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Nature reserves get RO44mn eco boost

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Environment Authority (EA) has signed nine agreements worth RO44mn to develop and manage seven nature reserves across Oman as part of a push to promote sustainable tourism and protect the sultanate's natural heritage.

The deals include four contracts with the government-owned Omran Group to operate and manage Ras al Shajar Nature Reserve, the Turtle Reserve in South Sharqiyah, Arabian Oryx Sanctuary and the Wetland Nature Reserve in Al Wusta. Two other agreements cover development of the Laja Shlion site in Jabal Samhan Nature Reserve and the Itlatat Hayur area in the wilayat of Mirbat.

The authority also signed two investment contracts for an eco-tourism resort and a stargazing facility called the Stars Park Project in Al Hajar Al Gharbi Starlight



Nature Reserve. The second is for development of the Khor al Mughsail Nature Reserve in Dhofar.

The agreements were signed during an official ceremony held under the patronage of H E Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism. Officials said the projects aim to support tourism, protect ecosystems and promote sustainable development, while ensuring the long-term preservation of Oman's natural sites.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of EA, said the projects will include eco-tourism resorts, star parks, eco-lodges, camps, visitor centres, safaris, trails and turtle ponds. "This investment in eco-tourism aims to protect and preserve the natural heritage in nature reserves and ensure sustainability for future generations," he said.

He added that the authority also aims to raise awareness among visitors, promote conservation education and encourage local communities to participate in eco-tourism. "It also seeks to diversify sources of income, improve infrastructure and enhance the national tourism product," he added.

Sulaiman bin Nasser al Akhzami, Director General of Nature Conservation at EA, said the seven reserves cover approximately 5,660sqkm. These include the Al Hajar al Gharbi Starlight Reserve in Dakhliyah, Khor al Mughsail in Dhofar, the Laja Shlion site in Jabal Samhan,

Ras al Shajar in Quriyat, Wetlands Reserve in Al Wusta, Turtle Reserve in South Sharqiyah and Arabian Oryx Reserve in Al Wusta.

Akhzami added that the investment projects were selected based on specific environmental and operational standards, including environmental impact assessments, sustainable tourism practices and the use of eco-friendly materials. Investors are also required to demonstrate financial capability and a clear project timeline.

He noted that nature reserves play a vital role in protecting biodiversity and endangered species, adding, "Financing their management and maintenance requires significant resources, making environmental investment a strategic option aligned with Oman Vision 2040 priorities."

Oman currently has 31 officially declared nature reserves spread across various governorates.



05

US, China agree to slash tariffs in trade-war truce



09

Hamas releases hostage, says ready for negotiations



(Supplied photo)

OMAN'S
SECOND LARGEST
DAM OPENS

Wadi Adawin Dam - Oman's second largest dam - was inaugurated by Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Salalah on Monday. With capacity of 83mn m³, the RO24mn structure is of 389m length and 70m height. Officials said the dam, built as part of a broader flood mitigation strategy, is set to play a critical role in controlling seasonal floodwaters and protecting nearby communities

Sayyid Fahd receives Chinese official

Muscat - H H Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Council of Ministers, received Xiao Jie, Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, and his accompanying delegation on Monday.

The guest conveyed greetings and best wishes of the leadership in China to the leadership in Oman and the Omani people.

H H Sayyid Fahd emphasised the deep-rooted relations between the two countries, which continue to witness significant development, reflecting both sides' commitment to advancing the interests of their peoples.

The meeting explored ways to enhance economic and trade co-operation, including encouraging more joint investment projects in renewable energy. The meeting also addressed regional and international developments.

Xiao expressed his pleasure at the visit, which contributes to elevating cooperation between the two nations across various fields. He affirmed China's appreciation for Oman's efforts in strengthening friendly relations with countries worldwide. He also praised the constructive discussions held with the Chairman of the State Council and Omani officials, noting their positive impact on advancing Omani-Chinese relations.

Sayyid Shihab inaugurates Olympic Shooting Complex

Muscat - H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, inaugurated the National Olympic Shooting Complex in Muscat on Monday.

Built to International Shooting Sport Federation standards, the facility is designed to support athletes at all levels, from beginners to professionals, providing a comprehensive environment for training and competition.

The complex, spanning multiple purpose-built structures, marks a significant milestone in Oman's sporting journey, enhancing its capacity to host official shooting championships and elevating the country's profile in regional and global sports.

The facility includes three Olympic-standard shooting ranges: a 10m range covering 2,700sqm with 80 targets for 80 shooters, a 25m range spanning 2,900sqm with 50 targets for 50



shooters, and a 50m range measuring 2,600sqm, also with 80 targets for 80 shooters. It also features a broadcasting room for digital and visual coverage of events.

Additionally, the complex houses a specialised 1,600sqm hall designed to accommodate ten shooters in a controlled indoor environment, ensuring maximum concentration and accuracy. Spectator stands are available across all shooting areas.

OQ inks renewable energy pacts worth \$2bn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Global energy investment group OQ signed 13 renewable energy agreements worth over US\$2bn during Oman Sustainability Week 2025 on Monday, marking a significant step in its efforts to support the sultanate's net zero goals for 2050.

The agreements, signed by Ashraf bin Hamad al Mamari, CEO of OQ Group, and Najla Zuhair al Jamali, CEO of OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE), involve project development partnerships, financing arrangements with local banks and equipment supply contracts to accelerate clean energy projects.

"These agreements mark a strategic advancement in OQ's renewable energy leadership and reflect our unwavering support



for Oman's 2050 net zero goals," Mamari said. "Recognising clean and sustainable sources as the future of energy, we're collaborating with national and international partners to establish new investment opportunities in clean energy infrastructure."

The deals cover major projects including high-capacity solar and wind installations in Suhar and Duqm, such as the Riyah-1 and Riyah-2 plants and the North Oman Solar Project. These facilities will supply clean power to the national grid and oil and gas production sites under long-term offtake agreements, significantly reducing carbon emissions.

As part of its broader decar-

bonsation strategy, OQ also signed a deal with Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to conduct pre-feasibility studies for carbon capture technologies across its assets in Oman. The partnership will assess the full CO₂ value chain, from capture and transport to utilisation and storage, to build commercially viable business cases.

The agreements extend to major industrial clients including Jindal, Vale Oman, Oxy and United Solar Polysilicon, ensuring secure renewable power supply as they transition to more sustainable operations.

The deals also emphasise industrial localisation, with a focus on boosting in-country value through partnerships like one with Voltamp for local transformer manufacturing, supporting Oman's goal to become a regional clean energy hub.

OQAE's Najla said, "These agreements operationalise our strategy to promote renewable energy and accelerate the transition to a low-emission economy. These partnerships demonstrate international confidence in OQ's capabilities and investment framework as we expand our portfolio of high-quality projects."

Wheat production expected to exceed 7,700t

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Farmers across Oman have started harvesting this season's wheat crop, with officials projecting total production from four key governorates to exceed 7,700 tonnes.

In Dhofar's Najd region, the 2024-2025 harvest began in early April under the supervision of Directorate General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in cooperation with Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund. Around 6,400 acres have been cultivated across 52 farms, with production expected to reach up to 6,000 tonnes.

Fael Mohammed al Jahfali, Director General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Dhofar, said the cultivation area has dropped from 7,600 acres last season, attributing the decline to farmers diversifying into other crops in response to changing

environmental and economic conditions.

"Many farmers are opting for crops like onions, tomatoes, fodder, garlic and other vegetables that need less water and generate quicker returns," he added.

Jahfali also informed that 13 harvesters are currently supporting the wheat harvesting process in Dhofar.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in cooperation with the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund, supplied 30 tonnes of wheat seeds at 50% subsidy for the 2024-2025 season. Harvesting machinery has also been provided free of charge, while Oman Flour Mills Company is managing the collection process from farmers.

Jahfali described wheat as one of Oman's most strategic crops, noting that the Najd area offers strong potential for expansion due to its large cultivable land and accessible groundwater.



According to Salem bin Musabab al Kalbani, Director of Agricultural Development Department in Dhahirah, 1,350

acres have been allocated for wheat cultivation under food security projects through usufruct contracts, of which 250 acres

have been cultivated this year, with production expected to reach 1,000 tonnes. "The ministry is actively sup-



Wheat is one of Oman's most strategic crops. The Najd area offers strong potential for expansion due to its large cultivable land and accessible groundwater

FAEL MOHAMMED AL JAHFALI

porting wheat farmers with technical guidance and field supervision," Kalbani said. Last season, more than ten tonnes of

subsidised seeds were distributed, besides modern irrigation systems and harvesting equipment.

In Dakhliyah, farmers in the wilayat of Adam have also begun harvesting. Saeed bin Hamad al Raqmi, Head of the Agricultural Development and Water Resources Section, said wheat is a popular crop due to relatively low water requirements, nutritional value and affordability. This year, 106 acres have been planted in Adam, with production expected to reach 120 tonnes, up from 72 tonnes last season.

In Buraimi, too, harvesting commenced last month. Nasser bin Ali al Marshoudi, Director General of Agriculture and Water Resources, said more than 200 acres have been planted, with production forecast to exceed 250 tonnes. "Over seven tonnes of high-quality seeds were distributed among farmers for the 2024-2025 season," he said.

Rains bring relief to parts of Oman as heat wave continues elsewhere

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Rainfall in parts of Oman has brought temporary relief from soaring summer temperatures with several governorates recording heavy precipitation.

The wilayats of Rustaq, Mudhaibi and Mahdha received the most rain, measuring 14-15mm on May 11 and 12, according to Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The wilayat of Al Awabi and picturesque Wadi Bani Kharous also saw heavy rains.

The rains led to several overflowing wadis, briefly disrupting local movement but offering a welcome break from the intense heat.



Other parts of the sultanate, however, continue to face high temperatures. Hamra ad Duru recorded the highest temperature on Sunday at 42.2°C, followed by Muqshin 41.9°C, Marmul 41.6°C and Ibri 41.1°C. Haima reported a high of 40.7°C,

Al Mazyunah 40.6°C, Izki 40.5°C, Ibra 40.4°C, Nizwa 40.1°C and Thumrait 39.5°C.

While the contrasting weather is unusual, it is not unprecedented during the transitional period into summer, according to meteorologists. "Localised rainfall in mountainous and interior areas can still occur due to convective cloud formations, even when the rest of the country is experiencing extreme heat," a CAA spokesperson said.

With summer approaching, CAA has warned that warmer-than-average conditions are likely to persist in many parts of the country, urging residents to take necessary precautions against heat-related illnesses.

Muscat dancers crowned best hip-hop crew in Middle East

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A troupe from Kings United Dance Academy Muscat won top honours at the United Dance Organisation Middle East Championship held in Dubai recently.

Competing against 18 teams from all over the Middle East, the crew of students aged nine to 14 brought pride to Oman by securing first prize in the Under-14 Hip Hop Category and receiving the prestigious Judges' Special Award.

The winning team comprises Hanisha Aswani, Vaanya Kukreja, Veer Shiv Gupta, Niharika, Jefrina Saravanan, Shriya Shah and Roohi Thakkar who trained intensively under the guidance of coach Mukesh and choreography director Tejas Gupta.

Their preparations spanned over 30 days, with more than 2,000 hours of focused prac-



tice put into perfecting every move.

Following this victory, the team will represent Oman at

the upcoming Universal Dance Championship in UK, where elite dance crews from around the globe will compete.

"We danced not just for a trophy but to make Oman proud on a world stage. This is only the beginning," Tejas said.



PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to notify that Jindal Shadeed Iron & Steel LLC, a company registered under Commercial Registration **No. 1777769**, has officially changed its name to Jindal Steel Sohar LLC, effective **6 April 2025**, pursuant to the approval granted by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Sultanate of Oman (Reference No.: W.T.S/411/Certificate/2025).

All business operations and transactions will henceforth be conducted under the new name. There is no change in the company's Commercial Registration number or ownership structure.

For any queries or clarifications, please contact us at:
connect@jindalshadeed.com

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Omani firms explore new markets at Saudi Food Show

Muscat - Represented by the Supervisory Team for Promotion of Omani Products (OPEX), the sultanate is participating in the third edition of Saudi Food Show, which opened on Monday in Riyadh and will run till May 15.

The event features exhibitors from 104 countries, including over 1,300 global brands.

This year, Oman is participating with 15 government and private entities, including Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Authority for SME Development.

Khalid al Salehi, Director General of Marketing and Commercial Affairs at Madayn, said Oman's participation aligns with a broader plan to promote national products and attract foreign investment. "The OPEX team has developed a strategic plan for 2025 aimed at exploring new markets, promoting Omani products and facilitating global partnerships," he said.

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Pact signed to start food delivery using e-bikes

Our Correspondent
Muscat

EVO, Oman's green mobility provider, and talabat, a regional on-demand delivery platform, have signed a memorandum of understanding to launch a six-month pilot of swappable battery e-bikes, marking Oman's first large-scale electric last-mile delivery trial.

The signing ceremony - held under the patronage of H E Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shamakhi, Undersecretary for Transport at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT), on Monday - came

during the ministry's participation in the Green Mobility Exhibition, part of Oman Sustainability Week 2025, which began on Monday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre and runs until Wednesday. The event, which aligns with Oman's long-term target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, is billed as the country's largest platform for showcasing smart and sustainable transport technologies.

The wilayat of Bausher has been selected as the first phase of implementation. Under the project, EVO will provide 10 e-bikes and three battery swapping and charging stations to talabat's logistics partners.

Thuraiya al Wahaibi, logistics operation specialist at MTCIT said, "This long-awaited pilot project for food and ready-meal delivery using electric bikes marks a significant step toward sustainable and efficient last-mile services."

She added that the ministry plays a central role in regulating the sector and facilitating procedures related to electric vehicles and consistently seeks integration and collaboration with the private sector in various initiatives under its mandate.

An official from MTCIT said the project aims to cut emissions in the transport sector while supporting last-mile logistics through

low-emission delivery services.

The ministry said the collaboration with talabat and EVO aims to create practical, scalable models for environmentally friendly logistics in Oman's urban areas. The MTCIT's pavilion features projects including electric vehicle solutions, charging infrastructure, intelligent transport systems, and digital transformation initiatives in the mobility sector.

The ministry further participated in a panel discussion focused on advancing green mobility in Oman. The discussions highlighted national and regional initiatives, with contributions from the Net Zero team presenting key strategies.

MTCIT invites bids for luxury marina project in Quriyat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) has announced a tender for the construction, management, and operation of a marina for luxury tourist yachts in the wilayat of Quriyat, Muscat governorate.

The Internal Investment Committee of the ministry launched the bid for local and international investors specialised in marine port construction, inviting proposals in line with the terms outlined in the tender documents.

The document purchasing period is from May 12 to June 22. Clarification periods will run from June 18 to July 6, and the deadline for proposal submission will end on August 17.



The project is part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to enhance Oman's maritime infrastructure and attract foreign investment, supporting the country's broader economic diversification goals. It allotted a plot of land last year in the Daghamar area in Quriyat for a project of this nature.

Yacht tourism in Muscat governorate is experiencing a growth, with approximately 500 registered tourist yachts now operating in the capital.

Captain Majid bin Saif al Barhi, Director General of Maritime Affairs at MTCIT, earlier said that yacht tourism is a vital component that enhances marine tourism in the sultanate.

"Tourists are drawn to explore the rich marine life along Oman's coasts, including renowned destinations such as the Dimaniyat Islands, the Bandar al Khiran area, and other popular sites."

Currently, there are six marinas in operation.



Dhofar International Development And Investment Holding Company (SAOG) AND ITS SUBSIDIARIES

P.O.Box 2163, Salalah, Postal Code 211, Sultanate of Oman, Tel: 23295400, Fax: 23291500, Email: didico@omantel.net.om, Website: www.didic.com

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE THREE MONTHS ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the Un-audited Financial Results of Dhofar International Development & Investment Holding Company SAOG ("DIDIC") for the period ending 31st March 2025.

During the first three months of 2025 Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) was down by 210 points and closed at 4367.0280 points as on 31st March, 2025 which is a 4.58% decrease over the three months period. During this period, however, the Company's investments in equities at a group level recorded a marginal increase of RO 0.004 million.

Group Consolidated Performance

During the three months period ending 31st March 2025, Net Profits were RO 3.741 million and the total comprehensive income attributable to our shareholders amounted to RO 1.857 million as compared to net profit of RO 3.153 million and total comprehensive profit of RO 3.322 million for the same period in 2024.

The Group ended the first three months of 2025 with total assets of RO 229.948 million, a marginal increase of 0.55% while shareholders' equity of RO 139.418 million registered an increase of 3.09% from the first three months of 2024 where total assets amounted to RO 228.691 million and shareholders' equity attributable to our shareholders was RO 135.243 million.

Performance of Key Associates

Bank Dhofar, our banking associate, reported after tax net profit of RO 12.16 million for the three months period ended

31 March 2025 as compared to RO 10.81 million for the same period in 2024, representing an increase of 12.49%. The net interest income and net income from Islamic financing activities and investments increased to RO 29.095 million compared to RO 28.789 million during same period of 2024 registering an increase of 1.06%. Net fees and commission income for the period was RO 7.757 million which was higher by 16.89% as compared to same period last year. Net loans and advances including Islamic financing receivables witnessed an increase of 10.08% and reached RO 4.08 billion as at 31 March 2025 as compared to RO 3.71 billion as at 31 March 2024. Similarly, customer deposits including Islamic deposits, significantly increased by 19.01% to 4.16 billion compared to comparative period of last year. Total shareholders' equity in the bank registered a marginal increase of 1.58%, increasing to RO 571.635 million from RO 562.718 million a year prior.

Dhofar Insurance, our insurance associate recorded a marginal increase of 2.85% in its insurance revenue to RO 23.80 million from RO 23.14 million a year earlier for the three months period. Its insurance service results were similarly up by 4.80% from a net revenue of RO 1.558 million to a net revenue of RO 1.633 million. However, its net insurance finance results were at a net expense of RO 0.333 million in 2025 for the first three months, from a net expense of RO 0.080 million in 2024. It reported net profit of RO 1.900 million for this period which was higher by 6.02% as

compared to net profit of RO 1.792 million a year earlier. The shareholders' equity has increased by 3%, from RO 38.034 million as at 31 March 2024 to RO 39.168 million as at 31 March 2025.

Oman Investment & Finance Company, our billing and collection associate that has also ventured into money exchange and contracting operations through specialized subsidiaries, had its revenue dropped in its group operations in the first three months of 2025 by 11.31%. Net profits were lower by 34.46% at RO 1.651 million from RO 2.520 million a year earlier. The Shareholder's equity increased by 17.29%, from RO 30.974 million as at 31 March 2024 to RO 36.329 million as at 31 March 2025.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the board of directors, I would like to extend our gratitude to the leadership of the FSA, CBO and MOCI for their continued support. I would also like to thank the management teams of DIDIC, our subsidiaries and associate companies for all their hard work and dedication.

Finally, we wish our country continued safety and stability under the wise leadership and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, may God protect him and prolong his life.

Khalid Bin Mustahail Ahmed Al Mashani
Chairman

UN-AUDITED CONSOLIDATED AND PARENT COMPANY'S FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

At 31 March 2025 (Expressed in Omani Rial)

	Group 2025	Parent Company 2025	Group 2024	Parent Company 2024
ASSETS				
Cash and bank balances	455,287	404,159	879,409	216,169
Receivables and prepayments	7,725,934	14,480,512	8,366,970	14,401,943
Inventories	-	-	9,778	-
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss				
-Investment in equities	38,344,282	23,632,942	39,189,402	23,894,921
-Investment in term deposits	-	-	730,000	730,000
Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income	1,390,194	-	1,827,896	-
Investment in subsidiaries	-	765,692	-	1,534,094
Investment in associates	176,895,046	176,895,046	172,398,080	172,398,080
Loan to subsidiary	-	3,600,000	-	4,950,000
Investment properties	4,675,908	247,212	247,212	247,212
Property and equipment	461,308	461,307	5,041,639	503,621
Total assets	229,947,959	220,486,870	228,690,586	218,876,040
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Share capital	54,472,000	54,472,000	54,472,000	54,472,000
Legal reserve	11,919,314	11,919,314	11,031,792	11,031,792
General reserve	7,070,404	7,070,404	7,070,404	7,070,404
Investment revaluation reserve	(4,319,084)	(4,319,084)	(2,918,455)	(2,918,455)
Retained earnings	70,275,253	69,866,666	65,587,023	65,178,436
Total equity due to shareholders of the Parent company	139,417,887	139,009,300	135,242,764	134,834,177
LIABILITIES				
Loans and borrowings	88,493,749	79,532,015	89,988,833	81,027,098
Other liabilities	2,005,078	1,927,444	3,296,752	2,907,864
Income tax payable	31,245	18,111	162,237	106,901
Total liabilities	90,530,072	81,477,570	93,447,822	84,041,863
Total equity and liabilities	229,947,959	220,486,870	228,690,586	218,876,040
Net assets per share	0.341	0.340	0.330	0.329

UN- AUDITED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

for the period ended 31 March 2025 (Expressed in Omani Rial)

	Group 2025	Parent Company 2025	Group 2024	Parent Company 2024
INCOME				
Dividend income	1,062,505	1,051,208	1,057,396	997,131
Income of a subsidiary	45,000	-	45,000	-
Realised (loss)/gain on sale of financial assets	4,800	4,800	-	-
Unrealised gain/(loss) on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	4,229	1,558	(96,246)	(83,802)
Interest income	8,218	152,656	17,985	175,154
Other income	40,146	21,016	79,251	23,069
Total income	1,164,898	1,231,238	1,103,386	1,111,552
EXPENSES				
Administrative and general expenses	(405,543)	(343,555)	(380,836)	(319,794)
Depreciation on property and equipment and investment properties	(34,671)	(11,456)	(41,238)	(16,665)
Total expenses	(440,214)	(355,011)	(422,074)	(336,459)
Operating profit/(loss)	724,684	876,227	681,312	775,093
Finance costs	(1,515,285)	(1,483,355)	(1,585,026)	(1,438,293)
Deferred finance costs	(23,730)	(23,730)	(23,729)	(23,729)
Share of loss from subsidiaries	-	(183,473)	-	(240,514)
Share of profit from associates	4,555,308	4,555,308	4,187,069	4,187,069
Profit before tax for the year	3,740,978	3,740,977	3,259,626	3,259,626
Income tax	-	-	(106,901)	(106,901)
Net profit after tax for the year	3,740,978	3,740,977	3,152,725	3,152,725
Other comprehensive income				
Items that will not be subsequently reclassified to profit or loss				
Changes in financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income	(128,654)	-	920,074	-
Share of other comprehensive income of subsidiaries	-	(128,654)	-	920,074
Share of other comprehensive income of associates	(1,755,760)	(1,755,760)	(750,681)	(750,681)
Other comprehensive income for the year	(1,884,414)	(1,884,414)	169,393	169,393
Total comprehensive income for the year	1,856,564	1,856,563	3,322,118	3,322,118
Basic earnings per share	0.009	0.009	0.008	0.008

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request the company in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request.

MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,376.434
Sensex	82,429.90
FOREX RATES (RO1 equals)	
India	220.65
Pakistan	730.62
Bangladesh	315.18
Philippines	144.83
Sri Lanka	776.08

*Rates as on May 12
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Gold prices decline 3% after easing trade tensions

The ounce price of gold fell 3% to around \$3,220 as of 0815GMT on Monday, following the announcement of the US-China trade deal to cut tariffs.

The US and China said in a joint statement on Monday that they had agreed to a broad rollback of punitive tariffs for the initial 90 days.

The US will reduce its tariffs on Chinese products from 145% to 30%, while China's will be reduced from 125% to 10% by May 14.

The price of gold per ounce has recently reached historical highs, exceeding \$3,400 amid global trade tensions caused by US tariffs. In early April, the US decided to impose high tariffs on all countries of at least 10%.

The US will reduce its tariffs on Chinese products from 145% to 30%, while China's will be reduced from 125% to 10% by May 14.

Sustainability, energy transition take centre stage at OPES and OSW 2025

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Petroleum and Energy Show (OPES) and Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) 2025 – the sultanate's largest energy and sustainability events – were officially inaugurated on Monday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. The events are being held under the supervision of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and will run until May 14.

The opening ceremony took place under the patronage of H H Sayyid Taimur bin Asaad al Said, in the presence of several distinguished ministers, ambassadors, senior officials, and representatives from various concerned entities, underscoring the growing national interest in a sustainable and balanced future.

This year marks the first time that OSW and OPES are being held together as an integrated platform, emphasising the importance of securing and sustaining energy while showcasing the sultanate's commitment to achieving a balanced and progressive future.

Commenting on the significance of the events, H E Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, said, "OPES and OSW 2025 are nationally significant events that underscore Oman's ongoing commitment to advancing sus-



Oman Net Zero Centre launched

Our Correspondent
Muscat

During the Oman Petroleum and Energy Show (OPES) and Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) 2025, H H Sayyid Taimur bin Asaad al Said on Monday inaugurated the Oman Net Zero Centre, which operates under the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

The newly launched centre focuses on several key areas, particularly the preparation and continuous updating of the na-

tional plan to achieve net-zero emissions. It also oversees the implementation of relevant projects and initiatives, offering support and consultation to institutions and stakeholders to help meet national net-zero targets.

In addition, the centre is responsible for defining and updating Oman's national strategy to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. It provides technical guidance and support to both government bodies and private sector organisations on

the net-zero transition and energy efficiency.

The Oman Net Zero Centre also monitors progress, promotes awareness, and builds capacity to ensure the effective implementation of related programmes and initiatives. These efforts reflect a strong commitment to addressing climate change and advancing clean, renewable energy solutions.

The initiative aligns with Oman's pledge to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

tainable energy, and achieving a balance between innovation, economic growth, and environmental preservation. The OPES 2025 reinforces the country's vision for a sustainable energy future by supporting efforts to reduce carbon emissions and achieve carbon neutrality. OSW 2025 is closely aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, playing a vital role in promoting the green circular economy and achieving the nation's ambition to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050."

"Together, these events serve as dynamic platforms for knowledge exchange, fostering innova-

tion, and building strategic partnerships – driving national capacity development and enhancing economic resilience."

The theme of Oman Sustainability Week 2025 is 'Sustainable Growth - Balancing Progress and Preservation', while the theme for the Oman Petroleum and Energy Show 2025 is 'Navigating the Energy Transition through Innovation in Oil and Gas'. This joint platform aims to foster meaningful discussions and innovative solutions in these critical areas.

Throughout the week, OPES and OSW 2025 will feature a dynamic programme comprising exhibitions, strategic conferences, C-level roundtables, technical workshops, and site visits.

The event is expected to attract more than 30,000 visits from over 50 countries, with participation from more than 350 exhibiting companies and 2,400 delegates representing diverse global sectors. This strong international turnout highlights Oman's growing prominence as a hub for global dialogue on energy and sustainability. Moreover, the influx of international participants is anticipated to generate significant economic value across peripheral sectors such as tourism, hospitality, and transport, contributing meaningfully to the nation's broader diversification goals.



OQEP signs over RO21mn contracts with local firms

Our Correspondent
Muscat

OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP), the leading exploration and production company listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange, announced on Monday the signing of four major contracts exceeding RO21mn during its participation in the Oman Petroleum & Energy Show 2025.

These agreements with local companies and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) operating in Oman's concession areas reflect OQEP's commitment to enhancing In-Country Value (ICV).

OQEP signed a contract with Technical Services Company to

develop a fully integrated residential camp within the Bisat Project at Block 60. The contract includes engineering, manufacturing, procurement, installation and operational services, with completion scheduled for June 2026. The facility, designed to accommodate between 360 and 460 individuals, will directly support Bisat field operations while contributing to Omanisation objectives.

In addition, OQEP concluded a two-year agreement with Shalim Oil Company, with an option to extend for a further two years. This strategic decision will ensure the continued employment of over 80 former Shalim staff, reinforcing OQEP's

commitment to workforce stability and long-term local engagement in its oil fields. Shalim, a recognised local service provider, specialises in light land drilling rigs for Block 60, OQEP's principal hydrocarbon concession.

A third contract was signed with Rimal Al Sahara Oil & Gas to supply casing materials for Blocks 60 and 48 under a four-year agreement, with an optional two-year extension.

This collaboration reflects OQEP's growing capability in providing essential well construction components, while supporting local procurement and reducing reliance on imports.

Asyad launches Global Impact Disclosure Framework in partnership with JP Morgan

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Asyad Group has announced the launch of its Global Impact Disclosure Framework, becoming the first Omani company – and the second global logistics provider – to disclose its sustainability impact through the global framework established by the Impact Disclosure Taskforce, in collaboration with JP Morgan's Development Finance Institution.

As one of the first logistics providers in the region to adopt this advanced international framework, Asyad is setting new standards for assessing the impact of its development projects in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This disclosure strengthens investor confidence in global financial markets and catalyses further green investments in Oman.

The launch was revealed during Asyad Group's participation in Oman Sustainability Week 2025, where the company was also presented with the Platinum Award in ESG for the second consecutive year. This accolade recognises Asyad's leadership in embedding sustainability standards across its operations and



Asyad is setting new standards for assessing the impact of its development projects in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

its innovative green logistics solutions contributing to Oman's Net Zero 2050 targets.

Essam al Sheibany, Vice President of Sustainability at Asyad Group, emphasised that the disclosure reflects the Group's strong commitment to sustainable development and effective governance. He stated, "We believe that transparency is the foundation of real progress. This framework provides clearer visibility into the environmental and social impact of our logistics investments, enabling stronger

partnerships and reinforcing our role in shaping a low-emissions, future-ready logistics sector."

Asyad's presence at Oman Sustainability Week 2025 was marked by strategic engagement across multiple platforms. Most notably, the Group announced that Marsa LNG would join the Sohar Port and Free Zone Net Zero Alliance – reaffirming its commitment to clean energy practices and supporting Oman's transition to a low-carbon economy.

At its pavilion at the OSW

2025, Asyad is hosting 'Asyad's Sustainability Talks', a curated series of high-level fireside chats, panel discussions, and keynote speeches focused on clean mobility, low-carbon logistics, and regional integration. These sessions have brought together senior government officials – including H E Eng Khamis al Shamakhi, Undersecretary for Transport at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, alongside international experts and thought leaders.

The main session of the week, 'Oman's Green Transport Ambitions', featured the Undersecretary for Transport, who outlined the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 in the national shift towards low-carbon transport systems. He highlighted developments in green mobility, public transport infrastructure, and emissions reduction across the maritime and aviation sectors.

As part of its contributions to clean marine fuel research, Asyad is assessing alternatives such as green ammonia and methanol, supporting the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) goal of reducing global maritime emissions by 50% by 2050.

Global oil prices jump by 3% as US, China reach tariff cuts agreement

Oil prices surged by 3% early on Monday after the United States and China agreed to cut tariffs on each other, easing concerns over global trade and the broader economy.

The US benchmark, WTI Crude, was up by 3.13% at \$62.93. The international benchmark, Brent Crude, rose above \$65 per barrel and was trading at \$65.79, an increase of

2.93% on the day.

Markets were awaiting the outcome of initial US-China trade talks held in Geneva over the weekend.

Early on Monday, the White House announced that the United States and China would each reduce tariffs by 115% while maintaining an additional 10% tariff. Other US trade measures would remain in place.



The US and China will suspend the tariffs for 90 days, except for the 10% baseline rate.

He Lifeng, Vice Premier of the State Council of China, US Secretary of the Treasury, Scott Bessent, and United States Trade Representative, Jamieson Greer, will continue to engage in future discussions.

"Crude oil has risen alongside other pro-cyclical commodities

following news that the US and China will temporarily reduce tariffs on each other's goods, thereby easing fears of a prolonged economic downturn that could suppress demand," commented Ole Hansen, head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank, on Monday.

"WTI and Brent may test key resistance levels near \$65 and \$69, respectively. However, the

key question is whether today's announcement represents peak optimism, considering the low probability of a complete US reversal on its stance towards China," the strategist added.

The surge in oil prices was mirrored by equity markets on Monday, with Dow futures also climbing in response to news that the US and China are, for now.

US, China agree to slash tariffs in trade-war truce

Ben Werschkul

Two days of high-stakes talks between the US and China have led to a 90-day pause on tariffs, with duties set to drop by 115% on both sides by Wednesday.

The move will drop American tariffs on Chinese goods, which currently run as high as 145%, to 30% and slash China's retaliatory duties from 125% to 10%.

It marked a dramatic pause in a trade war between the two nations that had been the equivalent of an embargo with a steep drop in trading activity seen between the two nations.

It also gives markets what they wanted: a de-escalation. US futures markets surged higher in pre-market trading.

"Neither side wants a decoupling," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Monday morning to reporters after saying Sunday that the talks had yielded "substantial progress."

He added that the 90-day pause could also be extended, saying "as long as there is good faith effort, engagement, and constructive dialogue, then we will keep moving forward."

The agreement was announced in a joint statement from the two nations that suggested alternating talks in China and the United States in the weeks ahead. "The Parties will establish a mechanism to continue discussions about economic and trade relations," the statement added.

The closely-watched talks stretched over two days, with Secretary Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer representing the US side and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng leading the talks from the Chi-



US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer hold a press briefing on trade talks with China in Geneva on Monday

The agreement will drop American tariffs on Chinese goods, which currently run as high as 145%, to 30% and slash China's retaliatory duties from 125% to 10% for 90 days

nese side.

Chinese state-run media also published the joint statement on Monday and added that the talks had seen "major consensus [with] substantial progress during the talks."

President Trump helped open the door to de-escalation in recent days. He previously floated a possible 80% rate on the US side while hailing the progress in Switzerland with a post Saturday that it had been "a very good meeting today with China... a total reset negotiated in a friendly, but constructive, manner."

A move 'towards resolving' tensions

The weekend's talks are expected to be the first in a drawn-out process of negotiations that will span an array of complex issues, from intellectual property to currency manipulation to steel "dumping" to semiconductors to agriculture to fentanyl.

Fentanyl was a key issue in this weekend's talks, with Bessent calling the issue the "upside surprise for me from this weekend." The Chinese sent a deputy minister to the talks to directly address the issue. For now, the 20% duties that Trump

imposed on China over fentanyl to begin his term will remain in place - which is why US duties are now moving to 30% compared to China's 10%.

Other sector-specific duties that the US imposed on China before Trump took office this year on "strategic sectors" like electric vehicles and steel are also remaining in place and are not changed by Monday's announcement, according to US officials.

In his own comments, Bessent added a key outstanding issue for him: "We have identified 5 or 6 strategic industries and supply chain vulnerabilities and we will continue moving towards US independence or reliable supplies of allies on those."

It was a weekend that came after days of de-escalation from Trump and his team and a

weeks-long diplomatic dance in which both sides ratcheted up tariffs to an effective trade embargo and tried to position the other as more in need of a deal.

As recently as last Wednesday, Trump said that the US is "losing nothing" by not trading with Beijing and was also asked about the Chinese contention that the 145% tariff needed to be brought down before substantive negotiations could start and whether he was open to that, with the president simply answering, "No."

But his tone began to shift. By Thursday, Trump said regarding tariffs that, if this weekend's talks go well, "you know it's coming down." By Friday morning, he had opened the door to a lowering further, posting that a lowering of tariffs to 80% "seems right."

(Source: Yahoo Finance)



US President Donald Trump

Trump vows to cut US drug prices; pharma stocks fall

Washington, US - The shares of drug companies sharply dropped around the world after US President Donald Trump said he wants to lower the cost of prescription medicines in the US. He wants prices to be similar to those in other countries. Investors are worried that this could reduce profits for these companies.

According to Bloomberg, drug companies in Europe like Novo Nordisk, AstraZeneca, and Roche saw their share prices fall. In Japan, the medicine group in the Topix Index had its biggest one-day drop since August. US drugmakers such as Eli Lilly, Pfizer, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Merck also saw their shares go down before the New York stock market opened.

Trump posted on social media that he plans to sign an order to cut drug prices at 9am on Monday in Washington. He didn't give details about how the order will work or if there will be any limits.

People in the US pay more for medicines than anyone else in the world. This helps companies make new drugs but also leads to higher profits. The US government already talks with compa-

nies to lower the cost of some expensive drugs under a law passed in 2022 by former President Joe Biden. More drugs are expected to be included every year.

Some companies, like Japan's Takeda, Astellas, and Otsuka, earn a lot of money from the US market, so they could be hit hard by these changes, said health expert Hidemaru Yamaguchi from Citigroup in Japan.

In Europe, drug companies such as Novo Nordisk, AstraZeneca, Roche, Novartis, GSK, and Sanofi make 40% to 60% of their money from the US, according to Bloomberg.

Novo Nordisk's shares dropped by as much as 8.6% in early trading. The fall also came after a study showed that Eli Lilly's obesity drug, Zepbound, helped people lose about two inches more from their waist than Novo's drug, Wegovy.

This isn't the first time Trump has tried to reduce drug prices. During his first term, he also suggested a plan to limit the cost of drugs for Medicare. But the courts stopped that plan after drug companies said it didn't follow proper legal steps.

Agencies

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) Announce the following Tender:

Sr.No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Floating Date	Last date for obtaining the documents	Bid Submission Date	Requirements from participants	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT)(RO)
1	44/2025	Inspection, Maintenance and Calibration OETC Grid Stations (MIS & DFR) EOT Crane.	13/05/2025	27/05/2025	01/07/2025	Local Companies with Experience in Same Field, Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	52/500

Participation:

Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity Apply on E-tendering.

Buying the Tender:

By E-Tendering System.

Fees:

Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of documents. (Payment Through Bank Transfer), SMEs are exempted from tender's fees.

The deadline for clarification:

Before (21) Days from bid submission date.

Submission:

The submission of hard copy will be only for Bid Bond & other documents by E-Tendering

Terms and conditions:

- Specifying the name of the Company or whatever refers to in the Bid Guarantee Envelope.
- The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from the bid submission date.
- The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from bid submission date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). Small & Medium Enterprises are exempted from the submission of 1% of the bid bond.
- Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted.
- OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.

Offer:

The bid bond should be submitted in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.

Company Address:

Muscat - Al Mawaleh- Road No: 2153 - Building No. 4230 Block No: 321 - Contact Details: **92217856**

Email Website:

tenders@omangrid.com
www.omangrid.com / link of E-Tendering System
https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx

إعلان طرح مناقصات

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصة التالية:

رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	تاريخ الطرح	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	ثمن الوثيقة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (ر.ع.)
٢٠٢٥/٤٤	فحص وصيانة ومعايرة الرافعات العلوية في محطات الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء.	٢٠٢٥/٠٥/١٣	٢٠٢٥/٠٥/٢٧	٢٠٢٥/٧/٠١	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها سجل تجاري ساري المفعول.	٥٢/٥٠٠

الإشترك

يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة بعد تقديم الطلب عن طريق نظام المناقص الإلكتروني.

طريقة الشراء

من خلال نظام المناقص الإلكتروني.

الرسوم

مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة، لا ترد. (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي)، تُعفى المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة من دفع ثمن الوثيقة.

آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات

قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات.

الشروط والخصائص

- تحديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على المظروف.
- أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء.
- إرفاق تأمين في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (١%) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء.
- وعنوان باسم الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء، تُعفى المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة من تسليم الضمان المصرفي.
- كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه.
- الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مقيدة بقبول أقل العروض أو أي عطاء آخر.

العرض المقدم

يجب وضع الضمان البنكي للعطاء فقط في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بمعنى الشركة قبل الساعة الأصباح من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات.

عنوان الشركة

عنوان الشركة : محافظة مسقط - الموالح رقم السكة ٢١٥٣ مبنى رقم ٤٢٣ - تفاصيل التواصل : ٩٢٢١٧٨٥٦
tenders@omangrid.com
www.omangrid.com
link of E-Tendering System
https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx

Journeys seem rewarding with elegant, powerful Toyota Camry

Since its global debut in 1982, the Toyota Camry has become a true icon evolving over nine impressive generations to deliver the perfect blend of performance, design and reliability. Today, the Camry redefines refinement with a striking new look, intelligent hybrid power and next-generation features that make every drive feel exceptional.

At the heart of the new Camry is Toyota's advanced Hybrid System and cutting-edge TNGA-K platform. This dynamic foundation enhances agility and stability with a lower centre of gravity and increased body rigidity, ensuring a drive that feels more connected, responsive and rewarding. Whether you are cruising in the 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine with 201 hp or opting for the electrified hybrid delivering a total of 226 hp, the Camry gives you power to move and precision to enjoy, backed by an eight-speed automatic or smooth ECVT transmission.

Drivers can tailor their drive with selectable modes like NORMAL, ECO and SPORT, while Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV) drivers gain the added flexibility of EV mode ideal for quiet, efficient urban driving. This personalisation brings a whole new level of engagement behind the wheel.

On the outside, the new Camry turns heads with its sleek, confident stance. The bold Hammer Head front design and wide lower grille create a dynamic first impression, while advanced Bi-LED and multi-eye LED headlights add both beauty and brightness perfect for enhancing night time visibility.

Step inside, and the Camry greets you with a cabin crafted to delight. Designed with a sporty, driver-focused layout, the interior



is elevated by premium materials, tasteful metallic accents and a harmonious layout that blends comfort with sophistication. Choose from refined fabric or luxurious leather in a range of colours that complement the Camry's stylish exterior.

Technology meets elegance in the Camry's thoughtfully appointed interior. A high-definition 12.3-inch touchscreen multimedia system with wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto makes connectivity effortless. Other standout features include a full-colour head-up display, wireless smartphone charging, a digital rear-view mirror and immersive audio systems, either a 9-speaker JBL surround sound system or a 6-speaker option. The panoramic roof, ventilated and power-adjustable front seats, dual-zone climate control with rear vents and 60/40 split-fold rear seats ensure every journey is as comfortable as it is convenient.

Safety, a core Toyota promise, is more advanced than ever in the new Camry. The latest Toyota Safety Sense suite includes a Pre-Collision System with extended detection for pedestrians, cyclists and even motorcycles. It also features Intersection Collision Avoidance, Emergency Steering Assist and low-speed

Acceleration Suppression. Dynamic Radar Cruise Control now responds faster and more intuitively, while Lane Tracing Assist, Lane Departure Alert and Automatic High-Beam systems add even more driving confidence.

To protect what matters most, the Camry also comes equipped with Safe Exit Assist using Blind Spot Monitoring, plus six SRS airbags, Vehicle Stability Control, Hill-start Assist Control, Rear Camera Detection and a Panoramic View Monitor. Parking is easier too, with Parking Assist Monitor, Parking Support Brake and more, turning tight spots into stress-free manoeuvres.

With every detail thoughtfully engineered, the new Toyota Camry is not just a car, it is a refined driving experience that raises the bar for the entire segment.

Specifications of vehicle imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions & fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories. Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications.



Majlish A'Shura hosts experts from UN High Commissioner for HR

Majlish A'Shura welcomed experts from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Monday as part of efforts to enhance cooperation and exchange expertise in the fields of legislation and human rights, contributing to Oman's ongoing efforts in this area.

The delegation was received by H E Dr Ahmed Ali al Saadi, head of the Legal and Legislative Committee of the Council, and in the presence of his deputy H E Talal Said al Maharbi. During the meeting, H E Saadi praised the role played by the High Commissioner in supporting human rights principles on an international level, reaffirming the Sultanate of Oman's commitment

This visit is part of the ongoing cooperation between Majlish A'Shura and various international bodies and organisations, aimed at exchanging experiences and enhancing transparency and legislative development for the public good

to continuing its efforts in protecting human rights within the framework of its national vision and existing legislation.

During the visit, both sides discussed ways to enhance technical cooperation and knowledge exchange, as well as addressed several issues of mutual interest,

particularly those related to the development of national legislation in line with international human rights standards.

The experts expressed their satisfaction with the existing laws and legislation in the Sultanate of Oman, noting that they align with the goals and objectives of the United Nations.

The delegation toured the council's premises, including the debating hall, where officials from the council's General Secretariat provided a detailed explanation of the Council's working mechanisms and legislative role, alongside an overview of the procedures followed in discussing draft laws and proposals during the Council's sessions.

This visit is part of the ongoing cooperation between Majlish A'Shura and various international bodies and organisations, aimed at exchanging experiences and enhancing transparency and legislative development for the public good.

OABC gets new office, new partner

The Oman American Business Council (OABC), a non-profit organisation dedicated to fostering business relationships between Oman and the United States, has announced Europcar Oman as its newest strategic partner.

As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, Europcar has generously sponsored the complete design and fit-out of OABC's new office in Hayy as Saruj, providing artwork, furniture, and greenery to create a welcoming and functional workspace.

This collaboration reflects Europcar's commitment to strengthening organisations that drive economic growth and meaningful engagement.

By supporting OABC's office upgrade, Europcar is enabling the



non-profit to expand its impact, enhance services for its members, and further its mission of connecting businesses in Oman and the United States.

"For years, we've worked alongside Europcar on projects like beach cleanups and industry-focused roundtable discussions,

and we've always valued their involvement with OABC," said Rebecca Olson, CEO of OABC.

"Now, with this generous support in setting up our new office, formalising our partnership was a natural next step. And just wait until you hear about Europcar's

next CSR initiative - it's all about connecting interns with local businesses for hands-on experience. We're proud to align with an organisation that constantly seeks ways to uplift the community - and follows through on it."

Rebecca continued, "As a non-profit, our mission is to equip businesses with the resources, connections, and platforms they need to grow. This sponsorship allows us to establish an inspiring and professional environment where we can better serve our members and strengthen bilateral business ties."

Europcar's contribution highlights its ongoing commitment to giving back to the community and supporting economic diversification in Oman.



OETC wins gold award at Oman Sustainability Week

Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sustainability principles and their integration across all operational plans and projects, the Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) has been awarded the Gold Award at the Oman Sustainability Week Awards ceremony.

The event - held under the patronage of H E Salim Nasser al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, on Sunday - was attended by a distinguished group of CEOs and representatives from public and private sector institutions.

This recognition came as part of Oman Sustainability Week 2025, which aims to showcase national efforts in sustainability, support initiatives that enhance quality of life, foster community development, protect the environment, and develop policies and frameworks aligned with Oman Vision 2040, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and global trends and goals on emissions reduction, environmental balance and sustainability.

OETC received the Gold Award in the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) sustainability category, competing alongside more than 29 institutions from both public and private sectors, who got shortlisted to the finals after successfully passing the required evaluation according to the framework approved by the Center for Sustainability and Excellence in Chicago, US.

The award highlights collective efforts, celebrates achievements, and underscores the commitment to national and global sustainable development targets. Commenting on the award, Saleh Nasser al Rumhi, OETC's CEO, emphasised the company's full dedication to advancing sustainability and aligning all its strategies accordingly. He noted that OETC has taken significant steps to embed sustainability into all its operations in line with both national directions and global priorities.

He added, "We recognise the importance of working within a clear framework guided by Oman Vision 2040, which places sustainability at the forefront to ensure inclusive and long-term development. At

OETC, we are committed to realizing this vision by reducing carbon emissions, implementing strategic projects, enhancing operational efficiency, supporting community development, and preserving environmental safety and sustainability, while also enabling economic growth and fostering a robust business environment."

Rumhi further stated that this recognition is a powerful motivation for OETC to continue positioning itself as a regional leader in sustainability. It also stands as a testament to the company's ongoing efforts to adopt global ESG best practices.

This achievement reaffirms OETC's intention to press forward with sustainable projects and expand its positive impact in support of Oman's vision for a prosperous and sustainable future. It is worth mentioning that OETC, a member of Nama Group, is the company responsible for the transmission and control of electricity across the Sultanate's network. The electricity is transmitted from production stations to distributed load centers in the governorates.

BMW 7 Series claims to be a symphony of modern luxury and timeless culture

In the quiet of early morning, the elegant BMW 7 Series rests at the edge of Riyam Park in Muscat, its sleek silhouette mirroring the curves of the iconic incense burner monument that crowns the park's hill.

Built in 1990 to commemorate Oman's 20th National Day, this towering censer pays homage to the nation's rich history in the frankincense trade, once a gift of kings and an emblem of prosperity.

The BMW 7 Series - with its stunning illuminated kidney grille and crystal headlights - is a nod to the same value and heritage that has stood the test of time. Inside, it's like stepping into a private oasis. The car's curved



display and ambient lighting create a sanctuary of modern luxury, blending the brand's traditional quality and contemporary design.

The smart tech and OS 8.5 ensure that every interaction is intuitive and engaging. The vehicle is a perfect aesthetic dance of old and new, where automotive heritage and forwardism collide in

perfect harmony. Here's to the road ahead, where every drive in the BMW 7 Series feels like stepping into a story waiting to be told.

Blending beautiful heritage with a forward-thinking design, the BMW 7 Series is an updated masterpiece for those who like to move the world and move with the times

Complex surgery repairs damaged aorta of accident victim in Muscat Private Hospital

A seat belt is always a lifesaving mechanism. With the experience of a complex life threatening operation, doctors from Muscat Private Hospital (MPH) urged all, even at back seats, to sport seat belts. This ensures the impact due to an accident to be less and thus have less sudden effect on the heart and lungs.

Mumtaz Ahmed - a Pakistani national - critically injured in a severe car crash on April 25 in Kalba, Musandam, was initially treated at a government hospital. Despite stabilising efforts, a serious tear in the aorta near his heart, coupled with rib and spine fractures and liver damage, made his condition life-threatening.

Due to overcrowded emergency cases in the government sector, he was shifted to Muscat Private Hospital.

A 12-member team of experts from Muscat Private Hospital performed a highly complex and life-saving vascular procedure for hours called TEVAR (Thoracic Endovascular Aortic Repair) - on a 38-year-



This is the first time that the Thoracic Endovascular Aortic Repair (TEVAR) has been performed in a private hospital in the country, showcasing advanced medical capabilities and swift emergency response

old road accident victim recently.

The complex operation involved teamwork involving the Cathlab, ICU, OT nurses and multiple departments including anaesthesia, radiology and administration.

This marks the first time the procedure has been performed in a private hospital in the country, showcasing advanced medical capabilities and swift emergency response.

Dr Ahmed Salim Mohammed al Aufi, Consultant Vascular and

Trauma Surgeon, led the multi-disciplinary team in performing the TEVAR procedure on May 3. "The operation was delicate and critical, but successful. The patient is stable, conscious, and responding well to physiotherapy," he said.

"This case also highlights the importance of wearing seatbelts in both front and back seats. He had to put stem of 12mm to stop the blood clotting."

He has severe complications including high blood pressure but we had all our resources to help him out of the danger.

Dr Raymond Elias, Medical Director, added, "This is a significant moment for Oman's private healthcare. The TEVAR case demonstrates not just medical innovation but commitment to saving lives."

Here he called for people to wear always seat belts so that the impact gets less.

Dr Zahra Ghanim Ahmed, Dr Amr Hassan, and CEO Hassan al Lawati also played key roles in the operation and coordination.

Lawait said, "This is a perfect example of Public-Private Partnership in healthcare, aligning with Oman Vision 2040. We don't compete - we complete each other in service of the nation. Behind every success are unsung heroes - our nurses, technicians, ambulance and lab teams."



Kaldi 850 launches summer beverages

New Seasonal Offerings Include Cranberry Ice Tea, Watermelon Lemonade, and Mango Passion Lemonade.

Kaldi 850, a brand known for its innovation in beverages and café experiences, has announced the release of three new drinks as part of its seasonal summer menu. The newly launched beverages - Cranberry Ice Tea, Watermelon Lemonade, and Mango Passion Lemonade - are designed to offer a refreshing escape from the summer heat.

The new drink selection combines bold flavours with a cooling twist, catering to customers seeking lighter and fruit-forward refreshments during the warmer

months.

"Our goal was to create drinks that not only quench thirst but also celebrate the vibrant taste of summer," said Paul Biswajit, General Manager, at Kaldi 850. "Each of these flavours brings something unique - from the tartness of cranberry to the tropical sweetness of mango and passion fruit."

The summer drinks are now available at all Kaldi 850 outlets and will be offered for a limited time only.

Kaldi 850 continues to evolve its seasonal offerings, keeping customer preferences and seasonal trends at the forefront of its beverage innovations.

OTE achieves milestone with delivery of 20 Haval H9 SUVs

Great Wall Motor (GWM) and OTE Group celebrated a major milestone with the ceremonial delivery of 20 brand-new Haval H9 SUVs at the Wattayah showroom, reaffirming their shared commitment to customer satisfaction, timely delivery, and world-class automotive experiences.

More deliveries are scheduled for this week.

The event marked a significant achievement in GWM's mission to meet the growing demand for its flagship 7-seater SUV in Oman. The Haval H9, known for its rugged 4x4 capabilities and luxurious interior, has rapidly become a favourite among customers who seek both adventure and comfort.

Engineered for Oman's terrains, the Haval H9 delivers powerful off-road performance, spacious seating for families, and cutting-edge features that elevate every journey. The delivery ceremony, attended by enthusiastic customers and senior GWM representatives, was a celebration of trust, reliability, and shared success.

"The Haval H9 continues to be a top choice for customers who want power, comfort, and reliability in one SUV," said a senior spokesperson from the OTE Group, the exclusive distributor



Haval H9, known for its rugged 4x4 capabilities and luxurious interior, has rapidly become a favourite among customers for adventure, comfort

of GWM in Oman. "This successful delivery is not just about numbers, but about the confidence our customers place in us. From booking to delivery and beyond, we're committed to delivering not just vehicles, but peace of mind."

The event also underscored GWM's ability to meet high demand with prompt delivery, backed by a strong service network, ready availability of spare parts, and a seamless ownership experience. Customers interested in the Haval H9 can now explore the latest inventory across GWM showrooms in Suhar, Salalah, Sinaw, Mabella, and Wattayah.

With test drives, expert sales consultants, and dedicated after-sales services, GWM ensures that every step - from selection to ownership - is smooth, transparent, and rewarding.

Great Wall Motor (GWM) is a global leader in intelligent and innovative automotive solutions.

Renowned for its premium SUVs, GWM combines bold design, cutting-edge technology, and top-tier safety features to deliver vehicles built for modern lifestyles. GWM also operates a regional parts distribution center in Jebel Ali to ensure timely access to essential components across the Middle East.

As the exclusive distributor of GWM in Oman, OTE Group offers exceptional customer service through a comprehensive network of over 2,000 employees and 200+ customer touchpoints. With a robust portfolio spanning automotive, electronics, and home appliances, OTE continues to be a trusted name in quality and reliability.



Technocrat A Mohammad Akbar Khan honoured in META 2025

In a heartfelt tribute to over two decades of leadership, innovation, and transformative impact, Ali Mohammad Akbar Khan, was honoured on May 8, at the Channel Summit META 2025 Gala Dinner, held at the Fairmont Bab al Bahr in Abu Dhabi.

The recognition marks a full-circle moment for Khan, who was among the original attendees of the inaugural DISTREE event in 2005 at Le Meridien Al Aqah Beach Resort, Fujairah. That event laid the foundation for what would become a defining platform for the consumer tech retail industry in the Middle East, Turkey, and Africa (META) region.

The award was presented by Farouk Hemraj, CEO of ChannelHub and the founder of DISTREE and Channel Summit, in acknowledgment of Khan's enduring contributions to the regional tech ecosystem. In a personal message shared with Khan ahead of the ceremony, Hemraj wrote: "Can you believe it has been nearly two decades since the first DISTREE event? Your presence at that inaugural gathering, coupled with your continued leadership and success, has been instrumental in shaping the electronics retail sector. Today, you are at the helm of companies that have become giants in the field, and your contributions have truly made a difference."

OAB, OHB sign pact to provide liquidity under Iskan platform

As part of its efforts to support social empowerment and enhance the quality of life for Omani citizens, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has signed a strategic partnership agreement with Oman Housing Bank (OHB) to provide liquidity under the 'Iskan' programme - a national initiative aimed at accelerating the processing of subsidised housing loan applications for citizens on the waiting list.

The signing ceremony was attended by Moosa bin Masoud al Jadidi, CEO of Oman Housing Bank, and Suleiman bin Hamed al Harthi, CEO of Oman Arab Bank.

This agreement reflects

OAB's ongoing commitment to playing a pivotal role in urban and social development across the sultanate by offering innovative financing solutions supported by advanced digital infrastructure and high-quality customer service. Through this partnership, OAB officially joined the 'Iskan' digital platform on Sunday, enabling citizens to submit applications directly through its branch network under the same terms approved by OHB.

The programme allows eligible citizens to obtain subsidised housing finance up to RO60,000, while those seeking to purchase residential units in Sultan Haitham City or inte-



grated city projects implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning can receive financing of up to RO80,000, in accordance with the conditions set by OHB.

OAB will begin receiving and evaluating housing finance applications under the programme after fully training its staff on the platform's procedures and electronic processing system to ensure a smooth and integrated customer experience. The bank's participation adds significant value to the programme, leveraging its extensive banking expertise and widespread presence across Oman's governorates, which will enhance service ac-

cessibility and help reduce waiting times - in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 goals for housing development and sustainable urban growth.

Since its launch, the 'Iskan' programme has succeeded in reducing waiting times from several years to less than six months, through a fully integrated digital process that automatically loads eligible applicants based on seniority and sends them SMS notifications with a direct application link, ensuring transparency and efficiency. The alliance between OHB and local banks, led by OAB, aims to finance more than 50,000 housing units within five years.

Argentina’s Supreme Court finds boxes of Nazi items in basement

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Argentina’s Supreme Court has found dozens of boxes filled with Nazi material among its archives in its basement.

The 83 boxes hold documents including postcards, photographs and notebooks, as well as propaganda material, the court said on Sunday.

Court employees discovered the material by chance while preparing for the creation of a museum.

“Upon opening one of the boxes, we identified material intended to consolidate and propagate Adolf Hitler’s ideology in Argentina during the Second World War,” the court said.

The court has invited Argentina’s Holocaust Museum to help document and preserve the materials.

Experts will also examine them for any clues that can ‘shed light on still-unknown aspects’ of the Holocaust, such as international financing networks used by the Nazis, the court said.



Officials inspect documents found at Argentina’s Supreme Court

The boxes were sent by the German embassy in Japan to Argentina during the World War II aboard a Japanese steamship, according to the history that the court was able to piece together.

Germany’s diplomatic mis-

sion in Argentina had claimed the boxes contained ‘personal effects’.

But customs authorities at the time randomly searched several boxes and found the Nazi material.

Concerned that the quantity and nature of the material could affect Argentina’s neutrality during the war, officials confiscated the 1941 shipment, the court said.

The case was then referred to the Supreme Court. It isn’t sure what action the court took at the time.

Argentina’s role during WWII

Although Argentina remained neutral for much of World War II, the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure site notes that a ‘significant portion of Argentina’s population was of German origin’ and that ‘Nazi propaganda was highly influential’ there.

Just months before the war ended, however, Argentina declared war against Japan and its ally, Germany.

Fleeing Nazi persecution in Europe, some 24,000 Jews entered Argentina between 1933 and 1943, according to the Holocaust Encyclopedia.

Another 20,000 Jews entered the country illegally.

Argentina’s President Juan Peron, who came to power in 1946, was a prominent Nazi sympathiser and the country became a haven for Nazi Germany’s war criminals after the end of World War II.

DW

Trump defends gift of jet from Qatar

Media said Trump would receive an aircraft from Qatar’s royal family to replace current Air Force One

Washington, D.C., US - US President Donald Trump on Sunday defended plans to receive a new luxury Boeing aircraft as a gift after media reported that he would receive an aircraft from Qatar’s royal family to replace the current Air Force One.

The Boeing 747-8 jumbo jet was described by the ABC News broadcaster in its scoop as a ‘flying palace’, saying it would possibly be the most costly present ever received by the US government.

Critics say acceptance of such a gift could violate strict rules on presents for US presidents and raise further questions regarding conflicts of interest with Trump’s family businesses and use of public office. Trump plans to travel to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates from Tuesday to Thursday.

What did Trump say?

In apparent confirmation of the reports, Trump said in a social media post late on Sunday, in which Qatar was not mentioned, that the plane was a temporary ‘gift’ that would go to the Defence Department.

Trump wrote that the opposition Democratic Party was wrong in opposing such a present, as it meant Air Force One could be replaced ‘free of charge’.

“They insist we pay, top dollar, for the plane,” the US president wrote. “Anybody can do that! The Dems are World Class Losers!!!!”

What have critics said about jet?

The reports have provoked criticism from both sides of the political aisle.

Laura Loomer, a far-right ally of Trump, said accepting the plane would be a ‘stain’ on the administration.

The Democratic National Committee said the move showed that Trump was using the presidential office for personal financial gain.

“While working families brace for higher costs and empty shelves, Trump is still focusing on enriching himself and his billionaire backers,” the DNC said in an email to the supporters.

Individual Democratic lawmakers have also slammed the plan.

Senator Chris Murphy called it ‘wildly illegal’, while Representative Kelly Morrison said such a gift amounted to ‘corruption in plain sight’ and an unethical, unconstitutional ‘bribe’.



Trump seemingly confirmed that he would receive the jet as a ‘gift’ but did not explicitly mention Qatar

US media have reported that the Trump administration is set to accept a new Air Force One from Qatar as a gift. Trump has called the deal a ‘transparent transaction’, but critics point to likely conflicts of interest

Could the gift be illegal?

The US constitution prohibits government officials from accepting gifts ‘from any King, Prince or foreign State’.

Sources told ABC, however, that the White House and Department of Justice claim the gift is legal and not a bribe because it is not given in exchange for any particular favour or action. They also say the gift would not be unconstitutional because it will first be passed on to the US Air Force before being turned over to the presidential library, and thus never given to an individual person as a present.

Qatar has said reports describing the jet as a gift ‘are inaccurate’.

Why replace Air Force One?

Trump has long been unhappy with the two highly customised Boeing 747-200B series aircraft currently used as Air Force One, the name given to any aircraft carrying the US president.

The current planes, equipped with highly sophisticated communication technology and anti-missile devices, have been in service since the 1990s.

Trump ordered two new aircraft from Boeing during his first term in office from 2017 to 2021, but delays and rising costs have made it unclear whether even one will be delivered by 2029, when his current term ends. A new Boeing 747-8 costs around US\$400mn, experts said.

DW

Sudan: RSF shelling kills 7 civilians

Khartoum, Sudan - The Sudanese army on Monday said the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) killed seven civilians in artillery shelling on El-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state in western Sudan.

A military statement said RSF shelling that began late on Sunday targeted residential neighbourhoods, killing seven people - including two women and children - and wounding at least 15 others who were taken to hospitals.

The RSF has not yet commented on the Sudanese army’s claims.

On Sunday, the army also said RSF shelling in the city killed nine people.

El-Fasher has witnessed intense fighting between the Sudanese army and RSF since May 2024, despite international warnings about the risks of violence in a city that serves as a key humanitarian hub for the five Darfur states.

The RSF and the army have been locked in a brutal power struggle since April 2023, resulting in thousands of deaths and pushing Sudan into one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises.

More than 20,000 people have been killed and 15mn displaced, according to UN and local figures.

Anadolu Agency

South Korea kick starts official campaign for presidential polls

Seoul, South Korea - The candidates for the presidential elections slated to take place on June 3 have started with their official campaign from Monday, as reported by Yonhap.

According to Yonhap, the polls show that Democratic Party (DP) candidate Lee Jae-myung has led the race.

With the election fervour, opinion surveys in South Korea have predicted that the voters are likely to end three years of conservative rule after former President Yoon Suk Yeol was ousted over his failed martial law bid in December.

Democratic Party candidate, Lee Jae-myung is the front-runner, trailed by People Power Party’s (PPP) candidate Kim Moon-soo, who has served as the former labour minister. According to Yonhap, his candidacy was confirmed only two days ago after an intraparty strife happened over a possible candidacy merger with former Prime Minister Han Duck-soo.

Notably, the promises made by Lee include improving the economy and people’s livelihoods, while Kim is expected to unite conservative voters to challenge the DP candidate.

In total, seven candidates have made their bids official during a two-day registration period through Sunday. Yonhap reported that seven people have registered their candidacies with the National Election Commission, the election watchdog.

It was observed that the candidates and their campaign teams have been allowed to give speeches in public places starting 7am till 11pm.

They are also allowed to distribute leaflets, other campaign materials, and put up campaign banners during the official campaign period.

Yonhap reported that Lee was assigned candidate No 1, followed by No 2 for Kim and No 4 for Lee Jun-seok of the minor New Reform Party.



As per law, candidate numbers are assigned in order of the number of seats a party holds in the National Assembly, starting with the party with the most seats, Yonhap mentioned.

Opinion surveys in South Korea have predicted that the voters are likely to end three years of conservative rule

It was reported that No 3 was left blank as the Rebuilding Korea Party did not field a candidate, while Nos 5-8 were given to two minor party candidates and two independents.

As per the report by Yonhap, the election, which was triggered by the impeachment of former President Yoon over his failed martial law bid in December, has shaped up to be a contest between the DP’s Lee and Kim.

ANI

Afghanistan: Taliban prohibits chess over religious concerns

Kabul, Afghanistan - The Taliban have banned chess in Afghanistan due to religious concerns, continuing their opposition to various forms of entertainment and sports, Khaama Press reported.

As per reports, the decision was taken due to ‘religious considerations’ and restrictions announced by the Taliban’s Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

The decision places chess-related activities on hold indefinitely in Afghanistan. Officials from the Taliban-led Ministry of Sports confirmed the suspension of chess activities on May 11, stating that the sport will remain banned in the nation until suitable responses are found regarding religious concerns.

As per reports, no activities related to chess would be allowed to resume without addressing these issues. Taliban’s Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice has also dissolved the Afghanistan Chess Federation, terming the game ‘haram’ (for-



bidden) as per the interpretation of the Islamic law, Khaama Press reported.

The decision follows a growing trend of restrictions imposed by the Taliban on cultural, social and sporting events in Afghanistan since it seized power. Before the Taliban’s announcement regarding the ban, several chess players and enthusiasts reportedly requested permission and financial support from the Taliban-led Ministry of Sports to continue their activities. However, the Taliban announced the ban, further complicating their efforts to play the game.

Chess, once considered an in-

tellectual sport in Afghanistan, has enjoyed a resurgence in recent years, with the national federation operating under the Taliban-led Ministry of Sports, Khaama Press reported. The Taliban’s recent stance, citing Islamic legal interpretations, demonstrated their broader strategy to restrict cultural and recreational activities in Afghanistan.

The ban on playing chess demonstrates the Taliban’s increasing restrictions on freedoms in Afghanistan. The Taliban have also imposed several restrictions on women in Afghanistan.

ANI

Hamas releases hostage, says ready to engage in negotiations

Ankara, Turkey - The Palestinian resistance group Hamas re-leased Israeli-American hostage Edan Alexander in Gaza on Monday evening.

Alexander was handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the southern city of Khan Younis, Israeli Channel 7 reported.

Alexander is the last known living US hostage held in Gaza.

After the release of the hostage, Hamas said that it is ready to immediately engage in negotiations to reach a lasting ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

"Hamas is ready to immediately begin negotiations to reach a comprehensive agreement for a sustainable ceasefire, the withdrawal of the occupation army, the end of the siege, the exchange of prisoners, and the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip," it said in a statement.

The Israeli army had said it will establish a safe corridor in Gaza along with a temporary ceasefire for the Israeli soldier's release, according to Israeli media on Monday.

The Israeli public broadcaster KAN said the army will cease its strikes in Gaza and establish a safe corridor effective 12pm local time (0900GMT) for the soldier's release.

Israeli Channel 12 also reported that the Israeli forces operating in Gaza were notified of a ceasefire for Hamas's release, which is set to begin at 12pm local time (0900GMT).

Meanwhile, US President



Donald Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff arrived in Israel on Monday ahead of the release of captive from Gaza.

The Israeli daily *Maariv* said Witkoff will meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer during his trip.

Israeli Channel 12 also reported that US Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs Adam Boehler will arrive in Israel, escorted by Alexander's mother.

Trump said on Sunday that Hamas's forthcoming release of the soldier marks a 'step taken in good faith' towards the US and regional mediators, signaling that

it might be the first of the 'final steps' needed to end Israel's war.

Alexander, a soldier who was serving in an elite infantry unit on the Gaza border, is known to be the last remaining American hostage in Gaza who is still alive.

According to Hamas, the soldier's release would be among several steps aimed at facilitating a ceasefire, reopening border crossings, and allowing humanitarian aid and relief supplies into the Gaza Strip.

18 more killed in Gaza

Meanwhile, the Israeli army killed at least 18 Palestinians, in-

cluding children, and injured several others in strikes across war-torn Gaza early on Monday.

A medical source said that 16 Palestinians were killed and others injured in airstrikes targeting a school sheltering displaced people in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip.

According to an Anadolu reporter, fighter jets struck the Fatima Bint Asad School twice, resulting in the fatalities, including women and children.

Local sources and witnesses said an Israeli warplane struck the second floor of the school, where hundreds of displaced civilians have sheltered.

Another medical source said a Palestinian girl was killed in an Israeli drone strike on a home in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza.

Another Palestinian succumbed to his injuries sustained from a previous Israeli strike in the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza, he added.

The Israeli army also blew up more homes in the eastern areas of the Al-Tuffah neighbourhood in northeastern Gaza City, according to witnesses.

At least 52,862 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's genocidal war since October 2023.

Anadolu Agency



Turkey: PKK announces intention to disband

Istanbul, Turkey - The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has said the Kurdish group plans to cease operations soon, news agencies close to the organisation reported on Monday.

The announcement comes after four decades of armed conflict with the Turkish government over autonomy for ethnic Kurds in the country.

Why did PKK decide to disband?

"The 12th PKK Congress has decided to dissolve the PKK's organisational structure and end its method of armed struggle," read a statement from the group carried by pro-Kurdish news agency ANF. Their most recent summit has 'brought the Kurdish issue to the point of resolution through democratic politics, thus completing its historical mission', they added.

After holding its congress last week, it appeared that the group was responding to a call by PKK founder Abdullah Ocalan to lay down their arms. Ocalan has been imprisoned on an island near Istanbul since 1999.

Over the weekend, Turkish

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had hinted the decision was close at hand, saying 'we are advancing with firm steps on the path to the goal of a terror-free Turkey'.

What is the PKK?

Kurds are an ethnic group of at least 30mn people who were split between Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran when Western allies redrew borders following the end of World War I.

The PKK was founded in 1978 with the stated goal of achieving an independent Kurdish state. However, in the 1990s they changed course, seeking only autonomy within Turkey.

Armed clashes with Turkish security over the decades, as well as attacks on civilians, led to the group being labelled a terrorist organisation by Ankara, as well as the United States and the European Union.

In turn, the Turkish government has been accused of destroying Kurdish villages and towns and forcing displacement of civilians in an effort to root out the group.

DW



Israel is prolonging Gaza war, hostage deal: Trump envoy

Jerusalem/ Istanbul - US President Donald Trump's special envoy to the Middle East said on Sunday that Israel is prolonging the war in the Gaza Strip and reaching a new ceasefire and hostage deal is the correct next step to take.

Steve Witkoff made the remarks during a meeting with families of Israeli hostages being held by Palestinian resistance factions in Gaza, according to Israel's Channel 12. The network did not specify the time or location of the meeting. "We want to bring the hostages home, but Is-

rael is not prepared to end the war," Witkoff said, according to sources present at the meeting.

He sharply criticised Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's handling of the war in Gaza, saying the Israeli government is 'prolonging the war, even though we do not see where further progress can be made'.

"Still, there is currently a window of opportunity that we hope Israel and all the mediators will take advantage of. We are putting pressure on all the mediators and doing everything to return the hostages," he added.

His remarks came as the Palestinian group Hamas said on Sunday that it will release Israeli-American soldier Alexander Idan after talks with the US administration amid efforts to reach a Gaza ceasefire.

Witkoff's comments came ahead of Trump's scheduled tour of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates from Tuesday through Friday. The itinerary does not include a visit to Israel. US and Israeli media have recently reported growing tensions between Trump and Netanyahu.

Afghan family sues German govt

Berlin, Germany - An Afghan family residing in Pakistan, whose names were not given due to fears of reprisal from the Taliban, told German public broadcaster ARD that they have filed a lawsuit against the government.

The family is suing, they said, because they have been waiting for over 18 months for a

visa they are legally entitled to.

The main plaintiff, assigned the pseudonym Aisha by ARD, is a writer and scientist who is well known to Berlin due to her function in the Afghan government before the Taliban swept back to power in 2021.

In October 2023, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) agreed to

take in Aisha and 13 of her relatives, including many small children. After many months of sending documents and security interviews, Aisha says they were told they were approved in March.

However, they were never given an appointment to go pick up their visas.

DW

How Europe can find its way back into West Asian diplomacy

By Abbas Araqchi

A century after Britain and France drew the modern borders of West Asia, Europe finds itself increasingly absent from the region's diplomatic future. In critical discussions - including the ongoing indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States - European diplomats are rarely more than passive observers. The colonial past is behind us, but Europe's current inertia, a product of its own strategic choices, is harming all sides.

When former US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - a nuclear agreement signed by Iran and six world powers including Britain, France, and Germany - the moment called for European resolve. Then-French finance minister Bruno Le Maire declared that Europe would not be a 'vassal' of Washington. Yet in practice, the EU3 (Britain, France, and Germany) failed to deliver. Promised economic benefits under the JCPOA never materialised, as European firms opted to comply with US sanctions rather than uphold their governments' commitments.

Today, the same pattern of strategic indecision plays out closer to home, where Washington engages Moscow with little regard for European capitals. Nowhere is this more visible than in the EU3's recent approach to the JCPOA's 'snapback' mechanism - once designed as a last-resort dispute tool, now wielded as diplomatic leverage. Such brinkmanship



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi

Under previous US administration, the EU3 acted as key intermediaries between Tehran and Washington, and Iran engaged constructively

risks triggering a global non-proliferation crisis that would most acutely affect the Europeans themselves.

Iran has made its position clear. We have formally warned all JCPOA signatories that abuse of the snapback mechanism will be met with consequences - not only ending Europe's role in the deal, but potentially escalating tensions beyond repair.

The EU3 must ask itself how it arrived at this dead end. Under the previous US administration, the EU3 acted as key intermediaries between Tehran and Washington, and Iran en-

gaged constructively. But when political will faltered in Washington, the Europeans gradually abandoned the effort. Instead of recalibrating, the EU3 adopted a confrontational posture - citing human rights, or Iran's lawful ties with Russia - as pretexts to distance themselves diplomatically. The result: Today, Iran is more sanctioned than entities officially labelled terrorists by the United Nations Security Council.

This approach has not only damaged state-level relations but also had real humanitarian consequences. For example, last year's EU ban on Iran's national airline - based on missile export allegations later denied by senior Ukrainian officials - severely limited access to life-saving medicines, including cancer treatments.

The contrast with earlier periods is stark. In 2003, after a devastating earthquake struck Bam, France quickly deployed a field hospital. But when a massive fire engulfed the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas in April -

threatening economic disruption across Central Asia and the Caucasus - only Russia offered immediate assistance. The EU's condolences came more than a week later, well after the crisis had been contained. This frayed relationship unfolds as the world watches the twin catastrophes of Gaza and Ukraine expose the West's double standards. Iranians, like others, see the selective outrage and ask: where is the consistency?

Yet despite tensions, the history between Iran and Europe remains rich. Cultural, academic, and economic ties - spanning energy, technology, the automotive sector, and environmental cooperation - have long proven fruitful. In diplomacy, European engagement has led to meaningful collaboration on issues ranging from Afghanistan to the Eastern Mediterranean.

Mindful of this history, I have extended multiple invitations to restart meaningful dialogue. At the United Nations General Assembly in New York last autumn, I proposed cooperation - not just on the nuclear file, but across all areas of mutual concern, including Ukraine. Those overtures were met with silence. Still, I remain committed to diplomacy.

Following recent consultations in Russia and China, I have expressed my readiness to visit Paris, Berlin, and London to begin a new chapter. This initiative has led to preliminary discussions at the deputy foreign minister level - a fragile but promising beginning. But time is running out.

(Source: IRNA)

UK hosting ‘critical’ talks on war in Ukraine

Representatives from France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the EU are joining the talks in London

London, UK - The United Kingdom was hosting European ministers on Monday for talks on the war in Ukraine.

London’s Foreign Office said that the ‘critical talks’ would focus on ‘repelling Russian aggression and bolstering European security and securing a just and lasting peace for Ukraine’.

The talks came two days after European leaders threatened Russian President Vladimir Putin with sanctions if he did not agree to a ceasefire in Ukraine.

Representatives from France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the EU will join British Foreign Secretary David Lammy in London. This is the sixth meeting of the so-called ‘Weimar+’ group, which was set up in February in response to Washington’s policy shift under the new term of President Donald Trump.

Lammy is likely to announce sanctions targeting those backing the Russian invasion, his ministry said.

The UK’s foreign secretary will be joined by his German, Spanish, and Polish counterparts. France will be represented by its minister for Europe, Benjamin Haddad. The EU’s top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, will also attend.

Ahead of the meeting, Lammy said the leaders were facing a ‘once-in-a-generation moment for the collective security



The UK is hosting a summit on ‘repelling Russian aggression’ in Ukraine

of our continent’.

“I have brought our friends and partners to London to make clear that we must stand together, allied in our protection of sovereignty, of peace and of Ukraine,” he added.

Meanwhile, Andrius Kubilius, the European Union’s defence commissioner, has said the bloc must step up production and innovation in the defence sector in collaboration with Ukraine to confront Russia’s aggression.

“To stop (Russia President

Andrius Kubilius, the EU’s defence commissioner, said the bloc must step up production and innovation in the defence sector in collaboration with Ukraine to confront Russia’s aggression

Vladimir) Putin, we need to produce more, we need to innovate more, and we need to do that together in the European Union and with Ukraine,” Kubilius, a former Lithuanian prime minister, told a defence industry forum in Brussels on Monday.

He said an EU-Ukraine task

force would convene for the first time on Monday ‘to assist integration of our defence industries, to facilitate development of joint projects or joint procurement processes’.

The commissioner said Ukraine’s innovations in the fields of drone production and

artificial intelligence could be a spur to Europe’s own defence industry.

“In the future, when Europe will need to take the whole responsibility for the defence of (the) European continent, Ukraine will be the most important part of the new European

security architecture,” he said.

China urges ‘binding’ peace deal

China has called for a ‘binding peace agreement acceptable to all parties’ to end the war in Ukraine, as Kyiv and its allies put pressure on Russia to agree to a ceasefire.

“We support all efforts conducive to peace and hope that the relevant parties will continue to resolve the issue through dialogue and negotiation,” Chinese

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said in a press briefing.

Zelenskyy has previously accused China of helping Russia’s war in Ukraine. In April, Ukraine said Kyiv’s troops had captured two Chinese citizens fighting alongside Russian forces in the eastern Donetsk region. Zelenskyy then claimed some 155 Chinese nationals were fighting against Ukrainians on their soil, but China has denied these claims.

Russia fires over 100 drones

Ukraine said Russia fired 108 drones overnight, despite attempts from Ukraine and its allies to reach a 30-day ceasefire agreement by Monday.

“From 11pm on May 11, the enemy attacked with 108 Shakheds and other types of drones,” the Air Force said, adding that ‘as of 08:30am, 55 drones were confirmed downed.’

The attack also included 30 stimulator drones which were lost along the way without hitting anything, the message on Telegram said.

The attacks wounded one person and damaged residential buildings in the southern Odesa region, the military administration said. The country’s state railway company had earlier said two other people had been injured in the Donetsk region.

DW

China releases white paper on new national security outline

Beijing, China - China on Monday rolled out a new national security outline for the ‘new era’, naming ‘people’s security as its ultimate goal’, and ‘political security as the fundamental task’.

The national security framework, guided by ‘national interests’, was detailed in a white paper released by the State Council Information Office, according to state-run Xinhua news agency.

“It is also one that serves and promotes high-quality development, supports further expansion of high-level opening up, and operates under the rule of



law,” said the paper, adding: “China’s national security adheres to reform and innovation as the driving force.”

The framework, described as a key component of ‘Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New

Era’, is divided into six sections, which include the implementation of the Global Security Initiative and the promotion of ‘common security’ around the world. “The Global Security Initiative highlights the security vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity, and brings a global outlook to the holistic approach to national security,” the paper noted.

China also emphasised balancing its own security needs with global stability and called for strengthened international security governance.

Anadolu Agency

BUSY GIVING CARE ON NURSES DAY



A nurse applies an intravenous drip to a patient at the International Mongolian Hospital of Inner Mongolia on Monday. The nurses of the hospital were busy at their posts on the International Nurses Day

Russian president calls for deeper ties with Islamic world

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday welcomed participants of the 16th KazanForum, calling for stronger ties between Russia and the Islamic world in finance, technology, and regional security.

“I cordially welcome you to hospitable Kazan,” Putin said in a message to guests of the International Economic Forum ‘Russia-Islamic World: KazanForum’, which will open on Tuesday in the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan.

The event, which runs through May 18, brings together delegations from over 100 countries.

Despite global tensions, Putin said Russia remains committed to expanding cooperation with Muslim-majority countries in economic, scientific, educational, and humanitarian fields.

“Joint work on developing a digital financial system will be the subject of a meeting of the Russia-Islamic World Strategic Vision Group with the participation



Russian President Vladimir Putin

of representatives of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation,” he added.

This year’s forum agenda includes trade, Islamic finance, halal standards, and participation-based financial models. Participants include officials from international organisations, governments, investment groups, and public institutions.

Putin also noted that this edition of the forum coincides with the 80th anniversary of the Soviet victory in World War II.

Anadolu Agency

South Africa’s DA fights new equity law in court

Johannesburg, SA - South Africa’s Democratic Alliance (DA), the second-biggest party in government, went to court last week to challenge new employment equity laws that impose strict hiring targets for non-white employees.

The Employment Equity Amendment Act updates a 1998 law requiring employers to set and report on diversity targets. It aims to boost the hiring of Black people and other groups in some industries.

Statistics cited by Reuters news agency show that South Africa’s companies are still dominated by white people at the top, with Black employees mainly occupying lower-level roles. Unemployment is much higher among Black citizens.

Companies with more than 50 employees must meet sectoral targets for the number of non-white people, women and disabled people in skilled and senior roles under the act - or justify their failure to do so.

For example, it requires 57.5% of top management to be Black, Indian or ‘coloured’ people, a term for biracial South Africans.



The measures have drawn fire from the US government under President Donald Trump, who cited ‘racist laws’ as part of his reasons to cut aid to South Africa and offer support to minority Afrikaners to relocate to the United States.

Debating fairness and power

The pro-business DA says the act violates anti-discrimination clauses in South Africa’s constitution and gives the state too much regulatory power.

Helen Zille, chair of the DA

Federal Council, said the new law would ‘drive unemployment up, economic growth down and make far more people marginalised in our economy than they already are’.

She added that the legislation is unfair and gives totalitarian powers of social engineering to the country’s labour minister.

Sabelo Myeni, a board member of the Institute of People Management, a human resource and people management fraternity, told DW that, ‘the Act prompts a thorough review of workforce demograph-

ics to ensure alignment with these targets’.

He suggested that business leaders are expected to not merely meet legal obligations, but proactively assess compliance with the intention ‘to foster an inclusive workplace that reflects South Africa’s diversity’.

Nqobani Mzizi, an academic and corporate governance executive, said the original law fell short of its transformation goals, so amending it made sense to ensure real transformation.

“I would not think that it is unfair because it still accommo-

dates the current, except that it says, let us progress and make sure that now in the next five years, organisations have something set to target against,” Mzizi said.

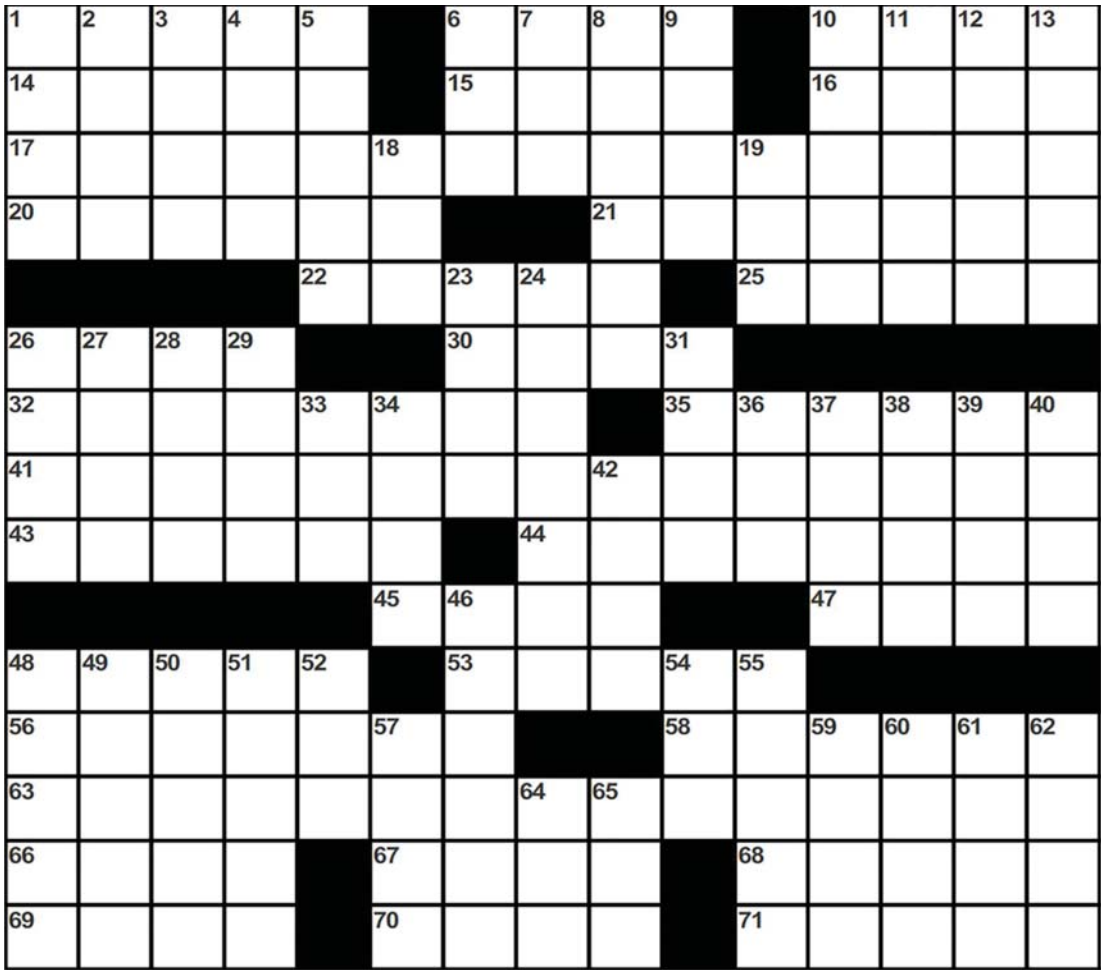
Sabelo Myeni noted that while the Act is a bold step towards addressing South Africa’s historical inequalities, its success depends on strategic implementation and complementary initiatives such as ‘balancing quotas with upskilling, fostering inclusive workplaces, and strengthening alternative frameworks like the BBEE (Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Equity)’.

The African National Congress (ANC), now the biggest party in a unity government formed after it lost its parliamentary majority in the 2024 elections, criticised the DA’s court challenge.

Fikile Mbalula, ANC secretary general, told reporters that ‘the DA’s hatred for transformation has become shameless’, adding that the ANC warned ahead of the 2024 general elections against the DA’s reluctance to transform.

DW

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Grads for life
 - 6) Choir recess
 - 10) Wee dogs
 - 14) Main competitor
 - 15) Like a lemon
 - 16) "There's _ day dawn-ing II
 - 17) Wasn't born yesterday
 - 20) Over fast?
 - 21) More eccentric
 - 22) Cranberry product
 - 25) Became white with fright
 - 26) Feels poorly
 - 30) Like a runt
 - 32) One of two writers
 - 35) Ideal place to live
 - 41) What some planes make
 - 43) Is disrespectful ver-bally
 - 44) Court handout
 - 45) Hearty soup
 - 47) Seven big wet things
 - 48) Genie holders
 - 53) Many-headed mythi-cal monster
 - 56) USA part
 - 58) Overrun

- 63) Comment
 - 66) Functions
 - 67) "Buona _" (Italian welcome)
 - 68) Car window sticker
 - 69) Salon option
 - 70) Touchy and sensitive
 - 71) Alcohol type
- DOWN**
- 1) Vessels of biblical pro-portions?
 - 2) Dryer accumulation
 - 3) Colored eyeball part
 - 4) Bryn_ College
 - 5) Serbs or Croats, e.g.
 - 6) Fire residue
 - 7) Luau dip
 - 8) Like some living rooms
 - 9) "Cogito_ sum"
 - 10) Coat for severe cold
 - 11) "Wait_ Dark"
 - 12) Fly-catching bird
 - 13) Fencing weapon
 - 18) Caddy contents, sometimes
 - 19) Alley_ (NBA pass-shot combo)
 - 23) "Once_ a time"
 - 24) Respectful bow
 - 26) Is directed?

- 27) A Com Belt state
- 28) Golden Triangle country
- 29) Has the evening meal
- 31) China's dollar
- 33) First thing into the pool, often
- 34) Snake sound
- 36) Dynamite stuff
- 37) Poems of praise
- 38) Maine tree
- 39) Andean civilization
- 40) Improves, as wine
- 42) Lecherlike
- 46) No longer frozen
- 48) Enjoy immensely
- 49) Entertain, in a way
- 50) Parking regulator
- 51) Light reflector
- 52) Greed, envy or pride
- 54) Get _ of (throw away)
- 55) Battery pole
- 57) Something to solve
- 59) Thing on a guitar neck
- 60) Make impressions?
- 61) Dance romantically
- 62) Turnpike tariff
- 64) Assn. relative
- 65) Sci-fi gun type

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You've shaken off all the lingering remnants of that serious attitude you were recently forced to wear, and not a moment too soon! After all, you have your reputation to think about. It's long past time to have some fun, and your only dilemma now is which charming offer to accept and which to postpone until tomorrow, or next week, if absolutely necessary.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

"Entertainer" is your middle name, and you really feel it today. You can create an audience out of just about anything too. There will be plenty of opportunities to strut your stuff over the next couple of days, and you should jump on all of them. You don't need an actual stage to perform. Try a dinner table, an office staff meeting, or in your own home. No matter where you are, give your fans what they came for.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You don't mind at all when someone else steps on your lines or tries to steal credit from you. It's like they don't understand that making things happen is more important than simple recognition. No one loves operating from behind the scenes as much as you do, being in charge of the whole production without hogging the spotlight. Bring something awesome to life and forget about what history has to say.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

This dutiful, responsible mood that has overtaken you has gone on for far too long, and you've decided that enough is finally enough. You're going to have some serious fun, and you're going to have it now! Whichever companion you invite along for the ride will be far beyond delighted. Feel free to say anything you might otherwise be hesitant about.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

No matter what your best friend says today, you need to trust your instincts now and ignore all the doubts and worries that inevitably come your way. If you do go against your intuition and it doesn't work out, you're likely to spend far too long wondering what might have happened. This way, at least you should know that there really was no other way for you to act or react.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

As is so often the case, you've got something to show the world. This time, the lesson involves the virtue of subtlety at a time when it's far easier for us all to just give in and make a show of things. Strutting your stuff the same way the rest of the planet's population is strutting theirs may be the easy thing to do, but that just doesn't tempt you. On the other hand.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

We all need to let loose and have some fun every now and then, especially you! It's not an all that uncommon state of affairs for you, because, after all, you can't live without variety. At the moment, though, you're even more freewheeling, optimistic, and ready to play than usual. There's just one thing to do: gather the troops and organize an absolutely unforgettable party!



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

A sweet, frivolous invitation could arrive today, one that involves nothing but fun. After the past week, you're unlikely to refuse or even think about refusing. You may need to talk your current sweetie into joining you, but you should be able to entice them with either a romantic dinner or an espresso at that little out-of-the-way cafe. You've got what it takes to have the best of both worlds.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You've already paid your dues, and nobody can argue with that. Your karmic account should now be firmly in the black, so it's definitely time for some much-deserved fun. Someone out there has noticed what you've been through lately, and they're more than willing to offer up their services to show you how to have fun again. Go along on whatever adventure they've planned.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Invitations aren't hard for you to come by, and it's not too hard to talk you into accepting them. The most attractive offer likely arrives via someone who wants to thank you for something sweet that you've never allowed yourself to be properly rewarded for. This time, don't refuse the gesture! Everyone deserves their time in the spotlight when it's earned, and you've certainly earned it this time.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You don't mind at all when someone else steps on your lines or tries to steal credit from you. It's like they don't understand that making things happen is more important than simple recognition. No one loves operating from behind the scenes as much as you do, being in charge of the whole production without hogging the spotlight. Bring something awesome to life and forget about what history has to say.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You do not expect it from them, but a coworker does you a tremendous favor today. You're not expecting this particular person to go out of their way for you, and you're pleasantly surprised to note that they also don't take a single bit of credit for it. They may try to be totally anonymous in their efforts. If so, don't make a big deal of it, but do offer them a wink and a smile.

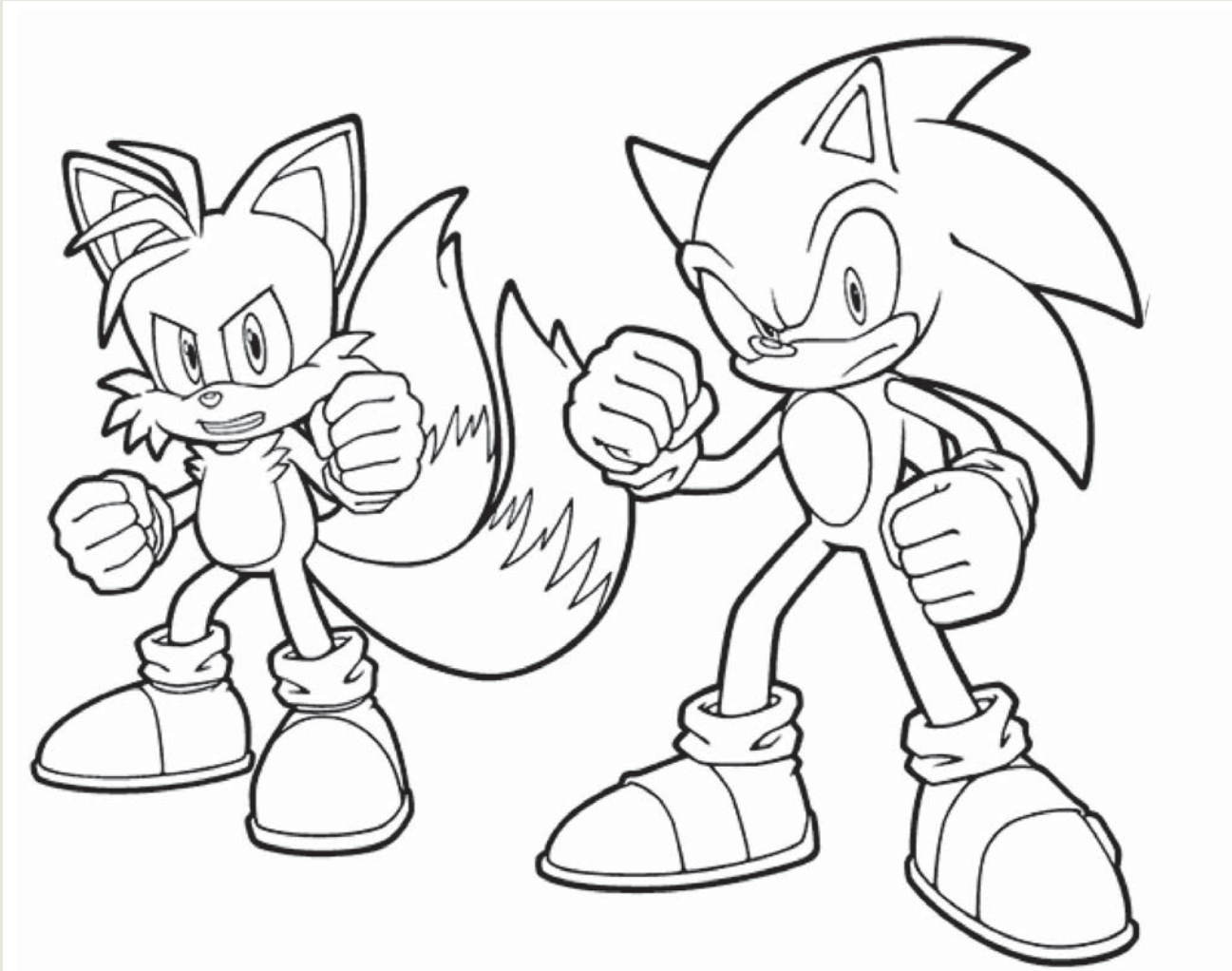


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 01. Which of these are crea-tures from Greek mythology that had the head and body of a woman and the wings and feet of a bird?**
- A. Lutenists
 - B. Pianists
 - C. Trumpeters
 - D. Harpies
- 02. Where would you hear the word "chukka" used?**
- A. In a chicken coop
 - B. At the door of a night club
 - C. To describe someone who has had too much to drink
 - D. At a polo match
- 03. Which author, poet, play-wright, actor, Shintoist and na-tionalist committed seppuku in 1970 after declaring "Long live the Emperor"?**
- A. Yukio Mishima
 - B. George Takei
 - C. Noriyuki "Pat" Morita
 - D. Shūji Terayama

Answers: 1.D 2.D 3.A

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

L	H	I	R
L	O	T	F
L	H	R	L
G	E	I	I

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



Andy Robertson (R) with Trent Alexander-Arnold

It’s not nice to see a friend get booed, says Robertson

Liverpool, England - Andy Robertson sprang to the defence of Liverpool teammate Trent Alexander-Arnold after some fans booed the right back during his side’s 2-2 draw at home to Arsenal on Sunday.

Alexander-Arnold, who came through the Liverpool ranks and has won a clutch of silverware including two Premier League titles, announced this week that he would leave on a free transfer when his contract is up at the end of the season.

He came off the bench in the second half but was given a decidedly mixed reception with some fans angry at his decision showing their displeasure by booing the 26-year-old.

“There’s a lot of emotion

around it. It’s crucial in these moments that I don’t tell you how to feel and you don’t tell me how to feel about it. All I can do is tell you how I feel about it,” Robertson told Sky Sports.

“First of all, I’m disappointed to lose my best mate. In the game, we’ve done it all together. He’s an amazing player and person. He’s made me a better player and that comes from the bottom of my heart. He’s taken me to levels where I never knew existed. He kept pushing me through the good years.

“He’s made a choice. His legacy at this club is obviously there to see. The trophies he’s won, the moments he’s had in history will always be there. It’s an emotional decision. It’s not

nice to see a friend get booed, it wasn’t nice. But as I said, we can’t tell people how to act.”

Liverpool manager Arne Slot also said that fans had the right to their opinions.

“There were people who were not so happy, there were people who were happy for him. They clapped for him. A few of them booed,” the Dutchman said.

“It would not be fair to the whole of Liverpool to focus on the few that booed. If they want to, it’s fine by me. But there were a lot of people who were really positive as well.”

Alexander-Arnold, who has made more than 350 appearances for Liverpool, has been heavily linked with a move to Real Madrid.

Amorim hints at Man Utd exit if he cannot solve problems

Manchester, England - With his team one win from a European trophy and a place in the UEFA Champions League, Ruben Amorim cut a frustrated figure after Manchester United lost 2-0 at home to West Ham United, seemingly suggesting he may have to leave the club if he cannot turn around their poor performances in the Premier League.

The defeat by West Ham was United’s 17th in the league this season, extending a winless run of seven matches in the competition, and with their only victories since late January coming against relegated Leicester City and Ipswich Town. It has left them 16th in the table with only 39 points.

When he was asked what he thought when he looked at the Premier League table, Amorim said: “How is a manager of Manchester United supposed to feel in that position? Embarrassed.”

He added: “So it’s a big prob-

lem that we have here at the club. It’s a decisive moment in the history of the club. We need to address that.

“It’s a big problem because it’s mentally. We are not scared of losing a game as Manchester United. We don’t have that fear any more and that is the most dangerous thing that a big club can have.

“It’s not the players’ fault. It’s my fault, I’m responsible. If we cannot change that really fast we should give our place to different people.”

Amorim warned that the club should not let the Europa League final against Tottenham Hotspur



Ruben Amorim

on 21 May distract from the problems he faces, which he believes are bigger than getting back into the Champions League, their achievement if they win the final.

“Everybody is focused on the final,” he added. “The final is not the biggest thing in our football club. We need to change a lot of things. If we don’t change the way we play and perform and feel this urgency of winning every game, we should not play in the Champions League.

“We should just stay in the Premier League and learn how to be competitive one week at a time.” “The biggest focus on our football club is to change a lot of things. It’s not just the final.”

Yoro injury a big worry for Manchester United

Manchester, England - Manchester United’s 2-0 Premier League loss to West Ham United at Old Trafford was compounded by an injury to centre-back Leny Yoro, leaving boss Ruben Amorim with a headache ahead of their Europa League final against Tottenham Hotspur in 10 days.

Amorim had voiced his fear about injuries ahead of the Europa League final at Bilbao, Spain - with a Champions League berth next season going to the victor - and Yoro looked gutted when he limped off in the 52nd minute on Sunday, covering his face with his shirt.

The television camera caught Amorim hanging his head in dismay.

“We have to assess Leny in a better way (Monday),” Amorim



Manchester United’s Leny Yoro leaves the field after suffering an injury during their Premier League match against West Ham United

told reporters after the game. “He felt something but I think it could be a small thing.”

The 19-year-old Frenchman missed the first four months of the season after sustaining an

ankle injury during United’s pre-season tour in the United States, but has been solid since his return.

He scored in the Europa League quarter-final against

Lyon and set up Mason Mount’s equaliser in the semi-final second leg against Athletic Club.

“He had that problem at the beginning of the season,” Amorim said. “We hope it’s not too serious. I don’t want to say too much but maybe it’s not a big deal.”

Amorim’s team were already missing Joshua Zirkzee and Lisandro Martinez for the remainder of the season, while Matthijs de Ligt, Diogo Dalot and Ayden Heaven remain out.

Tomas Soucek and Jarrod Bowen scored to lift fellow strugglers West Ham to their first victory at Old Trafford in 18 years on Sunday, handing Man United their 17th defeat and ninth at home as their worst ever Premier League season continues.

GUNNERS SHOW THEIR METTLE

Arsenal rally from two goals down to earn a point at Liverpool

Liverpool, England - Arsenal gave Liverpool a guard of honour and then a reminder of why they were the only team to challenge them in their romp to the Premier League title as they hit back from two goals down to draw 2-2 at a sun-drenched Anfield on Sunday.

After being clapped onto the field by their Arsenal counterparts, Liverpool dominated the first half with a header by Cody Gakpo and Luis Diaz’s tap-in in the space of 90 seconds putting them 2-0 ahead.

Arsenal looked deflated after being knocked out of the Champions League semi-finals in mid-week, but mustered an admirable response after the break with Gabriel Martinelli’s header reducing the arrears just after halftime.

Mikel Merino then headed in a rebound to make it 2-2 in the 70th minute after Arsenal captain Martin Odegaard’s piledriver was pushed against the woodwork by Alisson.

Merino was sent off nine minutes later for a lunging tackle on Dominik Szoboszlai but the 10-man visitors clung on for a point and almost won it as Odegaard sent a shot just wide of the post deep in stoppage time.

Liverpool also thought they had won it at the death when Andy Robertson fired in from close range but the goal was disallowed for a foul in the build-up.

“It was a great game of football, fans all around the world and in the stadium love what they saw,” Liverpool manager Arne Slot, the first Dutch coach to win the Premier League, said.

“It didn’t matter too much because the league table is clear but it is about prestige.”

Slot’s side, who wrapped up their record-equalling 20th English title a fortnight ago, have 83 points from 36 games with Arsenal second on 68 and still not guaranteed a top-five finish that would ensure Champions League football next season.

“What we did in the first half is nowhere near the level so that’s not acceptable. We reacted, great but it is unacceptable,” Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said of his side’s start. “No-one accepts those standards. It has to hurt a lot.”

Apart from Arsenal’s comeback the other main talking point



Arsenal’s Mikel Merino celebrates his goal against Liverpool at Anfield on Sunday

What we did in the first half is nowhere near the level so that’s not acceptable. We reacted, great but it is unacceptable. No-one accepts those standards

MIKEL ARTETA

from an entertaining tussle was a decidedly mixed reaction for Trent Alexander-Arnold when he came off the bench.

Liverpool’s right back, who announced this week he would leave at the end of the season, was booed by a large number of fans angry at his decision to leave on a free transfer.

While that put something of a dampener on the day, Liverpool’s fans had been buoyant in the first

half as they looked determined to lay down a marker for next season.

Arsenal were caught napping in the 20th minute when Robertson was given far too much space to measure his cross and the unmarked Gakpo headed past David Raya.

Soon afterwards it was 2-0 as Szoboszlai raced on to a through ball and calmly set up Diaz to score.

Diaz had earlier been denied by a great save from Raya and also failed to make contact with another good effort while Raya also tipped a Curtis Jones effort around the post.

Arsenal were not about to roll over though and Martinelli glanced in Leandro Trossard’s cross as the visitors turned the tables after halftime with Robertson saying Liverpool were “not at it” at the start of the second period.

While Arsenal’s league campaign has tailed off badly, allowing Liverpool to ease to the title, they showed spirit and were rewarded as Merino earned them a deserved point that would have soothed them after a dispiriting week.

Marinakis unhappy about Awoniyi confusion

Nottingham, England - Nottingham Forest owner Evangelos Marinakis entered the pitch and expressed his frustrations after Sunday’s 2-2 draw with Leicester City as he could not understand why the injured Taiwo Awoniyi was not substituted, manager Nuno Espirito Santo said.

The draw left Forest in seventh with their Champions League hopes slipping away and although they secured a return to Europe for the first time in 30 years, Marinakis was fuming when he remonstrated with the manager after the fulltime whistle. Awoniyi had come on as a late substitute as Forest searched for a winner but the 27-year-old forward needed treatment when he clattered into the far post on a quick counter-attack.

Although he rejoined the



Nottingham Forest owner Evangelos Marinakis with manager Nuno Espirito Santo

game minutes later, he was limping around as Forest failed to find the goal needed to move up to fifth.

“It was due to the situation. There was a confusion over the

situation of (Awoniyi). There was frustration to play 10 minutes with a player that had so much confidence and being positive that he’s going to score,” Espirito Santo told Sky Sports.

Napoli’s Conte calls for calm after setback in title challenge

Naples, Italy - Napoli manager Antonio Conte urged perspective after Sunday’s draw with Genoa, emphasising that his side were still in the hunt for the Serie A title, which would have been an ‘unthinkable’ target at the start of the season.

Napoli’s advantage over second-placed Inter was cut to a single point after they were held to a 2-2 draw at home by Genoa on Sunday, leaving the title race wide open following Inter’s win against Torino.

With two games to go and the title within touching distance, Conte still believes his side has overachieved this season.

“The last rounds represent a target that at the start was absolutely unthinkable. To achieve that would be incredible. These fans deserve it, as the people of Naples always followed us with passion and enthusiasm,” Conte told DAZN.

“We are still going beyond our capabilities, so can only thank these players for everything. The bitterness today is because it was not a deserved draw, but I always tell them that details make the difference, and we could’ve done something better in those details today.”

Conte was visibly irritated by the chances Napoli wasted throughout the match.

“Genoa had two shots on goal and scored both. These



We are still going beyond our capabilities, so can only thank these players for everything. The bitterness today is because it was not a deserved draw

ANTONIO CONTE

things happen too in football, when you concede a goal, you could’ve always done something better,” he said.

“I could not have asked for more from my players, as they had 22 shots on goal, 11 of them on target, dominated possession, and in the end it was a draw. We must improve in these situations.

“It’s disappointing, because we deserved to win for all that we created, so there remains bitterness and regret.”



Napoli players look crestfallen after their match against Genoa

DOWN TO THE WIRE

Napoli stumble against Genoa to let Inter back into title race

Naples, Italy - Napoli’s Serie A title hopes suffered a late setback on Sunday when they were held to a 2-2 draw at home against Genoa, setting up a thrilling season finale with closest rivals Inter Milan just one point behind.

The hosts remain top with 78 points, holding a slim lead over Inter, who won 2-0 at Torino earlier on Sunday, with two rounds

remaining. To make matters worse for Napoli, midfielder Stanislav Lobotka, struggling with an ankle injury, was forced off just minutes after the match began.

Scott McTominay delivered a perfect pass into the box where Romelu Lukaku got rid of his marker before guide his shot into the bottom corner to give Napoli the lead in the 15th minute.

Genoa came close to scoring an equaliser on the half-hour mark as Andrea Pinamonti’s header from a free kick hit the top of the crossbar.

Genoa levelled in the 32nd minute when Honest Ahanor’s header hit the bar, with Napoli keeper Alex Meret initially parrying it into the post, only for the rebound to bounce off his body and into the net for an own goal.

The sombre mood at Diego Armando Maradona Stadium lifted in the 64th minute when Giacomo Raspadori drilled a

screamer from close range, restoring Napoli’s lead and sending the blue-and-white supporters into a frenzy.

However, a Johan Vasquez header six minutes from time silenced the crowd as the realisation hit that the title race had been blown wide open again.

McTominay urged fans to stay calm, reminding them that Napoli still hold a narrow lead in the title race. “We have to stay calm, this is not the time to panic,” McTominay told DAZN.

“Genoa are a strong team,

they scored two good goals and we have to look at what we did wrong there.”

Napoli will visit Parma next before finishing the season by hosting Cagliari, while Inter will next play Lazio at home before travelling to Como for their final match.

“We’ve got to keep the same attitude we’ve had so far, because this is what got us here, so keep going with the same intensity and hard work that we’ve done every single day,” Raspadori added.

Inzaghi highlights player rotation as Inter eye double

Turin, Italy - Inter Milan manager Simone Inzaghi says careful squad management is crucial as he tried to balance domestic duties with the looming Champions League final.

Despite the relatively controlled 2-0 Serie A win at Torino on Sunday, Inter were without several key players — striker and captain Lautaro Martinez, goalkeeper Yann Sommer, and midfielder Davide Frattesi were among those left out of the starting lineup.

The 49-year-old has opted to rotate his key players to ensure the long season does not wear them down as they try and complete the Serie A-Champions League double.

“I need to give some players rest time after a long and hard season,” Inzaghi, whose side face Paris St Germain in the Champions League final on 31 May, told Sky Sport Italia.



Inter Milan’s Nicola Zalewski celebrates with Joaquin Correa after scoring against Torino on Sunday

“For the players who were absent today, I don’t think we’ll get any of them back (for the next

match) against Lazio, but we’ll see for the final match with Como.

“People say Inter have a small squad but we don’t have the budget of PSG, Manchester City

or Bayern Munich, so we need to be better in terms of organisation. With this heart, we can fight it out with everyone.”

With Napoli only managing a draw against Genoa, Inter are just one point behind the Serie A leaders, with just two rounds remaining.

“I said before the game, unfortunately the Scudetto is no longer in our hands, but we need to keep playing with focus like we did tonight, giving our all against a team that hadn’t lost yet in front of their home fans. We needed a tough performance and that’s what it was,” he said.

Inzaghi also praised Nicola Zalewski’s effort in the match, that included an early goal after a solo-effort.

“He is doing very well and has a lot of quality. He actually started out as a mezzala (half-winger) and can also work as a wing-back,” Inzaghi said.



Barcelona manager Hansi Flick celebrates with Inigo Martinez after their match against Real Madrid

We must remain focused, says Flick after Clasico win

Barcelona, Spain - Barcelona manager Hansi Flick urged his players to remain focused and avoid any premature celebration as they moved to the brink of the LaLiga title with a thrilling 4-3 victory over Real Madrid on Sunday.

Barca overcome a two-goal deficit as they earned their fourth consecutive win over Madrid in all competitions this season.

Barcelona, now seven points clear at the top, could secure the LaLiga title as early as Wednesday if Real Madrid fail to win at Mallorca.

However, regardless of Real’s result, a Barcelona victory in their city derby against Espanyol on Thursday would clinch the championship for the Catalans.

“I don’t feel like we are champions yet and I believe my players think the same way,” Flick said. “It would be nice to win the LaLiga and Copa del Rey double and, yes, one win is enough for us to

do it. But this is football.

“Sure, we are in a good position but you never know what will happen. We have three matches ahead of us and all our rivals want to beat us, so we must remain focused.”

Flick praised his players for their resilience in fighting back from two early goals by Kylian Mbappe to secure a crucial win that left Madrid on the verge of a trophyless season.

“It was not easy to recover after going down 2-0, but the mentality of the team is just remarkable, how they are always looking to attack relentlessly. It’s nice to see them out there on the pitch,” Flick said.

He added that after Tuesday’s heartbreaking extra-time loss to Inter Milan that saw them exit the Champions League at the semi-final stage, the win was a statement of his players’ grit and resiliency.

Dortmund beat Leverkusen to keep top-four hopes alive

Leverkusen, Germany - Borussia Dortmund powered back from a goal down to crush hosts Bayer Leverkusen 4-2 in the Bundesliga on Sunday, keeping alive their chance of a top-four finish going into the final matchday next week.

Dortmund have now won six of their last seven league games to climb up from 11th to fifth and are just a point behind fourth-placed Freiburg.

The Ruhr valley club, last year’s Champions League finalists, have 54 points going into next week’s season finale, with the top four teams earning auto-



Borussia Dortmund’s Karim Adeyemi celebrates his goal against Bayer Leverkusen on Sunday

matic qualification for next season’s Champions League.

Yet they found themselves a goal down in the 31st minute with Leverkusen’s Jeremie Frimpong giving the hosts a deserved lead in coach Xabi Alonso’s final home match.

The Spaniard announced on Friday that he will leave at the end of the season, having joined in October 2022 and led them to the domestic double last season without defeat while also reaching the Europa League final.

“We lived a lot of special moments and it was a mixed feeling

in the last home game. We are thankful for what we achieved in the past three years,” Alonso told a press conference.

“I have changed a lot in these years. We had many experiences. Luckily most of them good ones, today maybe not but I will forget this one quickly,” he said. “What I lived here in Leverkusen has been very special.”

“We played a very good first half but keeper (Dortmund keeper Gregor) Kobel made saves. In the second half, we were not good. But football today for me was not the most important thing,” Alonso said.

New Delhi, India - India stalwart Virat Kohli's Test retirement has robbed the format of its biggest global star and its most influential advocate, leaving a vacuum that will be hard to fill.

Kohli has ended his 123-Test career having amassed 9,230 runs at an average of 46.85, securing his position as a modern great of the game.

Between 2014-2022, Kohli captained India to 40 wins in 68 tests to become the country's most successful skipper in the format.

But the 36-year-old's lasting legacy in Test cricket lies beyond his truckload of runs and checked cover-drive, which is among the game's most beautiful shots.

Having succeeded Mahendra Singh Dhoni as India's Test captain, "King Kohli" overhauled India's approach to turn the team into a ruthless juggernaut that did not rely anymore on designer dustbowls to win Test matches.

Kohli demanded, and helped create, a formidable pace pool in his single-minded pursuit to turn India into a team capable of winning tests anywhere in the world.

Mostly they did.

He revolutionised the fitness culture in the India dressing room, turning a somewhat lax fielding side into a crack squad of electric-heel fielders.

Kohli led by example.

Nicknamed "Chiku" after a chubby-cheek popular comic book character in India in his early years, Kohli sacrificed his favourite butter chicken and grew into a lean, mean run-machine with an extraordinary ability to run between the wickets.

On the field, he is among the safest catchers and the fastest



KOHLING

TIME ON A GLORIOUS ERA

INDIA'S MODERN GREAT WALKS AWAY FROM TEST ARENA, LEAVING A BIG VOID

VIRAT KOHLI IN TESTS	
Matches	123
Runs scored	9,230
Batting average	46.85
Hundreds	30
Fifties	31
Top score	254*



CAPTAIN FANTASTIC	
40	wins in 68 Tests make Virat Kohli the country's most successful skipper in the format

retrievers of the ball.

When doing none of this, Kohli, like a conductor at an orchestra, whips up boisterous support from the stands with just one gesture.

When needed, he can also silence the stands with a glare or gesture, like he did at the Oval after India fans started booing Australia batter Steve Smith during a 2019 World Cup

match. The silky-smooth batting, the wild celebrations and a penchant to get under an opponent's skin - Kohli has often been at the centre of an unfolding drama, which injects fresh life into a fan's often-dreary experience of watching Test cricket.

Kohli's name fills the stands and guarantees theatre, and his availability is often a major factor in broadcast rights negotiations.

Married to a Bollywood star, Kohli has 271 million followers on Instagram and 67.8 million on X - making him a social media phenomenon.

His popularity has been a key factor behind cricket's return to the Olympics at the 2028 Games in Los Angeles, the organisers acknowledged last year.

Kohli called on all of it to back Test cricket's primacy - demanding a results-oriented approach and advocating India hold their home matches in select venues with guaranteed full-houses.

"There's something deeply personal about playing in whites," Kohli wrote about his love for the format in his retirement statement.

"The quiet grind, the long days, the small moments that no one sees but that stay with you forever."

As a batter, he fell well short of Sachin Tendulkar's 15,921 runs from 200 tests, but Kohli may have carved out a stronger legacy, according to former Australia captain Greg Chappell.

"... perhaps Kohli even eclipses him (Tendulkar) in terms of cultural influence and psychological impact on India's cricketing identity," he wrote on ESPNcricinfo.

Al Manar Racing's Al Zubair eyes sprint success on his Zandvoort debut

Muscat - Al Manar Racing by Team WRT's Al Faisal al Zubair teams up with Jens Klingmann again to make his racing debut at the Dutch Zandvoort circuit at the second round of the 2025 GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS Sprint Series this weekend (May 16th-18th) in the Netherlands.

Fresh from winning the second of the two one-hour races at Brands Hatch in England two weeks ago that has firmly put the Omani and his German teammate into early title contention, the pair again lay faith in the Al-Manar Racing by Team WRT BMW M4 GT3 EVO as they chase Gold Cup honours.

Al Manar Racing by Team WRT currently holds second place in the Teams' Championship, just half a point behind CSA Racing, and are third in the Drivers' Championship (41.5pts) behind Thierry Vermeulen/Chris Lulham (54.5pts) and Arthur Rougier/James Kell (42pts).

Al Zubair said: "Looking forward to the weekend in Zandvoort. Like the first round, it is going to be a very difficult track. I have never personally raced there before. Luckily, we tested there in March, so a bit of track time definitely helps."

"After a good weekend at Brands Hatch, we go straight to the second round here. We need to keep the ball rolling, keep it consistent and go for the points. That will be important at the end of the championship and that is the target for us."

Bronze Cup entrants bolster



Al Faisal al Zubair

the Zandvoort grid to a record 41 cars and join forces with the Pro, Gold and Silver Cup entrants. This is only the third time in Sprint Cup history that the number has exceeded 40. The race weekend will also be shared with competitors in the GT2 and GT4 European Series and the GB3 Championship.

Competition for Al Manar Racing by Team WRT comes from the Sainteloc Racing and Tresor Attempto Racing Audi R8 LMS GT3, the Emil Frey Racing's Ferrari 296 GT3 and the CSA Racing and Garage 59 McLaren 720S GT3s.

Free practice takes place on the Dutch coastal track from 10.20 am. on Friday (May 16th) and precedes an hour of pre-qualifying from 3.10 pm. The first qualifying session fires into life at 10 am on Saturday (May 17th) and the first of the one-hour races gets underway at 3 pm.

Sunday's action sees the second qualifying session start at the earlier time of 9 am with race two getting the green light from 2.45 pm.

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(Courtesy: euronews.com)

DAD & Dude



STAYING FIT

Niren Philip has trained scores of interested persons to learn swimming in the sea, off Kalbou Park, on weekends. And while continuing his dedicated free service to help people in Muscat stay fit, he also helped his own son Ron Philip shape up for a Triathlon. And how!

HUBERT VAZ

Scores of seagulls fluttering over the cool, placid waves in the Arabian Sea, off the seafront near Kalbou Park in old Muscat, have to move on yonder on weekends to make way for a batch of swimmers who converge at a favourite spot at 6.30 am...

As wet, glistening lycra and swimming goggles in fluorescent hues (accompanied by spirited murmurs) provides a red-tide effect on the surface of the sea at this spot, the swimmers - young and not-so-young - guided by a few 'coaches', then begin to romance the waves as they undertake lessons in swimming against the tide.

Some dexterously glide ahead a few hundred metres, others stay a short distance from the shore learning the strokes and strides. And a good amount of enthusiasm envelopes the arena as many take on their fears or realise their dreams with ease as they befriend the waters and get acquainted with a new life skill.

"Swimming is a life-saving skill, everyone should learn swimming. And in our group (known earlier as Alawi Swimming Academy) we help people interested in learning swimming to do so in an informal way - we have individuals as well as families joining every weekend," says Niren Philip (53), an avid swimmer and coach who himself learned swimming in this group some years ago.

An athlete in his younger days, Niren, admits that



he faced immense bloating issues after undertaking medication for asthma while he stayed in Bangalore. But after coming to Oman, he joined this group to learn swimming and it completely changed his fitness profile as well as his mindset. He soon shaped up as a swimming coach and over the years shared his skills to help hundreds of others confront their fears of water and learn swimming.

About the advantage of learning swimming in the sea, Niren said, learning to swim in the sea is easier as buoyancy is better due to the salinity. Also, in a pool, the expanse of water is limited and one gets a grip of bars along the edge after a certain distance, unlike the sea which is limitless and one learns to stay afloat without holding onto anything. For safety, however, newcomers use buoys and stay closer to the shore, he assured.

Niren has also taken part in Ironman events in Muscat, along with other team mates - who took up the cycling and running sections while he did the swimming part. He also taught his son Ron Philip to shape up as a good swimmer and guided him to take up all three sections of Triathlon events and complete it within a reasonable timeframe.

"In Oman, taking up fitness activities is very important. Many people think, 'will I be able to do it'. One has to overcome this thought and begin. Once you start, your mind and heart takes you to your goal," he assured, adding that once you prepare the right mindset, the body will help you achieve your target.



DAD'S THE WORD

Ron Philip shares how his father Niren Philip, trained, guided, and inspired his fitness path

Why did you learn swimming - what was your motivation?

Learning swimming was a skill that my Dad wanted me to learn as it would help me survive in water, if ever needed. What motivated me to continue to stick with swimming and try to improve upon it was by watching amateurs and pros swim fast yet make it look effortless and smooth.

Did your Dad train you mentally and physically?

My father played a very big part in training me for all the sports I have ever played. He always motivated me and pushed me on to try different sports, to improve, and guided me through the whole journey. He made me train individually as well as with a coach and made sure I was ready for any challenge.

Why did you decide to take up Triathlons?

By the time I completed my undergraduate studies and shifted back to Muscat, my father had already completed two Ironman Team Relays, so I had a basic idea what triathlons and Ironman Triathlon was. When he suggested that I take up Triathlon as an activity, I felt an interest develop towards it as it consisted of 2 sports that I enjoy (swimming, running) and one that I always wanted to try out (cycling). So, it felt like getting the best of all worlds. This resulted in me having to train every single day as my dad set me a goal that was the Ironman 70.3 Muscat. The training was either one of the three sports every day and on some days 2 or 3 together. Training started out tough but as it progressed it gave me a keen sense of satisfaction and I enjoyed looking forward to completing the activities every day.

What is your advice to youth in Oman?

The only advice I could give, is to keep playing football as they already do, and also pick up some extra sport, like running swimming, etc to help them become more physically and mentally active. It will help them develop a more systematic and focused routine as they train for these sports.

What is your most recent achievement and your immediate goal?

My most recent achievement was my first Muscat Marathon - Half Marathon. It was a really good experience, I enjoyed seeing the massive crowd, the enthusiasm, and everyone's efforts paying off. It was a tough event, as I was still under recovery after completing the Ironman 2 weeks prior to the marathon, but I did enjoy it. For the time being, I'm focusing on training and staying fit.

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