stop strategy to deny favourites McLaren a one-two finish.

Australian Oscar Piastri, who had seized the lead from pole-sitting McLaren teammate Lando Norris on the opening lap, finished runner-up with the title-chasing Briton third.

Both McLarens made two stops but the strategy unravelled when Leclerc eked out his set of hard tyres for 38 laps around Monza’s super fast circuit as the crowd roared him on.

The result left Norris 62 points behind Red Bull’s Max Verstappen, who finished only sixth, with eight races remaining.

“Mamma Mia, Mamma Mia,” screamed Leclerc over the car radio as he took the chequered flag waved by former Italy soccer player Alessandro Del Piero.

“It’s an incredible feeling,” Leclerc said before the podium

celebrations.

“I want to win Monza and Monaco every year and I have managed to do so. It is so, so special.”

Leclerc was 11 seconds clear with seven laps to go and 8.3 ahead with five remaining as the massed ranks of ‘tifosi’ willed him on.

He crossed the line 2.664 ahead.

“We considered a one-stop strategy the whole race but it was not possible with the amount of (tyre) graining I had,” said Norris, who had started the day 70 points behind Verstappen and hoping to gain far more.

“We are disappointed but Ferrari drove a better race.”

McLaren could also have taken the lead in the constructors’ championship but ended the day still eight points behind Red Bull, down from a previous 30.

Carlos Sainz was fourth for Ferrari with the Italian team’s future driver Lewis Hamilton fifth for Mercedes.

Das, Miraz rescue Bangladesh after Pakistan’s Shahzad shows his mettle

Rawalpindi, Pakistan - Bangladesh’s Litton Das hit a defiant 138 and Mehidy Hasan Miraz 78 as the tourists recovered from a precarious position to post 262 all out after Pakistan’s Khurram Shahzad bagged six wickets on the third day of the second test at Rawalpindi on Sunday.

Responding to Pakistan’s first innings 274, Bangladesh were reduced to 26-6 and in danger of

following on amid fiery fast bowling in the morning but Das and Miraz put together a 165-run stand for the seventh wicket to steady the ship.

Das hit 13 fours and four sixes in his 228-ball knock while Miraz, who claimed five wickets to skittle out Pakistan, showed his ability with the bat by hitting 12 fours and a six.

After a hard day of toil, Pakistan were 9-2 in their second in-



Pakistan’s Khurram Shahzad celebrates after taking the wicket of Bangladesh’s Zakir Hasan

nings at stumps for a slender lead of 21 as they bid to level the two-match series after losing the first test by 10 wickets.

Sri Lanka battle to avoid defeat

Sri Lanka battled to 136-4 against England by lunch at Lord’s on Sunday as they sought to deny the hosts an unassailable 2-0 lead in the Test series after being set an unlikely 483 to

win. Nightwatchman Prabath Jayasuriya (4) was first out, edging Chris Woakes into Harry Brook’s hands in the slips after he and Dimuth Karunaratne added seven to the overnight total of 53-2.

Karunaratne (55) then struck a positive tone, hitting Gus Atkinson for three fours in one over on his way to the first half-century by an opener in the series.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

A smart, honest and efficient male, having a total experience of 22 years+ in MIS, Budget, Cashflow, Treasury, Banking, Tax, Audit, with the knowledge of SAP FICO, ERP, GPS, Tally, is looking for a senior position in Accounts & Finance.
Contact: +968-91468679, Email: amitpandit007@gmail.com.

Indian male over 15 years experience in a leading MNC for civil project, fitout project and planning engineer with valid Oman driving licence is looking for a suitable placement.
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Some spaces live in our memories for long, some spaces create memories for a lifetime... and some spaces both, live and create, memories forever.

The Al Waha Hotel, at Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort and Spa, is one such haven where guests leave with a bundle of memories and an open invitation to return at the next opportunity. Countless memories are created here everyday, just like the kaleidoscopic designs created by foamy waves along its shores, accompanied by the din of racing jet-skis, and tantalizing aromas of freshly baked pizzas emanating from the nearby Assira restaurant.

A stupendous locale for quality family time, Al Waha is Oman's first hotel dedicated for families with all the trappings of an enjoyable time together wherein every member as something special to indulge in, individually as well as collectively.

Developed in traditional Dhofari architectural style and comprising 460 rooms and suites (Al Waha and Al Bandar together) offer sparkling sea or lush garden views from either a private balcony or furnished floor-level patio. Every room is somehow or the other fitted with different views of water bodies - Ocean, Lazy River or the swimming pool.

Water bodies form one of the most attractive segments of the property. While it boasts of a 2km long pristine beach where people swim, sunbath engage in adventure sports, the big pools offer a safer space for some. A small volleyball court at the pool is a delight to watch and so is the children's pool and splash pad. Kids love Al Waha as they can have free popsicles and ice creams by the pool all day long

Oman's only lazy river connects Al Waha to the town of Al Bandar. Just take a floating tube and sail the crystal-clear river overseeing the seas at the sides and the palm trees at the top. With breeze swaying down the wet body and sounds of bees and butterflies from the garden, the trip is like the lakes in a Utopian land devoid of any care or responsibility.

Currently, Al Waha is the most preferred family vacation destination due to its family friendly services and facilities, from Splash pad, lazy river, family-friendly pools, connecting rooms, in-room treats for kids and teenagers, welcome by 'Habibi the Turtle' and a personalised check-in experience for kids.

A wide array of amenities makes for an unforgettable stay, from thrilling watersports to a lazy river and kids club, a secluded spa and diverse dining options. The resort offers an array of activities - inland and water sports - for families and kids - kayak, wake board, jet-skis, snorkeling, tours with the Turtle Ranger discovering the turtle nests, and if you one is lucky, (I was) one can witness turtles swimming in the waters.

Close by, also lies the 'Vintage Car Mu-



seum' where vehicles dating back to decades, greets you. It is fascinating to watch the cars and encounter their evolution with time.

Food lovers, this is the place for you - from an international buffet to barbecue evenings at Samba, live pizzas by the pool every Friday, or grabbing a bite at Surf Café or Assira, there is much on offer.

In the evening, there is also Capri Court - a fine dining Italian restaurant - which offers an A la Carte menu. In quite a romantic ambience, the restaurant with outdoor seating

overlooking the infinite ocean and the stretches of palm trees under the stars, is ideal for a time together for couples. Alternatively, people can also dine at Sultanah which offers Mediterranean cuisine as well as other international dishes.

They say, a hotel is incomplete without its people. A special appreciation goes out to the team who have been literally on their toes making guests feel comfortable and at home. And that is enough motivation for guests to come back again.

SRI LANKA'S PEKOE TRAIL

The Pekoe Trail, a 300km, 22-stage discovery of Sri Lanka on foot, has been creating international headlines for Sri Lanka as a destination for wellness and nature-based travel.

This is a unique tourism experience that supports the long-term environmental sustainability of habitats as well as the social and commercial sustainability of the communities it passes through.

The first of the Pekoe Trail's 22 segments was opened in 2021, shining a light on life in Sri Lanka's tea estates.

Most countries have their own iconic, national walking trail. But for a long time, despite its stunning nature and plethora of tourist offerings, Sri Lanka didn't. However, adventurer and travel specialist Miguel Cunat decided to change that by creating the Pekoe Trail.

The route takes walkers through the country's tea plantations and hillside communities. Though the paths themselves have been used for years by locals, the creation of the trail has now mapped, signposted and maintained them.

The Pekoe trail is an incredible new tourist offering but it's also helping to change the lives of locals.

GO, TAKE A WALK!

The new, 300km Pekoe Trail winds through Sri Lanka's central highlands, passing remote villages and tea estates providing a unique tourism experience



The Pekoe trail - a 300 km walking route - was developed through the Tourism Resilience Project with funding from the European Union and the US Agency for International Development. It is broken up into 22 sections, averaging around 12km each - so whether you're looking for a day hike or a multi-day expedition, there's something to suit everyone.

"The beauty of it is that within the same trail, everything changes so much because you're going through tea plantations, pine forests and eucalyptus forests," Thushni de Silva, experience manager at Experience Travel Group disclosed.

"We go through main attractions like Ella Rock or the Nine Arch Bridge and you cross paddy fields, which you don't really expect when you're in tea country. You've got so much going on that you don't expect when you're exploring these areas."

The trail starts in the famous city of Kandy and heads south towards Hatton and Horton Plains National Park. It then heads east through Haputale and Ella before looping around and finishing in the beautiful city of Nuwara Eliya.

(Courtesy: Euronews.com)



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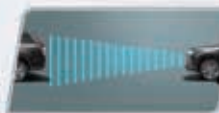


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PO Box 2616, Ruwi 112, Muscat,
Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24799388.
Toll Free No. 80076000

EDITORIAL
Mohammad Najmuz Zafar
Tel: +968 24799388
Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

ADVERTISING
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