



Apply now

Don't Miss Out on a
First-Year Annual Fee waiver
with Al Jawhar Visa Platinum
Credit Card from Bank Muscat



Bank Muscat. Better Everyday.
Terms and conditions apply.

Oman improves ranking in UN index of digital governance

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has improved its ranking in the 2024 Government Electronic and Mobile Services Maturity Index (GEMS) with a score of 72%, compared to 66% in 2023, according to a report released by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on Monday.

The report covers 17 Arab countries and assesses digital government performance across three key dimensions - service availability and development, service uptake and satisfaction, and government outreach and engagement.

Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates led the index with scores of 96% and 95%, respectively, reflecting strong progress in national digital transformation. The



index covers a wide range of sectors, including health, education, transportation, finance, justice, trade, tourism and social affairs.

The index highlighted gains in Oman's performance across the key pillars of digital maturity. The sultanate's score in the service availability and development pillar rose to 80%, up from 76.64% in 2023. Service uptake and satisfaction increased to 63%, compared to 51.95% last year, while

The index also showed a sharp

The index covers a wide range of sectors, including health, education, transportation, finance, justice, trade, tourism and social affairs

rise in Oman's evaluation indicators. The level of service development for electronic portals improved to 94% from 84.45% in 2023. User satisfaction with these portals was 89%, up from 76.44%. Mobile application availability also improved to 60%, compared to 49.97% last year, while user satisfaction of mobile platforms increased to 62%, up from 47.76%.

Nawar al Awa, ESCWA's GEMS project lead, noted that despite overall progress in the region, a significant digital divide remains between countries with advanced digital infrastructure and those in the early stages of digital development. This gap widened from 91% in 2023 to 95% in 2024, largely due to disparities in resources and challenges in adopting emerging technologies.

Oman appeals to India, Pakistan to de-escalate tensions

Muscat - Oman has voiced concern over the escalating military tensions between India and Pakistan, calling for immediate de-escalation and a return to diplomatic dialogue to preserve regional stability.

In a statement issued by its Foreign Ministry, Oman urged the two nuclear-armed neighbours to resolve their differences through political means. 'The Foreign Ministry is following with deep concern the current military escalation between India and Pakistan. The Sultanate of Oman calls on the two neighbouring countries to contain this dangerous escalation and open the way for diplomatic efforts to reach an understanding between them and prioritise political solutions to preserve security and stability and achieve peace, peaceful co-existence and harmony.'

The appeal follows a series of

Indian airstrikes early Wednesday on what New Delhi described as 'terrorist infrastructure' in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. The strikes, part of 'Operation Sindoor', targeted nine locations in response to the April 22 attack in Indian-administered Kashmir, which left 26 civilians dead, including 25 Indian nationals and one Nepali.

Pakistan strongly condemned the strikes as 'unprovoked aggression'. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called these a 'heinous act that will not go unpunished', while the Pakistani military reported 26 deaths and 46 injuries in the affected areas.

India maintained that the strikes were 'focused, measured and non-escalatory', aimed at avoiding military installations. India too reported at least 15 civilians killed and 43 injured by Pakistani shelling on its side of the border.

OIA invests in US advanced water treatment solutions firm Gradiant

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has expanded its strategic portfolio in the water sector through an investment in US-based Gradiant, a global leader in advanced water and wastewater treatment solutions.

Gradiant, which holds 166 registered patents and has 67 pending applications, has been a key partner for OIA in localising cutting-edge technologies for the Omani market.

According to the latest issue of OIA's bulletin *Enjaz & Eejaz*, the collaboration has led to establishment of the Oman Laboratories Innovation Centre in partnership with Nama Water Services Company, as well as discussions with Gradiant's subsidiary Turing Company on leveraging artificial intelligence to address the sultanate's water sector challenges.

The bulletin also highlighted OIA's recent divestments in the international real estate sector, including sale of its stake in Scape in Australia, earning an in-



ternal rate of return (IRR) of 17% and a 2.3x return on investment. It also exited its investment in Zurich Apart Hotel, part of the Elba Hospitality portfolio with Westmont Hospitality Group, securing an IRR of 22% and a 4.4x return.

Additionally, the bulletin featured a project to plant 30,000 Omani lemon trees in Rahab Farm, the first carbon sequester-

ing project launched by Nakheel Development Oman. This project aims to contribute to achieving net zero emissions and increase production of Omani lemons by 38%.

To provide updates on OIA projects, the bulletin introduced a new section titled 'From the Field', highlighting the authority's on-site visits to projects under implementation, reflecting its

commitment to supporting national development.

The issue concluded with a feature on the Hujrat al Sheikh neighbourhood in the wilayat of Wadi al Ma'awal, one of the oldest Omani settlements. The piece highlighted a new walkway project to revitalise the neighbourhood's ancient alleys, connecting key heritage landmarks and supporting local economic growth.

GCC, Egypt hail Oman mediation in securing US-Yemen ceasefire

Muscat - Oman's mediation efforts have succeeded in securing a ceasefire agreement between the United States and Yemeni authorities, drawing praise from Egypt and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) for its role in promoting regional stability.

In a statement on Wednesday, Egypt's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration commended Oman's diplomatic engagement, calling it a 'significant step' towards restoring calm in Yemen.

'We hope the coming period will see a firm commitment to this agreement, which could also help generate momentum to end the war in Gaza and advance efforts towards regional security and stability,' the ministry added.

Jasem Mohamed al Budaivi, Secretary-General of GCC, also praised Oman's role, describing it as a testament to the sultanate's "constructive and effective" regional diplomacy. He reaffirmed the GCC's commitment to fostering peace through balanced policies and stressed the impor-



Jasem Mohamed al Budaivi

tance of de-escalation and adherence to international maritime law, particularly regarding freedom of navigation.

The ceasefire agreement, announced on Tuesday by H E Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, followed recent discussions between Oman, the US and Yemeni parties.

"In the future, neither side will target the other, including American vessels, in the Red Sea and Bab al Mandab Strait, ensuring freedom of navigation and the smooth flow of international commercial shipping," H E Sayyid Badr said.

BRIEF

Duqm-Haima water supply link inaugurated

Duqm - Nama Water Services inaugurated several water projects in Al Wusta on Wednesday, including the strategic Duqm-Haima Water Supply System, which spans 211km built at a cost of over RO24mn.

The project is aimed at enhancing water security and sustainability in the governorate amid rising demand of a growing population. It includes four key stations in Duqm, Al Ajaiz, Abu Madabi and Haima.

Additionally, several solar and wind-powered desalination plants were launched across the governorate, besides two wastewater treatment plants in Mahout and Al Jazer.



03 Judicial council confirms legality of digital divorce



13 Catholics in Oman await a 'new shepherd'

Oman signs anti-corruption cooperation pact with OIC

Malé, Maldives - Oman has signed the Makkah Agreement for cooperation among Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states in the field of enforcing anti-corruption laws, aiming to enhance regional collaboration in combating corruption and promoting integrity.

The agreement was signed during the Saudi-Maldives International Forum for Integrity Enhancement held in the Maldives on May 6 and 7. The event was co-organised by the Kingdom of



The Makkah Agreement seeks to enhance cooperation between law enforcement authorities of OIC countries in preventing, investigating and prosecuting corruption-related crimes

Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Maldives. Oman's delegation at the forum was led by H E Sheikh Ghosn bin Hilal al Alawi, Chairman of State Audit Institution.

The Makkah Agreement seeks to enhance cooperation between law enforcement authorities of OIC countries in preventing, investigating and prosecuting corruption-related crimes. It also covers the recovery of criminal proceeds and promotes exchange of technical assistance, expertise and training among

member states.

The agreement addresses a wide range of corruption offences, including bribery of public and foreign officials, embezzlement, trading in influence, abuse of functions, illicit enrichment, private-sector bribery, laundering of criminal proceeds, concealment and obstruction of justice.

Oman participated actively in the preparatory meetings to review and discuss the draft agreement and submitted its recommendations.

Muscat governorate reviews heritage and tourism integration



Muscat – Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi, Governor of Muscat, chaired a high-level meeting on Tuesday with H E Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Undersecretary for Heritage Affairs in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, to advance heritage conservation efforts in the Muscat governorate.

The meeting, attended by senior officials, focused on strengthening cooperation to preserve Oman’s cultural and historical legacy, promote tourism, and integrate heritage conservation into urban development plans.

Officials reviewed the latest data on archaeological sites and monuments across Oman, which currently has 3,025 registered monuments. In Muscat, Quriyat leads with 80 monuments and 287 archaeological sites, followed by Bausher with 37 monu-

ments and 62 sites, Muttrah with 46 monuments and 23 sites, Seeb with 23 monuments and 31 sites, and Amerat with 20 monuments and 26 sites.

The meeting also reviewed the work of the Historic Landmarks Linkage Committee, which focuses on integrating historical sites into the urban fabric

The Directorate General of Antiquities provided updates on ongoing restoration efforts for key landmarks in Muscat and outlined priority heritage conservation projects aimed at safeguarding Oman’s cultural

heritage as a cornerstone of national identity.

Innovative projects to revive traditional Omani crafts, including sarooj (lime mortar), green cotton, and leather production, were also highlighted, along with awareness campaigns to promote craft heritage.

The Directorate General of Museums presented updates on geological heritage initiatives, including geological parks, meteorite restoration, and a proposal to relocate the Natural History Museum to the Oman Botanic Garden.

The meeting concluded with a review of the work of the Historic Landmarks Linkage Committee, which focuses on integrating historical sites into the urban fabric of Muscat and Muttrah, reflecting the governorate’s commitment to preserving its rich cultural heritage.



Ejada system boosts govt efficiency

Muscat - Ejada (Excellence) system has improved government performance, reducing employee resignations by 72% and increasing strategic partnerships by 233%, officials said on Tuesday.

The updates were shared at a ceremony marking institutional excellence for 2024, held under the patronage of H E Dr Mahad

bin Saeed bin Ali Baowain, Minister of Labour.

The system has also strengthened leadership capabilities, with 45% of supervisory roles now qualified or in the process of qualification under the ‘second line’ leadership strategy.

In total, 64% of government employees, or 111,475 individuals, have benefited from compe-

tency development programmes.

Inter-agency collaboration has grown sharply, with partnerships and cooperation agreements rising to 2,579, while the value of funds disbursed to small and medium enterprises increased by 111% to over RO152mn.

The system has also improved

operational efficiency, with 4,863 business procedures streamlined, while innovation funding increased by 153% to more than RO45mn.

Complaint handling has improved, with the average index reaching 94%, while environmental and community engagement initiatives surged by 247% and 642%, respectively.

OCCI addresses challenges to Gulf Common Market integration

Muscat - The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), in collaboration with the Federation of GCC Chambers, on Tuesday hosted a workshop in Muscat focused on challenges facing the Gulf private sector within the framework of the Gulf Common Market.

Speaking at the event, Zakaria bin Abdullah al Saadi, CEO of OCCI, said the workshop is part of the chamber’s strategic efforts to serve and empower the private sector, in alignment with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

He noted that enhancing the business environment and broadening economic diversifi-



cation remain key national priorities.

Saadi stressed that GCC countries have made significant progress toward regional eco-

nom ic integration, with the Gulf Common Market standing as a major achievement.

He called for unified efforts among GCC chambers to ad-

dress key challenges, unlock the full potential of joint cooperation, and put forward actionable recommendations to strengthen the market’s performance.

CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2025					
	Consolidated		Parent Company		
	Unaudited 31-Mar-25 RO'000	Audited 31-Dec-24 RO'000	Unaudited 31-Mar-25 RO'000	Audited 31-Dec-24 RO'000	
Cash and balances with central bank	136,486	180,450	89,999	117,845	
Due from banks	145,285	67,222	124,140	65,876	
Loans, advances and financing to customers	3,543,477	3,490,871	2,419,987	2,390,677	
Investment securities	442,084	540,320	312,671	328,419	
Investment in subsidiary	-	-	137,487	135,095	
Property and equipment	39,480	39,586	34,392	34,254	
Intangible assets	6,202	6,280	-	-	
Other assets	61,838	56,639	53,644	46,088	
Total assets	4,374,852	4,291,368	3,172,320	3,118,254	
Due to banks	29,504	54,599	18,576	31,293	
Customer deposits	3,672,193	3,571,693	2,518,417	2,467,307	
Borrowed funds	9,625	9,625	9,625	9,625	
Other liabilities	78,485	79,542	71,982	64,965	
Taxation	11,693	10,145	10,172	9,181	
Total liabilities	3,801,500	3,725,604	2,628,772	2,582,371	
Share capital	166,941	166,941	166,941	166,941	
Share premium	36,565	36,565	36,565	36,565	
Legal reserve	53,626	53,626	53,614	53,614	
General reserve	25,560	25,560	25,560	25,560	
Fair value reserve	3,837	3,837	3,837	3,837	
Impairment reserve	(1,538)	(1,707)	(1,806)	(1,975)	
Retained earnings	16,800	16,800	16,800	16,800	
Shareholders' equity	387,086	379,498	387,282	379,617	
Perpetual Tier 1 capital bonds	186,266	186,266	156,266	156,266	
Total equity	573,352	565,764	543,548	535,883	
Total equity and liabilities	4,374,852	4,291,368	3,172,320	3,118,254	
Net assets value per share (RO)	0.232	0.227	0.232	0.227	
Contingent liabilities and commitments	360,387	377,039	216,316	238,523	

CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2025					
	Consolidated		Parent Company		
	Unaudited 31-Mar-25 RO'000	Unaudited 31-Mar-24 RO'000	Unaudited 31-Mar-25 RO'000	Unaudited 31-Mar-24 RO'000	
Interest income	42,397	38,274	42,574	38,400	
Interest expense	(21,707)	(20,848)	(21,707)	(20,848)	
Net interest income	20,690	17,426	20,867	17,552	
Income from Islamic financing and investing activities	18,179	16,335	-	-	
Profit paid on participatory deposits and banks	(10,379)	(10,120)	-	-	
Net income from Islamic financing and investing activities	7,800	6,215	-	-	
Net fee and commission income	5,022	5,595	3,876	4,389	
Net income from investment securities	283	104	192	75	
Other operating income	1,352	2,902	1,064	920	
Share of profit from subsidiary	-	-	2,410	2,012	
Total income	35,147	32,242	28,409	24,948	
Operating expenses	(18,063)	(18,309)	(13,913)	(13,500)	
Net allowances for credit losses	(7,335)	(6,271)	(6,009)	(4,075)	
Profit before tax	8,849	7,662	8,487	7,373	
Income tax expense	(1,430)	(1,244)	(991)	(877)	
Net Profit for the period	7,419	6,418	7,496	6,496	
Other comprehensive income / (loss)					
Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss in the subsequent periods					
- Equity investment at FVOCI – net change in fair value	(426)	3	(297)	3	
Items that are or may be reclassified to profit or loss in the subsequent periods					
- Debt investment at FVOCI – net change in fair value	595	(178)	485	(145)	
Share of OCI from subsidiary	-	-	(19)	(33)	
Other comprehensive income / (loss) for the period	169	(175)	169	(175)	
Total comprehensive income for the period – net of tax	7,588	6,243	7,665	6,321	
Earnings per share:					
Basic and diluted (RO)	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004	



بنك عُمان العربي OMAN ARAB BANK



Rashad bin Mohammad Al Zubair, Chairman

Dear Shareholders,
I am pleased to present to you the financial results of Oman Arab Bank SAOG (the Bank) for the first quarter ended 31 March 2025.
The Federal Reserve has maintained the Federal fund rates at its current level, highlighting a careful stance towards inflationary pressures. Meanwhile, the US proposed tariffs may impact global trade and supply chains.
Oman continued to have balanced fiscal discipline and healthy debt to GDP ratio supported by improved governance in public expenditure, providing a cushion against external shocks. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported in January 2025 that Oman's economy continued to expand, supported by favorable hydrocarbon revenues and steady reform efforts. The IMF noted that fiscal and external surpluses continued in 2024, with the overall fiscal balance at 6.2% of GDP and the current account balance at 2.4% of GDP, with government debt declining to 35% of GDP in 2024.

Consolidated Financial Performance

The Bank recorded a net profit after tax of OMR 742 million for the three-month ended 31 March 2025, up 16% compared to OMR 642 million for the same period in 2024.

Net interest income from conventional banking and net income from Islamic financing services increased by 21% to RO 285.5 million for the first quarter of 2025 due to an increase in interest and finance income, which was partly offset by higher cost of funds.

Operating income increased by 9% to RO 351 million for the three-month ended 31 March 2025 compared to RO 322 million for the same period in 2024. Operating expenses reached RO 180 million compared to RO 183 million for the same period in 2024. This has led to a healthy growth in operating profit which grew 16% to reach RO 182 million in the first three months of 2025 compared to RO 153 million in the same period last year. Net allowances for expected credit losses increased by 47% to reach RO 7.3 million in the three-month ended 31 March 2025 compared to RO 6.3 million for the same period in 2024.

Net loans and advances, including Islamic finance, grew 3% to RO 3,543 million compared to RO 3,436 million at 31 March 2024, while customer deposits reached RO 3,672 million by the end of first quarter of 2025, up 8% compared to RO 3,392 million at 31 March 2024.

Parent Company Performance

The parent company recorded a net profit after tax of RO 75 million for the three-month ended 31 March 2025, up 16% compared to RO 6.5 million for the same period in 2024. Interest income grew 21% compared to RO 38.3 million for the same period in 2024, while interest expenses grew 4%. Operating income reached RO 28.4 million for the three-month ended 31 March 2025 compared to RO 24.9 million in the same period of 2024, driven by growth in net interest income and an increase in share of profit from subsidiary by 20%, while operating costs increased by 27%. Operating expenses increased by 3% to reach RO 13.9 million for the three-month ended 31 March 2025 compared to RO 13.5 million in the same period in 2024. Net allowances for expected credit losses increased by 47% to reach RO 6.0 million for the three-month ended 31 March 2025 compared to RO 4.1 million for the same period in 2024.

Net loans and advances grew 0.7% to RO 2,420 million at 31 March 2025, compared to RO 2,404 million for the same period in 2024. Net customer deposits increased by 7% to RO 2,518 million at 31 March 2025 compared to RO 2,348 million for the same period in 2024.

The Parent Company has adopted the equity method to account for investments in a subsidiary in its separate financial statements. This amendment has been applied retrospectively, and the previous financial statements have been restated accordingly.

Performance of Alizz Islamic Bank

Alizz Islamic Bank's net profit grew by 20% to RO 2.4 million for the three-month ended 31 March 2025 compared to RO 2.0 million for the same period in 2024. Net financing receivables amounted to RO 122 million at 31 March 2025, 9% higher than RO 103.6 million for the same period last year. Customer deposits reached RO 154 million at 31 March 2025, up 11% compared to RO 104.4 million at 31 March 2024.

New Banking Services and Products

In Q1 2025, the Bank introduced innovative products and services, reinforcing its commitment to elevating customer experiences and promoting economic growth, including support of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). Notably, the Bank unveiled a new suite of commercial banking services tailored for SMEs, corporate clients, and government entities. These services incorporated advanced technologies such as Host-to-Host (SWIFTNet). The new services allow clients to effortlessly manage their financial operations at any time and from any location, with corporate clients gaining complete oversight and efficient management of their financial transactions.

As part of its digital transformation journey, the Bank also successfully launched its Corporate Mobile Banking application, tailored to meet the needs of corporate, SME, and government entities. Additionally, a Virtual Account solution was introduced for licensed brokerage firms on the Muscat Stock Exchange, in collaboration with the Financial Services Authority (FSA).

During Ramadan, Oman Arab Bank announced the launch of its special Ramadan 'Markabat' Car Loan campaign. The initiative aimed to meet the needs of individuals and families by offering flexible financing terms and competitive interest rates. The Bank offered flexible repayment terms of up to 60 months, helping improve personal financial management, while saving time and effort. It also provided customers with the opportunity to obtain financing for purchasing new or used cars with attractive interest rates, reaching some of the lowest rates in the market, contributing to easing the financial burden on customers during the holy month of Ramadan.

In celebration of Eid al-Fitr, the Bank announced the launch of its special Eid al-Fitr Spend Campaign, designed to reward the Bank's credit cardholders with 4% cashback for local purchases made during the festive period. The campaign aimed to encourage local spending while providing a unique opportunity for customers to earn cashback on their everyday purchases.

Staying aligned with evolving customer needs and emerging technologies, Alizz Islamic Bank partnered with Visa, a world leader in digital payments, to offer an enhanced Shariah compliant card experience. The new Visa cardholder, the new premium card's offerings come as part of the bank's recent transformational journey that focused on Personalizing every experience through innovative and smart solutions. This partnership enables Alizz Islamic Bank to provide instant issuance of new Visa debit cards, credit cards and prepaid cards.

Retail Initiatives

Oman Arab Bank achieved significant milestones in retail banking over the past quarter of the year, reinforcing its commitment to innovation, customer experience and digital transformation. Among the most notable advancements was the successful launch of Samsung Pay and Apple Pay wallets, enabling secure and seamless transactions through tokenization for both debit and credit cards. The Bank also rolled out several enhancements to its mobile apps, including features like international purpose of transfer, e-IPD enhancements, and mobile debit card requests for renewals and replacements. In addition, new billers such as Vodafone and Friendi mobile top-ups were integrated into both the mobile app and ATMs, further improving customer convenience.

In line with its strategic focus on expanding payment infrastructure, Oman Arab Bank upgraded its physical and digital payment systems, including the replacement of 52 outdated NCR machines with new DIN machines and the installation of a Dynamic View System to improve ATM monitoring. The Bank also expanded its POS network, onboarding high-profile merchants such as Pizza Hut with 133 machines, Makah Hypermarket with six branches, and Modern Dairy Factory. Collaborations with major fuel retailers like Oman Oil and Al Maha Petroleum led to the deployment of POS machines across 67 fuel stations. The Bank's reach in the academic and institutional sectors was further solidified through a significant RO 7 Million agreement with Sohar University and a completed SAP payment gateway integration for Muscat University.

On the campaign front, Oman Arab Bank continued to engage customers with rewarding offers and strategic outreach. A national campaign commemorating His Majesty's Ascension Anniversary offered up to 25% cashback on credit card transactions, while the Ramadan Car Loan campaign and weekend discounts at Lulu Hypermarket strengthened seasonal engagement. The Bank also introduced a new credit card product for the Ministry of Finance with tailored limits and usage options.

Initiatives included enhancing contacts transaction limits for the Ministry of Housing and O-Taxi. These collective efforts underpin the Bank's ongoing drive for innovative financial solutions, broaden accessibility, and strengthen customer relationships.

Strategic Collaborations & Partnerships

In Q1 2025, Oman Arab Bank strengthened its commitment to empowering communities and supporting the nation through key partnerships and initiatives. The Bank participated in the Sultan Qaboos University Career Fair, which was held from 17 to 19 February 2025. OAB's booth attracted a large number of young visitors who expressed keen interest in exploring its pioneering initiatives, career opportunities, and innovative programs, particularly the *Bawad Al Azzal* program, which targets university and college graduates. The Bank's participation in the exhibition aligns with its commitment to supporting national talent and contributing to Oman's employment objectives for youth, in line with the country's future vision.

Additionally, Oman Arab Bank continued to provide insurance solutions, and Oman Arab Bank announced a strategic partnership: a collaboration set to redefine the financial services landscape by providing customers with enhanced access to innovative, integrated solutions. The partnership enabled OAB's customers to seamlessly access Takaful Oman's comprehensive suite of insurance products through OAB's extensive network of branches and advanced digital platforms. The collaboration reflects both the organisations' commitment to innovation, customer dedication, all while delivering financial solutions that address the evolving needs of Oman's diverse market.

The Bank has played a vital role in financing key development projects across various sectors and industries in the Sultanate. This includes support for small and medium-sized enterprises, with total financing exceeding RO 100 million during the first quarter of the year. In addition, the Bank continues to advance green financing initiatives in line with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles and government-led sustainability efforts. These contributions are fully aligned with the Bank's strategic plans and the broader objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Reinforcing its leadership in innovation and advanced financial solutions, the Bank dived a key role in collaborating with the Financial Services Authority (FSA) to launch five digital trading platforms for licensed brokerage firms on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX). These platforms are part of some broader financial and sustainability initiatives aimed at facilitating and stimulating investment, driving comprehensive access to the capital markets, and enhancing digital platforms.

Further, and as part of its ongoing initiatives and innovative programs to support and empower SMEs, the Bank organized the Erit Exhibition, serving as a distinguished promotional platform for entrepreneurs, supporting national products, and enhancing their presence in local markets. The exhibition showcased a variety of products, including handmade crafts, artworks, and homegrown food items. The initiative also featured a staff-organized bazaar to raise funds and awareness for children with intellectual disabilities, reinforcing a culture of corporate social responsibility involvement within the Bank. Additionally, the Bank proudly announced its sponsorship of the upcoming Special Olympics World Winter Games, set to take place in Torino, Italy, in 2025 – marking a continuation of its dedication to empowering children and supporting their inclusion on international platforms.

Further, extending its social outreach, the Bank hosted the 'Happiness Ramadan Carnival', a joyful and inclusive community event tailored for people with disabilities. The event provided a day of entertainment, interaction, and support for individuals and families, creating a warm and welcoming environment that reflected the Bank's values of empathy and equality.

In parallel, the Bank launched a nationwide financial literacy programme targeting SMEs, a sector central to the country's economic diversification goals. Recognising that access to financial knowledge is critical to the growth and sustainability of these businesses, the Bank has already conducted three successful training workshops in Muscat and Sohar. These free sessions provided both aspiring and existing entrepreneurs with practical financial advice, business planning tools, and a deeper understanding of banking services. Looking ahead, the Bank plans to extend the initiative to more regions including Dakhilay (Nizwa) and Salalah, ensuring broader geographic inclusion. The programme's hybrid model also includes live-streamed educational content and plans to host the content online permanently – ensuring long-term accessibility and sustainability for entrepreneurs nationwide. This initiative reflects the Bank's belief that empowering SMEs with the right financial tools and education can unlock their full potential and contribute significantly to Oman's economy.

Complementing these CSR efforts, the Bank has played a vital role in financing key development projects across various sectors and industries in the Sultanate. This includes dedicated support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), with total gross financing exceeding RO 100 million during the first quarter of this year. These efforts align with the Bank's strategic priorities and the overarching objectives of Oman Vision 2040, driving progress and economic resilience across the nation.

As for Alizz Islamic Bank, the bank signed an agreement with the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) and Saudi Export-Import Bank (Saudi EXIM) to provide Shariah-compliant financing solutions, further enhancing the bank's commitment to offering innovative and ethical financial services in alignment with Islamic principles.

Development of Human Resources

Oman Arab Bank held its annual meeting, a yearly tradition celebrating the successes achieved through the innovative contributions of the team and employees. The event also served as a platform to prepare for a new year filled with achievements and

to sustain the exceptional performance the Bank has attained through continuous advancements in digital products, solutions, and customer service.

Similarly, in the first quarter, the Bank's unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality learning and development programs resulted in the successful delivery of 88 courses, encompassing both physical and online modalities. These courses, spanning leadership, technical, and soft skills, impacted 1,488 learners. The cumulative training hours amounted to 6,757, reflecting our dedication to fostering continuous professional growth and development within our organization.

Continuing our efforts to strengthen our talent pipeline and contributing to the national employment agenda, the Bank launched a refreshed version of our highly successful Al Ruwad Graduate program. Partnering with the Ministry of Labour and one of the renowned and leading training institutes, we have on-boarded 25 young national talents to undergo an intensive 9-months bespoke development program. Upon successful completion of the program, these high potential talents would be deployed into the business. This approach ensures they are well-prepared to have impactful careers within our Bank.

Additionally, as part of our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, we provided 36 internship opportunities to job seekers and recent graduates. Our Talent Experience team launched several impactful initiatives focused on enhancing employee well-being, fostering a strong sense of community, and celebrating accomplishments across the Bank.

In January, with our "Happy Thursdays"—a once a month initiative designed to bring a much closer tie to the workforce by promoting relaxation and camaraderie among employees. We also carried out branch visits to strengthen the connection between our teams across various locations. Additionally, the "Breakfast with the CEO" event continues to provide a valuable opportunity for employees to engage in open dialogue and connect directly with the Bank's top leadership.

February featured a key moment during the Town Hall meeting, where we recognized long-serving employees through the Long Service Award and celebrated exceptional contributions with the Mutamizoon (Employee of the Year) Award. These recognitions reflect our appreciation for dedication and excellence within the organization.

In March, we encouraged team spirit and wellness through the OAB Ramadan Football Tournament, which promoted healthy living, friendly competition, and stronger interpersonal connections. These initiatives underscore our ongoing commitment to nurturing a vibrant, inclusive, and engaging workplace culture where every employee feels valued, supported, and empowered to excel.

In March, we successfully completed the hiring of 5 new talents to replenish our bench strength and redeployed a number of our internal talents to the Branches as Service Ambassadors, to further enhance our customer experience.

We continued our digitalisation efforts in HR process automation to enhance operational efficiency, ensuring that employees enjoy a seamless experience when submitting any applications, allowing services to be completed in a short time. This accomplishment not only highlights the team's dedication to meeting goals but also reflects their commitment to enhancing the overall employee experience.

Continuing its endeavors to develop national talent, Alizz Islamic Bank designed a specialized comprehensive training programme on the fundamentals of banking for non-banking professionals that was conducted by the CEO of the bank with more than 50 internal and external delegates benefiting from the programme that introduces fundamental banking concepts and principles, the basics of how banks operate as service providers and businesses, their obligation to operate in a safe and sound manner and manage risks, the responsibilities of bank employees in a customer-focused financial services environment and more.

Highlighting the accomplishments and the team's dedication to meeting goals reflects a commitment to enhancing and furthering existing and potential employees' skills and services, as well as their ongoing support.

Community Engagement

Oman Arab Bank and Alizz Islamic Bank both maintained their commitment to social responsibility in Q1 2025 through various community initiatives.

Notably, OAB launched a pioneering initiative to waive outstanding debts for a number of its distressed customers. This initiative is part of the Bank's ongoing efforts to promote economic development and alleviate financial burdens on individuals facing challenging economic circumstances. This step reflects the Bank's vision of building a sustainable relationship with its customers, founded on trust and mutual support, contributing to economic and social growth in the Sultanate.

During Ramadan, OAB successfully organized the Iftar Saem initiative in the Wilayat of Muttrah. This initiative is part of the Bank's annual Ramadan activities, aimed at encouraging generosity and embodying the virtues of the holy month.

The active participation of OAB employees in the Iftar Saem initiative and other community programs reflects their strong commitment to social responsibility and charitable work, which remains a core priority for the Bank.

As for Alizz Islamic Bank, in alignment with its 'Alizz Cares' Program, and underscoring its commitment to fostering inclusivity, empowering communities, and enhancing the quality of life, Alizz Islamic Bank introduced the 'Sports for All' initiative that strives to encourage sports and development into the community. The initiative reflects the Bank's commitment to promoting inclusivity, health, equality and public welfare through sports, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The first arm of this initiative was partnering with Special Olympics Oman to sponsor a specialised full year training programme for 10 athletes. The Bank also partnered with Sultan Qaboos University on the 10th Sports Tournament for Students of Universities and Higher Education Institutions in the GCC and launched the Alizz GT Gaming Tournament in collaboration with the Omani Gaming Committee for Games and Electronic Sports from the Ministry of Culture, Sports & Youth and participants competed on the EA Sports FC 25 game.

Additionally, as part of Alizz Islamic Bank's ongoing commitment to enhancing and supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with 'Sharakat', the Bank continues to empower eight selected SMEs which includes three nominations by the SMEs Development Authority, two from Alizz Islamic Bank's Business Banking customers, and three that were selected from a pool of 105 applicants through social media platforms by providing intensive guidance for their running business, focusing on boosting their operational capabilities and fostering long-term success.

Conclusion Thoughts

Looking back on the promising progress achieved during the first quarter, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to our shareholders, customers, and employees for their continued trust and loyalty. Your steadfast support empowers us



THE DIFFERENCE...
**Our History
with you**
Banking that is proudly human



Judicial council confirms legality of digital divorce

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Supreme Judicial Council has confirmed that divorce pronounced through digital platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram and Snapchat is legal in Oman, while underscoring the need to maintain the sanctity of marriage in a rapidly changing communication landscape.

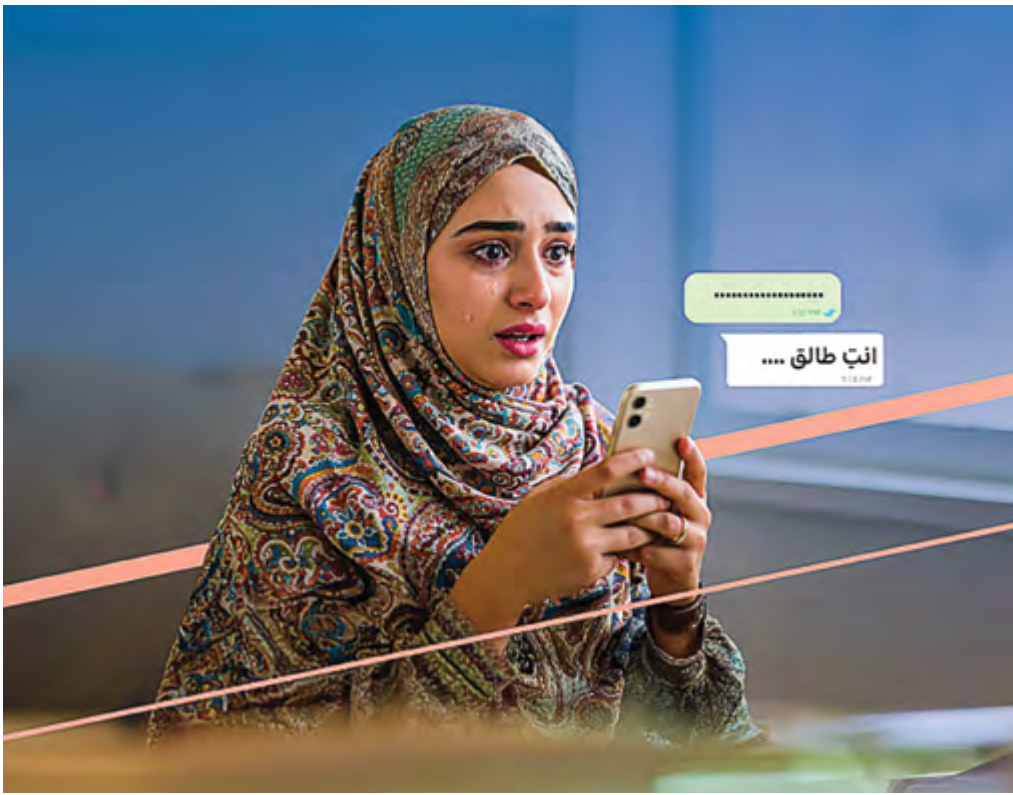
In a recent statement, the council clarified that divorce pronounced via modern communication tools are binding under Omani law, provided it is proven that the pronouncement was made by the husband.

'Divorce conducted through modern technology, including WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat and others, is valid if it is conclusively proven that it was issued by the husband,' the council said.

The clarification comes amid growing legal and social debate in the region over the impact of digital communication on family structures.

The council reaffirmed the importance of traditional family values, describing marriage as a 'sacred bond and a documented contract based on love and compassion between spouses'.

It also noted that marriage re-



The clarification comes amid growing legal and social debate in the region over the impact of digital communication on family structures

mains 'a great responsibility because it is the foundation for building a stable family', stressing that the legal recognition of digital divorce does not diminish the solemnity of the institution.

Meanwhile, official figures indicate a drop in the overall number of divorce cases in Oman with 3,828 annulments recorded in 2023, down from 4,160 in

2022 and 3,837 in 2021. However, Muscat bucked the national trend, reporting a rise in cases with 1,008 registered in 2023, up from 977 in 2022 and 853 in 2021.

North Batinah recorded 665 cases, Dhofar 633, Dakhliyah 360, South Batinah 325, North Sharqiyah 251 and South Sharqiyah 241 cases in 2023.



MoH launches national health drive for women, children

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Health (MoH) launched a national campaign on Wednesday to promote public health for women and children in North Sharqiyah, reflecting the sultanate's ongoing commitment to maternal and child health.

Held in collaboration with Ministry of Information and Children First Association, the campaign aims to raise awareness on preventive, therapeutic and promotional healthcare services, while reducing maternal and child morbidity and mortality. It follows a series of preparatory meetings and field visits that began across Oman in June 2024.

The campaign launch, held under the patronage of H H Sayyida Dr Mona bint Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at Sultan Qaboos

University and Chairperson of Children First Association, brought together dignitaries, international representatives and public health experts.

Dr Ahmed bin Saeed al Saeedi, Director General of Health Services in North Sharqiyah, highlighted the progress made through national initiatives like the National Maternity and Child Health Programme, the Expanded Immunisation Programme, and early screening programmes for cervical and breast cancer.

Saeedi noted significant improvements in key health indicators in the governorate, including a drop in maternal mortality to 17.5 per 100,000 live births and a decrease in under-five mortality to 11.1 per 1,000 live births. Early pregnancy registration reached 90% in 2024, up from 80% in 2022, while anaemia among pregnant women fell to 19% from 21.8% two years earlier.

He also informed about an expansion of maternity clinics staffed by trained midwives, improved detection of congenital anomalies and increased infertility care in primary healthcare centres. He cited the example of Ibra Hospital which has conducted IVF procedures for 35 cases, with three successful outcomes reported.

On the child health front, the mortality rate in the governorate dropped from 62 to 36 in the last five years, while immunisation coverage increased to 99.8%. More than 9,000 women have accessed early breast cancer screening since 2021, and breastfeeding counselling clinics have been established to enhance maternal support.

"Community engagement is vital," Saeedi emphasised, noting ongoing partnerships with Omani Women's Association to deliver awareness programmes across the governorate.



SAYYID SHIHAB MEETS JAPANESE AMBASSADOR

H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received H E Kiyoshi Serizawa, Ambassador of Japan to Oman, in his office at Al Murtafa'a Camp on Wednesday. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and discussed matters of common concern (ONA)

Oman hosts regional meet on boosting univ rankings

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation launched a regional symposium in cooperation with Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization on Wednesday aimed at improving the global standing of Arab universities.

Titled 'Improving the Ranking of Arab Universities in Global Rankings and the Mechanism for Entry into the Arab University Rankings and University Accreditation', the two-day symposium was held under the patronage of H E Dr Rahma

bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The symposium aims to enhance the academic reputation of Omani universities and improve their regional and international competitiveness. It has brought together experts and academics from across the Arab world to share insights on aligning institutional practices with global standards, improving research quality, and navigating the evolving landscape of university rankings and accreditation systems.

Yahya bin Salam al Mandhari, Director General of Scholarships at the ministry, emphasised the

critical role private universities and colleges play in strengthening Oman's academic profile. He highlighted the national goal of placing four Omani universities among the world's top 500 in the QS World University Rankings by 2040, adding that progress is already being made.

"Sultan Qaboos University is currently ranked 362 globally, while Sohar University is placed in the 1001-1200 band," Mandhari said, noting that seven Omani universities are now included in the QS rankings, including one public and six private institutions.

Dr Mahmoud bin Abdullah al

Abri, Secretary of Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, underscored the growing strategic importance of university rankings.

"These are no longer just indicators of academic reputation," he said. "Rankings now serve as vital tools for shaping education policy, attracting international students, facilitating research and forging global partnerships."

He added that the symposium provides a valuable platform for Arab universities to exchange experiences and explore ways to enhance institutional performance amid rapidly evolving global standards.

Recall



RANGE ROVER /
RANGE ROVER SPORT
2024 - 2025

Recall Date: 8 May 2025

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
RANGE ROVER / RANGE ROVER SPORT	2024 - 2025	24

Recall consequences

The middle seatbelt buckle in the second row of seats may have been incorrectly produced. An incorrectly positioned inner cable can lock the belt tongue and prevent correct locking. In the event of an accident, an improperly locked seatbelt buckle can increase the risk of injury.

Recall Action

Replacement of second row center seat belt buckle.



To check the serial number of the affected items, please visit the Recall and Warranty website by scanning the QR code.



For more information
800 626 43
www.aso.om



Consumer Protection Authority
80079009 - 80079997
مركز حماية المستهلك
80079009 - 80079997

Edition:03

Date: 8 May 2025

Code: SOP-18-01-02

China announces sweeping measures to stimulate trade-war hit economy

Beijing, China – China’s monetary and financial authorities on Wednesday unveiled a raft of supportive measures, including policy rate and reserve requirement ratio (RRR) cuts, as the country stepped up efforts to stabilise markets and sustain economic recovery amid external headwinds.

In one of its key policy actions, the People’s Bank of China (PBOC), the country’s central bank, announced an RRR cut of 0.5 percentage points for eligible financial institutions from May 15. Notably, the RRR for auto financing and financial leasing companies will be slashed from 5% to zero percent.

PBOC Governor Pan Gongsheng told a press conference that this move is expected to provide the financial market with roughly 1tn yuan (about \$138.9bn) in long-term liquidity. PBOC on Wednesday also announced its decision to cut the rate for seven-day reverse repos by 0.1 percentage points starting Thursday to better implement the moderately loose monetary policy and enhance support for the real economy.

Pan said this policy rate reduction is expected to result in the loan prime rate (LPR), a market-based benchmark lending rate, dropping by 0.1 percentage points.



In one of its key policy actions, China’s central bank announced a 0.5 percentage points cut in reserve requirement ratio for eligible financial institutions from May 15. This move is expected to provide the financial market with roughly 1tn yuan (about \$139bn) in long-term liquidity

More financial support, meanwhile, will be given to sectors including tech innovation, service consumption and elderly care via relending – with relending rates lowered by 0.25 percentage points from Wednesday, the central bank said.

These announcements followed a high-level meeting of Chinese policymakers in late April that called for faster implementation of more proactive and

effective macro policies, ample liquidity and stronger support for the real economy, after an encouraging 5.4% GDP expansion witnessed in the first quarter of 2025.

“The foundation for China’s sustained economic recovery needs to be further consolidated, and the country faces an increasing impact from external shocks,” said the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party

of China Central Committee. Pan said Wednesday’s policy decisions will steadily lower overall social financing costs, boost market confidence, and effectively support stable expansion of the real economy.

Capital market boost
Also speaking to the press, Wu Qing, head of the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC), pledged efforts to keep

capital markets stable and active, noting that the commission will help listed companies affected by tariffs cope with challenges.

Relevant authorities will support listed companies in using various financing instruments such as equities, bonds and real estate investment trusts (REITs) to conduct direct financing, and encourage eligible domestic enterprises to pursue overseas listings in compliance with laws and regulations, Wu told the media.

Financial institutions and tech firms, as well as private equity and venture capital firms, will be allowed to issue technological innovation bonds, with funds raised in this manner earmarked for investment and financing in the innovation sector, according to a statement jointly released by the PBOC and the CSRC on Wednesday.

To further bolster the capital market, the central bank said it will combine the quotas of its two monetary policy tools to make them more convenient and flexible – thereby strengthening the inherent stability of the capital market.

The Securities, Funds and Insurance companies Swap Facility (SFISF), with an initial scale of 500bn yuan, and the 300bn-yuan relending facility that supports stock buybacks and shareholding increases, will be

operated under a shared quota of 800bn yuan from Wednesday onwards.

At the same press conference, Li Yunze, head of the National Financial Regulatory Administration, said the administration will continue to expand the pilot program for long-term investment by insurance funds.

An additional 60bn yuan in quotas is expected to be approved in the near term, injecting fresh liquidity into the market, Li revealed.

“We have solid economic fundamentals, sound macro policies, and reliable institutional guarantees, all injecting much-needed certainty into China’s economy and capital markets amid global uncertainties,” Wu said.

Chinese authorities will also expedite the rollout of a series of financing systems aligned with the new development model of its property sector, reinforcing efforts to stabilize the property market, Li said at the media conference.

Loans approved for China’s “white list” real estate projects have reached 6.7tn yuan, which facilitated the construction and delivery of over 16mn homes, significantly stemming the property sector downturn and restoring market stability, Li said.

Xinhua

MENA region records 14 IPOs worth \$2.4bn in Q1

Dubai, UAE – The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region recorded 14 initial public offerings (IPOs) in the first quarter of 2025, raising a total of \$2.4bn, according to a report released today by Ernst & Young (EY).

This marks an increase of four IPOs compared to the same period last year, with proceeds rising by 106% year-on-year.

The initial public offerings during Q1 2025 came from the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Sultanate of Oman.

In the UAE, a single IPO was recorded during the quarter, as Alpha Data, a company specialising in software and IT services, listed on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX), raising \$163mn.

Gregory Hughes, EY MENA IPO and Transaction Diligence Leader, stated that rising demand for public listings across the region has driven market development, including the launch of new financial products, enhanced governance standards, and a stronger focus on transparency and accountability.

EY’s report also noted that the IPO outlook for the rest of 2025 remains positive, with 21 companies planning listings on regional exchanges across a diverse range of sectors.

WAM



US trade deficit soars to record \$140bn in March

Indrabati Lahiri

The US trade deficit soared to a record \$140.5bn in March as consumers and businesses alike tried to get ahead of President Donald Trump’s latest and most sweeping tariffs – with federal data showing an enormous stockpiling of pharmaceutical products.

The deficit – which measures the gap between the value of goods and services the US sells abroad against what it buys – has roughly doubled over the last year. In March 2024, that gap was just under \$68.6bn, according to the US Department of Commerce.

According to federal data released on Tuesday, US exports for goods and services totalled about \$278.5bn in March, while imports climbed to nearly \$419bn. That’s up \$500mn and \$17.8bn, respectively, from February trade.

Consumer goods led the imports surge – increasing by \$22.5bn in March. Pharma products in particular climbed \$20.9bn, the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Economic Analysis noted, signalling that drug makers sought to get ahead of Trump’s threats to slap tariffs on the sector.

“While we had known consumer goods accounted for the bulk of March’s rise, we can now

see pharmaceutical products were \$20bn higher – almost all of which were imported from Ireland,” analysts at Oxford Economics wrote in a Tuesday research note. “Uncertainty remains high, and broader signs of front-loading may be visible in coming months.”

Because pharma accounted for so much of this surge, the big rise in imports doesn’t necessarily mean other sectors used March to stockpile in the same way. Retailers, for example, may not have bought as many clothes, toys and furniture from abroad – perhaps because they were already feeling the effects of previously-implemented levies, some analysts say, or because they decided to hold off on rushing in new inventory due to uncertainty.

Either way, this may signal supply challenges down the road – with shoppers potentially seeing barer shelves for products that run out of inventory in the coming months.

Still, imports of “capital goods,” like computers, as well as automotive parts and cars, also increased in March. But industrial supplies and materials, such as metal and crude oil coming into the US, fell – notably as steel and aluminium tariffs and other levies impacting energy took effect. Service-based imports like travel also decreased.

(Source: Euronews.com)

India and UK seal landmark free trade agreement

New Delhi, India – The India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA), signed on Tuesday after nearly three years of negotiations, is one of the most comprehensive free trade agreements ever entered into by India.

The FTA is likely to set a new benchmark for equitable trade between two major economies.

Broadly, the UK-India FTA provides for tariff reductions and market access on various items by both countries. Under the agreement India will reduce import duties on 90% of tariff lines, with 85% of these becoming fully tariff-free within ten years.

Under the agreement, almost 99% of Indian exports will receive duty-free access to the UK market, covering nearly the entire trade value between the two



FTA is projected to contribute \$6.4bn annually to the UK economy by 2040, while boosting bilateral trade to over \$100bn by 2030

countries. UK products such as whisky, gin, cars, cosmetics, medical devices, advanced machinery, and lamb will see significant tariff reductions. For example, tariffs on whisky and gin will be halved from 150% to 75% initially, and further reduced to 40% over the next ten years. Tariffs on automotive will be re-

duced from over 100% to 10% under a specified quota system.

The agreement will boost key sectors and opens up bigger export opportunities for India, in sectors like textiles, marine products, leather, footwear, sports goods and toys, gems and jewellery, engineering goods, auto parts, and organic chemicals.

Exporters from the UK will get easier access to the Indian market for products such as cosmetics, aerospace components, medical equipment, salmon, electrical machinery, soft drinks, chocolate, and biscuits.

In the services sector, India will get enhanced access to the UK market for its professionals, especially in the IT, financial, professional, and educational services sector. The FTA includes

provisions for easier movement of skilled workers, including contractual service suppliers, business visitors, investors, intra-corporate transferees, and independent professionals.

There will be a three-year exemption from social security contributions in the UK for Indian workers and their employers, seen as a great achievement. This will result in significant cost savings and increased competitiveness for Indian service providers.

The FTA is projected to contribute \$6.4bn annually to the UK economy by 2040, while boosting bilateral trade to over \$100bn by 2030. The deal is expected to double bilateral trade from its current value of about \$60bn.

ANI

Trump says US doesn’t have to make trade deals, downplaying tariff talks

Washington, US – US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that the United States does not have to sign trade deals with countries, backtracking on a positive trade deal approach.

Noting that he was constantly asked, “When, when? When are you going to sign deals?” We don’t have to sign deals,” Trump said. “They have to sign deals with us. They want a piece of our market. We don’t want a piece of their market,” as he hosted Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney at the White House and answered questions about trade negotiations.

Trump argued that China makes most of its money in the US and its economy is suffering because it cannot trade with America.

Stating that the US was losing billions of dollars per day in trade when he took office, Trump claimed it is reversing rapidly.



US President Donald Trump

Pointing to tariffs on sectors such as automotive, aluminum and steel, Trump stated that companies have returned to the US with trillions of dollars in investment.

Trump reported that he will evaluate trade agreements with Vice President JD Vance, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick in the next two weeks.

“We will sign some deals. But much bigger than that is we’re going to put down the price that people are going to have to pay to shop in the

United States,” he noted.

Pointing out that the figure the US will determine will be very fair and low, Trump said, “We’re not looking to hurt countries.”

Trump’s remarks contradicted Bessent’s comments about trade deals with other countries, which reflected positivity.

Bessent said negotiations with 17 major trading partners are happening. “I would be surprised if we don’t have more than 80% or 90% of those wrapped up by the end of the year,” he said, suggesting some deals might be announced “as early as this week.”

The goals of the negotiations include substantial reductions in tariffs charged to the US, eliminating non-tariff barriers and addressing currency manipulation and subsidies, said Bessent. “The strategic uncertainty is part of negotiations.”

Anadolu Agency

Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus in Muscat Vacancy Announcement

Position: Administrative/Clerk.

Qualifications: High School Diploma, University Degree is an advantage, excellent knowledge of both Arabic and English languages, computer proficiency skills (Windows, Microsoft Office), previous experience in an administrative and/or accounting position, familiarity with the rules and regulations of the public sector in Oman and the regulations governing tenders, strong communication and interpersonal skills, and any other qualifications related to the position, including previous experience.

Duties:

- Overview and reconcile the Embassy’s monthly and yearly accounts (expenditure and revenue)
- Prepare, overview and implement the Embassy’s monthly, annual and mid-term budget.
- Organize the Embassy’s archives. Perform the duties of the Personal Assistant to the Head of the Diplomatic Mission.
- Translate documents, letters, and other content from English to Arabic and vice versa.
- Comply with and implement the Headquarters’ directives in accounting and administrative matters.
- Prepare requests for tenders.
- Provide administrative support to the Embassy’s staff (including personnel matters).
- Perform any other duties that may be assigned to him/her by the Head of the Diplomatic Mission.

Salary: OMR 958,000 starting monthly gross salary

All applications accompanied by relevant documentation (CV and cover letter) must be submitted by 1 June 2025 at 12:00 noon, at the following **email: muscatembassy@mfa.gov.cy**

Interested candidates need to provide Clearance Certificate, attested by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman
Any applications received after that day and time will not be taken into account.

UTAS Academic Council holds 5th meeting of academic year

The fifth meeting of the Academic Council of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) for the 2024-25 academic year was held at its Musannah branch.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Saeed bin Hamad al Rubaie, Vice-Chancellor of the university, with the attendance of council members including vice-chancellors, assistant vice-chancellors, heads of academic departments, and representatives of specialised projects and programmes. The meeting took place in the conference hall of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor's Office at Musannah branch.

The Vice-Chancellor opened the meeting with a welcoming speech, emphasising the importance of synergy between academic and administrative departments to support the ongoing academic development of the university. He highlighted the need to move forward in enhancing the quality of education in line with Oman Vision 2040, strengthening partnerships with government, private, and civil sectors, and capitalising on international partnerships to maximise benefits in the educational, research, and innovation fields.

The council discussed several important academic topics, beginning with a presentation of the university students' Professional Practice Record. This record documents students' participation in practical training, field applications, acquisition of skills, and attainment of professional qualifications. It also reflects collaboration with various community sectors and fosters students' entrepreneurial skills, serving as a key indicator of their readiness for the labour market and life beyond graduation.

It was agreed to submit the record to the University Council for final approval. This record will be an important addition to graduation documents and will provide a comprehensive overview of students' experiences and engagement throughout their academic journey.

The council also reviewed a proposal to introduce a course titled 'Oman: The Nation and the People', aimed at instilling national identity, a sense of belonging, and educating students about Oman's cultural and political history. The course is designed to reinforce values and principles and contribute to character-building.

The meeting included a presentation on the results of student feedback regarding course evaluations, faculty performance, and the learning environment for Fall 2024. The council discussed ways to utilise the outcomes of this feedback to improve educational quality, enhance student engagement, and develop a positive and effective learning environment that ensures better service and a more refined educational process.



ing the quality of education in line with Oman Vision 2040, strengthening partnerships with government, private, and civil sectors, and capitalising on international partnerships to maximise benefits in the educational, research, and innovation fields.

The council discussed several important academic topics, beginning with a presentation of the university students' Professional Practice Record. This record documents students' participation in practical training, field applications, acquisition of skills, and attainment of professional qualifications. It also reflects collaboration with various community sectors and fosters students' entrepreneurial skills, serving as a key indicator of their readiness for the labour market and life beyond graduation.

It was agreed to submit the record to the University Council for final approval. This record will be an important addition to graduation documents and will provide a comprehensive overview of students' experiences and engagement throughout their academic journey.

ing the quality of education in line with Oman Vision 2040, strengthening partnerships with government, private, and civil sectors, and capitalising on international partnerships to maximise benefits in the educational, research, and innovation fields.

The council discussed several important academic topics, beginning with a presentation of the university students' Professional Practice Record. This record documents students' participation in practical training, field applications, acquisition of skills, and attainment of professional qualifications. It also reflects collaboration with various community sectors and fosters students' entrepreneurial skills, serving as a key indicator of their readiness for the labour market and life beyond graduation.

It was agreed to submit the record to the University Council for final approval. This record will be an important addition to graduation documents and will provide a comprehensive overview of students' experiences and engagement throughout their academic journey.

ing the quality of education in line with Oman Vision 2040, strengthening partnerships with government, private, and civil sectors, and capitalising on international partnerships to maximise benefits in the educational, research, and innovation fields.

The council discussed several important academic topics, beginning with a presentation of the university students' Professional Practice Record. This record documents students' participation in practical training, field applications, acquisition of skills, and attainment of professional qualifications. It also reflects collaboration with various community sectors and fosters students' entrepreneurial skills, serving as a key indicator of their readiness for the labour market and life beyond graduation.

It was agreed to submit the record to the University Council for final approval. This record will be an important addition to graduation documents and will provide a comprehensive overview of students' experiences and engagement throughout their academic journey.

of students' experiences and engagement throughout their academic journey.

The council also reviewed a proposal to introduce a course titled 'Oman: The Nation and the People', aimed at instilling national identity, a sense of belonging, and educating students about Oman's cultural and political history. The course is designed to reinforce values and principles and contribute to character-building.

The meeting included a presentation on the results of student feedback regarding course evaluations, faculty performance, and the learning environment for Fall 2024. The council discussed ways to utilise the outcomes of this feedback to improve educational quality, enhance student engagement, and develop a positive and effective learning environment that ensures better service and a more refined educational process.



Abraj Energy, SONATRACH solidify ties

Abraj Energy Services, Oman's leading oil and gas services provider marked a significant presence during the historic state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

The visit witnessed the strengthening of bilateral economic ties and the opening of new horizons for strategic partnership and investment between the Sultanate of Oman and Algeria.

Under the gracious patronage of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of Algeria, a Term Sheet agreement was signed between Abraj Energy Services and SONATRACH to establish a joint venture specialising in drilling and well services as well as integrated project management.

The signing ceremony took place at the Presidential Palace in Algiers and was attended by Saif bin Said al Hamhami, CEO of Abraj Energy Services, and Rachid Hachichi, Chairman and CEO of SONATRACH.

The agreement is the result of extensive efforts that followed the signing of an MoU between the two parties in April 2024 and months of collaboration between their joint working teams.

Commenting on the occasion, Abraj CEO Hamhami said, "We

are deeply honoured and proud of this moment, representing a national and strategic milestone for Abraj Energy Services and the Sultanate of Oman.

Being part of His Majesty's official delegation to Algeria reflects the trust and vital role Abraj plays locally and regionally. This visit has significantly deepened our cooperation with SONATRACH and marks a true starting point for a sustainable and impactful partnership."

The signed key terms agreement aims to lay the legal, technical, and commercial foundations for assessing the feasibility of launching a joint venture company focused on delivering drilling and well services, along with integrated project management.

The initial focus will be on the Algerian market, with plans to expand regionally and internationally in the future.

This strategic initiative is expected to establish a joint energy entity that strengthens bilateral cooperation in the energy services sector.

It also supports knowledge transfer and operational expertise sharing, aligning with the growing demand for integrated and sustainable energy solutions. The announcement follows an exceptional year for Abraj Energy Services in 2024.

Sohar International to sponsor Omar al Ghailani

As a progressive and purpose-driven institution dedicated to cultivating homegrown talent, Sohar International - serving as the Gold Sponsor - has recently formalised its sponsorship of Omar al Ghailani, a globally acclaimed Omani freediving champion.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was officially signed by the bank's Chief Executive Officer Abdulwahid Mohamed al Murshidi.

This strategic partnership not only reflects the bank's steadfast commitment to empowering Omani youth but also, through Omar's ongoing community engagement.

Commenting on the support, Murshidi said, "Freediving is a



discipline that demands exceptional mental fortitude, physical control, and a deep harmony with nature - qualities that set it apart from conventional sports. At Sohar International, we take

pride in supporting a broad spectrum of athletic pursuits that resonate with our national identity and future aspirations. By standing behind Omar's remarkable journey, we celebrate not only

personal excellence but also the enduring spirit of perseverance deeply rooted in Oman's maritime legacy. Through this partnership, we aim to inspire a new generation of Omanis to dream boldly and pursue their goals with purpose."

Expressing his gratitude to Sohar International for their support, Ghailani stated, "I am honoured to collaborate with Sohar International - a partner whose values closely align with my own. Having the backing of an institution that champions commitment, discipline, and national pride is both empowering and affirming. This support not only strengthens my journey as an athlete but also reinforces the importance of fostering mean-

ingful partnerships that elevate individual potential and national representation."

Ghailani's remarkable track record includes over 30 national records, several continental achievements, and podium finishes at prestigious international championships - cementing his status as one of the region's most accomplished freediving athletes.

Through this initiative, Sohar International once again demonstrates its role as a catalyst for community progress. This initiative underscores the bank's willingness to invest resources, expertise, and goodwill beyond its core financial services, affirming its commitment to social betterment.

Bank Dhofar GCC Equity Fund (Shariah Compliant)

Unaudited Statement of Comprehensive Income from 27 March 2025 to 31 March 2025	
	Period from 27-Mar-2025 to 31-Mar-2025 (Unaudited) RO
Income	
Profit on Wakala account	10,988
Total Income	10,988
Expenses:	
Management, performance, custodian and administration fees	(594)
General and administrative expenses	(180)
Total expenses	(774)
Net Profit for the period	10,214
Earnings per unit (Rial)	0.004
Unaudited Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2025	
	31-Mar-25 (Unaudited) RO
Assets	
Receivables	6,798
Cash and cash equivalents	2,545,615
Total Assets	2,552,413
Unitholders' Funds	
Fund capital	2,541,425
Retained earnings	10,214
Total Unitholders' funds	2,551,639
Liabilities:	
Accruals and other payables	774
	774
Total unitholders' funds and liabilities	2,552,413
Net Asset Value (NAV) per unit (Rial)	1.004
Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any Unitholder who requests them, in either Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of request. Fund Address P.O.Box:1507, Postal Code:112, Ruwi, Muscat Governorate, Sultanate of Oman Asset Management Department Email:- assetmanagement@bankdhofar.com	

Bank Dhofar Money Market Fund

Unaudited Statement of Comprehensive Income from 01 Jan 2025 to 31 March 2025	
	31-Mar-25 (3 months) RO
Income	
Investment income	481,629
Total Income	481,629
Expenses:	
Management fees	43,854
Administration and custody fees	8,771
Fund Management Body sitting fees	1,356
Foreign exchange loss	3,496
General and administrative expenses	4,716
Total expenses	62,193
Net Profit for the period	419,436
Earnings per unit (Rial)	0.012
Unaudited Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2025	
	31-Mar-25 RO
Assets	
Term deposits	22,938,344
Cash and cash equivalents	16,195,669
Accrued interest on term deposits	528,659
Total Assets	39,662,672
Liabilities:	
Accruals and other payables	62,889
Total Liabilities	62,889
Net Assets	39,599,783
Net units issued	37,879,639
Composition of net assets:	
Proceeds from issue of units, net of redemptions	37,879,639
Retained Earnings	1,720,144
Net Assets Value (NAV)	39,599,783
Net Asset Value (NAV) per unit (Rial)	1.045
Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any Unitholder who requests them, in either Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of request. Fund Address P.O.Box:1507, Postal Code:112, Ruwi, Muscat Governorate, Sultanate of Oman Asset Management Department Email:- assetmanagement@bankdhofar.com	

Alfardan Properties launches living privilege programme



Alfardan Properties has launched 'Alfardan Living Privilege Programme' and 'Alfardan Oyster Privilege Club', which was attended by Alfardan Properties' distinguished tenants and members of Oman's press at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort. Having been successfully launched previously in Qatar, these programs have now been introduced to enhance the lifestyle of distinguished residential and commercial tenants based in premier mixed-use developments in Oman: Alfardan Heights and Finaa Alfardan.

"Alfardan Living Privilege Programme" is designed exclusively for elite residential tenants at Alfardan Properties while 'Alfardan Oyster Privilege Club' is a programme tailored to their commercial tenants and their employees, both offering access to a world of carefully curated

benefits and unparalleled experiences.

In Oman, Alfardan Properties' tenants will enjoy bespoke preferential rates at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, including preferred rates across hotel rooms, award-winning Guerlain Spa and renowned dining outlets such as Em Sherif, Coya, Novikov Café, Roberto's, Hakkasan, and Zorba, among others.

International privileges extend across Qatar and Türkiye, offering preferential rates at 5-star hotels, over 50 award-winning dining outlets, and exclusive spas at premier destinations such as The St Regis Doha, The St Regis Marsa Arabia Island, Marsa Malaz Kempinski in Qatar, and Six Senses Kocata Mansions in Istanbul. Additionally, members enjoy preferred rates across Alfardan Jewellery brands.

The remarkable success of

the 'Alfardan Living Privilege Programme' and the 'Alfardan Oyster Privilege Club' in Qatar has played a pivotal role in driving their expansion to Oman. These initiatives have become cornerstones of Alfardan Properties' commitment to distinctive living, elevating residential and corporate experiences through exclusive access to a curated suite of premium lifestyle benefits. Their success and strong impact on tenant satisfaction have underscored the programs' ability to create meaningful connections and deliver exceptional value - making their introduction to the Omani market a strategic next step.

Mohamed Sleiman, Chief Executive Officer of Alfardan Properties and Alfardan Hospitality, said, "Introducing these two programs in Oman marks a key milestone for us."

New chancellor Merz warns US against interfering in German domestic affairs

Friedrich Merz accused US government of spreading ‘absurd views of the Federal Republic of Germany’

Berlin, Germany - Germany's new Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Wednesday warned the US against interfering in his country's domestic politics.

"I would like to embolden and encourage the American government to let domestic politics in Germany be domestic politics and to largely stay out of these partisan considerations," Merz said in an interview with public broadcaster ZDF.

The US government must 'stay out' of German domestic politics, he reiterated while pointing out that he plans to have a phone call with US President Donald Trump on Thursday.

He added that he does not yet know Trump personally, but will speak with him 'openly'.

Merz stressed he himself had never 'interfered in the American election campaign and taken a one-sided side'.

The chancellor accused the US government of spreading 'absurd views of the Federal Republic of Germany'.

Asked about US support for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, he said: "I've always had the impression that America can distinguish between extremist parties and parties of the political centre."

Representatives of the US government repeatedly and aggressively supported the AfD



Friedrich Merz was elected chancellor in a second round of voting on Tuesday, after an unprecedented first round where he failed to secure enough votes

during the election campaign, and Trump confidant Elon Musk even interviewed AfD leader Alice Weidel.

Most recently, the White House sharply criticised the German government for classifying the AfD as a right-wing extremist group.

Turbulent times for Europe

Friedrich Merz is traveling to Paris and Warsaw on Wednesday, kicking off his first official trip as Germany's new chancellor. His visit comes amid his bid to renew relations with Berlin's top allies as well as place Ger-

many back on the world stage.

But the CDU leader takes office amid turbulent times for Europe, with geopolitical challenges like Russia's war in Ukraine.

The continent is facing tests in transatlantic relations, for example, with European leaders concerned with US President Donald

Trump's administration saying that it will no longer be the primary guarantor of security on the continent and that European nations should be responsible for their own defence.

Germany's export-oriented economy's outlook also remains very uncertain with the Trump

administration having slapped tariffs on much of the world, including the EU.

The bloc faces 10% duties on most goods from the US for a 90-day period that began on April 9. It's not clear what comes next.

The bumpy road

Friedrich Merz was elected chancellor in a second round of voting on Tuesday, after an un-

The conservative bloc, CDU/CSU, and its junior partner, centre-left SPD, had more than enough votes between them to secure Merz's election in the first round.

It is not yet clear why it failed, but it will leave many wondering if the new coalition will be any more stable than the previous coalition that fell apart at the end of 2024.

Merz becomes Germany's

The US government must 'stay out' of German domestic politics, Friedrich Merz reiterated while pointing out that he plans to have a phone call with US President Trump

precedented first round where he failed to secure enough votes.

A total of 325 lawmakers voted in favour of Merz the second time around, bringing him over the necessary 316 threshold required to be chancellor in the 630-seat parliament.

The first round of voting stunned the country because it had never happened before in Germany's postwar history. The incident sent social media into a frenzy.

The development underscored the fragility of the coalition partners, observers and opponents have pointed out.

tenth postwar chancellor and the CDU's sixth holder of the post.

In personnel appointment, SPD's Miersch becomes party's parliamentary group leader

Matthias Miersch, the former secretary general of the SPD, won a vote to lead the party's parliamentary group.

SPD is the junior coalition partner in the new government and has 120 seats or lawmakers in the 630-member parliament.

Miersch received 99 out of 119 votes. Some 18 representatives voted against him, with two abstaining.

Agencies

Kim inspects munition factories

Ankara, Turkey - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has inspected shell manufacturing at several munitions factories, calling for 'more' shell production to contribute to the expansion of the combat power of the country's armed forces, state media reported on Wednesday.

Kim inspected shell production and the state of the machine-building industry and said that a rapid increase of shell production has helped the North Korean military's combat power, according to a report by Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

During his field guidance at the munition enterprises under the Second Economy Commission, Kim expressed 'great satisfaction', saying the facilities'



North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un

modernisation had reached a high level and that the shell production capacity had grown rapidly.

The respective munitions enterprises' shell output has increased four times the average

annual level and nearly twice the peak-year level.

Kim expressed hope that 'they (factories) would produce more shells to contribute to the expansion of the combat power of our armed forces'.

Kim also inspected a machine factory, where he discussed its modernisation goal and the long-term development of the country's machine-building industry.

He urged the factory to focus on developing and producing 'more intelligent, high-speed, precision and multifunctional machine-building equipment' to enhance the production and technical power of the munitions industry, as well as other sectors of the national economy.

Anadolu Agency

Colombia's Gustavo Petro accuses US lawmaker of plotting his overthrow

Bogota, Colombia - Colombian President Gustavo Petro accused US Representative Mario Diaz-Balart on Tuesday of being a leader of a purported plot to orchestrate his overthrow.

In a series of statements posted on X, Petro alleged the Florida Republican lawmaker is actively working to remove him from office through congressional action.

"Senator Diaz-Balart, you know it very well; you are not only trying to overthrow the President of Colombia through parliamentary means, in alliance with the Colombian far-right, but also to silence me so that I am not in the electoral campaign,"



Colombian President Gustavo Petro

he said.

"I hope, and I believe in this, that you do not have the support of the US government; it cannot be that blind and clumsy. If you overthrow the president, a revo-

lution will break out in Colombia," Petro warned.

Diaz-Balart swiftly responded, lashing out against the Colombian head of state and accusing him of a serious drug addiction.

The accusation echoes similar claims previously made against Petro by a former official from his own administration.

"Gustavo Petro seems to be once again under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or both. He has reached the point where he can't even spell common names," Diaz-Balart said in his response.

The politician, who clarified for Petro that he is not a senator, but rather a member of the House of Representatives, went further, even suggesting the head of state should undergo a rehabilitation process, 'given what would be his evident dependence on psychoactive substances'.

Anadolu Agency

Dying in Mediterranean Sea: Rescuers still suffer from lack of political support

Berlin, Germany - "We rescued 68 people from two unsuitable boats on the night of May 1st," Marie Michel, a crew member of the sea rescue organisation SOS Humanity, reported at a press conference marking the group's tenth anniversary.

"Both boats were in the Libyan search and rescue zone at the time, but the Libyan rescue coordination centre did not coordinate any of these rescues, but said that they are not responsible," she added.

In Michel's view, this sums up how the European Union has successively outsourced responsibility for rescuing people from drowning in the Mediterranean to civilian organisations for more than ten years.

Controversial migration deals

According to the International Organization for Migration, almost 32,000 refugees have drowned in the Mediterranean

since 2014. This year alone, 500 have drowned - so far. Agreements worth hundreds of millions of euros between the EU and Libya in 2017, and the EU and Tunisia in 2023, were designed to reduce migration - and the many deaths in the Mediterranean.

The deals stipulated that coastguards of both countries would take over border protection. However, these agreements have been heavily criticised, and reports on serious human rights violations are unabated.

"Many of the survivors from Libya who have been on board with us in the last five days bear signs of torture on their bodies," Michel said. She added that migrants had recounted how they had been humiliated, forced to strip their clothing, doused with ice-cold water, beaten with wooden sticks, metal rods and plastic hoses, shot with pistols, and raped.

The rescue organisation's most recent report on the situa-



Private sea rescue organisations criticise that there is no political will to end the dying in the Mediterranean Sea

tion in Libya, Tunisia and the Mediterranean also shares the harrowing stories of 64 survivors.

"After being severely beaten, three young men jumped into the sea. The Libyan coastguard let them die in front of our eyes and even insulted them as they drowned. They said to each other: 'Let them die, it's easier for

us and for them," one migrant recalled.

European sea rescue programme

On May 4, 2015, four families founded the search and rescue organisation SOS Humanity in Berlin. Since then, they say they have rescued more than 38,000

refugees in distress at sea along the Mediterranean route from North Africa to Italy.

"The first rescue we carried out on March 7, 2016, rescued 74 exhausted, injured and desperate men and women in a small, unprotected rubber dinghy far off the coast of Libya," SOS Humanity founder Klaus Vogel told DW,

adding that 'our expectation of getting European governments to see refugees as fellow human beings, and to recognise the rescue of refugees in the Mediterranean as Europe's natural duty has not been fulfilled'.

The organisation calls for German politicians to push for a collective European sea rescue programme, and to end its cooperation agreements with Libya and Tunisia.

Meanwhile, the aid organisation criticises that Germany's incoming government does not even mention the term 'sea rescue' in its coalition agreement.

"For more than ten years now, we have had a situation in Europe in which European government have held repeated crisis summits, but they have not been able to put an end to the dying," Gerald Knaus, Austrian migration expert and co-founder and chairman of the think tank European Stability Initiative, told DW. "The deadliest border in the

world remains the deadliest border in the world. And this continuous dying is an expression of a complete and systematic failure," he said.

Knaus is the architect of the 2016 refugee agreement between the European Union and Turkey.

At the time, the deal included US\$6.42bn worth of aid for Ankara in return for Turkey sealing off the migrant route across the Mediterranean and agreeing to take back refugees. According to the social scientist, the number of deaths in the Aegean Sea has fallen from 1,100 in one year to 80 as a result.

According to Knaus, a deal with African countries, such as Libya and Tunisia, could include issuing five-year visas for citizens who enter legally, increasing the number of scholarships available, and investing several hundred million euros to combat poverty. DW

INDIA AND PAKISTAN ON EDGE

New Delhi/Islamabad - At least nine people were killed while 33 others were injured 'due to the unprovoked shelling' along the Line of Control (LoC), the de facto border between India and Pakistan, the ruling Jammu and Kashmir National Conference party said on Wednesday.

"There has been a loss of nine precious lives, with 33 individuals injured so far due to the unprovoked shelling," the party said on X.

Earlier, the Indian army had said three civilians were killed in firing by Pakistani forces along the LoC as well as the international border in Jammu and Kashmir.

A party lawmaker, Ajaz Jan, visited a hospital in the Poonch district in Indian-administered Kashmir to review the situation.

"The situation remains extremely tense," the party said.

The latest escalation between two nuclear-armed nations comes after India launched overnight missile strikes inside Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, hitting what New Delhi said were 'nine terrorist locations'.

At least 31 people, including five in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, were killed and 46 others were injured due to Indian strikes, the Pakistani Army said, adding six places were targeted by the Indian missiles.

The escalation between the nuclear-armed neighbours



The escalation between the nuclear-armed neighbours comes in the wake of an April 22 attack in Pahalgam, Indian-administered Kashmir, in which 26 people were killed

At least 31 people, including 5 in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, were killed and 46 were injured due to Indian strikes, Pakistani Army said, adding six places were targeted by Indian missiles

comes in the wake of an April 22 attack in Pahalgam, Indian-administered Kashmir, in which 26 people were killed.

India blamed Pakistan for the attack, claiming there were cross-border links. Pakistan denied that it had anything to do

with the killings. Islamabad offered a neutral probe into the attack with third-party monitoring.

Meanwhile, Pakistan on Wednesday reiterated its commitment to peace with longtime rival India but warned that it will not allow violation of its

sovereignty.

"Pakistan remains committed to peace, with dignity and honour, and reiterates that it shall never allow any violation of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, or permit any harm to its proud people," the nation's top security

body said in a statement after its emergency meeting in the capital Islamabad.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired the National Security Committee (NSC) meeting, which was also attended by the three services chiefs and key Cabinet members.

The huddle was held hours after India said it carried out overnight missile strikes across Pakistan.

The NSC statement said that

Pakistan also shot down five Indian fighter jets, and a combat drone.

New Delhi didn't react to Islamabad's claim, but contended its strikes were in response to the April 22 attack in the Pahalgam area of Indian-administered Kashmir.

The Indian officials said New Delhi exercised its 'right to respond and pre-empt as well as deter more such cross-border attacks'.

The NSC statement said that it deliberated upon the 'grave developments arising out of India's unprovoked, cowardly and unlawful act of war'.

The meeting accused India of targeting civilians, including women and children, aside from causing damage to the civilian infrastructure, including mosques and hydropower infrastructures.

"India's act of aggression also caused grave danger to commercial airlines belonging to brotherly gulf countries, endangering the lives of thousands of on-board passengers," the statement further said.

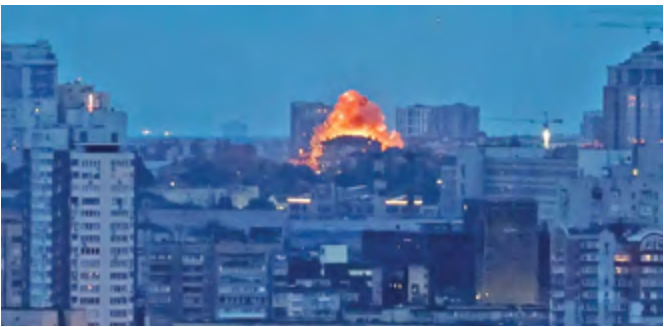
Pakistan, it went on to say, has been emphatically rejecting Indian allegations claiming the presence of terrorist camps on its territory.

"It would also be recalled that immediately after 22 April 2025, Pakistan made a sincere offer for a credible, transparent and neutral investigation, which unfortunately was not accepted," the NSC said.

The meeting authorised the country's armed forces 'to undertake corresponding actions in this regard'.

The NSC called upon the international community to 'recognise the gravity of India's unprovoked illegal actions and to hold it accountable for its blatant violations of international norms and laws'.

Agencies



Russian drone strike kills 2 people in Kyiv

Kyiv, Ukraine - Two people have been killed and eight others, including four children, wounded in a Russian drone attack on Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, Ukrainian officials said.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko wrote on Telegram that drone debris fell on a residential building in the Shevchenkivsky district of the capital, with four of the wounded hospitalised. He said two people had been killed.

Ukraine's emergency services confirmed that two bodies were found during firefighting after the Russian attack.

A Russian overnight drone at-

tack also wounded four people in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia, Ukrainian police said on Telegram.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called to increase pressure on Russia after overnight strikes. "Only significantly intensified pressure on Russia and stronger sanctions can pave the way to diplomacy," he wrote on social media.

Russia unleashed a barrage of drone strikes across Ukraine hours before President Vladimir Putin's May 8-10 ceasefire order went into effect.

DW

Trump administration eyes Libya for next round of migrant deportations: Report

Washington, D.C., US - The Trump administration is preparing to begin deporting migrants to the North African country of Libya, potentially expanding its mass deportation strategy to a country torn by conflict, CBS News reported on Tuesday.

Two US officials familiar with the plans told CBS News that deportations could start as early as this week and would likely be carried out by the US military, in an expansion of an already controversial programme.

According to the report, it remains unclear which migrants could be subject to removal under the proposed plan or whether they would be taken into custody by Libyan authorities upon arrival.

The US State Department currently warns Americans against traveling to Libya, citing risks including 'crime, terrorism, unexploded landmines, civil unrest, kidnapping, and armed



conflict'.

In recent months, the US has arranged for third-country nationals from Asia and Africa to be sent to the Central American countries of Costa Rica and Panama. A group of Venezuelan men accused of gang affiliations was sent to El Salvador, which transferred them to a high-security prison. Controversially, the

men had no due process to contest their alleged gang affiliations, with many friends, relatives, and lawyers arguing they were wrongly accused.

In the case of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, 29, who was married to a US citizen and had a court order barring his deportation, the Trump administration admitted he had been sent to El Salvador

in error, but has refused to take any steps to bring him back, despite a Supreme Court ruling.

Libya has remained in turmoil since 2011, when longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi was ousted after four decades in power.

Last month, the UN special representative for Libya, Hanna Tetteh, told the UN Security Council that ordinary Libyans

face daily crises, including economic hardship, insecurity, and political instability.

She called on the international community to work together on a 'unified plan' to support a democratic state that addresses the Libyan people's fundamental needs and fosters economic growth.

Anadolu Agency

CIVIL DEFENCE MOCK DRILLS HELD IN INDIA



School students take part in a nationwide civil defense mock drill, held to assess India's preparedness for emergency response, at Kerala School in New Delhi on Wednesday (ANI)

Canada 'not for sale', Carney tells Trump

Washington, D.C., US - US President Donald Trump praised Canada's new prime minister, Mark Carney, as 'a very talented person, a very good person' during their meeting on Tuesday.

"I love Canada," Trump said during the White House meeting, in what could be seen as a change of tune despite Trump's enduring aspirations to make Canada the 51st US state.

Trump used a much tougher language ahead of Carney's arrival on his Truth Social platform, insisting that the United States doesn't need 'anything' from Canada.

He also claimed that America subsidizes Canada to the tune of US\$200bn a year, 'in addition to giving it military protection, and many other things'.

Trump appeared to be referring to the US trade deficit with



US President Donald Trump and Canada's PM Mark Carney

Canada, which stood at US\$63.3bn in 2024, largely due to American imports of Canadian oil.

Canada 'won't be for sale, ever'

The topic of Canada joining the

United States came up during the Oval Office meeting, with Trump admitting that 'it takes two to tango'.

"It would really be a wonderful marriage," the president said. But Carney responded by telling Trump that 'as you know from

real estate, there are some places that are never for sale', adding that Canada is 'not for sale, it won't be for sale, ever'.

"But the opportunity is in the partnership and what we can build together," the prime minister asserted.

"Never say never," Trump replied with a grin.

But when the US president mentioned that the Canadians might agree to join the United States 'over a period of time', Carney raised his hand and interrupted. "Respectfully, Canadians' view on this is not going to change on the 51st state," he said. Trump was visibly tense and referenced his Oval Office clash with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in February, but insisted it wouldn't happen again.

Anadolu Agency

US judge blocks use of Alien Enemies Act to deport Venezuelans

Washington, D.C., US - A second federal judge has ruled that US President Donald Trump overstepped his authority by using the Alien Enemies Act (AEA) - a law meant for use during times of war - to deport Venezuelans alleged to be gang members.

US District Judge Alvin Hellerstein found on Tuesday that Trump's use of the law was unlawful, saying the act may only be invoked during a de-

clared war or if the US faces an incursion on its territory, according to *The Hill*.

The ruling blocks the act from being used for deportations in the Southern District of New York.

Hellerstein criticised the Trump administration for depriving the accused Venezuelans of the chance to challenge their alleged links with the Tren de Aragua gang (TdA), arguing that the government's actions



The federal judge said President Donald Trump overstepped his authority

failed to meet the due process protections of the wartime law.

"There is nothing in the AEA that justifies a finding that refugees migrating from Venezuela, or TdA gangsters who infiltrate the migrants, are engaged in an 'invasion' or 'predatory incursion'. They do not seek to occupy territory, to oust American jurisdiction from any territory, or to ravage territory. TdA may well be engaged in narcotics trafficking, but that

is a criminal matter, not an invasion or predatory incursion," he said.

"Thus, I find that the Presidential Proclamation exceeds the scope of the AEA," he added. The ruling follows a similar decision by a Texas judge last week, who also found Trump's use of the Alien Enemies Act unlawful for addressing gang-related deportations.

The act has historically been used only during wartime, most

recently for the notorious internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Hellerstein also condemned the administration's deportation practices, citing inadequate notice given to detainees and the inhumane conditions at El Salvador's Terrorism Confinement Center, where some deportees are being sent, perhaps for life, with no chance to contest the accusations they are facing.

Anadolu Agency



Fresh drone strike reported on Port Sudan

Khartoum, Sudan - Witnesses reported a new drone strike in the eastern Sudanese city of Port Sudan on Wednesday, amid raging fighting between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Sounds of explosions were heard near the Flamingo naval base in the city, witnesses said, adding that Sudanese air defences thwarted the attack.

No information was yet available about casualties or damage.

There was no immediate comment from the army or RSF on the report.

Fires broke out in Port Sudan on Tuesday after a drone strike on several sites in the city, including oil depots, which the Sudanese army blamed on the RSF.

The Red Sea city has become the temporary administrative capital and a de facto seat of the Sudanese government following the outbreak of clashes with the RSF since April 2023.

Sudanese officials have repeatedly accused the rebel group of launching drone attacks on civilian infrastructure, including power stations and

other facilities, in northern cities such as Merowe, Dongola, Dabba, and Atbara.

Since April 2023, the RSF has been battling the army for control of Sudan, resulting in thousands of deaths and creating one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

The Red Sea city has become the temporary administrative capital and a de facto seat of the Sudanese government following the outbreak of clashes with RSF since April 2023

More than 20,000 people have been killed and 15mn displaced, according to the UN and local authorities. Research from US scholars, however, puts the death toll at around 130,000.

Anadolu Agency

32 Palestinians killed as Israel launches new airstrikes in Gaza

Gaza City/Istanbul - At least 32 more Palestinians were killed, and dozens injured in fresh Israeli strikes on Wednesday across the war-torn Gaza Strip, medics said.

A medical source said 16 people were killed in Israeli shelling of a school-turned shelter in Al-Tuffah neighbourhood in Gaza City.

Several people are still trapped under the rubble, the source said.

Wednesday's strike came one day after at least 33 people were killed and 73 others injured in an Israeli strike on a school in the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza.

According to data released by Gaza's government media office, at least 234 shelters and displacement centres were targeted by the Israeli army since the outbreak of its genocidal war in October 2023.

Eight people, including a child, were also killed in another strike targeting a house in the southern city of Khan Younis, a medical source told Anadolu.

In the eastern part of the same city, a Palestinian and his wife lost their lives after Israeli forces shelled their home in Bani Suhaila town, the same source said.

The Israeli army killed three more Palestinians, including a child, in Munasira refugee camp in eastern Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, medics said.

Three others were killed, and several others injured in an Israeli airstrike on a house in the eastern Tel al-Zaatar neighbourhood of the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza.

According to witnesses, the Israeli army carried out home demolitions in the Nuseirat refugee camp located in the central enclave.



A medical source said 16 people were killed in Israeli shelling of a school-turned shelter in Al-Tuffah neighbourhood in Gaza City

According to data released by Gaza's government media office, at least 234 shelters and displacement centres were targeted by the Israeli army since the outbreak of its genocidal war in October 2023

Death toll surges to 52,653

At least 52,653 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's genocidal war since October 2023, the Health Ministry said on Wednesday.

A ministry statement said that 38 people were killed in Israeli attacks in the enclave in the last 24 hours, while 145 others were injured, taking the number of injuries to 118,897 in the Israeli onslaught.

"Many victims are still

trapped under the rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them," it added.

The Israeli army resumed its deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip on March 18 and has since killed 2,545 people and injured over 6,800 others despite a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement that took hold in January.

'Mediation efforts ongoing'

Meanwhile, Qatar and Egypt

said on Wednesday that their mediation efforts are ongoing and consistent, based on a unified vision to end the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and foster the necessary conditions to reach a comprehensive ceasefire.

In a joint statement, the two countries stressed that attempts to sow discord between Doha and Cairo through the casting of doubt, distortion, or media escalation will not succeed, nor will they deter them from pursuing their joint efforts to end the war in Gaza and the resulting humanitarian catastrophe there.

"Qatar and Egypt will not be drawn into any internal dynamics or secondary agendas that do not serve the interests of the brotherly Palestinian people,"

the statement said.

The two nations renewed their unwavering commitment to a clear framework focused on alleviating suffering, promoting de-escalation, and working toward a lasting resolution.

Qatar and Egypt affirmed that they are closely coordinating with the US to reach an agreement to end the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza and ensure the protection of civilians.

Qatar and Egypt, along with the US, have been mediating to reach a ceasefire in Gaza.

Since March 2, Israel has kept Gaza's crossings closed to food, medical, and humanitarian aid, deepening an already humanitarian crisis in the enclave, according to government, human rights, and international reports.

Anadolu Agency

Unexploded Israeli bombs become key resource for Hamas: Media report

Jerusalem - Roughly 3,000 Israeli bombs that failed to detonate during airstrikes in the Gaza Strip have become a vital source of raw materials for improvised explosive devices used by the Al-Qassem Brigades, the armed wing of the Palestinian group Hamas, the Israeli news site The Marker reported on Tuesday.

The website, the Haaretz newspaper's financial supplement, said the percentage of unexploded Israeli ordnance in Gaza has surged, reaching as high as 20% of the total munitions dropped during certain phases of the war.

Humanitarian and local organisations have repeatedly warned about the risks posed by unexploded ordnance left behind by months of Israeli genocide.

According to the report, investigations by the Israeli military revealed that many of the large explosions that damaged or de-

stroyed Israeli armoured vehicles - including a tank in January - were caused by unexploded Air Force bombs that were recycled by the Al-Qassem Brigades.

By the end of 2024, the Israeli military had carried out over 40,000 airstrikes on Gaza, the outlet reported. The UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) estimates that between 5% and 10% of the munitions used in these operations failed to explode.

As of early 2025, the Israeli Air Force was aware of at least 3,000 unexploded bombs in Gaza, The Marker added. Each Israeli bomb weighing a tonne and used in these strikes costs between US\$20,000 and US\$30,000.

Tonnes of explosives transferred

"These unexploded bombs have effectively become a pipeline through which Israel, unintentionally, has transferred thousands of tonnes of explosives to Hamas - worth tens of millions of dollars - over the past year and a half," the report said.

Given Hamas's severe shortage of weaponry, these raw ma-



terials have allowed its fighters to produce thousands of explosives, The Marker said.

The use of these devices has played a central role in attacks on Israeli troops, resulting in rising casualties among its forces operating in Gaza, it added.

The report warned that the price could be even heavier as Israel's security Cabinet pushes to expand military operations in the Gaza Strip.

The reason behind the high

failure rate of Israeli munitions is reportedly technical malfunctions. The intense pace of airstrikes has depleted the military's supply of functional fuses - devices that trigger explosives - The Marker reported.

The report noted that the stock value of Aryt Industries, the Israeli company that produces detonators, has surged more than 2,000% since the war began.

Simple use, high risk

Due to depleted stocks, the Israeli army began using fuses sourced from various stockpiles or provided by the US, some of which are decades old. According to the report, while the average failure rate for Israeli bombs was previously around 2%, it has climbed to as high as 20% for certain Air Force munitions used in Gaza.

The Al-Qassem Brigades' method for using these unex-

ploded bombs is reportedly straightforward. In some cases, they cut open the bomb, extract the explosive material, and transfer it to large metal containers to be used as an explosive device. In other cases, they use the bombs as-is, attaching a metal wire to trigger the explosion.

The report noted that the Al-Qassem Brigades are willing to accept casualties among its members due to 'work accidents' during this process.

In response to a request for comment from The Marker, a spokesperson for the army said the military 'is making every effort to address the threat of unexploded ordnance in the Gaza Strip'.

The spokesperson claimed that 'only a small percentage' of the tens of thousands of munitions launched failed to explode on their intended targets.

Anadolu Agency

SEVENTH HEAVEN

Frattesi strikes in extra-time as Inter edge Barcelona in seven-goal thriller to reach Champions League final

Milan, Italy - Inter Milan substitute Davide Frattesi struck an extra-time winner to send his side into the Champions League final following a sensational 4-3 victory over Barcelona on Tuesday after Francesco Acerbi had rescued them from the brink of elimination with a stunning equaliser deep in added time.

Frattesi's goal and a string of superb saves by goalkeeper Yann Sommer secured Inter a rip-roaring 7-6 aggregate victory in a semi-final for the ages.

The Italian side will face either Paris St Germain or Arsenal in the Munich final later this month, with the French team taking a 1-0 lead into Wednesday's semi-final second leg.

Following a breathtaking first leg in Barcelona that had everything from early drama, late chaos, and dazzling moments from 17-year-old Lamine Yamal, the return encounter in Milan was even more dramatic, a rollercoaster ride that will live long in the memory.

It was a tale of two halves as Inter dominated the first 45 minutes and opened a two-goal lead thanks to a Lautaro Martinez goal on the counter in the 21st minute before Hakan Calhanoglu extended their advantage with a penalty right before the break.

The penalty was awarded

after the VAR spotted a foul by Pau Cubarsi on Martinez in the box that had looked like a well-timed challenge on first viewing.

However, Barca woke up in the second half with Eric Garcia and Dani Olmo netting within six minutes to level the scoring and, even though Sommer worked his magic to help keep the hosts alive, the Catalans thought they had scored the winner through Raphinha, who struck from close range in the 87th minute.

But as Inter made a desperate run for an equaliser, Denzel Dumfries found 37-year-old Acerbi inside the box and he fired

I have to thank the physiotherapists because in recent days I was not well, I dedicate the victory to them. I don't know what to say. Tonight the incredible happened

DAVIDE FRATTESI

a first-time effort into the net to score his first European goal in his 20th season and take the game to extra time.

In the 99th minute, Marcus Thuram made a brilliant run from the right and played the ball into the area for Frattesi, who set himself before neatly guiding a curling shot into the bottom cor-



Inter Milan's Davide Frattesi celebrates with teammates after scoring against Barcelona in their Champions League second-leg match on Tuesday

ner to send the delighted home fans into raptures.

Sommer made two world-class saves from Yamal, who also hit the post with another stunning strike deep in added time, as Inter moved a step closer to their fourth Champions League title and their first in 15 years after losing to Manchester

City in the final two years ago.

"I'm lucky to have finished the game, I screamed so much that I saw everything black," Frattesi, who also came off the bench to score the winner in the first leg of their quarter-final at Bayern Munich, told Sky Sport.

"I have to thank the physiotherapists because in recent

days I was not well, I dedicate the victory to them. It's incredible, I don't know what to say. Tonight the incredible happened."

Barca were chasing a treble after winning the Copa del Rey, but will now turn their focus to LaLiga, where they top the table and on Sunday host rivals Real Madrid, who trail them by four

points with four games to go.

The five-time winners were hoping to reach their first Champions League final in a decade, but were left licking their wounds ahead of Sunday's clash.

Unbeaten domestically since late December, Barcelona will try to grab a fourth consecutive victory over Real this season.

"Football has been very cruel to us," Barca defender Eric Garcia told Movistar Plus. "We were down 2-0 again and the character this team showed was remarkable."

"We are a team full of young players and this has been a great year. We still have the (Spanish) league to play for."



Barcelona manager Hansi Flick consoles Raphinha after the match

‘Every 50-50 decision went Inter’s way’

Milan, Italy - Barcelona manager Hansi Flick was upset over several refereeing decisions in his side's 4-3 loss at Inter Milan that stopped the Catalans reaching their first Champions League final in a decade after an extra-time goal by home substitute Davide Frattesi.

Flick criticised Polish referee Szymon Marciniak who had a busy night in the semi-final, second leg at San Siro, with Inter advancing 7-6 on aggregate to face Paris St Germain or Arsenal.

He awarded Inter a penalty after a VAR review for a challenge by Pau Cubarsi on Lautaro Martinez that he did not deem an infringement and later reversed a decision he had signaled as a spot kick for Barcelona, with VAR saying Henrikh Mkhitaryan's foul on Lamine Yamal was just outside

the box.

Barca's also complained about what they thought was handball inside the box by Inter's Acerbi and a foul by fullback Denzel Dumfries on Gerard Martin in the build-up to the equaliser which took the game to extra time.

"I don't want to talk too much about the referee, but every decision that was 50-50 went (Inter's) way," German Flick told a press conference.

"I am disappointed, but not with my team. They tried everything. It's the way it is. We are out, but next year we will try again to make the fans happy."

"It makes me sad ... My team did an excellent job. I don't like talking about the referee ... I've told him what I think, but I'm not going to say it here what I've said..."

Club Leon out of Club World Cup as CAS rejects appeal

Mexico's Club Leon will not participate in this year's Club World Cup after losing their appeal on Tuesday having been removed from the tournament by FIFA due to an ownership rule breach.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) rejected the appeal by Leon who had qualified by winning the CONCACAF Champions Cup in 2023.

FIFA said in March that Club Leon and another Mexican club in the tournament, Pachuca, did not meet regulations on multi-club ownership. Pachuca's spot in the competition was unaffected.

"This is the greatest damage done to a team that has always competed with humility and honesty," Leon said in a statement.

"The only thing left for us is to win again to regain the place on the field that was taken from us. Have no doubt, as long as no one prevents us from doing so again, we will do it."

The expanded 32-team Club World Cup runs from June 14 to July 13 in the United States with \$1 billion in prize money at stake.

I wouldn't change my players for anyone in the world, says Inter's Inzaghi

Milan, Italy - Inter Milan saw off an exceptional Barcelona side to reach the Champions League final on Tuesday and, while manager Simone Inzaghi was understandably impressed by the opposition, he said that he would not change his players for anyone else.

After a scintillating 3-3 draw in the first leg, it was hard to imagine that the return at the San Siro would be able to match the excitement but the two sides served up an even more dramatic 120 minutes, with Inter coming out on top 4-3.

"First of all, we must also congratulate Barcelona, a really strong team," Inzaghi told Sky Sport.

"It took a super Inter, applause for these guys, two monstrous performances were put on the pitch. I'm happy to be their coach, they gave me everything they had. It is only right that they enjoy the success in this stadium."

Inter had a two-goal lead at halftime before Barca staged a



Inter Milan manager Simone Inzaghi celebrates with his players

stunning comeback and looked like stealing the win but Francesco Acerbi equalised in added time and substitute Davide Frattesi netted the extra-time winner to send the home fans wild.

"We had some problems, but with our hearts we went beyond every obstacle," Inzaghi said.

"We tried to play for it, with the weapons and the qualities we have. After the first leg we had the match plan in mind, but

It took a super Inter, applause for these guys, two monstrous performances. I'm happy to be their coach

SIMONE INZAGHI

without sacrifice and help all together you can't do it."

Inzaghi saw plenty of quality in Barcelona's side, and not only 17-year-old Lamine Yamal who had taken most of the plaudits after his goal and performance in the first leg.

"There has been a lot of talk about Yamal, I have seen another extraordinary player who is (Barcelona midfielder Frenkie) De Jong," Inzaghi said.

"He impressed me at Yamal's level, he cleaned out every second ball. I wouldn't change mine for anyone in the world, but I've seen many strong ones besides Yamal."



Yann Sommer denies Barcelona's Lamine Yamal with a fingertip save

It's Sommer time at San Siro

San Siro, Milan - Inter Milan goalkeeper Yann Sommer produced a decisive save deep into extra time to help his side secure a dramatic 4-3 extra-time victory over Barcelona and book a place in the Champions League final, drawing comparisons to club great Julio Cesar.

The 35-year-old Swiss international denied Barcelona teenager Lamine Yamal, all braces and golden hair, in the 113th minute with a fingertip stop as he flung himself high to his left to paw away a vicious, curling ef-

fort, preventing an equaliser that would have forced a penalty shootout.

The save came from a similar position to where Lionel Messi had famously been denied by Cesar at the Camp Nou in a semi-final in 2010, during the Nerazzurri's treble-winning campaign.

"It was a special save, one I'll remember for the rest of my life," a visibly emotional Sommer told reporters after Inter advanced 7-6 on aggregate at a rain-soaked San Siro.

"I'm happy that ball didn't go in."

Sommer's performance was crucial on a night when Inter overturned a 3-2 deficit, with Francesco Acerbi and Davide Frattesi finding the back of the net to seal one of the club's most memorable European victories in a rollercoaster affair echoing that of the first leg in Barcelona.

While Sommer has often operated outside the media spotlight, his composure and ability to build play from the back were on full display.

HITMAN HANGS UP TEST CAP

India captain Rohit Sharma announces retirement from Test cricket, to continue in ODIs



Rohit Sharma's decision comes after poor home series against Bangladesh and New Zealand late last year and then a horror tour of Australia

Mumbai, India - Rohit Sharma has retired from Test cricket with immediate effect, meaning India will need to name a new full-time captain almost immediately after the end of IPL 2025, with India's five-Test series in England scheduled to begin on June 20 at Headingley.

"Hello everyone I would just like to share that I am retiring from Test cricket. It's been an absolute honour to represent my country in whites. Thank you for all the love and support over the years. I will continue to represent India in the ODI format," Rohit, who had retired from T20Is after India won the T20 World Cup

ing, they should be a part of the team. When you start and when you end is your individual decision. No coach, no selector, no BCCI can tell you when you should call it quits. If you perform, then why 40, you can jolly well play till 45, who's stopping you?"

Rohit's decision comes after poor home series against Bangladesh and New Zealand late last year and then a horror tour of Australia across December 2024 and January 2025, where he crossed 50 just once and averaged 10.93 from eight Test matches. India won both the Tests against Bangladesh,

Rohit retires with 4301 runs in 67 Test matches, averaging 40.57 despite the poor recent run. He scored 12 centuries and 18 half-centuries, with a best of 212, against South Africa in Ranchi in October 2019

last year with him as captain, said in a post on social media on Wednesday evening.

Rohit retires with 4301 runs in 67 Test matches, averaging 40.57 despite the poor recent run. He scored 12 centuries and 18 half-centuries over the years, with a best of 212, against South Africa in Ranchi in October 2019.

As recently as Tuesday, Gautam Gambhir, India's head coach across the three international formats, had said in response to a question on the future of senior pros Rohit and Virat Kohli that "Till the time they are perform-

but were swept 3-0 by New Zealand under Rohit's captaincy, and then lost the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series in Australia 3-1.

Rohit missed the first and last Tests on that tour of Australia, the first to be at home in India for the birth of his child, and the last, in Sydney, where he "stood down". At the time, he had stressed that it was just that, a reaction to his poor batting form, not a "retirement decision", and that he was not "going to take myself out of the game".

Ronaldo's son called up by Portugal Under-15s

The next chapter of the Ronaldo legacy began on Tuesday when Cristiano Jr received his first call-up to Portugal's Under-15 squad, marking the start of what could become football's most compelling father-son succession story.

The 14-year-old forward, currently developing at Al-Nassr's youth academy in Saudi Arabia, will join Portugal for a tournament in Croatia this month, facing Japan, Greece and England in his first taste of international football.

"Proud of you, son," wrote 40-year-old Portugal captain Ronaldo on social media, sharing the squad announcement.

The five-times Ballon d'Or winner, who led Portugal to the 2016 European Championship title, has scored a world record 136 goals in 219 internationals and will watch with parental pride as his eldest son looks to tread a similar path.



Cristiano Jr

Kvitova secures first win since maternity break

Indian Wells, US - Former Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova has finally tasted the winning feeling again after a less than impressive return to the sport following the birth of her first child.

The 35-year-old Czech had lost all four of her matches since making a comeback in February after 15 months away, during which time son Petr was born last July.

On Tuesday, however, she beat Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu 7-5 6-1 in the Italian Open first round in Rome.

"It's kind of weird that my first one came here," she told the WTA's website. "I've never played my best tennis here. But it feels much better than losing, that's for sure."

Kvitova, who won Wimbledon in 2011 and 2014 and reached number two in the world, said she had doubted she would ever return to the international arena.

"I was 95% that I would never come back," she said. "I had enough of tennis at that time. I was like, 'I can't do it any more,' so we decided to try for a baby."



Petra Kvitova



Iga Swiatek

Swiatek defends coach Fissette despite disappointing results

Rome, Italy - Iga Swiatek has failed to win a tournament in almost a year, but the Polish world number two has defended her coach and psychologist despite the poor run of results and losing her place at the top of the world rankings in a difficult period.

Swiatek parted ways with her coach Tomasz Wiktorowski in October after three years, adding Belgian Wim Fissette to her team and in November accepted a one-month suspension after testing positive for banned substance trimetazidine.

The five-time Grand Slam winner has drawn a blank since winning last year's French Open, and her latest result saw Swiatek lose her Madrid Open title in a crushing 6-1 6-1 semi-final defeat to Coco Gauff last week.

"Sometimes I'm not happy with the way I play. It's

natural, especially with my perfectionism. This can be seen on the court," Swiatek told Polish media outlet SportoweFakty.

"However, when I come off it, I can look at the season from a broader perspective.

"Then I find a lot of positives. Reaching the quarter-finals or semi-finals is a good result. Again, I am the most even player of the whole season."

Swiatek was asked if new coach Fissette was responsible for the lack of success.

"No, this is a very harsh and unfair statement. I can only look at the coach from my own perspective, which is the only right one for me, that is, what our work looks like every day.

"The worse results coincided with many other challenges in recent months, also in family life. I found myself at a stage of my career where I had to reformulate my thinking about myself.

Oakes resigns as Alpine F1 principal; Briatore takes over

London, England - Oliver Oakes has resigned as principal of Renault-owned Alpine with immediate effect and former boss Flavio Briatore is taking over his duties, the British-based Formula One team said on Tuesday.

Oakes was appointed principal in July 2024, at the time the team's fifth boss in four turbulent and largely underwhelming seasons.

His departure comes amid mounting speculation that Alpine are about to replace Australian driver Jack Doohan with Argentina's Franco Colapinto for next week's Emilia Romagna Grand Prix at Imola.

"BWT Alpine Formula One Team announces that Oliver Oakes has resigned from his role as Team Principal. The team has accepted his resignation with immediate effect," Alpine said in a statement.

"As of today, Flavio Briatore will continue as Executive Advisor and will also be covering the



Flavio Briatore

duties previously performed by Oliver Oakes.

"The team would like to thank Oliver for his efforts since he joined last summer and for his contribution in helping the team secure sixth place in the 2024 Constructors' Championship."

Alpine are ninth in the 10-team standings after six races with 22-year-old rookie Doohan, son of motorcycle great Mick,

yet to score a point.

Italian Briatore, 75, was boss of the team when they raced as Benetton and Renault and won championships with Michael Schumacher in 1994 and 1995 and Fernando Alonso in 2005 and 2006.

He was also instrumental in signing Colapinto from Williams as reserve last January.

"Clearly, Franco is among the

As of today, Flavio Briatore will continue as Executive Advisor and will also be covering the duties previously performed by Oliver Oakes

best young talents in motorsport right now," the Italian said at the time.

Briatore remains a controversial figure in Formula One due to his involvement in one of the biggest scandals in the sport's history.

He received a lifetime ban when the 'Crashgate' scandal exploded in 2009 but that was overturned by a French court in 2010 and he returned in June last year as executive adviser to Renault chief executive Luca de Meo.

Colapinto replaces Doohan at Alpine

Sydney, Australia - The Renault-owned Alpine Formula One team confirmed on Wednesday that Argentine Franco Colapinto would replace Jack Doohan for the next five races, starting at the Emilia-Romagna Grand Prix next week.

"The next five races will give us an opportunity to try something different and after this time period we will assess our options," said Executive Advisor Flavio Briatore, who is set to take over as team principal after Ollie Oakes resigned on Tuesday.

Earlier on Wednesday, Oscar Piastri expressed his sympathy

for fellow Australian Doohan.

"Coming to F1, especially as a rookie under pressure, I do feel sorry for him in some ways," McLaren driver Piastri told ABC television from England on Wednesday.

"It's not been the easiest start to the year for him and I know how hard it is to get to F1 in the first place.



Franco Colapinto

"So I think whatever happens, he can be very proud of the journey so far."

While Doohan is 19th in the drivers' standings after two retirements and a best finish of 14th in his first six grands prix, Piastri is 16 points clear at the top in the wake of four wins in the first six rounds.

A third successive win at Miami at the weekend has fired

expectations back home that Piastri will become the first Australian world champion since Alan Jones in 1980.

The 24-year-old, who was born and raised in Melbourne, made it clear that he was not about to get carried away by the hype. "It's still incredibly early in the season, we're only 25% of the way through," he said.

"The position we're in is nice, the race wins we've had are nice, but I think the effort and the hard work that's gone on behind the scenes to achieve all that is what I'm most satisfied with.

GUJARAT SURVIVE RAIN AND BUMRAH SCARE

Gill, Buttler shine as Titans beat Mumbai in thriller

Mumbai, India - In a chaotic match laced with rain breaks in the second half, Gujarat Titans (GT) got home by the barest of margins to reach the top of the IPL 2025 points table and end Mumbai Indians' (MI) six-match winning streak. When it started to rain just before midnight, MI would have thought they had fashioned an improbable come-back. Between two rain breaks, they had taken 4 for 25 to turn GT's lead of eight on the DLS par score to a deficit of four with two overs to go.

Thanks to some excellent work from the groundstaff, the game resumed at the last possible moment, leaving GT 15 to get in one over. Deepak Chahar was hit for a four and a six in the first three balls, then bowled a no-ball, but came back to take a wicket. With one needed off the last ball,



Arshad Khan of Gujarat Titans celebrates their win

MI could still have forced a tie had someone come around to collect the throw from mid-off. Hardik Pandya, who had bowled two no-balls earlier and had decided against bowling the last

over, missed with the direct hit, sparking wild celebrations in the GT camp.

There was appreciable seam movement for GT to exploit after winning the toss and choosing to

field. Mohammed Siraj had Ryan Rickleton caught at short cover, and Arshad Khan troubled Rohit Sharma before getting him out for 7 off 8.

GT could have shut MI out of

There was appreciable seam movement for GT to exploit after winning the toss and choosing to field. Mohammed Siraj had Ryan Rickleton caught at short cover and Arshad Khan dismissed Rohit Sharma

the game then and there but they dropped Will Jacks on 0 and 29, and Suryakumar Yadav on 10. Jacks went on to score his first

fifty for MI, in just 29 balls, and Suryakumar registered a 12th straight score of 25 or more. Despite some help for the spinners, MI seemed well-placed at 97 for 2 in 10.3 overs.

It is the strength and depth in the GT bowling that allows their batters to play more conventional cricket than some other teams, and it was on full display in the second half of MI's innings. R Sai Kishore, who doesn't always get to bowl, troubled the right-hand-heavy MI middle order before going over the wicket and cramping Suryakumar on an inside-out shot for a catch at long-off. He then responded unerringly to the attacking fields for Hardik, who slogged and top-edged. Between these two wickets, Rashid Khan

marked his comeback from 3-0-50-0 in the last match with the wicket of Jacks.

ESPNCricinfo

TODAY'S MATCH

MATCH 58

6 PM



PUNJAB KINGS

VS

DELHI CAPITALS

'Death bowling is like an instinct'

Bengaluru, India - Bhuvneshwar Kumar might be a little under-stated, but he is a bonafide IPL superstar. No quick bowler has taken more wickets than his 193 in the tournament, and only Yuzvendra Chahal (219 at the time of writing) stands in front of him in the overall list. And he has found ways to stay relevant in a fast-changing game by "being proactive - to be a step ahead of the batter".

His new/old team Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) are having a season to remember, and part of the reason is the combination Bhuvneshwar has formed with Josh Hazlewood and Yash Dayal: between them, they have 40 wickets so far. RCB have also



Bhuvneshwar Kumar

A crime in my eyes: Hardik says no-balls cost Mumbai the game

Mumbai, India - After a chaotic game that went down to the last ball, giving both teams a chance to recover from mistakes they made, Mumbai Indians (MI) captain Hardik Pandya was the one ringing the turn of events. He felt that more than Tilak Varma's dropped catch off Shubman Gill (on 35, he made 43), the three no-balls - two from him and one from Deepak Chahar in the final over - were a "crime" and they cost them victory.

Hardik bowled two no-balls in the eighth over, which went for 18. But crucially, defending 14 in the final over, Chahar bowled a no-ball at a vital juncture as MI lost a rain-affected thriller against Gujarat Titans (GT) in Mumbai.

"The catches didn't really cost us. We were very clinical with that," Hardik said after MI's three-wicket defeat. "Maybe definitely with the no-balls, with my no-ball and even the last [over] no-ball.



Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya looks crestfallen after the defeat

"That, in my eyes, indeed it's a crime, and most often than not it kind of bites you. It definitely did to us, but at the same point of time, really happy with the boys giving their 120% and making sure that we were in the game and not giving up."

Sent into bat, MI huffed and

At the same time, really happy with the boys giving their 120% and making sure that we were in the game and not giving up

HARDIK PANDYA

puffed their way to 155 for 8, despite a half-century from Will Jacks. They lost 6 for 58 in the last 9.3 overs. But the bowlers brought the team back brilliantly in wet conditions and got praise

from the captain.

"It was definitely not a 150 wicket. I think it was a 175 [surface]," Hardik said. "We were definitely short in batting by 20-25 runs or maybe 30 runs if you would have batted well. But I think credit to the bowlers, they kept fighting and they kept bowling at the right areas.

"In the first innings, the ground was not wet. Post that, throughout the whole innings, the ball kept getting wetter. I don't know if it helped us or not helped us, but yeah, it was difficult. Rain kept coming in. It's always not really ideal to have a stoppage and start again and have a stoppage. But the game goes on."

Gill, meanwhile, said the conditions at the start of GT's chase "felt like a Test match" with the fast bowlers getting plenty of movement. There was a strong wind blowing while the rain made batting hard work.

"The game plans were defi-

nately different when we were playing in the powerplay. There was wind and a little bit of rain and just the atmosphere was such, it felt like a Test match for the first four to five overs," Gill said. "We just had to play proper, normal cricket and once the powerplay was over, we thought now we will try to play our normal game a little bit more. But the rain kept coming in.

"It's not easy in a T20 match, if there is such a long break to be able to come back and start the game."

After a tough powerplay where GT managed just 29 runs, Gill and Jos Buttler settled the nerves with a 72-run second-wicket stand. Gill and Sherfane Rutherford also had a quick stand, but GT lost four wickets for 13 runs in 15 balls, which pegged back their momentum and also pushed them behind the DLS par score when the players went off the field at around midnight.

been the second-most economical bowling side at the death (overs 17 to 20) in IPL 2025, conceding runs at 10.23, a shade behind Mumbai Indians' (MI) 10.22.

"I am back in RCB after 16 years and I am very happy to be back," Bhuvneshwar said in a video released by the franchise. "From the 2008-09 or 2010 season to now in 2025, things are very different. I had come in as a young player and now I have come back with so much more experience.

In the 11 overs Bhuvneshwar has bowled at the death this season, he has five wickets and an economy rate of 10.09.

"Death bowling is like an instinct. It depends on what is the situation of the match and what you are thinking as well," Bhuvneshwar said.

Nehra fined, handed demerit point

Mumbai, India - Hardik Pandya and his team-mates (first XI plus the impact sub Karn Sharma) have all been hit with fines for Mumbai Indians' (MI) slow over-rate in their loss against Gujarat Titans (GT) at home on Tuesday night. For the winners, head coach Ashish Nehra has been penalised for "conduct that is contrary to the spirit of the game".

In the stop-start second half of the IPL 2025 game between MI and GT, when rain took the players off and brought them back in a few times, MI had to bring an additional fielder into the 30-yard circle for the final over - the 19th - of the chase as is the in-game penalty norm in



Ashish Nehra

the IPL. GT needed 15 runs to get off that Deepak Chahar over and got over the line off the last ball.

Hardik was fined INR 24 lakh, since this was the second time

MI had committed the offence under his captaincy this season. His team-mates were each fined either INR 6 lakh or 25% of their respective match fees,

whichever is lesser.

Nehra, meanwhile, was at his animated best in the dying minutes of the game, when it looked like he wanted the umpires to restart the game after the latest rain interruption. He was fined 25% of his match fee and also handed one demerit point for breaching Article 2.20 of the IPL code of conduct, though the IPL didn't state what exactly his offence was.

This is the first time a coach has been penalised with a demerit point for a breach of the IPL's code, though Hardik has a lot of compatriots for company: Rishabh Pant, Shubman Gill, Axar Patel, Sanju Samson, Rajat Patidar and Riyan Parag.



MS Dhoni of Chennai Super Kings stumps Kolkata Knight Riders' Sunil Narine off the bowling of Noor Ahmad. Noor's 4 for 31 helped Chennai restrict Kolkata to 179 for 6



14

SUMMER KITCHEN
Cook up a summer pasta, a carrot consomme and a salad - enjoy a light lunch



15

IN TOWN
Bangladesh National Day and Dutch Cultural Week celebrations in Muscat



16

ENTERTAINMENT
A peek into tinsel town, in Hollywood and Bollywood

CONCLAVE BEGINS

Hubert Vaz

Catholics in Oman, along with those around the world, are anxiously awaiting the election of a new pope following the death of Pope Francis last month... And the much-awaited conclave of cardinals in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City, which began on Wednesday afternoon, has heightened their anxiousness.

The common refrain among Catholics belonging to different nationalities in Oman is that whoever assumes the coveted position as ‘shepherd’ of all Christians around the globe is one who reflects the true essence of the faith as well as the broader sentiments of the faithful who exist on all rungs of society and are ridden with numerous issues stemming from conflict, poverty, social discrimination as well as spiritual crossroads.

According to official sources, the 133 cardinals met for a final time on Tuesday morning before moving into their lodgings in Casa Santa Maria, where they had to hand over their mobile phones and remain cut away from the outside world until a new pope is chosen. The cardinals swear an oath to secrecy, as do all Vatican staff assisting them, from cooks and cleaners to drivers and medics.

There are two rounds of votes each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Smoke is emitted from the chimney installed atop the Sistine Chapel at the end of each voting session - if it is black, it means the vote has yielded no decision, if it is white then a new pope has been chosen. If the election drags on, the cardinals will take a day off for reflection after three full days of voting.

There has been widespread speculation over who will succeed Francis, and with each passing day, more names have been emerging. Some forerunners include Robert Prevost, a moderate cardinal from the US, who appears to have taken the shine off another moderate frontrunner, Pietro Parolin, the Vatican’s secretary of state. Another favourite is Luis Antonio Tagle, a reformer from the Philippines nicknamed ‘the Asian Francis’. Others in the progressive camp include the Italian cardinals Matteo Zuppi and Pierbattista Pizzaballa, as well as Jean-Claude Hollerich from Luxembourg, Timothy Radcliffe from the UK and Michael Czerny of Canada.

Elizabeth Davis, a senior Indian artist and professional in Oman, said, “I’m definitely looking forward eagerly to see who will be the next pope. And, in the meanwhile, folks should watch the movie ‘Conclave’, also, ‘The Two Popes’. I am hoping the new pope will bring as much positive changes to the Catholic church as our dear Late Pope Francis did.”

Arnold Villasis Fort, a Filipino professional in Muscat, said, “I’m very excited to know who

‘NEW SHEPHERD’ AWAITED

Catholic cardinals from all over the world have begun casting their votes for a new pope under Michelangelo’s ‘The Last Judgment’ ceiling fresco in the Sistine Chapel, in the Vatican on Wednesday afternoon. Catholics of various nationalities in Oman join their counterparts all over the world in praying for a ‘new shepherd’ with a good measure of anxiousness as well as optimism

will be the next pope, especially since one of the Filipino cardinal’s name is popular and is a favourite candidate for the post - Cardinal Antonio Luis Tagle. I expect the new pope not to be ultra conservative, he should be sensible to address the issues of varying changes in our current generation. He should be steadfast to defend the teachings of the church.”

Maggie Jeans, a veteran educationist from the UK in Oman, also said, “I’m fascinated by the whole process having recently watched the film ‘Conclave’ based on a novel by Richard Harris, also ‘The Two Popes’ on Netflix. (Both films, highly recommended). I’m not a Catholic, but I hope that the new candidate will continue to pursue the more liberal and moderate policies of the late Pope Francis, the 266th pontiff. He was a remarkable man with real empathy for the poor and a real grasp of the challenges which face us today. He appointed several new cardinals, and I hope, that one of them is elected to continue his good work.”

There were others like Jenny Lihong, a Chinese expatriate living in Oman for over 20 years, who said, “The world is watching with hope and respect. It’s a meaningful moment for people of all faiths - the Pope represents not just religion, but also moral leadership. I hope the new Pope will be a strong voice for peace, unity, and dignity for all. Living in Oman - a country known for its tolerance and interfaith respect - I truly appreciate the importance of dialogue and harmony among different religions.”

Many others voiced their preferences, some hoping that an Asian pope was the need of the hour, others seeking reinforcement and renewal of the faith among the younger generations in the western world who are distracted or distanced by digital influences. The days ahead will soon reveal what’s in store for the faithful.

Extra omnes

The conclave began with a special mass in St Peter’s Basilica, known as ‘Pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice’, led by Cardinal Giovanni Re, the Dean of the College of Cardinals. During the service, Cardinal Re delivered a homily expounding the church’s priorities for the next papacy. Later in the afternoon, in a final ritual, all 133 cardinals took a collective and individual oath, pledging perpetual secrecy about the papal election. What followed was known as ‘extra omnes’, meaning ‘everybody out’, and the doors of the chapel closed to outsiders leaving the cardinals to cast their ballots.

Cook-up



Carrot Consomme

- Ingredients**
- 3 litres water
 - 1.5kg carrots - trimmed, peeled, cut into large chunks
 - 1 cup chopped leeks, green parts only
 - 5cm fresh ginger - peeled and cut in half
 - 5 black peppercorns
 - 2 whole cloves
 - 2 bay leaves
 - 2 sprigs fresh thyme
 - 1 celery stalk - trimmed and cut into large chunks
 - Kosher salt
 - 25g butter
 - Rosemary sprigs – for garnish

Method

Combine all of the ingredients in a large stockpot, cover, bring to a boil over high heat, then adjust heat and simmer for 3 hours till veggies are mushy. Remove from heat, cool briefly, then carefully pour through a cheesecloth lined fine-mesh strainer into another large pot. Discard vegetables. Taste the consommé and season with salt as desired. Re-heat and serve with a dash of butter and sprig of rosemary.

The consommé can also be cooled and refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 3 days.



Herbed Avocado Salad

- Ingredients**
- ½ cup raw pepitas (green pumpkin seeds)
 - ¼tsp chilli powder
 - 1tsp extra-virgin olive oil
 - A pinch of salt
 - ½ cup chopped radish
 - ½ cup chopped green onion
 - ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
 - 1 medium jalapeño – chopped
 - 4 large just-ripe avocados
 - ¼ cup lime juice
 - 2tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
 - 2tsp honey or maple syrup
 - ½tsp fine sea salt
 - Lime zest - for garnish, optional

Method

Since avocados start browning once they're cut, prepare everything else first. Toast the pepitas in a large skillet over medium heat, stirring, until they're starting to turn golden on the edges and make little popping noises. Remove the skillet from the heat and stir in the chilli powder, olive oil and pinch of salt. Set aside to cool.

Meanwhile, combine the chopped radish, green onion, herbs and jalapeño in a bowl, and set aside. To prepare the dressing, whisk together the lime juice, olive oil, honey and salt in a small bowl. Set aside.

You can slice or dice the avocados however you'd like, but for the prettiest slices, first cut the avocados in half and remove the pits. Then cut the halves in half again to make long quarters. Peel the avocado skin off each quarter and carefully slice it into long strips.

To assemble, place the avocado in a medium serving bowl or platter. Drizzle the dressing all over them. Stir the toasted pepitas into the herb mix, then spoon it over the avocados. Finish the salad with optional flaky salt and/or lime zest.

SUMMER KITCHEN

AS THE MERCURY SOARS, MEALS NEED TO BE LIGHT AND SIMPLE, TO MAKE THEM 'COMFORT FOOD' THAT DESERVE AN ENCORE WHENEVER YOU LIKE



Light LUNCH

Summer Pasta

- Ingredients**
- 250g linguine pasta
 - ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
 - 1 cup finely chopped onion
 - 6 large cloves garlic - thinly sliced
 - 650g cherry tomatoes
 - ½tsp granulated sugar
 - ½tsp table salt
 - ¼tsp ground black pepper
 - ½ tsp dried thyme
 - ¼tsp crushed red pepper
 - 30g fresh basil leaves - shredded
 - ½ cup freshly grated parmesan cheese, plus more for topping

Method

Cook pasta in well-salted water according to package instructions. Before draining, reserve ½ cup of pasta water and set aside.

Meanwhile, in a large skillet, heat oil over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, then add garlic and cook about 30-60 seconds longer, until fragrant. Add tomatoes, sugar, salt, pepper, thyme, and red pepper and cook, stirring frequently until tomatoes soften and burst. Once tomatoes are soft enough you can use a wooden spoon or spatula to squish them as you stir. Add basil and stir.

Add warm cooked, drained linguine and stir well. Add splashes of pasta water as needed to make a thin sauce, you basically want to ensure the pasta is not dry and the noodles are coated with a thin layer of the sauce. Remove from heat, add parmesan and stir well. Add additional salt or pepper, as needed, then serve warm topped with additional parmesan as desired with a side salad or side of crusty bread.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

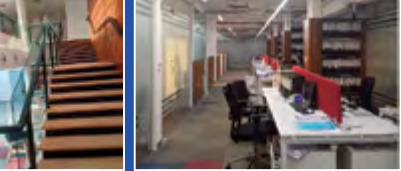
MEP Design Engineer with experience in Design Softwares and Calculations available on own visa. Contact: 99506977

Indian male, looking for job in sales department with three years of experience in Abu Dhabi (UAE). Graduated in 2016 from India, with diploma in Computer Science in Engineering. Please contact: 94216172

Experienced Kindergarten Teacher with 10 years of experience in Oman seeking immediate placement. Specialist in English, Maths, Environmental Studies, and Art & Craft. Familiar with local curriculum. Contact: 91232874 Email: sriyanipeiris@yahoo.com

SHOP FOR SALE

Three Dhabeli coffee shops for urgent sale at Wadi Kabir, opposite Souq al Juma. Contact Kishore Bhanushali on: 98826793



WAREHOUSE

- 3000++ pallets space available on monthly/ per pallet rental bases.
- loading/unloading bays, with state of the art racking and centrally air conditioning @21 degree

OFFICE

700 sq mts of office space, centralized air conditioning ready to use.

State of the Art warehouse and office in Misfah

Centrally located with ease of access to Muscat - Nizwa Sohar

CONTACT NO: 9 3 8 9 3 5 9 6



BIRTHDAY WISHES

GEETHA NAGARAJ

10 May

To my lovely sister, I wish you a very happy birthday. You have always been my guiding light and my best friend. Side by side, or miles apart, you are close to my heart. Have a great year ahead.



WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684

Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربت ORBIT

Car Rental & Lease

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Yoga, Kalari, Panchakarma, Massage, Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Beauty therpay & post Delivery Care



Zaher Building ,1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-king Tel:24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website:www.siddhayur.com

take a break

IN TOWN

Bangladesh National Day



Embassy of Bangladesh hosted a reception to mark its Independence Day and National Day

Photos: V K Shafeer

Dutch Cultural Week



Embassy of The Netherlands organised a series of events to mark its Cultural Week last week

BOGGLER

L	O	O	G
A	N	T	L
V	A	D	T
S	D	S	A

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The 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

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

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS

1. The Statue of Liberty was a gift to the United States from...



A. The people of Canada

B. The Royalty of England

C. The people France

D. French landlords

2. What is Gold Spot?

A. An ancient gold mine in Germany

B. An artificially flavoured orange drink in India

C. A gold jewellery bazaar in Turkiye

D. An island in the archipelago of Seychelles

3. Who is Anwar Sonya?

A. Founder of the Omani Art Movement

B. Avid birdwatcher in the Sultanate of Oman

C. Accomplished Omani fashion designer

D. Senior astronomer and space enthusiast in Oman

Answers

3. A

2. B

1. C

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

**ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

If you've got a little less zest in your attitude overall, now is a great time to take action so you can get back to your old, more energetic self. Today's energy may call for plenty of rest, silly movies and long chats with old friends so you can recharge those emotional batteries. Try picking up a book, going to a museum, or just watching people in the park, anything that helps you appreciate life.

**TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

It's time to take the guilt out of your pleasures! Whatever it is that brings you real joy needs to be brought out in the open and celebrated, no matter what others might think. If you like dancing to yesterday's top hits while wearing clothes that would embarrass a teenager, go for it. It's sure to be liberating not only for yourself but also for your friends.

**GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

You know full well that your soul has unplumbed depths. Like the ocean, there are things living down deep that might become endangered if you don't take time to cultivate them, like your creativity, for example! If you've been a little careless about nurturing your artistic nature, now is definitely the time to turn it all around. Take a class, pick up a new book, or talk with a total stranger.

**CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

Good times are on the way, and your good energy is totally ready for fun. Whether you choose to go out as part of a crowd, a pair, or all by yourself, you can tell that a marvelous time will be had by all. Your company and agenda for the day (and night) are all up to you, though. Check in with your subconscious and decide who's in, who's out, and what you're all up to.

**LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Eating a donut is a supremely delicious indulgence. Eating a dozen donuts is a cry for help! Remind yourself of that if you find yourself reaching for junky snacks all day long. No matter how much you may care for an original glazed, they're really not worth risking your health for. (Right?) Now is a great time for you to start taking better care of yourself!

**VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Aren't you tired of the same old excuses from your people? They might be coming from your best friend, who's always late. Alternately, they might come from a coworker who can never keep your travel itinerary straight. They might even come from you, telling yourself how you can never exercise because there's not enough time.

**LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Though you may feel like monopolizing someone's company today, it's a good idea not to get too greedy. Let them have their fun for now. They're sure to come back to you sooner or later. Trying to keep them by your side all day and night just cuts down on the amount of fun you could be having on your own.

**SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You need to figure out a way to drop some of your prized attachments before they make your life even more unnecessarily complicated. Though it might feel impossible not to cling tightly to something or someone, wouldn't your life be much easier if you could just loosen your grip a bit more?

**SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Before you put your signature on that legal agreement or pledge your allegiance to someone new, be sure to scrutinize the fine print and go over every last detail. It might not come naturally to you, the big picture is more your thing, after all, but it's essential to make sure that everything moves forward as smoothly as possible.

**CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Cupid is sometimes too cautious for your liking. You can't just strut up to him out of nowhere and demand that he shoots an arrow at the object of your affections just to power up your love life! For now, just try acting nice and totally unconcerned about what happens next. The more frantically you seem to want love, the less likely it will.

**AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Stop punishing yourself for mental sins and try to leave the past where it belongs: far behind you. Learn to absorb the right lessons from past mistakes, but don't pile on the guilt for anything you did out of ignorance or naivete. If you had never made any mistakes, you'd never have learned a thing, and if you never learn, you never grow.

**PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

It's an easy, breezy day for you. You should feel relaxed and mellow and ready to enjoy life for exactly what it is. Augment that mood by doing whatever you can to spread the emotional wealth. Make an awesome dinner for you and someone close to you. Pull out all the stops. What's the point of having good china, if you never use them?

entertainment



WHAT IMPACT MIGHT TRUMP'S HOLLYWOOD TARIFFS PLAN HAVE?

US President Donald Trump has said he will hit movies made in foreign countries with 100% tariffs, as he ramps up trade disputes with nations around the world.

Trump said in a post on *Truth Social* that he was authorising the US Department of Commerce and Trade Representative to start

the process to impose the levy because America's movie industry was dying "a very fast death".

He later said he would consult Hollywood executives to see if they're happy with his proposal, after the news sent shockwaves through the industry.



Matthias Schoenaerts and Gal Gadot to lead WWII thriller 'Ruin'

Gal Gadot and Matthias Schoenaerts are set to star in a new WWII-set thriller titled *Ruin*. The planned feature is being directed by Niki Caro (*Mulan*) and written by Kaz Firpo and Ryan Firpo. The film will actually be set post-WWII in Germany and, as per Deadline, will follow 'a recently released camp prisoner (Gadot) who is forced to make an unlikely alliance with a German soldier (Schoenaerts) in a mutual quest to exact revenge on a Nazi SS squad.' Production will kick off in early 2025, according to the report.



WHY JUSTIN BIEBER DIDN'T ATTEND MET GALA 2025

Justin Bieber didn't take a swing at attending the 2025 Met Gala. While his wife Hailey Bieber walked the Metropolitan Museum of Art's red carpet in New York City for the fashion event, the Grammy winner spent quality time with his friends at the golf course. In a photo shared to his Instagram Stories May 5, Justin - rocking a white tank top and matching flowy pants - stood on a vibrant green golf course, preparing to take his shot. After his putt landed the ball just outside of the hole, he lifted his hand in frustration. And that's not the only activity Justin - who shares son Jack Blues Bieber, 8 months, with Hailey - got up to while his partner of six years turned heads at the annual fundraiser, which boasted the theme *Supernature: Tailoring Black Style*.

GHOSTBUSTERS AMONG HOLLYWOOD CLASSICS TO SCREEN ON THE SANTA CRUZ BEACH BOARDWALK

The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk has revealed this year's Movies on the Beach lineup, and among the Hollywood classics is the original *Ghostbusters*.

Set to screen on June 27, the event invites fans to kick back on the sand in front of the Colonnade, bringing a blanket or low-back chair, while enjoying boardwalk treats like kettle corn, saltwater taffy, corn dogs, and turkey legs. Seating is first come, first served, with each film including a 15-minute intermission.



'O SAATHI RE' NEARLY COMPLETE

Avinash Tiwary and Aditi Rao Hydari are currently shooting for *O Saathi Re*. While the movie was announced some time back, the two have been shooting for the movie without revealing much. The makers want to keep things private when it comes to the details but Filmfare has recently learnt something exciting about the project. The filming for *O Saathi Re* is almost over. However, the last leg of shooting is currently underway.

Sources have exclusively revealed, "The shooting for *O Saathi Re* will end on the 11th of this month. Avinash and Aditi are currently going to Mussoorie for four to five days. They will finish shooting after their Mussoorie schedule."

'Jaws' is getting a 50th anniversary edition on Home Ent formats

Iconic tentpole *Jaws* is to get a 50th anniversary release on the home formats later this year. Universal Pictures Home Entertainment will debut the release on June 17 in 4K Ultra HD, Blu-ray and Digital. The *Jaws* 50th anniversary is officially the 20th June - the date of its original release stateside (it didn't hit the UK until December) so this is as close as it can get to that big half-century birthday.

This Combo Pack features the never-before-seen documentary, *Jaws @ 50 - The Definitive Inside Story*, a brand-new look at the making and legacy of the film directed by Laurent Bouzereau and from National Geographic, in partnership with Steven Spielberg's Amblin Documentaries, Nedland Media, and Wendy Benchley. The disc and digital include over five hours of bonus features with an inside look at the making of the film, deleted scenes, original on-set footage, and much more.



HOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: THUNDERBOLTS

Genre: Superhero action
Starring: Florence Pugh, Sebastian Stan, Wyatt Russell, Olga Kurylenko, Lewis Pullman

Thunderbolts is a 2025 American superhero film based on Marvel Comics featuring the team *Thunderbolts*.

Produced by Marvel Studios and distributed by Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, it is the 36th film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). The film was directed by Jake Schreier from a screenplay by Eric Pearson and Joanna Calo. The movie had premiered on April 22 at the Cineworld Leicester Square in London, England, and was released in the United States on May 2, as the final film of Phase 5 of the MCU. The film's ending reveals that



the *Thunderbolts* team is rebranded as 'The New Avengers' following the film's opening weekend, Marvel Studios implemented a rebranding of the film itself as *The New Avengers* in alignment with the narrative development.

The plot follows Yelena Belova (Florence Pugh) one of the Black

Widows and sister to Natasha Romanoff. Burnt out in her job as a 'cleaner' for Valentina Allegra de Fontaine (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) she seeks a more formidable role, inspired partly by her father, Alexei Shostakov aka Red Guardian (David Harbour) who dreams of bigger things.

When she poses this idea to de Fontaine, her shadowy boss agrees, so long as she'll complete one final mission. De Fontaine has other ideas. She's busy cleaning house while under a congressional investigation and wants all evidence of her misdeeds scrubbed, including her special operatives, who she pits

against one another in a remote lab deep underground.

Things don't go her way, and our rag-tag band of heroes escapes with a mysterious man named Bob (Lewis Pullan) with equally mysterious powers and an adorably affable demeanor. One thing leads to another, and the reluctant band of anti-heroes ends up teaming up to take down de Fontaine.

In Malaysia, Yelena Belova destroys a laboratory on behalf of CIA director Valentina Allegra de Fontaine to conceal her involvement with the OXE Group's 'Sentry' superhuman project. As de Fontaine faces imminent impeachment, she dispatches Yelena, John Walker, Ava Starr, and Taskmaster to a covert OXE facility under the pretense of a mission. Once there, the operatives are pitted against one another in a deadly confrontation. Where the film stumbles, rather badly, is in its third act, when things take a terrible turn.

Rating ★★★★★

IDdesign

SPRING SALE
25-50^{OFF}%

Sale ends 15th May



SHOP IN-STORE & ONLINE
WWW.IDDESIGNOMAN.COM

☎ 80080888 📍 MARKAZ AL BAHJA