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Diplomatic missions key in attracting FDI

FOREIGN INVESTMENT RISES TO RO26.7BN; MANUFACTURING, FOOD SECURITY AND PHARMACEUTICALS ACCOUNT FOR 50% FDI

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman welcomed 22 trade and investment delegations in 2024, leading to a notable rise in foreign direct investments (FDI), which reached RO26.677bn by the end of September.

The milestone was announced during a meeting hosted by Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in collaboration with Foreign Ministry. The gathering brought together ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to Oman to discuss strategies for enhancing foreign investment.

H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, emphasised the importance of leveraging the country's investment opportunities. Discussions focused on incentives and potential investments in key sectors, including manufacturing, food security and pharmaceuticals, which now account for 50% of total FDI in Oman.



Economic diplomacy plays a crucial role in attracting FDI and expanding Omani exports globally

H E SHEIKH KHALIFA BIN ALI AL HARTHY



Discussions included strategies to encourage investors from friendly nations, highlighting Oman's economic advantages and fostering strong investment partnerships. A key objective was to streamline communication between diplomatic missions and relevant Omani entities.

H E Ibtisam Ahmed Said al Farooji, Undersecretary for Investment Promotion, highlighted the role of diplomatic missions in attracting investors and promoting Omani products abroad. "This meeting serves as a platform to

review Oman's incentives and strengthen international investment partnerships."



The Foreign Ministry's effective coordination has bolstered economic cooperation and trade relations

H E IBTISAM AHMED SAID AL FAROOJI

ordination, which has bolstered economic cooperation and trade relations between Oman and its international partners. The meeting reaffirmed the sultanate's commitment to attracting global investment and advancing its economic diversification goals.

H E Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Undersecretary for Political Affairs in Foreign Ministry, outlined Oman's achievements in economic and investment cooperation. "Economic diplomacy plays a crucial role in attracting FDI and expanding Omani exports globally."

He added that Omani embassies worldwide continue to play a crucial role in supporting investment efforts and facilitating access to foreign markets. He assured that his ministry would continue working with relevant bodies to drive economic growth and enhance Oman's standing as an investment destination.

Pact signed for National Rehabilitation Centre to be built in South Batinah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Health (MoH) has signed an agreement to establish the National Rehabilitation Centre funded by Sheikh Mohammed bin Saud Bahwan. To be built in South Batinah, the facility will provide specialised rehabilitation and healthcare services for adults and children alike.

The agreement was signed by H E Dr Hilal al Sabti, Minister of Health, and Sheikh Bahwan.

Dr Abdullah bin Hamoud al Harthi, International Relations Advisor at Minister of Health's Office, said the centre will be the first of its kind in Oman, linking healthcare and community institutions to rehabilitate individuals recovering from accidents, sports injuries and other conditions. "The centre will also connect with major healthcare institutions, including Medical City Hospital for Military and Medical Services and University Medical City. It is expected to offer advanced rehabilitation services using the latest technologies and practices, improving quality of life and supporting patients' reintegration into society."



It will be the first of its kind in Oman, linking healthcare and community institutions to rehabilitate individuals recovering from accidents, sports injuries and other conditions

DR ABDULLAH BIN HAMOUD AL HARTHI

muscle recovery, and cardiopulmonary rehabilitation, along with other comprehensive treatments.

Dr Ali bin Abdulhussain al Lawati, Advisor for Engineering Affairs at Minister of Health's Office, said the project is part of a healthcare complex in South Batinah. "Health projects in this complex cover 700,000sqm, with the rehabilitation centre forming a key part. The facility will house specialised departments for physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, and prosthetics, in addition to administrative divisions, a training and research centre, workshops and storage facilities."

Ahmed bin Muslim al Rawas, Assistant President for Administrative Affairs and Human Resources at Medical City Hospital for Military and Medical Services, said the centre reflects Oman's commitment to strengthening partnership among healthcare institutions. "This integration will improve service quality, ensuring patients receive timely and effective rehabilitation, while also minimising service gaps."

Thakiya bint Said al Noobi, Senior Specialist in Prosthetics and Orthopaedics at Al Khoula Hospital, stated that the centre will operate under unified frameworks, policies and evidence-based protocols for diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation. "It will also serve as a research and academic hub to enhance human resource development in rehabilitation services."

She added that specialised teams, including rehabilitation doctors, neurologists, neurosurgeons, general practitioners, therapists, nursing professionals, and prosthetics and orthotics experts, will work together to support patients' reintegration into society.

Oman condemns Israeli strikes in Syria, calls for immediate action

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has condemned Israel's military actions in Syria, urging the international community to take swift and decisive measures to prevent further escalation in the region.

In a statement, the Foreign Ministry expressed strong disapproval of Israel's airstrikes on Daraa, which it described as another violation of Syrian territorial sovereignty. The ministry called on global powers to act immediately to deter Israel and halt its continued breaches of international law, which contribute to growing regional tensions and instability.

Oman also condemned Israel's deadly airstrikes on Gaza, which killed more than 400 Palestinians on Tuesday. The attacks came amidst stalled efforts to implement the second phase of a peace agreement and ongoing talks to uphold a fragile ceasefire.

Foreign Ministry urged global powers to act immediately to deter Israel and halt its continued breaches of international law, which contribute to growing regional tensions

In the statement, the ministry said, "These ongoing attacks against the Palestinian people are a clear violation not only of the ceasefire agreement signed in January but also of all international norms and humanitarian law."

2024 warmest year, breaks 175-year global heat record

Geneva, Switzerland - The annual average global mean temperature in 2024 was 1.55°C above the 1850-1900 average - the warmest year in the 175-year observational record, beating the previous record set only the year before, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said in its annual climate report on Wednesday.

Record greenhouse gas levels helped bring temperatures to an all-time high in 2024, accelerating glacier and sea ice loss, raising sea levels and edging the world closer to a key warming threshold, the UN weather body said.

Countries agreed in the 2015 Paris Agreement to strive to limit



temperature increases to within 1.5°C above the 1850-1900 average.

Preliminary estimates put the current long-term average increase at between 1.34-1.41°C, closing in on but not yet exceeding the Paris threshold, the WMO said.

"One thing to point out very clearly is that one single year above 1.5° doesn't mean that the level mentioned in the Paris agreement had been formally exceeded," said John Kennedy, WMO's scientific coordinator and lead author of the report.

But uncertainty ranges in the data mean that it cannot be ruled out, he said during a briefing.

The report said other factors could also have driven global temperature rises last year, including changes in the solar cycle, a massive volcanic eruption and a decrease in cooling aerosols.

While a small number of regions saw temperatures fall, extreme weather wreaked havoc across the globe, with droughts causing food shortages and floods and wildfires forcing the displacement of 800,000 people, the highest since records began in 2008.

Ocean heat also reached its highest on record and the rate of warming is accelerating, with rising ocean CO₂ concentrations also driving up acidification levels. Glaciers and sea ice continued to melt at a rapid rate, which in turn pushed sea levels to a new high. From 2015 to 2024, sea levels have risen by an average of 4.7mm a year, compared to 2.1mm from 1993 to 2002, WMO data showed.

Kennedy also warned of the long-term implications of melting ice in Arctic and Antarctic regions. "Changes in those regions potentially can affect the kind of overall circulation of the oceans, which affect climate around the world," he said. "What happens in the poles doesn't necessarily stay at the poles."



07
Trump, Putin agree on 30-day energy infrastructure ceasefire



13
Bahla potter Mohammed al Qamshoui uses 3D printing to make traditional pottery



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ITIKAF: A SACRED SECLUSION IN LAST 10 DAYS OF RAMADAN

Muscat - Ramadan is a time for reflection, prayer and forgiveness. It is a month that helps us strengthen our faith, practise self-discipline and grow spiritually. Islamic scholar Hatim Abdul Salem explains some key concepts in simple terms -

WEEK 3

Itikaf is a form of spiritual seclusion observed during the last ten days of Ramadan. 'Itikaf' means to isolate oneself and it involves withdrawing from worldly affairs to focus entirely on worship, prayer and seeking Allah's blessings.

Hatim Abdul Salem

ings. It is performed in a mosque, where individuals spend their time in deep devotion, detaching from all distractions to strengthen their connection with Allah.

The last ten days of Ramadan are considered the most sacred, as they include Laylatul Qadr (The Night of Power) - a night described in the Quran as being better than a thousand months. Muslims engage in constant worship, recitation of the Quran and supplication, seeking forgiveness and divine mercy. Itikaf is a highly recommended sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) and those who observe it are promised immense spiritual rewards. It allows individuals to purify their hearts, renew their faith and increase their devotion to Allah.

Itikaf can be observed for one day, multiple days or the last ten days of Ramadan. Those performing itikaf should:

- Stay in the mosque throughout the period, avoiding unnecessary communication with the outside world
- Spend time in prayer, Quran recitation and self-reflection
- Eat and sleep in the mosque, ensuring their focus remains solely on Allah
- Seek Laylatul Qadr, hoping to receive divine blessings and forgiveness.

Non-Muslims embrace spirit of Ramadan



Our Correspondent
Muscat Daily

Ramadan is a time of spiritual reflection and discipline for Muslims worldwide, but in Oman, a growing number of non-Muslims are also observing the fast - not just as a gesture of solidarity with their Muslim colleagues, friends and neighbours, but also for health reasons.

For some, fasting started as an experiment, but soon, the physical and mental benefits became evident. Sharing his experience, N R Narayan, Director of Al Ghait al Kabir Trading and Investments, said, "I was introduced to this tradition by a couple of my Omani friends who graciously guided me through the practice. I have been observing the Ramadan fast since 1998. Since then, I have missed the fast only twice - once in 2015 while travelling and in 2024 when my mother passed away."

Asked how he benefits from fasting, Narayan said, "I reflect on the discipline it instils, the resilience it nurtures and the willpower it strengthens. For me, fasting transcends the mere act of abstaining from food; it is a journey of inner fortitude and spiritual reflection. It is a test of the body, a triumph of the mind and nourishment of the soul."

But fasting comes with challenges, especially for first-timers who often experience dizziness, fatigue and headaches in the initial days. Travel industry professional David D'Souza said, "The first three days were tough. I felt lightheaded, and by noon, I just wanted to sleep. But by the end of the first week, my body adjusted and I felt much better. I lost nearly 2kg in the first three weeks. More than that, my energy levels stabilised and my

dakumar highlighted the psychological benefits as well. "Many non-Muslims who fast report a sense of calmness and emotional balance. The discipline required to control hunger also translates into better self-control in daily life. Fasting is not just about food; it is about mastering the mind."

Weight loss is a noticeable effect with fasting helping manage health conditions. "I have been struggling with high blood sugar levels for years. After fasting this Ramadan, I noticed a significant drop in my glucose levels. My doctor told me it's the best thing I could have done," Nandhini said.

For many others, the emotional and social impacts of fasting are profound. Sharing iftar meals with Muslim colleagues and experiencing the communal spirit of Ramadan builds deeper bonds and a sense of inclusion. "It's a beautiful experience," said Santosh Kumar, an AC mechanic. "It makes me appreciate the discipline and patience of those who fast every year. I fast for 15 days and it makes me happy."

Being a resident of Oman for 15 years, accounts professional Avdhesh Joshi wanted to experience a sense of fellowship with his colleagues during Ramadan. "The communal iftars make it all worthwhile."

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Muscat launches awareness campaign to curb food waste

Muscat - Muscat Governor's Office has launched a multilingual awareness campaign titled 'Take just what you need' to promote food conservation and reduce waste. The initiative aims to encourage people to buy or prepare only the amount of food they need, minimising excess food going to landfills.

Authorities highlighted the environmental impact of food waste, stating that large quantities of discarded food not only end up in landfills but also decompose, emitting odours that inconvenience nearby residents and attract insects and mosquitoes. 'Food waste increases workload for cleaners and requires additional resources to manage waste disposal and pollution,' the office stated.

The campaign seeks to spread key messages on responsible consumption, including gratitude for food, valuing resources and supporting those in need instead of wasting. 'Through these initiatives, Muscat Governorate hopes to promote a sense of responsibility within the community and encourage appreciation for the blessings we have,' it added.

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Dakhliyah sees 32.94% rise in tourists

Our correspondent
Nizwa

The number of visitors to her-itage and tourist sites in Dakhliyah governorate rose to 415,081 in 2024, a 32.94% in-crease from 312,243 in 2023, ac-cording to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. Among the key attractions, Al Hoota Cave recorded 39,981 visitors last year.

The rise in the tourist num-bers is attributed to the increas-ing role of heritage and tourism neighbourhoods such as Harat al Aqar in Nizwa and Harat al Ain in Izki, along with the popularity

The region is home to 63 castles and forts, with major landmarks including Nizwa Fort, Jabreen Castle, Bahla Fort and Bait al Rudaydah Castle

AHLAM HAMAD AL QASABI

of destinations like Jabal Akhdar, Jabal Sharqi and Misfat al Abriy-een in Al Hamra.

Ahlam Hamad al Qasabi, Di-rector of the Heritage and



Tourism Department in Dakhliyah, said the region is home to 63 castles and forts, with major landmarks including Nizwa Fort, Jabreen Castle, Bahla

Fort and Bait al Rudaydah Castle being actively invested in. Samail Fort has also been offered for pri-vate sector investment.

By the end of 2024, the gov-

ernorate had 158 hotel estab-lishments, including hotels, camps, hotel apartments, rest houses, guesthouses, and her-itage and green inns, offering

around 2,636 rooms.

Qasabi noted that investment in historical landmarks aligns with the ministry's efforts to pre-serve cultural heritage and en-sure its sustainability.

"This includes creating direct and indirect job opportunities, empowering the private sector-especially small and medium en-terprises and local artisans- and providing marketing outlets for craftsmen to enrich local tourism and revitalise cultural heritage sites."

Adventure tourism and sea-sonal agricultural experiences, such as the pomegranate, rose, and peach harvests in Jabal

Akhdar, are among the key at-tractions drawing visitors. Devel-oped traditional neighbourhoods showcasing Omani culture, in-cluding pottery and silverware craftsmanship, also continue to attract tourists.

The Department of Heritage and Tourism is facilitating tourism licensing processes and organising year-round events.

"Planned initiatives include the Rose Pathway in Jabal Akhdar and the restoration of several historic landmarks and mosques to preserve the region's cultural legacy and enhance its appeal as a tourist destination," Qasabi said.



Sultanate highlights tourism potential at Moscow fair

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is showcasing its tourism sector at the Moscow Interna-tional Travel and Tourism Exhi-bition (MITT), which began on Tuesday with the participation of ten Omani tourism companies.

The three-day event, one of the largest in Russia and Eastern Europe, brings together tourism professionals from around the world to explore industry devel-opments and expand business networks.

Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director General of Tourism Promotion at the Min-istry of Heritage and Tourism, emphasised the significance of Oman's participation in global tourism exhibitions. "The Min-istry of Heritage and Tourism aims to enhance Oman's pre-sence at major international plat-

Oman's objectives are to increase its visibility, promote key attractions, and opportunities to attract more inter-national visitors

forms like MITT, presenting the latest developments in our tourism sector and fostering col-laboration with international tourism companies," he said.

MITT serves as a key platform for international partnerships, connecting travel agencies, air-lines, hotels, and service providers. It also features semi-nars and workshops on emerging tourism trends and innovations.

Oman's pavilion at the exhibi-

tion highlights the country's rich cultural heritage through ad-vanced technology, offering an interactive experience for visi-tors. The pavilion aims to attract global industry players and strengthen Oman's position in international tourism markets.

The ministry's objectives in-clude increasing Oman's visibil-ity, promoting key attractions, and discussing opportunities to attract more international visi-tors. The exhibition also provides a platform for small and medium enterprises in Oman's tourism sector to connect with major global companies. Its participa-tion focuses on promoting luxury, adventure, sustainable and well-ness tourism. Meetings with in-ternational airlines and tourism companies, as well as media en-gagements, are expected to play a crucial role in advancing the country's tourism goals.

OCCI Musandam hosts discussion on civic councils' role in society and development

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Musandam branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) on Tuesday hosted a Ramadan Evening titled 'Municipal Councils and Their Role in Society and Develop-ment'.

The event, held under the pa-tronage of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidi, Governor of Mu-sandam, was attended by Raed bin Mohammed al Shehhi, Chair-man of the OCCI Musandam branch. Discussions focused on the role of municipal councils in fostering local development and strengthening community part-nerships.



The session explored the councils' responsibilities, includ-ing infrastructure development and their role as intermediaries between citizens and the govern-ment to improve local services. Participants also highlighted the councils' involvement in planning and executing projects aimed at enhancing the business environ-

ment and driving economic growth in Musandam.

Emphasis was placed on part-nerships between municipal councils and the local commu-nity, along with strategies to en-hance communication between councils and business owners to identify development priorities. The event also reviewed several

strategic and municipal projects that have improved infrastructure and boosted the local economy. The discussion underscored the role of the private sector in the success of upcoming municipal projects, which are expected to contribute to economic diversifi-cation and sustainability.

Sayyid Ibrahim said, "This Ra-madan Evening is part of broader efforts to foster community communication and create a space for constructive dialogue. Such gatherings are essential for exchanging ideas and visions on how to advance the governorate and stimulate collaboration be-tween the public and private sec-tors, contributing to sustainable development."

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3/2025	Construction and Maintenance	Rennovation /Maintenance Works In Qurayat Sports Hall	05/04/2025	14/04/2025
RE-TENDER 29/2024	Construction and Maintenance	Design and Build Contract of Asphalt Roads and Allied Works in Camel Race Track at Bidiyah in North Sharqiya Governorate	05/04/2025	14/04/2025
RE-TENDER 30/2024	Construction and Maintenance	Design and Build Contract of Camel Race Track, Fencing and Gates Including Temporary Stable, Test Room, Store and Media Rest Room With Shaded Carpark at Mudaibi In North Sharqiya Governorate	05/04/2025	14/04/2025
RE-TENDER 31/2024	Construction and Maintenance	Design and Build Contract of Camel Race Track, Fencing and Gates Including Temporary Stable, Test Room, Store and Media Rest Room With Shaded Carpark at Bidiyah in North Sharqiya Governorate	05/04/2025	14/04/2025
RE-TENDER 38/2024	Construction and Maintenance	Design and Build Contract of Synthetic Turf Football Court, Grand Stand and Administration Block at Haima in Al Wusta Governorate	05/04/2025	14/04/2025
RE-TENDER 1/2025	Services	Almanthora Alhasanah of Biography of Oman Scholars	05/04/2025	14/04/2025
RE-TENDER 2/2025	Services	Jawabat Abu Said Al Kudami	05/04/2025	14/04/2025

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

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2024
OMAN'S MOST TRUSTED BRAND AWARDS

INTERVIEW

AL ZAIN FARM
WINNER: POULTRY PRODUCTS (CHICKEN)

Our Correspondent
Muscat

AL ZAIN FARM

Raising the bar in
Oman's poultry industry

Al Zain Farm LLC has established itself as a leading and trusted name in Oman's poultry industry. Known for its commitment to quality, safety, and innovation, Al Zain recently won Oman's Most Trusted Brand Award in the Poultry Products (Chicken) category. In this exclusive interview, Shabbir Boriyawala, Chairman of Al Zain Farm LLC, shared insights into the company's journey, the core values that define its success, and the unique factors that set it apart from competitors. He discussed Al Zain's rigorous quality and safety standards, and strategic expansion beyond poultry into other premium food products. Boriyawala also outlined Al Zain's vision for future growth and expansion in Oman and the wider GCC region.

Can you share the journey of Al Zain Farm LLC and its evolution into one of the most trusted poultry brands in Oman?

Al Zain Farm LLC has grown from a humble poultry operation into one of Oman's most trusted and recognised poultry brands. With over ten years of experience in the industry, we have consistently focused on producing high-quality, fresh, and nutritious chicken for Omani consumers. Our commitment to excellence, coupled with state-of-the-art farming practices, has enabled us to earn the trust of households, businesses, and institutions across the country. Being recognised as Oman's Most Trusted Brand in the Chicken Category is a testament to our dedication to quality and consumer satisfaction.

What core values and principles have been pivotal in shaping Al Zain's reputation for quality and reliability?

Our brand is built on a foundation of integrity, quality, and sustainability. We prioritise the health and well-being of our birds, ensuring they are raised in highly controlled, bio-secure environments. We also maintain strict quality control measures at every stage of production, from hatchery to processing. Al Zain proudly holds HACCP, ISO 22000, and Halal certifications, which reflect our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of food safety, hygiene, and ethical production. These certifications reinforce our promise to deliver only the best-quality poultry to our consumers.

What sets Al Zain apart from other poultry producers in Oman, and how does the brand maintain its competitive edge?

What sets Al Zain apart from other poultry producers in Oman is our unique focus on freshness, taste, and nutrition. Unlike imported poultry, our products are delivered fresh daily, ensuring superior quality. Additionally, Al Zain is the only producer of tender chicken in Oman, offering an exceptionally juicy and flavourful product that is unmatched in the market. Our strict biosecurity protocols and advanced production facilities further strengthen our position as an industry leader.



Al Zain is actively working on expanding its presence beyond Oman. We are exploring regional markets while maintaining our strong foothold in the local poultry industry. Our goal is to continue innovating and diversifying our product range to meet the evolving needs of modern consumers

SHABBIR BORIYAWALA,
CHAIRMAN OF AL ZAIN FARM LLC

How does Al Zain maintain the highest standards of quality and safety in its poultry products, and how important is consumer feedback in ensuring this trust?

Quality and food safety are non-negotiable at Al Zain. We adhere to internationally recognised quality and safety standards, ensuring that every product meets stringent hygiene and freshness criteria. Our HACCP and ISO 22000 certifications reflect our unwavering commitment to food safety management and risk control. Consumer feedback plays a crucial role in our operations, allowing us to continuously improve and innovate based on evolving customer preferences and market demands.

Can you highlight some recent innovations or new products that Al Zain has introduced to stay ahead of consumer trends in the poultry industry?

Al Zain is committed to staying ahead of consumer trends through continuous innovation.

Recently, we introduced whole frozen tender chicken, catering to different customer needs.

Beyond poultry, Al Zain has expanded into premium-quality food products to meet the evolving needs of consumers. We now offer finest sourced French fries and a diverse potato range, ensuring premium taste and quality. We also offer a variety of frozen vegetables, carefully selected to retain maximum freshness and nutrients. Our upcoming dairy offerings will include pure ghee, butter, and margarine, which will soon be available to provide consumers with high-quality cooking essentials.

clude pure ghee, butter, and margarine, which will soon be available to provide consumers with high-quality cooking essentials.

This strategic expansion allows Al Zain to broaden its product portfolio while maintaining the same high standards of quality and trust that consumers expect from our brand.

How does Al Zain connect with its customers to ensure brand loyalty and satisfaction with every product?

We believe in building strong relationships with our consumers. In addition to engaging with customers through social media platforms, retail activations, and direct interactions, Al Zain has established Al Zain Food Express outlets. These outlets serve as experience centers where customers can taste our products, explore our range of offerings, and enjoy freshly prepared poultry-based meals. This direct engagement allows us to receive valuable consumer feedback while reinforcing brand trust and loyalty.

How does Al Zain approach sustainability, particularly in terms of animal welfare and its environmental impact?

Sustainability is at the core of our operations. Al Zain follows ethical poultry farming practices, ensuring the highest standards of animal welfare. We are also committed to reducing our environmental footprint and have taken a major step towards sustainability by installing a 3.5MW solar power plant at our facilities. This initiative significantly reduces our reliance on conventional energy sources, promoting a cleaner and greener environment. Additionally, we actively contribute to the local economy by creating jobs and supporting community initiatives.

What exciting developments can we expect from Al Zain in the coming years, and how do you plan to expand your presence beyond Oman?

Al Zain is actively working on expanding its presence beyond Oman. We are exploring regional markets while maintaining our strong foothold in the local poultry industry. Our goal is to continue innovating and diversifying our product range to meet the evolving needs of modern consumers. Furthermore, Al Zain aspires to become a leader in the food industry, not just in Oman but across the entire GCC region.

What is Al Zain's long-term vision, and how does it align with broader trends in Oman's food and agriculture sector, especially as the brand continues to lead in the poultry market?

Our long-term vision aligns with Oman's food security and agricultural sustainability goals. As we continue to lead the poultry market, we remain committed to investing in cutting-edge technologies, expanding production capacities, and enhancing our product portfolio. We aim to be a benchmark for quality and trust in the region's food industry, ensuring that Al Zain remains the first choice for consumers across the GCC.

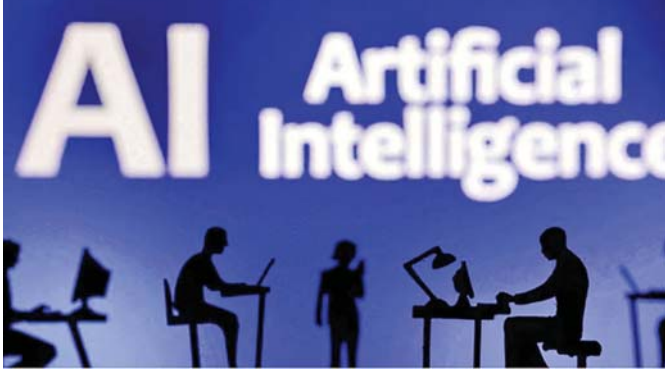
1 in 4 GCC companies plan to spend over \$25mn on AI in 2025: Survey

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Artificial Intelligence (AI) remains a top priority for business leaders worldwide in 2025, with a strong focus on achieving tangible results from AI initiatives. According to the latest findings from Boston Consulting Group (BCG)'s AI Radar global survey, one in three companies globally plans to allocate over \$25mn to AI this year, while in the GCC, one in four companies is set to make a similar level of investment.

The survey, which includes input from 1,803 C-level executives across 19 markets and 12 industries, highlights widespread optimism about AI's potential, tempered by significant challenges in realising its full value.

Leading companies in the GCC are focusing their AI investments on two strategic priorities: re-shaping core business functions



and creating entirely new AI-powered business models. Re-shaping involves fundamentally transforming existing operations for greater efficiency, while new business models enable offerings that were not possible before AI.

This strategic approach is reflected in the fact that 81% of GCC companies plan to increase technology investments in 2025, and 72% rank AI/GenAI as a top-three strategic priority. At the country level, 88% of executives in Qatar, 72% in the UAE, and

69% in Saudi Arabia rank AI/GenAI among their top three strategic priorities, compared to a global average of 73%.

In the GCC, 66% of executives expect AI to boost productivity; however, they acknowledge that more needs to be done to ensure that the current workforce is prepared to meet AI demands. Overall, the region's positive outlook on workforce retention stands out as a key survey finding, with only 7% of executives in the Middle East anticipating job

reductions due to AI automation – an even lower percentage than the global average of 8%.

The GCC's efforts also emphasise practical AI applications rather than limited experimentation. To successfully implement AI, the region's organisations are increasingly adopting the "10-20-70 principle" – a proven framework for AI value creation. This approach dedicates 10% of efforts to algorithms, 20% to data and technology, and 70% to people, processes, and cultural transformation.

While the GCC leads in AI adoption, regional executives are also keenly aware of the risks of scaling AI. Data privacy and security, lack of control over AI decision-making processes, and regulatory challenges are top concerns for regional executives, aligning closely with global risk perceptions. Addressing these concerns is crucial to ensuring AI's practical adoption.

Oil prices extend losses as Russia-Ukraine energy truce sparks oversupply worries

London, UK – Oil prices again fell on Wednesday after a nearly 1% drop in the previous session, as a US-Russia agreement on a 30-day ceasefire in Ukraine's energy sector and rising crude inventories heightened oversupply concerns.

Investors were also exercising caution as the US Federal Reserve meeting was underway, where the central bank was expected to keep rates unchanged on Wednesday.

Brent oil future expiring in May fell 0.4% to \$70.25 per barrel as of 02:05 GMT, while West Texas Intermediate or WTI also dropped 0.4% to \$66.48 per barrel.

Both contracts ended had risen sharply in early trade on Tuesday after Middle East tensions escalated, but closed nearly 1% lower after the tempo-



rary peace measures in Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has agreed to a 30-day cessation of attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure, following a proposal by US President Donald Trump.

This agreement aims to de-escalate tensions and protect

critical energy assets in Ukraine, marking a potential step toward broader peace negotiations.

This temporary truce has introduced new dynamics into the global oil market, particularly concerning supply expectations.

If US-Russia peace talks on Ukraine succeed, Washington could ease certain sanctions on Russian energy exports, either by relaxing restrictions on oil trade or allowing more exemptions for buyers. This would enable Russia to increase crude and refined product shipments.

Such prospects contribute to existing concerns about an over-supplied oil market, especially as other factors, like plans by OPEC+ to unwind production cuts starting in April, are already expected to add to global crude supplies.

(Source: Investing.com)

Fitch cuts world growth forecast amid US imposed trade war

New Delhi, India – US President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs have started a global trade war and it will reduce not only the growth of the United States (US) and the world but also push up inflation and delay Federal Reserve rate cuts in US according to a report by Fitch Ratings.

The rating agency has cut the growth forecast of US to 1.7% from 2.1% in its December 2024 Global Economic Outlook (GEO) and the growth forecast for 2026 was cut to 1.5% from 1.7%. These rates are well below the trend if we compare it with almost 3% annual growth in 2023 and 2024.

Fitch says fiscal easing in China and Germany will cushion the impact of higher US import tariffs, but this year growth in the Eurozone will still be a lot weaker than its forecast of December GEO. Mexico and Canada will experience technical recessions given the scale of their US trade exposures. Fitch Ratings has cut Mexico and Canada annual 2025 forecasts by 1.1pp and 0.7pp respectively.

It says the average world growth will slow to 2.3% this year, well below the trend and down from 2.9% in 2024. This is a downward revision of 0.3 percentage point and reflects broad-based reductions in developed and emerging economies. World growth will remain weak at 2.2% in 2026.

Fitch Ratings says "The size, speed, and breadth of US tariff hike announcements since January is staggering." The effective tariff rate (ETR) of US has risen



Fitch Ratings has cut the growth forecast of US to 1.7% from 2.1% in its December 2024

Fitch Ratings says the average world growth will slow to 2.3% this year, well below the trend and down from 2.9% in 2024. World growth will remain weak at 2.2% in 2026

to 8.5% from 2.3% in 2024 and is likely to rise further.

Fitch estimates an effective US tariff rate of 15% on Europe, Canada, Mexico, and others in 2025, and 35% on China. This will push the US ETR to 18% this year before moderating to 16% next year as the ETR on Canada

and Mexico falls to 10%. This would be highest rate for 90 years.

Fitch Ratings said, "There is huge uncertainty about how far the US will go and our assumptions could be too harsh. But there are also risks of a larger tariff shock including from an esca-

lating global trade war. Moreover, the US administration has set out an import substitution agenda - aimed at boosting US manufacturing and reducing the trade deficit - which it believes can be achieved with higher tariffs."

According to Fitch, tariff hikes will also impact US negatively, it will result in higher US consumer prices, reduce real wages, and increase companies' costs, and the surge in policy uncertainty will take a toll on business investment. Retaliatory tariffs will hit US exporters. Export-oriented

global manufacturers in East Asia and Europe also will be affected.

Fitch calculation suggests tariff increases will reduce GDP by about 1% in the US, China, and Europe by 2026.

The tariff shock is estimated to add 1% to US near-term inflation, and the Fed will delay further easing until Q4 2025. Fitch believes that now Fed will cut rate just once this year, but it may go for three more cuts in 2026 as the economy slows and tariff levels stabilise.

ANI



Gold hits record high as haven demand grows

Ambar Warrick

Gold prices rose slightly to a new record high in Asian trade on Wednesday, as safe haven demand remained underpinned by renewed geopolitical ructions in the Middle East and concerns over trade tariffs.

Investors also remained largely risk-averse before the conclusion of a Federal Reserve meeting later on Wednesday, which was expected to offer more insight into the US economy.

The yellow metal rose sharply over the past week as risk appetite was undermined by US President Donald Trump continuing to threaten higher trade tariffs, while fears of a US recession grew. The dollar fell on this notion, lending gold more strength.

Spot gold rose 0.1% to a record high of \$3,039.0 an ounce, while gold futures expiring in May rose 0.1% to a peak of \$3,046.12 an ounce.

A Bank of Japan meeting yielded few changes on Wednesday, while the Bank of England is expected to keep rates unchanged later in the day.

Gold hit a record high on Tuesday after the Israel-Hamas ceasefire collapsed, pointing to heightened tensions in the Middle East. Middling progress in Russia-Ukraine ceasefire discussions also aided haven demand.

The Fed was widely expected to keep interest rates unchanged at 4.5% after the conclusion of a meeting later on Wednesday, amid persistent uncertainty over the US economy under Trump.

Officials have repeatedly flagged uncertainty over the near-term economic outlook as Trump enacts his agenda, with limited scope for any further reductions in interest rates in the near-term. The Fed is also set to release its updated summary of economic projections, offering more insight into the central bank's expectations for the US economy under Trump.

Trump's trade tariffs- especially his flip-flopping on measures against Canada and Mexico- sparked increased uncertainty over the US economic outlook. The US President has warned that he will impose even higher tariffs in early-April.

(Source: Investing.com)

Nvidia unveils Blackwell Ultra AI chip for 'age of AI reasoning'

Daniel Howley

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang announced the company's next-generation Blackwell Ultra AI chip during its annual GTC event in San Jose, California, on Tuesday.

In addition to the Blackwell Ultra chip, Nvidia also announced its GB300 superchip, which combines two Blackwell Ultras with the company's Grace central processing unit (CPU). The chips are designed to power AI systems for customers ranging from hyperscalers like Amazon, Google, Microsoft, and Meta to research labs around the world.

According to Nvidia, the Blackwell Ultra offers 1.5 times the performance of Blackwell and represents a 50x increase in data center revenue opportunity versus its Hopper chip, thanks to its improved AI capabilities.

Nvidia says the Blackwell Ultra is designed for the "age of AI reasoning," a type of AI processing that mimics how hu-



Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang

mans think and reach conclusions. It broke into the mainstream when DeepSeek debuted its R1 AI model. OpenAI's o1 and Google's Gemini 2.0 Flash Thinking are also reasoning models.

DeepSeek initially sent a shock through Wall Street when it said that it developed its AI models at a fraction of the cost that Silicon Valley heavyweights spend while using below-top-of-the-line chips. But Nvidia has fought back against that assertion, saying that reasoning models benefit from using powerful GPUs, which allow them to pro-

vide better responses to user queries faster.

Like Blackwell, the Blackwell Ultra will slot into Nvidia's massive NVL72 rack server that combines 72 GB300 superchips, which the company says provides improved efficiency and serviceability.

According to the company, the GB300 NVL72 can handle 1,000 tokens per second when using DeepSeek's R1 AI model. That's up from 100 tokens per second when using Nvidia's Hopper chip. In other words, Blackwell Ultra is a major step up from older Hopper systems.

Nvidia's Blackwell chip is now in full production and, according to the company, has been its fastest ramp-up in history. In its most recent quarter, Nvidia said Blackwell contributed \$11bn to its \$39.3bn in total revenue.

(Source: Yahoo Finance)

Japan warns of uncertainty over Trump tariffs, keeps interest rate steady

Tokyo, Japan – Bank of Japan (BOJ) Governor Kazuo Ueda on Wednesday expressed concern over uncertainties surrounding the impact on the domestic economy of US President Donald Trump's aggressive tariff plans, saying he wants to monitor the situation before deciding on the next rate hike.

At the end of a two-day policy meeting, the BOJ stood pat on the current rate of 0.5%. The central bank, which has been shifting away from a decade of ultra-easy monetary policy, raised the key short-term rate from 0.25% at the previous meeting in January.

"There is a high degree of uncertainty" regarding Trump's trade policies, Ueda said at a press conference. "We will decide on our policy after studying the impact (of US tariff plans) on the economic outlook and inflation in our country."

While acknowledging a downside risk to the global economy, the BOJ chief said the bank



Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda holds a press conference in Tokyo on Wednesday

plans to increase its policy rate further if the domestic economy and prices continue to move in line with its expectations, adding underlying inflation is still below the level the bank is aiming at.

The decision suggests the BOJ is taking a cautious approach toward the next hike, which is expected to bring the policy rate to 0.75%, the highest level in about 30 years, despite some positive signs in the do-

mestic economy.

The rate of inflation has been at or above the bank's 2% target for almost three years, while major firms have promised bumper pay increases for the third year in a row in this year's wage negotiations.

The Trump administration imposed 25% tariffs on steel and aluminum imports earlier this month despite vehement opposition from its trading partners.

The president is also considering extending the levy to auto imports, which would deal a heavy blow to the Japanese industry.

In Japan, households are feeling the pinch from inflation, with rice prices rising at the fastest rate since comparable data became available in 1971. Prices of vegetables, such as cabbage and tomatoes, are also soaring amid unfavorable weather conditions and increasing production costs.

Japan's core consumer prices, a key indicator for the BOJ, rose 3.2% in January from a year earlier, the fastest pace in 19 months. The inflation rate has been at or above the bank's 2% target since April 2022.

To mitigate the impact, many Japanese firms agreed to lift salaries in this year's labor-management wage negotiations, with the average increase reaching 5.46%, according to the Japanese Trade Union Confederation's preliminary survey released last week.

Kyodo News

China's industrial sector maintains growth momentum

Beijing, China – China's industrial production saw steady growth in the first two months of this year, driven by robust manufacturing performance and the sustained effect of combined macro policies, official data showed on Monday.

China's value-added industrial output, an important economic indicator, went up 5.9% year on year during the January-February period, up 0.1 percentage points from the full-year growth rate of 2024, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).



The overall industrial output expansion, fuelled by the robust performance of the equipment manufacturing sector, was achieved despite a high comparative base during the same period last year, NBS spokesperson Fu Linghui told a press conference.

In terms of sectors, the value-added of mining increased by 4.3%, manufacturing by 6.9%, and the production and supply of electricity, thermal power, gas and water by 1.1% during the period, according to the data.

The value-added output of the

equipment manufacturing sector rose by 10.6% year on year, an increase of 2.9 percentage points from the full-year growth rate of last year, providing strong support for the stable growth of overall industrial production, the data showed.

The high-tech manufacturing sector saw a stellar performance, with its value-added output climbing 9.1% year on year. The production of industrial robots and integrated circuit wafers increased by 27% and 19.6%, respectively.

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Study identifies effective method for detecting severity of banana bruises

A research study has demonstrated that fractal dimension-based image processing can effectively detect and assess bruises in bananas, offering a potential solution for improving quality control during transportation and storage.

The study, led by Dr Mai Khalfan Salim al Dairi, Research Assistant at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), shows how mechanical damage from improper handling and storage can accelerate fruit deterioration.

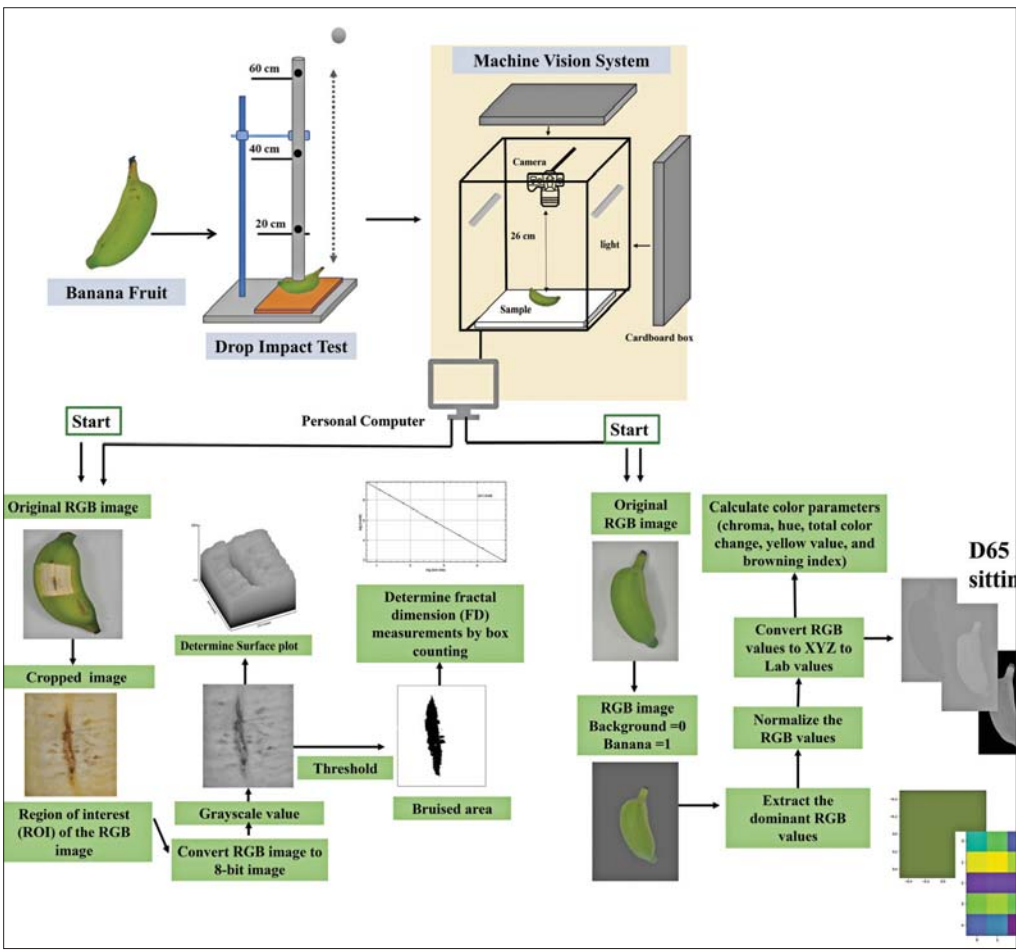
The research team conducted simulated drop impact tests to evaluate the severity of bruises using machine vision technology. Fractal dimension analysis was used to measure bruise intensity, alongside conventional assessments of bruise area, size, and susceptibility. The study examined the impact of drop heights, ball weights, and storage temperatures on key banana quality parameters, including weight, firmness, colour, sugar content, and acidity.



Dr Mai Khalfan Salim al Dairi

Mai stated that the results confirmed fractal dimension analysis as a highly accurate method for identifying bruises, which could improve quality control processes. The study also found that storing damaged bananas at improper temperatures exacerbates quality issues, leading to weight loss, reduced firmness, and significant changes in sugar and acidity levels, making the fruit less appealing to consumers.

The research recommends



using modern technologies such as fractal analysis and machine vision for precise damage assessment. It also emphasises the importance of optimal storage temperatures to minimise deterioration and maintain nutritional and visual quality.

“These advancements could

Attabi. The research was among the winning projects in the 11th National Research Award, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. Commenting on the recognition, Mai said, “Winning the National Research Award has been a profound recognition of

The study also found that storing damaged bananas at improper temperatures exacerbates quality issues, leading to weight loss, reduced firmness, and significant changes in sugar and acidity levels, making the fruit less appealing

enhance product quality for consumers while reducing economic losses for farmers and traders.”

The study was published in the journal *Food Chemistry* with an impact factor of 8.5. The research team included Dr Pankaj B Pathare, Prof Rashid Abdullah al Yahyai, Dr Hemanatha Jayasuriya, and Dr Zahir Humaid al

my dedication to addressing one of the real-world challenges through research. It symbolises not only personal achievement but also the impact of myself and our Postharvest and Value Addition Research Team on advancing knowledge and contributing to sustainable agricultural practices.”



Healthcare management committee meets in MoH

To promote the principle of integration and improve healthcare services for citizens and residents across the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, H E Dr Hilal bin Ali al Subti, Minister of Health, chaired the first meeting of the Healthcare Management and Regulation Committee for 2025 on Wednesday at the headquarters of the Ministry of Health (MoH).

The meeting was attended by H E Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Undersecretary for Health Affairs in MoH, Dr Fatima bint Mohammed al Ajmi, Chief Executive Officer of the Oman Medical Specialties Board, along with several directors general and officials from MoH, the Medical City Hospital for Military and Medical Services, and the University Medical City.

During the meeting, the agenda was approved, and discussions were held on the implementation of recommendations from the third meeting of the committee in 2024. Several topics were addressed, including the transfer of patients between primary healthcare centers and emergency departments, the integration of emerging technologies in healthcare, and the establishment of a database for retired healthcare practitioners.

This database aims to designate these practitioners as local points of contact within their communities, allowing them to actively participate in education and consultation. In addition, the meeting examined the impact of maternity leave following the implementation of the new social protection system.

The meeting included several presentations, including a presentation on the blood bank by Lieutenant Colonel Dr Salim al Busaidi, Oncology Consultant at the Medical City Hospital for Military and Medical Services.

Another presentation focused on the policy for handling the transport of processed human biological samples in laboratories inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman, presented by Dr Ferial al Lawati, Senior Consultant Physician at the Royal Hospital.

Furthermore, Dr Abdullah al Asmi, Associate Professor and Senior Consultant in Neurology at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University, and Chairman of the Higher Medical Committee, gave a presentation on the Higher Medical Committee.

‘Drive into Spirit of Ramadan with GWM’



GWM is embracing the spirit of Ramadan with an exclusive lineup of limited-time offers designed to make luxury SUVs more accessible than ever. As consumer spending rises during this festive season, GWM is presenting first-time buyers and existing customers with premium deals on the rugged Tank 300 and 500, as well as the newly included Haval H9 and H7 models.

With a focus on innovation, reliability, and affordability, GWM continues to strengthen its presence in Oman's automotive market. The Ramadan campaign offers a value-packed package that includes a four-year/50,000km service package, one-year registration and

insurance, and up to RO500 in Lulu vouchers and Petro cards for all new buyers. Additionally, customers can take advantage of an industry-leading 45% buy-back option for three years or 60,000km, ensuring a worry-free ownership experience.

Speaking about the campaign, a senior spokesperson, OTE Group, noted that Ramadan is a time of celebration, togetherness, and new beginnings.

“At GWM, we want to offer our customers an opportunity to own a world-class SUV with unmatched benefits. Our Ramadan promotion is designed to provide exceptional value, whether it's for a first-time buyer or a loyal GWM customer looking to up-

grade. With these limited-time offers, we invite customers to visit our showrooms and experience the luxury, capability, and advanced technology that define our brand.”

The promotion is available till April 30 across all participating GWM showrooms in Oman. Customers can explore the vehicles in person, enjoy test drives, and consult expert advisors to find the perfect SUV for their needs. GWM has also enhanced its digital engagement platforms, allowing potential buyers to browse offers, schedule appointments, or make inquiries online, ensuring a seamless and convenient experience.

With its commitment to deliv-

ering premium SUVs at an accessible price point, GWM continues to redefine the luxury automotive segment. Whether it's the robust off-road power of the Tank 300 and 500 or the smart, refined driving experience of the Haval H9 and H7, this Ramadan, GWM invites drivers to upgrade their journeys with unbeatable offers.

Great Wall Motors (GWM) is a global leader in automotive innovation, committed to producing high-quality SUVs that combine cutting-edge technology, safety, and performance. With a focus on affordability without compromise, GWM continues to redefine the driving experience.

Liva Insurance joins forces with Elite Show Jumping Competition

The world of show jumping took centre stage this week, with Liva Insurance supporting the growth of equestrian sports in Oman as the Silver Sponsor of the ‘Elite Show’ Jumping Competition.

This prestigious event, officially recognised by the Oman Equestrian & Racing Federation, showcased the incredible skill, precision, and unmatched synergy between horse and rider. This unique partnership is a testament to Liva Insurance's dedication to fostering the growth of equestrian sports in Oman, while simultaneously strengthening the nation's rich cultural traditions and sporting reputation.

By supporting this renowned competition, the brand also continues to play an integral role in empowering the next generation of riders and ensuring the sport's

continued success in the Sultanate of Oman.

Equestrianism has been an integral part of Oman's cultural identity for centuries, representing the country's strength, resilience, and deep national pride. Show jumping - introduced into the nation in the 1980s - has since blossomed, gaining momentum with state-of-the-art training facilities, passionate riders, and growing global recognition.

Sharing her thoughts on the significance of this partnership, Bader al Lawati, head of Brand and Communications, said, “Equestrian sports embody resilience, precision, and the pursuit of excellence - all of which are values that align closely with Liva Insurance's mission. We are truly honoured to support the



Elite Show Jumping Competition. It not only offers a platform for talented riders to showcase their ambition and determination but also plays a key role in advancing the growth of equestrian sports in Oman.”

This thrilling competition was more than just an exciting display of equestrian skill; it was an immersive experience for spectators, offering a unique blend of cultural exhibitions, live entertainment, diverse culinary delights, and abundant networking opportunities. The event also served as a valuable platform for local businesses and SMEs, stimulating economic activity and contributing to Oman's broader vision for sustainable development and international recognition. As a key player in Oman's insurance sector, Liva Insurance

is dedicated to supporting initiatives that drive In-Country Value (ICV), not only through its core business operations but also by supporting organizations that work to preserve and promote the nation's cultural and sporting heritage.

By investing in high-profile events such as the Elite Show Jumping Competition, the brand also continues to strengthen the community, empower local enterprises, and nurture equestrian talent, ensuring that Oman's equestrian legacy remains strong and vibrant for future generations. Established in 2023 through the integration of Al Ahlia Insurance and National Life & General Insurance Company (NLGIC), Liva Insurance is the region's leading multi-line insurance company.

Cyffer, the Nigerian linguist who brought Europe, Africa closer

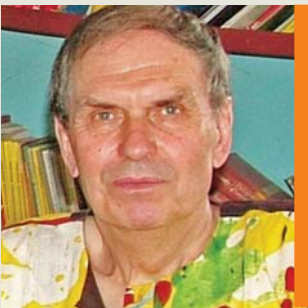
Abuja, Nigeria - The academic community is mourning the loss of emeritus professor Norbert Cyffer, who is renowned for his extensive research on African languages, particularly Kanuri.

Linguist had long studied Kanuri, spoken by approximately 10mn people across Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad, but little academic works had been published on the language. Cyffer's contributions enriched linguistic scholarship and raised important questions about the future of African language studies in Europe.

A neglected field in academia?

When he first encountered Kanuri, Cyffer was struck by its vast number of speakers and its lack of academic attention. In a 2015 report titled *In the Name of Grammar*, which he co-authored with other scholars, Cyffer pointed out that despite having a comparable number of speakers to Finnish, Kanuri 'remains neglected in academic research'.

Determined to change this, he spent over four decades studying Kanuri's grammar, lan-



Norbert Cyffer, is renowned for his extensive research on African languages, particularly Kanuri. Cyffer's contributions enriched linguistic scholarship and raised important questions about the future of African language studies in Europe

guage documentation, and its role as a second language. Starting in the late 1960s, Cyffer spent time with Kanuri-speaking communities, recorded their language and music at a time

when very few academics ventured it such regions. His recordings also shed light on the cultural diversity of Nigeria's border regions with Niger and Chad. Cyffer's efforts also con-

tributed to the development of the Kanuri dictionary, further cementing his role in advancing the language's visibility.

Reflecting on Cyffer's contributions, Tukur Abba, a senior

lecturer in linguistics at Kano's Bayero University, and a former student of Cyffer, recalled a defining moment in the field. During Cyffer's time in Nigeria, he played a crucial role in developing the first Standard Kanuri Orthography (SKO), a widely used spelling system that continues to serve as a linguistic benchmark. Before that, there was no standard orthography or spelling of Kanuri.

Bridging the gap

Beyond his research, Cyffer was widely regarded as a mentor and a key figure in fostering cross-continental collaboration. His guidance, according to scholars like Abba, shaped the careers of many emerging African linguists, strengthening academic ties between Africa and Europe.

"Norbert Cyffer was a bridge. He was the reason Kanuri became known to European scholars," said Abba.

His influence extended beyond Africa, inspiring scholars across Europe to study Kanuri and other African languages.

DW

Trump, Putin agree on 30-day energy infrastructure ceasefire

Moscow/Washington, D.C. - Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump agreed in a phone call that Russia and Ukraine stop attacking each other's energy infrastructure for 30 days and gave the Russian military an order to do so.

The Kremlin also said in a statement that the two leaders discussed a US proposal for a 30-day ceasefire, to which Ukraine agreed last week.

According to the Kremlin Putin had raised 'significant points' about monitoring such a truce and preventing it from being used by Ukraine to mobilise more soldiers and rearm itself.

"It was emphasised that the key condition for preventing the escalation of the conflict and working towards its resolution by political and diplomatic means should be a complete cessation of foreign military assistance and the provision of intelligence information to Kyiv," the Kremlin said.

Meanwhile, the White House said that Trump and Putin agreed that the war between Russia and Ukraine needs to end with a 'lasting peace' and that talks to achieve that goal will begin immediately.

"The leaders agreed that the movement to peace will begin with an energy and infrastructure ceasefire, as well as technical negotiations on implementation of a maritime ceasefire in the Black Sea, full ceasefire and permanent peace," the White House said in a statement about the call.

"These negotiations will begin immediately in the Middle East."

Meanwhile, Trump said that his telephone conversation with Putin had been 'a very good and



Ukraine's energy installations, like this thermal power plant here, have been the target of repeated Russian attacks

Putin raised 'significant points' about monitoring such a truce and preventing it from being used by Ukraine to mobilise more soldiers and rearm itself

productive' one.

"We agreed to an immediate ceasefire on all energy and infrastructure, with an understanding that we will be working quickly to have a complete ceasefire and, ultimately, an end to this very horrible war between Russia and Ukraine," he wrote in a post on his Truth social network. Trump added that many elements of 'a contract for peace' have been discussed, and 'that process is

now in full force and effect'.

Ukraine in constant communication

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky has talked to several European leaders on Tuesday evening following the Trump-Putin call.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer reiterated Britain's 'unwavering support' to Ukraine in a phone call, according to a state-

ment by the British government, while Zelensky provided an update on the frontline situation.

During an online briefing on Tuesday, Zelensky told reporters that he had also spoken to French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, both key European allies of Ukraine. "We are in constant communication. I am confident that there will be no betrayal from our partners and that the assistance will continue."

Saudi to host US, Russia talks

US envoy Steve Witkoff said late on Tuesday that Saudi Arabia would host further talks between Russia and the United States.

The next round of talks on Sunday is to focus on a maritime ceasefire in the Black Sea as well as a more complete ceasefire and a permanent peace deal, Witkoff said in an interview on US broadcaster Fox News. "The devil is in the details. We've got a team going to Saudi Arabia, led by our national security adviser (Mike Walz) and our secretary of state (Marco Rubio)," said Witkoff.

"We've got to figure out those details," said Witkoff, who met with Putin last week. Witkoff is officially the US president's special envoy to the Middle East but is also a key player in the Trump administration's push for an end to the war in Ukraine.

DW



Nigerian President Bola Tinubu

Nigeria: Tinubu declares state of emergency

Lagos, Nigeria - Nigerian President Bola Tinubu declared a state of emergency on Tuesday in the oil-rich region of Rivers State following a prolonged political crisis and governance paralysis.

Tinubu said during a nationwide broadcast that he suspended Governor Siminalayi Fubara, his deputy, and all elected members from the state who are in the House of Assembly for six months.

"The latest security reports made available to me show that between yesterday and today, there have been disturbing incidents of vandalisation of pipelines by some militants without the governor taking any action to curtail them. I have, of course, given stern orders to the security agencies to ensure the safety of the lives of the good people of Rivers State and the oil

pipelines," he said.

The situation in Rivers State has been volatile, with the governor accused of gross misconduct, including spending public funds contrary to the Constitution and hindering the state's House of Assembly from performing its duties.

Before Tinubu's address, the assembly had announced an indefinite recess, preventing Fubara from presenting the 2025 budget.

Tinubu's declaration is based on a section of the constitution that interprets a state of emergency as a situation of national danger or disaster. The president has nominated retired Vice Admiral Ibokette Ibas as administrator to take charge of the state's affairs during the six-month period.

Anadolu Agency

HEAVY SNOW IN TOKYO



Staff members work in the snow near the Meguro Station in Tokyo, Japan, on Wednesday. Affected by cold air, Tokyo ushered in heavy snow on Wednesday (Xinhua)

Trump releases files on JFK assassination

Washington, D.C., US - The US National Archives released around 80,000 pages of declassified records late on Tuesday related to the 1963 assassination of President John F Kennedy (JFK) following an executive order by President Donald Trump.

The documents, which have been uploaded to a portal maintained by the National Archives, are part of a long-awaited effort to disclose all government records related to the assassination. Trump's executive order, signed on January 23, directed the full release of the remaining files, calling it a matter of public interest.

"This release consists of approximately 80,000 pages of previously classified records that will be published with no redactions," the Office of the Director of National Intelligence said in a statement.

However, it added that cer-



John F Kennedy was a member of the Democratic Party

tain records withheld under court seal or for grand jury secrecy remain classified.

A 1992 law ordered the release of all files pertaining to the killing of JFK by October 26, 2017 but allowed presidents to forestall their public dissemination if they certified that releasing them would have created 'an identifiable harm to the military

defence, intelligence operations, law enforcement, or conduct of foreign relations' that outweighed the public interest.

Trump in his first term and then President Joe Biden throughout his time in office consistently postponed their release.

"They've been waiting for that for decades. And I said during the campaign I'd release them,

and I'm a man of my word," Trump told reporters on Monday. "You got a lot of reading. I don't believe we're going to redact anything. I said, 'just don't redact. You can't redact,'" he added.

It was not immediately clear which documents, if any, had been previously released in some form or were completely new to the public.

"The collection of records that we reviewed, the vast majority of which were released - some were kept classified in whole or in part - if that's what we're talking about, then there is no smoking gun," Tom Samulok, the former deputy director of the Assassination Records Review Board, told CNN

Several analysts studying the JFK assassination told US media outlets that the new documents are unlikely to reveal anything groundbreaking.

Anadolu Agency

USAID shutdown likely ran afoul of US Constitution: Federal judge

US District Judge Chuang ruled in favour of 26 anonymous USAID staffers who sued Musk’s DOGE

Washington, D.C., US - A federal judge ruled on Tuesday that efforts by a government task force led by Elon Musk to shutter the US Agency for International Development (USAID) likely ran afoul of the US Constitution and blocked the world’s richest man from making further cuts to the US’s international development agency.

US District Judge Theodore Chuang ruled in favour of 26 anonymous USAID staffers who sued Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Chuang ruled that the Musk-led effort likely violates the Constitution’s Appointments Clause and separation of powers and granted in part the plaintiffs’ request for a preliminary injunction.

“The court finds that Defendants’ actions to shut down USAID on an accelerated basis, including its apparent decision to permanently close USAID head-



The judge ordered DOGE to reinstate email and computer access as well as payments to all USAID employees, including those placed on leave

The judge further barred Musk’s group from firing or placing any other USAID employees on leave, cancelling any further USAID contracts or grants or closing any of the agency’s bureaus or buildings

quarters without the approval of a duly appointed USAID Officer, likely violated the United States Constitution in multiple ways, and that these actions harmed not only Plaintiffs, but also the public interest, because they de-

prived the public’s elected representatives in Congress of their constitutional authority to decide whether, when, and how to close down an agency created by Congress,” Chuang wrote in his 68-page order.

He ordered DOGE to reinstate email and computer access as well as payments to all USAID employees, including those placed on leave. He further barred Musk’s group from firing or placing any other USAID employees on administrative leave, cancelling any further USAID contracts or grants, closing any of the agency’s bureaus or buildings, or further deleting contents on its website.

Questions have mounted over who is truly in charge of DOGE, but President Donald Trump has

said publicly that Musk is the man leading the effort, and the tech mogul has boasted about his role and made public declarations that were later executed by the task force.

The White House has said DOGE is being led by Amy Gleason, a bureaucrat who was leading the executive predecessor group that DOGE grew out of, and has said Musk is just a presidential advisor. But Chuang said Musk’s public statements have made clear that he has ‘firm control over DOGE’.

Houthi report more US raids across Yemen

Ankara, Turkey - The Yemeni Houthi group on Wednesday reported a fresh series of raids by the US warplanes on areas in northern and western Yemen, according to local media.

“An American aggression targeted the Asa’id area in the Al-Safra district of Saada province (northern Yemen) with four airstrikes,” the Houthi-run Al-Masirah TV reported late on Tuesday, without providing further details.

It also reported other US raids targeting the Takhiya area in the Majz district of Saada province.

“The American aggression also targeted the Al-Ahli Sports Club building in the Al-Mina district of Al-Hudaydah province in western Yemen with two airstrikes, as well as the Bahis area in the Midi district of Hajjah province in the northwest,” the Houthi-run broadcaster added.

Meanwhile, the group’s military spokesman Yahya Saree announced in a televised speech that his group targeted the USS Harry Truman aircraft carrier in the Red Sea with multiple rockets and drones.

Anadolu Agency

Ethiopia: Escalation in Tigray threatens regional stability

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - Just over two years have passed since Ethiopia’s government and rival factions signed the Ethiopia-Tigray peace accords, also called the Pretoria Agreement, in South Africa’s administrative capital. While it officially ended a fierce war in Tigray, Ethiopia’s northernmost state, another war now looms, and tensions are high.

“People are worried,” says Kilfom Abraha, a young man living in Mekelle, Tigray’s state capital.

“People are not working, and long lines have formed at banks as they try to withdraw money. The cost of living has skyrocketed.” Though the November 2022 peace agreement brought some calm, many are still displaced. Fear of a return to the war that rocked Tigray and neighbouring regions between 2020 and 2022 echoes around.



As the political crisis has intensified, residents of Mekelle queued to draw money and stocked up on food

Though November 2022 peace agreement brought some calm, many are still displaced. Fear of a return to the war that rocked Tigray and neighbouring regions between 2020 and 2022 echoes around

“They’d always resolved their problems internally. Now they are completely and utterly split.”

Reda, who negotiated the Pretoria Agreement for the TPLF in 2022, became the president of Tigray’s interim government. He was backed by Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who rejected Gebremichael.

Backlash over Tigrayan power

Ahmed, in office since 2018, initially showed signs of furthering democratisation and reconciliation. His rapprochement with long-time enemy Eritrea earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019. But the Ethiopian prime minister’s image as a reformer

was soon stained as his institutional fight against Tigray’s political elite became ugly.

Abiy’s reforms meant members of the established Tigray elite were forced out of privileged positions in government and security they had held for decades, but they remained strong in Tigray. Plaut, who recently co-authored the book ‘Understanding Ethiopia’s Tigray War’, said the 2020-2022 war was about trying to break the power of the TPLF.

“This was something that was agreed on by both Prime Minister Abiy and the Eritrean leader, President Isaias Afwerki,” Plaut told DW. “That was the one thing they really agreed upon. And in essence, it wasn’t achieved. They

couldn’t destroy the TPLF militarily, and they weren’t able to remove them, so both sides who had invaded Tigray were left frustrated. And that has left the situation very unresolved.”

Political actors inside Ethiopia and observers say an escalation of the conflict is imminent. Influential Lt. Gen. Tsadkan Gebretnesae, Vice President of the Tigray Interim Administration, warned that a war ‘seems inevitable’ and last week called for negotiations.

Various parties spoke of the need to strengthen the interim administration. As Ethiopia showed signs of preparing for a new war, neighbouring Eritrea was said to be doing the same.

However, Plaut is wary of making predictions. “President Isaias of Eritrea, who has repeatedly intervened in the internal affairs of Ethiopia and is already arming certain factions inside Ethiopia, is always very cautious about what he does and acts right at the last moment.”

DW

FINALLY! BACK ON EARTH



NASA astronaut Sunita Williams shows her thumb as she safely returned to Earth with her colleagues after an unexpected 286-day mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS), in Florida on Tuesday (NASA/ANI)

Mozambicans in southern Malawi look to return home

Lilongwe, Malawi - Violence around Mozambique’s disputed election in October 2024 saw an estimated 300 people killed, and led to about 13,000 fleeing across the border into southern Malawi.

As the dust settles and the true cost emerges, Mozambican and Malawian officials have begun a drive to repatriate those who fled the violence.

What prompted deadly violence?

The election saw Daniel Chapo from the ruling Frelimo party take over from outgoing President Filipe Nyusi, who was not allowed to run again after completing the two terms allowed by the constitution.

Opposition leader Venancio Mondlane claimed that the election was rigged, sparking mas-



Military personnel were deployed on the streets of Mozambican cities to quell election violence

sive protests across the country.

When Mozambique’s highest court, the Constitutional Council, confirmed Chapo’s victory - continuing the leftist party’s dominance of Mozambican politics since independence from

Portugal in 1975 - the protests intensified.

Most refugees came to the Nsanje district in southern Malawi, which is geographically surrounded by Mozambique.

DW

Israel intensifies attacks across Gaza, killing 12 people in overnight strikes

Gaza City/Jerusalem - The Israeli army killed at least 12 more Palestinians in fresh overnight and dawn airstrikes on Wednesday across various areas of the Gaza Strip.

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa quoted medical and field sources in Gaza reporting deadly airstrikes across Gaza as Israel on Tuesday broke a ceasefire with the Palestinian group Hamas that took hold in January.

Two Palestinians were killed and five others wounded in an Israeli drone strike on a tent for displaced people in the Al-Mawasi area in western Khan Younis, the southern Gaza Strip, Wafa reported.

The Israeli army also struck another tent for displaced people in northern Khan Younis, resulting in the death of a woman and a child, along with three others injured.

Four people were killed and others injured in a third tent targeted by the Israeli army in western Khan Younis, the Palestinian broadcaster also said.

A medical source in the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza City reported that four Palestinians were killed and others injured as the Israeli army struck a home for the Al-Hattab family in the southern Al-Sabra neighbourhood.

The attacks represent the most significant violation of a fragile ceasefire brokered by Qatar, Egypt, and the US in January, which was shattered by Israel's sudden escalation in Gaza as of Tuesday, killing over 400



The attacks represent the most significant violation of a fragile ceasefire brokered by Qatar, Egypt and the US in January, which was shattered by Israel's sudden escalation in Gaza as of Tuesday, killing over 400 Palestinians in a single day.

Nearly 50,000 Palestinians have been killed, mostly women and children, and over 112,000 others injured in a brutal Israeli military campaign in Gaza since

October 2023.

In November 2024, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu and his former Defence Minister

Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its war on the enclave.

'Just the beginning'

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said resuming the genocide in the Gaza Strip is 'just the beginning', warning that future negotiations will occur 'under fire'.

In a televised address aired by Israel's public broadcaster, Netanyahu claimed: "We had extended the ceasefire for weeks even though we had not received hostages in return."

"We sent delegations to Doha

and accepted US envoy Steve Witkoff's proposal, but Hamas rejected all offers," he added.

Israeli media reported last Thursday that Witkoff had presented an updated proposal to both sides, offering the release of five Israeli captives for a 50-day truce, the freeing of Palestinian prisoners, humanitarian aid access and talks on the second phase of a three-phase ceasefire.

Hamas announced on Friday that it accepted a mediators' pro-

posal, agreeing to release an Israeli-American soldier and four bodies of dual nationals as part of resuming phase-two negotiations for a Gaza ceasefire and prisoner swap.

Netanyahu countered: "I warned Hamas that if it didn't release our captives, we'd resume fighting - and we have."

Israel estimates that 59 Israelis are being held hostage in Gaza, with 24 still alive. In contrast, more than 9,500 Palestinians remain imprisoned in Israeli jails, enduring torture, deprivation and medical neglect, which has claimed many lives, according to Palestinian and Israeli human rights reports.

"This is just the beginning. From now on, we'll act against Hamas with growing intensity, negotiating only under fire, and we'll keep fighting to achieve all war goals," said Netanyahu.

The ceasefire's first phase ended March 1, with Netanyahu refusing to enter the second phase, which required ending the war and withdrawing from Gaza fully - terms Hamas insisted on.

While Tel Aviv cites the captives and perceived threats from Gaza as objectives, Israeli analysts linked the renewed genocide to Netanyahu's push to pass a budget and avert his government's collapse by late March.

By resuming the massacres, Netanyahu secured the return of National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir to the coalition government, ensuring his far-right Jewish Power party's support for a 2025 budget.

Anadolu Agency

China seeks 'unity, cooperation' for stable ties with EU

Beijing, China - China has been seeking 'unity' and 'cooperation' to build 'healthy and stable' relations with the EU, according to Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Wang's comments came in a phone conversation late on Tuesday with Emmanuel Bonne, diplomatic adviser to the French president, a statement from Beijing said.

He told Bonne that in today's 'increasingly complex' situation, it is significant both for China and Europe 'to resolve specific economic and trade frictions through consultation'.

Wang said Beijing hopes that France will work with China 'to send a positive signal of unity and cooperation and promote the healthy and stable development of China-France and China-Europe relations'.

The statement also quoted Bonne as saying that 'under the current complex international situation in particular, France looks forward to maintaining high-level exchanges and close strategic communication with China to jointly resist camp confrontation'.

France 'opposes trade wars and tariff wars, and is willing to properly resolve economic and trade frictions through consultations with China', said Bonne.

The two sides also exchanged views on the ongoing Moscow-Kyiv war, and Bonne said Paris 'looks forward to China playing an important role in reaching a fair, solid and sustainable peace agreement'.

Wang reiterated China's position which seeks to resolve the crisis through dialogue and



Chinese FM Wang Yi expressed hope that France will work with China to send a positive signal of unity and cooperation and promote healthy and stable development of EU relations

negotiation.

"At the same time, this process should respect the will of the parties concerned, should not be imposed by a third party, and should not serve the interests of only one country," said the top Chinese diplomat.

"China supports the achievement of a fair, lasting and binding peace agreement acceptable to all parties concerned, and believes that all parties and stakeholders should participate in the peace talks process in due course," he added.

Anadolu Agency

South Korea to deploy 14,000 riot cops on day of impeachment ruling

Seoul, South Korea - South Korean police said on Wednesday that they have decided to deploy 14,000 riot officers in the capital Seoul to respond to possible unrest on the day of the impeachment ruling on President Yoon Suk Yeol over his short-lived declaration of martial law last December.

The figure accounts for around 60% of the nationwide available riot police, which will be mobilised under the highest-level security alert, Seoul-based Yonhap News Agency reported, citing police officials. The police initially planned to deploy 12,000 officers but have increased the number to better handle unexpected situations that may arise from large-scale protests and possible attacks on major facilities, including the court and its judges.



The eight-judge Constitutional Court, which wrapped up the impeachment trial of Yoon over his December 3 martial law declaration late last month, is likely to deliver its long-awaited ruling this week.

The consent of at least six judges is required to uphold the impeachment by law. If they uphold it, an election for a new president must be held in 60 days.

If it is dismissed, Yoon will return to his duties immediately and serve for the remainder of his constitutional term until 2027.

The day of the sentencing hearing has yet to be announced.

Any protesters storming the court will be arrested on the spot as criminal justice police officers will be deployed to the court premises and special police forces will also be on standby.

West Bank: 1 killed during Israeli raids

Ankara, Turkey - The Israeli forces on Wednesday morning killed a young Palestinian man, injured and arrested others during raids in several areas of Nablus city in the northern occupied West Bank, according to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa.

An Israeli undercover special force infiltrated the Al-Ain refugee camp in western Nablus, and opened fire on a car, resulting in the death of Oday Adel Al-Qatouni, who was a passerby near the incident, the Palestinian broadcaster reported.

Following the incident, clashes erupted in the camp, with Israeli forces injuring three Palestinians.

Wafa added that the Israeli forces stormed into several homes and arrested several people in the camp.

The Israeli forces also stormed other areas in Nablus, including the Balata and Askar refugee camps and the Masaken al-Sha'abi neighbourhood in eastern Nablus.

The raids came as the Israeli army has continued its military offensive in the northern West Bank since January 21, killing over 70 Palestinians and displacing thousands.

Tension has been running high across West Bank, where at least 937 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the Gaza onslaught.

Anadolu Agency

Palestinian activist Khalil calls himself 'a political prisoner'

Washington, D.C., US - Mahmoud Khalil, a Palestinian activist and recent Columbia University graduate, decried his arrest and the conditions facing detainees in US immigration facilities, calling himself a 'political prisoner'.

"My name is Mahmoud Khalil and I am a political prisoner. I am writing to you from a detention facility in Louisiana, where I wake to cold mornings and spend long days bearing witness to the quiet injustices underway against a great many people precluded from the protections of the law," Khalil wrote in a letter made public on Tuesday.

Khalil was arrested on March 8 by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agents after they



accosted him and his eight-month pregnant wife Noor Abdalla as they returned from dinner. He was taken into custody without a warrant, and the agents withheld details about his arrest, according to footage of

the arrest that was made public by his family on Friday.

The Trump administration has accused Khalil, who played a prominent role in pro-Palestinian demonstrations at the school last year, of engaging in 'activities

aligned with Hamas', although no evidence has been provided.

He is currently being held at an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centre in Louisiana. Khalil said his arrest was a direct result of his activism for a free Palestine and an end to Israeli violence in Gaza.

"My arrest was a direct consequence of exercising my right to free speech as I advocated for a free Palestine and an end to the genocide in Gaza, which resumed in full force on Monday night," he wrote in the letter. "It is our moral imperative to persist in the struggle for their complete freedom."

"I was born in a Palestinian refugee camp in Syria to a family

which has been displaced from their land since the 1948 Nakba," he continued.

Khalil also drew parallels between his situation and the use of administrative detention by Israel, where Palestinians are often imprisoned without trial or charge. He accused both the Biden and Trump administrations of perpetuating anti-Palestinian racism, citing US support for Israel's military actions in Gaza.

He also accused Columbia University of targeting him for his activism and 'creating a new authoritarian disciplinary office to bypass due process and silence students criticising Israel.'

Anadolu Agency

'I WAS CLOSE TO DYING, BUT I WILL PLAY AGAIN'

West Ham forward Antonio on horror crash and his hopes for the future

London, England - Michail Antonio has spoken for the first time about his life-threatening car crash in December, and his determination to play in the Premier League again.

West Ham United striker Antonio, 34, sustained a badly broken leg when his car hit a tree in Epping Forest on 7 December.

The Jamaica international underwent surgery and although he is making positive strides in his physical recovery, the mental challenge of processing what happened was acutely brought home to him when he went to see the remains of his car in a scrapyard three weeks ago.

"It gave me a weird feeling in my stomach," Antonio said. "It just made me realise how close I was to dying. I had seen the pictures but it was 10 times worse in person. The car was an absolute mess. It was difficult for me."

Mental and physical challenge

Antonio shattered his leg in four different places and had a pole put in his thigh with four bolts, so screws and bolts could help the bones knit back together.

And while his body may be healing, the mental trauma of such an horrific incident can take longer to repair.

"Since the crash, I've been more emotional than I have ever been in my life, but I feel like it's better," said Antonio, who has previously spoken openly about having therapy to help develop coping strategies following the death of his father and break-up of his previous marriage.

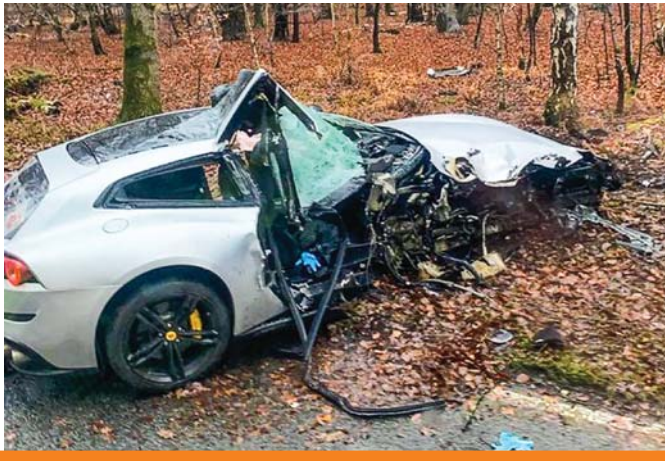
"I wouldn't have processed it at all, or what I would have done would be to push it down and been angry or aggressive," he



West Ham United's Michail Antonio was welcomed back to the London Stadium last Tuesday for the first time since his car accident on December 7; Antonio sustained a badly broken leg when his car hit a tree in Epping Forest

The most difficult part is that I almost wasn't there for my children. Therapy just made me happy, positive about life, because I've got another chance at life

MICHAEL ANTONIO



added, when asked how he would have reacted to the crash if he had not previously reached out for help.

"Therapy is one of the best things that's happened to me in

my life.

"The most difficult part is that I almost wasn't there for my children. It's just made me happy, positive about life, because I've got another chance at life."

Looking to the future

Father-of-six Antonio, who joined West Ham in 2015, has shown great resilience and determination throughout his career, working his way up from

non-league Tooting & Mitcham to reach the top at both club and international level.

That strength of character is sure to stand him in good stead as Antonio looks to the future.

"It's the biggest injury I've ever had in my career," he said. "But the fact that I'm already two to three months ahead of where I should be, I know that I'll play again, and I know that once I'm playing the game I'll get the sharpness back."

While Antonio has "been working six days a week" as he slowly continues his rehabilitation, the support from the extended West Ham family has not gone unnoticed by him.

Two days after his crash, West Ham fans and players paid tribute to Antonio during their 2-1 win over Wolverhampton Wanderers, with the players warming up in tops bearing their team-mate's name and number, with goalscorers Tomas Soucek and Jarrod Bowen honouring him in their celebrations.

"I remember watching the Wolves game in hospital, and it made me emotional," said Antonio. "I loved the support. Over the next six to eight weeks, every time I watched a game I could hear the fans singing my name, which is something I really appreciated and that has actually helped me massively."

Antonio eventually got to experience that support first-hand when he made an emotional return to London Stadium for West Ham's recent home match against Newcastle United - and he has not ruled out playing for the Hammers again - especially as team-mate Bowen is closing in on his record of 68 goals as the club's all-time Premier League top scorer!

Coach Kluivert has 'got a very good feeling' about Indonesia

Sydney, Australia - Patrick Kluivert has promised some surprises from his Indonesia team when they take on Australia in Thursday's World Cup qualifier, despite only having had a couple of training sessions with his squad since taking over as coach in January.

The former Netherlands and Barcelona striker has been handed the mission of taking Indonesia to the World Cup finals for the first time since 1938 and Thursday's clash in Sydney could be crucial to those hopes.

ready. They know what we expect tomorrow, so we look forward to playing the match."

Kluivert took over a squad studded with players from the Indonesian diaspora, many of them Dutch-born and playing at a high level in Europe.

They impressed with a 0-0 draw against Australia as well as a 2-0 home win over Saudi Arabia last year and stand just a point behind the second-placed Socceroos in Group C. The top two teams will progress directly to the 2026 finals.

I think the team is ready. They know what we expect tomorrow, so we look forward to playing the match (against Australia)

PATRICK KLUIVERT

With many of his players flying in from their clubs in Europe, Kluivert admitted that there had not been enough time to really impose his ideas on the squad but said he was confident they were ready to challenge for a first win over Australia since 1981.

"Changing is impossible at the moment," he told reporters in Sydney on Wednesday.

"But of course, there's things I don't just explain here, but there will be some, some things change, but that's between us. I think the team is

"I think we showed already the last year, maybe a little bit more, that Indonesia is a country that has to be dealt with," said Dutch-born captain Jay Idzes. "Hopefully, and I truly believe it, in the next years we can really put Indonesia on the map."

Kluivert said he and his assistants, who include former Barcelona forward Jordi Cruyff, had not been idle since their appointments, travelling around Indonesia and visiting their Europe-based players to "share their philosophy".



Patrick Kluivert

'India could potentially host Italian Super Cup'



AC Milan defeated Inter Milan to win the Italian Super Cup in Saudi Arabia in January

Bangalore, India - Serie A might consider India as a potential host for the Italian Super Cup, in an effort to broaden the tournament's global audience, the Italian league's commercial and marketing director Michele Ciccarese has said.

The Italian Super Cup, which is played between the winners and the runners-up of the previous season's Serie A and Coppa Italia, was hosted in Saudi Arabia in January where AC Milan defeated Inter Milan 3-2 to win the trophy. When asked about India's potential to host the Super Cup, Ciccarese confirmed that it aligned with the league's strategy.

"What we do is to bring our international trophy like the Super Cup in all over the world, for a simple reason, to engage a wider audience and bring the

best of that culture," Ciccarese said. "So, that's exactly what we might do, and take the conversation forward to ... come here and play in India."

India's bid to host the 2036 Olympics is an attempt to position the country as a global sports hub.

Ciccarese suggested that the influence of the Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket competition could promote the country and bring attention to the achievements of other sports, drawing parallels with the "Made in Italy" project. "Made in Italy is how we engaged with all the 20 Serie A clubs, and each club provides one of the important players to promote, not only the city, but the clubs, the territory, the production chain and everything that is around that club," he said.

CONMEBOL president Dominguez apologises for 'Tarzan without Cheetah' remark

Asuncion, Paraguay - CONMEBOL president Alejandro Dominguez apologised on Tuesday for saying that the Copa Libertadores without Brazilian teams would be like "Tarzan without Cheetah" after a club official had suggested sides could withdraw due to racism.

Palmeiras president Leila Pereira said that Brazilian clubs should consider pulling out of South American competitions due to the lack of strong sanctions against racism following an incident involving one of the

team's under-20 players.

Cheetah was a chimpanzee character that appeared in the Tarzan films and television series.

Dominguez was asked by journalists if he could imagine a Libertadores without Brazilian teams following Monday's draw for South America's top club competition at the CONMEBOL headquarters in Paraguay.

"That would be like Tarzan without Cheetah, impossible," Dominguez replied with a laugh.

Shortly before that, the

Paraguayan had said in a speech that racism was a scourge affecting football and that his organisation would continue to apply sanctions so that "every racist expression has a real consequence".

"I want to apologize. The expression I used is a popular phrase and I never intended to belittle or disqualify anyone," Dominguez said on Tuesday on his X account.

"The CONMEBOL Libertadores is unthinkable without the participation of clubs from the



Alejandro Dominguez

10 member countries (...) I reaffirm my commitment to continue working for a fairer, more united and discrimination-free football."

Dominguez's comments sparked a backlash and the Brazilian government strongly condemned them, criticising CONMEBOL for its failure to implement effective anti-racism measures.

"The Brazilian government repudiates in the strongest terms the statements made by the President of CONMEBOL Ale-

jandro Dominguez," a Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement read.

"The statements take place in a context in which CONMEBOL authorities have repeatedly failed to adopt effective measures to prevent and avoid the repetition of acts of racism in matches organised by them."

Earlier this month, CONMEBOL fined Paraguayan club Cerro Porteno \$50,000 after Palmeiras player Luigi was racially abused during a Copa Libertadores under-20 match.



Novak Djokovic and Vasek Pospisil formally established the PTPA in 2020 to advocate for players

FIGHT FOR FAIR PLAY

Tennis player’s union begins legal action against the game’s governing bodies

London, England - The Professional Tennis Players’ Association (PTPA) has filed a lawsuit against the sport’s governing bodies, accusing them of anti-competitive practices and a disregard for player welfare. The PTPA, an independent players’ union co-founded by Novak Djokovic in 2019, said on Tuesday that after years of good-faith efforts to reform professional tennis, it had been forced to take legal action to end “monopolistic control” of the sport. In a statement, it said that along with more than a dozen players the PTPA had filed papers in a New York court against

the ATP Tour, the WTA Tour, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) and the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA). “Tennis is broken,” Ahmad Nassar, Executive Director of the PTPA, said in a statement. “Behind the glamorous veneer that the Defendants promote, players are trapped in an unfair system that exploits their talent, suppresses their earnings, and jeopardizes their health and safety. “We have exhausted all options for reform through dialogue, and the governing bodies have left us no choice but to seek accountability through the courts. Fixing these systemic

failures isn’t about disrupting tennis, it’s about saving it for the generations of players and fans to come.” In response the ATP accused the PTPA of choosing “division and distraction” and having no meaningful role in the sport. “We strongly reject the premise of the PTPA’s claims, believe the case to be entirely without merit, and will vigorously defend our position,” the ATP said in a statement. “ATP remains committed to working in the best interests of the game -- towards continued growth, financial stability, and the best possible future for players, tournaments, and fans.”

Tennis is broken. Behind the glamorous veneer that the defendants promote, players are trapped in an unfair system that exploits their talent, suppresses their earnings

AHMAD NASSAR

The WTA defended its record of growing women’s tennis, describing the lawsuit as “baseless”.

“Every decision taken at the WTA Board level includes the input of players via their elected Board representatives, and athletes receive substantial financial rewards and other benefits from participation in the WTA,” the organisation said. The ITF stressed its goal is to ensure the growth of tennis as a global sport. “As a not for profit organisation and global guardian of the game... we reinvest 90% of our income into the global development of the game, via our 213 member National Associations,” an ITF spokesperson said. Describing the various gov-

erning bodies as ‘a cartel’, the PTPA, which has also begun legal action in Britain and the EU, accuses them of paying “artificially low compensation to professional tennis players” and imposing a “draconian” ranking system that forces them to compete in certain tournaments. The lawsuit calls the schedule unsustainable, says players are made to play in extreme heat and often in the early hours of the morning, that tennis balls chosen by the tournaments are a factor in chronic injuries and that players’ privacy rights are being abused by random drug tests.

Prior to filing the lawsuit, the PTPA said it met with more than 250 players across the tours, including the majority of the men’s and women’s top 20. “The overwhelmingly positive player feedback was a resounding confirmation -- change is needed now, and players are united in their fight for reform,” the statement said. Serbia’s 24-times Grand Slam champion Djokovic has been a fierce advocate for change to the organisation of tennis, insisting that the revenues generated by the sport are not fairly shared out to players.

Osaka rallies to beat Starodubtseva

Miami, US - A scrappy Naomi Osaka came from behind to beat Yulia Starodubtseva 3-6 6-4 6-3 in the first round of the Miami Open on Tuesday for her first win since January’s Australian Open. Osaka dropped the first set and trailed 4-2 in the second against the tournament qualifier before finding her rhythm in front of a supportive crowd on a sunny day in South Florida. “I knew that I wasn’t playing too well, but I thought, let me try to stay on the court as long as possible because I consider Miami my home,” said Osaka, who was born in Japan before moving to the U.S. at a young age. “(In Indian Wells) I was just over-hitting a lot, so I tried to use my legs. I was going to run into every corner if I had to, and we were going to have to play for three hours if she was going to beat me.” The match hinged on a tense Osaka service game in the third set, where she fended off two break chances for her Ukrainian opponent and crushed an unreturnable serve to take a commanding 4-1 lead. She would pound another serve Starodubtseva could not get back over the net on match point to secure the hard-fought victory in two hours and 28 minutes with

coach Patrick Mouratoglou looking on. Osaka was forced to withdraw from her third round match in Melbourne Park with an abdominal strain and piled up the errors in her first-round loss at Indian Wells earlier this month but moved well and showed her trademark power to grab the win on Tuesday. The Japanese player faces 24th seed Liudmila Samsonova of Russia in the second round on Thursday, with the pair having split their two career head-to-head meetings. American Alycia Parks, Czech Kateřina Siniakova and Romanian Sorana Cirstea were among the other players who advanced to the second round.



Naomi Osaka

PTPA lawsuit against governing bodies of game a ‘special moment’

Australian tennis player Nick Kyrgios said the lawsuit filed by the Professional Tennis Players’ Association (PTPA) against the sport’s governing bodies marks a “special moment” and that it was high time the players’ voices were heard. The PTPA accused the men’s and women’s tours, as well as the International Tennis Federation and International Tennis Integrity Agency, of indulging in anti-competitive practices and disregarding player welfare. Former Wimbledon finalist Kyrgios, who is among 12 current and former players listed as plaintiffs along with the PTPA in the U.S. suit in New York, said the group was determined to do something for the future of the game. “I know that myself and many of the players aren’t happy with the structures and everything that’s going on in tennis at the



I know that myself and many of the players aren’t happy with the structures and everything that’s going on

NICK KYRGIOS

moment,” Kyrgios told Sky Sports. “This will be a special moment in tennis, for sure. “Things needed to change. It’s a big day for tennis.” The PTPA was formally established by Novak Djokovic and

Vasek Pospisil in 2020 to advocate for players. Pospisil said the PTPA had spoken to over 300 players and had plenty of support, including from the top players. “The ATP/WTA has spread so much fear over the years that it’s not easy to put your name on this publicly. Player support for this initiative is undeniable,” he added. Men’s governing body the ATP rejected the PTPA’s claims of an unfair system that exploited the players and suppressed their earnings. It said that the PTPA was guilty of “division and distraction”. The women’s WTA described the action as “regrettable and misguided”. While player associations are common in professional sports, tennis is different in that the players operate as independent contractors.



Sebastian Coe is a favourite for the post of IOC president

Presidential election of IOC on Thursday

Ancient Olympia, Greece - The International Olympic Committee kicked off its session in Olympia, site of the ancient Games, on Tuesday that will culminate with the election of a new president on Thursday. Outgoing President Thomas Bach, in his speech at the Olympic academy near the ancient stadium, made only a fleeting reference to Thursday’s key vote where seven candidates will take a shot at world sport’s most powerful and influential job. The IOC is the world’s wealthiest multi-sports organisation with revenues of about \$7 billion per four-year cycle. “This is a exactly what this session is about. A sacred pilgrimage to our ancient past,” Bach said. “An homage to our modern origins and to our founder. And a manifestation of our faith in the future, when we will elect a new president,” said Bach, who is stepping down in June after 12 years in charge. The candidates are international cycling chief David Lapparent, current IOC vice-president Juan Antonio Samaranch Jr, World Athletics chief Sebastian Coe, multiple Olympic swimming champion Kirsty Coventry, who is Zimbabwe’s sports minister, and Prince Feisal Al Hussein of Jordan.

Khelif targets second Olympic boxing gold in LA

Imane Khelif, who won Paris Olympics boxing gold amid a gender-eligibility row, is determined to defend her title at the 2028 Los Angeles Games and says she will not be intimidated by U.S. President Donald Trump. Trump signed an executive order banning transgender women from female sports in the United States last month and called Khelif “a male boxer” in his speech after signing the order. “I will give you a straightforward answer, I am not trans-

gender,” she told ITV in an interview. “This does not concern me, and it does not intimidate me.” The International Olympic Committee’s executive board recommended boxing’s inclusion in the 2028 Games on Monday and Khelif said she dreamed of retaining her title in California. “Second gold medal, of course. In America, Los Angeles

...I (will) defend with everything this gold medal,” she said. “I believe that if the old Imane operated at 50% of her potential, then the Imane Khelif of today is even more motivated and determined.” Khelif was disqualified by the International Boxing Association at the 2023 world championships after a test that the body said rendered her ineligible to fight



Imane Khelif



Jasprit Bumrah has not recovered from the stress-related back injury and could join the MI squad in early April

BUMRAH'S ABSENCE 'A CHALLENGE'

Mumbai, India - Not having Jasprit Bumrah for the initial few games of IPL 2025 "is a challenge" and "hopefully he can join the team soon", Mahela Jayawardene, the Mumbai Indians (MI) head coach, said at a press interaction in Mumbai on Wednesday.

Jayawardene further said that the fast bowler "is in good spirits" as he recovers at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence (formerly the National Cricket Academy) in Bengaluru. "[Bumrah] has just started his progress. We have to wait and see what their [BCCI medical team] feedback is on him," Jayawardene said. "At the moment, everything is going well. But, obviously, it is on a day-to-day basis. He is in good spirits. Not having him is a challenge. He is one of the best bowlers in the world and he has been a fantastic pro for us for many years."

"We'll have to wait or find

an opportunity for someone else to step up. That's how I see it. It gives us an element of trying a few things and see how things work. The early part of the season allows us to do that."

Bumrah has played all his IPL cricket for MI, starting in 2013 and picking up 165 wickets in 133 matches over the years. The only IPL season he missed since he started playing was in 2023, when he had a back injury.

The MI squad has Trent Boult, Deepak Chahar, Reece Topley and Corbin Bosch (replacement for Lizaad Williams) as the other front-line quicks, along with captain Hardik Pandya, the allrounder, and the uncapped Ashwani Kumar, Satyanarayana Raju, Arjun Tendulkar and Raj Angad Bawa. Bumrah's absence could force a rethink of MI's bowling plans, since Boult and Chahar are predominantly powerplay bowlers, leaving

them short of proven T20 experience in the death.

Bumrah hasn't recovered from the stress-related back injury that has kept him out of action since January, and he could join the MI squad in early April. He suffered the injury on the second day of the final Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test in Sydney on January 4. Bumrah was subsequently ruled out of the Champions Trophy, which India won earlier this month. This is the first time Bumrah has gone down with a back injury since his surgery in March 2023.

While announcing the Champions Trophy squad in January, Ajit Agarkar, India's chief selector, had said that Bumrah had been asked by the BCCI medical team to offload for at least five weeks (from the SCG Test).

MI's first two IPL 2025 fixtures are away. They start their campaign in Chennai against Chennai Super Kings (CSK) on March 23 and then play Gujarat Titans (GT) in Ahmedabad on March 29.

Suryakumar to lead Mumbai in IPL opener as Pandya serves ban

Mumbai, India - Suryakumar Yadav will lead Mumbai Indians in their Indian Premier League opener against Chennai Super Kings on Sunday while regular skipper Hardik Pandya serves a one-match ban.

Pandya was penalised for MI's slow over-rate in their last league game of IPL 2024, against Lucknow Super Giants (LSG). Since that was his third offence of the season, Pandya was given a one-match suspension for his next IPL game, along with an INR 30 lakh fine.

"That is out of my control," all-rounder Pandya told reporters in a pre-tournament press conference in Mumbai on Wednesday.

"We bowled the last over one-and-a-half or two minutes late. At that point I didn't know the consequences."

"It is unfortunate, but the rules say it. I will have to go with the process."

Pandya will be available for MI's second game, also away, in Ahmedabad against Gujarat Titans (GT) on March 29. MI's first home match is two days later, when they host Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) on March 31. They then play two matches in the first



Suryakumar Yadav

That is out of my control. We bowled the last over one-and-a-half or two minutes late. At that point I didn't know the consequences

HARDIK PANDYA

week of April: LSG in Lucknow on April 4 and at home against Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) on April 7.

MI had finished last in IPL 2024 after winning only four out of 14 games.

Mumbai are spoilt for choice though when it comes to leadership.

Apart from India test and one-

day captain Rohit Sharma and national T20 skipper Suryakumar, Mumbai also boast pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who has captained in tests and T20 Internationals.

Bumrah will miss the early part of the league with a back injury he suffered in Australia earlier this year.

"I'm lucky that I have three

captains who are playing with me," all-rounder Pandya said.

"I know that there are three different minds, who have led India in different formats and so many years of experience are always there."

Mumbai and Chennai are IPL's two most successful sides having claimed five titles each.

Head coach Mahela Jayawardene said Mumbai had identified the core group and added more experience to bid for a sixth IPL trophy. "It's not an easy thing to win an IPL trophy, we all know that, and Mumbai has been successful delivering that," the former Sri Lanka captain said.

I want to mark myself at No 3, says Shreyas

Chandigarh, India - Shreyas Iyer, the new Punjab Kings captain, has expressed his intention to bat at No. 3 during IPL 2025. Iyer recently proved to be India's point of difference at No. 4 during their unbeaten run to the Champions Trophy title in Dubai and earlier in IPL 2024, when he captained Kolkata Knight Riders to the title, he had primarily batted at the same position. Occasionally, he had also slid down to No. 5 or No. 6 to suit the needs of KKR last season.

"We already know that IPL is an integral part of Indian cricket. And if I would want to mark myself at some position in T20, it would be No. 3," Iyer said at a press conference. "And that's what I'm focusing at. I wouldn't say that we are planning and thinking about what number I will be batting."

"This time I'm quite clear about that position. And I'm going to be focusing on that number. As long as the coach approves of me."

Iyer will reunite with coach Ponting after the pair had some success at Delhi Capitals, helping them make the playoffs from 2019 to 2021, including the final in 2020. PBKS splurged INR 26.75 crore (USD 3.18 million ap-

This time I'm quite clear about that position. And I'm going to be focusing on that number

SHREYAS IYER



prox) on Iyer, making him the second-most expensive player at an IPL auction.

"If you look back at the auction, I think it was pretty clear to everyone who I wanted as my captain," Ponting said. "And we

got what we wanted. I was desperate to work with Shreyas again. We had a great working relationship at Delhi over a long period of time. He's one of the best players that I've worked with. He's a great human being. He's an IPL-winning captain. You couldn't ask for much more."

"We've got the best leader that we could possibly hope for. And we've had a lot of great times and success together. I think we understand each other really well. As you know, the captain-coach relationship in any team is vital."

In IPL 2024, PBKS had managed to win just one of their seven home games across Mullanpur and Dharamsala, and finished second from bottom. Ponting is hoping to remedy that and find ways to win at home this season. "What I understand is that if you are not winning at home, you are not winning the IPL," Ponting said. "It's one of the main reasons that I'm sitting here now. I wanted a really strong coaching challenge. And we've got that. But there's no pressure on us. We're going to go out and play a really dynamic and entertaining brand of cricket."

Italy striker Retegui ruled out of Germany matches

Rome, Italy - Italy will be without striker Mateo Retegui for both legs of their UEFA Nations League quarter-final against Germany because of a thigh injury, Italy's football association (FIGC) said on Wednesday.

Argentina-born Retegui, who plays for Italian club Atalanta, is this season's top scorer in Serie A with 22 goals, and he has scored six times for Italy in 18 appearances since making his debut in 2023. "Striker Mateo Retegui, who underwent instrumental tests this morning for a muscle strain in his right thigh was assessed as unavailable for both matches against Germany and returned to his club for further evaluation," an FIGC statement said.

Florentina's Moise Kean, second highest scorer in the Italian league this season with 15 goals, is now Luciano Spalletti's most likely choice to lead the line against Germany.



Mateo Retegui

WRC drivers protest swearing crackdown with silence in Kenya

Nairobi, Kenya - Drivers competing in the World Rally Championship (WRC) will stay silent, or speak only in their own languages, in stage-end interviews at this week's Kenya Safari Rally in protest at the governing FIA's ban on swearing.

The World Rally Drivers Alliance (WoRDA) said in a statement on Wednesday that the action was necessary in the sport's interest.

"We apologise to all the rally

fans, even though we know they support us," it added.

Hyundai's French driver Adrien Fourmaux was fined 10,000 euros (\$10,907) with a further 20,000 suspended, for swearing in a television interview at the end of Rally Sweden in February.

The fine was the first since amendments to the FIA sporting code in January set out stiff sanctions for drivers who break the rules concerning conduct, includ-



ing bad language.

The drivers and co-drivers set up WoRDA, which is similar to Formula One's GPDA, after Fourmaux's penalty when they condemned fines that they said were vastly disproportionate to average incomes and budgets in rallying.

French driver Adrien Fourmaux was fined 10,000 euros for swearing in a television interview in February



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OFFBEAT HALWAS
Have a sweet tooth? Give yourself some variety, as far as halwa is concerned



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IN TOWN
British Business Forum hosts an iftar dinner on the British embassy lawns



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ENTERTAINMENT
A peek into tinsel town, in Hollywood and Bollywood



PRINTING POTS

Clay To

code

Bahla potter integrates 3D printing technology to fashion traditional pottery

Mohammed Taha

For Mohammed bin Hamoud al Qamshoui, who hails from the wilayat of Bahla, in Dakhliyah governorate, pottery is more than a craft - it is a legacy. Having inherited the skill from his father, the Omani artisan has, however, given it a new-age spin.

Qamshoui has now taken a bold step forward, merging traditional pottery-making with advanced 3D printing techniques to create unique ceramics.

"I inherited the profession of hand-crafted pottery from my father," Qamshoui said. Since officially embarking on his journey in 2006, he has expanded his repertoire to include cups, teacups, plates, vases, and ceramic medallions in various sizes and designs.

Beyond crafting pottery, Qamshoui is dedicated to passing on his knowledge. He conducts training sessions for school students, teaching them the intricacies of pottery and porcelain-making. This year, he introduced 3D printing into his work, a move that has transformed his creative process.

He gained expertise in the technology through training programmes at the Pottery and Ceramics Training and Production Centre in Bahla. After completing the programme, he launched his own small-scale craft project, receiving support from the centre to establish his business.

"I receive orders from customers - both, individuals and institutions - from within Oman and abroad," he said. Initially, marketing his products had proved challenging but social media changed it.

"At the beginning, marketing was an obstacle until I launched my project's social media accounts. This significantly increased demand for my products," he said adding that participation in exhibitions and training sessions also contributed to his growth.

Qamshoui believes his craft has taught him patience, endurance, and self-reliance. "The profession of hand-made pottery taught me these essential qualities," he said.

Innovation in pottery
Explaining the advantages of 3D printing, Al-Qamshoui said he uses specialised software to design each piece before printing. "These programmes

facilitate my work, saving time and effort while ensuring a neat and organised final product," he said.

The process begins with designing the shape on software which is then fed into a 3D printer. "Sometimes, a single piece takes up to five hours to print," he noted. The technology allows for greater precision, consistency, and efficiency compared to traditional hand-crafting methods.

Qamshoui has received financial assistance from the pottery centre of Riyadh, in Dakhliyah, which provided essential materials for manufacturing and firing the products. But, the support from his family and friends helped him in staying motivated, he asserts.

His participation in local exhibitions and training workshops, including one on decoration and gypsum mould-making, has further boosted his craft, giving him more experience and exposure.

"Participation in exhibitions plays a crucial role in marketing and promoting our products," he notes, adding, "It also allows us to receive honest feedback from visitors, which helps improve product quality and enhances competition among artisans in this fray," he said.

Al Qamshoui encourages Omani youth to embrace traditional crafts, urging them to preserve their heritage. "Learning Omani crafts helps keep our traditions alive and sustains our authentic cultural identity," he said.

The technology allows for greater precision, consistency, and efficiency compared to traditional hand-crafting methods

MOHAMMED BIN HAMOUD AL QAMSHOUI



cook-up

IFTAR DESSERTS

Unique halwas

If you’ve had enough of the regular halwas available around town, how about trying some offbeat halwas for iftar dinners this Ramadan?

Moong Dal Halwa

Ingredients

- 1 cup moong dal
- 9 to 10tbsp ghee
- 4 green cardamoms – powdered
- 10 to 12 pistachios (unsalted) – chopped
- 10 to 12 blanched almonds – sliced
- 1tbsp golden raisins
- To be mixed
- 1 cup whole milk
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup sugar

Method

Soak the moong dal or mung lentils, in enough water overnight or for 4 to 5 hours. Drain and then grind the moong dal to a smooth paste with ¼ or ⅓ cup water to a smooth and fine consistency. Melt ghee in a nonstick kadai or frying pan, add the ground moong dal, stir and mix well. Keep on stirring the halwa on medium-low to medium heat till the raw aroma goes away completely. First the halwa is pasty,

then it starts getting lumpy and then starts breaking down and getting separated with the fat releasing from the sides. Break the lumps while stirring.

Meanwhile when the halwa is cooking, in another pan or kadai, take milk, water and sugar. Keep this pan on the stove top and stir so that the sugar dissolves. On a low or medium flame, heat this milk-water-sugar mixture till it comes to a boil. The moong dal mixture should reach a granular consistency before you add the hot milk mixture. You should get a fried aroma from the mung lentils and the colour should become golden. The fat also should get separated.

When the milk mixture comes to a boil, add it to the fried mung lentils. The mixture sizzles, so be careful while adding the hot milk and water mixture. Stir well, simmer and cook, stirring often.

The liquids should get absorbed and once again you will see the ghee getting separated. Lastly, add cardamom powder, chopped pistachios and raisins. Serve hot.



Apple Halwa

Ingredients

- 2 apples large
- 1½tbsp ghee
- ¼ cup + 2tbsp granulated sugar
- ¼ + ⅓tsp cinnamon powder
- ¼tsp cardamom powder
- ⅓tsp nutmeg powder
- Sliced almonds/cashew nuts - to garnish

Method

Wash the apples and peel them. Cut into slices and run them into a food processor till the apples are well ground. Few pieces are ok. In a pan, heat ghee on medium flame. Once hot, add the apples and cook till all the water is evaporated. Now, add sugar and mix. Also add cinnamon powder, nutmeg and cardamom powder. As the sugar melts, the halwa will again become liquidy. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring continuously, till all the water evaporates. Garnish with sliced almonds/cashew nuts and serve hot.

Bread Halwa

Ingredients

- 25 bread slices
- 3 cups water
- Pinch of cardamom powder
- 8 spoons sugar
- ½ cup oil
- 1tbsp cashew nuts - roasted

Method

Take all the bread pieces and roast them on a pan on medium heat till they turn crispy. (You can directly use rusk if you want to cut short the time). Blend the toasted bread in a blender and make a powder like breadcrumbs. Take about 1 ½ cups of breadcrumbs, and keep it aside. In a nonstick pan, heat 2tbsp oil, add the measured breadcrumbs, and sauté them till they turn golden brown. Add 3 cups of water and keep stirring it as you see the mixture starts to boil. Slowly add the sugar. As the sugar dissolves, add remaining oil, little by little, and keep stirring till the water evaporates and the mixture turns into a halwa consistency. Garnish with roasted cashew nuts.



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NAME CHANGE

I, **JIPSARANI PUZHYYIL PUTHIYA PURAYIL** (holder of Indian Passport **P5717109** daughter of **SETHURAMAN PUZHYYIL PUTHIYA PURAYIL** having permanent residence in **No 9 8TH CROSS VINAYAKA LAYOUT DODDANEKUNDI MAHADEVAPURA BENGALURU PIN: 560037, KARNATAKA, INDIA** (complete postal address in India), and presently residing **SQU, KNOWLEDGE OASIS MUSCAT, BUILDING NO 2185, FLAT NO 610**, (complete postal address in Oman) intend to change my name from **JIPSARANI PUZHYYIL PUTHIYA PURAYIL** (old name) to **JIPSA SUNNY MANGWANI** (new name) for all practical. Any objection towards my name change may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, PO Box No: 1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

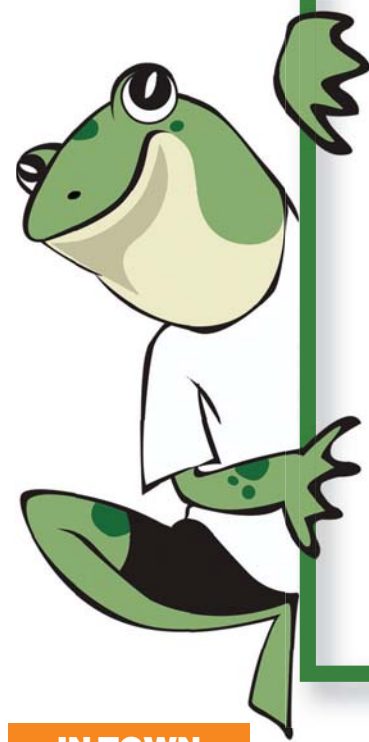
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take a break

HOPPING
AROUND
WITH
HOPIBI



Get bitter about litter

Guys, enjoy an iftar gathering outdoors, if you must, but make sure to clean up after you're done. Don't just take community hygiene for granted and think it is someone else's responsibility.

While I enjoy hopping around during the holy season, sharing pleasantries with the faithful and partaking in their observances, what puts me off is the scant attention given to cleanliness at some locations.

Many of the parks in town, especially in Wadi Kabir, Qurum, Seeb, as well as stretches of lush lawns along many streets in town are frequented by families and groups of people who come together for iftar.



While the warmth and brotherhood over sharing a meal is commendable, one cannot overlook what they often leave behind - water bottles, cola cans, plastic

plates/glasses/spoons, thermocol food containers, etc. Often these are dumped besides overflowing bins while some of it gets carried by the wind and

no one really goes after it. While some conscientious groups carry away their trash, many rely on the civic cleaners to do the job. Besides leaving behind a shabby sight for other visitors to these public places, the trash also invites rodents and pests. It also raises a stench of leftover foodstuff which will be cleared by the garbage vans only in the wee hours of the next day. Guys, we all need to get bitter about litter, only then can we keep Muscat as the 'most beautiful city' that we always talk about. Every stray pouch of chips, each toffee wrapper, every cigarette butt tossed away carelessly counts. It all begins with...you!

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Don't indulge yourself or anyone else in anything that doesn't sound quite right. Financially speaking, you have antennae that are as keen as the day is long, and they're trying to send you an important message right now. The time is definitely not good to make any major investments. Wait a while and be sure it is before you.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Everyone knows how fond you are of your behind-the-scenes work. You operate best when you're quite literally pulling the strings from the wings. But right about now you may be asked to take center stage, which, obviously, can't be done from behind a curtain. So don't fight it. It's your turn to shine, that's all. You're the star of your own show. Revel in it.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
If you have something to say to a certain higher-up who's been anything but communicative lately, you'd better say it now. First off, you might just be paranoid that they're avoiding you. Maybe they don't even know your full name! You can make some headway, but you have to act fast. Knock politely, enter on command, and ask for a few minutes of their time. That's a nice way to start, isn't it?



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Touchy? You? Oh, every now and then, maybe. Today in particular, for example. If you are, indeed, feeling especially cranky, you'd better take some time off from your partner. Absence does make the heart grow fonder, after all, and when you already know you're in a bad mood, isn't it best to put some distance between you and the person you care about most? Sure it is.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Today might be a little tricky when it comes to communication and travel. Now that you know what you're dealing with, it's up to you to plan for it. If the past few days have been a struggle, and you don't want an instant replay of the disorganization, troubleshoot. Be sure you have an alternative arrangement for each and every plan.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Your faith in the Universe is a rare and lovely thing, and that confidence is certainly going to come in handy today. The rest of the world will likely be storming around mad at something or someone. But you'll be an oasis of calm, an inspiration in this otherwise hectic day. Share your peacefulness with others if possible.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Ready to do some shopping? You bet you are. And since you've been good in this department for some time now, you're perfectly justified. The thing is you may not be able to find what you want. Not just yet anyway. That doesn't mean you won't find it in the future or even sooner than that. In the meantime, though, don't settle. Shop around.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Tolerance isn't usually one of your finest assets. Bravery, energy, and unstoppable enthusiasm, of course, all those undoubtedly belong to you, but tolerance isn't something that comes naturally. Keep this in mind, because you're going to have to give yourself a crash course in this attribute, and with any luck you'll get the basics down soon.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Tolerance isn't usually one of your finest assets. Bravery, energy, and unstoppable enthusiasm, of course, all those undoubtedly belong to you, but tolerance isn't something that comes naturally. Keep this in mind, because you're going to have to give yourself a crash course in this attribute, and with any luck you'll get the basics down soon.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Just when you thought it was safe to come out and were getting ready to do just that...don't. Not yet and especially if you don't have to. Today's astrological buffet is chock full of frustrations, and if you're trying to convince a family member to do something they've been resisting, it probably won't get much better. Should you give up? Absolutely not.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Just when you thought it might actually be safe to come out, just for a few hours, one more challenge will arrive, and this one won't be going anywhere in a hurry. Yes, you've heard an awful lot of that lately, but don't shoot the messenger, and don't be upset with yourself. The heavens are stalling you. Go get a massage or buy that outfit you've been admiring from afar.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
There's an awful lot of activity going on right now concerning your finances, your joint finances in particular. What it boils down to is you may need to take the checkbook or credit card away from someone who doesn't quite know how to manage it. If it's a partner, you'll have your work cut out for you, especially if you want to be nice about it. Be practical first.

IN TOWN

BBF Iftar



The British Business Forum hosted an iftar dinner on the British embassy lawns on Sunday



Photos: Y K Shafar

BOGGLER

E	A	R	B
E	U	R	Y
L	S	E	K
Y	P	E	M

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

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

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS

1. In Sudan, during Ramadan, this dish is popularly consumed for iftar?
- A. Saltah
B. Asida
C. Molokhia
D. Harisa



2. Which fruit shrub bears the flower shown here?
- A. Plum
B. Mandarin
C. Pomegranate
D. Cashew

3. In which country would you find the tomb of Nabi Ayoub?
- A. Saudi Arabia
B. Morocco
C. Yemen
D. Oman

Answers
1. B
2. C
3. 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

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

entertainment



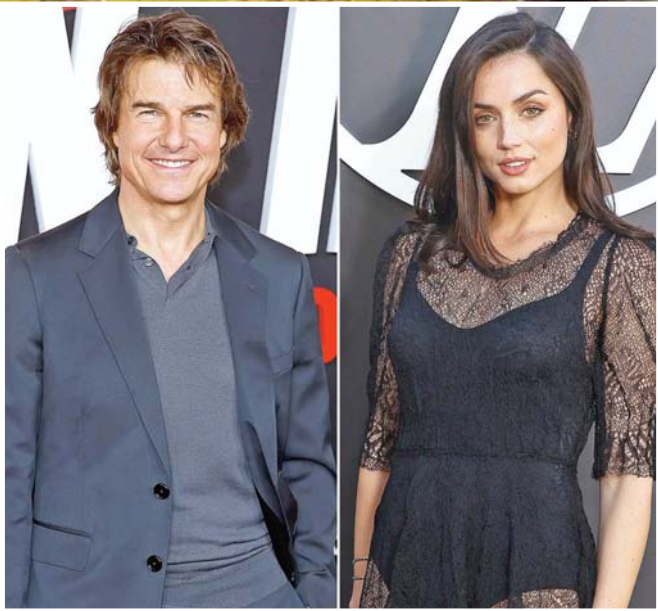
DISNEY'S SNOW WHITE' GETS MUTED HOLLYWOOD PREMIERE

Disney's live-action remakes of animated classics are usually safe bets. But a new version of the oldest of them all, *Snow White*, has become mired in controversies, receiving an unusually low-key premiere in Hollywood on Saturday.

The studio kept its outspoken stars Rachel Zegler

and Gal Gadot away from reporters at the afternoon event, with no red carpet interviews - and has avoided questions about the film's divisive depictions of the Seven Dwarfs.

It follows a similarly pared-down European premiere on Wednesday at a remote castle in Segovia, Spain, where few media outlets were invited.



Tom Cruise, Ana de Armas spark dating rumours

Tom and Ana first sparked romance rumours over Valentine's Day weekend last month when they were photographed together for the first time. They were spotted walking in London's Soho neighbourhood, with the *Deep Water* actor carrying bags of takeout from a restaurant. Both stopped to chat and take photographs with fans. Neither Tom, who has been filming an Alejandro G Inarritu movie in England in recent months, nor Ana have commented on the rumours.



La Roux returns to stage with 'Don't know where I went'

Dynamic dance pop singer La Roux — who won a 2011 Grammy for Best Electronic/Dance Album — made a triumphant return to the stage on Saturday night, and turned in a bulletproof performance.

The flame-haired singer — who hit No 8 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 2010 with her hit, 'Bulletproof' — played the sleek LA venue the Sun Rose on Saturday. "It's been 10 years... I don't know where I went," said, "there is an album on the way."



Park Bo-gum in 'When Life Gives You Tangerines!'

Okay, can we talk about Park Bo-gum in *When Life Gives You Tangerines*? Because he's literally the entire green forest in this show! His character, Gwan-sik, just has this calming, earthy vibe that makes everything feel so peaceful, like being in the middle of a lush forest.

Watching him grow from a carefree young guy to a loving father and partner is honestly so beautiful. And the chemistry between him and IU? It's like the trees swaying together in the wind—so natural and perfect. (The man is such a simp when it comes to his girl!)

Park Bo-gum's performance is so grounded and real, it just feels like he's the heart of the whole story. (Those doe eyes... sigh) Every scene he's in feels so warm and comforting. Can someone please give him all the awards already?

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Ouseppinte Osivathu, set in Idukki's hills, revolves around the unity of a family which crumbles amidst greed, betrayal, and tragedy, leading to escalating tensions and deepening conflicts between its members.

The film has been credited as one that blends family drama with a touch of mystery, making it an engaging and emotional experience. The storytelling is captivating, with a perfect mix of heartwarming moments and subtle suspense that keeps the audience invested.

The direction by Sarath Chandran R J is commendable, bringing out the best from the cast while maintaining an engaging narrative flow. The film's emotional depth is enhanced by stunning cinematography and a well-composed background score.

Even though an investigation is happening in the movie, which practically keeps the audience interested in the story, what eventually works in favour of the film is how it shapes the drama using each character. By revealing minimal details about each character at regular intervals, writer Fasal Hassan manages to keep the audience engaged throughout.

Dileesh Pothan, who plays

BOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW:
OUSEPPINTE OSIVATHU (Malayalam)

Genre: Family drama

Starring: Dileesh Pothan, Kalabhavan Shajon, Vijayaraghavan, Kani Kusruti

Filial rollercoaster

the vulnerable and sentimental Michael, has emerged as a favourite in this movie where he is often caught off guard in some sequences. Michael has always tried to hold the family together, and if you come to terms with his predicament, the story brings in an emotional element that pulls on the heart-strings of viewers. Kalabhavan Shajon, who plays the brother George, on the other hand, complements Pothan's role on screen.

Though the film lacked any specific visuals that brought about a wow factor, every scene had a palpable impact on the flow of the story, creating an overall positive impression. Worth a watch.

Rating ★★★★★