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Dhamani transforms health insurance

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Financial Services Authority (FSA) officially launched national health insurance platform Dhamani on Sunday, marking an important step towards regulating the Omani health insurance sector through digital innovation.

The platform provides a comprehensive, integrated digital solution for the exchange of health insurance data and claims between insurers and private health institutions.

Sheikh Abdullah Salem al Salmi, Executive President of FSA, elaborated on Dhamani's pivotal regulatory role and key features, and emphasised the positive impact it will have on all stakeholders in the health insurance process - from policyholders to insurance companies and private healthcare providers.

Salmi described Dhamani as a transformative leap for the Omani health insurance landscape, utilising digital advancements to streamline operations, improve access to healthcare services and promote broader insurance coverage across the country.

He informed that the platform proved its efficiency and effectiveness during its pilot phase.

In the first quarter of 2025, the platform facilitated nearly 3mn transactions between insurers and private healthcare providers.

Dhamani has successfully integrated with all insurance institutions, over 30 private hospitals and three private health complexes to date.

The platform aims to resolve longstanding challenges within the insurance ecosystem, ensuring timely payments to private healthcare institutions and enhancing the quality of health insurance services. Additionally, it offers a comprehensive database of diseases, diagnoses and treatments, providing valuable insights for healthcare sector studies and future developments.

Dhamani serves over 650,000 health insurance policyholders, processing approximately 40,000 transactions daily. To support its continued growth and development, a nominal fee is charged to hospitals, helping finance the platform's ongoing enhancements. The total cost of building the platform was RO1.6mn.

Looking ahead, the platform plans to expand its services to include all private health centres and clinics across Oman, further strengthening the sultanate's health insurance infrastructure.



Dhamani has successfully integrated with all insurance institutions, over 30 private hospitals and three private health complexes to date

Karwa Motors to export over 700 vehicles in 2025

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is set to export more than 700 vehicles to various international markets this year, according to Ibrahim bin Ali al Balushi, CEO of Karwa Motors.

In an interview with a local radio station, Balushi said the company is eyeing aggressive expansion in the GCC market. "In the recent past, we have exported vehicles to Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United States," he said.

In 2023, Karwa Motors exported 180 vehicles to the United States, increasing the number to 237 in 2024. The company also exports to several African countries.

"Our target for 2025 exceeds 700 vehicle exports. We have signed contracts with several countries, including a five-year agreement with one client for the



In the recent past, we have exported vehicles to Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the US

IBRAHIM AL BALUSHI

annual export of at least 300 vehicles," Balushi added.

Established as a joint venture between Mowasalat Qatar and Oman Investment Authority, Karwa Motors operates a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility spread over 600,000sqm in Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

With production capacity of

600 buses annually, the factory commenced operations in 2021 and initially focused on supplying buses for FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The facility is equipped with advanced technology and includes comprehensive workshops for the entire production cycle - from cutting and welding to final assembly.

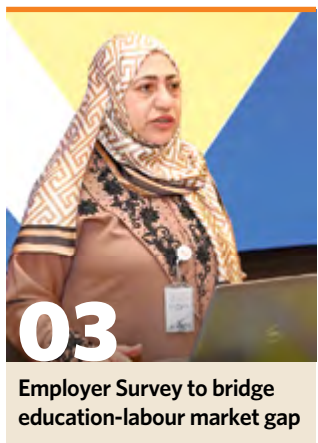
Since beginning commercial operations, Karwa Motors has awarded local procurement contracts worth over RO2.5mn, reflecting its commitment to developing Oman's supply chain and integrating local businesses into the manufacturing sector.

As part of its strategy to reduce import dependence and support the domestic economy, the company allocated over RO1.1mn worth of business opportunities to 93 Omani small and medium enterprises in 2024.



ROYAL CAVALRY RIDER WINS ZUTENDAAL ENDURANCE RACE IN BELGIUM

Mahmoud bin Marhoon al Fori of Royal Cavalry of Oman won first place in the 100km Zutendaal Endurance Race in Belgium riding Dalila. Organised by International Equestrian Federation and held in three stages - 40km, 30km and 30km - the race featured 20 riders from around the world (ONA)



03
Employer Survey to bridge education-labour market gap



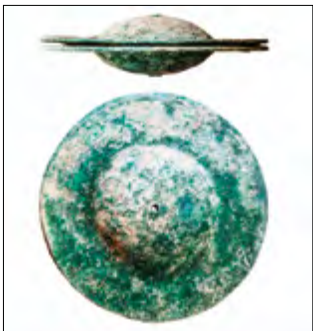
15
Daruma dolls - Symbolic Japanese souvenirs

Rhythms of the past: Musical find in Oman links ancient civilisations

M Najmuz Zafar
Muscat

Archaeologists have uncovered a pair of 4,200-year-old copper cymbals that may point to the use of music as a unifying element among early civilisations across the Arabian Gulf and the Indian subcontinent.

The early Bronze Age instruments were discovered at an archaeological site in Dahwa, North Batinah. Dr Khaled A Douglas, head of Archaeology Department at Sultan Qaboos University and lead author of a study published in the journal *Antiquity*, told *Muscat Daily* that this is the first time a musical instrument from this period has been found so well preserved in the Arabian Peninsula.



(Supplied photos)

"These cymbals seem to have been placed intentionally, likely for a ritual purpose," Douglas stated, adding that the find suggests music may have been used not just in daily life but also in ceremonial gatherings.

The cymbals were found stacked in the corner of a large structure believed to have served as venue of a public or religious function. Both are identical in size and made from locally sourced copper. The building, which featured a raised platform and occupied a central location within the settlement, is thought to have hosted gatherings or events.

The cymbals are notable for their resemblance to instruments found in ancient Indus Valley cities such as Mohenjo-Daro and

depicted in carvings from Mesopotamia. These regions were active in trade and cultural exchanges with Oman, which was historically known for its copper production and coastal trading routes.

"This discovery indicates that cultural exchanges between the Arabian Peninsula and the Indus Valley extended beyond trade, encompassing shared musical practices that may have played a role in uniting diverse communities," Douglas said.

The study, carried out by researchers from Sultan Qaboos University in collaboration with international experts, adds to mounting archaeological evidence that Oman was a key node in the network of early civilisational contact in the region.



(Supplied photo)

Sayyid Badr receives message from Saudi Foreign Minister

Muscat - H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received a written message from Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on Sunday related to bilateral relations between the two countries.

The message was delivered by H E Ibrahim Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to

Oman, during a meeting with H E Sayyid Badr at the Foreign Ministry in Muscat.

During the meeting, the two sides emphasised the depth of relations between the two countries, and their keenness to continue developing these in all areas of cooperation, guided by the Royal directives of the leadership of the two countries.

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FIRE PREVENTION - THE ONLY OPTION

Jabal al Akhdar, one of Oman's most popular tourist destinations, enthalls visitors with its exotic landscape and rare juniper trees. However, recurring fires - often ignited by careless campers - have devastated this fragile ecosystem. What measures can authorities adopt to safeguard Jabal al Akhdar's flora and prevent further fires? Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers said -

YOUR SAY

Hameed al Balushi
Private sector employee

Installing early fire detection systems like heat sensors and thermal cameras can greatly help. Authorities should also build watchtowers and improve road access for emergency vehicles to respond quickly. Educating the public, especially campers and tourists, about fire safety is crucial to preserving Jabal al Akhdar's unique ecosystem and trees.

Salma al Amri
Homemaker

Random fires often happen due to negligence. Authorities must limit access during dry seasons and strictly ban open flames. Awareness signage in Arabic and English can guide tourists. Con-

ducting regular drills with local communities and fire teams will also improve preparedness and help contain fires before they spread too far.

Khalfan al Nabhani
Businessman

It's time we treat Jabal al Akhdar's forests like a national treasure. A seasonal permit system for visitors, along with dedicated forest rangers, can control traffic and ensure rules are followed. We should also invest in satellite surveillance and use drones for monitoring.

Ahmed al Hinai
Tour guide

Fires destroy not just trees but entire habitats. The government should create

buffer zones by clearing dry brush around vulnerable areas. Special campaigns in schools and social media about forest care can raise awareness.

Anil Thomas
Salesman

Authorities must instal fire alarms and water tanks at key locations to douse small fires instantly. Local volunteers and villagers can be trained as first responders. Also, restricting open camping can reduce accidental fire incidents.

Farzana Iqbal
Private sector employee

We need technology like drones for early fire detection, restricted access during fire-prone months and strict fines for careless behaviour (like random camping). Educational programmes about rare flora and fauna should be conducted for tourists to create a sense of responsibility at camping sites.

**? NEXT ON
YOUR SAY**

Do you think driving licences for expatriates should be valid for more than two years? What should the validity period be and why?

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.

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

Share your comments in not more than 50 words along with your full name and profession before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram or muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*.

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RO200,000 pact inked to support social security families

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Social Development and Al Jisr Foundation signed a RO200,000 financing agreement on Sunday to support the Istiqrar (Stability) programme aimed at assisting families registered under the Social Protection Fund. The agreement was signed by H E Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar,

Minister of Social Development, and Dina Fawzi al Khalili, Director General of Al Jisr Foundation. The partnership seeks to strengthen collaboration between the public and charitable sectors in supporting eligible social security families, and to lay out a clear mechanism for implementing the Istiqrar programme in line with criteria and standards outlined in the agreement.

Muscat to host global business leaders at two-day forum

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman will host leading international business figures, government officials and economists in Muscat this month at the inaugural Advantage Oman Forum, a two-day gathering aimed at positioning the sultanate as a key global investment destination. Set to take place on April 27 and 28, the event is being organised by Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, through 'Invest Oman', in partnership with Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Sohar International. It will highlight Oman's growing economic potential and showcase investment opportunities in sectors aligned with Oman's Vision 2040 and the country's Net Zero 2050 ambitions. It is also expected to reinforce the sultanate's economic diplomacy and efforts to attract long-term, sustainable foreign investment. The forum will include panel discussions, closed-door meet-

ings and fireside conversations focused on global megatrends and their impact on Oman's economic direction. Key themes include clean energy, advanced manufacturing, logistics, mining, agri-food, tourism and digital innovation, with sustainability and competitiveness at the core of the discussions. 'The Advantage Oman Forum aims to provide a platform for strategic dialogue and collaboration, unlocking new opportunities for high-quality investments,' a press release said. Among the confirmed speakers are Abdulsalam al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority; H E Qais al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; H E Dr Said al Sagri, Minister of Economy; and H E Salem al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism. Prominent regional business leaders include Mohamed al Abbar, Founder of Emaar Properties; Mohammed al Barwani, Chairman of MB Holding Group; Mohammed Mahfoudh al Ardhi,

Chairman of Muscat Stock Exchange; and Yusuff Ali, Chairman of Lulu Group. International figures will also participate, including Abdulla al Marri, UAE Minister of Economy; Luigi Di Maio, EU Special Representative for the Gulf Region; Creon Butler from Chatham College, Oxford. Dushyant Thakor, Deputy Executive Director at WAIPA, will present insights on global investment promotion trends. Richard Quest, CNN Editor-at-Large, will moderate a headline session titled 'The Shape of Things to Come', focusing on emerging trends in climate adaptation, renewable energy, artificial intelligence and Industry 5.0. The session will examine how technologies such as Edge AI and telemedicine are changing global business, and how companies can navigate geopolitical uncertainties and build long-term resilience.

Ministry of Health
SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders: -

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of tender Document	Closing Time/ Day/ Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
2025/1289	Providing sewage suction services to Samad Al-Shan Hospital, affiliated with the General Directorate of Health Services in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate	Before 10 am on Sunday 04 / May /2025	Before 10 am on Thursday 29/ May /2025	Specialized companies registered with the Tender Board	10 riyals for small and medium enterprises 25 riyals for local companies

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
Any Clarification, you may contact via
Telephone: 24402200 - Email id: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

Survey to bridge education-labour market gap

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation launched Employer Survey 2025 on Sunday to assess alignment of higher education outcomes with the demands of the labour market.

The survey, which will run till June 30, targets organisations that have hired graduates from Omani higher education institutions since 2018. It aims to identify key skills and competencies needed across economic sectors, supporting curriculum reform and national employment strategies.

H E Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al

Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, said the survey is “a cornerstone in shaping educational policies” that respond to national priorities. She added that it supports Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to enhance economic competitiveness and sustainability.

“The survey’s findings will guide the development of academic programmes and help equip graduates with skills required for a future-oriented job market,” she said.

H E Rahma emphasised the need for collaboration between higher education institutions and the private sector in providing



The survey’s findings will guide the development of academic programmes and help equip graduates with skills required for job market

H E DR RAHMA AL MAHROUQI

accurate data on graduate employment and qualifications.

The ministry acknowledged the role of other government bodies supporting the survey, including Authority for Small and

Medium Enterprises Development, Ministry of Labour, the National Centre for Statistics and Information, and Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

The Employer Survey invites feedback from CEOs, HR professionals and recruitment managers on graduate performance and institutional needs. It will also gather data on vocational training and qualification programmes.

The survey forms part of Oman’s wider efforts to align academic output with economic development goals and to expand the use of data in policy-making and workforce planning.

New society to enhance statistical practices and support development

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has officially established a statistical society through a ministerial decision (No 121/2025) issued by H E Dr Laila bint Ahmed bin Awad al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

The Oman Statistical Society will support national development efforts by promoting statistical research and strengthening the role of data in public policy and planning. It aims to advance academic and professional standards in the field, while encouraging knowledge exchange and the application of best practices in statistical methods.

According to the ministry, the society is intended to serve as a platform for collaboration between government and private institutions engaged in statistical work. By offering expert opinion and facilitating the sharing of resources, it will support more informed decision-making process.



H E Dr Laila bint Ahmed bin Awad al Najjar

The organisation also aims to build stronger ties with international and regional entities working in statistics, contributing to Oman’s global engagement in the field.

A key part of the society’s mission is to uphold high ethical standards and ensure professional integrity in statistical practice. Its governance will be overseen by a 12-member Board of Directors, elected for two-year terms. Members may be re-

elected at the end of each term. Funding will come from membership dues, donations, government support, income from activities, and returns from investments, in line with applicable regulations.

The establishment of the society is seen as a step forward in the institutional development of Oman’s statistical capabilities, providing a structured platform for experts to contribute to national progress.

MTCIT issues regulatory framework to drive govt digital transformation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has taken an important step towards modernising its public sector with the issuance of a new regulatory framework governing digital transformation across government entities.

The framework, enacted under Ministerial Decision No 108/2025 by H E Eng Saeed bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, outlines the structure and operational mechanisms of the Government Digital Transformation Programme, known as ‘Tahawul’.

Designed to streamline digital governance and clarify implementation procedures, the regulation sets out defined roles and responsibilities for all parties involved in executing digital initiatives. It applies to all administrative units of the state and other public legal entities, with the exception of military



It outlines the structure and operational mechanisms of the Government Digital Transformation Programme ‘Tahawul’

and security agencies, excluding the Royal Oman Police.

According to the decision, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) will lead efforts to coordinate national digital transformation. Its responsibilities include setting the operational direction for the programme, identifying priority initiatives and services, issuing

relevant policies and frameworks, and ensuring compliance by concerned entities.

The ministry is also tasked with monitoring progress, offering support to entities implementing digital projects, and preparing guiding manuals to aid in execution. The regulation provides a unified model to strengthen collaboration between the ministry and other

government bodies,” a statement from the ministry said.

Government entities will be required to establish supervisory committees to oversee the implementation of digital initiatives, comply with the ministry’s IT governance policies, and ensure their plans are regularly updated. They must also work towards fully digitising essential services and making them accessible through authorised digital platforms.

The regulation encourages better integration between public bodies, promotes the use of shared digital resources, and supports community engagement in shaping digital services. It also emphasises inclusive access, mandating that digital platforms and applications must cater to all users, including persons with disabilities and the elderly.

Additionally, the framework sets out mechanisms to improve the delivery of digital government services.

High-performing local brands in hospitality sector to be promoted by SME Authority

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) has invited SMEs operating in Oman’s café, restaurant, and hospitality sectors to register for a new promotional guide aimed at boosting the market visibility of Omani-owned brands.

The initiative seeks to highlight businesses that are legally registered with ASMED and hold valid trademarks filed with the Intellectual Property Department at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. Priority will be given to businesses that possess an Entrepreneurship Card.

ASMED stated that only enterprises meeting strict criteria on food quality, cleanliness and



brand identity will be included in the guide.

“The objective is to promote high-performing local brands and enhance their competitiveness within the domestic mar-

ket,” the authority said.

The initiative comes as the number of Omanis employed in the SME sector reached 192,714, according to the latest data shared by ASMED.

A total of 64,436 SMEs were issued Entrepreneurship Cards in the second half of 2024.

Looking ahead, ASMED aims to finance at least 300 enterprises across various sectors in 2025. The authority also reported that 400 financing requests were approved under the ‘Azm’ lending portfolio by the end of September 2024, with total disbursements exceeding RO37.6mn.

In collaboration with the Development Bank, ASMED has launched nine financing programmes to support entrepreneurs in scaling their businesses locally and abroad. The programmes are also intended to encourage jobseekers and aspiring entrepreneurs to take advantage of new opportunities emerging within Oman’s evolving business landscape.

Flood risk management project 54% complete in 3 governorates

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A major consultancy project aimed at mapping and managing flood risks in three governorates has reached 54% completion, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The update was shared during a high-level coordination meeting in Muscat last week, which was attended by specialists from the ministry, officials from Muscat governorate, representatives of Muscat Municipality, Majlis A’Shura members, Municipal Council officials and walis from the governorate.

The meeting reviewed progress in the consultancy services project, including updated flood risk maps and emergency management plans covering the governorates of Muscat, Dhofar and Musandam.

Dr Mahmoud bin Mohammed al Mamari, who gave a detailed presentation, said the project focuses on three core objectives: Identifying flood-prone areas, preparing emergency response plans, and developing a comprehensive Flood Risk Evaluation Guidebook.

He said the project is being implemented in three phases. The first involves analysing rainfall and surface runoff data,

followed by the preparation of detailed flood risk maps, and finally the development of integrated risk and emergency management plans.

“These plans will help identify vulnerable areas and include strategies such as implementing protective infrastructure, designating evacuation and shelter points, and issuing recommendations to the relevant authorities,” Mamari said.

Launched in 2024, the project is scheduled for completion in 2026 and is seen as a key component of Oman’s long-term disaster preparedness strategy for regions prone to flooding.



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China's US envoy urges end to trade war

China's ambassador to the United States, Xie Feng, has urged Washington to seek common ground with Beijing and pursue peaceful coexistence while warning that China stood ready to retaliate in the escalating trade war.

Speaking at a public event in Washington on Saturday, details of which were posted on the Chinese embassy's web site, Xie said tariffs would devastate the global economy and drew a parallel between the Great Depression and tariffs imposed by the US in 1930.

Referring to concepts in traditional Chinese medicine like the need to balance the opposing forces of yin and yang, Xie said harmony should guide relations between the world's two largest economies.

"A good traditional Chinese medicine recipe usually combines many different ingredients which reinforce one another and creates the best medical effect," he said.

The trade war has all but frozen the mammoth trade between the world's two largest economies with tariffs over 100% in each direction and a suite of trade, investment and cultural restrictions.

China's top shipbuilding association on Saturday attacked a U.S. plan to apply port fees on China-linked ships.



Port of Duqm strengthens regional position with record growth in 2024

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Port of Duqm has firmly cemented its position as a vital regional logistics hub, recording robust growth in operational activities during 2024.

In 2024, the port received 1,204 ships, up from 933 in 2023 – a year-on-year increase of 29%. It also expanded its logistics services and upgraded infrastructure, further strengthening its role as a key trade gateway and enhancing operational efficiency.

This record growth was driven by a sharp rise in cargo handling volumes. Liquid cargo increased by 169.2%, dry cargo by 86.2%, and general cargo by 81.6% year-on-year, according to the latest edition of Duqm Economist magazine, released on Sunday.

The port's rapid expansion highlights its pivotal role within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), enhancing the zone's attractiveness to investors and fostering a business-friendly environment across sectors such

The record growth in port's operational activities was driven by a sharp rise in cargo handling volumes. Liquid cargo increased by 169.2%, dry cargo by 86.2%, and general cargo by 81.6% year-on-year in 2024

as heavy industries, refining, and renewable energy.

The surge in cargo handling capacity further reinforces SEZAD's ability to attract new investments, supporting infrastructure and logistics development

strategies and positioning Duqm as a leading destination for business and sustainable growth.

In 2024, the Cargo Services Centre, Customs Station, and Fishing Port were inaugurated, boosting the port's ability to at-

ing the Omani economy was highlighted.

Looking ahead, the Port of Duqm remains committed to supporting future green hydrogen projects by enhancing infrastructure, providing technical support, and offering specialised consultancy services. Through technical studies, the port is fostering an enabling environment for the development of the hydrogen and clean energy sector, reinforcing Duqm's position as a strategic hub for sustainable energy.

As the port continues to pursue its ambitious vision, it remains focused on infrastructure development and operational efficiency to fully leverage its strategic location, with the aim of building a more sustainable and prosperous future, Duqm Economist noted.

Financial Services Authority revokes licence of Trust Fund Management

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Financial Services Authority (FSA) issued an administrative decision to revoke the licence of Trust Fund Management Company for failing to submit audited financial statements for the years 2023 and 2024, as well as for failing to file audited capital adequacy reports – in violation of Articles 168 and 168(b) of the Executive Regulation of the Capital Market Law.

In a statement, the FSA said that Trust Fund Management Company also failed to rectify its status in accordance with legal requirements during the three-month suspension period imposed under Decision No 4/2024.

The breached articles stipulate that the company must prepare unaudited quarterly financial statements for the first, second, and third quarters of its financial year, and submit them to the FSA in the prescribed format within 30 days of the end of each quarter or within 45 days for companies with subsidiaries.

The companies are also required to prepare annual audited financial statements in accordance with international accounting standards and submit them to the FSA no later than two months after the end of the financial year, or 14 days before the general meeting in the case of public joint stock companies.

With regard to capital adequacy, Article 168(b) requires a



FSA warned that appropriate action will be taken against any violations that threaten market stability or the rights of consumers

company to submit audited capital adequacy reports to the FSA annually, within the same timeframe prescribed for filing financial statements. The FSA may also request the company to submit audited reports for shorter periods. The external auditor must comply with the standards issued by the FSA, and the report must include an opinion on whether the company's systems ensure that capital adequacy does not fall below the required threshold, the FSA said.

The FSA emphasised that it will continue to uphold the highest standards of audit and governance. It called on all companies operating in the sector to adhere to applicable laws and regulations and warned that appropriate action will be taken against any violations that threaten market stability or the rights of consumers.



GME and Shanghai Futures Exchange sign MoU to boost cross-regional cooperation

Dubai, UAE – Gulf Mercantile Exchange (GME), the leading international energy futures and commodities exchange in the Middle East, and China's Shanghai Futures Exchange (SHFE) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a framework for strategic cooperation between the Middle East and China's derivatives markets.

The MoU aims to enhance collaboration in key areas including product cooperation, exchange of market development insights, research support, and investor education initiatives. The agreement reflects a shared commitment to enhance market transparency and support the evolution of regionally relevant commodities benchmarks.

Raid al Salami, Managing Director of Gulf Mercantile Exchange, said, "We value our cooperation with Shanghai Futures Exchange. This MoU is an important step in building

greater alignment between China and the Gulf in the commodities trading space. By sharing knowledge, expertise, and vision, we can pave the way for more regionally relevant benchmarks, greater mar-

This Memorandum of Understanding is an important step in building greater alignment between China and the Gulf countries in the commodities trading space

RAID AL SALAMI

ket transparency, and stronger investor engagement across both regions."

The agreement outlines several areas of cooperation, including: product cooperation;

sharing knowledge on market development, infrastructure, and regulation; providing support for studies and research relevant to each other's market; exchanging personnel to deepen cross-market understanding; and co-developing educational programmes for market participants in both regions.

This partnership supports GME's ongoing efforts to position the Gulf as a global commodities hub and aligns with SHFE's internationalisation strategy to connect with key markets across the world.

The Gulf Mercantile Exchange is home to the Oman Crude Oil Futures Contract (GME Oman), that generates the world's largest amount of physically delivered crude oil. The Oman crude contract serves as the third-most important crude oil benchmark globally, which is used by five national oil companies based in the GCC countries.

US tariffs threaten \$22bn Arab exports

Beirut, Lebanon – A dramatic escalation in trade protectionism by the United States is significantly impacting Arab economies, placing \$22bn in non-oil exports at risk, according to a policy brief issued by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

Total Arab exports to the US declined from \$91bn in 2013 to \$48bn in 2024 – largely due to reduced US crude oil imports. Yet non-oil exports nearly doubled over the same period, climbing from \$14bn to \$22bn, with sectors like textiles, chemicals, aluminum, fertilisers, and electronics driving the growth. That progress is now under serious threat.

Jordan is the most exposed, with nearly 25% of its total exports destined for the US. Bahrain, heavily reliant on aluminum and chemical exports to the American market, is also flagged for heightened risk. Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates faces disruptions to an estimated \$10bn in US-bound re-exports due to tariffs levied on goods originating from third countries.

ESCWA also notes that GCC



economies are facing a recent sharp drop in global oil prices, which is further straining fiscal revenues and testing the resilience of Gulf economies reliant on hydrocarbon exports.

The financial implications are also significant. ESCWA estimates that Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, and Tunisia will pay \$114mn more in sovereign interest payments in 2025 due to rising bond yields linked to global investor uncertainty. This increase in borrowing costs threatens to constrain national budgets and delay development spending.

On the demand side, reduced imports from major global part-

ners such as the European Union and China are likely to add pressure. The EU currently absorbs 72% of Tunisia's exports and 68% of Morocco's, while China imports 22% of GCC oil and chemical exports.

Despite the headwinds, ESCWA highlights potential opportunities for trade diversion. Egypt and Morocco could gain US market share as higher tariffs on Chinese and Indian goods make Arab exports more competitive – although the recent 90-day tariff pause (excluding China) may limit the scale of that effect.

To navigate the crisis, ESCWA urges Arab countries to accel-

erate regional integration. The brief recommends advancing the Pan-Arab Free Trade Area, implementing the GCC Customs Union, and expanding cooperation under the Agadir Agreement.

It also calls for renewed investment in logistics infrastructure and regulatory reforms to reposition Arab countries within global value chains.

"Despite the pressures, there is an opportunity here to accelerate structural reforms and deepen resilience," ESCWA Executive Secretary Rola Dashti stated. "The region is at a strategic inflection point," she added.

Oil prices post 4.2% weekly gain despite demand fears

Oil prices posted a slight weekly gain supported by renewed optimism over US trade talks as both benchmarks rebounded from last week's four-year lows.

The international oil benchmark of Brent crude increased by 4.2% to \$66.96 per barrel on Thursday, up from the closing price of \$64.26 a barrel last Friday.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate also rose by 2.8% to \$63.72 per barrel, com-

pared to \$61.96 at last week's closing price.

Oil markets are closed Friday in observance of the Good Friday holiday, which precedes Easter Sunday.

Prices settled higher Thursday, lifted by renewed optimism over US trade talks, as both benchmarks rebounded from last

week's four-year lows amid discussions on reciprocal tariffs.

Market attention is now turning to a possible breakthrough in US-China trade relations. The US president also said China reached out for talks following his decision to impose new tariffs on Beijing. Trump said Beijing had made contact 'a number of

times' since the US announced a 145% tariff on certain Chinese goods.

On Thursday, fears that new US sanctions on Iran could disrupt global oil supply pushed prices higher.

However, both benchmarks fell on Wednesday as markets priced in the uncertainty from changing US tariff policies and escalating US-China trade tensions.

Agencies



China seeks new markets to offset US tariff impact

Jerry Fisayo-Bambi

Beijing, China – Chinese exporters have begun seeking new opportunities to tap into global markets in the face of the ongoing trade war with the United States.

Key to this are trade fairs, where many can showcase their products and create sales channels to offset tariff impacts, with the end goal of finding other opportunities beyond traditional markets like the US.

Of the several trade fairs, two major trade fairs – the Canton Fair and the China International Consumer Products Expo (CICPE) – serve as key platforms for businesses.

The booths of this year's Canton Fair in the southern Chinese metropolis of Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, are highly sought after among Chinese exporters hoping to build new business relationships in alternative markets.

"We will surely expand our markets abroad besides the United States. This product is a key focus at present. It has up-to-date functions. Clients from Poland and the Netherlands wanted to sign an exclusive distribution agreement with us right here," said Tang Shousheng, an exhibitor.

Beyond sales expansion, Chinese exporters are also investing in overseas production facilities to strengthen their presence in global markets.



People visit the 5th China International Consumer Products Expo in Haikou, China on Friday (Xinhua)

Beyond sales expansion, Chinese exporters are also investing in overseas production facilities to strengthen their presence in global markets

Quest to diversify and keep resilience

"We plan to invest 10mn yuan in building overseas factories. In fact, we have already found local suppliers for essential components such as plastics, SMT (surface-mount technology) patches, and packaging materials like

colour boxes," said Huang Shuyu, an exhibitor.

Organisers of the Canton Fair say around 31,000 firms are participating in this year's fair, which runs till May 5, up by nearly 900 compared with the previous one.

At the just-concluded CICPE, many Chinese exporters tried to

diversify their brands and supply chains, hoping to ensure they remain resilient in an unpredictable trade environment.

Some businesses are introducing proprietary brands tailored to specific international markets and to expand their domestic market share.

"We started to launch our own brands last year, and these products have performed very well in the Russian market," said Ran Yan, an exhibitor.

Despite the trade disruptions, many exhibiting businesses remain committed to global expansion

"We have not given up the global industrial layout in terms of our overall brand strategy," said Li Rongsheng, said one exhibitor.

The US and China are locked in a trade row that has seen Washington impose tariffs of more than 145% on Chinese goods entering the US.

In March, China's exports jumped 12.4% from last year in a last-minute flurry of activity as companies rushed to beat increases in the tariffs, and analysts forecast sharp setbacks.

(Source: Euronews.com)

Fed, ECB take diverging paths in Trump era

Diccon Hyatt

In 2025, the European Central Bank (ECB) and its American counterpart have taken starkly different approaches to monetary policy.

The ECB has continued to slash interest rates, while the Fed has held them steady. The diverging paths came into focus more sharply on Thursday when the ECB lowered its benchmark rate by a quarter point, the seventh decrease since June.

By contrast, US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell made public comments the same day, suggesting US central bankers are in no hurry to cut the key fed funds rate. The Fed has cut its rate by one percentage point from its peak last year, and held it steady since December, while the ECB has lowered its own by 1.75 percentage points.

Powell's remarks elicited a response from President Donald Trump, who accused Powell of acting too slowly to cut rates, falling behind Europe in lowering borrowing costs and boosting the economy.

However, economists said the difference was mainly caused by Trump's own policies, especially his sprawling and unpredictable campaign of tariffs on trading partners. In the years leading up to the tariffs, the two central

banks largely moved in tandem, reacting to similar economic currents.

Forecasters and investors widely expect the tariffs to push up the cost of living, making Fed officials reluctant to cut interest rates for fear of reigniting inflation. European officials, meanwhile, are more concerned with an economic slowdown, especially since the tariffs could hurt exports to the US.

"Every central bank is dealing with the complications arising from the trade war, a six-sigma event," wrote Douglas Porter, chief economist at BMO Capital Markets, in a note. "The response to the tariff uncertainty varies depending on how sensitive the economy is to US trade, and the respective starting points for growth and inflation."

Ernie Tedeschi, director of economics at the Budget Lab at Yale, emphasised the specific differences between the US and its European counterparts in a post on social media platform X, referring to President Trump's seeming resurrection of 19th-century-style mercantilist economic policies.

"Europe didn't raise their tariffs to Gilded Age levels, so they're not facing the price pressure the Fed is," he said.

(Source: Investopedia.com)



What is Trumponomics? Markets are still guessing

Vahid Karaahmetovic

Investor uncertainty over the direction of US economic policy under President Donald Trump's second term is growing, with UBS strategists saying the lack of clarity is driving market volatility and eroding confidence.

In a note published this week, Jason Draho, Head of Asset Allocation at UBS's CIO Americas, attempts to define "Trumponomics" and concludes that even those in Trump's own administration are struggling to articulate a coherent economic vision.

"That's the trillion-dollar question and my honest answer is that I'm not really sure," Draho wrote, referring to the note's central question: "What exactly is Trumponomics?"

While Trump's first term featured a broadly pro-growth agenda with tax cuts, deregulation, and higher spending, the current approach appears more fragmented and harder to pin down. "Such ambiguity is creating confusion and anxiety that's weighing on financial markets," Draho said.

The central point of friction so far and the key driver behind recent market weakness is tariffs. The new administration's reciprocal tariffs are more sweeping than before and lack a clearly stated purpose. It's unclear whether the aim is to level the playing field on trade or to eliminate trade deficits altogether.

"Without knowing which consideration is more important, it's hard to know what will constitute satisfactory deals," Draho noted.

There are also contradictions between stated goals.



Trump has pledged to reduce the fiscal deficit but is simultaneously pursuing policies – such as potential tax cuts funded by tariff revenues – that could widen it.

Similarly, efforts to increase domestic energy production may be undermined by higher

There are contradictions between stated goals. Trump has pledged to reduce fiscal deficit but is simultaneously pursuing policies – such as potential tax cuts funded by tariff revenues – that could widen it

input costs from tariffs. "Both goals can't be achieved at the same time," the strategist warned, pointing out that lower imports from reshoring would reduce tariff revenue.

"That will lead to larger fiscal deficits, especially if the expected tariff revenue is used to pay for larger tax cuts now," he added.

Given all the uncertainty, markets have reacted accordingly. Risk assets have priced in a higher probability of recession, while both bonds and the dollar have sold off – an unusual combination typically signaling rising risk premiums rather than deteriorating growth expectations alone.

According to UBS, the policy stance remains ideologically muddled. The early days of Trump 2.0 presented two competing visions: a populist, America First-style "MAGA" approach, and a fiscally conservative, small-government "DOGE" framework. But neither has yet prevailed.

Delaying some tariffs and carving out exemptions for tech products like semiconductors and smartphones may hint at a more pragmatic turn. However, it would likely take more than that to boost investor sentiment.

(Source: Investing.com)

Netflix profit jumps as price hikes and subscription growth beat expectations

Tina Teng

Netflix's first quarter earnings again topped analysts' expectations, thanks to its price hikes across the board and higher-than-expected subscription growth. The company appears to be sheltered from the global trade routs, with the stock significantly outperforming peers this year.

The video streaming giant attributed the success to "membership growth and higher pricing." Additionally, "the timing of expenses" also helped boost its profitability.

The company raised prices across most of its plans this year in the US, Canada, Portugal, and Argentina. This included its standard plan without commercials, its cheaper ad-supported tier, and its premium plan. These increases contributed to higher profitability during the first quarter, with the operating margin climbing to 31.7% – nearly four percentage points higher than in



the same quarter last year. Netflix also noted that revenue from advertising remains relatively small compared to its core subscription income.

Netflix's stock has shown notable resilience amid the tariff-induced market turmoil of 2025, rising 9% year-to-date – a sharp contrast to double-digit percentage declines seen across other major tech stocks.

"Based on what we are seeing by actually operating the business right now, there's nothing really significant to note," commented co-CEO Greg Peters.

"We also take some comfort that entertainment historically has been pretty resilient in tougher economic times. Netflix, specifically, also, has been generally quite resilient. We haven't seen any major impacts during those tougher times, albeit over a much shorter history."

This quarter also marks a shift in Netflix's reporting approach, as the company has stopped disclosing subscriber numbers. Instead, it will focus on more traditional business metrics, such

as revenue growth and profit margins. While Netflix added 18.9mn subscribers in the fourth quarter of 2024, analysts expect user growth to slow in 2025.

Netflix's earnings hit a trough in 2022 as subscriber growth stalled, prompting the company to overhaul its growth strategy. It launched a cheaper ad-supported plan at the end of 2022 and began cracking down on password sharing. The company has since expanded into live sports and events programming, including the Jake Paul vs. Mike Tyson fight, NFL games, the Beyoncé Bowl, and other live-streamed entertainment.

For the first quarter, Netflix reported earnings per share of \$6.61 on revenue of \$10.54bn, up 25% and 12.5% year-on-year, respectively. Both figures beat Wall Street estimates. Operating income rose 27% to \$3.35bn, resulting in an operating margin of 31.7% – the highest in recent years.

(Source: Euronews.com)

China's FDI inflow increases 13.2% in March

Beijing, China – China's foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow saw marginal recovery in March, in contrast to a decline seen in the first three months, official data showed Friday.

FDI in the Chinese mainland in actual use climbed by 13.2% year on year last month, the Ministry of Commerce said in a statement. In the first three months, FDI inflow totaled 269.2bn yuan (about \$37.35bn), down 10.8% year on year.

During the January-March period, 12,603 new foreign-invested enterprises were estab-



lished nationwide, representing a year-on-year growth of 4.3%, the ministry said.

In breakdown, actual use of FDI in the manufacturing and

services industries during the three-month period stood at 71.51bn yuan and 193.33bn yuan, respectively.

Meanwhile, actual use of FDI

in high-tech sectors reached 78.61bn yuan, with FDI in the e-commerce services sector, biopharmaceutical manufacturing sector, aerospace equipment manufacturing sector and medical instrument manufacturing sector growing by 100.5%, 63.8%, 42.5% and 12.4%, respectively.

Investments from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries jumped by 56.2% during the period, while those from the European Union increased by 11.7%, the data showed.

Xinhua

BYD's stunning SUV Sealion 7 EV launched

In an exclusive gathering of distinguished guests from both the public and private sectors, World Auto Business unveiled BYD's trailblazing electric SUV - the Sealion 7 EV, at the BYD showroom in Wattayah.

This exclusive event attended by a select audience, emphasised BYD's commitment to revolutionising sustainable mobility without compromising on power, elegance and cutting-edge technology. The evening commenced with a warm and engaging welcome address setting the stage for an unforgettable showcase of the exceptional innovations behind the BYD Sealion 7 EV.

The BYD spokesperson articulated how the brand continues to redefine automotive excellence, with the Sealion 7 EV standing as a bold testament to innovation and confidence. Drawing inspiration from the ocean, its aesthetics seamlessly merge form and function, making every drive an immersive and exhilarating experience.

Highlighting the vehicle's technological advancements, he detailed how the Sealion 7 EV is designed to shape the future of transportation with BYD's cutting-edge Platform 3.0. Engineered to eliminate range anxiety, this next-generation



The launch event - attended by a select audience - emphasised BYD's commitment to revolutionising sustainable mobility

platform is complemented by fast-charging capabilities, ensuring seamless and efficient travel.

He also emphasised the game-changing introduction of BYD's Blade Battery, an innovation that enhances the Sealion 7

EV performance, durability and dynamic driving experience.

Following the welcome remarks, an insightful product presentation provided a deep dive into the Sealion 7 EV electrified performance, intelligent features

and eco-conscious efficiency. This presentation reinforced BYD's leadership in the electrification space and its role in making sustainable driving a mainstream reality.

The highlight of the evening

was the momentous unveiling of the Sealion 7 EV, met with enthusiastic applause from the audience. This was followed by a ceremonial key handover to the first few owners of the Sealion 7 EV in Oman, marking the begin-

ning of an exciting new era in the country's electric SUV segment.

Guests at the event shared their perspectives on the Sealion 7 EV's transformative impact. One attendee described it as a game-changer, recognising BYD's mastery in crafting an electric SUV that seamlessly blends power, efficiency and space while setting a new standard in sustainable mobility.

Another guest lauded the Sealion 7 EV's futuristic design and intelligent performance, ac-

Powered by revolutionary Blade Battery, the Sealion 7 EV offers an extended electric range, making it ideal for both urban commutes and long-distance journeys

its sculpted lines, striking front grille and futuristic LED lighting signature. The sleek bodywork and assertive stance exude dynamism and efficiency, ensuring an unmistakable road presence.

Inside, the cabin is a seamless fusion of luxury and technology. Premium leather upholstery, a panoramic sunroof and customisable ambient lighting create an inviting atmosphere, while a spacious, ergonomically designed interior ensures supreme comfort for passengers. At the heart of the dashboard is the rotating 15.6" infotainment screen, serving as a digital command centre that offers seamless connectivity and entertainment.

The Sealion 7 EV is equipped with Intelligent driving assistance systems, Intelligent Adaptive Cruise Control and a high-resolution digital instrument cluster elevate the driving experience to a new level of sophistication. With Over-the-Air (OTA) updates, the vehicle's software remains at the cutting edge, continuously enhancing performance and user experience.

Powered by BYD's revolutionary Blade Battery, the Sealion 7 EV offers an extended electric range, making it ideal for both urban commutes and long-distance journeys.

UTAS to organise forum on 'digital revolution' in libraries

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Mus-sanah, represented by its university library, is organising a forum on digital revolution in libraries and institutes of learning, on Monday.

Titled 'Libraries and Information Institutions in the Digital Revolution Era: Revolution of the Present and Future', the forum will discuss the growing influence of digital transformation on the information and knowledge sectors. The event will bring together a group of distinguished specialists and professionals in the field of libraries and information from various public and private entities.

The forum aligns with the university's efforts to keep pace with rapid digital transformations and to foster collaboration and

knowledge exchange among information institutions. Dr Nasser Salem al Baimani, UTAS-A Assistant Vice-Chancellor, affirmed the university's commitment to supporting digital transformation as a key pillar of its future strategy. He emphasised the importance of artificial intelligence in enhancing library services and improving user experience through smart systems.

Halima Suleiman al Balushi, Head of the University Library, stated that the forum offers a dynamic platform for academic dialogue and interaction among experts and professionals. It aims to explore the future of libraries and information institutions in the digital age and contribute to shaping innovative visions for the development of this vital sector.

CFA Oman honours Charterholders

CFA Oman hosted a Charter Awards Ceremony recently, at a prestigious venue in Muscat. The event celebrated the achievements of new CFA Charterholders who have successfully completed the globally recognised CFA Program.

Ahmed bin Jaffer bin Salim al Musalmi, Governor of the Central Bank of Oman, attended the event as its chief guest.

In his speech, he acknowledged the growing number of CFA Charterholders in Oman and praised the increasing participation of young Omani professionals. He highlighted the CFA designation as a globally respected standard in the investment industry and emphasised the importance of ethics, professionalism, and continued contribution to Oman's financial sector and economy.

He also encouraged employers to support such professional qualifications within their institutions.



Vikas Kumar, the President of CFA Oman reflected on the organisation's growth since its establishment in 2019 under the sponsorship of the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS). He noted that membership has expanded by over 75%, reaching 71 members, with over

one-third being Omani nationals and a growing representation of women.

He expressed optimism about the future, citing nearly 200 candidates from Oman currently enrolled in the CFA Programme. The president also acknowledged the support of founding sponsors

Sohar International and Jabreen Capital, whose contributions have been instrumental in the society's development. CFA Oman presented a token of appreciation to CBFS for the continuous support.

The evening included a panel discussion on 'Economic Diversi-

fication and the Journey Towards Oman Vision 2040', where speakers explored the role of finance professionals in supporting national growth initiatives. The event concluded with a networking dinner attended by senior executives from the banking and financial services industries, CFA Charterholders, and members of the academia.

The ceremony reflected CFA Oman's ongoing efforts to encourage a culture of professional excellence and ethical leadership within the investment community.

As the nation moves forward with its economic transformation, initiatives like these play a vital role in equipping professionals with the skills, values, and networks needed to contribute meaningfully to Oman's financial future.

The event was held with the support and sponsorship from Sohar International Bank.



Bank Muscat celebrates inauguration of lighting project of Al Baz Sports Team

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, recently celebrated the inauguration of the lighting system project of the Al Baz Sports Team in Samail, Dakhliya governorate.

The event was organised under the patronage of Sheikh Ali Mohammed al Tamimi, wali of Samail, and in the presence of Adel Saeed al Nuaimi, regional manager of Bank Muscat branches in Dakhliya governorate, in addition to a number of invitees and team members.

On this occasion, Nuaimi said, "Bank Muscat proudly celebrates the success of its 'Green Sports' programme, a cornerstone of the bank's commitment to social responsibility. This initiative has made a significant impact on national sports teams, Omani youth, and society at large.

"By organising a diverse array of activities and events, the programme fosters the development of young people's skills across sports, culture, and social engagement, while also highlighting their talents and serving

local community. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the team's management and members for this remarkable achievement and wish them continued success in their endeavours."

Abdullah Mahfouz al Sulaimi, Head of Al Baz Sports Team in Samail, expressed delight in organising this ceremony to celebrate the inauguration of the team's field lighting project. He emphasised that the 'Green Sports' programme is a key initiative dedicated to supporting local sports teams.

"This programme has had a significant and positive impact on the community, as evidenced by the numerous beneficiaries since its inception. Throughout this project, we aim to further enrich the community by utilising this space to host a variety of social, sports, and cultural activities and events."

Aziz Said al Mahmoudi said: "We are thrilled about this enhancement to the team's field, as the project will create an ideal environment for training and hosting a variety of events."

National Risk Register's health representatives holds first meeting

In a step to enhance emergency and health risk management, and as part of the effort to compile short- and long-term risk profiles for the year 2026, the Ministry of Health, represented by the Center for Emergency Management, convened on Sunday the first meeting of the National Risk Register (Health Sector Representatives) at Kempinski Hotel Muscat.

The meeting was attended by H E Dr Saeed Harib al Lamki, Undersecretary for Health Affairs in MoH and Head of the Health Sector in the National Risk Register, along with several directors-general from various civil, military, and security government entities, as well as representatives from healthcare and academic institutions.

Dr Mohammed al Busafi, Director of Emergency Management Centre, delivered the opening address stating that this strategic project represents a significant step toward building an integrated national system for monitoring, analysing, and as-



sessing health risks, and it aligns directly with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040, which positions health as a fundamental pillar for human well-being and sustainable development.

Dr Busafi emphasised that the establishment of the National Health Risk Register is not merely a healthcare initiative, but a cross-sectoral national project that includes civil, military, security, research, and community institutions. He concluded that risks do not recognise administrative boundaries or specific sectors; therefore, the response must be collective, integrated,

and based on the highest standards of coordination and collaboration.

The meeting aimed to review national health-related risks, strengthen cooperation among sector representatives, assess risk mitigation procedures, and explore mechanisms and methods for risk management in line with international standards.

The agenda included several presentations on risk management, environmental risks, zoonotic and plant-borne infectious diseases, human infectious diseases, and cybersecurity threats.

UTAS holds second council meeting

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) held its second council meeting for the academic year 2024-2025, chaired by H E Prof Mahad bin Said Baawain, Minister of Labour and chairman of the Council.

The meeting was attended by Dr Saeed bin Hamad al Rubaie, vice chairman of the council and chancellor of the University, along with a number of distinguished undersecretaries, representatives from the private sector, and academic members. The meeting took place April 17 at the university's headquarters in the ministries district in Al Khuwayr, a press release said.

The session commenced with a review of the follow-up report on the implementation of the decisions from the first council meeting held in January 2025. The report outlined actions taken on previous resolutions, which included policies on security, risk management, student travel ticket grants, standardising performance evaluation criteria for faculty study leave applications, and the formation of the audit and review committee, in addition to other topics.



In alignment with the university's commitment to strengthening ties with the local community and industrial sector, the council approved the 'Community and Industry Engagement Policy'. This policy aims to foster collaborative partnerships, enhance research cooperation,

offer consultancy services, facilitate field visits, and provide training and development opportunities for students and staff - contributing to capacity building and skill development in line with labor market needs.

The council also ratified the 'Student Orientation Program

Policy', designed to support the smooth transition of new students into university life by creating a supportive and enriching academic and social environment. The policy aims to reinforce students' sense of academic belonging and develop their professional and practical

skills to enhance their readiness for various work environments.

Additionally, the Council endorsed the Asset and Infrastructure Management Policy to ensure efficient and sustainable use of university assets. It also approved the Document Management Policy.



Research Day

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Ibra, celebrated its annual Research Day on April 15. This event aligns with the celebration of higher education institutions, highlighting research outputs and successes.

The occasion showcased remarkable research achievements and innovations from all departments, along with a presentation titled 'MoHERI's Research Funding and Capacity Building Programmes' by

Dr Salah al Zadjali, director general of Research Programmes and Capacity Building at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation (MoHERI).

The Research Day concluded with an awards ceremony, where the winners of the Best Research Poster competition were announced, along with distinguished researchers across various fields and the external evaluators.



Sohar International supports Gulf Traffic Week 2025 in Oman

Reinforcing its commitment to community engagement and road safety, Sohar International was honoured for its participation as the Golden Sponsor of Gulf Traffic Week 2025.

This prominent regional initiative, organised in collaboration with the Royal Oman Police (ROP), was held under the theme 'No Phone While Driving'. The campaign aimed to raise public awareness about the dangers of distracted driving and to encourage responsible road behaviour, a press release said.

The official opening ceremony took place at Mall of Oman, under the patronage of Issa Hamed al Azri, secretary general of the Supreme Judiciary Council. The event was attended by several dignitaries, including Khalil Salim al Hedaifi, chief Gov-

ernment and Private Banking officer at Sohar International. The ceremony marked the formal launch of the nationwide awareness drive and underscored the collective commitment to promoting road safety across the sultanate.

Hedaifi said, "At Sohar International, we view our participation in the Gulf Traffic Week not merely as a corporate responsibility, but as a national duty. Partnering with esteemed institutions such as the Royal Oman Police allows us to contribute meaningfully to raising public awareness around critical safety issues. Through our sponsorship, we aim to make a tangible impact in reducing such risks, protecting lives, and empowering a more informed and safety-conscious community."

Bestune B70 unveils Comfort Ramadan offer

Gulf Great Sands, the official distributor of Bestune in Oman, has unveiled an exceptional Ramadan promotion on the Bestune B70 Comfort.

Available for a limited time at a special cash price of just RO7150, this offer brings together affordability, premium features, and comprehensive ownership benefits, a press release said.

Buyers of the Bestune B70 Comfort will receive a package of value-added benefits that include free insurance, free first year registration, free window tinting, and complimentary periodic maintenance for three years or 55,000km. In addition, each model is backed by a manufacturer's warranty of six years or 250,000km, giving cus-



tomers confidence in the durability and support behind their investment. This limited time offer is valid until April 20 and is the perfect opportunity to step

into a refined sedan at a price that reflects both practicality and generosity.

The Bestune B70 Comfort is a thoughtfully crafted sedan that

merges elegant design with dynamic performance. Its sleek profile is enhanced by LED headlights and daytime running lights, and 18-inch alloy wheels,

while a panoramic sunroof brings an open, airy feel to the cabin. Inside, the atmosphere is equally refined, offering leather seats, a 6-way power-adjustable driver's seat, and a multifunction leather-wrapped steering wheel. Comfort is further elevated by dual-zone automatic climate control, allowing personalised temperature settings for driver and passenger alike.

Safety is a core focus in the Comfort variant, with a suite of protective technologies including ABS, EBD, Brake Assist, Electronic Stability Control, and an Electronic Parking Brake with Auto Hold. It is also equipped with front and side airbags, as well as a rear-view camera, providing peace of mind in every journey.

Liva Insurance backs Road Safety initiative

Liva Insurance demonstrated its strong commitment to community and social responsibility by joining the Royal Air Force of Oman's (RAFO) Traffic Day event, held at Ghala Air Force Base on April 14.

The event was held under the patronage of Senior Air Staff Officer Zahran bin Nasser Ambusaidi, and served as a key highlight of the wider Gulf Traffic Week observed throughout the region from April 13 to 17, a press release said.

This year's Traffic Day went

beyond the traditional conversations around road safety, weaving together education,



empowerment, and community engagement. By engaging

different government and privet sector entities such as Oman Human Rights Organization, Ministry of Education, Mwasalat, Oman Oil Marketing Company, Directorate-General for Combating Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and others, this event created a wholesome experience, providing innovative and promising ideas for a safer future.

Liva Insurance supported the event, focusing on creating awareness for a safer future.



Al Mouj Muscat partners with Mubashir advertising

Al Mouj Muscat, Oman's premier lifestyle destination, has partnered with Mubashir, a leading specialist in high-impact advertising solutions, to offer targeted advertising opportunities to Oman's business community.

This collaboration aims to enhance brand visibility among Al Mouj Muscat's affluent and diverse audience, a press release said.

A vibrant hub of culture and commerce, Al Mouj Muscat is home to over 8,000 residents representing 85 nationalities and welcomes more than 4 million visitors annually. With over 80 retail and dining outlets set against a backdrop of stunning waterfront views and dynamic public spaces, brands have the

opportunity to engage consumers in a setting designed for premium experiences and meaningful interactions.

Leveraging Mubashir's expertise in seamlessly blending digital and physical advertising, businesses will benefit from strategically placed, high-quality advertisements across Al Mouj Walk, Al Mouj Marina, and other key high-footfall locations. Customised campaigns will further optimise advertiser reach and enhance meaningful brand interactions, ensuring maximum recall and audience engagement.

This partnership represents a significant step forward for businesses aiming to engage with Al Mouj Muscat's vibrant community.

Bait Al Zubair celebrates Shabab Oman Ship

Under the patronage of HE Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, Bait Al Zubair hosted a special event on Tuesday celebrating the inclusion of the Shabab Oman sail training programme in UNESCO's Register of Good Safeguarding Practices for Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The event featured a cultural symposium with distinguished speakers, including Khatima al Rashdiya, head of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Department at the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science; Nasser al Sawafi, assistant head of the Literary Forum at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and



Youth, and Brigadier (Navy) Jasem al Balushi, a press release said.

The panelists discussed several key themes, including the notable achievements of the

Shabab Oman ship, its upcoming journeys, and its role in representing the Sultanate on the international stage. The symposium also addressed the importance of intangible cultural



heritage as an effective tool for fostering cultural dialogue between nations, highlighting the pivotal role Shabab Oman plays in carrying Oman's heritage across the globe.

Ecuador: ‘Maximum alert’ after ‘assassination plot’ against Noboa

Quito, Ecuador - Ecuador’s government on Saturday placed the country on ‘maximum alert’ following an intelligence report of an alleged plot to assassinate President-elect Daniel Noboa.

“We strongly condemn and reject any attempt to harm the life of the President of the Republic, State authorities, and public officials,” the Ministry of Government said in an official statement released on X.

“The State is on maximum alert,” it added.

The intelligence reports claim that assassins were entering Ecuador from Mexico and other countries to carry out ‘terrorist attacks’ and ‘street unrest through violent demonstrations’.

The statement blamed ‘criminal organisations, in collusion with political sectors defeated at the ballot box’, though no names were provided. “These actions are not only aimed at destabilising the Government, but also at undermining democracy, Ecuador’s sovereignty, peace, and the rule of law,” it said.

The Armed Forces, National Police, and intelligence agencies are working in coordination to detect and ‘neutralise’ any threats, according to the ministry. “We will respond with full force - our resolve will be



tested. Let it not be forgotten: we prevail, and we will continue to prevail.”

No specific individuals or groups were named in the statement, and officials have not yet disclosed further operational details.

The announcement came amid rising political tensions in the country.

Noboa defeated Luisa Gonzalez in the April 13 runoff, but Gonzalez has accused him of ‘grotesque electoral fraud’. Ecuador’s electoral council and international observers have dismissed her claims.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, who supports Gonzalez, has not recognised Noboa’s win.

After the report on the alleged plot against Noboa surfaced, Mexico’s Foreign Ministry rejected any suggestion of involvement: “Our country is and always will be guided by the principle of non-intervention.”

Colombia has also not officially recognised the result. Noboa, set to be sworn in on May 24, faces the challenge of stabilising a country plagued by cartel violence, with one killing per hour reported earlier this year.

Anadolu Agency

Russia violated Easter ceasefire: Kyiv

Zelensky claimed Russian forces carried out attacks, citing a total of 387 shelling incidents, 19 assaults

Kyiv, Ukraine - Following President Vladimir Putin’s announcement of a 30-hour ceasefire in observance of Easter, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has claimed that Russian forces carried out attacks, citing a total of 387 shelling incidents and 19 assaults.

Zelensky further said that despite Russia’s declared truce, Ukrainian frontline units recorded 59 cases of shelling and 5 assaults, along with multiple combat engagements across the Donetsk, Starobinsk, and Zaporizhzhia sectors.

In a post on X on Sunday (local time), Zelensky wrote: “A report by Commander-in-Chief Syrskyi on the frontline as of 6am. Across various frontline directions, there have already been 59 cases of Russian shelling and 5 assaults by Russian units. In the sector of the Starobinsk Operational Tactical Group, one combat engagement was documented. In the Donetsk OTG sector, there were three combat engagements - in the Pokrovsk and Novopavlivka directions, and one combat engagement took place near Stepove in the Zaporizhzhia direction. The enemy carried out dozens of FPV drone strikes.”

“In the Kursk region, Russian forces conducted artillery strikes



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia must fully comply with the conditions of the ceasefire

and used drones. Everywhere, our warriors are responding as the enemy deserves, based on the specific combat situation. Ukraine will continue to act symmetrically. Between 6pm yesterday and midnight today, there were 387 instances of shelling and 19 assaults by Russian forces. Drones were used by

Russians 290 times,” he added.

The Ukrainian President further emphasised that while Russia seeks to create the impression of a ceasefire, Ukraine will continue to respond accordingly.

“Overall, as of Easter morning, we can state that the Russian army is attempting to create the

general impression of a ceasefire, while in some areas still continuing isolated attempts to advance and inflict losses on Ukraine. Russia must fully comply with the conditions of the ceasefire. Ukraine’s proposal to implement and extend the ceasefire for 30 days after midnight tonight remains on the table. We will act in

We can state that the Russian army is attempting to create the general impression of a ceasefire, while in some areas still continuing isolated attempts to inflict losses on Ukraine

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

accordance with the actual situation on the ground,” Zelensky added.

Zelensky on Saturday (local time) alleged that the Russian offensive has not ‘subsided’ despite Moscow declaring a ceasefire on the occasion of Easter. In a post on X, Zelensky said that Russian assault operations are ongoing on several frontline sectors and there is no ‘trust’ in Moscow’s words.

“As of now, according to the Commander-in-Chief reports, Russian assault operations continue on several frontline sectors, and Russian artillery fire has not subsided. Therefore, there is no

trust in words coming from Moscow. We know all too well how Moscow manipulates, and we are prepared for anything,” Zelensky wrote on X.

Zelensky also stated that Russia has rejected the proposal for a full and unconditional 30-day ceasefire, noting that the 30-hour Easter ceasefire is insufficient for building ‘genuine confidence’.

In a video shared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Russia on X, President Putin said: “The Russian Side announces an Easter ceasefire from 6pm today to 12am Monday. This is done for humanitarian reasons. I hereby order all military operations ceased for this period.”

This is the second ceasefire to be announced since the conflict began in 2022. A previous attempt at a ceasefire during Orthodox Christmas in January 2023 failed after both sides were unable to agree on a proposal.

ANI



Issues related to land use disputes are on the rise according to authorities

Nigeria: Death toll rises sharply in Benue attacks

Benue, Nigeria - The death toll in attacks in Benue state in central Nigeria has risen to 56.

Benue state Governor Hyacinth Alia cited the figure on Saturday while visiting two villages that were attacked by gunmen on Thursday night 17 April, 2025, into Friday. Police had earlier said 17 people were killed.

The governor said there was the possibility of the figure increasing because the search was still ongoing. This is the latest flare-up of intercommunal violence to hit central Nigeria, in recent weeks.

In a separate incident earlier in

the week, 11 people were killed by armed attackers in the Otukpo area of Benue.

In nearby north central Plateau state, two attacks in under two weeks left more than 100 people dead. Homes were razed and looted, according to Amnesty International, and hundreds of people were displaced.

Governor Alia blamed the attacks in Benue State’s Ukum and Logo local government areas on ‘suspected herdsmen’.

Clashes between the nomadic cattle herders and settled farmers over land use have become increasingly common in central

Nigeria.

The attacks often take on a religious dimension; farmers are often Christian and the herders mostly Muslim Fulani.

Overgrazing, drought, and desertification, which are worsened by climate change, have made large areas of Nigeria’s north unproductive. This drives the herders to seek grazing lands in the country’s more fertile south.

The resulting land disputes often descend into deadly violence, especially in rural areas where law enforcement is largely absent.

DW

Turkish crops face ‘devastating’ damage due to frost considered worst in decades

Ankara, Turkey - In the northern Turkish Black Sea village of Gulyali, Kemal Duran walks through his hazelnut orchard with a look of deep concern etched on his face. Normally teeming with lush foliage in spring, the orchard now remains almost barren and leafless due to a severe frost - considered the worst in decades by experts.

“Much of the production has disappeared,” he told Xinhua, noting that many local farmers in this region are facing a comparable plight.

“We are all assessing what’s left for this year, but it doesn’t look promising at all,” the farmer lamented, describing the economic losses as ‘very significant’.

Across Turkey, farmers like Duran are grappling with the aftermath of the unseasonably brutal frost that swept across half of the country, from the grape-growing hills of Manisa in the west to the apricot groves of Malatya in the east, striking at the heart of Turkey’s agricultural backbone.

Temperatures plunged to below minus 15 degrees Celsius in some areas, freezing fruit blossoms, killing young vines,



An apricot tree affected by frost at an orchard in Malatya, Turkey (Xinhua)

and halting the growing season before it even began.

Hazelnuts are among Turkey’s most important export commodities, generating more than US\$2bn a year.

The country supplies most of the world’s hazelnut demand. Even before the frost, growers were bracing for a reduced yield. Now, many are warning that the damage could be ‘devastating’.

“There’s no doubt prices will rise. There’s just no supply anymore,” Duran said.

More than 800km to the southeast, Suleyman Arslan is dealing with the same heart-

suggest that the losses inflicted by the forest could exceed 500mn dollars for the apricot sector alone.

“Turkey’s agriculture faces considerable losses due to the frost, and this is unprecedented,” this expert told Xinhua.

He explained that this ‘weather disaster’ impacts not only the fruit sector but also a wide range of other crops, including vegetables, wheat, and canola.

Agriculture remains a pillar of Turkey’s economy, with exports from the sector surpassing US\$36bn last year, according to figures from the Turkish Exporters’ Assembly.

Turkish Agriculture and Forestry Minister Ibrahim Yumakli described the frost on his X account as one of the most severe agricultural frosts in Turkey’s history.

The head of the Turkish Farmers’ Association, Huseyin Demirtas, said in a statement on Friday that ‘there is at least 50 per cent of losses in all regions’ of Turkey, and in some provinces, ‘the loss of produce is nearing 80 per cent’.

Anadolu Agency

Pope Francis sits out Easter Mass, but greets devotees

Vatican City - Pope Francis made a brief appearance at St Peter's Square to mark Easter Sunday, although the Easter Mass was delivered by a high-ranking cardinal as the pontiff recovers from double pneumonia.

Minutes after Cardinal Angelo Comastri presided over the service in front of tens of thousands of Catholic Church followers, Francis appeared on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica to bless the crowd and wish them 'Happy Easter', which drew loud cheers and applause.

Pope's Easter message
The pope's traditional 'Urbi et Orbi' ('To the City and the World') blessing was delivered by a Vatican archbishop as Francis sat in his wheelchair.

Francis described a 'growing climate of antisemitism around the world' and also condemned the situation in Gaza and reiterated his call for a ceasefire.

"I think of the people of Gaza, and its Christian community in particular, where the terrible conflict continues to cause death and destruction and to create a dramatic and deplorable humanitarian situation," read the pope's traditional Easter address.

The pope also called for freedom of religion and respect for views of others, saying that peace was not possible without them. "There can be no peace without freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of expression and respect for the views of others," the address read.

After the blessing, Francis was



Pope Francis speaks from a balcony, at St Peter's Square, in the Vatican, on Sunday

The 88-year-old pope delegated the reading of the Easter Mass to a cardinal. Francis is recovering from double pneumonia, which left him fighting for his life in the hospital for a month

driven through the gathered crowd, circling St Peter's Square, in the open-top popemobile.

The blessing and earlier Mass, which commemorates the Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, was attended by some 300 cardinals, bishops and priests.

How is the pope's health?
The 88-year-old left Rome's Gemelli Hospital four weeks ago after spending more than a month in the hospital.

However, doctors say he still

needs more time to recover following his life-threatening illness.

The pope's voice remains weak, despite improvements in his breathing. He has appeared in public twice over the last week without the nasal cannula that delivered oxygen.

Francis, who is the leader of the world's more than 1.4bn Catholics, missed the majority of Holy Week events for the first time since his election in 2013.

They include Friday's Stations of the Cross at the Colosseum and Saturday's Easter vigil at Saint Peter's Basilica, where he

delegated his duties to cardinals.

He also missed the traditional foot-washing ritual on Thursday, which is meant to imitate Jesus Christ washing his disciples' feet.

Francis did, however, make a brief appearance at St Peter's on Saturday to greet visitors.

A million pilgrims in Rome
This year, the Easter festival holds even more significance because the Catholic Church has declared 2025 a Jubilee or holy year.

During such a year, pilgrims

are encouraged to travel to Rome, and travel through the doors of the four major basilicas - St Peter's, St John Lateran, St Paul Outside the Walls and St Mary Major.

This weekend alone, an estimated one million visitors are in the city, including believers from all over the world.

Among them is US Vice President JD Vance. He converted to the Catholic faith in 2019 and plans to attend Easter Mass with his family.

Vance briefly met with Francis on Sunday at the Domus Santa Marta to exchange Easter greetings, the Vatican said. The vice president held talks on Saturday with the Vatican's secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

DW



N Korea slams US decision to ease arms export regulations

Istanbul, Turkey - North Korea on Sunday slammed US President Donald Trump's recent decision to relax domestic arms export regulations, claiming that it was an effort to 'expand wars', according to the state-run news agency.

On April 9, Trump issued an executive that called for a review of regulations on US military equipment exports in an effort to make it easier to sell defence products abroad.

"For the United States, arms sale is not only merely a money-making space to meet monetary desire but also a major means of supporting the realisation of aggressive foreign policy, the hegemony-seeking one," the Korean Central News Agency said.

Pyongyang pointed to the ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip, accusing the US of providing military equipment to its allies since the start of those conflicts.

According to the news agency, US arms sales have significantly increased in recent years, with the majority of exported weapons ending up in the

Trump had issued an executive order that called for a review of regulations on US military equipment exports in an effort to make it easier to sell defence products abroad

hands of 'war maniacs' in Europe and the Middle East.

"The US measure to ease arms export regulations precisely means the one to expand wars," it said.

Anadolu Agency

Munich's famous surfing spot closed

Munich, Germany - Munich's fire department has closed the Eisbachwelle, a famous wave in the city centre attracts local and international surfers and crowds of onlookers.

In a post on X, the fire department said that Saturday's closure was necessary to carry out further investigations.

"A danger to surfers cannot be ruled out," it said. "!!Do not enter !!"

The area has been cordoned off and marked with signs. It is not known how long the wave will be closed.

Surfer in critical condition
The closure comes after the dramatic rescue of a surfer late on Wednesday evening.

The surfer fell from her board and her leash, which attaches a



Surfing is currently banned on Munich's Eisbach river and it's not clear how long for

surfboard to a surfer's leg, apparently became hooked on the bottom of the Eisbach river.

Bystanders were unable to free her because of the strong current.

After 30 minutes in the river, she was rescued by fire officials and reanimated on the river bank.

She was taken to hospital in a critical condition, according to a fire department press release.

Popular tourist attraction
The Eisbachwelle is a tourist hotspot, attracting surfers and crowds from around the world in

all weather, even in winter.

The artificial wave of around 0.5 metres (1.6 feet) is generated where the Eisbach hits a concrete step as it emerges from underground. The wave takes skill to surf because of the river's strong current and shallow water.

DW

3 people killed, 2 wounded in US airstrikes on Sanaa: Houthis

Istanbul, Turkey - The Houthi group announced that three victims were killed and two wounded in US airstrikes on Saturday that targeted the province of Sanaa in central Yemen.

"The American aggression launched a strike on the Al-Nahda neighbourhood in the Al-Thawra District in central Sanaa, resulting in the martyrdom of two people," said the Houthi-affiliated 26 September news site.

Houthi-run Al-Masirah TV reported that 'one person was killed and another injured due to the American aggression on Bani Matar District' in Sanaa province.

It added that 'the American

aggression targeted the Bani Hashish District with three airstrikes, and the Al-Hosn District with two strikes, both in Sanaa Province'.

It also reported that 'the aggression also targeted the Dhurwan area in Hamdan District, Sana'a Province'.

The channel noted that 'the American aggression targeted the Sirwah District in Ma'rib Province with one airstrike'.

Earlier on Saturday, Al-Masirah reported 13 US airstrikes on the port and airport in Al Hudaydah, without providing details. There have been no statement from the US.

US President Donald Trump ordered in mid-March 'decisive

and powerful military action' against the Houthi group and later threatened to 'completely annihilate them'.

The Houthis have targeted ships passing through the Red and Arabian seas, the Bab al-Mandab Strait, and the Gulf of Aden since November 2023 in solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, where more than 51,000 victims have been killed in a brutal Israeli assault.

The group halted attacks when a ceasefire in Gaza was declared in January between Israel and Hamas, but resumed the assaults after Israel renewed airstrikes on the enclave last month.

Anadolu Agency

Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu 'abandoned hostages for political survival'

Jerusalem/Ankara - The father of an Israeli soldier held in Gaza accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday of abandoning the hostages in favour of prolonging the war for his political interests.

"We listened to Netanyahu's words from the Hostages Square (in Tel Aviv), and we are deeply disappointed," Hagai Angrest, father of soldier Matan, told Maariv daily. "Across the world, everyone is saying that a ceasefire and the return of the hostages should be the top priority. Yet we see a prime minister who is abandoning the soldiers and sending more into battle.

"We were told this war would not end without them. But now it seems Netanyahu is choosing his political survival over the lives of those in captivity," he said. "The

entire country supports bringing the hostages back."

On Saturday night, Netanyahu claimed in a televised speech that there is 'no choice' but to continue the war on Gaza, asserting that a ceasefire deal with Hamas would 'undermine the gains of the war'. He alleged that Hamas rejected a proposal that included the release of half the living Israeli captives and many of the dead, in exchange for ending the war, a condition Netanyahu labelled 'unacceptable'.

On Thursday, Hamas leader in Gaza Khalil Al-Hayya stressed that his group is willing to engage in comprehensive negotiations that would secure the release of all Israeli hostages in exchange for a full ceasefire, Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, reconstruction efforts, and the lifting of the siege.



A spokesman for the Israeli prime minister said on Saturday that retrieving all the Israeli captives in one deal is 'impossible'.

Israeli estimates suggest that 59 captives remain in Gaza, with

24 believed to be alive. In contrast, over 9,500 Palestinians remain imprisoned in Israel under harsh conditions, including reports of torture, starvation, and medical neglect, according to

both Palestinian and Israeli rights organisations.

Gaza death toll rises to 51,201
Meanwhile, Israeli airstrikes on

the Gaza Strip killed at least 44 more Palestinians in the last 24 hours, bringing the death toll from Israel's genocidal war since October 2023 to 51,201, the Health Ministry said on Sunday.

A ministry statement said that 145 more injured people were transferred to hospitals, taking the number of injuries to 116,869 in the Israeli onslaught.

The Israeli army launched a surprise aerial campaign on the Gaza Strip on March 18, killing 1,827 people and injuring 4,828 others despite a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement that took hold in January.

Palestine blasts assaults on Christians
Palestine condemned on Sunday Israeli police assaults on Christians during the Holy Saturday

celebrations as 'racist' and 'a blatant violation of the freedom of worship and access to holy sites'.

On Saturday, Israeli police clashed with Palestinian Christians during the Holy Saturday observances at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem.

"We decry the arbitrary actions, assaults, and restrictions imposed by Israeli soldiers and illegal settlers throughout the Easter holiday on Christians, preventing their participation in this global human celebration," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The ministry also denounced footage showing Israeli soldiers assaulting visitors to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Anadolu Agency



US Vice President J D Vance

US Vice President Vance to meet Indian PM Modi

New Delhi, India - The United States Vice President JD Vance will arrive in New Delhi on Monday, for an official visit to India scheduled till April 24.

The Ministry of External Affairs said that he will be received at the Air Force Station, Palam, at 10am. A formal meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled at 6:30pm, the same day at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg.

On Tuesday, Vance will travel to Jaipur, while on Wednesday, he will visit Agra.

Concluding his visit, the US vice president will depart from India on Thursday, April 24, at 6:40am.

On the upcoming visit of Vance, Randhir Jaiswal, the official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, said that India has a Comprehensive Strategic Global Partnership with the US.

"So, when you have that level of partnership with any country, obviously you will discuss all relevant issues," Jaiswal said during his weekly media briefing on Thursday.

ANI

Nationwide rallies in US oppose Trump administration policies

The protests focused on issues from immigration to civil liberties and federal job cuts

Washington, D.C., US - Demonstrators gathered on Saturday in cities across the US in a coordinated wave against President Donald Trump's policies, according to the New York Times.

The protests focused on issues from immigration to civil liberties and federal job cuts.

More than 700 demonstrations were planned, according to the advocacy group 50501, which organised the rallies.

The demonstrations came two weeks after large-scale protests denounced the Trump administration's agenda, and coincided with growing public concern about what activists said are authoritarian tendencies in US leadership.

While many demonstrations resembled traditional rallies, others were organised as community events, including food drives, aimed at fostering solidarity.

In Washington, D.C., hundreds of demonstrators assembled north of the White House to demand justice for Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a Maryland resident who was wrongfully deported to El Salvador. Protesters demanded the federal government return him to the US.

Aaron Burk, whose partner recently left her job at the Energy Department under a federal buy-out offer, told the newspaper that he feared that the deportation of undocumented immigrants without due process could pave the way for broader civil liberties violations, including targeting Americans.

"We are losing our country," said Sara Harvey, who was at the



Rallies took place in cities, including Washington, Los Angeles and Jacksonville, Florida

Meanwhile, the Trump administration urged the US Supreme Court on Saturday to lift its emergency order that blocked deportations under the Alien Enemies Act

demonstration after protesting federal job cuts and participating in nationwide rallies April 5. "I do it for my grandchildren," she told the newspaper. Rallies took place in cities, including Washington,

Los Angeles and Jacksonville, Florida, the report said.

Deportation freeze

Meanwhile, the Trump administration urged the US Supreme

Court on Saturday to lift its emergency order that blocked deportations under the Alien Enemies Act. The order came following an urgent appeal by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

The Hill, a US daily, reported that in a court filing, Solicitor General D John Sauer asked the justices to dissolve the stay and let lower courts resolve the issue, accusing ACLU lawyers of 'improperly skipping over the lower courts' and calling their petition

'fatally premature'.

Sauer also claimed the government provided migrants 'adequate time to file' legal challenges and had agreed not to deport anyone with pending claims. In its emergency request filed with the Supreme Court, the ACLU said that detained Venezuelan migrants could face life sentences in a Salvadoran mega-prison without judicial review.

The Supreme Court directed the government 'not to remove

any member of the putative class of detainees' until further notice.

Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito dissented.

The case centres on migrants detained in the Northern District of Texas, the only region covered by the current order. Separate federal courts have also temporarily blocked deportations in the Southern District of New York, District of Colorado, and Southern District of Texas.

Anadolu Agency

Turkish FM in Algeria for strategic talks

Ankara, Turkey - Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan is on a visit to Algeria for strategic talks till Monday, according to diplomatic sources.

During his two-day visit, Fidan will co-chair the third meeting of the Turkey-Algeria Joint Planning Group (JPG) with Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf, according to information obtained from Turkish Foreign Ministry sources.

Fidan, who is expected to be received by Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, is also expected to inaugurate the Turkish Consulate General in Oran during his visit.

In his meetings, Fidan is expected to review the preparations for the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council meeting, which will be held during Tebboune's planned visit to Turkey.



Turkish FM Hakan Fidan

The Turkish foreign minister is also expected to address the negotiation processes of agreements aimed at strengthening the legal framework between the two countries.

Fidan is also expected to emphasise the need to make efficient use of opportunities in economic cooperation to achieve

the targeted trade volume of US\$10bn between Turkey and Algeria.

He is also expected to underline the importance Turkey attaches on enhancing existing energy cooperation with Algeria for its energy security.

He will discuss potential projects and partnerships in the defence industry based on mutual benefit, and exchange views on regional and global issues, particularly the Sahel, Libya, Syria, and Gaza.

Bilateral relations

Most recently, Fidan held a bilateral meeting with his Algerian counterpart on February 21 on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Johannesburg.

Attaf also attended the 4th Antalya Diplomacy Forum held

on April 11-13.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Algeria on February 26-28, 2018, and January 26-27, 2020, giving fresh momentum to bilateral relations.

During the 2020 visit, it was decided to establish the High-Level Cooperation Council (HLCC) between the two countries. The first HLCC meeting was held on May 16, 2022, during Tebboune's visit to Turkey.

Accompanied by nine ministers, Tebboune signed 15 agreements and a Joint Declaration at the meeting.

The joint planning group, which serves as the monitoring mechanism of the HLCC, was launched with its first meeting held in Algiers on December 10, 2022, co-chaired by the foreign ministers.

Anadolu Agency



A view of damaged structures and collapsed terrain following a landslide, in Ramban, India on Sunday (ANI)

Landslide in India's J&K traps vehicles, people

Ramban, India - Several vehicles and locals were feared trapped under debris after a landslide hit the Shan Palace area in Ward No 2 of Ramban district, Jammu and Kashmir, following heavy rains.

Local police and hotel staff rushed to the spot and rescued those who were trapped. Visuals from the area showed several vehicles completely buried under mud, stones, and debris. The entrances of shops and a restaurant were also damaged.

Locals were seen standing on rooftops to assess the damage.

Official confirmation is still awaited on the number of people trapped or any possible deaths.

Earlier in the day, hailstorms and landslides caused severe damage in Udhampur. Union Minister and area MP Jitendra Singh said there were three casualties and some families suffered property loss.

As National Highway (NH)

Local police and hotel staff rushed to the spot and rescued those who were trapped. Confirmation is still awaited on the number of people trapped or possible deaths

44 remains blocked in the Ramban area, Singh said he is in contact with the Deputy Commissioner and relief is being provided to those affected.

"There was a heavy hailstorm, multiple landslides and fast winds throughout the night in the Ramban region, including the areas surrounding the Ramban

town. The National Highway stands blocked, and unfortunately, there have been three casualties and loss of property for a couple of families. I am in constant touch with Deputy Commissioner Mr Baseer-ul-Haq Chaudhary," Singh posted on X.

The Union Minister said that district officials have been asked to ensure proper relief and assistance. He also urged people not to panic amid the ongoing natural disaster.

Heavy rainfall in Udhampur on Saturday night led to more traffic blockages on NH-44 in the Ramban area.

In Jammu, strong winds caused part of the boundary wall of the Civil Secretariat to collapse, bringing down the barbed wire. Several parked vehicles were damaged. A JCB machine was deployed to clear the debris and reopen access to the area.

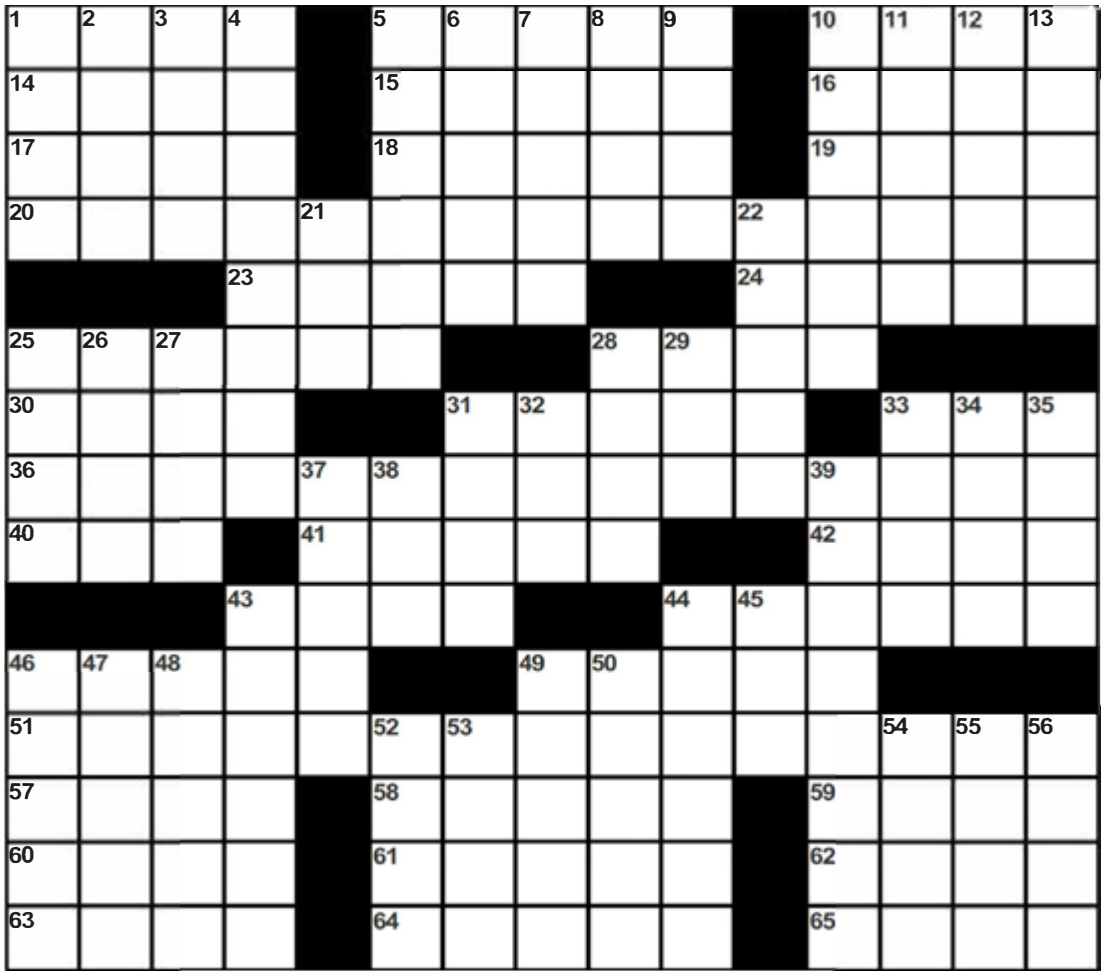
ANI

EASTER PRAYERS



Nuns offer prayers on the occasion of Easter, at St Francis Assisi Cathedral Church in Bhopal, India, on Sunday (ANI)

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Campus military org.
 - 5) City known for romance
 - 10) Blood vessel obstruction
 - 14) Geometry calculation
 - 15) Decrease in intensity
 - 16) Puerto_
 - 17) Dispatched
 - 18) Moscow monetary unit
 - 19) Line on a list
 - 20) Three things a chef might bake
 - 23) West Point student
 - 24) Ecstasy opposite
 - 25) Ants, collectively
 - 28) Fill a belly
 - 30) Egg, to a biologist
 - 31) Ruin
 - 33) Gabor of old Hollywood
 - 36) Three things a chef might roast
 - 40) Snowy place that provides quite a view
 - 41) Legendary actress Sophia
 - 42) Pond organism
 - 43) Basketball highlight
 - 44) Tuition collector

- 46) Its business is beauty
 - 49) Favored by God (Var.)
 - 51) Three things a chef might fry
 - 57) Russo of "Outbreak"
 - 58) Fertilizer derived from sea birds
 - 59) Wield the scepter
 - 60) Sermon sign-off
 - 61) Intense hatred
 - 62) One of the Great Lakes
 - 63) Attention-getter, in a theater
 - 64) Have a feeling about
 - 65) Designates, as a knight
- DOWN**
- 1) Sculptor's tool
 - 2) Twistable cookie
 - 3) Pitched shelter
 - 4) Ancient burial place
 - 5) Travesty or spoof
 - 6) Mistreatment
 - 7) Morocco's capital
 - 8) "... do you good!"
 - 9) "So it would..."
 - 10) Wince
 - 11) Collectible art print, briefly
 - 12) Crossing medium
 - 13) Famous rock opera
 - 21) It may be picked up at the beach

- 22) Solemn promises
- 25) Soda selection
- 26) Shape of Obama's office
- 27) Oatmeal glob
- 28) Hit like a ton of bricks
- 29) Section of a play
- 31) Boxer's comeback?
- 32) Bill often passed
- 33) Sinuous coral reef dwellers
- 34) Chevy car of yore
- 35) Way off yonder
- 37) Hollow twanging sound
- 38) Longest division of geologic time
- 39) Traded
- 43) Learned teacher
- 44) Tum into
- 45) Get mileage out of
- 46) Type of heap or metal
- 47) Throaty cries for attention
- 48) Airport inconveniences
- 49) Egghead
- 50) "Peanuts" character
- 52) Psychiatric components
- 53) Like all newborns
- 54) Wise Hindu teacher
- 55) Silver-tongued
- 56) Witnesses

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

For now, the top of your priority list belongs to the ones you love, but you'd never admit to it! They know how you feel, though, and that's really all that counts. If a situation presents itself that demands that you either take the side of the ones you care for most or be totally objective, you have no choice but to side with your people. They're pleased, grateful, and ready for more.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You've never been short on charm, and you know exactly how to use that gift of to the utmost. Today, when a loved one pops up and quietly asks you to help them out in some new way, you do it without uttering a word, and you do it so well they should win before the other side even knows they're sparring. Hope that they appreciate you, because with the depth of devotion you give to others, you really deserve it.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

When someone close needs a charismatic, well-spoken ally, they immediately think of you, as well they should! Your gift of gab is shining brightly right now, so it's likely you end up standing next to a friend, arms crossed, befuddling their antagonists by easily expressing what they'd be struggling to say. As usual, you do a fine job of it, but be careful when it's all over. Gloating isn't like you.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You've been dealing with an awful lot lately, especially when it comes to secrets and those who keep them. You're done trying to keep anything nonessential under wraps at this point. In fact, you're ready to blow the lid off of anything that's asked of you. Before you do, though, be sure you're not going to harm yourself or anyone close to you. Otherwise, have at it, because it's time to clear the air.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

For most of us, anything that even comes close to balancing the checkbook or getting our finances in order is so stressful or boring that we'd prefer having neck surgery. When your bills need to be done, however, not only do you not whine, but you perk right up and get into it, and you usually get it done in record time. Today, that quality is on display for the whole world to see, and there may be some envy.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You're famous for your work ethic, so if you're under extra pressure right now to get a big job done quickly, don't worry. Nobody else is! The tricky part might be getting others to work with you, or at least it would be tricky for anyone else. For you, it's all in a day's work with energy like this. The best part is that the loyalty you inspire means that your colleagues will love and respect you even more when it's all over.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You've recovered from an old or recent trauma, but it wasn't easy, and you don't want to go through anything like it ever again. Fortunately, events like those that took place are quite rare in your world, as are what you go through today, for entirely different reasons. There's a very interesting person on the horizon, someone you may actually find fascinating enough to think about getting to know better.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You may be trying not to let your feelings show at the moment, but there's only one way for you to pull it off: Try putting some serious distance between you and whoever you want to avoid oversharing with. Otherwise, there's just no way you can hide them long enough for it to matter. You've never been good at disguising your emotions, and right about now one sympathetic glance from someone who cares is all it takes to get you going.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

If you have any doubts about a loved one right now, don't let anyone talk you into letting those doubts slide. You have remarkably good instincts, especially when it comes to those closest to you. So if your gut is alerting you to something amiss, trust it and run with the info. The best thing to do is likely to stay put for the time being, anyway. Sit tight and do some investigating.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Your talent for making nice with everyone is legendary. You can keep the peace even when you're not sure whose side you're on. That trait comes in handy today, since at least two people you care for are playing tug-of-war and need someone to mediate. You're tired of the job, and you've probably worked it more times than you care to count. Still, you recognize the value of neutrality, and when it falls on you, you can play the part to the very best of your abilities.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You're famous for your love of discovering new (and old) secrets in most, if not all, circumstances. At the moment, your intensifying investigation is even more appealing to you, though the nature and seriousness of the issue don't matter at all. To you, the point is that your curiosity is running on high, and your insightful side emerges in a big way. Just be sure that no one who may be hurt hears about the info you discover.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You're one of the most sensitive people in your world, so when something seems to be a bit off today, you're the first to know. One tiny, inconvenient little fact that's out of place may be bothering you, and whether or not you know it, it affects everything you do for the entire day. Don't hesitate to follow up on it. The good news is that you should be quite relieved and happy about what you discover and closer to a loved one too.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. The Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959 due to its occupation by troops from what country?

- A. China
- B. Soviet Union
- C. North Korea
- D. Japan

02. Who, after splitting from a long term girlfriend in 2008, briefly dated actress Kate Hudson, and in 2012 was dating Serbian tennis star Ana Ivanovic?

- A. Richard Branson
- B. Roger Federer
- C. Adam Scott
- D. Silvio Berlusconi

03. Which of these bones is the lowest in the human body (when it is standing up!)?

- A. Cranium
- B. Sternum
- C. Patella
- D. Pelvis

Answers: 1. A 2. C 3. C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

A	P	O	R
H	L	R	S
E	O	A	D
R	E	Y	L

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

SOLUTION

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

Pyramids, Al Ahly gain advantage in African Champions League first leg semis

Johannesburg, South Africa - Both African Champions League semi-final first-leg ties on Saturday ended goalless, giving Egyptian clubs Al Ahly and Pyramids an advantage for next weekend's return matches.

Holders Al Ahly, looking for a fifth title in six years, held Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa at Loftus Versfeld in Pretoria before Pyramids also ensured an away stalemate at Orlando Pirates in Soweto.

Al Ahly, who have won a record 12 Champions League titles, twice had the ball in Sundowns' net but both efforts were ruled off-side. They also saw their Slovenian striker Nejc Grdisar hit the crossbar with a first-half effort.

The hosts had the bulk of the possession but found no way to penetrate the tight Egyptian defence.

It was the same for the attacking Pirates at the Orlando Stadium where Pyramids also proved stoic in defence. Pyramids also managed to twice breach Pirates' defences but VAR ruled offside the first effort and disallowed the second for a handball.

The return legs will be played in the Egyptian capital on Friday.

DELAYING THE INEVITABLE

Gunners thrash Ipswich to stall Liverpool's title party

Ipswich, England - Arsenal cantered to a 4-0 victory over Ipswich Town to end Liverpool's hopes of winning the Premier League title on Sunday, with Leandro Trossard scoring twice and the hosts' Leif Davis sent off for a dangerous tackle on Bukayo Saka.

Arsenal moved on to 66 points in second spot but Liverpool, who face relegation-threatened Leicester City later, still only need to win two of their remaining games to secure the crown.

Keen to force Liverpool to wait to lift the trophy, the Gunners tore into their hosts from the kick-off and they took the lead in the 14th minute. Following a surging run by Martin Odegaard, the ball eventually found its way to Trossard, who stroked the ball home despite losing his footing as he took the shot.

Arsenal's razor-sharp second illustrated the gulf in class between the two teams as Saka went on a penetrating run down the right before squaring to Mikel Merino, and his deft flick teed up for Martinelli for a simple close-range finish.

The home side were reduced to 10 men just after the half-hour mark as Davis raked his studs



Arsenal's Leandro Trossard celebrates after scoring against Ipswich Town on Sunday

We don't need to look at them (Liverpool) we just have to keep going like this and take it game by game. We want to win every game but we know how tough it is in the league

LEANDRO TROSSARD

down the back of Saka's calf in a clumsy challenge, and the referee showed him a straight red card.

Despite being down to 10 men, Ipswich refused to lay down and striker George Hirst dragged a shot just wide of the far post in

the 56th minute, one of only four shots on goal that they managed to create in the game, none of which they got on target.

Trossard grabbed his second in the 69th minute and Ethan Nwaneri added a late fourth to

leave Ipswich stuck in 18th place on 21 points.

Though Liverpool retain their dominant position, Trossard has not yet given up hope.

"We don't need to look at them (Liverpool) we just have to keep going like this and take it game by game. We want to win every game but we know how tough it is in the league. A good

win today and we just need to keep pushing going forward," he said.

Chelsea win

Pedro Neto scored in stoppage time as Chelsea fought back to beat neighbours Fulham 2-1 at Craven Cottage on Sunday and breathe life into their quest to secure a spot in next season's

Champions League.

Chelsea moved up to fifth in the Premier League standings with 57 points, level with Nottingham Forest, who travel to Tottenham Hotspur on Monday.

Meanwhile, Manchester United slumped to a 15th league loss of the season as Wolverhampton Wanderers snatched a 1-0 win at Old Trafford.



Paris St Germain's Desire Doue celebrates with Bradley Barcola after scoring against Le Havre on Saturday

Champions PSG beat Le Havre to continue unbeaten league run

Paris, France - Ligue 1 champions Paris St Germain continued their quest to become the only team in the French top flight to remain unbeaten throughout a season with a routine 2-1 home win over Le Havre on Saturday.

PSG manager Luis Enrique, with the title win wrapped up two weeks ago, made nine changes from the side which advanced to the Champions League semi-finals in midweek despite losing the second leg against Aston Villa.

The hosts took the lead in the eighth minute when Bradley Barcola rolled a pass into the box to Desire Doue whose control took him past his marker before he hit a shot that took a deflection on its way to the net.

Le Havre were completely outplayed in the first half and will have been relieved to go into the break just one goal down but PSG doubled their lead five minutes after the interval.

After some intricate close

With the title win wrapped up two weeks ago, PSG made nine changes from the side which advanced to the Champions League semifinals

passing around the opposition area, Senny Mayulu dinked the ball over onrushing keeper Mathieu Gorgelin leaving Goncalo Ramos with the simplest of tap-ins from close range.

The visitors pulled one goal back on the hour mark through Issa Soumare's header from a corner kick move but were unable to muster another chance on target.

PSG increased their advantage over AS Monaco to 24 points, while Le Havre remain 16th in the standings.

Villa end Newcastle's winning streak in style

Birmingham, England - Aston Villa thumped top-five rivals Newcastle United 4-1 at Villa Park to keep themselves in the thick of the race for Champions League qualification on Saturday.

Five days after being knocked out of Europe's top club competition by Paris St Germain in a thriller, Villa returned to Premier League action in emphatic fashion with the recalled Ollie Watkins opening the scoring inside the first minute.

Fabian Schar equalised for third-placed Newcastle with a header before halftime but Villa blazed clear after the break with Ian Maatsen restoring their lead before a Dan Burn own goal and substitute Amadou Onana's superb finish sealed the points.

Victory lifted Villa three points above Chelsea into sixth place with 57 points from 33 games, level with Nottingham Forest who play at Tottenham Hotspur on Monday.

Newcastle have 59 points, one more than fourth-placed Manchester City, in what is turning into a fierce battle to qualify for next season's Champions



Aston Villa's Ollie Watkins celebrates his goal against Newcastle United on Saturday

League. The top five in the Premier League will all qualify.

Newcastle had won five successive Premier League games and the League Cup final but were brought crashing back down to earth by a superb Villa side who could have scored far more.

Watkins was twice denied by the woodwork in the first half as the England forward produced a dazzling display, including a second-half assist for Maatsen, having been left out of the starting line-up in recent games.

"I think the manager's got a little bit of a headache now because I'm banging on his door saying why am I not playing," Watkins, who had was a substitute in both legs of Aston Villa's clash with PSG, told Sky Sports.

Unai Emery's Villa go to Manchester City on Tuesday when victory would send them into the top four.

Newcastle were rocked after 33 minutes when Youri Tielemans slid a pass to Watkins whose shot took a big deflection off Schar to wrong-foot goalkeeper Nick Pope.

Bayern Munich storm past Heidenheim to close in on title

Heidenheim, Germany - Bayern Munich had little trouble beating lowly Heidenheim 4-0 on Saturday to put themselves within touching distance of their 34th Bundesliga title.

The table now shows Bayern at the top with 72 points, nine ahead of Bayer Leverkusen who face St. Pauli on Sunday, with four rounds left to play.

With Bayern racing into a three-goal lead after just 36 minutes — courtesy of Harry Kane's precision, Konrad Laimer's drive and Kingsley Coman's flair — there was little doubt about Saturday's outcome.

Kane could have doubled his tally after 22 minutes, with the pressure on the Heidenheim goal reaching a boiling point, but the Bundesliga's leading marksman steered a close-range header just wide, letting the hosts off the hook.

Joshua Kimmich then took his time before rifling a shot into the corner for 4-0 in the 56th minute as Bayern surged ahead at full throttle in their relentless pursuit of another league crown.

"I know that now afterwards everyone will say that it's normal



Bayern Munich's Kingsley Coman celebrates his goal against Heidenheim

for Bayern that we win here like this," manager Vincent Kompany, whose Bayern side suffered a Champions League exit in midweek to Inter Milan, told reporters.

"But if you look at the last games of Heidenheim like against Bayer Leverkusen, and how difficult that was for the opponents, then I knew that it wouldn't be easy.

"It was a complete performance, that's of course a big compliment for the boys after the somewhat difficult week," added Kompany.

Dominant first pole of FIA WEC season for Al Harthy and Rossi

Muscat - Ahmad al Harthy and Team WRT teammate Valentino Rossi combined perfectly to deliver a sensational first LMG3 class pole position of the FIA World Endurance Championship season at Imola in Italy on Saturday, ahead of Sunday's second race of the 2025 campaign.

Omani racer Al Harthy took the main qualifying session at the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari and was exceptional throughout, ultimately recording the provisional pole position time of 1m42.731 seconds to ensure the No.46 BMW M4 LMG3 progressed to the Hyperpole.

Italian hero Rossi took over the car for the second session, and he produced a best of 1m42.355 seconds to seal the class pole position for today's 6 Hours of Imola, sparking electrifying celebrations among his home fans.



Ahmad al Harthy (R) with his WRT teammates Valentino Rossi (C) and Kelvin van der Linde

"I'm absolutely delighted with pole, first being fastest in my session and then Valentino fastest in Hyperpole here in Italy," said Al Harthy. It's fantastic to achieve our first pole position with BMW and WRT in FIA WEC and it's obviously the best place to start the

race, I really am delighted. "Thank you for all of the amazing support we have, our incredible partners, this pole is the first step in us trying to accomplish the results we are all aiming for on the track. I'm really looking forward to the race, Imola is an

old school circuit so we do have to be careful and make sure we have the best execution possible," he added. Quick from the off in the first two free practice runs on Friday, the Team WRT trio of Al Harthy, Rossi and Kelvin van der Linde

ended session one third fastest with a lap of 1m43.453 seconds. Carrying that level of performance through to session two, the No.46 BMW was third again with an improved 1m43.186 seconds, only 0.2 seconds shy of the top.

Al Harthy went fastest on his first full lap with a time of 1m48.984 seconds and the next time around – his first true flyer – the Omani smashed his previous time with a lap of 1m43.718 seconds to remain on top. Quicker still he lowered his best to a 1m43.032 seconds lap, before then dipping below the 1m43 second barrier with a tremendous effort of 1m42.731 seconds to completely dominate the session and end qualifying some 0.7 seconds clear.



'I have let myself and team down'

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - McLaren's Formula One leader Lando Norris called himself an idiot after crashing in Saudi Arabian Grand Prix qualifying on Saturday, and he stuck by the self-criticism when talking to reporters afterwards. "Makes sense. I agree with it. Should be fighting for pole," the unhurt driver said after qualifying 10th at Jeddah's Corniche circuit. "I shunted so I'm not going to be proud, I'm not going to be happy. I have let myself down and let the team

down," said Norris, blaming himself for "silly risks" he did not need to take. Australian team mate and title rival Oscar Piastri will line up on the front row instead on Sunday, alongside Red Bull's polesitter Max Verstappen. "I don't know what happened. I need to look into it all. Just a mistake I guess, I was pretty comfortable and happy until then," said Norris after smashing into the wall at the exit to turn four. "It has made my life and everyone in the team's much harder because everyone has a big job to try and fix everything."

LAS-MINUTE HEARTBREAK!

Munoz strikes in added time as Las Palmas crush Atletico's slim title hopes

Las Palmas De Gran Canaria, Spain - Javi Munoz scored a stoppage-time winner to earn relegation-threatened Las Palmas a shock 1-0 victory over Atletico Madrid on Saturday, dealing a major blow to the visitors' slim LaLiga title hopes.

Diego Simeone's side remain third in the standings with 63 points, three behind second-placed Real Madrid, who would host Athletic Bilbao on Sunday.

With six league games remaining, Simeone seemed resigned to losing the last title Atletico were still competing for this season, admitting the match "did not go as they had imagined."

"If we had any chance of winning the league, we had to get perfect numbers. Today we didn't," the Argentine told reporters.

"The first half was fairly solid but we couldn't take the lead. The second half started flat, and we weren't able to create what we

had imagined." Someone denied any lack of attitude by his players, but admitted that their tactical execution and individual performance fell short.

"It wasn't a matter of attitude, we just played badly," he said. "There was no fluidity, no chance to link up play."

Both sides had chances to break the deadlock before half-time, with Las Palmas coming close through a close-range header from Alex Suarez and a Dario Essugo effort that went just wide.

At the other end, goalkeeper Dinko Horkas produced sharp saves to deny Julian Alvarez and Alexander Sorloth before the break.

"It was a tough match, a defeat we have to put behind us and move on. But today is tough," Atletico defender Robin Le Normand told Movistar. "Beyond fighting for the title, we



Javi Munoz of Las Palmas celebrates with teammates after scoring against Atletico Madrid on Saturday

wanted to play a very good match... They didn't create much, but they're playing for salvation, fighting for every ball. We didn't get it right."

In a slower-paced second half, Atletico dominated possession but were unable to create clear scoring chances against a disciplined defence from the hosts.

Seconds before the match

If we had any chance of winning the league, we had to get perfect numbers. Today we didn't

DIEGO SIMEONE



ended in a goalless draw, Munoz capitalised on sloppy defending by Atletico, who failed to clear the ball, allowing the midfielder to shoot from close range and finally beat goalkeeper Jan Oblak.

The goal was initially ruled out for offside, but a VAR review overturned the decision three minutes into stoppage time, sparking wild celebrations at the Estadio Gran Canaria.

Iglesias hat-trick in vain as Barca rally to beat Celta in thriller

Barcelona, Spain - LaLiga leaders Barcelona fought back from 3-1 down to beat Celta Vigo 4-3 in a rollercoaster encounter on Saturday, with a stoppage-time penalty by Raphinha extending their lead over Real Madrid at the top of the table to seven points.

With the score tied at 3-3 after Celta's Borja Iglesias netted a hat-trick, the game seemed to be heading for a draw when Dani Olmo won a penalty deep into added time and Raphinha stepped up to score and seal the three points.

Barcelona took the lead when Ferran Torres picked up the ball in midfield and found space to dribble towards goal, pulling the trigger from the edge of the box to beat goalkeeper Vicente Guaita for his 10th league goal of the season. But Celta responded immediately when Pablo Duran put in a superb cross from the wing and as Wojciech Szczesny sprinted off his line to collect the ball, the Polish keeper missed it to give Iglesias a tap-in into an empty net.

Barca went behind seven minutes into the second half when Frenkie de Jong made an error and completely missed a long ball, allowing Iglesias to run



Borja Iglesias of Celta Vigo celebrates after scoring against Barcelona

through and beat Szczesny to grab his second goal.

As Barca pushed forward to find an equaliser, a Celta clearance found Iglesias again and he capitalised on the home side's high line to sprint through on goal and beat Szczesny for a third time

to claim his hat-trick.

A stunned Barcelona tried to recover quickly and they got one back in the 64th minute when Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha combined to find Olmo, who scored five minutes after coming on as a substitute.

McTominay strikes late to help Napoli edge Monza

Monza, Italy - A second-half header by Scott McTominay secured title-chasing Napoli a 1-0 win at relegation-threatened Monza in Serie A on Saturday as Antonio Conte's side provisionally moved level with leaders Inter Milan.

Napoli put on an underwhelming display in a clash that looked nothing like an affair between relegation candidates and title contenders, with McTominay sealing the three points in the 72nd minute.

Second-placed Napoli are level with Inter on 71 points from 33 games, before the defending champions travel to Bologna on Sunday.

Monza sit bottom with 15 points, 11 points from safety.

Napoli stormed Monza's goal in brief spells of the opening half but did not succeed in making their efforts count.

McTominay had a good attempt from a free kick early on, but his low shot aimed straight at Monza goalkeeper Stefano Turati. But in the second half, McTominay nodded home from a lovely lofted cross from Giacomo Raspadori.

Sabalenka photographs disputed ball mark

Stuttgart, Germany - World number one Aryna Sabalenka took matters into her own hands and used a mobile phone to photograph a disputed ball mark when the umpire refused her request to take another look during her win over Elise Mertens at the Stuttgart Open on Saturday.

Sabalenka looked bemused when an out call went against her to give Belgian Mertens the first service break and a 4-3 lead in the opening set of their quarter-final, and a check by umpire Miriam Bley confirmed the call.

The Belarusian went to look for herself and when Bley refused her call to check again, Sabalenka borrowed a phone from one of her team members and took a photo of the mark to a mixture of cheers and whistles from the crowd. Bley then gave Sabalenka a warning for unsportsmanlike conduct but the player put the incident behind her and went on to win 6-4 6-1.

Bley and Sabalenka shook hands after the match, which left the player with the impression that all was not forgiven.

"When I gave her a handshake there was a very interesting look and a very strong handshake,



Aryna Sabalenka takes a photograph of a disputed ball mark

never had it before," Sabalenka said in her on-court interview.

Asked if she had returned the pressure in the handshake, Sabalenka said: "No, it's okay, why would I play this game with someone like her?"

Sabalenka will meet Jasmine

Paolini in the semi-finals after the Italian defeated American Coco Gauff 6-4 6-3.

On Sunday, Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko powered into the final with a 6-4 6-4 victory over fellow unseeded player Ekaterina Alexandrova.

KOHLI LEADS PERFECT PAYBACK

Bengaluru exact revenge from Punjab in comprehensive fashion

Mohali, India - Another away game, another Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) win in IPL 2025; it was their fifth in five matches and this one has taken them to ten points and third on the points table. Less than 48 hours after going down at home, RCB went up north to Mullanpur and exacted revenge from Punjab Kings (PBKS) in comprehensive fashion.

The RCB bowlers hardly gave away anything as PBKS were restricted to 156 for 7. In reply, the chasemaster Virat Kohli was at it again as he recorded his 67th fifty-plus score in the IPL, the most for any batter. Devdutt Padikkal also recorded his first IPL fifty in 22 innings as RCB romped home with seven balls to spare and by seven wickets.

RCB had no hesitation in bowling on what Rajat Patidar called a "decent" surface. For the first six overs, it seemed that it was more than just decent as PBKS smashed 62 in the power-play with Prabhsimran Singh going big.

Then the RCB spinners came to the fore, and it was one-way traffic thereon. Krunal Pandya picked 2 for 25 in his four overs, Suyash Sharma returned 2 for 26 as RCB put a lid on the scoring in the middle overs. Josh Hazlewood and Bhuvneshwar Kumar then put on a death-bowling masterclass, hardly giving PBKS an inch.

In the chase, Arshdeep Singh got Phil Salt for the fourth time in T20s, but Kohli and Padikkal added 103 off 69 balls for the second wicket to keep RCB on track. Even as Padikkal and Patidar fell, Kohli held his own to remain unbeaten on 73 off 54 as RCB kept their 100% away record intact.

There is an inevitability when it comes to Kohli and chasing middling totals. He seems to have the scoring all mapped out. How many runs to get, the required rate, when to attack, when to hold himself back. A 158-chase gave him all those liberties. He hit five fours in his first 20 balls, all inside the power-



Virat Kohli of Royal Challengers Bengaluru hit seven fours and a six in his 54-ball 73 against Punjab Kings

TODAY'S MATCH

MATCH 39

6 PM



KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS
VS
GUJARAT TITANS

play. Then for the next 24 balls, he hit none. He was content with taking the ones and the twos, handing back the strike to the more aggressive Padikkal, but ensured he stayed put. He struck two fours and a six after recording his fifty off 43 balls, and stayed unbeaten till the end to take RCB over the line with plenty to spare.

Kohli's 73* was his 67th fifty-plus score in the IPL, which is the most for any batter in the history of the league. That it came in an RCB win will please Kohli to no end.

Padikkal was caught at long-on for a 35-ball 61 but not before giving RCB a certain amount of cruise control in the chase.

Avesh helps Lucknow edge Rajasthan in thriller

Jaipur, India - For the second game in a row, Rajasthan Royals (RR) stumbled in a seemingly straightforward chase, unable to score nine off the final over. In Jaipur on Saturday night, Avesh Khan's ice-cool death bowling turned a cruise into chaos, as Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) snatched victory from under RR's nose.

Up until 17 overs of their chase, RR seemed set to break their three-match losing streak. But with 25 needed off 18, Avesh got his execution dead right in a double-wicket over that went for just five. He first dismissed a well-set Yashasvi Jaiswal for 74



Avesh Khan of Lucknow Super Giants celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Shimron Hetmyer of Rajasthan Royals

when he backed away to scythe a yorker-length delivery behind point. Then, four balls later, Riyan

Parag's attempt to play a cheeky scoop to a full ball that reversed in to strike his toe caught him

plumb in front.

RR went into panic mode, and stumbled at the finish line.

Four nights ago in Delhi, RR failed to knock off the two runs they needed off the final ball. Here, they needed four. Shubham Dubey had just been dropped off the previous delivery by David Miller at long-on. This was his shot at redemption, but Avesh stuck his left arm out on his follow-through to stop a straight hit.

Earlier, Vaibhav Suryavanshi, all of 14 years and 23 days, strode out for his debut as the youngest player in IPL history when he was brought in as an Impact Player for their 181 chase.



Ravindra Jadeja of Chennai Super Kings celebrates his fifty against Mumbai Indians on Sunday. Jadeja's 53 and Shivam Dube's 50 helped Chennai post 176 for 5 from their 20 overs

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DARUMA DOLLS

At Katsuo-ji Temple, Daruma dolls watch from every corner. They peer between tree branches, cluster around altars, and dot winding pathways, flashes of bright red among the hillside forest.

The iconic Japanese dolls range from a couple of inches to several feet in height, and there are thousands of them at the 1,300-year-old temple, located about an hour from downtown Osaka in Minoh National Park.

According to the temple, Katsuo-ji became known as the 'Daruma temple' about 100 years ago, around the same time the site began selling the dolls — a lucky talisman in Japan and a symbol of determination and ambition, which have also become one of the country's most recognisable and popular souvenirs.

Katsuo-ji has long been associated with success and victory for over a thousand years, with many emperors and shoguns visiting the temple for blessings. Today, it's frequented by locals before exams or important business meetings.

Marco Fasano, an Italian tour guide living in Japan and founder of Tanuki Stories, has visited Katsuo-ji several times — including for good luck before taking his Japanese Language Proficiency Test.

"There is a whole process that you need to do when you buy the Daruma," explains Fasano, who first discovered the temple while researching places for his tour itineraries. "You need to think of something that you want to accomplish, write the wish on it, paint one eye, purify the Daruma with some incense, then take it with you."

Unlike other lucky talismans or rituals, Daruma dolls are not simply about making a wish and hoping it comes true, says Fasano.

"Every time you look at your Daruma, you need to remember that wish and ask yourself, 'What am I going to do today to achieve that goal?' It's about reminding you that you need to work on it."

The second eye is only filled in once the goal is achieved — at which point, the Daruma doll can be returned to the temple.

"When you go there and you see that all these people had their wish granted, it's proof that you can do something about your wish as well," says Fasano.

'A symbol of perseverance'

Round and red with scowling expressions, the dolls represent the Bodhidharma (or, 'Daruma' in Japanese), the fifth-century monk who founded Zen Buddhism.

Followers believe that the monk meditated for so long that he lost his limbs, illustrated by the doll's rounded shape, which is weighted at the base so it will always stand back up when knocked over.

"It became a symbol of perseverance," says Fasano. "According to Zen Buddhism, the answers are already inside you. It's not something that comes suddenly as a gift, but it's something that you need to work on diligently and find in yourself."

In another legend, the monk was said to have cut off his eyelids to avoid falling asleep during his meditation, one explanation for the doll's wide-eyed stare.

Darumas are rich with auspicious imagery, from the lucky red colour to the thick eyebrows and beard, which represent cranes and turtles - two animals associated with good luck and longevity in Japan.

Katsuo-ji isn't the only 'Daruma temple' in Japan. In nearby Kyoto, Hōrin-ji 'Darumadera Temple' boasts a collection of around 8,000 Darumas, many of which are housed in a specially built hall funded by the temple's worshippers.

While the dolls can be found all over Japan, around 80% of Daruma dolls are made in Takasaki, a town in Gunma prefecture in the Kanto region, where the traditional papier-mache craft can be traced back around 200 years.

Shorinzan Daruma-ji Temple says it started selling the dolls about 220 years ago, and holds an annual Daruma Market. According to the temple, visitors began placing dolls around the grounds about 100 years ago.

Katsuo-ji offers visitors two different types of Darumas - the Kachi-Daruma, the classic doll known as 'the winning Daruma' which is used to set a specific goal or the Daruma-Mikuji, known as 'the fortune-telling Daruma', which are only found at Katsuo-ji.

Instead of drawing eyes on the fortune-telling Daruma, visitors ask a question before selecting a doll. Like a fortune cookie, each Daruma-Mijuki contains a tiny scroll of unique written advice that is intended to guide you toward your goal.

"Many visitors take photos and videos of the Daruma-Mikuji placed freely by worshippers throughout the temple grounds, and the Kachi-Daruma enshrined on the offering shelves," says Yusuke Yamada, a spokesperson for Katsuo-ji Temple, adding that the temple is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many visitors.

(Courtesy: cnn.com)

Symbolic souvenir

Daruma dolls are one of Japan's most popular souvenirs. But where do they come from?



OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

One of the best ways to explore mainland Greece is under your own steam, through the myriad activities on offer here.

There are opportunities to don a mask and flippers and snorkel over an ancient submerged city, to climb Mount Olympus, the fabled home of Zeus, king of the gods, to leap into a boat and whitewater-raft down a 7.5-mile-long gorge, and to ski through the quiet backcountry of its Peloponnese mountain range. What's your take?

Ski in Kalavryta

Picture Greece and you're likely thinking sun-kissed islands not snowy ski slopes. But the country has the latter, too. The mythical home of the Muses, Mount Parnassos near Athens gets all the fuss for its downhill, but for quieter days and tons of fresh, downy powder, make for the mountain resort of Kalavryta in the northern Peloponnese, where the slopes spread between 5,575ft and 7,675ft high. From December to April, the real joy here is skiing into the crowd-free backcountry, with phenomenal views of the Gulf of Corinth. It's wise to hook up with a guide, such as Orias's experts, to explore the undiscovered slopes of the Helmos mountain range.

Snorkel in Pavlopetri

Pop on a snorkel ordinarily and you might expect to see fish — or perhaps the odd wreck — but Pavlopetri, off the coast of southern Laconia in the Peloponnese, is unique. Twelve feet down, these crystal-clear waters hide a real-life Atlantis — a sunken Minoan city 5,000 years old yet still extraordinarily intact. Flipper past Bronze Age streets, mansions, courtyards and rock-carved tombs. No experience is needed — simply follow the underwater signs detailing three swimming routes and providing background on the ruins. Epos Travel organises tours to the area, or grab a snorkel and go it alone.

Climb Mount Olympus

Ruled by Zeus, Greece's highest mountain is a living legend. The topmost of its peaks is cloud-wreathed 9,573ft Mytikas, a holy grail to hikers. Scaling its gnarly heights is a two-day challenge: you'll hike up to seven hours a day on exposed terrain, with rocky scrambles and steep slopes to negotiate. It's best to join a guided walk, such as those arranged by Trekking Hellas. Helmets, harnesses and ropes are provided for the final climb, where you'll be rewarded with views over peaks and valleys to the Aegean. A night at a mountain refuge on the Muses Plateau is special, too, as you'll awake to a fiery sunrise befitting the gods.

Hiking the Menalon Trail

Imagine the burbling streams, glassy rivers, moss-cloaked forests and towering peaks that poet Virgil so eloquently captured 2,000 years ago when evoking the idyll of Arcadia in Eclogue 10, then lace up your boots for this five-day hike through the Central Peloponnese. Carving an enchanting path through the real-life Arcadia, the Menalon Trail is a glimpse of pre-dawn of tourism Greece. Leading from Sternitsa to Lagkadia, the well-signposted 47-mile, eight-stage trail tiptoes through wild and remote landscapes, taking in silent pine woods, wooden bridges and old mule paths from stone-built village to stone-built village. You're bound to be smitten by the deep, sheer-walled Lousios Gorge, where nymphs bathed an infant Zeus in the fast-flowing river, and by fresco-adorned Prodromos Monastery, which clings to a cliff. It's best to hike the trail from April to November, staying overnight in family-run guest-houses.

White-water rafting in Vikos Gorge

Who needs the Grand Canyon for drama? Mother nature pulled out just as many stops to create the Vikos Gorge in Greece's mountain-rippled Vikos-Aoös National Park. One of the world's deepest gorges, the 7.5mile-long, 2,953ft-deep ravine is spectacular enough from the hiking trails threading deep into it, especially in the rose-gold glow of sunrise or sunset. But it's even more so when you take a white-water raft along the river's glassy green waters and gentle rapids, shaded by centuries-old plane trees. Trekking Hellas organises three-hour excursions for beginners. Bring swimming togs and a towel.



FROM KAYAKING TO SKIING, HIKING TO BIKING, HERE ARE SEVEN MUST-TRY OUTDOOR ADVENTURES ON MAINLAND GREECE



Mountain biking in Zagori

Snowcapped during the cooler months, the thickly forested, canyon-riven Pindus Mountains rise sheer and rugged above the wilds of Epirus in northwestern Greece. This is a terrific region to jump into a bike saddle for a two-wheel, go-slow adventure. Perhaps the prettiest stretch of all is Zagori, where you can tick off 46 traditional, grey-stone-built, slate-roofed villages like rosary beads. Here the largely car-free routes send you rattling over old stone paths and humpback bridges to historic chapels and monasteries, mountainside and riverbank villages, and wineries.

Kayak on Lake Kremasta

Created during a 1960s hydroelectric project to dam four rivers, Greece's biggest artificial lake is a fjord-like, island-speckled beauty that twists and turns over 50sq miles. While you can admire the alpine loveliness of the Agrafa Mountains from its pine-fringed shores, there's nothing like kayaking in quiet exhilaration across its glass-calm, cerulean-blue waters in summer, pausing every so often for a refreshing dip. Choose a quiet time of day, such as early morning or evening, and keep your eyes peeled for wildlife including golden eagles, otters and wolves. Finix Adventures runs three-hour guided kayaking tours on the lake year-round.

(Courtesy: nationalgeographic.com)

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