

New protocol for suspension of classes during heavy rains

Our Correspondent Muscat

Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation has issued a statement regarding suspension of classes in educational institutions during rains across all governorates of the sultanate.

The initiative aims to ensure safety of students and staff amid severe weather conditions.

According to the statement, a protocol has been established to guide decisions on whether to suspend classes. The National Emergency Management Committee will be responsible for making and announcing these decisions.

The committee will oversee initial recovery efforts in coordination with military, security and civil agencies.

The statement details specific rainfall thresholds that will trigger different responses. Heavy rains, characterised by active winds leading to valley flooding, will result in suspension of classes or transition to distance learning if



Rains to hit parts of Oman from Sunday

Muscat - Civil Aviation Authority has announced that heavy rains are expected in several parts of Oman beginning Sunday. The Directorate General of Meteorology has forecast inclement weather conditions from September 29 to October 1. Weather maps indicate the possibility of cloud formation and rain of varying intensity over the Hajar Mountains and coastal and mountainous areas of Dhofar.

rainfall exceeds 60mm in Muscat and Dhofar, 100mm in Al Wusta and Musandam, and 80mm in other governorates.

For moderate rains - measuring less than 35mm in Muscat and Dhofar, less than 50mm in Musandam and Al Wusta, and less than 80mm in the remaining governorates - classes will proceed as normal. However,

when rainfall reaches 35mm in Muscat and Dhofar, 50mm in Al Wusta and Musandam, and 80mm in other areas, decisions may vary between continuing classes, suspending these or moving to distance learning mode.

The ministry confirmed that continuation of classes as usual during moderate rains is the re-

sponsibility of government units affiliated to it.

This proactive approach aims to safeguard educational continuity while prioritising the well-being of students during adverse weather conditions.

Starting April 14 to April 17 this year, Oman experienced an extraordinary deluge with precipitation figures surpassing the

national annual average by a significant margin. Notably, Mahda in Buraimi recorded 320mm of rain - nearly ten times the national average of 30.6mm observed in 2022.

The unprecedented downpour resulted in widespread flooding, significant infrastructure damage, and disruptions to agriculture and school and college education.

Royal Decree appoints Unesco representative

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal Decree No 38/2024 on Wednesday granting an official the rank of 'Ambassador' and appointing the individual as Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco).

Article 1 grants Amna Salim Rashid al Balushi the rank of Ambassador and appoints her as Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to Unesco.

Article 2 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of publication. ONA

Sayyid Fahd receives Egypt's media head



H H Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said meets Karam Gabr on Wednesday

Muscat - H H Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Council of Ministers, received Karam Gabr, Head of Supreme Council for Media Regulation of the Arab Republic of Egypt, on Wednesday.

At the outset of the meeting, Gabr conveyed the Egyptian leadership's greetings to the Omani leadership. He also conveyed his country's best wishes for progress and prosperity to the Omani people.

H H Sayyid Fahd underscored the government's support for the Omani media in pursuance of the latter's constructive role in the march of sustainable development. He also lauded Omani media persons and the efforts

they exert in unbiased reportage that is based on integrity.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and explored ways of enhancing media cooperation, particularly in exchanging expertise and visits of media persons. They also highlighted current issues in the regional arena and the efforts exerted to put an end to violations in a bid to have security and stability in the region.

The Egyptian official lauded the wise and balanced policy espoused by Oman and its role in backing efforts to promote understanding and constructive dialogue among nations. This policy has got Oman the respect and appreciation of all, he noted.



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi (R) and Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei in New York, US on Tuesday (ONA)

Oman and Brunei strengthen ties at UN ceremony

New York, US - Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei during a ceremony commemorating Brunei's 40th anniversary of accession to the United Nations. The event, held under the patronage of Sultan Hassanal, took place as part of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Sayyid Badr extended Oman's congratulations to Brunei, highlighting the strong ties between the two nations. In response, Sultan Hassanal expressed his best wishes for continued progress in Oman and reiterated the importance of strengthening bilateral relations.

Following the ceremony, Sayyid Badr engaged in several high-level meetings with foreign ministers from various countries. During his meeting with Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, the two discussed ways to enhance cooperation in economic, cultural, scientific and technological fields, while also addressing key regional and international issues.

Sayyid Badr also met Romanian Foreign Minister Luminica Odobescu, focusing on strengthening ties in education, culture and the economy, as well as tackling shared security challenges.

Sayyid Badr engaged in several high-level meetings with foreign ministers from various countries

They both agreed on the importance of dialogue to maintain regional stability.

During discussions with Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), Sayyid Badr reaffirmed Oman's support for Palestinian refugees. He emphasised the need for urgent humanitarian assistance to Gaza and praised UNRWA's role in delivering essential services.

In a meeting with Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, the focus was on development of bilateral relations and exploration of new opportunities for cooperation in various sectors.

Sayyid Badr also held discussions with Dutch Foreign Minister Casper Veldkamp, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and Abdulaziz Ibrahim al Mulla, Executive Director of International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

MCSY launches Tamkeen to boost youth self-employment

Our Correspondent Muscat

Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY), represented by the Youth Centre, in collaboration with Oman Oil Marketing Company, has launched the second edition of the 'Tamkeen' programme aimed at empowering self-employed individuals.

The programme is designed to equip young people with the skills necessary to transform their talents into viable sources of income as independent business owners. It also seeks to enhance support for these entrepreneurs and promote their work both locally and internationally, while empowering skilled Omani youth and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders.



Amira Mohammed al Balushi, Programmes Manager at Youth Centre, informed that the programme is a result of joint efforts between the latter and Oman Oil. "Implementation of this programme aims to develop young people's skills and empower them as self-employed individuals, helping them turn personal

skills into income sources."

The programme will feature both virtual and in-person components, encompassing several stages. Over 262 participants from more than 13 fields - including media, technology, software, crafts, science, arts, photography, design, marketing and writing - will benefit.

According to Khamis al Shuaibi, General Manager of Shared Services at Oman Oil, continuation of Tamkeen aligns with the company's commitment to empowering Omani youth in self-employment. He highlighted the company's role in supporting young Omanis as they pursue their entrepreneurial ambitions, emphasising the strategic goal of nurturing creativity and innovation among the youth.

09 Lebanon: 16 killed in Israeli strikes

13 Omani lensmen shine at global competition in Qatar

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Dhofar civic body reviews development plans

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Dhofar Municipal Council convened on Wednesday to discuss various development plans for the tourist and archaeological sites in the governorate, besides looking at various programmes for the improvement of health, environmental and social services across the region.

The civic body also reviewed the outcome of the discussions on visions and proposals across multiple sectors with advisory councils representing university and college students in the southern Oman.

Key topics addressed in that



meeting included the activation of a national programme for spreading sign language, as outlined in the meetings of the council's permanent committees.

The council also reviewed the results of a recent meeting between the Governorate Development Committee and Dhofar Municipality specialists on a project to construct a bridge on Rabat Street at the intersection of Al Nahda Street in Salalah.

Additionally, the council discussed the proposed Al Mugh-sail-Rakhiout-Dalkout coastal road project, emphasising its significance for the economic, tourism and commercial developments of the region, besides highlighting its expected role in boosting investments in Dhofar.

They also examined a report from the Oman Investment Authority on efforts to bolster the food security system, create income sources for local breeders, and provide job opportunities for youth. Finally, the council reviewed correspondence from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources regarding the implementation of the Wadi Adawinb Dam project in Salalah.



ASMED hosts dialogue session on challenges, prospects of financing

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED), in collaboration with a group of entrepreneurs, organised a dialogue session on Wednesday on the prospects of financing and its challenges for the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Oman.

The entrepreneurs, who joined ASMED for the inaugural session of the dialogue on 'Prospects for Financing Small and Medium Enterprises', are already benefiting from various financing programmes and hence have their individual experiences to share with the participants.

The discussion focused on improving the efficiency of financing procedures and expediting the approval process. The goal of streamlining these processes is to reduce waiting times for en-

The discussion focused on improving the efficiency of financing procedures for SMEs and expediting the process

trepreneurs and enhance their access to timely financing. The session also aimed to develop flexible financing mechanisms tailored to meet the varying needs of entrepreneurs at different growth stages.

Transparency and clarity in financing conditions were emphasised during the session, so that clear mechanisms could be developed to help entrepreneurs better understand the requirements for obtaining finances.

The session included four key areas of discussion: The pre-finance stage, the application process, the disbursement phase, and the post-financing stage, including project sustainability. Participants identified the challenges and proposed solutions to enhance the financing service, while agreeing to initiatives and future steps for development.

Halima bint Rashid al Zaria, Chairperson of ASMED, highlighted the authority's ongoing commitment to the Entrepreneur Readiness Programme, designed to equip entrepreneurs with essential administrative and financial skills. She spoke on the importance of Musanda or the 'Support' programme that focuses on monitoring funded projects for their effective expansion.

The authority plans to automate many procedures, particularly the loan financing, to reduce human interventions.

'Al Shuwaimiya Nights' kicks off in Dhofar to promote local businesses

Our Correspondent
Salalah

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED), through its department in Dhofar, launched the second edition of the 'Al Shuwaimiya Nights' event in the wilayat of Shalim and the Hal-laniyat Islands.

The event, which commenced on Tuesday evening, creates opportunities for the local entrepreneurs to broaden their community partnership.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Ahmed al Ghassani, Director of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Department



in Dhofar, emphasised that this initiative is part of a broader plan to activate various centres affiliated with the department. The event aims to introduce vocational and specialised training programmes in entrepreneurship while fostering community partnerships between the public and

private sectors.

Ghassani added that the initiative seeks to create marketing opportunities for the SME owners and the families involved in activities linked to the cottage industry by allowing them to showcase their products and promote their services.



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13 pacts worth RO12.7mn inked for Dhahirah development projects

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dhahirah Governor's Office has signed 13 agreements to implement various services and development projects across its three wilayats, with total investment exceeding RO12.5mn.

The initiative aims to enhance services and development of sectors in alignment with the governorate's strategic development goals.

Among the key projects are establishment of Itlatat Yanqul and Itlatat Dhank. These itlatat (viewpoints) cover an area of 65,000sqm each and cost RO4mn. These destinations will serve both residents and tourists, featuring open theatres, sports fields, children's play areas, water



bodies, fountains, restaurants and cafes, besides essential amenities.

The agreements include projects to pave internal roads with

an investment of over RO6mn in the wilayats of Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank - 60km of roads in Ibri and 25km each in Yanqul and Dhank - alongside maintenance projects

for roads damaged by climatic events, costing more than RO2.7mn.

According to Najeeb bin Ali al Rawas, Governor of Dhahirah,

these agreements are part of a broader strategy to enhance services in the governorate's development programmes for 2023-2024. He emphasised the fact that the projects aim to create balanced development across the wilayats, improve recreational services, increase green spaces, and maximise local investment opportunities.

The itlatat projects will not only showcase the natural beauty of Dhahirah but also contribute to its sustainable growth, featuring unique designs that harmonise with the region's geography.

Rawas noted the significance of these road projects in ensuring safe and efficient transportation for residents and businesses, highlighting their vital role in the governorate's development.

Lobster fishing season begins Oct 1, reduced to 2 months

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has announced that the lobster fishing season will commence on October 1 and be reduced to two months, marking a change from March 1 to the end of May each year.

The move reflecting the increasing pressure on stocks due to high demand for this valuable marine resource in both local and international markets.

MAFWR has organised lectures and programmes for artisanal fishermen to educate them on relevant laws and regulations, as well as sustainable practices to preserve this natural resource.

Muslim Salem Rafeet, Assistant Director General of Fisheries

in Dhofar, highlighted the economic significance of lobsters, noting that prices can exceed RO7/kg in peak season.

Last year, total production in Oman was approximately 801 tonnes, primarily from Al Wusta, Dhofar, South Sharqiyah and Musandam.

According to Rafeet, lobster fishing is gaining traction among fishermen and investors due to its economic benefits. MAFWR is committed to ensuring the sustainability of lobster stocks by implementing necessary regulations, including issuing fishing licences and designating permissible fishing equipment and seasonal periods. Additionally, MAFWR oversees trading, marketing and export operations in accordance with the Marine Fishing Law.



Over RO9mn invested in Buraimi to boost agri, livestock production

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Buraimi is making strides in strengthening its food security system by launching various investment projects across multiple sectors. These initiatives aim to boost local agriculture and livestock production, contributing to self-sufficiency and the development of the local economy.

Nasser bin Ali al Marshoudi, Director General of Animal Wealth and Water Resources in Buraimi, said investment projects worth over RO6mn have been



implemented on 1,559 acres, focusing on cultivation of wheat, potatoes, garlic and onions using modern agricultural technologies. This approach is expected to significantly increase produc-

tion in the governorate. Specifically, 1,061 acres have been dedicated to wheat cultivation, with investments totalling RO2.7mn. These projects are crucial for enhancing local wheat production, a fundamental crop for achieving self-sufficiency in Oman.

In the livestock sector, investments amounting to RO3.4mn have been made on 506 acres to raise goats and sheep and poultry projects, as well as production of milk and meat.

Overall, the total value of food security investments in Buraimi has reached RO9.56mn.



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ANNOUNCEMENT

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3610/2024/MO H/HQ-265	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Tow Uninterruptible Power For Various Wards at Royal Hospital Main Building	3/10/2024	30/10/2024	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in Excellent Grade	SME: 10 LO: 25
3611/2024/MO H/HQ-266	Supply and Installation of Air Conditioning Units in Higher Institute of Health Specialities at Al Wutayyah in Muscat Governorate	1/10/2024	30/10/2024	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in Excellent, First, Second and Third	SME: 10 LO: 25
3660/2024/MO H/HQ-270	Replacement of Medical Equipments for Quality Control Lab	3/10/2024	16/10/2024	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in Excellent, First, Second and Third	SME: 10 LO: 25
3680/2024/MO H/HQ-272	Supply of Pharmaceutical	10/10/2024	30/10/2024	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	SME: 15 LO: 75

- Tenders should be submitted on line on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: **24402200** , Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Asyad seeks to position Oman as leader in low-carbon shipping fuel

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Asyad Group, in collaboration with OQ Alternative Energy and Sumitomo Corporation Middle East, announced a joint study agreement on Wednesday to explore the potential of establishing Oman as a global leader in low-carbon fuels for bunkering.

This visionary initiative represents a pioneering step in promoting sustainable shipping practices to meet global decarbonisation goals in the maritime industry, leveraging Oman's renewable resources on a global scale, Asyad Group said in a statement.

The group - comprising Asyad, OQ Alternative Energy, and Sumitomo - has issued a Request for Information (RFI) to the world's leading shipping companies to drive the adoption of green logistics solutions in Oman. Additionally, a feasibility study will assess key factors, including the levelised costs of delivered low-carbon fuels, the infrastructure required to support such operations, and alignment with global regulatory



Oman's unique geographical advantages and superior renewable energy resources could position it as a frontrunner in providing competitively priced low-carbon fuels to global shipping industry

standards for sustainable fuels.

Early findings suggest that Oman's unique geographical advantages and superior renewable energy resources could position the country as a frontrunner in providing competitively priced low-carbon fuels to the global shipping industry.

Insights derived from the RFI will form the cornerstone of the study and will be crucial in guiding the development of a world-

class low-carbon bunkering infrastructure in Oman, making a lasting impact on global maritime practices.

In line with Oman's Vision 2040 and its sustainable energy strategy, the parties aim to leverage the sultanate's abundant renewable resources to offer low-carbon fuels such as e-methanol and ammonia at competitive prices.

Current bunkering facilities at

the ports of Salalah and Duqm are earmarked as strategic sites for potential retrofitting to support low-carbon fuel operations. By updating these existing infrastructures and transforming these ports into key nodes on vital global trade routes, Oman aims to become a leader in the global transition to low-carbon shipping fuels and further support the growth of the nation's burgeoning logistics sector.

Moody's upgrades Omantel rating to Ba1 from Ba2

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Moody's Ratings has upgraded Omantel's long-term corporate family rating to Ba1 from Ba2, the probability of default rating to Ba1-PD from Ba2-PD, and the Baseline Credit Assessment (BCA) to ba2 from ba3.

Moody's said that its rating action reflects Omantel's stable financial performance amid structurally intensified competition since 2022, strong credit metrics that are more commensurate with the ba2 BCA, and improved liquidity.

'The rating action also incorporates the company's track record of prudent financial policy and calculated development strategy, as well as efforts to keep leverage under control. At the same time, the stable outlook reflects our expectations that material improvements in the company's standalone credit quality are unlikely over the next two years,' Moody's said.

Moody's noted that Omantel's rating is also supported by its prudent development strategy and financial policy. 'This is demonstrated by the strategic focus on sustaining leading mar-



ket positions in core segments, measured capital spending, a cautious approach to M&A, stable dividend payments, and efforts to maintain leverage under control.'

The rating agency highlighted that Omantel's liquidity has improved.

'We forecast that Omantel's cash balance of RO34mn as of June 2024 and operating cash flow of RO260mn through the end of 2025 will be sufficient to cover capital spending of RO160mn, dividends of RO41mn, and debt repayment of RO52mn over the same period. The liquidity is also supported by very modest debt maturities until 2028 when the outstanding

\$689mn bond is due, followed by the \$500mn sukuk due in 2031,' the rating agency said.

However, Moody's pointed out that intense competition in the Omani telecommunications market continues to impact Omantel's business.

Moody's said, 'The entrance of Oman Future Telecommunications Company under the Vodafone brand has broken the duopoly of Omantel and Ooredoo as integrated operators. As a result, the Omani telecom market has become one of the most challenging within the GCC region. This has led to flat connectivity revenue for Omantel and a slight decline in its subscriber base.'

INTERVIEW

STEPHEN CROLIUS, PRESIDENT OF CARBON-NEUTRAL CONSULTING

EVs to play key role in Middle East energy transition

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Stephen Crolius, a former Climate Advisor at the Clinton Foundation, is the President and Co-founder of the global energy transition consulting firm Carbon-Neutral Consulting. As a thought leader, Crolius focuses on sustainable and low-carbon fuel sources, renewable energy, and transport electrification. In an exclusive interview with Muscat Daily, Crolius shared his insights and views on the role of electric vehicles (EVs) in the Middle East region's energy transition and how governments can encourage the adoption of EVs in the region.

What role can electric vehicles play in the GCC countries' transition to green energy?

EVs have an important role to play in the Middle East's transition to green energy. Car ownership in the GCC countries is in the global mid-range, generally between 0.2 and 0.6 vehicles per capita. As a result, in the United Arab Emirates, for example, 20% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are produced by the transportation sector, overwhelmingly from cars. The parallel trends of electric vehicle adoption and renewable electricity development are already underway and together can foreseeably drive GHG emissions from on-



Governments and EV producers need to ensure that their combined efforts lead to viable economic proposition for consumers. Governments can also encourage EV adoption by supporting development of public charging infrastructure

STEPHEN CROLIUS

road transportation to a very low level.

In your view, which factors influence EV adoption in the Middle East?

While car buyers in the Middle East are noted for certain distinct preferences (such as futuristic design and cutting-edge technology), it is clear that the essential bargain is the same in the Middle East as in other geographic markets. Buyers are willing to take on the potential issues of EV ownership—such as where and how EVs can be charged, whether they have enough range for essential trips, and how the cars perform in very hot weather—so that they can claim the environmental benefits that EVs can deliver. Critically, most consumers are only willing to accept this bargain as long as the economic proposition, i.e., the purchase price net of government incentives, is not inferior to that of conventional vehicles.

How can regional governments and

industries work together to encourage the adoption of EVs and address any barriers to their uptake?

Governments and EV producers need to ensure that their combined efforts lead to a viable economic proposition for consumers. In Oman, for example, the government is offering a variety of tax breaks to EV purchasers, including a 100% exemption from customs tax, waiver of registration fees, and a zero percent value-added tax.

Governments can also encourage EV adoption by supporting the development of public charging infrastructure. The Saudi government, for example, has launched the Saudi Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Development Initiative, with plans to install 50,000 charging stations by 2025. Public charging amenities tend to increase the uptake of EVs by reducing concerns about range and enabling EV ownership for consumers who do not have ready access to charging solutions at their

place of residence.

How do EVs fit into the Middle East's energy transition, and what will be the key factors driving their adoption in this region?

The rapid development of solar generating capacity is arguably the centerpiece of the Middle East's transition to green energy. The GCC countries alone expect to have solar capacity of approximately 70GW in place by 2030. For comparison, average electricity demand in the United Kingdom is 30GW. Solar generation and electric vehicles can be developed synergistically. The fact that solar panels only generate electricity when the sun is shining creates a powerful need for grid balancing, i.e., storing excess electricity for use during dark or cloudy periods. The batteries in a nation's fleet of electric vehicles stand out as a resource that can be used in this regard. Although the technology for this, known as ve-

hicle-to-grid, is not yet in widespread use elsewhere in the world, there is little doubt about its eventual deployment. Middle Eastern countries could certainly become leaders in this area.

One other item should be included on the list of factors driving EV adoption: the commitment of car manufacturers to the development of Middle Eastern EV markets. One of the strongest forms of commitment is the establishment of in-market production facilities. In that regard, several favorable developments should be noted. One is Lucid Motors' opening of a plant in Saudi Arabia in September 2023. Another is the substantial Saudi investment in the Chinese EV startup Human Horizons, which will support in-country development, manufacture, and sale of electric vehicles. Of greatest note, perhaps, is the early success of the young Omani company Mays EV. The first Mays vehicle is due to come to market later in 2024, with strong early interest leading the company to increase its first-year production target.

Looking ahead to the next five years, what is your vision for the global EV market and what do you believe will be the primary driving forces behind its expansion?

Business strategists think in terms of demand-side and supply-side drivers of market development. The global EV market has arguably reached an

inflection point past which supply-side forces will become dominant. The main factor underlying this circumstance is the massive amount of capital that automotive OEMs have invested in EV supply chains and production capacity. In the U.S., it is reported that \$165bn was invested between 2015 and 2023 in manufacturing capacity associated with the production of electric vehicles. In the European Union, 38 battery plants were in operation at the end of 2022. Japanese car companies including Toyota, Honda, and Subaru, spurred by concern about intensifying competition from Chinese companies, are busy building battery plants and electric vehicle assembly facilities in their home country and elsewhere. Smaller, newer companies, such as Mays, are also building EV manufacturing capacity.

The investment cases for these facilities may have been based on an appraisal of consumer demand, encouragement from governments, and/or a sincere commitment to sustainable technology. But whatever their motives, the companies have made these investments, and the only way they will be able to achieve an attractive return is to run the plants at capacity. This means generating demand in the marketplace. The auto companies can therefore be expected to use all of the market-building tools at their disposal.

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Chief economists point to stabilising outlook but warn on debt levels

Geneva, Switzerland - Easing inflation and strong global commerce are fueling cautious optimism for recovery but elevated debt levels are becoming a growing concern in both advanced (53%) and developing (64%) economies, according to the latest Chief Economists Outlook published today by the World Economic Forum.

The report, based on a survey of leading chief economists, highlights that debt levels and fiscal challenges are placing significant pressure on economies worldwide leaving them vulnerable to future crises. A growing concern is a potential "fiscal squeeze", where rising debt-servicing costs limit governments to invest in essential sectors such as infrastructure, education and healthcare. In developing economies, 39% of economists expect an increase in defaults over the next year.

"The global economy may be stabilising, but fiscal challenges continue to pose significant risks," said Saadia Zahidi, Managing Director, World Economic Forum. "Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts from policy-makers and stakeholders to ensure that economic recovery is not undermined by these pressures. Now is the time for pragmatic solutions that can strengthen both



The global economy may be stabilising, but fiscal challenges continue to pose significant risks. Now is the time for pragmatic solutions that can strengthen both fiscal resilience and long-term growth

SAADIA ZAHIDI

fiscal resilience and long-term growth."

Diverging growth and debt risks

The global economic outlook varies sharply across regions. In the United States, nearly 90% of chief economists anticipate moderate or strong growth in 2024 and 2025 reflecting confidence in a "soft landing" after a period of tight monetary policy. Some 80% of those surveyed agree that the outcome of the United States election will significantly influence global economic policy, with many citing election-related risks as a major

concern for the year ahead.

In contrast, nearly three-quarters of respondents expect weak growth for the remainder of the year in Europe. Similarly, China's struggles persist, with almost 40% of economists forecasting weak or very weak growth in both 2024 and 2025.

Elsewhere, growth prospects are mixed. In sub-Saharan Africa, a moderate or stronger growth trajectory is anticipated, with expectations improving from 55% in 2024 to 71% in 2025. The Middle East and North Africa region remains uncertain, while Latin America is expected to see modest im-

provements, with a slight uptick in growth in 2025. South Asia also stands out, with over 70% of economists predicting strong or very strong growth in 2024 and 2025, driven by India's robust performance.

Global inflation easing
Global inflation continues to ease, with many chief economists expressing optimism for next year. In the US, the share of chief economists expecting high inflation drops from 21% in 2024 to 6% in 2025. Europe is expected to follow a similar trend, with high expectations for high inflation dropping from 21% this year to 3% next year,

providing some relief to policy-makers.

While a majority of chief economists (54%) expect the condition of the global economy to remain stable in the short term, 37% foresee conditions will weaken, compared to only 9% who expect an improvement.

Policy-makers are facing growing pressure to balance economic growth with other priorities, such as environmental sustainability, economic equality, and social cohesion. Two-thirds of respondents agree that progress on these goals is necessary, even if it slows growth.

However, only 12% believe current efforts are effective.

Political polarisation (91%) and the lack of global cooperation (67%) are identified as major barriers to achieving progress on more balanced growth. But with rising geopolitical tensions and domestic political divisions, prospects for improvement in the short term appear bleak.

Greater political consensus and international collaboration will be essential to balance the quality and quantity of growth, as per the new report.

Long-term risks

Looking ahead, the report highlights that limited fiscal space leaves countries ill-prepared for future crises, particularly in developing economies (82%) compared to advanced economies (59%).

The growing burden of debt is not only a short-term threat to macroeconomic stability but also hampers the ability of countries to address long-term challenges such as climate change, demographic shifts and social cohesion. If debt sustainability remains a significant constraint on countries' ability to spend, economies may struggle to maintain sustainable growth while navigating these pressing global issues.

OECD raises global GDP forecast for 2024

Paris, France - The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) has increased its expectation for the global economic growth from 3.1% to 3.2% on Wednesday.

Releasing its Economic Outlook's Interim Report, the OECD said global output growth has remained resilient and inflation has continued to moderate.

It said, "Growth has been relatively robust in many G20 countries including the United States, Brazil, India, Indonesia and the United Kingdom.

"In contrast, outcomes have remained soft in a few economies, including Germany, and output contracted in Argentina."

The report forecasted that the G20 economies will grow by 3.2%, up 0.1 percentage points from the previous estimation, while the euro area's forecast was unchanged at 0.7% for this year.

Among major eurozone economies, France, Spain and Italy's GDP growth predictions increased while German economy is expected to expand by 0.1%, down 0.1 percentage points from the previous report in May.

Argentina's economy is expected to narrow by 4% in 2024, and Japan was only other country expecting a contraction in the economy among G20 for 2024, by 0.1%.

Anadolu Agency

OPEC says phasing out oil is just fantasy as demand rise

Julianne Geiger

OPEC's latest World Oil Outlook (WOO) 2024 makes it clear: peak oil demand is not on the horizon. Despite ongoing discussions around transitioning to renewable energy, OPEC forecasts global oil demand to grow significantly, reaching over 120mn barrels per day (bpd) by 2050.

This projection is driven by strong demand from non-OECD countries, which are expected to see the majority of growth.

"What the outlook underscores is that the fantasy of phasing out oil and gas bears no relation to fact," OPEC said in its World Oil Market Outlook forward.

From 2023 to 2029, global oil demand is expected to increase by 10.1mn bpd, with non-OECD countries leading the way, adding 9.6mn bpd to reach 66.2mn bpd.

Meanwhile, demand in OECD countries is projected to stagnate, oscillating around 46m bpd. Long-term, non-OECD demand will continue to rise,



OPEC's outlook also underscores that oil and gas will continue to dominate the global energy mix, accounting for over 50% through 2050

adding 28mn bpd by 2050, while OECD demand is expected to decline. India, Other Asia, Africa, and the Middle East will be key drivers of this growth, with India alone expected to increase its demand by 8mn bpd.

Sectors like petrochemicals,

road transportation, and aviation are set to play a critical role in future demand. Petrochemicals alone are projected to account for an additional 4.9mn bpd of oil demand, driven by increasing demand for ethane and naphtha. Road transportation is forecast to

grow significantly before stabilizing, while aviation demand will add another 4mn bpd by 2050.

OPEC's outlook also underscores that oil and gas will continue to dominate the global energy mix, accounting for over 50% through 2050. The organization stresses the importance of continued investment in the oil sector, estimating \$17.4tn will be needed by 2050 to ensure stable supply.

(Source: Oilprice.com)

Bitcoin soars to a one-month high amid interest rate cuts

Tina Teng

Bitcoin prices have surged to their highest level since 26 August, propelled by an acceleration in the global central banks' easing cycle.

The largest cryptocurrency has soared 21% since the second week of September, with its price climbing from above \$53,000 to more than \$64,000 on Wednesday.

Cryptocurrencies are among the high-risk assets that have experienced a significant rally amid central banks' commitments to reduce interest rates.

In September, the European Central Bank implemented its second rate cut of the year, followed by the US Federal Reserve's substantial 0.5% reduction.

On Tuesday, the People's Bank of China introduced a series of easing measures, including cuts to key lending rates and

increased cash injections into the markets to bolster its economy.

These looser liquidity conditions have fuelled a rally in the digital token markets, propelling Bitcoin prices to a one-month high. Historically, Bitcoin prices have tended to trend upwards during periods

when the Fed's monetary policy shifts to easing.

During the 2020 pandemic, Bitcoin prices skyrocketed by 1,600%, reaching more than \$64,000 in April 2021 from the previous year.

This price surge was primarily driven by global central banks' near-zero interest rate policies, which unleashed significant liquidity into the markets, alongside a Bitcoin frenzy in mining and trading activities.

However, the crypto markets experienced a sharp decline from their peak in November 2021, when the Fed signalled its intention to tighten

monetary policy. Consequently, Bitcoin plummeted by 78%, falling to just above \$15,000 by November 2022.

2024 has witnessed a resurgence of enthusiasm for cryptocurrencies, with Bitcoin rising 52%, Ethereum increasing by 12%, and many other digital tokens also experiencing price gains.

Bitcoin continues to outperform in the digital token markets, driven by its growing acceptance among major institutions and regulators. Its price surged by 48% in February following the approval of Bitcoin spot ETFs by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), just before the significant Bitcoin halving event in April.

This event, which occurs approximately every four years, halves the reward for mining new blocks. Since March, Bitcoin's price has remained relatively stable, lacking significant catalysts within the crypto market.

(Source: Euronews.com)



Interest rate cuts: A blessing or a curse for stock market investors?

Colin Laidley

The US Federal Reserve last week cut its benchmark interest rate for the first time in more than four years, beginning a long-awaited process of normalizing monetary policy after holding rates at a two-decade high for more than a year.

Market participants, who were abnormally uncertain about the outcome going into the latest Fed meeting, weren't immediately sure what to make of the decision. Eventually, jitters about the magnitude of the Fed's half-percentage point cut wore off and stocks surged to record highs on Thursday.

Wall Street's reaction reflected a peculiar mix of apprehension and optimism in financial markets. On the one hand, rate cuts are broadly supportive of the stock market because they reduce the returns of fixed-income investments and promote business growth. But easing monetary policy is also often a sign that policymakers see trouble ahead for the economy, and that is especially true of large cuts like last week's.

Wall Street's enthusiasm on last Thursday was, from a historical perspective, more warranted than its caution on Wednesday.

According to a recent Bank of



America (BoFA) analysis, of the last 10 Fed policy-easing cycles—going back to 1974—the S&P 500 has returned 11% on average in the 12 months following the first rate cut. That's slightly below the index's average return of 12% a year since the start of the 1970s, but a respectable return nonetheless.

However, half of those 10 rate cuts were followed within 12 months by a recession. When you remove those cuts that coincided with recession, the S&P 500's average 12-month return jumps to almost 21%.

Some have expressed concern that the stock market's strong

showing so far this year could limit the S&P 500's near-term upside. After all, Wall Street has been anticipating that the Fed would cut rates all year, driving the S&P 500 up about 20% since the start of the year.

BoFA analysts, however, found little in the way of a clear relationship between performance heading into and out of a first rate cut, challenging the supposition that the boost stocks get from cuts is front-loaded. For example, in 1995, the S&P 500 was up 26% over the prior 12 months and was within 1% of its then-all-time high when the Fed started to cut rates.

(Source: Investopedia.com)



Al Maha wins ‘Best Finance Team of the Year’ award at Oman CFO Forum

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company has won the prestigious ‘Best Finance Team of the Year’ award in the Oil and Gas category at the Oman CFO Forum.

The award recognises the team’s outstanding contributions to financial performance, strategic growth, and operational excellence.

The Oman CFO Forum, held at the Oman Sheraton Hotel in Muscat, was graced by H E Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority, as the chief guest.

The event brought together top finance executives, industry experts, and thought leaders from across the sultanate and beyond. It served as a platform for insightful discussions on key challenges, emerging trends, and

fostering strategic partnerships to empower CFOs in driving innovation and unlocking sustainable growth opportunities.

Al Maha’s finance team played a pivotal role in the company’s success, which contributed to winning the Best Finance Team of the Year award at the Oman CFO Forum. The team’s efforts focused on meeting and exceeding financial targets, achieving the highest net profits and the highest share prices among the fuel marketing companies in Oman.

A strong emphasis was placed on profit growth, alongside implementing cost-saving measures and improving operational efficiency. One of the key reasons for receiving this award was the team’s commitment to innovation and efficiency, particularly

through digital transformation.

By automating routine tasks, centralising operations, and using advanced analytics for better decision-making, the team enhanced accuracy, reduced errors, and optimised resource allocation, leading to significant performance improvements.

In addition to their financial acumen, Al Maha’s finance team demonstrated exceptional foresight by leading the company’s digital transformation efforts. By integrating cutting-edge technologies such as Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and cloud-based financial systems, the team improved efficiency and also enhanced the scalability and agility of financial operations.

Their implementation of a digital finance dashboard enabled real-time monitoring of key met-

rics, empowering leadership to make data-driven decisions swiftly.

This forward-thinking approach ensured that Al Maha remained adaptable in a rapidly evolving market, further cementing its position as an industry leader.

The finance team’s influence extended beyond financial metrics, playing a vital role in Al Maha’s strategic initiatives such as market expansion and product diversification. The team guidance in launching high-margin product lines and non-fuel retail projects bolstered the company’s revenue and stability.

Moreover, the team dedication to fostering collaboration and team development contributed to a strong work culture and continuous growth.

Audi ropes in EVO Oman to conduct EV training at Youth Centre

Audi Oman, represented by Premium Motors, in collaboration with EVO Oman, recently hosted a specialised training session at the Youth Center to introduce Audi’s electric vehicle (EV) technology, particularly the Audi e-tron.

The event aimed to familiarise participants with Audi’s electric vehicles and underscore the significance of sustainable mobility solutions.

The EVO Oman, the leading provider of electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the Sultanate, played a crucial role in the event. Known for offering comprehensive charging solutions for both individual EV owners and businesses, EVO is at the forefront of supporting Oman’s transition to greener transportation.

The Youth Centre, which focuses on developing young talents and equipping them with the skills needed for Oman’s future, welcomed this initiative as an opportunity to engage youth in the rapidly evolving world of electric vehicles.

Through such collaborations, Audi Oman aims to promote environmental responsibility and innovation among the younger generation. Audi Oman’s broader commitment to society is reflected in this partnership. By working with the Youth Centre, Audi is offering sustainable transportation solutions and fostering a culture of innovation and environmental consciousness.

Commenting on the initiative, Christian Nehme, General Manager of Premium Motors Oman, said, “At Audi Oman, we believe that the future of transportation



lies in sustainability. By partnering with the Youth Center and EVO Oman, we are preparing the next generation to embrace the EV revolution, ensuring a greener, more responsible future for all.”

Audi Oman’s collaboration with EVO extends further by launching Oman’s largest network of interconnected EV chargers, providing Audi EV owners with a seamless and convenient charging experience across the country.

The Audi Group is one of the most successful manufacturers of automobiles and motorcycles in the premium and luxury segment. The brands Audi, Bentley, Lamborghini, and Ducati produce at 21 locations in 12 countries.

In 2023, the Audi Group delivered 1.86mn Audi vehicles, 13,560 Bentley vehicles, 10,112 Lamborghini vehicles, and 58,224 Ducati motorcycles to customers. In the 2023 fiscal year, AUDI Group generated a total revenue of €69.9bn and an

operating profit of €6.3bn. With its attractive brands, new models, innovative mobility offerings and groundbreaking services, the group is systematically pursuing its path toward becoming a provider of sustainable, individual, premium mobility.

AUDI AG’s commitment to the region was confirmed through the foundation of its fully owned subsidiary in 2005, Audi Middle East, which covers Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

Premium Motors is the official Audi importer in Oman since 2020. With its strong reputation Premium Motors has become a trusted distributor for Audi vehicles in Oman. Offering the best-in-class customer service and a wide range of Audi models, Premium Motors also offers an array of services, including comprehensive after-sales support such as maintenance, repairs, and genuine Audi parts.



‘Tea & Tiles’ event brings together interior designers

Blue Starz Enterprises SPC on September 18 hosted the highly anticipated ‘Tea & Tiles’ event at the RAK Ceramics showroom in Mabela, Muscat.

The evening gathered an exclusive group of 40-50 interior designers, architects and contractors for a memorable experience filled with insightful conversations, industry knowledge exchange, and valuable networking opportunities.

The event offered guests a unique chance to explore RAK Ceramics’ wide range of premium products, large format slabs in particular, ideal for upcoming design projects. Attendees were treated to an immersive experience that showcased the latest in ceramic tiles and sanitary ware solutions, further strengthening connections within Muscat’s design and contracting community.

In addition to the product showcase, a real-time printing photo booth captured and eternalised the evening’s best mo-

ments, while the refreshment station delighted guests with a selection of delectable snacks. Special appreciation goes to 11:11 Café, located in Qurum, for sponsoring the event’s hot and cold beverages, providing exceptional tea and coffee to keep the conversations flowing.

The ‘Tea & Tiles’ event was a success, offering a blend of inspiration, education, and collaboration for all attendees, solidifying RAK Ceramics and Blue Starz Enterprises SPC as key partners in Oman’s design and construction landscape.

Blue Starz Enterprises SPC is committed to providing world-class interior and exterior design solutions through its partnership with renowned brands such as RAK Ceramics, Italgrnati, Energieker, La Fabbria, Argenta Ceramica, and Ecoceramic. With a focus on quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction, Blue Starz Enterprises SPC continues to support Muscat’s design and contracting community.

Bahar names 1st raffle winners of ‘dream Tesla’

Bahar, the flagship brand of National Detergent Company (NDC), is pleased to announce the winners of the first raffle draw in its ongoing promotion ‘Buy Bahar Win Your Dream Tesla’.

Launched on July 25 and to continue until October 7, this campaign has garnered significant engagement from loyal customers throughout Oman.

The first raffle has resulted in ten consumers winning gift vouchers worth RO50 each. Additionally, ten participants won brand-new washing machines, and five individuals have won the iPhone 14, while another five have won the latest iPhone 15. Furthermore, five participants were lucky to win Samsung Galaxy S24.

This promotion presents an exceptional opportunity for residents to win a range of prizes, including the Mega prize of a Tesla



Model Y, which is the first of its kind in the sultanate. All are winners with the instant ‘Scratch and Win’, customers have numerous opportunities to win with every purchase. This promotion is available in all leading Hyper/Supermarkets in Oman, and participation requires purchasing any

Bahar, No.1, Farah, Pinex and Spark products just for RO3 and entering details in the raffle coupon for a chance to win in the upcoming raffles.

Reflecting on the promotion’s success, Murali Sundar, CEO of National Detergent Company, said that the team in Bahar is

“delighted by the enthusiastic participation and engagement from our customers.”

This campaign, he said, was designed not only to reward our customers but also to celebrate the longstanding trust and loyalty they have shown towards Bahar. “The winners of this first

draw exemplify our commitment to offering unique and valuable rewards. We look forward to the forthcoming draw and are dedicated to continuing to provide exceptional value and memorable experiences.”

Anish Kumar, Head of Marketing and Sales at NDC, added, “The success of the first raffle has been remarkable, and we are excited to see the momentum build as we approach the final grand prize draw. At Bahar, we aim to exceed traditional promotional methods and deliver extraordinary value to our customers.

“The positive feedback from our winners highlights the impact of this campaign, and we are confident it will further strengthen the bond between Bahar and its devoted consumers.”

SBA offers Akeed benefits with ever-popular Corolla

‘Drive one of Toyota’s best-selling sedans with exclusive Akeed benefits’, Saud Bahwan Automotive (SBA) gives a call, inviting its prospective customers to ‘become a Corolla owner with service upgrades from two years/20,000km or ten years/100,000km - whichever is earlier - along with 1st year free insurance’.

‘Enjoy the winning season at Toyota and participate in the grand raffle to win an All-new Toyota Prado,’ the company further stated.

As the campaign ends on October 31, SBA encouraged people to head to their nearest Toyota showroom and check out Toyota’s amazing product lineup.

‘Take advantage of the Akeed



benefits and invest in a Corolla this season. Built on the brand ethos of quality, durability, and reliability, the sedan remains a top-notch household choice. It

delivers an exhilarating experience packed with advanced safety, technologies and unmatched fuel efficiency’, it added.

Exploring the vehicle dynamics, the Corolla features a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder Dynamic Force engine that produces 168hp and 20.39 kg/m of torque. For a more

fuel-efficient option, opt for the 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine that produces 121hp and 15.7kg/m of torque. Each engine type is paired with a direct-shift CVT transmission. Promising agility and high confidence, the Corolla is utilitarian at all trim levels.

Make fun memories and create joyous moments in the Corolla which is built for comfort, convenience, and safety of your family. The makers of the Corolla have always opted for a simple yet appealing interior style with impressive space, integrated functionalities, and intuitive controls. Experience the pillowy, cushion-fitted seating space created with fine-quality material with supporting armrests, and comfortable legroom space.

Will simultaneous polls work in India?

Critics of the move, especially opposition parties, point out that this approach undermines federalism

New Delhi, India - A key election pledge by India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the country's 2024 election was to adopt the 'One Nation One Election', or ONOE initiative.

It envisages holding elections to India's lower house of parliament (Lok Sabha) at the same time as votes for state assemblies, municipalities and village councils (panchayats) - once every five years.

ONOE would replace India's current electoral system, where parliamentary, assembly, and local body elections are held separately. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi further reiterated his government's commitment to ONOE in his Independence Day address last month, appealing to all political parties to make his pledge a reality.

Synchronising electoral cycles

Last week, a voluminous report on ONOE was approved by Modi's cabinet after a high-level panel headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind submitted its recommendations to align the electoral cycles of the central and state governments.

In the first step, the panel recommended simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies.

The second step - which would take place within 100 days of the first - would include elections to all rural and urban local bodies.

The Kovind panel also called for the creation of an implementation group to ensure the smooth rollout of its recommendations. According to the report, a comparative analysis of countries that hold simultaneous elections - such as Germany, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines and Belgium - was conducted in order



A paramilitary personnel stands guard as the voters queue up to cast their vote for the second phase of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections, in Budgam on Wednesday (ANI)

We do not stand with this. ONOE cannot work in a democracy. Elections need be held as and when, for our democracy to survive

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE

to adopt best practices for the ONOE system.

"We plan to implement one nation one poll within tenure of this government," said home minister Amit Shah, after the completion of 100 days in office.

The BJP, which firmly backs the proposal, argues that ONOE will result in higher economic growth, provide for better governance, reduce wasting public funds and will counter voter fatigue and increase voter

turnout.

"One cannot always be in campaign and election mode. Having frequent elections distracts from governance, which is very important to electors," said Shazia Ilmi, a BJP spokesperson, who added that the ONOE system would allow legislators to focus on more local issues in their respective constituencies.

"We have to be open to this idea and let us look at the positives," Ilmi told DW.

Opponents warn of risk to federalism

Critics of the move, especially mainstream opposition parties, pointed out that this approach undermines federalism and risks shifting India toward a presidential election model. Some believe the move also attempts to strengthen the central government and promote a pan-Indian Hindu-nationalist identity.

"We do not stand with this. ONOE cannot work in a democracy. Elections need be held as and when required if we want our democracy to survive," Congress party president Mallikarjun Kharge told local media.

Regional political parties, which also slammed the move, said ONOE is an attempt to cen-

tralise and homogenise a vast and diverse country which is impractical as it bypasses the federal structure, essentially a union of states.

"ONOE goes against the basic tenets of federalism enshrined in the Indian constitution. State elections are contested on regional issues and in case of ONOE, national issues will prevail over regional aspirations," R P Singh, a political advisor to the regional Samajwadi Party, told DW.

"Moreover, it is fraught with threatening consequences for India's democratic polity despite claims of supposed benefits," added Singh.

Asaduddin Owaisi, a lawmaker belonging to the All India Majlis-e-Mtlehadul Muslimeen,

told DW that ONOE cannot be imposed on a diverse and pluralistic country like India.

"This grandiose proposal is just another cheap stunt by the anti-democratic BJP. They fail to realise that it is a threat to regional parties, federalism, and India's diversity," said Owaisi.

Supporters cite cost savings

Proponents of the ONOE system argue that expenditure is a central reason to support the idea. Currently, elections are held at different times across India, requiring massive expenditure. Holding all elections together could save both money and time.

However, former Chief Election Commissioner S Y Quraishi

has flagged concerns about the costs incurred for ONOE and the extensive preparations needed.

"It is a logistical nightmare that they will require three times the number of electronic voting machines and voter verifiable paper audit trails. The money required is huge and the so-called idea behind ONOE is to ostensibly cut down expenses," Quraishi told DW.

He further pointed out that the problem of election costs could be better addressed through reforms in political financing.

"There are practical difficulties and needs to be debated in parliament. Also, holding simultaneous elections for the general election, state assemblies and local bodies can result in the dilution of democratic accountability," he added.

Hurdles ahead

The BJP-led ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) still faces significant hurdles as the implementation pivots on securing a two-thirds majority in parliament and necessitates amendments to India's Constitution. Unlike its two previous terms, Modi's government will now have to bank on its allies and friendly parties to get the bills passed.

Though it has a simple majority in both Houses, the ruling alliance falls short of the required two-thirds mark by over 50 votes in the upper house or Rajya Sabha and 72 in Lok Sabha. Additionally, approval from all states and federal territories is compulsory. The bill is expected to be introduced in the upcoming winter session of parliament. However, given the vociferous opposition and the lack of parliamentary numbers on its side, the ruling party will face hurdles.

DW

New train to link Berlin and Paris in eight hours

Berlin, Germany - A new high-speed train, operated by German rail operator Deutsche Bahn and France's SNCF, will allow passengers to travel between Berlin and Paris in approximately eight hours, Deutsche Bahn announced on Tuesday.

The first departure is scheduled for December.

"This is the first daytime direct connection between the capitals of Germany and France, and it is also a symbol of a growing Europe," said Michael Peterson, an executive at Deutsche Bahn.

"This new connection is fur-

ther proof of the Franco-German friendship and contributes to a shared goal of our two countries: more CO2-free mobility," added Alain Krakovitch from SNCF.

What will the journey look like?

The train is set to depart from Berlin at 11:54am and arrive at Paris' Gare de l'Est at 7:55pm In the reverse direction, it will leave Paris at 9:55am and arrive in Berlin at 6:03pm.

The route will stop in Strasbourg, France, and not Saarbrücken, as initially requested by Deutsche Bahn.

It will also make stops in the German cities of Frankfurt and Karlsruhe.

Second-class tickets will be available starting at €60 (US\$67), slightly more expensive than the cheapest flights between the two capitals.

With this route, the number of daily connections between France and Germany will increase from 24 to 26.

Berlin and Paris have been connected by a long-distance night train service, operated by Austrian Railways, although it is currently suspended due to construction work. DW

Conflict keeps millions of children out of school in West and Central Africa

Abuja, Nigeria - Ongoing conflicts across West and Central Africa have disrupted the education of around 2.8mn children, according to a recent United Nations report. Over 14,000 schools in the regions were closed by the second quarter of 2024 - 1,000 more schools than the previous year.

The global number of out-of-school children totals 250mn, according to 2023 UNESCO figures. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for close to 30% of all out-of-school children around the world, and the number is on the rise.

Armed conflicts have ravaged communities and displaced many people.

"The key challenge they are facing then is not related to getting an education, but rather how to access basic survival needs - food, water, and medical services," Dr Ibrahim Baba Shatambaya, a political science lecturer at Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, Nigeria, told DW.

Then there is the issue of violence directly affecting schools. "Education is under siege in West and Central Africa. The deliberate targeting of schools and the systemic denial of education because of conflict is nothing short of a catastrophe," said Hassane Hamadou, Norwegian Refugee Council regional director.

Countries like Nigeria, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Mali, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are bearing the brunt of this crisis as schools are repeatedly attacked by armed groups.



This file photo shows families and relatives of abducted girls gathering to commemorate the 10th anniversary since the kidnapping by militants of Boko Haram, in Abuja, Nigeria, on April 14, 2024

Devastation in Nigeria

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is facing a severe education crisis. Over 15.23mn children are out of school, according to UNESCO.

The problem is largely affecting the northern part of the country, which has been besieged by the Boko Haram insurgency and kidnapping crisis in the past decades.

The regional disparity is confirmed in figures showing that the Northwest and Northeast regions of Nigeria count 8.04mn and 5.06mn out-of-school children, respectively, compared to 2.58mn in southern Nigeria.

"In the case of Northwest Nigeria, kidnappings, and other forms of criminality, have made that part of the country unstable," Shatambaya said.

The reasons for the prevalence of conflicts in these regions are multifaceted, says Dr

Michael Ndimancho, a political analyst at the University of Douala in Cameroon.

"When you look at countries like Nigeria and Cameroon ... there are many historical issues at play," he said, mentioning the example of the Boko Haram insurgency. "And in West and Central Africa, you have the problem of borders which are not only large but very porous."

For Shatambaya, it is more a question of governance in Nigeria at the local, state and federal levels. He says government measures so far have not been adequate. "Each of these actors has a stake in managing crises associated with conflicts and other social ills like the forced movement of people," he said.

Cameroon's shattered futures

The Anglophone regions of Cameroon are facing a similar situation. According to UN and

UNICEF figures, over 700,000 children in 2021, and 855,000 in 2019 were out of school in Northwest and Southwest Cameroon, where armed separatist groups have targeted schools.

"It is quite alarming that we have up to 2.8mn children who have been out of school," Biezel Mafor, a civil society activist from Cameroon, told DW. "Unfortunately, Cameroon has not been left out of this statistic, and with the crisis going on, it is quite sad that these children see their dreams being shattered."

For the last several years, the Anglophone regions of the country have been involved in a separatist conflict between the Cameroonian government and Ambazonian separatist groups, as well as infighting among different separatist groups. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced and thousands killed.

DW

FIVE IN ONE



The Lijian-1 Y4 commercial carrier rocket carrying five satellites blasts off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China on Wednesday (Xinhua)

China test-fires intercontinental ballistic missile into Pacific Ocean

Beijing, China - China on Wednesday said that it has test launched an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) into the Pacific Ocean.

The missile, carrying a dummy warhead, was fired by the People's Liberation Army (PLA)'s Rocket Force and landed on the high seas of the Pacific Ocean, *Global Times* reported, citing the Defence Ministry's statement.

The launch as per Chinese Defence Ministry was part of the country's annual training plan and 'not aimed at any specific country or target'.

China said that the launch was part of 'a routine arrangement in the annual training plan and relevant countries had been notified in advance' as per a report in Xinhua.

"The launch tested weaponry performance and military training effectiveness and achieved desired goals," the ministry noted as per Xinhua.

This is the first time since 1989 that China is known to have successfully conducted an atmospheric test of an ICBM. The first test of a Chinese ICBM took place in May 1980 and since then most of China's nu-



Missile, carrying a dummy warhead, was fired by the People's Liberation Army's Rocket Force and landed on the high seas of Pacific Ocean

clear weapons tests have been conducted underground. Incidentally, North Korea has recently conducted several short-range ballistic missile

tests, flying towards the Sea of Japan. Earlier, in April this year the US had deployed its Mid-Range Capability, or Typhon, missile system to the Philippines during a joint exercise.

Under the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) between the US and the then-Soviet Union, all land-based missiles, conventional and nuclear, that could travel between 500km and 5,500km (310 miles and 3,400 miles) had been banned.

The US however, suspended the INF in 2019, claiming that the Russians did not adhered to

its terms and had been secretly testing and fielding missiles that violated the pact.

Meanwhile, Japan claimed China 'gave no advance notice' before test-firing the ICBM into the Pacific Ocean.

"China's growing military activity is a serious concern," top government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi said in a news conference in Tokyo.

He said Japan would 'continue to carry out surveillance activities' following the test-launch, reported Tokyo-based Kyodo News.

Agencies

UN: Biden throws weight behind Security Council reform, expansion

Washington, D.C., US - US President Joe Biden used his last address to the UN General Assembly to urge member states to support the expansion of the oft-deadlocked Security Council, saying it needs 'new voices'.

Addressing fellow global leaders at the UN's New York headquarters, Biden said the council, 'like the UN itself, needs to go back to the job of making peace, of brokering deals to end wars and suffering'.

"I want to get things done together. In order to do that, we must build a stronger, more effective and more inclusive United Nations," Biden said in his farewell address. "The UN needs to adapt and bring new voices and new perspectives. That's why we support reforming and expanding the membership of the UN Security Council."

The problems have grown increasingly acute in recent years as the Council has been unable to reach a consensus to address the world's most pressing crises. Permanent members, including the US, China and Russia, often use their veto power to block action.

The US has repeatedly done so as the Council has sought to address the humanitarian catastrophe in the besieged Gaza Strip where Israel's war has led to more than 41,000 deaths, widespread hunger and the reemergence of diseases not seen in decades.

Russia and China have sepa-



US President Joe Biden addressed his counterparts for a final time before departing office in January

rately prevented the Council from addressing matters related to North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, as well as the Kremlin's war on Ukraine.

Aside from the trio of nations, the UK and France also wield veto power. Many nations agree

that the Council needs to be overhauled, but significant differences about how that is to be accomplished have led to a stalemate in the process.

As he addressed his counterparts for a final time before departing office in January, the US

president said he has 'hope' world leaders will be able to find a 'way forward' to address the challenges of war, hunger, terrorism and displacement.

"I truly believe we're in another inflection point in world history," said Biden. "The choices we

make today will determine our future for decades to come."

Turning to the Kremlin's war on Ukraine, Biden said Russian President Vladimir Putin 'has failed' to destroy Ukraine, and instead provided the foundation for NATO to expand and further

The UN needs to adapt and bring new voices and new perspectives. That's why we support reforming and expanding the membership of the UN Security Council

JOE BIDEN

strengthen the transatlantic alliance. "But we cannot let up. The world now has another choice to make. Will we sustain our support to help Ukraine win this war and preserve his freedom or walk away, let aggression be renewed and a nation be destroyed?" he asked.

Biden maintained that Washington is ready to cooperate with China 'on urgent challenges of the good of our people and the people everywhere', citing cooperation with Beijing on combatting synthetic opioids as evidence of his efforts to 'responsibly manage the competition with China'.

He maintained, however, that the US 'is unabashed, pushing back against unfair economic competition, against military coercion of other nations in the South China Sea and maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits'.

Anadolu Agency

German Green Party leaders step down after poll defeat

Berlin, Germany - The co-chairs of Germany's Green Party have announced their decision to step down on Wednesday after their party's humiliating defeat in the regional elections.

Omid Nouripour and Ricarda Lang told a press conference in Berlin that they will not stand as candidates at the party's upcoming conference in November, ahead of general elections next year.

"We have come to the conclusion that a new start is needed," Nouripour said, adding that the Green Party's defeat in the Brandenburg elections on Sunday was 'a testament to the deepest crisis of the party' for a decade.

Lang said 'new faces' are now needed to lead the party out of this crisis amid a string of electoral defeats, and growing criticisms directed at the party's leadership. "Now is not the time to stick to the chair at all costs. Now is the time to take responsibility, and we are taking that responsibility by enabling a fresh start," Lang added.

The pro-environment Green Party suffered heavy losses in regional elections in Brandenburg, Saxony and Thuringia this month.

Anadolu Agency

Turkish first lady meets daughter of Malcolm X

New York, US - Turkish first lady Emine Erdogan on Tuesday met with Ilyasah Shabazz, the daughter of US civil rights leader Malcolm X, at the Turkish House in New York.

During the meeting, the first lady highlighted the global impact of Malcolm X's struggle for freedom, equality, and justice, as well as his inspirational role in movements against injustice worldwide, according to presidential sources.

The two also discussed the similarities between Malcolm X's fight and the human rights and justice efforts of Turkish activist Sule Yuksel Senler. They considered potential collaborative projects with the foundation established to preserve Senler's legacy.

"We came together at the Turkish House with Ilyasah Shabazz, the precious daughter of Malcolm X, who is a symbol of the fight against racism in Amer-



Emine Erdogan and Ilyasah Shabazz met at the Turkish House in New York

ican history," the first lady said on X.

They also touched upon the Malcolm X and Dr Betty Shabazz Memorial and Educational Centre and exchanged ideas about cooperation with the Sule Yuksel Senler Foundation.

Senler, one of the most renowned names in Muslim women's struggle for religious freedom, died in 2019. The foundation with the same name was established one year later to honour her.

Anadolu Agency

Trump warned of death threats from Iran

Florida, US - Donald Trump has been briefed by US intelligence about death threats from Iran, his presidential campaign said in a statement on Tuesday.

The Republican presidential candidate 'was briefed earlier today by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence regarding real and specific threats from Iran to assassinate him in an effort to destabilise and sow chaos in the United States', Trump campaign communications director Steven Cheung said in a statement.

According to Cheung, 'intelligence officials have identified that these continued and coordinated attacks have heightened in the past few months'.

Law enforcement officials were working to ensure Trump was protected and the November 5 presidential election was free from interference, he added.

Iran denied accusations that it was trying to kill Trump earlier this summer, shortly after a gunman opened fire at a rally in Pennsylvania, killing one person



Authorities said Ryan R pointed a rifle through a fence at Trump's Florida golf club on September 15

and wounding the presidential candidate.

The US has also accused Iran of hacking Trump's campaign, saying Tehran is trying to influence the 2024 election.

Earlier this month, US officials said Iranian cyberattackers offered 'stolen, non-public' material from Trump's campaign to the staff of his then-White House

rival, Joe Biden.

'Foreign actors are increasing their election influence activities' as Election Day in November approaches, the US statement said, singling out Russia, Iran and China as 'trying by some measure to exacerbate divisions in US society for their own benefit'.

Iranian cyberattackers also tried to share information stolen

from the Trump campaign with US media organisations, the officials said. Iran denied the allegations. The US goes to the polls on November 5. Polls show Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris, who launched her campaign after Biden dropped out earlier this summer, are still neck and neck.

DW

Lebanon: 16 killed in Israeli strikes

Israeli army said it struck over 100 Hezbollah targets in Lebanon since Wednesday morning

Istanbul, Turkey - At least 16 people were killed and dozens injured in fresh Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon on Wednesday, according to Lebanese authorities and media reports.

The Health Ministry said four people were killed and 38 others injured in Israeli airstrikes on the Baalbek-Hermel province in eastern Lebanon.

Five more people were killed and 27 others wounded in Israeli attacks in the towns of Tebnine and Bint Jbeil in southern Lebanon, the ministry added in a statement.

Israeli warplanes also hit the southern town of Joun, killing four people and injuring several others, the state-run National News Agency reported.

Three more people lost their lives and nine others were injured in another airstrike in the town of Maaysrah in Keserwan in northeastern Lebanon, the broadcaster said.

It was the first time for Israeli warplanes to strike Keserwan since the outbreak of cross-border



Israel has launched waves of deadly airstrikes in Lebanon since Monday morning, killing nearly 570 people and injuring over 1,800 others, according to Lebanese health authorities

Pope Francis on Wednesday called on the international community to ‘make every effort to stop this terrible escalation’ after days of intense Israeli airstrikes killed hundreds in Lebanon

der clashes with Hezbollah on October 8 last year.

The area is inhabited by Shias, according to an Anadolu reporter.

The Israeli army said that it struck over 100 Hezbollah-linked targets in Lebanon since Wednesday morning.

Israel has launched waves of

deadly airstrikes in Lebanon since Monday morning, killing nearly 570 people and injuring over 1,800 others, according to Lebanese health authorities.

Hezbollah and Israel have been engaged in cross-border warfare since the start of the Israeli war on Gaza.

The international community has warned against the strikes on Lebanon, as they raise the spectre of spreading the Gaza conflict regionally.

Rockets launched from Lebanon

The Israeli army said on Wednesday that 40 rockets were launched from Lebanon into northern Israel.

Air-raid sirens sounded in several cities in northern Israel, including Safed, Tiberias, Western Galilee, Upper Galilee, Mount Meron, and the Carmel region.

‘After sirens were activated in the Upper Galilee area, approximately 40 projectiles were de-

tected crossing from Lebanese territory, some of which were intercepted,’ the military said in a statement.

No injuries were reported. Israeli media outlets reported several interceptions over the city of Safad.

The Israeli army vowed to continue its attacks against what it called Hezbollah targets and weapon depots across Lebanon.

Hezbollah, for its part, said that it shelled Hatzor settlement

and Dado military base in northern Israel with dozens of rockets

It said the attacks were ‘in support of our steadfast Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and their resistance, and in defence of Lebanon and its people’.

‘Possible ground operation’

The Israeli army is preparing for ‘a possible ground operation’ against Lebanon, Israeli media said on Wednesday.

Public broadcaster KAN said Defence Minister Yoav Gallant met on Tuesday with soldiers training for a ground invasion scenario into Lebanon.

‘Israel is preparing for a possible ground operation in Lebanon, as its preparations continue,’ KAN commented on Gallant’s meeting with soldiers.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli army on the report.

Meanwhile, Pope Francis on Wednesday called on the international community to ‘make every effort to stop this terrible escalation’ after days of intense Israeli airstrikes killed hundreds in Lebanon.

“I am saddened by the news coming out of Lebanon,” the pope said at his weekly general audience at the Vatican, voicing hope ‘that the international community will make every effort to stop this terrible escalation’, which he called ‘unacceptable’.

He expressed ‘closeness’ to the Lebanese people, ‘who have already suffered too much in the recent past’.

Anadolu Agency

Bangladesh calls for conference to solve ongoing Rohingya crisis

New York, US - Bangladesh has called for an ‘all stakeholders’ conference’ to address the ongoing Rohingya crisis, as the country ‘reached its limits’ in hosting the world’s most persecuted community.

“Bangladesh has reached her limits,” Muhammad Yunus, chief adviser to the transitional government, said at a side event of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

An eminent economist, Yunus proposed an ‘all stakeholders’ conference’ to review the crisis and suggest innovative solutions.

Expressing concern over deteriorating security in the border region, Yunus called on international actors, including the UN Security Council and Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to acknowledge these challenges in their approach.

“Delayed repatriation has resulted in loss of human capital,



both for Rohingyas and Myanmar,” he warned, stressing that the challenges faced by Myanmar could spill over to neighbouring countries.

Noting not a single Rohingya has been able to return to Myanmar in the past seven years due

to unaddressed root causes, he said repatriation remains the only sustainable solution to the crisis.

He urged the international community to support justice and accountability mechanisms for crimes committed against the Rohingya. Around 1.2mn Ro-

hingya have been living in Bangladesh since August 2017, fleeing a severe military crackdown in Myanmar’s Rakhine state. In recent weeks, hundreds of new Rohingya refugees arrived in the South Asian country.

Anadolu Agency

Israel kills 28 more Gazans as death toll approaches 41,500

Gaza City, Palestine - Israeli attacks killed 28 more Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, taking the overall death toll since last October 7 to 41,495, the Health Ministry in the enclave said on Wednesday.

A ministry statement added that some 96,006 others have been injured in the ongoing assault. “Israeli forces killed 28 people and injured 85 others in four ‘massacres’ of families in the last 24 hours,” the ministry said.

“Many people are still trapped under the rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them,” it added.

Israel has continued its brutal offensive on the Gaza Strip following an attack by the Palestinian group Hamas last October 7, despite a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire.

Meanwhile, at least 35 more Palestinians were detained in Israeli military raids in the occupied



West Bank on Wednesday, according to prisoners’ affairs groups.

A woman was among the detainees in the raids that targeted most cities of the West Bank, the Commission of Detainees’ Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoner Society said in a joint statement.

“The arrests were marked by attacks on houses and threats against families of the detainees,” the statement said.

The new arrests brought the total number of Palestinians detained by the Israeli army in the West Bank since October last year to over 10,900, including those who were released after being arrested, according to Palestinian figures.

The figure doesn’t include those arrested from the Gaza Strip whose numbers are estimated to be in the thousands.

Anadolu Agency

World leaders condemn Israel’s war on Gaza Strip in UN speeches

New York, US - World leaders condemned Israel’s war on the Gaza Strip, calling for global action at the UN General Assembly in New York on Tuesday.

“We will not sit silent and watch as apartheid is perpetrated against others,” said South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, addressing the General Assembly, evoking his country’s decades-long fight against apartheid, which finally ended with success in the 1990s.

He also welcomed the international support for the genocide case South Africa has filed against Israel at the International Court of Justice.

“The only lasting solution is the establishment of a Palestinian state, a state that will exist side

by side with Israel, with East Jerusalem as its capital,” he said.

In his remarks, Ramaphosa also called for sweeping reforms to the UN Security Council, criticising its current structure as outdated. He argued that it cannot remain an ‘exclusive club of five nations’.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro criticised Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday for Israel’s attacks on the Gaza Strip during his speech to the UN General Assembly.

“It is in this inequality...that we find the logic of the mass destruction unleashed by the climate crisis and the logic of the bombs dropped by a criminal like Netanyahu on Gaza,” said Petro.

“When Gaza dies, all of hu-



The UN General Assembly session, gathering world leaders, is set to continue until September 30

manity will die,” he said. “Today, we have 20,000 dead children. Presidents laugh at this situation in the UN General Assembly.”

Petro said only the voices of world powers are heard on the international stage.

“The power of a country in the world is no longer exercised by political and economic power, but by destroying humanity. Those of us who have the power to sustain life speak without being paid attention to. That is why they do not listen to us when we vote to stop the genocide in Gaza. The presidents who can destroy humanity do not listen to us,” he said.

The Emir of Qatar called for the Israeli wars against Gaza and Lebanon to stop, vowing to con-

tinue mediation efforts ‘until a permanent ceasefire is reached’ in Gaza.

In his speech, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani said Gaza ceasefire mediation is ‘a strategic political choice at the regional and international levels and a humanitarian duty before being a political one’.

“We will continue to make efforts with our partners until a permanent ceasefire is reached, securing the release of prisoners and detainees, taking the path of a just solution in accordance with the resolutions of the international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative, and enabling the Palestinian people to obtain all their legitimate rights.”

Anadolu Agency

AL ZUBAIR POSITIVE DESPITE MONZA DISAPPOINTMENT

Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Team suffer Fanatec GT World Challenge setback in Italy

Monza, Italy - The Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Team suffered a setback to their 2024 Fanatec GT World Challenge powered by AWS Endurance Cup title ambitions after a premature retirement from the fourth round at the Monza circuit in Italy on Sunday.

After starting the three-hour race from the rear of the Gold Cup grid, Oman's Al Faisal bin Khalid al Zubair was hit from behind by another car after just six laps of the race and the damage sustained to the Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo made it impossible for Al Zubair, Australian team debutant Broc Feeney and Austrian Dominik Baumann to continue.

A disappointed Al Zubair said: "Unfortunately, it was not the best of weekends. It started off quite difficult with the car set-up for us and the Pro car in the team. Then, in qualifying, we had a real issue where we couldn't get our tyres to really switch on. That allowed us to qualify sixth in class.

"From then on, we went for quite an aggressive set-up for the race. About 20 minutes into the race, I had an accident into turn one. There was too much damage to the car and that forced us to retire from the race. We are still second in the championship with one round to go. That is a positive and I am looking forward to the next round in Jeddah."

Gold Cup victory after 87 laps



The Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Team in action at Monza

We are second in the championship with one round to go. That is a positive and I am looking forward to the next round in Jeddah.

AL FAISAL BIN KHALID AL ZUBAIR

on the Italian circuit went to the Haupt Racing Team Mercedes trio of Michele Berreta, Jusuf

Owega and Arjun Maini. The Comtoyou Racing Aston Martin crew of Matisse Lismont, Jon Van Uiter and Charles Clark led for long periods after regaining the advantage they had lost to the Tresor Attempto Racing Audi on the 18th lap when the Audi slipped out of contention nine laps later.

The Saintéloc Racing trio of Paul Evrard, Gilles Magnus and Jim Pla extended their lead in the title race after finishing second in their Audi. The Comtoyou Racing Aston Martin eventually reached the finish in third.

After a two-hour free practice session and pre-qualifying on Saturday, it was down to the serious business of qualifying on Sunday morning. The Al Manar Racing by Getspeed crew were at the foot of the Gold Cup standings after Q1, were fourth in Q2 and at the foot of the rankings again in Q3. With the three sessions combined, the Al Manar Racing by Getspeed crew started at the rear of the Gold Cup field after ongoing tyre issues.

The championship reaches its conclusion in Jeddah on November 21-23.



Al Faisal Al Zubair at Monza after his accident on Sunday



Carlos Alcaraz with Rafael Nadal

‘Always great having Rafa around’

Madrid, Spain - Carlos Alcaraz welcomed the addition of Rafael Nadal to Spain's Davis Cup team for the quarter-finals in November and hoped the event in Malaga will not mark the end of the 22-times Grand Slam champion's career.

Nadal was a surprise choice for the Nov. 19-24 Final 8. The 38-year-old last competed at the Paris Olympics in July and subsequently missed the U.S. Open and the Laver Cup this month

over fitness concerns.

Nadal has said he expects to end his injury-plagued career this year after a hip injury that required surgery limited his appearances in 2023, and there has been speculation the Davis Cup could be his last event.

"It's always great having Rafa around. I miss him. I'm not going to lie, I missed him in the Laver Cup. Obviously, as much time as I can spend with him, it's a privilege for me," said Alcaraz, who

partnered Nadal in doubles at the Paris Games.

"I don't want to think that it's a potential last dance for him in Malaga. I just want to enjoy seeing him on court as much as I can. "It's great support having him in the team. He can bring a lot of experience to the Davis Cup."

Nadal had targeted a return at the Laver Cup before eventually withdrawing and the Spaniard has not said where he plans to play before the Davis Cup.

Red Bull's strategy chief to join McLaren as sporting director

Woking, England - Red Bull's Head of Race Strategy Will Courtenay will leave his role to join Formula One world championship rivals McLaren as their Sporting Director, the Woking-based team said on Tuesday.

Red Bull have lost a number of senior employees, including star designer and former chief technical officer Adrian Newey, who left the Milton Keynes-based outfit to join Aston Martin as their Managing Technical Partner earlier in September.

Courtenay will move to McLaren after 20 years at Red Bull and report to Racing Director Randeep Singh. However, it is not known when Courtenay will make the switch to McLaren, with media reports saying his Red Bull contract runs until mid-2026.

"We are delighted to welcome Will to McLaren. His experience, professionalism and passion for motorsport make him the ideal candidate to lead our F1 sporting function," McLaren Team Principal Andrea Stella said in a statement.

"We are now entering a key



Will Courtenay

We are delighted to welcome Will to McLaren. His experience, professionalism and passion for motorsport make him the ideal candidate to lead our F1 sporting function.

ANDREA STELLA

phase in our journey as a team, and we are confident that he will be a great addition to our strong leadership team as we strive to continue challenging for wins and championships."

The champions are 41 points behind McLaren in the constructors' standings with six rounds remaining, including next month's United States Grand Prix.

Brook century helps England beat Australia in rain-curtailed match

Chester-Le-Street, England - A superb maiden ODI century by new captain Harry Brook led England to a dominant, rain-shortened DLS victory over Australia on Tuesday to keep the five-match series alive with two to play.

Australia, seeking a 15th successive ODI win, overcame difficult early conditions to post 304, with Steve Smith hitting a patient 60 and Aaron Hardie (44) and Alex Carey (77 not out) cutting loose in the final 10 overs.

After losing both openers

early, Brook and Will Jacks then built an excellent partnership of 156 to swing the game England's way.

After Jacks went for 84, Liam Livingstone smashed a quick unbeaten 33 as Brook moved serenely on to 110 but, on 254-4 with 51 needed from 74 balls, the rain began and England were eventually awarded a 46-run victory under a DLS calculation that had produced a revised target of 209 after their 37.4 overs.

It was a day of ebb and flow



Harry Brook led from the front to take England home

under changing conditions in the air and on the pitch.

In the absence of the in-form but unfit opener Travis Head and on a damp afternoon and a sticky pitch,

Australia took a relatively cautious approach to their innings. Smith started particularly patiently but was just starting to accelerate when he was brilliantly caught in the deep by a running, diving Brydon Carse off Jofra Archer for 60 to leave his team on 172-5 after 35 overs

Cameron Green hit 42 and

the ever-dangerous Glenn Maxwell fell for a rapid 30 just as he was warming up, after Marnus Labuschagne was out for a duck trying to ramp spinner Jacks off his third ball. The tourists were 200-5 after 40 overs but Carey batted nicely and then put on a rapid 68 with Hardie in 7.1 overs before the latter was run out for 44 off 26 balls.

Carey finished unbeaten on 77 - three more than his top-score innings in last week's second match.

Equal starting pay for men and women in England domestic cricket

London, England - England will offer equal starting salaries to men and women across professional domestic cricket from next year, the country's cricket board (ECB) said on Tuesday.

The equal pay will apply to the players at both 'Rookie' and 'Senior Pro' levels, the ECB said.

Rookie level has been introduced into the women's game for the first time and will serve as a player's first professional contract while the Senior Pro level is for the established players in first teams.

The starting salaries and salary budget have been approved by the ECB's Professional Game Committee (PGC), featuring representatives from the First-Class County (FCCs), the Professional Cricketers' Association (PCA), and the ECB.

ECB said pay parity has been introduced as part of the restructuring of the women's professional game following their earlier announcement of the men's and women's professional white ball competitions alignment for next season.

"Equalising starting salaries across our men's and women's professional domestic game is another positive step forward for women's cricket in England and Wales," Director of Women's Professional Game Beth Barrett-Wild said in a statement.



Pep Guardiola with Rodri

Rodri out ‘for a long time’, says Man City boss Guardiola

Manchester, England - Manchester City midfielder Rodri will be out for a “long time”, manager Pep Guardiola said on Tuesday, while the team await confirmation on the severity of the Spaniard’s knee injury.

The 28-year-old Spain international limped off the pitch in the first half of Man City’s 2-2 Premier League draw with Arsenal on Sunday with what is feared to be a season-ending ACL injury.

Following his side’s League Cup win over Watford, coach Guardiola said he still did not know the 28-year-old’s exact diagnosis, but expected to find out in the coming hours.

“Still we don’t have the definitive (diagnosis) but he will be out for a long time, a while,” Guardiola said.

“There are some opinions that it may be less than we expect. Right now I can’t tell you.

We’re waiting on the last phone calls from the doctors. What he has and what type of surgery he has to get.

“We expect that tonight, tomorrow we will know exactly.”

Rodri, named the best player at this summer’s European Championship, which he won with Spain, has been key to Guardiola’s success at the helm of the Premier League champions.

Since joining from Atletico Madrid in 2019, Rodri has played 174 Premier League games for the club and has finished on the losing side only 19 times in that period, with 129 wins.

However, the Man City boss says the team will find a solution in the absence of an “irreplaceable player”.

“When a team doesn’t play with the best midfielder in the world for a long, long time, it is a big blow,” said Guardiola.

MAN CITY EASE PAST WATFORD

Premier League champions enter fourth round of League Cup; Chelsea, Aston Villa, Leicester also advance

Manchester, England - Matheus Nunes scored his first Manchester City goal in his 34th appearance as the hosts eased to a 2-1 victory over second-tier Watford to reach the fourth round of the League Cup on Tuesday.

Jeremy Doku slotted in City’s opener after five minutes and Nunes produced a clinical finish in the 38th minute to put Pep Guardiola’s side in control at The Etihad.

Watford have suffered some horrible Premier League mauplings against City in recent seasons but they refused to capitulate and Tom Ince gave them an 86th-minute lifeline with a curler.

Eight-time winners City avoided being dragged into a penalty shootout though despite some late Watford pressure.

Chelsea took their place in round four with a 5-0 hammering of fourth-tier leaders Barrow at Stamford Bridge - Christopher Nkunku scoring a hat-trick for Enzo Maresca’s side.

Leicester City were also up



Manchester City’s Jeremy Doku scores against Watford

against fourth-tier opposition but needed penalties to edge past Walsall after being held to a 0-0 draw at the Bescot Stadium.

Aston Villa’s Jhon Duran scored his fifth goal of the season with a penalty in his side’s 2-1 win at Wycombe Wanderers.

Newcastle United’s clash with AFC Wimbledon was postponed after flooding damaged the Wimbledon pitch on Monday.

City were back in action little more than 48 hours after their seismic clash with Arsenal in the Premier League and Guardiola

rotated his squad with several regulars rested, handing a first start to 16-year-old Kaden Braithwaite.

Nunes has struggled to establish himself at City following his 53 million pounds (\$71 million) move from Wolverhampton

Wanderers just over a year ago, but took his chance to catch the eye on his first start of the season.

His low finish from just outside the penalty area was superb and he could have had a hat-trick but for good saves in the second half by Watford keeper Jonathan Bond.

“He has special qualities few players have. Unique. Space in transitions is unbelievable,” Guardiola said.

“Pleased for him and the goal. Still he has things to read and it’s not easy to adapt. Really pleased for him, he’s a lovely guy and lovely guys always deserve good things.”

Watford had begun badly with a poor back pass by Ryan Porteous intercepted by James McAtee before Jack Grealish squared for Doku to spin and tuck away a fine finish.

The visitors had conceded 26 goals in their last five clashes against City, including an 8-0 drubbing in the Premier League in 2019 but proved more resilient this time.

They had a goal ruled out in the first half when Kwadwo Baah was adjudged to have barged over Braithwaite before shooting past Stefan Ortega.

But they got their reward late on when Ince finished off a fine move with a left-foot stunner.

Chelsea were far too strong for Barrow despite Maresca making 11 changes to his starting lineup.

Wolves defender Mosquera suffers knee injury, to miss rest of season

London, England - Wolverhampton Wanderers centre back Yerson Mosquera will likely miss the rest of the Premier League season after suffering a serious knee injury, the club said on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old Mosquera was taken off on a stretcher after twisting his knee in the second half of their 3-1 defeat at Aston Villa in the Premier League on Saturday.

The Colombia international underwent scans that revealed injuries to the medial collateral ligament (MCL) and the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) which will shortly require surgery, with no definitive time scale on a comeback.

“We will be visiting specialists in the coming days to finalise the plan for surgery; this will take place in the next two weeks,”

Wolves’ head of high performance Phil Hayward said in a statement.

“Clearly there is a long recovery period ahead for Yerson, and the club will be providing all the support he needs to ensure a successful rehabilitation and a return to competition in due course.

“Time scales are difficult to state before surgery but it is

highly unlikely he will feature again this season.”

Mosquera started all five of Wolves’ Premier League games this season after spending the last campaign on loan at Villarreal in LaLiga.

Wolves are bottom of the Premier League with one point from five games to sit in the relegation zone with Southampton and Everton.



Yerson Mosquera of Wolverhampton Wanderers grimaces in pain as he lies injured on the field

We would love to receive all of our guests, says Saudi Arabia’s 2034 World Cup bid chief

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Hammad Albalawi, head of Saudi Arabia’s 2034 World Cup bid unit, said his country welcomes all visitors, including LGBTQ people and their bid to host the 48-team showpiece event has nothing to do with ‘sportswashing’ their human rights record.

Global governing body FIFA limited the 2034 contest to bidders from the Asian and Oceania confederations as Morocco, Portugal and Spain will share the hosting of the 2030 tournament.

The hosts are set to be officially appointed at the FIFA Congress on Dec. 11 and Saudi Arabia’s bid is almost certain to succeed due to the absence of any other expressions of interest before FIFA’s deadline late last year.

“You will be respected,” Albalawi told Sky Sports when asked about LGBTQ fans visiting his country. “You will be welcome in Saudi Arabia as that respect and welcome is to everyone from all around the world.

“We respect the privacy of all of our guests. We have seen millions of guests come to Saudi



Hammad Albalawi

Arabia in the last few years. We’ve hosted over a hundred sporting events attended by more than three million fans who have enjoyed their experience.

“People need to educate themselves about the Kingdom and the best way to do that is to come and visit.

“They will find hospitable Saudis. We would love to receive all of our guests.”

In May 2023, Saudi’s govern-

ment-run tourism website said in a statement under general information for LGBT visitors, “We ask that visitors respect our culture and traditions and follow our laws as they would when visiting any other country in the world.”

“Like other governments around the world, visitors are not required to disclose their personal information and we will respect visitors right to privacy.”

The Saudis have invested

We respect the privacy of all of our guests. We have seen millions of guests come to Saudi Arabia in the last few years.

HAMMAD ALBALAWI

heavily in high-profile sports such as soccer, Formula One, boxing and golf over the last few years, leading critics, including Amnesty International, to accuse the oil-rich kingdom of “sportswashing” its human rights record.

Albalawi denied accusations of sportswashing and reaffirmed the Kingdom’s commitment to Vision 2030 while speaking with both local and international media.

“We’re not doing this to make a headline, we’re doing this for our people,” Albalawi said. “We are investing to make sure that Saudis live longer and happier lives and that’s something that we’re very proud of.”

Underdogs International Team ready to challenge US at Presidents Cup

Montreal, Canada - The United States are once again heavy favourites entering this week’s Presidents Cup in Montreal but International Team captain Mike Weir said on Tuesday his squad should not be underestimated in their bid to snap the Americans’ dominance.

The U.S. are 12-1-1 in the biennial competition that began in 1994, having lost in 1998 and settled for a tie in 2003, but Weir is not bothered by past results and knows that matchplay golf can be unpredictable and serve as a great leveller.

“Golf’s golf, and there are going to be challenging matches no matter what, the odd time there’s a team that runs away with a match here and there, but most of the matches are always tight,” Weir told reporters at Royal Montreal Golf Club.

Standing in the International Team’s way of regaining the Presidents Cup is Jim Furyk’s powerhouse U.S. squad that boasts five of the top 10 players

in the world and all 12 of his team members are ranked inside the top 25.

By comparison, Japanese world number seven Hideki Matsuyama, making his sixth Presidents Cup start, is the highest-ranked golfer on an International Team that features



Mike Weir

eight players who are sitting outside the top 25.

“So we’ve got a tall challenge, but the guys are up for it, they’re ready for it, and they’re embracing that,” said Weir.

Former Masters champion Weir, whose squad includes

three fellow Canadians, is also counting on plenty of support from the galleries like he received during his 2007 win over Tiger Woods the last time the Presidents Cup was at Royal Montreal.

“It’s a big part of this competition, I believe, and a big part of team golf where you can ride some momentum and the crowd gets behind you, and you can really feed off that,” said Weir.

“I certainly did here in 2007, not only with my match playing Tiger, but just the other matches, you get the crowd energy, and you can raise your level a little bit. So it can be a huge factor.”

Furyk was the losing Ryder Cup captain when the U.S. fell to Europe in 2018 and insisted he will be making some changes in how he runs his team this week.

While not revealing his plans, Furyk simply said he would draw from some good experiences that they’ve had in the past.

Real survive Alaves scare

Vazquez, Mbappe and Rodrygo on target as Ancelotti’s team move to second

Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid survived a late scare as goals by Lucas Vazquez, Kylian Mbappe and Rodrygo gave them a 3-2 home win over Deportivo Alaves in LaLiga on Tuesday.

Carlos Benavidez and Kike Garcia scored in the 88th and 89th minutes for Alaves but Real held on to win a match they had mostly dominated.

Real are second in the LaLiga standings on 17 points, one behind leaders Barcelona who have a game in hand and will host second from bottom Getafe on Wednesday.

Real opened the scoring a little over a minute after kickoff when Vinicius Jr took a long Federico Valverde pass in his stride and ran up the left channel before setting up fullback Vazquez who fired home from close range. The champions produced a commanding performance after a bumpy start to the season, with Vinicius, Mbappe and Bellingham a constant threat to their rivals.

Mbappe fired into the back of the net in the 22nd minute but his goal was ruled out for offside.

Real kept dominating the action throughout the first half and extended their lead in the 40th minute when Mbappe played a neat one-two with Bellingham before cutting inside and slotting a tidy finish to the right of the goalkeeper.

Real looked to be heading for a comfortable win when Rodrygo scored their third three minutes after the break, firing a low shot under the goalkeeper’s legs to finish off a quick counter-attack.



Real Madrid’s Rodrygo scores against Deportivo Alaves

We were happy because we played a great game until the 88th minute, when two lapses in concentration led to two goals and we had to suffer a bit more than we should have

LUCAS VAZQUEZ

Both Benavidez and Garcia capitalised on some poor defending to get Alaves back in the contest but their comeback came too late to prevent Real taking all three points.

“It’s a shame that, with the performance that we were putting throughout the match it

had to finish the way that it did,” captain Vazquez told Real Madrid TV.

“We were happy with the win because we played a great game until the 88th minute, when two lapses in concentration led to two goals and we had to suffer a bit more than we should have.

Mbappe injured

Kylian Mbappe has suffered a muscle injury, Real said , casting doubt over the French international’s participation in the week-end derby against Atletico Madrid. Mbappe, has been in fine form this season, scoring seven goals in nine matches.



Carlo Ancelotti

We are doing really well in attack, says Ancelotti

Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti said he was not worried after his side survived a late comeback in a 3-2 home win over Deportivo Alaves in LaLiga on Tuesday.

Alaves scored twice in the last few minutes but Ancelotti looked for the positives, praising his side’s performance in taking a three-goal lead and creating several chances to win by a larger margin.

“This is football and when you think the game is over, get distracted and allow your rival to score, you give your rival a confidence boost while your own confidence is shaken. It’s something that happens all the time in football and it won’t stop happening,” Ancelotti told reporters.

“Sure, we don’t want that to happen to us, nobody does, but we need to highlight that for over 80 minutes our team played really, really well and that is what gives us confidence moving forward. “For over an hour the team played very well, looking for opportunities in different ways, in transition, filtering passes through the opponent’s lines... The team is improving, it’s good for us because the schedule is very demanding. Sunday’s game (at Atletico Madrid) will also be very demanding.”

Unbeaten after nine games in all competitions since the start of the season, Ancelotti’s Real are second in the LaLiga standings on 17 points, one behind leaders Barcelona.



Raphael Varane with the World Cup trophy in 2018

France’s World Cup winner Raphael Varane announces retirement

Paris, France - France’s World Cup-winning defender Raphael Varane announced his retirement from football at the age of 31 on Wednesday, bringing down the curtain on his successful career after suffering a serious knee injury.

Varane made 93 appearances for France from 2013-22, playing a key role in their victory at the 2018 World Cup in Russia, as well as their runners-up finish

four years later in Qatar.

Varane began his club career at Ligue 1 side Lens, before joining Real Madrid in 2011, where he played 360 times and won three La Liga titles and four Champions League trophies in a trophy-laden spell.

He joined United in 2021, making 95 appearances in all competitions for the English side and helping them win the League Cup in 2023 and FA Cup in 2024,

before moving to Serie A club Como in July where he suffered a knee injury on his debut.

“I have fallen and risen a thousand times, and this time, it’s the moment to stop and hang my boots up with my final game winning a trophy at Wembley,” Varane wrote in a post on Instagram, referencing United’s FA Cup win in May.

“I have no regrets, I wouldn’t change a thing. I have won more

than I could have even dreamed of, but beyond the accolades and trophies, I am proud that no matter what, I have stuck to my principles of being sincere and have tried to leave everywhere better than I found it.”

Varane added that he would remain at Como in a non-playing role. “A new life begins off the pitch. I will remain with Como. Just without using my boots and shin pads.”

We have to improve to win games, says Girona manager Michel

Girona, Spain - Girona manager Michel said on Tuesday that they are no longer the same team that took LaLiga by storm last season and need to rediscover their identity to avoid a fourth defeat in a row.

Unfancied Girona served up one of European soccer’s most compelling storylines when they went toe-to-toe with Spanish giants Real Madrid and Barcelona for much of last season before eventually finishing third.

That success was followed by a frenzied close season in which they cashed in on the likes of top scorer Artem Dovbyk and influential midfielder Aleix Garcia, while bringing in several players including Donny van de Beek from Manchester United.

The result is that Girona find themselves 12th in LaLiga ahead of Wednesday’s visit of 10th-placed Rayo Vallecano, having lost their last three games in all competitions, including their debut Champions League match 1-0 at Paris St Germain.

“Things happen for a reason,”



Michel

Michel told a news conference. “Our reality is that we have lost three games in a row and it is difficult because people expect the team to win. Right now we are not the team we were last year, we are another one.”

The key to improving Girona’s fortunes lay in moving the ball quicker, he added. “With the ball we are not hurting the opponent and this means that we have to suffer,” Michel said. “We must play with fewer touches and be able to look up and for that I need high intensity.”

France dismiss match-fixing allegations at Futsal World Cup

Paris, France - France brushed off allegations of match-fixing after their 4-1 defeat by Iran sent them into a softer part of the draw at the Futsal World Cup in Uzbekistan.

After a lifeless first half, Iran easily prevailed after France conceded a soft opening goal in the second, triggering angry reactions from other teams, some of whom filed complaints to world governing body FIFA.

“FIFA is aware of complaints filed by participating teams at the FIFA Futsal World Cup Uzbekistan 2024 regarding the Group F match between France and IR Iran,” a FIFA spokesperson said in a statement. “No further comment will be made while this process is ongoing.”

The French Football Federation was not immediately available for comment.

While both teams had already qualified for the last 16, the result means France will take on Thailand before a potential quarter-final against Paraguay, while Iran face Morocco.

Como register first Serie A win in more than 21 years

Bergamo, Italy - Como got their first Serie A win in more than 21 years as Cesc Fabregas’ team won 3-2 at Atalanta in a rescheduled match on Tuesday.

Delightful second-half goals from Gabriel Strefezza and Alieu Fadera, as well as an own goal from Atalanta defender Sead Kolasinac saw newly promoted Como fight back for their first win in the Italian top flight since May 2003.

It was a third defeat of the season for Atalanta, who drew 0-0 against Arsenal in the Champions League last week.

The match - a local derby - was originally meant to take place on Monday night but had to be postponed by 24 hours due to heavy rains in Bergamo and a waterlogged pitch.

Atalanta took the lead in the 18th minute when a corner was headed out but only as far as Davide Zappacosta, who volleyed into the bottom left corner from just outside the area.

However, Como got more into the match and managed to level just 20 seconds into the second half with a well-worked move as Sergi Roberto back-heeled a pass from Ignace Van der Brempt into the path of



Como’s Gabriel Strefezza celebrates with teammates after scoring against Atalanta

Strefezza and he fired into the far bottom corner.

Como turned things around completely in the 54th minute, albeit it with a large slice of fortune when Nicolás Paz’s strike was deflected off Kolasinac to completely wrongfoot Atalanta goalkeeper Marco Carnesecchi.

The match - a local derby - was originally meant to take place on Monday night but had to be postponed by 24 hours due to heavy rains in Bergamo

Things went from bad to worse for the host four minutes later as Fadera latched onto a long ball over the top from Paz and turned Atalanta captain Marten de Roon inside out before firing into the far bottom corner.

Ademola Lookman converted a penalty for Atalanta with the last kick of the match after Alberto Dossena had fouled Vanja Vlahovi deep in stoppage time.



14
STING AND ZING
Make your dinner table a bouquet of flavours, add the required zing



15
BREAKFAST MEET
Embassy of Malaysia hosted a Malaysian Breakfast Culture meet



16
ENTERTAINMENT
A peek into tinsel town, in Hollywood and Bollywood



Winning contests is not just about the prestige **but about getting recognised for creativity by experts as well as peers**

Ali al Ghafri

VICTORIOUS VIEWFINDERS

Showcasing the sultanate

Two Omani lensmen shine big time in an International Competition in Qatar

Mohammed Taha

Two talented photographers - Ali al Ghafri and Turki al Junaibi - secured the first and second places, respectively, at the Waqf and Picture International Competition held in Qatar on September 21. This prestigious event, organised by the Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs, had attracted 694 photographers from 49 countries, including Egypt, Jordan, UAE, and India.

Both Ali and Turki have previously bagged numerous international awards, further underscoring their exceptional talent and dedication to their craft. In an interview with Muscat Daily, Ghafri, who claimed the top honor in the category 'Reflections on the Cre-

ativity of the Creator', emphasised the prestige of the competition and the pride he felt representing Oman on such a prominent stage. "This accomplishment not only highlights the photographer's skills but also reflects the rich artistic heritage of Oman on a global stage. Such achievements inspire aspiring photographers in the region and contribute to cultural dialogue through visual

storytelling," he said. Ghafri's winning photograph, titled 'Al Nakhl Al Baseqat' (depicting the foliage of lofty palm trees), beautifully captures the essence of the authentic Omani palm tree. Reflecting on his journey, Ghafri said he set out to pursue photography a career in 2011, focusing on highlighting Oman's stunning natural landscapes and rich heritage. Omani photographers need better exposure by participating in a lot of local competitions and events to showcase their talents. Also, there needs to be more competition between Omani photographers to promote Oman as a tourist and economic destination because Omani photographers alone would know how best to project the sultanate to the world. "For a photographer, winning contests is not just about the prestige but about getting recognised for creativity by experts as well as peers.

Gaining global attention is a validation, not only of one's hard work but also of one's dedication and efforts in honing photographic creative skills. Junaibi, who bagged the second place with his captivating image 'Tree of Nature', also emphasised the importance of hard work and perseverance in the field of photography. His photograph, taken with a drone on Masirah Island, reflects the beauty of Oman's diverse environments. Junaibi, who has been active in photography since 2016 and joined the Photographic Society of Oman in 2018, is committed towards promoting domestic tourism through his art. Discussing the challenges photographers face, Junaibi stressed the importance of finding ways to stand out in a crowd. He noted, that networking and joining photography groups can be invaluable for gaining feedback, exchanging ideas, and sharing tech-

niques. More than technical skills, Junaibi believes that discovering and propagating one's unique style is crucial for artistic growth. He also said that their recent recognition serves as powerful motivation on their creative journey. "We take immense pride in representing the Sultanate of Oman on such prestigious international platforms," Junaibi said. "Achieving first place in a competition featuring some of the world's best photographers is no small feat, it does inspire us to push our artistic boundaries even further." Both photographers highlighted the need for more local competitions and events to nurture and showcase Omani talent, believing that such initiatives could further elevate Oman as a tourist destination. Their own success also serves to promote Oman's rich culture globally, they pointed out.



Achieving first place in a competition featuring some of the **world's best photographers is no small feat**

Turki al Junaibi

2nd prize



cook-up

Sting operation

WHEN YOU NEED TO ADD SOME STING AND ZING TO YOUR DINNER TABLE, MAKE SURE TO COOK-UP PEPPY SIDE DISHES THAT WELL COMPLEMENT THE MOOD OF THE MAIN COURSE



Mince Stuffed Capsicum

- Ingredients**
- 4 large, firm red capsicums
 - ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
 - 1 red onion - finely chopped
 - 2 garlic cloves - crushed
 - 300g lean mince (beef/mutton/chicken)
 - 1tbsp oregano leaves
 - ½ cup parsley leaves - chopped
 - ½ cup fresh mint leaves - chopped
 - 400g chopped tomatoes
 - ½ cup white long-grain rice
 - ½ cup cold water
 - Salad leaves - to serve

Method

Preheat oven 180° C. Slice tops from each capsicum, reserve tops, and scoop out the seeds and membrane to discard. Place them in a paper-lined roasting pan.

Heat 1tbsp oil in a large non-stick frying pan over medium-high heat. Add onion, cook, stirring, for 5 minutes or until softened. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute. Add mince and cook, stirring with a wooden spoon to break up mince, for 5 minutes, or until browned. Add

oregano, parsley, mint, tomato, rice and water. Season with salt and pepper.

Bring to a simmer for 5 minutes or until sauce starts to thicken. Remove from heat, divide mince mixture evenly between capsicums. Place the reserved tops on each stuffed capsicum.

Drizzle with the remaining oil. and bake for 30-40 minutes or until capsicums have softened and skins start to darken.

Serve warm with salad leaves.



Paneer Stuffed Capsicum

- Ingredients**
- 4 capsicums
 - 3tbsp oil
 - 1tsp grated ginger
 - 2 garlic cloves - crushed
 - 2 green chillies - chopped
 - 2 onions - minced
 - 1 carrot - minced
 - ½tsp red chilli powder
 - 5-6 cashew nuts - chopped
 - 2 potatoes – boiled and grated
 - 250g paneer - grated
 - 1tsp chaat masala
 - 12-15 raisins
 - Salt, to taste

Method

Remove the tops of the capsicums, scoop out the insides and discard, leaving the tops with

stalks intact. Rub some oil and salt inside and outside the capsicum halves, and set aside for ten minutes.

In a wide pan, heat the oil, add ginger, garlic, green chillies, and onions. Saute till onions become translucent. Add chilli powder, cashew nuts, raisins and fry for a few more minutes. Add grated carrot, mashed potatoes, and cottage cheese, sprinkle chaat masala, adjust salt and mix well. Fry the mixture for about 5 minutes on medium heat, remove and keep aside.

Stuff the capsicums with the prepared cottage cheese and potatoes mix. Preheat the oven at 180°C, grease a baking tray, and roast the capsicum till the capsicums soften slightly and the stuffing gets browned – around 15 minutes. You can also use a greased pan and cook the stuffed capsicums on a stovetop.

Chilli Fry

- Ingredients**
- 10 large, green chillies
 - ¾ cup peanut powder
 - ½tsp turmeric
 - ½tsp Kashmiri red chilli powder
 - 1tsp coriander powder
 - ½tsp cumin powder
 - 1tsp garam masala
 - 1tsp aamchur (dry mango powder)
 - ½tsp fennel powder
 - A pinch of asafoetida
 - ½tsp salt
 - 2tbsp oil

Method

First, in a large mixing bowl, take ¾ cup peanut powder. To prepare peanut powder, dry roast peanuts, remove the skins and blend to get a coarse powder. Add in ½tsp turmeric, ½tsp chilli powder, 1tsp coriander powder, ½tsp cumin powder, 1tsp garam masala, 1tsp aamchur, ½tsp fennel powder, a pinch of asafoetida and ½tsp salt.

Combine all the ingredients well, slit the green chillies and remove the seeds, and stuff each with the prepared peanut stuffing.

Heat 2tbsp oil in a pan and place the stuffed chillies. Cook for a minute or until the blisters appear, then flip the chillies and cook on all sides on medium flame. Once the chillies are cooked, add leftover stuffing mixture and simmer for a minute. Serve as a starter or side dish with dinner.



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Some news, hot and fresh!

Foodcourts! Oh, I simply love food courts, and I make it a point to stray away from restaurants and settle within a food court, for a bite or a brew, amid my shopping sprees.

The benefits of food courts are many, whether in a mall, a shopping arcade or an outdoor dining arena – you are spoilt for choice as regards menus, you can decide for yourself where to get seated, you get prompt service and, above all, it goes easy on your pocket.

I have, indeed, hopped around to some of the best food courts in town in the latest malls and supermarkets, those nestled within residential complexes as well as in and around shopping avenues. And, I must tip my hat to the vendors for catering to their clientele with utmost courtesy and well-rehearsed smiles.

Now, I hear, the Muscat Municipality has decided to propagate open-air food courts in town and the



first one is almost ready to get cracking in Amerat, the budding township which boasts of many firsts, including the great Amerat Park and a jogging/cycling track to promote healthy outdoor activity.

I also noticed a similar venture coming up in the car park section opposite the popular Souq al Jumma at Wadi Kabir – in fact, infrastructure for the stalls is being set up at present. I'm sure, this food court would soon turn out into a street food haven like none other over the years, given the popularity of being adjacent to an ancient weekend flea market.

What I do fear, however, is that people don't turn such food courts into 'fool's courts' by indulging in indiscriminate littering or dining irresponsibly by chucking food and trash into the adjacent wadi, damaging seating arrangements or parking irresponsibly, so as to inconvenience passing vehicles or residents of the locality. Be good, guys!

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Distraction is a technique that people often use to avoid dealing with real problems, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. From time to time, it's perfectly fine to keep yourself busy shopping for the perfect pair of flip-flops so that you don't have to clean out the garage. But today, that one problem you've been avoiding so successfully for so long needs to be addressed.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Futuristic thinking is all around you today, and your friends and coworkers seem to think only about what is going to happen, not about what is happening now. You, on the other hand, are focused on living each moment as it comes, which is definitely to your advantage. Because when an unexpected complication arises today, you will be the person who recognises it first.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Right now, simple misunderstandings may create some complicated situations that make waves in your professional life. That's why it's more important than ever to be extra careful about what you say and who you say it to. Double-check those messages before sending them, and think twice before writing about something that really requires an in-person conversation.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
You will be full of good, positive energy today, and you should be prepared to use it! From cheering up friends who are down in the dumps to pumping up your team for a competition, your voice will be the one that motivates and gives people hope today. This is a great day to visit a sick loved one, check in on an older relative, or spend some time volunteering.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Of course, you can't live your entire life without taking any risks, but you can certainly choose when to take them. For example, the stars say that today is not a good time to take part in any aggressive financial dealings with other people. So skip any type of group purchase or combined investment. You should even take a pass on silly office pools.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
It's admirable that you want to get a lot done today, but are you sure that you're not putting way too much pressure on yourself? Unreasonable deadlines and heightened expectations are a tough combination for anyone to grapple with, even a superstar like you! The people around you are moving at their own slow pace.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
People are willing to be much more flexible than you have been giving them credit for. Are you expecting the worst from somebody? Don't hesitate to ask others to cooperate with you today, especially if you think they aren't going to, because you'll get a nice surprise when they say that they will. It will be easy to make this a calm day.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
If you haven't been able to get that certain person's attention, start using your imagination. There are no rules about how to engage with someone who makes you feel this way. The door is wide open to many possibilities. So think of something unusual that will get their attention in a disarming way.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Dealing with authority figures may be a difficult challenge for some people now, but it isn't for you! You can easily handle tricky conversations with the biggest movers and shakers, in part because you know what you're talking about and you know that they know too! Your confidence will help you cover all the details.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Your mind is going to come up with all sorts of interesting ideas today. While each and every one of them won't be a winner, the sheer quantity of innovative thoughts will be impressive enough to get you noticed. This is a wonderful day to work on any sort of creative project, especially writing.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Your generous nature is coming out in full force today, and it will earn you many appreciative smiles from all the people whose lives you make just a little bit better with your thoughtfulness. But try to be generous with your time, not with money. People truly appreciate having you in their lives, so don't overspend in an attempt to win fans.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
Getting settled into a regular routine might bring comfortable predictability to your life, but it's hardly a great way to encourage yourself to grow or experience new things. It's time to mix things up and shake loose the cobwebs! Today, you need to satisfy your growing desire to transform an aspect of your life or rediscover yourself.

IN TOWN

Breakfast Meet



The Embassy of Malaysia hosted a 'Malaysian Breakfast Culture' a fortnight ago



Photos: V K Shafer

BOGGLER

M	U	C	S
N	O	G	D
O	E	S	G
O	U	I	I

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

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

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS

1. What is a group of crows called?

A. A flight
B. A flock
C. A crowd
D. A murder

2. What does FIFA stand for in English?

A. International Federation of Association Football
B. Federation of International Football Associations
C. Friends of International Football Activities
D. International Federation of Football Associations

3. What is the national flower of Oman?

A. Marigold
B. Desert Rose
C. Jasmine
D. Alfalfa

Answers 3. C 2. A 1. D

WORD BUILDER

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

entertainment



Dan Stevens and
Natasha Leggero Star
in Animated Series
‘The Milk Chug’

Dan Stevens, Natasha Leggero and Zeno Robinson lead the voice cast for animated series *The Milk Chug*, which released its trailer on Tuesday.

Named after the show’s coffee shop, *The Milk Chug* follows the playful and hilarious adventures of *Blue Cat* and his friends, a collection of characters who have procured a global fandom over the past decade. Robinson (*Dragon Ball Super*, *The Owl House*) stars as *Blue Cat*, with Stevens (*Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire*, *Cuckoo*), Leggero (*Ugly Americans*, *Another Period*), Maggie Lawson (*Psych*, *Lethal Weapon*) and Dana Snyder (*Aqua Teen Hunger Force*, *Squidbillies*) rounding out the friends.



DEMI
MOORE’S
‘THE
SUBSTANCE’
PREMIERES

Demi Moore’s latest film, *The Substance*, premiered earlier this year at the Cannes Film Festival, but it’s received even more attention following its 2024 Toronto International Film Festival screening. The Golden Globe Award winner plays a role that required raw vulnerability from her, and Demi pointed out that the film’s nudity has garnered a mix of opinions — specifically about the nude scenes. According to its official synopsis, *The Substance* follows the main character, Elisabeth Sparkle, who is ‘renowned for an aerobics show, [and] faces a devastating blow on her 50th birthday as her boss fires her.’



Ralph Lauren reunites
original supers Naomi
Campbell and Christy
Turlington

To kick off New York Fashion Week, Ralph Lauren took his star-studded guest list out of the city to the nearby Hamptons – and surprised them with legendary supermodels Naomi Campbell and Christy Turlington both walking the runway. The spring/summer 2025 show was business as usual for Lauren: preppy, Americana-inspired designs with plenty of sharp tailoring – and a whole lot of cute kids on the runway. It featured original Nineties supermodels Christy Turlington, 55, and Naomi Campbell, 54.



MEET THE ‘OCTOMOM’
NOW A VERY PROUD
GRANDMOTHER

Nadya Suleman became a household name in 2009 when she welcomed the first surviving octuplets in history. Already a mother of six children—Amerah, Calyssa, Elijah, Caleb, Joshua, and Aidan—Suleman became a mother to a remarkable 14 with the addition of the octuplets: Noah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah, Josiah, Makai, Maliyah, and Nariyah. Despite her past struggles with her fertility doctor and intense media scrutiny, Suleman is now in a very different place, celebrating a new addition to her family.

On September 22, she took to Instagram to share the joyous news, posting a photo of her baby granddaughter’s tiny foot peeking out from behind a pink blanket. Without revealing which of her 10 sons had welcomed the baby, Suleman wrote in the caption, “Thank you my son and my lovely daughter-in-law for giving us this beautiful gift! We are so blessed that she is a new addition to our family! Baby girl, you are so very loved and we can’t wait to watch you grow!”

Lee Ji-eun
completes
100th solo
concert and
world tour



Unnie! Uaena! I am shookth... One of Korea’s biggest artist and K-pop soloist, Lee Ji-eun better known as ‘IU’ has completed her first world tour.

Yeah! She also celebrated the landmark of performing her 100th solo concert at the Seoul World Cup Stadium with 50,000 fans in attendance. Squeeee...

While boyfriend, pookie supreme, fellow actor Lee Jung Suk was present at the concert, so were a number of stars. From G Dragon to Stray Kids’ Lee Know, ATEEZ’s Seonghwa, and more.

Mega stars and self-proclaimed fans of IU, BTS V, and J-Hope attended the show during their military break. Uaena and ARMY were thrilled to bits witnessing V’s enthusiastic reaction as IU performed their latest collaboration, ‘Love Wins All’. He hugged a pillow when the happy ending video was broadcast. My heart just can’t...



WHAT’S ON

THE WILD
ROBOT

The epic adventure follows the journey of a robot—ROZZUM unit 7134, ‘Roz’ for short — that is shipwrecked on an uninhabited island and must learn to adapt to the harsh surroundings, gradually building relationships with animals.



Genre:
Adventure
Starring:
Pedro Pascal,
Catherine
O’Hara, Lupita
Nyong’o
Language:
English

Portrait of a singer



KOREAN MOVIE REVIEW:
JUNG KOOK: I AM STILL
Genre: Documentary Starring: Jung Kook

A new genre of films have taken root via OTT and now on the silver screen - documentaries featuring KPop and Pop stars, sharing behind the scenes exclusive content of what goes into making of their respective albums, musical careers, and their rise to fame.

J Hope had *Hope on the Street*, Suga had *Road to D Day* and *D Day* concert *LIVE*. RM has

Right Place, Wrong Person. You would be forgiven if you have no clue of what these words mean - they are stage names of Korean boy band *BTS* members and their respective documentaries.

The latest to join the bandwagon is the youngest member of *BTS* - Jeon Jung Kook, fondly known as ‘Kookie’ or JK by fans. As these members are partially through their military service, any footage of them (to make up

for their absence in the limelight) surely get the fans flocking to cinema houses.

Directed by Jun Soo Park (who championed many other *BTS* films), *Jung Kook: I Am Still* is the first official documentary which follows the K-pop superstar as he prepares to launch his solo career with his debut album, *Golden*, in November 2023. The film, focuses on his ailments, frustration of learning English lyrics in correct diction, and most importantly, his musical command!

Peppered with exclusive interviews, behind-the-scenes footage, and clips of successful concert performances, the film

showcases Jung Kook’s remarkable, rise to fame as a global sensation, besides heartfelt moments with his fans (known as ARMY) around the world.

The film begins with JK traveling to New York and singing his first English song as a soloist - *Seven* - the success of which led to the album *Golden*.

If you did survive this review so far, now please keep your screams under control as the film has plenty of cameos by *BTS* members and an emotional slant to JK preparing for the military by getting his hair shaved off.

The cinematography, sound and dialogues are all candid, especially shaky camera move-



ments following a hyperactive JK. You also notice narrative discrepancies which could’ve been averted with tighter editing.

And if you were expecting a musical spectacle, you could be a tad disappointed as the film has a dearth of songs, despite being a documentary about a singer. In the last 15 minutes, however, you get a shot in the arm with rollercoaster renditions of *Seven*, *Standing Next to You*, and *Yes and No*, among others.

Now, if you are among the 40 million members of ARMY, this review doesn’t matter...just go and get your Kookie treat!

Rating ★★★★★

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