

Our Correspondent

Muscat

In a statement, Diwan of Royal Court said the visit is within the context of joint cooperation to achieve further welfare and growth in a manner that serves the two countries and meets their aspirations. 'During the visit, the two leaderships will discuss all matters that contribute to the joint Arab action. They will also exchange views on regional and



Oman and Algeria enjoy stable relations and consensus on regional and international issues. The partnership is marked by solid cooperation across several sectors, including energy, renew-

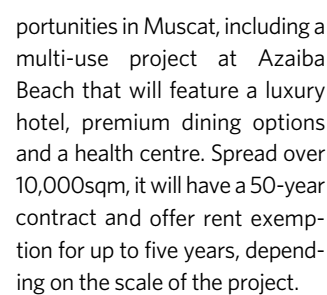
Relations between Oman and Algeria are deep rooted, strengthened by historical visits

Trade exchange between Oman and Algeria reached approximately RO41mn by the end of 2023, indicating a higher level of cooperation compared to other Arab nations in North Africa. Oman's exports to Algeria totalled RO37.3mn, while imports were valued at RO509,272.

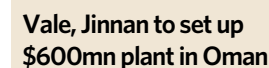
Our Correspondent

Muscat

MHT unveiled three other tourism-related investment op-



Interested parties can email the ministry at maryams@mht.gov.om for details.



Trust is earned, when action
meet words

A close-up photograph of two hands shaking in a firm, confident grip. The hand on the left is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt, and the hand on the right is wearing a dark grey suit jacket. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

A full-page photograph of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a vibrant pink saree with a wide, intricately patterned border in a lighter shade of pink. The saree features small, white floral motifs scattered across its body. Her jewelry includes a large, ornate gold necklace with blue and green gemstones, matching gold earrings, and a small red bindi on her forehead. She is positioned in front of a highly detailed, carved wooden structure, possibly a traditional Indian temple or palace interior, which is bathed in warm, golden light. The overall mood is festive and elegant.

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Buckle up in the rear seat

The use of seat belts plays a critical role in saving lives and reducing injuries in traffic accidents. Despite widespread awareness of their effectiveness, rear seat passengers often don't buckle up, leaving themselves vulnerable in the event of an accident. To address the issue, *Muscat Daily* readers suggest measures to raise awareness about the importance of using rear seat belts. Here is what they said -

Suleiman al Balushi
Salesman

We need to launch educational campaigns highlighting the importance of seat belt use, particularly in rear seats. Use social media, billboards and community events to spread the message. We also need to partner with insurance companies to offer discounts for drivers who consistently ensure all passengers wear seat belts. This could motivate both drivers and passengers to buckle up.

Ali al Tooqi
Teacher

Stricter implementation of laws that mandate seat belt use for all passengers, including those in the rear seats, and introducing higher penalties for not wearing seat belts will deter non-compliance.

Issa al Nadabi
Engineer

Involve community leaders and organisations in promoting seat belt use, creating a culture where wearing seat belts is the norm. We need to also encourage passengers to remind each other to wear seat belts. Creating a social norm where friends and family hold each other accountable can be effective.

Badriya al Siyabi
Financial accountant

Sharing statistics showing the effectiveness of seat belts in preventing injuries and fatalities will help emphasise the safety benefits for rear passengers. Additionally, integrating seat belt education into driver's education programmes and focusing on the responsibilities of drivers to ensure all passengers are buckled up will promote the use to seat belts.



YOUR SAY

that alert passengers to buckle up, especially in the rear seats. Also, ensure that rear seat belts are easy to access and use, possibly by redesigning the seat belt systems.

Salma al Ismaili
Psychologist

Vehicles must have reminder systems

that alert passengers to buckle up, especially in the rear seats. Also, ensure that rear seat belts are easy to access and use, possibly by redesigning the seat belt systems.

Muna Basheer al Zadjali
Private sector employee

Seat belts are essential safety equipment. Wearing a seat belt is the most effective way to prevent injury or death in crashes for both drivers and passengers. Nearly half of those who die in accidents are unbelted. Whether you're

in the front or back seat, always wear your seat belt on every trip, no matter how short. In addition to strict enforcement of laws, awareness programmes aimed at increasing seat belt usage can significantly reduce casualties in road accidents.

Ahmed al Saeedi
Public sector employee

Implement programmes that reward drivers for having all passengers buckled up, potentially through loyalty programmes or discounts. Authorities

should also enforce existing seat belt laws more rigorously, including fines for not wearing seat belts in the back seat.

Shaur Ahmed Khan
Private sector employee

Safety awareness is crucial for encouraging the use of rear seat belts. Awareness programmes in malls, public parks and on social media can effectively reach a broad audience. Additionally, incorporating education about use of rear seat belt safety into school curricula will help instil good habits from a young age. Children can be powerful advocates for safety, influencing their families and peers. Engaging activities, like workshops or interactive demonstrations, can make the message resonate even more.

Shankar MG
Private sector employee

Rear seat passengers are at greater risk as they are not observing the road ahead like the driver or front passenger. They are more than twice likely to be severely impacted by a collision. ROP should penalise passengers not wearing a seat belt and consider penalising drivers also in case of nonadherence.

Namrata K Anand
Homemaker

"Experience is a brutal teacher, but you learn." I have myself survived a horrifying accident when our car went out of control as my colleagues and I drove out of Dubai towards Hatta border. I was tossed around like a rag doll in the rear seat without my seat belt as the car swirled at high speed. By God's grace, we miraculously escaped, but our car took the hit. That day made me realise that seat belts should be made mandatory even for rear seat passengers as they are at a greater risk. I always insist my children buckle up hoping it becomes a habit for life.

Sayyid Badr receives credentials of 3 envoys

Muscat - H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received copies of credentials from three newly appointed ambassadors to Oman on Sunday.

He welcomed H E Tharwah Neimat, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to Oman, wishing her success in her duties and hoped for the continued development of relations between the two friendly countries.

H E Sayyid Badr also received credentials of H E Warunee Pan Krajang, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand, and wished her success and emphasised the potential of further growth in bilateral relations.

Additionally, the minister welcomed H E Abdi Aden Korio, Ambassador of the Republic of Kenya, wishing him success in his tenure and expressed optimism for advancing relations between Oman and Kenya.

The meeting was attended by Najeeb al Balushi, Head of Protocol Department; Sheikh Faisal al Marhoon, Head of Arab Department; Saleh al Suqri, Head of Africa Department; and several other senior officials.

Oman, Estonia ink pact to avoid double taxation

Muscat - The Sultanate of Oman and Republic of Estonia have signed an agreement to avoid double taxation and combat tax evasion.

The agreement establishes clear mechanisms for tax imposition and offers legal protection for investors, ensuring they are safeguarded against double taxation. Additionally, it aims to enhance investment opportunities and facilitate trade between the two countries, fostering stronger economic ties.

? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

What do you think of the new rule regarding strict fines for latecomers at work? Do you have any other suggestions to make office staff punctual?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om You can also log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue.

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

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TENDER NOTICE

SULTANATE OF OMAN
The Ministry of Agricultural
Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tender: -

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are eligible to participate	Tender Document fee (R.O)
724/2024/MAFWR/HQ-49	Maintenance of Carpark Shades and Add New Carparks at Headquarter of Ministry	Thursday 10/10/2024	Wednesday 30/10/2024	Tuesday 19/11/2024	SMEs companies registered with All grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
759/2024/MAFWR/HQ-50	Consulting services for the development of poultry sector in the Sultanate of Oman	Thursday 24/10/2024	Thursday 14/11/2024	Tuesday 3/12/2024	Specialized companies registered with third grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
760/2024/MAFWR/HQ-51	Supplying And Installing Fish Refrigeration Equipment, Cctv System And Other Works For The Fish Market At Seeb Fishery Harbour	Thursday 24/10/2024	Thursday 14/11/2024	Tuesday 3/12/2024	Specialized companies registered with all grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
761/2024/MAFWR/HQ-52	Providing agricultural workers for research centers, departments and stations at the General Directorate of Agricultural and Livestock Research	Thursday 24/10/2024	Tuesday 12/11/2024	Monday 2/12/2024	Specialized companies registered with all grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: [+968 24402200 or etenderhd@gstb.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@gstb.gov.om).

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



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SPF revises disability benefit criteria; to reassess eligibility

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Social Protection Fund (SPF) has revised the eligibility criteria for disability benefits in Oman and notified that fresh medical evaluations will be done to confirm ongoing eligibility.

The decision (No 1/12/2024), issued by H E Eng Salem bin Nasser al Afi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the SPF, outlines updated categories of individuals eligible for the programme, intended to streamline support for those with permanent disabilities.

According to the decision, eligibility for the benefits will now extend to individuals holding an official disability card issued by the Ministry of Social Development. Other eligibility conditions include autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, mental disabilities with an IQ below 70, severe visual impairment with a corrected vision of 60/2 or lower in both eyes, hearing impair-



ments with a loss threshold of 61 decibels or more in both ears, and severe physical disabilities evaluated by limitations in job performance.

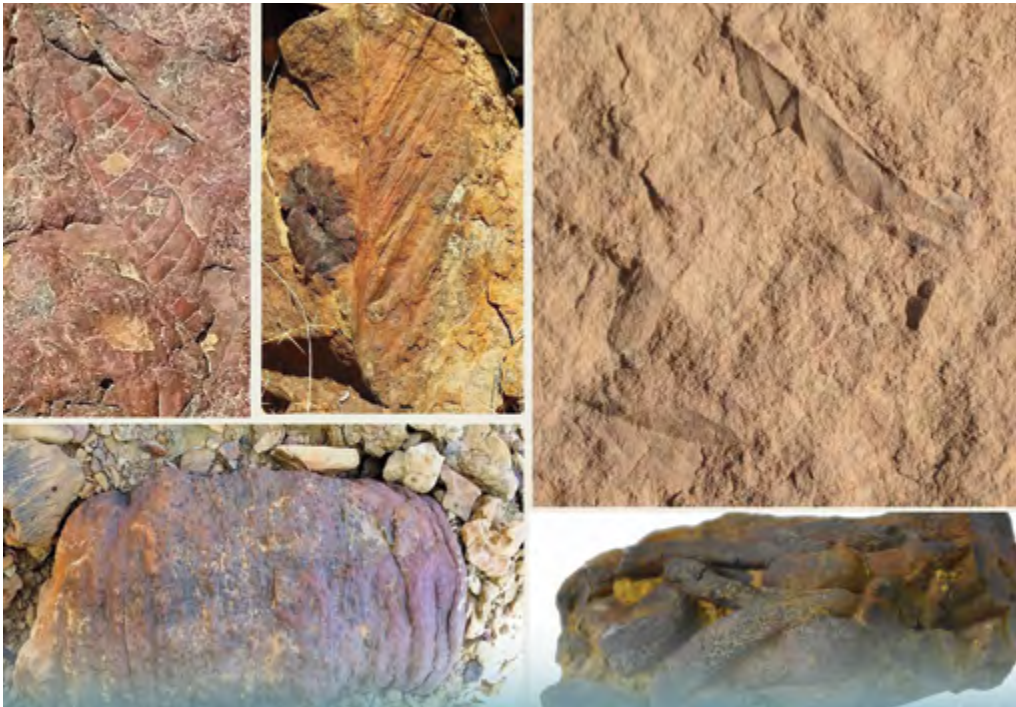
The decision further empowers SPF to conduct medical re-evaluations to confirm ongoing

eligibility, with assessments co-ordinated between the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Health.

Additionally, the SPF reserves the right to halt benefit payments if a reassessment finds that a recipient no longer qualifies.

The revised criteria aim to ensure that disability benefits reach those most in need, following a structured, evidence-based process

The revised criteria aim to ensure that disability benefits reach those most in need, following a structured, evidence-based process. The decision was issued on October 20 and came into effect the day following its publication in the Official Gazette.



National Fossil Collection Data Booklet highlights rich geological heritage

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has released the National Fossil Collection Data Booklet, marking the second part of a series documenting the Natural History Museum's collections.

The 111-page booklet offers an introduction to fossils, detailing their formations, types, and classifications. It documents the scientific names of fossils preserved in the Natural History Museum,



along with descriptive data and the locations from which they were collected throughout the sultanate.

Fossils are defined as the remains and traces of living organisms - both animal and plant - that existed in past geological eras and were preserved in the earth's interior.

The diverse fossils found in Oman reflect the variety of living organisms that thrived, influenced by the region's changing climate and environments over time.

The oldest fossil in the Natural

History Museum is a stromatolite, a primitive single-celled bacterial algae discovered in the Sidr area near the wilayat of Duqm, dating back 570mn years.

The national fossil collection features over 1,400 samples, including fossilised trees, bones of extinct animals like dinosaurs, elephants, and monkeys, as well as fossils of reptiles and amphibians, and a wide range of marine organisms such as mollusks, arthropods, and primitive fish.

The collection also includes non-fossil formations like geodes, desert roses, flint stones, and various minerals and rocks from Oman.

Pact inked to enhance digital skills in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology has signed a cooperation agreement with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) to boost the

digital transformation efforts of the government in Oman.

This initiative aims to equip future leaders with the skills needed for innovation and creativity in the digital landscape.

Represented by the Government Digital Transformation Programme (Tahawul), the

MTCT and the UTAS will jointly launch a Master of Science programme in Digital Transformation and Innovation.

The programme has been designed to strengthen collaboration between the government and academia, enhancing the skill sets of human resources

Over 19,000 citizens vote for 'Together We Progress' forum

Muscat - The Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers has announced the results of the voting process for the third edition of the 'Together We Progress' forum, with 19,360 citizens participating from various governorates.

The results revealed that economy, development, governorate development, the private sector, and investment received the highest votes as topics to be discussed at the forum. Notably, the social protection system emerged as the most requested topic by the community.

Organised by the Secretariat General, the forum aims to enhance communication between community members and decision-makers. It serves as a crucial platform for direct meetings and open dialogue, enabling citizens to engage meaningfully with development policies, programmes, and government initiatives. Participants will have the opportunity to express their opinions, and offer suggestions.



SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby
give notice of tenders for the following projects

Tender No.	Project Category	Tender	Last day to purchase tender documents	Last date of tender submission
34/2024	Constriction & maintenance	Renovation Of Mcsy Hq Buildings At Al Khuwair	02/11/2024	18/11/2024
35/2024	Constriction & maintenance	Renew And Maintenance For The Buildings Of Camel Racing Field At Mwilah, Sohar	02/11/2024	18/11/2024
Re - tender 28/2024	Constriction of ports roads bridge rail way dams and maintenance	Design And Build Contract Of Asphalt Roads And Allied Works In Camel Race Track At Al Mudhaibi In North Sharqiya Governorate	02/11/2024	18/11/2024
Re - tender 28/2024	Constriction of ports roads bridge rail way dams and maintenance	Design And Build Contract Of Asphalt Roads And Allied Works In Camel Race Track At Bidiyah In North Sharqiya Governorate	02/11/2024	18/11/2024

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

The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om



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Vale, Jinnan to set up \$600mn iron ore concentration plant in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Vale, a global leader in iron ore production, and Jinnan Iron & Steel Group, a renowned Chinese steelmaker in advanced separation technologies, announced on Sunday a joint partnership to establish Oman's first iron ore concentration plant in SOHAR Port and Freezone.

With an initial investment exceeding \$600mn, the state-of-the-art facility is expected to support the development of Oman's iron and steel industry, positioning the country as a key player in the global supply chain for Direct Reduction (DR) grade iron ore.

The announcement was made at a ceremony under the patronage of H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The Concentration Plant, scheduled to commence operations by mid-2027, will process 18mn tonnes of iron ore annually, producing 12.6mn tonnes of high-grade concentrate.

Vale will invest \$227mn to connect the plant to its agglomerate facilities in the region, while Jinnan will invest approximately \$400mn to build, own, and operate the plant, according to a



Vale will invest \$227mn to connect the plant to its facilities in the region, while Jinnan will invest \$400mn to build, own, and operate the plant

press statement.

At the heart of this collaboration is a commitment to innovation; iron ore shipped from Brazil will be upgraded into a higher-grade concentrate to produce high-quality agglomerates with reduced environmental impact. With its strategic location, the new plant will therefore strengthen the sultanate's role as a key supplier to regional and international steel markets.

Gustavo Pimenta, President of Vale, emphasised the significance of this investment, saying, "The concentration plant represents a key investment for Vale

as we further build our presence in the Middle East. Oman's strategic location, coupled with its stable political and economic climate and commitment to industrial development, makes it an ideal partner for our growth. This facility will enhance our ability to meet the increasing global demand for high-grade iron ore, while also advancing our sustainability goals. We are confident that this partnership not only strengthens our operations in the region but also creates long-term value for the country and the global steel industry."

The joint partnership between

Vale and Jinnan represents a significant milestone for both companies and Oman. As Jinnan's first project in the country, this collaboration highlights Oman's appeal as a destination for high-value industrial investments.

Zhang Tianfu, CEO of Jinnan Iron & Steel Group, said, "This partnership is a unique opportunity to blend Jinnan's rich experiences in modern low-carbon steelmaking with Vale's proven expertise in iron ore production. By working together in SOHAR, we aim to redefine steelmaking in the Middle East, bringing efficiency and quality to the fore-

front. We are proud to play a role in supporting Oman's industrial ambitions and look forward to the long-term impact of this project."

Emile Hoogsteden, SOHAR Port CEO, said, "This investment is a key step in our long-term strategy to attract high-value projects to Oman and foster a business-friendly environment. Through our fully integrated industrial and logistics ecosystem, we are driving sustainable growth and solidifying Oman as a key player in the global steel industry, enhancing trade efficiency and boosting economic development."

The concentration plant is expected to create economic benefits beyond the steel industry. By generating direct and indirect employment, driving technological advancement, and increasing export capacity, the plant will boost Oman's export capabilities and further integrate the sultanate into global steel trade routes, supporting efforts to diversify the industrial base.

With an emphasis on sustainability, the facility will utilise advanced technologies to minimise its environmental footprint, ensuring efficient resource use, in line with Oman's commitment to responsible and sustainable industrial growth.



Galfar awarded RO46mn contract for Izki-Nizwa road

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company, the largest construction firm in Oman, has been awarded a contract by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for the construction of the Izki-Nizwa road.

'We are pleased to inform our esteemed shareholders that the ministry has awarded Galfar the contract for the dualisation of the Izki-Nizwa road. Both parties accepted the letter of award on Sunday,' Galfar stated in a disclosure submitted to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The project is valued at approximately RO46mn, with an execution period of 36 months from the commencement date, the company reported.

Galfar noted that this contract award will further enhance its order-book and sustain its market share within Oman's infrastructure sector.

'We take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for the confidence placed in Galfar through this award,' the company added.

According to Galfar's initial financial results, the company reported total revenue of RO207.05mn for the first nine months of 2024, an increase of nearly 12% compared to RO184.97mn reported for the same period in 2023. However, the company recorded a net loss of RO4.2mn for the January-September period of this year, in contrast to a net profit of RO1.52mn in the corresponding period of 2023.

Sohar International intends to open branch in London

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sohar International Bank announced on Sunday its intention to open a branch in London, the United Kingdom.

The bank's board of directors, during a meeting on Sunday, resolved to apply to the regulators in Oman and the UK for a license to open a branch for Sohar International in London, according to a disclosure submitted to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

"The board would like to affirm to the shareholders and the market that this step aligns with Sohar International's strategy to support Oman's Vision 2040. The step also reflects Sohar International's consistent endeavours to take the best of Oman to



the world and bring the best of the world to Oman," said Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, in the disclosure.

He added that the board will keep the market and shareholders updated on any further progress regarding this matter.

UBS expects UAE's economy to grow by over 5% in 2025

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Michael Bolliger, Chief Investment Officer of Emerging Markets at UBS Global Wealth Management, stated that the UAE's GDP growth is expected to surpass 5% in 2025.

Bolliger told the Emirates News Agency (WAM), during an online press briefing, that the optimistic growth outlook for the UAE economy aligns closely with recent estimates from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The IMF recently maintained its forecast for the UAE's GDP growth at 4% in 2024, with an increase to 5.1% projected for 2025.

Bolliger highlighted that several global factors play a role in shaping growth expectations for the economies of the GCC countries, foremost among them oil production



and OPEC decisions. Additional positive factors include stimulus announcements in China, monetary policy measures, and reductions in the reserve requirement rate, all of which are anticipated to drive markets and the global economy toward recovery.

He clarified that these factors will undoubtedly influence the UAE's economic performance both directly and indirectly, with expectations that

the UAE economy will continue its growth momentum and maintain an upward trajectory.

Bolliger also noted that policy decisions by the US Federal Reserve concerning monetary policy will be an influential factor on the global economy in the coming period, forecasting a decrease of approximately 150 basis points in interest rates by the end of 2025. WAM

FINCORP AL AMAL FUND				
INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT SEPTEMBER 30, 2024				
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED SEPTEMBER 30, 2024				
Dear Unit holders, On behalf of the Investors' Committee, I hereby present to you the un-audited financial results of Fincorp Al Amal Fund (AIGF), for the period ended September 30, 2024.				
Fund Performance				
Figures in OMR	30-Sept-24	30-Sept-23	31-Dec-23	
Fund Income	402,591	514,747	873,095	
Fund Expenses	(73,601)	(75,800)	(166,432)	
Net Profit / (Loss)	328,990	438,947	706,663	
Figures in OMR	30-Sept-24	30-Sept-23	31-Dec-23	
Net Asset Value	4,056,095	4,623,664	4,598,221	
Units Outstanding	3,721,831	4,536,572	4,259,249	
Net Asset Value per unit	1.090	1.019	1.080	
Fund Performance (net of fees)	7.89%	10.43%	16.98%	
MSCI ACWI INDEX	17.16%	8.50%	20.09%	
S&P GCC Composite Index	1.36%	0.37%	6.19%	
Blended MSCI ACWI and S&P GCC Composite Index	9.26%	4.43%	13.14%	
Q3 2024 Performance				
During the quarter, global markets fell from record highs at the end of July when investors shield away from large tech stocks and trimmed their holdings at high levels. Considering the fears of a US recession on account of impact of holding high interest rates for a long time, rising Japanese interest rates and its impact as well on global capital markets (Yen carry Trade) led a fall in the developed economy stocks leading a drop in the major indices in the month of August. However, global markets welcomed the Fed's decision to cut interest rates and recovery was seen in the end of quarter in most industrial and manufacturing stocks. China stock market also surged after the government decision for a fresh stimulus of around USD 450 billion. After a flip flop during the quarter, the global economy remains resilient and with inflation slowing, central banks have begun cutting rates, helping to boost the capital markets further.				
Market Outlook				
After a gap of 2 and half years, most of central banks now entering in-to a rate-cutting cycle following the fall in inflation globally and have created a higher confidence in the globally among investors despite multiple Geo-political standoff around the world.				
US real time GDP estimates continued to suggest another quarter of solid economic growth, with consumer spending and industrial production expanding as a whole.				
Continuance of OPEC+ block to extend their additional voluntary production cuts of 2.2 million barrels per day for two months until the end of November 2024, and record production from the US have kept prices low so far.				
The forecast for GDP growth in the GCC has been revised downward to 2.2% for 2024, down from projection of 2.7% which is attributable to extended oil production cuts by the OPEC+ group.				
Investment Strategy				
As it is seen that a strong case of by most of the central banks to reduce the interest rates, we see an opportunity to increase our investment in Manufacturing and Industrial sector being the beneficiary of declining interest rates will offer boost to product lower cost. It will help GDP to remain strong going forward				
Therefore, we would continue to build our investment in the manufacturing/industrial sector. We are well positioned in the fundamentally very strong companies' stocks in International & GCC Markets				
In Conclusion				
The Investors' Committee would like to express its appreciation and gratefulness to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and the Omani Government for providing a secure and stable economic environment focused on driving growth and continued prosperity for all. The Committee also wishes to thank the Financial Services Authority and Muscat Securities Exchange for their sustained and continued efforts in building a vibrant capital market and the management team for their diligence and dedication in managing the fund successfully in a challenging economic environment. On behalf of the Investors' Committee, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the unit holders for their continued support and confidence.				
On Behalf of the Investors Committee Qaboos Al Khonji Chairman Dated: October 27, 2024				
PO. Box 782, PC 131, Sultanate of Oman, Phone: (968) 24822327, Fax: (968) 24822390, E-mail: fincorp@fincorp.org, Website: www.fincorp.org				
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INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024				
	30 September 2024	30 September 2023	31 December 2023	
	RO	RO	RO	
	(unaudited)	(unaudited)	(audited)	
ASSETS				
Current assets				
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	3,707,858	4,354,634	4,470,182	
Receivables	236,955	29,814	213,262	
Cash and cash equivalents	173,231	265,719	185,159	
Total asset	4,118,044	4,650,167	4,868,603	
UNITHOLDERS' FUNDS				
Fund capital	3,721,831	4,536,572	4,259,249	
Retained earnings	334,264	87,092	338,972	
Total unitholders' funds	4,056,095	4,623,664	4,598,221	
LIABILITIES				
Current liabilities				
Redemption payable	-	-	177,370	
Accruals and other payables	46,365	5,390	5,550	
Amounts due to related parties	15,584	21,113	87,462	
Total liabilities	61,949	26,503	270,382	
Total unitholders' funds and liabilities	4,118,044	4,650,167	4,868,603	
Net asset value per unit	1.090	1.019	1.080	

INTERIM STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE NINE-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2024				
	Nine-month period from 1 January 2024 to 30 September 2024	Three-month period from 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024	Nine-month period from 1 January 2023 to 30 September 2023	Three-month period from 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023
	(unaudited)	(unaudited)	(unaudited)	(unaudited)
INCOME				
Dividend income	104,569	23,826	116,450	25,823
Realised gains on sale of investments at fair value through profit or loss	252,199	54,507	259,477	101,935
Unrealised gains on investments at fair value through profit or loss	41,552	4,538	131,333	(159,430)
Interest income	655	142	3,551	(368)
Redemption charges	1,379	51	137	-
Foreign exchange gains (net)	2,237	312	3,799	1,042
	402,591	83,376	514,747	(30,998)
EXPENSES				
Management fees	(18,291)	(5,838)	(19,633)	(6,897)
Administration fees	(14,965)	(4,776)	(16,063)	(5,643)
Advisory fees	(14,965)	(4,776)	(16,063)	(5,643)
Custodian service fees	(4,447)	(1,381)	(3,515)	(1,509)
Investors Committee's meeting attendance fees	(6,894)	(2,717)	(6,283)	(2,117)
Brokerage commission expenses	(4,233)	(785)	(2,416)	(441)
General and administrative expenses	(9,806)	(3,358)	(9,178)	(2,512)
Performance fees	-	-	(2,649)	7,063
	(73,601)	(23,631)	(75,800)	(17,700)
Net profit for the period	328,990	59,745	438,947	(48,698)
Earnings per unit	0.083	0.016	0.096	(0.011)

Note:
The complete accounts, either in Arabic and English as requested, will be sent by mail within 7 days of request to any unitholder who requests the Fund at the address: PO Box 782, PC 131, Sultanate of Oman, Tel: +968 24822327. Fax: +968 24822390

IEA summit to discuss global energy security

WAM

شركة صناعة مواد البناء (ش.م.ع.ع.) Construction Materials Industries (S.A.O.G)				
P.O. Box: 1791, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman, Tel: 26752247/26755287, Fax: 26750867				
MANAGEMENT REPORT				
The Management of Construction Materials Industries SAOG has the honour of submitting the report on the performance of the Company for the nine months ended on 30th September 2024.				
Key Performance Indicators				
Particulars	2024 30 - Sep RO	2023 30 - Sep RO	Increase / (Decrease)	% of Increase / (Decrease)
Sales	2,125,407	1,920,375	205,032	10.68%
Gross Profit	269,925	289,059	(19,134)	(6.62%)
Finance Cost – Interest on Lease Liability (IFRS16)	25,216	77,846	(52,630)	(67.61%)
Amortization of Lease Liability	62,919	45,100	17,819	39.51%
Profit/(Loss) before Tax	(66,390)	(81,242)	14,852	(18.28%)
Net Profit /(Net Loss) after Tax	(66,390)	(81,242)	14,852	(18.28%)
Earnings Per Share	(0.0011)	(0.0013)	0.0002	(18.28%)
Particulars	2024 30-Sep RO	2023 31-Dec RO	Increase / (Decrease)	% of Increase / (Decrease)
Total Assets	8,659,207	7,798,498	860,709	11.04%
Total Liabilities	2,249,535	1,322,436	927,099	70.11%
Net Assets	6,409,672	6,476,062	(66,390)	(1.03%)
Total Number of Shares	62,500,000	62,500,000	---	---
Net Assets Per Share	0.103	0.104	(0.001)	(1.03%)
OPERATING PERFORMANCE				
Production:				
During the reporting period 2024, Quick Lime production has been decreased by 4.80% (2,028 MT) compared to the same period last year (2024 – 40,231MT, 2023 – 42,259MT) as the 200MT per day Quick Lime Kiln production was shut down for major refractory replacement and maintenance work.				
Sales:				
Sales has been increased by 10.68% (RO.205,032/-) during the reporting period 2024, compared to the same period in the previous year mainly due to sale of the ready finished goods from the previous year.				
Comparative sales amount for the third quarter are 2024: RO.2,125,407/- and 2023: RO.1,920,375/-				
Net Profit/Loss:				
The Company's result during the period ended on 30th September 2024 was affected by several factors, the most important of which are:				
- Production from 200MTPD Quick Lime kiln was stopped for necessary periodic refractory maintenance for 42 days during the period. - Quick Lime Kiln with 100MTPD capacity kiln was stopped production for complete revamping and modernization to raise the efficiency and increase the quality of the materials produced in line with the requirements of the market - High direct production costs such as raw material – lime stone, factory land rent and increase in custom duties in addition to an increase in water and electricity tariffs. - The decision of the Ministry of Transport to prevent the entry of (empty) land transport vehicles from neighboring countries that were transporting the company's products to water desalination plants in the neighboring countries, which greatly affected the Company's ability to fully fulfill its obligations to supply the required materials, in addition to the highest cost of transportation.				
However, the Company's management is still striving to find possible solutions to reduce the impact of this during the coming period and achieve the best possible results under these difficult circumstances, as the periodic maintenance work for the lime kiln was completed during the month of July, as well as obtaining the necessary permits from the Ministry of Transport.				
On the other hand, the company still faces some obstacles of which the most important are mentioned below:				
- Preventing the entry of (empty) land transportation vehicles to the Sultanate of Oman to transport hydrated lime, which had a negative impact on the company and led to a decline in its sales. - Increasing the customs tariff from the customs authority on consignments exported outside Sultanate of Oman by 15 riyals (double the previous fee) per shipment. - Increase in customs duties imposed by neighboring countries on importing raw materials and exporting our products, the most important of which is the increase and introduction of road tolls, which negatively affected significantly in the cost of the product. - The high cost of direct and indirect production, as well as the result of intense competition in neighboring countries, the company is unable to charge this increased cost to selling prices, including the increase in tariffs for electricity, water, natural gas and other components used in operating the lime kilns, which negatively affected the company's ability to compete in the markets, domestic and foreign. As a result of the fierce competition that we face in the local market from competitors from neighboring countries is very difficult, as we are unable to pass those additional expenses to our customers.				
Future Outlook:				
The Company's management and all employees strive diligently and continuously to find solutions to the problems and challenges facing the company through:				
- Developing production methods, reducing expenses and costs, and maintaining the level of product quality through the installation and operation of the new hydrated lime production unit expected by the end of November of this year, which will have a positive impact next year. - Modernization, development and renovation of the limekiln with a capacity of 100 tons per day in line with the requirements of the markets, which is underway, will have a positive impact in raising the production capacity of the factory, reducing the cost and increasing the company's ability to compete in the local and foreign markets. - Opening new markets and new customers for quick lime, dolomite and hydrated lime products to compensate for the negative effects that affected the company's sales as a result of the reasons mentioned above. And as a result of the effort and continuous endeavor, negotiations are under way with some customers in foreign markets to find new markets for quick lime, dolomite and hydrated lime products which heralds promising results, God willing. - Continue to follow up with relevant government authorities to obtain the necessary permits to allow the entry of land transportation (empty) in to the Sultanate, which will have a significant on the company's ability to fulfill its obligations in supplying materials to neighboring countries and reduce the cost of transportation. - Work is underway to study some projects that will contribute to developing and modernizing production methods, reducing expenses and costs, and maintaining the level of product quality through maintenance and continuous improvement of the performance of production machines and developing the factory's technical staff.				

Dreamlab Tech, NSSG forge cybersecurity powerhouse

Swiss cybersecurity firm Dreamlab Technologies and Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest) announced the strategic merger of their respective entities, Dreamlab Technologies Oman and National Security Services Group (NSSG).

This merger will establish a leading provider of cybersecurity solutions and services for Oman and the region, so think the representatives of the two companies.

The new entity, operating under the name 'Dreamlab Technologies', will combine Swiss engineering excellence with deep regional expertise to safeguard critical infrastructure and empower organisations to navigate the digital landscape confidently.

This merger represents a significant milestone in Ominvest's strategy to foster innovation and enhance national capabilities in the critical cybersecurity sector.

"This transformative merger establishes a robust cybersecurity entity poised to serve as a trusted partner for both government and commercial organisations across Oman and the region," said Sanjay Kawatra, Deputy Group CEO of Ominvest.

"By providing world-class cybersecurity solutions, we are not only fortifying the nation's digital



resilience but also actively contributing to its global competitiveness in the digital age. This strategic move represents a pivotal step in Ominvest's long-term growth strategy, demonstrating its proactive approach to capitalising on emerging opportunities in the dynamic cybersecurity landscape."

Adding to this, Waleed al Yarubi, Chief People, Corporate Communication and Sustainability Officer at Ominvest, highlighted the strategic importance of this merger: "This investment

transition signifies our commitment to building a future-ready portfolio that aligns with Oman's Vision 2040. By consolidating our cybersecurity strengths under Dreamlab Technologies, we are creating a regional leader capable of addressing the evolving cybersecurity landscape and driving digital transformation securely."

Nicolas Mayencourt, Global CEO of Dreamlab Technologies, added, "Dreamlab's Swiss-engineered software solutions, trusted by governments and crit-

ical infrastructure providers worldwide, will provide a secure foundation for navigating the complex cyber dimension. This merger allows us to leverage our cutting-edge technology and deep local knowledge to proactively address the evolving cybersecurity challenges facing the region."

Faiz al Raisi, who has successfully led Dreamlab Oman since 2017, has been appointed CEO of Dreamlab Technologies.

"Our combined team of highly skilled cybersecurity experts is dedicated to delivering exceptional value and innovative solutions to our partners. By integrating international best practices and local insights, we will empower organizations to proactively manage cyber risks and confidently build a secure digital future," Raisi added.

Dreamlab Technologies is a leading Swiss cybersecurity company with a global presence. Its software solutions are trusted by governments and critical infrastructure providers worldwide. Dreamlab is an accredited member of SWIFT's Customer Security Programme and the United Nations' ITU.

NSSG is a leading provider of cybersecurity solutions and services in Oman. It is part of Ominvest's portfolio, a leading investment company in Oman.



DGHS awards winners of health innovations

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Muscat governorate on Sunday organised an honouring ceremony for the winners of the Muscat Health Innovation Competition under the auspices of H E Dr Rahma Ibrahim al Mahrooqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation.

The event - at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) - was attended by H E Dr Saeed Harib al Lamki, Ministry of Health's Undersecretary for Health Affairs, along with several directors general and officials from MoH and various sectors, as well as investors, business leaders, representatives from the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Author-

ity, and other supporters.

The ceremony was opened by a welcoming speech by Dr Thamrah al Ghafri, Director General of Muscat Health, where she emphasized that innovation in the health sector extends beyond the development of treatments and medical devices as it also includes improving the quality of life and enhancing health awareness among community members.

Muscat Health Director General further noted that collaboration between government, private, and academic sectors is crucial for achieving sustainable innovation; through this partnership, a strong and resilient health system capable of facing future challenges can be built. The ex-

change of expertise and knowledge, along with unified efforts, contributes to creating an environment that fosters creativity and innovation, Dr Ghafri added.

Dr Ghafri stressed the importance of innovators, who bear the responsibility of leading the advancement of the health sector, stating, "Supporting and empowering innovators is an investment in the country's future and the well-being of its people; the new ideas and ambitious projects they present serve as the driving force for progress and prosperity."

The top three winners of the competition are Madiha al Balushi (first), Asma Bait Ishaq (second), and Amina al Ghamari (third).



Customers praise BankDhofar's IPO subscription process

The OQEP offering is the largest IPO in the history of the Sultanate of Oman, with approximately two billion shares offered, representing 25% of the company's total issued share capital. BankDhofar's customers confirmed the ease of the subscription process via the mobile banking application, saving them time and effort without having to visit any of the various branches spread across Oman.

The customers mentioned that this subscription is an opportunity to grow their money and diversify their investment portfolios. This subscription is also important for the Muscat Stock Exchange and the injection of liquidity into it, and for the revival of the national economy in general.

0% subscription financing

Abdul Aziz al Jahouri considered the subscription in OQEP a real opportunity to grow his long-saved money, stressing that the share price was convenient for him. "I subscribed for myself and my family through BankDhofar's mobile application, and the process was very quick and took only few seconds," he said.

Jahouri noted that technology has helped reduce the time and effort for individuals, as he no longer had to visit the branch to complete the subscription process, as the application allowed

him to do it from his office.

Jahouri decided to establish a close relationship with the bank recently in September, when he saw the bank's announcement regarding 0% interest financing for the IPO. Although he did not need financing for the IPO, the facilities offered by BankDhofar to individuals and investors prompted him to open a new bank account.

Jahouri said, "The IPO contributes to attracting foreign investors to the Muscat Stock Exchange, which will lead to the recovery of the national economy in general. He is optimistic that the share price will be between 420 and 440 baisas when it is listed on the MSX.

App saved time

Samra Sulaiman al Harthi praised the speed of the subscription process through BankDhofar's mobile application. "Subscribing through the app saved time and effort from visiting branches," she said, emphasising that she will continue to use the application for future subscriptions.

Harthi expects the share price to be more than 400 baisas when it is listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange, stressing that the factor that prompted her to subscribe is the performance of the company, which is the most important company in the OQ Group.

Muzn Islamic inaugurates new branch in Ibra

In line with its ongoing commitment to offer customers with a seamless banking experience, Muzn Islamic Banking has officially inaugurated a new branch in Ibra in North Sharqiyah governorate.

The strategic expansion reflects Muzn's dedication to enhance accessibility and convenience for its customers across the Sultanate, supporting their financial aspirations while adhering to Islamic principles.

Commenting on the inauguration, Salima al Marzooqi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer at Muzn, said, "At Muzn, we remain dedicated to our customers' needs by providing them with accessible and tailored sharia'a-compliant financial solutions. Our new branch in Ibra comes as part of our continuous efforts to bring quality banking services closer to the community. Moreover, we aim to foster stronger relationships with local customers and contribute to the economic development of the area."



The branch offers a full range of Islamic banking services, from personal and business banking accounts, to financing solutions,

enabling customers to manage their financial needs in a modern and convenient setting.

Muzn's continued investment

in branch expansion complements its broader digital transformation initiatives. Its customers can also enjoy the convenience of

the bank's advanced digital services, providing seamless access to their accounts and financial management tools anytime.

Audi's Q6 e-tron takes centre stage in iconic venues

Audi Middle East unveiled its all-new electric masterpiece, the Audi Q6 e-tron, in a stunning showcase at Al Mouj complex in Muscat, along with other cities in the Gulf.

Beyond a product launch, Audi's latest electric SUV marks the beginning of a new era for the four rings, taking a bold leap into the future of sustainable luxury and advanced mobility, says the company.

The other venues in the Gulf, which saw similar events, are the Ritz Carlton Abu Dhabi against the backdrop of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque; 7 by Richard Serra at the Museum of Islamic Art Park in Doha; and Dubai's Museum of the Future and House of Wisdom in Sharjah.

As the white cover slipped away, the Audi Q6 e-tron made a powerful statement, heralding the start of the brand's largest model offensive in its history.



With its sleek, modern exterior and spacious, intuitive interior, the Q6 e-tron redefines the

brand's vision of luxury and innovation.

The Q6 e-tron also introduces

world-first innovations like customisable digital light signatures and 'awareness' OLED rear

lights, enhancing both style and safety. Inside, the brand new 'Digital Stage' elevates the overall experience, seamlessly blending advanced digital interfaces with Audi's signature attention to detail.

With a range of up to 625km on a single charge (according to WLTP) and an 800-volt system that charges up to 80% in just 21 minutes, the Q6 e-tron is engineered to meet the fast-paced lifestyles of the region. A quick 10-minute charge can restore up to 260km of range. Audi's expanding charging infrastructure across the Middle East makes electric driving more accessible than ever.

The future of mobility has never been more exciting and the Audi Q6 e-tron is leading the way. To be available in showrooms by the end of this year, the Q6 e-tron sets a new benchmark in advanced technology.

Lulu opens new stores in Muscat, Al Ain to expand its retail presence in Oman, UAE

Lulu is enhancing its footprint across Oman and UAE, making shopping more accessible for residents in suburban areas. Spearheading the retail presence, Lulu opened a hypermarket at Al Khuwair in Muscat and new express fresh market store in Al Quaa, approximately 125km from Al Ain city, alongside.

The newly opened stores offer a global standard shopping experience for the local community.

Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Ahmed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, officially inaugurated the new hypermarket in Al Khuwair in the presence of Yusuff Ali M A, Lulu Retail Chairman; while prominent UAE businessman Hamad Salem Thaaloub Salem Alderei opened fresh market in Al Ain's Al Quaa.

Also present on the occasion were Ananth A V, Director Oman, Shabeer K A, Regional Director of Lulu Oman and other officials.

"It has always been our policy to make the Lulu brand easily accessible to shoppers in different suburbs and outskirts, so they do not need to drive long distances for shopping," said Yusuff Ali M A, Chairman of Lulu Retail.

"We are committed to extending our services to all regions, particularly in outlying



districts. This reflects our dedication to contributing to the overall development of the GCC nations and supporting suburban areas," he added.

Lulu, on an expansion spree across GCC, plans to open three additional outlets in Oman, along

with two more projects in Al Ain shortly. This strategic expansion to enhance services in both outlying and urban centers, ensures a comfortable shopping experience for residents. Several projects are in the pipeline, demonstrating Lulu's commitment to the region.

Lulu has recently announced its plans to launch an Initial Public Offering (IPO) for 25% of its share capital on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, providing an exciting opportunity for the public to invest in the GCC's

largest and fastest-growing full-line retailer. The IPO is scheduled from October 28 to November 5 and will offer more than 2.582 billion shares. Trading is anticipated to commence on November 14, with the offering expected to raise between US\$1.7bn and

US\$1.8bn for the 25% stake. Lulu Retail is a distinguished homegrown retail brand in the UAE, with over five decades of experience across the GCC. With more than 240 stores in six GCC countries, Lulu boasts a strong omni-channel presence

through three formats such as hypermarkets, express stores, and mini-markets, serving 600,000 customers daily from 120 nationalities. With a turnover of US\$7.3bn, Lulu Retail is the largest full-line retailer in the GCC.



Bank Muscat holds formal event to mark relocation of Athaiba branch

As part of its strategic initiative to expand and enhance its branch network, Bank Muscat celebrated the relocation of its Athaiba branch along 18th November Street.

The event, held under the patronage of Saleh bin Mohammed al Zakwani, Executive Chairman of Apex Media, and attended by members of the Bank's executive management, esteemed customers, and special invitees.

The new branch is set to elevate the banking experience by integrating modern safety, security, and technological solutions. This relocation underscores the bank's commitment to providing top-tier services in a comfortable environment, allowing cus-

tomers to conduct their transactions efficiently and securely.

The Athaiba branch offers a comprehensive range of banking services tailored to meet diverse customer needs

Strategically located in Athaiba amidst key commercial hubs, the branch houses a Private Banking and Wealth Management Center and the Asalah Priority Banking Center. These dedicated facilities offer personalized service through Relationship Managers, ensuring fast and seamless transactions in a welcoming atmosphere.

The branch also supports various financing services, including the 'Baituna' housing finance product, and features specialised

services for small businesses through the Najahi Business Banking Unit. Besides, the branch caters to the needs of people with disabilities, offering accessible facilities and self-service banking devices, such as ATMs and CDMs. These machines enable customers to perform a wide array of transactions, including withdrawals, check deposits, and bill payments. The branch operates from Sunday to Thursday, 8.00am to 2.00pm

Abdulnasir N al Raisi, General Manager of Personal Banking at Bank Muscat, expressed his enthusiasm for the new branch.

"This relocation reflects our continuous efforts to expand our footprint across Oman's gover-

norates, making banking services more accessible to everyone. The new Athaiba branch embodies our vision of providing both our employees and customers with a modern, technologically advanced environment. We aim to enhance the quality of our services and meet the evolving needs of our customers, as well as offer innovative digital solutions through our various banking devices. As part of our ongoing strategy, we are excited to announce the opening of several new branches in the near future."

Saleh Mohammed al Maaini, Deputy General Manager - Capital Regions, Bank Muscat, highlighted the significance of the relocation.

OETC strengthens support for SMEs and 'Riyada' card holders

With the aim of enhancing In-Country Value (ICV) and supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through various initiatives, activities, and projects, Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), in collaboration with the SME Development Authority, organised an introductory session for holders of the Riyada Card on October 21.

More than 50 Omani SMEs participated in the session, which provided a platform for business owners to interact with officials and specialists from the company and the authority. The session also introduced the benefits of the Riyada Card and the developmental opportunities available for its holders, in addition to showcasing the business opportunities and contracts available in the company's various projects across Oman.

This initiative comes as part of OETC's commitment to supporting SMEs and enhancing ICV, while adhering to the regulations and procedures set by the relevant authorities. The company ensures the integration of these enterprises into its projects by allocating no less than 10% of the total Engineering, Procurement and Construction projects cost to SMEs.

In addition, all tenders issued



by OETC with a value of RO10,000 or less are exclusively awarded to small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The company conducts other initiatives like supporting local products, engaging with Omani companies, and employing job seekers according to the project's nature, requirements, and location.

Talal al Azri, Tenders, Procurements and Contracts Manager at OETC, emphasised the importance the company places on supporting Omani entrepreneurs, youth, and SMEs, highlighting the company's adoption of policies and procedures that ensure the achievement of the intended goals.

He pointed out the company's commitment to implementing

plans that positively impact these enterprises and strengthen local communities.

"As a leading company in the Sultanate of Oman, we bear a great responsibility to support the youth and entrepreneurs, and we collaborate with relevant entities to ensure a certain percentage of our contracts is allocated to Omani companies. We also strive to transfer knowledge and expertise to ensure the growth and development we aim to see in our SMEs," Azri added.

It is worth mentioning that OETC, a member of Nama Group, is the only company responsible for the transmission and control of electricity across the sultanate's network.

Omran celebrates graduates of SHIFT and G!FT leadership programmes

Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) marked a momentous occasion as 67 employees successfully graduated from its SHIFT and G!FT leadership programmes, reaffirming its commitment to nurturing Omani talent and shaping the future of Oman's tourism sector.

The ceremony was held under the patronage of Sheikh Nasser bin Sulaiman al Harthy, Deputy President for Operations

at Oman Investment Authority, and in the presence of Dr Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, along with a number of representatives from various entities operating in the sector, at the Jumeirah Muscat Bay Resort.

Both programs are part of the #IAmTourism strategy, Omran Group's roadmap for developing human capital and enhancing capabilities. This aligns with the Group's strategic goals of nur-



turing a skilled national workforce to drive sustainable growth in the sector.

The SHIFT programme focuses on enhancing the leadership competencies of the

group's employees through a specialised curriculum in collaboration with the 'HR Compe-

tence'. 47 employees from Omran and its subsidiaries have successfully completed the programme.

Meanwhile, the 'G!FT' programme aims to empower female employees by offering diverse training programs across various management and leadership levels. The inaugural batch included 20 women employees.

Hilal Masoud al Jadidi, Chief of People and Change at Omran

Group, stressed the group's firm commitment to developing national competencies and empowering them to lead the tourism development process in the Sultanate of Oman.

"We congratulate all graduates on the occasion of completing this enriching training journey, and we commend their commitment and dedication throughout the programme period that extended for more than seven months."

124 civilians killed in RSF attack on Sudanese state of Gezira

Khartoum, Sudan - At least 124 people were killed on Saturday in attacks carried out by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on the village of Alseriha in the Gezira state of central Sudan, the Sudan Doctors Network said.

"A force affiliated with the RSF committed a massacre against civilians in the village of Alseriha, resulting in the death of 124 people from the area following an armed attack that lasted for hours, while dozens were injured and hundreds were displaced from the village," said the non-governmental organisation in a statement.

The network condemned the RSF attack on Alseriha and other villages in the east and west of Gezira, calling it an 'irrational escalation against civilians who have chosen to remain for over a year in difficult and tragic humanitarian conditions'.

The RSF has not yet commented on the situation.

Earlier on Friday, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that 853 households were displaced from Tamboul city and surrounding



villages in Gezira state between October 20 and 24, 2024, due to escalating clashes between the Sudanese army and RSF.

The developments come just days after Abu Aqla Muhammad Ahmed Kikil, the RSF commander in Gezira, announced his defection to the Sudanese army, taking his forces with him.

Areas in eastern Gezira, Kikil's home region, have become the base for his forces, who now fight alongside the army. In December 2023, Kikil's RSF forces seized control of several cities in Gezira, including the state capital, Wad Medani, which is just south of Khartoum.

Since mid-April 2023, Sudan's army and the RSF have been locked in a deadly conflict, which has resulted in over 20,000 deaths and displaced more than 10mn people, according to the UN.

The international community and the UN have intensified their calls for an end to the violence, as the conflict threatens to drive millions into famine due to food shortages in 13 of Sudan's 18 states.

Anadolu Agency

British MPs press for Khan's release

The MPs called on the UK's Foreign Secretary to intervene in Imran Khan's release from Adiala Jail and engage with the Pakistan government

Islamabad, Pakistan - British parliamentarians have called on the UK's Foreign Secretary David Lammy MP to intervene in Imran Khan's release from Adiala Jail and engage with the Pakistan government, Geo News reported.

The 20 British parliamentarians, representing both the Commons and the Lords, have signed a letter written by Kim Johnson, MP for Liverpool Riverside, at the behest of Imran Khan's adviser on International Affairs, Zulfi Bukhari.

The signatories are Kim Johnson, Paula Barker, Apsana Begum, Liam Byrne, Rosie Duffield, Gill Furniss, Paulette Hamilton, Peter Lamb, Andy McDonald, Abtisam Mohamed, Bell Ribeiro-Addy, Zarah Sultana, Steve Witherden, Nadia Whittome, Baroness Joan Bakewell, Baroness Christine Blower, Lord Peter Hain, Lord John Hendy and Lord Todoanfel.

The letter stated: "We are writing with grave concern about



Former Pakistani PM Imran Khan was imprisoned in 2023 in a move which the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found had no legal basis

20 British parliamentarians, in a letter, cited Amnesty International's review of Khan's case, highlighting the 'pattern of weaponisation of the legal system' to keep him detained and barred from political activity

the continued detention of former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan. As you will know, Khan was imprisoned in 2023 in a move which the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary De-

tention found had no legal basis and appeared to have been intended to disqualify him from running for political office, as per Geo News.

"Thus, from the outset, that

prosecution was not grounded in law and was reportedly instrumentalised for a political purpose," the letter added.

In a letter, they expressed concern that Khan's ongoing detention threatens democracy in Pakistan.

The letter cited Amnesty International's review of Khan's case, highlighting the 'pattern of weaponisation of the legal system' to keep him detained and barred from political activity.

Amnesty noted that Khan was denied adequate time and facili-

ties to prepare his defence in at least three trials.

"As a result, Khan's ongoing detention represents a grave threat to democracy in the country. Indeed, there has been speculation that his fate will likely be decided by a military court, which would represent a worrying and completely illegal escalation. Following a recent review of Khan's case, Amnesty International has found that there has been a pattern of weaponisation of the legal system to keep Imran Khan under detention and away from all polit-

ical activity," the letter to Lammy said.

They have also observed that in at least three trials, Khan has not been allowed adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence. It has become apparently clear that the number of cases against the jailed PTI founder is now 'consistent with a pattern of misuse of the justice system in Pakistan to intimidate, harass and target political opposition leaders - while infringing upon the enshrined independence of the judiciary,' the letter added.

It further said the recently passed 26th Constitutional Amendment would take powers, such as banning political parties or handling cases involving federal and provincial governments, away from the Supreme Court. "This would constitute an assault on the principle of a separation of powers codified in the country's Constitution."

It adds: "Meanwhile, in recent weeks, there has been further anti-democratic clampdowns on Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Party, which has seen the arrest of parliamentarians and high-profile activists. Despite gaining prior permission to hold a rally in Islamabad, it appears that Pakistani authorities unfairly invoked a new Public Order Act to detain PTI supporters."

"Parliamentarians across this House will agree that the political precedent this is setting is dangerous. As such, Khan must be immediately released from pre-trial detention. As a country, we have a duty to stand up for human rights, democracy and international law everywhere."

ANI

Bulgaria: Pro-Russian party looms large in polls

Sofia, Bulgaria - Bulgarians headed to the polls for general elections on Sunday, with pro-Russian and far-right groups expected to make gains amid the country's political instability.

The elections were called after the seven groups elected to the legislature did not succeed in forming a coalition. Turnout is expected to be low, with polls showing that only 10% of Bulgarians have confidence in the system.

Former Prime Minister Boyko Borissov's centre-right GERB party is tipped to finish first with around 25% of the vote. However, GERB is likely to struggle to form a viable coalition amid a splintered Parliament.

Analysts believe that the main pro-Russia party, Vazrazhdane, has a good chance of becoming second-largest group in the legislature.

Vazrazhdane wants Bulgaria to lift sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine and for the country to cease its aid to Kyiv, while also calling the country's NATO membership into question. It has gained popularity since proposing a Russian-inspired law banning LGBTQ 'propaganda' that was passed by a large majority in Parliament in August.

DW

Japan election: Ruling party 'short of majority'

Tokyo, Japan - Projections by Japan's national broadcaster NHK have shown Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) falling short of a majority for the first time since 2009 after snap elections on Sunday.

The projections leave it unclear whether Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's LDP will be able to achieve a parliamentary majority with its coalition partner, the Komeito party.

According to the NHK figures, the two coalition parties are set to win between 174 and 254 of the 465 seats in the lower house of Japan's parliament, with 233 needed for a majority.

The main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan is predicted to win 128 to 191 seats.

If confirmed, the projections leave the make-up of the future government very uncertain as Japan wrestles with economic setbacks and faces growing assertion from China.

In Japan's previous general election in 2021, the LDP won a majority in its own right, with



259 seats in parliament's lower house. Komeito had 32.

Ishiba called the snap election after the former defence minister was narrowly selected to lead the LDP in September.

Former Prime Minister Fumio Kishida stood down in August, after his government was rocked by a number of scandals.

In late 2023, it was revealed that dozens of LDP politicians had for years been building up

secret slush funds to the tune of 600mn yen (US\$4.1mn).

Kishida dismissed four members of his Cabinet, and a series of arrests of parliamentary aides and accountants were made as the full scale of the scandal unfolded. However, voters in the world's fourth-largest economy have continued to be dismayed by the fallout from the slush fund scandal and have been rankled by rising prices in the country.

Some pre-election polls already suggested that the LDP and Komeito might struggle to get the lower house seats needed for a majority.

With Ishiba having set this threshold as his main objective, missing it would undermine his position in the LDP and could require the ruling party to find other coalition partners or lead a minority government.

DW

Georgia: Ruling Georgian Dream party wins election

Tbilisi, Georgia - Georgia's ruling Georgian Dream party won Saturday's parliamentary election, receiving more than 54% of the vote, the electoral commission said on Sunday.

The result is a setback for those Georgians who would like their country to integrate into the EU, as the Georgian Dream party is seen as tending more toward Russia than the West, despite declarations to the contrary.

Several pro-European opposition coalitions have not recognised the preliminary result and have announced protests.

EU dreams on hold

Georgian Dream, a conservative, nationalist party founded by billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili - who largely made his fortune with business deals in Russia - secured 54.09% of the votes with almost all ballots counted, election official Giorgi Kalandarishvili announced in the capital



Georgian Dream, a conservative party secured 54.09% of the votes with almost all ballots counted

Tbilisi.

He said a union of four pro-Western opposition alliances received 37.58% of the votes.

Although Georgian Dream says it wants Georgia to join the EU, the fact that it also favours closer cooperation with Russia would seem to conflict with this declared aim.

Brussels says the country's membership application is frozen, citing what it sees as authoritarian tendencies on the part of the Bulgarian government after it enacted a number of controversial laws.

DW

Khamenei says not to exaggerate or underestimate Israel's attack on Iran

Iran's supreme leader was reacting for the first time after the Israeli airstrike on Iranian military sites

Tehran, Iran - In his first reaction following an Israeli airstrike on Iranian military sites, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Sunday that the attack must 'neither be exaggerated nor underestimated.'

Speaking at an event in Tehran, Khamenei emphasised the need to 'thwart' Israel's 'miscalculations'. He conveyed a message to the Iranian armed forces, asserting that Iran must make Israel 'understand the power, capability, ingenuity, and will of the Iranian nation'.

The attack commenced around 2:30am local time (23:00 GMT) on Saturday, targeting military facilities in the border provinces of Ilam and Khuzestan and areas surrounding the capital Tehran.

Iran's armed forces said while most missiles were intercepted by air defence systems, some caused 'limited damage', resulting in the deaths of four soldiers.

It claimed that Israeli fighter jets used airspace controlled by the US in Iraq to launch long-range missiles with 'light warheads' at Iranian military sites from approximately 100km outside Iran's borders.

An Israeli army spokesperson said the airstrike targeted Iran's missile production facilities, surface-to-air missile systems, and air defence infrastructure.

Khamenei asserted that Israel



Speaking at an event in Tehran, Khamenei emphasised the need to 'thwart' Israel's 'miscalculations'

made a 'mistake' by attacking Iran, stating that they 'exaggerated' the impact of the strike while also cautioning against underestimating them.

"They are miscalculating regarding Iran. They do not know Iran, they do not know the youth of Iran, they do not know the Ira-

nian nation, and they have not yet properly understood the power, capability, ingenuity, and will of the Iranian nation; this is something we must make clear to them," he was quoted as saying by the state news agency IRNA.

Khamenei passed the ball to military officials to decide on an

appropriate response to this latest attack, which was the first direct assault by Israel on Iranian soil that has been publicly acknowledged.

Saturday's attack occurred weeks after Iran launched missile strikes on targets in Tel Aviv in what it said was retaliation for the

killings of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh, and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander Abbas Nilforoushan.

Iran had previously warned that any further Israeli attacks would be met with a 'harsher response'.

They do not know Iran, they do not know the youth of Iran, they do not know the Iranian nation, and they have not yet properly understood the power, capability, ingenuity, and will of Iranian nation

AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI

On Saturday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said Iran feels 'obligated' to defend against 'foreign aggressive actions' based on the right of legitimate defence enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces also reaffirmed the country's 'right to take lawful and legitimate action at an appropriate time', while emphasising the necessity of a 'lasting ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon'.

US 'played a role'

The United States played a role in Saturday's Israeli strikes on Iran, a top official in Tehran said.

"The Americans clearly participated in the attack," Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in

a televised interview on Sunday.

"The Americans provided an air corridor for the Zionist air force, and the defensive equipment they sent to them is considered a form of involvement in the recent operations," he added, saying that US participation is 'completely clear'.

On the international backlash to Israel's attack, he said: "The level of global condemnation for this aggressive act by the Zionist entity was very high."

Meanwhile, the Israeli media reported that the US positioned a fleet of fighter jets on standby to rescue Israeli pilots if Tel Aviv's Saturday attack on Iran had gone badly.

"Israel and the US coordinated a plan to ensure the safe extraction of pilots should the operation have not succeeded," said Israeli Army Radio on Sunday.

The report stressed that while the US did not take part in the attack itself, a fleet from US Central Command (AFCENT) was prepared to intervene if necessary.

"The Americans' advanced capabilities in the region would allow them to carry out a rescue operation," the report stated.

Despite this readiness for potential US intervention, the Israeli Air Force had already devised an 'independent plan for pilot rescue without relying on American support', it added.

Anadolu Agency



At least 19 killed in Israeli air offensive in southern Lebanon

Beirut, Lebanon - At least 19 people were killed in intensified Israeli airstrikes in southern Lebanon on Sunday, local media said.

Three people lost their lives when Israeli fighter jets carried out two airstrikes in the border towns of Burji al-Shemali and Qaaqaait Al Jisr, the state news agency NNA reported.

Five more people were killed and several others injured in Israeli airstrikes in Tyre, the broadcaster said.

Two more strikes hit Marjayoun, killing at least eight people, NNA said. Three people were also killed in another airstrike in the town of Bafliyyeh.

Lebanese media also reported an Israeli strike on a mosque in the border town of Al-Dhahira, completely destroying it, marking a repeated occurrence of attacks on religious sites during the conflict.

Israeli forces also reportedly rigged several homes near a base of the UN peacekeeping mission (UNIFIL) in Al-Dhahira and detonated them.

The airstrikes were the latest in a massive air campaign launched by Israel last month

ing to Lebanese health authorities. Israel expanded the conflict this year by launching a ground assault into southern Lebanon on October 1.

Besides, four more Israeli soldiers were killed and 14 others injured in southern

More than 2,650 people have been killed and over 12,300 others injured in Israeli attacks in the country since last year, according to Lebanese health authorities

on Lebanon in an escalation from year-long cross-border warfare between Israel and Hezbollah since the start of Israel's brutal offensive on the Gaza Strip.

More than 2,650 people have been killed and over 12,300 others injured in Israeli attacks since last year, accord-

Lebanon, the military said on Sunday.

A military statement said the fatalities occurred in battles with Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon.

Five of the injured soldiers were in serious condition, the statement added.

Anadolu Agency

13 killed in Israeli airstrikes in Gaza

Gaza City, Palestine - At least 13 Palestinians were killed and several others injured while others remain missing following Israeli airstrikes on Gaza on Sunday.

"Ten Palestinians were killed and others injured in an airstrike that targeted a family home in the Beit Lahia project in northern Gaza," said a source from Gaza Civil Defence.

The source added that several people are still trapped under the rubble of the targeted home, as there are no civil defence or ambulance services available in the area.

The Israeli army renewed its artillery shelling and opened fire from vehicles in the Jabalia refugee camp, Beit Lahia, and around the areas of Al-Tawam and Al-Safatawi in the northern Gaza Strip, eyewitnesses told Anadolu.

The Israeli army also carried out strikes in northern Gaza amid heavy gunfire from vehicles east of Jabalia.

In Gaza City, a medical source reported that a Palestinian was



killed and several others were injured in an Israeli airstrike that targeted the Salah Al-Din school, which shelters displaced persons near Palestine Stadium.

The same source added: "Two more Palestinians were killed, and several others were injured when an Israeli airstrike targeted a family home in Gaza City."

In southern Gaza, Israeli naval forces also fired at the coast of

Al-Qarara northwest of Khan Younis.

Flouting a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire, Israel has continued a devastating offensive on Gaza since an attack last year by Palestinian resistance group Hamas.

Nearly 43,000 people have since been killed, mostly women and children, and over 100,000

others injured, according to local health authorities.

The Israeli onslaught has displaced almost the territory's entire population amid an ongoing blockade that has led to severe shortages of food, clean water, and medicine.

Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its actions in Gaza.

Anadolu Agency

China condemns US-Taiwan arms deal

Beijing, China - China strongly condemned the recent US\$1.988bn arms deal between the United States and Taiwan, stating that it seriously violates the one-China principle.

China also condemned the arms deal, warning that it severely undermines China's sovereignty and national security, jeopardises China-US relations and destabilises peace across the Taiwan Strait. It also cautioned that the sale sends a dangerously misleading signal to separatist forces advocating for Taiwan's independence.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson made the remarks after the US Defence Department



announced on Saturday that the State Department has approved US\$1.988bn in arms sales to Taiwan, including the 'National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems' and radar systems.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said: "The US arms sales to China's Taiwan region seriously violate the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiques, especially

the August 17 communique of 1982. The sales seriously undermine China's sovereignty and security interests, harm China-US relations and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and send a gravely wrong message to 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces."

The spokesperson added: "The US's decision to use Taiwan to contain China and help advance 'Taiwan independence' agenda by arming Taiwan goes against the US leaders' commitment of not supporting 'Taiwan independence' and the two sides' effort of stabilising the China-US relations."

ANI

INDIA

Scholz backs increasing defence cooperation

The German chancellor was referring to cooperation pacts signed during talks with the Indian PM

New Delhi - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz backed increased arms cooperation with India, as he concluded his visit to the South Asian country on Saturday.

Speaking in the western Indian state of Goa, Scholz noted how the two countries had concluded a strategic partnership more than 20 years ago and now aim to intensify their alliance, including in weapons exports.

"This will play a larger role in the future, and it is right that it should," he said, without giving further details.

The chancellor was referring to the 27 new cooperation agreements signed on Friday in New Delhi during talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in the fields of renewable energy, research and critical technologies.

Defence cooperation planned

Both leaders also agreed to support 'enhanced industry-level cooperation in the defence sector', according to a joint statement, which singled out a specific focus on 'technology collaboration, manufacturing



Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant welcomes Germany Chancellor Olaf Scholz, at Dabolim Airport in Panaji on Saturday (ANI)

/co-production and co-development of defence platforms and equipment'.

In the first six months of the year, India was the third-largest recipient of German arms, ac-

cording to German Economy Ministry data requested by a lawmaker from the populist

leftist Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance. Berlin approved licenses worth €153.75mn (approx-

mately US\$166mn).

Earlier this year, Germany lifted curbs on the export of small arms and their spare parts to India as an exception, due to the growing ties between the two countries. Berlin maintains strict rules on the sale of small arms to non-NATO countries.

Germany's Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems hopes to participate in the construction of six submarines for the Indian Navy. While a declaration of in-

The Frankfurt am Main naval supply ship and the Baden-Württemberg frigate departed Germany's North Sea port of Wilhelmshaven in May, before crossing the Atlantic and passing the Panama Canal to the Pacific. They then passed through the Taiwan Strait, before entering Mormugao Port in Goa on Saturday.

Scholz said the German ships are contributing to ensuring the freedom of global mar-

Earlier this year, Germany lifted curbs on the export of small arms and their spare parts to India as an exception, due to the growing ties between the two countries

tent was agreed last year, the Indian government has yet to take a decision.

European aerospace giant Airbus is also seeking to sell its A400M transports to India, but negotiations on a possible contract are still in the early stages.

Also Saturday, Scholz paid tribute to German sailors who had just wrapped up several days of joint military exercises with the Indian Navy.

itime traffic.

"It's important that our navy is involved in this to show that it is something that we strive for together," he said.

During the visit, Scholz also advocated for skilled workers for the German labour market and pressed for swifter negotiations between the European Union and India over a free trade agreement. DW



SET FOR DIWALI

People shop for firecrackers at a shop ahead of the Diwali festival, at Fancy Bazaar in Guwahati, Assam on Sunday. With Diwali knocking on the door, the whole country is getting ready to celebrate the 'Festival of Lights' (ANI)



People cycling at the Kartavya Path near India Gate amid deteriorating air quality, in New Delhi on Sunday (ANI)

Delhi's pollution worsens, people 'feel suffocated'

New Delhi - The air quality deteriorated in the national capital on Sunday, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) being recorded at 352, in the 'very poor' category, according to System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR). This is worse than the average AQI recorded at 255 on Saturday, categorised as 'poor'.

Moreover, AQI in Anand Vihar area crossed the 400 mark, being recorded as 405 at 7am, categorised as 'severe', worse than the AQI of 367 recorded on Saturday.

AQI at the Akshardham Temple deteriorated 261, whereas IGI airport recorded an AQI of 324, both categorised as

Air Quality Index in Anand Vihar area crossed the 400 mark, being recorded as 405 at 7am, categorised as 'severe'

'very poor'.

A layer of thick smog enveloped certain parts of the city.

Himanshu, a visitor to the national capital said that the increasing pollution feels 'suffocating'. "It feels suffocating due to pollution...The government should look into what can be

done to reduce pollution," he told ANI.

Moreover, a cyclist in the city told ANI that they are facing a lot of problems with breathing.

"We are from Delhi and we (the cyclist group) cycle daily here, but this situation of air pollution since the last few days we are facing a lot of problems. We can't breathe properly; we get tired faster due to the pollution. We take precautions like wearing a bandana but nothing is working because the pollution is increasing a lot," he said.

He further said that the measures taken by the government don't seem effective enough. ANI

US emerges as top defence export customer

New Delhi - Amid a growing push to increase export of indigenous defence equipment, the US, France and Armenia have emerged as the top three customers for Indian military exports.

"India is presently exporting military equipment to more than 100 nations across the world. The top three countries in the last financial year include the US, France and Armenia, official sources said on Sunday.

The Defence Ministry has been pushing defence exports and manufacturing in the



country to improve domestic production of these equipment to meet internal and international requirements.

The sources said the exports to the US include a significant number of parts of

aircraft and helicopters manufactured by Indian firms for global defence majors like Lockheed Martin and Boeing.

The exports to France include a lot of software and electronic equipment while the

exports to Armenia include ATAGS artillery guns, Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher systems, Swathi weapon locating radars and other important systems.

Official sources said that the Defence Industrial Base has been expanding with the presence of 16 Defence public sector units, 430 firms with licenses along 16000 medium and small-scale enterprises.

Sources said the value of defence production in the country has gone up significantly since 2014-15. ANI

Russia-Ukraine war: Putin warns against use of long-range arms

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin has indirectly doubled down on his threat of a war with NATO if it allowed Ukraine to use long-range weapons to hit targets inside Russia.

Referring to an initial threat he made in September to this effect, Putin said: "They didn't tell me anything about it, but I hope they heard."

Putin maintained that Ukrainian troops could not 'use these weapons on their own' and would need space intelligence available only to NATO for such operations.

He said the Russian Defence Ministry was mulling over options for a response to such attacks. "(The ministry) is thinking about how to respond to the possible long-range strikes on Russian territory; it will offer a range of responses," Putin told Russian state TV's top Kremlin reporter, Pavel Zarubin.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has repeatedly asked his Western allies for permission to use Western long-range missiles against targets deep inside Russian territory.

US and British leaders have put off making a decision on the



Ukraine said it shot down more than 40 Russian drones overnight

matter, apparently in response to the dire threats coming from Moscow.

Currently, Ukraine is already using drones to hit targets well inside Russia's borders.

Vladimir Putin says his Defence Ministry is weighing responses if Ukraine uses long-range weaponry to attack inside Russian territory.

Meanwhile, Ukraine said it shot down more than 40 Russian drones overnight.

Ukraine's air defences succeeded in destroying 41 of 80 Russian drones launched overnight, the Ukrainian military

said on Sunday.

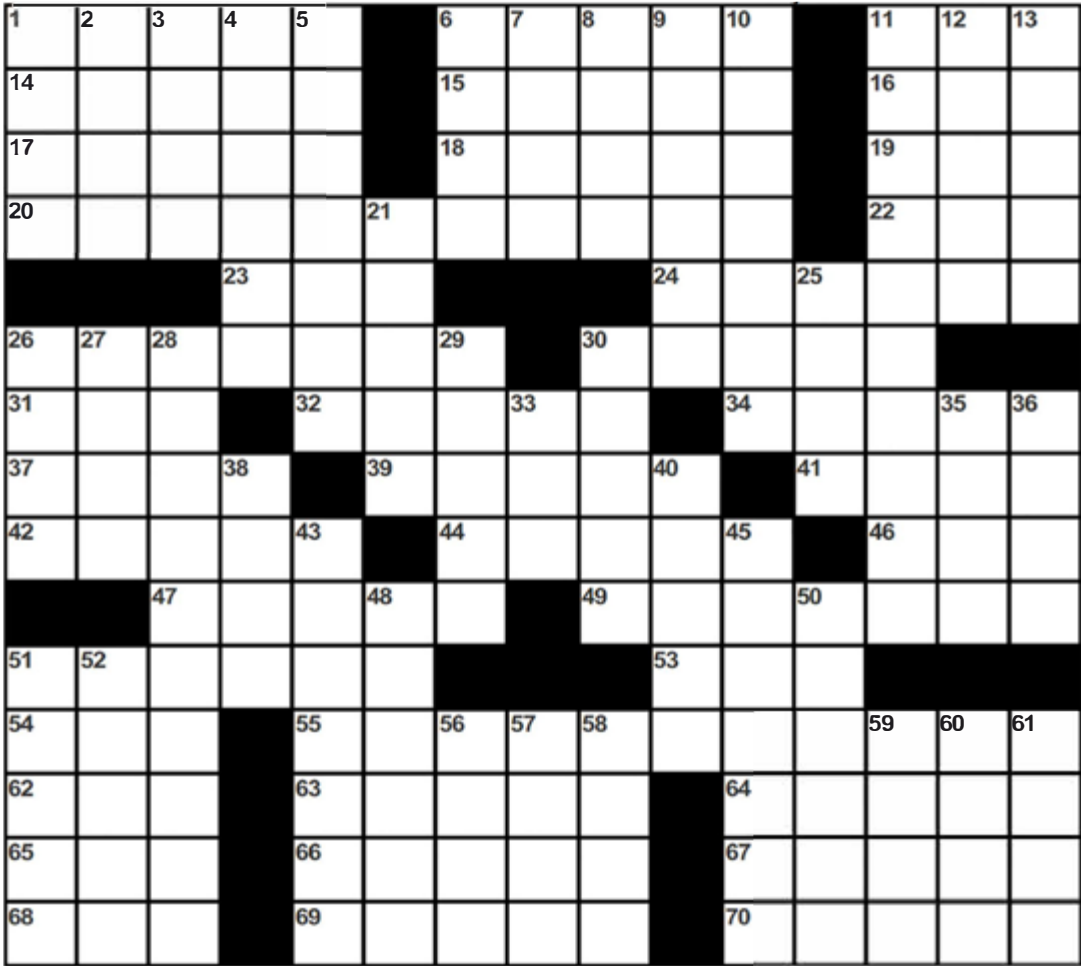
The air force said it lost track of 32 drones, without giving further details.

No casualties or infrastructure damage has so far been reported

The military and local authorities reported no casualties from the attacks or damage to critical infrastructure.

"Russia does not stop in its terror against Ukraine. Daily aggression against our people, our towns and villages. Strikes with various types of weapons," Zelensky said on the Telegram messaging platform. DW

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Lindsay of "Machete"
 - 6) "You're a Grand Old Flag" composer
 - 11) Gig gear
 - 14) Coffeeshop allure
 - 15) Antipasto bit
 - 16) Birth-named
 - 17) Reason to award a Navy Cross
 - 18) Muscular power
 - 19) Lyricist Gershwin
 - 20) Banned Sinclair Lewis book
 - 22) Karaoke need
 - 23) Milky Way unit
 - 24) Give laughing gas to
 - 26) Cash-back deals
 - 30) Onion in cocktails
 - 31) "... y Plata" (Montana motto)
 - 32) Sniggler
 - 34) Travels like Huck Finn
 - 37) Do some logrolling
 - 39) Like a wink and a nod
 - 41) Au naturel
 - 42) Ply with drink
 - 44) Inquisitor _ de Torquemada
 - 46) Leg it
 - 47) Lock of hair
 - 49) Take a nosedive
 - 51) Software instruction file
 - 53) Assayer's sample
 - 54) Pipe bend
 - 55) Banned Grace Metalious book
 - 62) Bro, say
 - 63) Cornhusker State city
 - 64) Mete out
 - 65) As well
 - 66) Fired up again
 - 67) Bulgaria's capital
 - 68) Sloppy digs
 - 69) Blissful spots
 - 70) Grown-up cygnets
- DOWN**
- 1) Wash up
 - 2) Graduate exam, maybe
 - 3) Holly who dethroned Ronda Rousey
 - 4) Microscope slide creature
 - 5) Do a voice-over
 - 6) _Nostra
 - 7) Lena of "Alias"
 - 8) Subtle suggestion
 - 9) Not at all eager
 - 10) Time for resolutions
 - 11) Banned George Orwell book
 - 12) Cause for a raise
 - 13) Hippie sign-off
 - 21) Do a host's job
 - 25) Totally blah
 - 26) LBJ son-in-law
 - Charles
 - 27) Clinton's canal
 - 28) Banned Brendan Behan book
 - 29) Shutter parts
 - 30) Gussy up
 - 33) Prefix with "sphere"
 - 35) Tried partner
 - 36) Mailed off
 - 38) Lady's man
 - 40) Condor's gripper
 - 43) President pro_
 - 45) Do one better than
 - 48) Appeared to be
 - 50) Laid-back
 - 51) Takes five
 - 52) "The Waste Land" author
 - 56) Where the Clintons met
 - 57) Like a dime, in a saying
 - 58) Nosebag morsels
 - 59) Sporty Italian car, briefly
 - 60) Slot insert
 - 61) Depot postings, briefly

NOTE PAD

B	L	E	A	C	H	E	D	S	T	A	I	R	S
A	I	R	P	L	A	N	E	W	I	N	K	A	T
I	D	R	E	A	M	O	F	J	E	A	N	N	I
T	O	S	S	U	P	T	E	E	S	O	M	E	
S	E	E	T	E	P	A		W	I	N			
F	O	S	T	E	R	P	A	R	E	N	T		
I	G	O	R	S	I	D	A	T	E	A	S	E	
B	R	O	O	D	C	I	G	I	N	L	A	W	
S	E	N	O	R	A		E	A	T		T	I	R
P	U	L	L	U	P	A	C	H	A	I	R		
B	A	L	G	L	O	E	L	L					
U	B	E	R	E	L	M		C	O	M	I	C	S
B	R	O	A	D	W	A	Y	M	U	S	I	C	A
B	A	N	Z	A	I		T	I	M	E	Z	O	N
A	M	I	E	N	S		H	A	S	T	E	N	E

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Your forays into business are going to be an adventure, to say the least. And keep in mind that it takes time for any new venture to take off and flourish. Any possessions you're trying to sell are moving slowly, and it's going to take some better advertising to move things along. Get your creativity involved and you will see some impressive results soon. Your entrepreneurial spirit is inspiring people around you, so it's important to show them you can make it.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Your tenacity is a powerful force today, and it will help you make lots of progress. Just be sure to fold in some fun and make time to touch base with a friend you haven't seen in a while. You will have time to finish what you've already started without having to shut yourself off from the real world. It's important to keep a balance in your life between using your brain and using your heart.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
You can oblige people today if you must, but don't be an out-and-out doormat. Make sure your opinions are clear. They need to know where you stand. You can go along with the group plans, and it might be in your best interests to do so right now, but that doesn't mean you should keep quiet about how you would do things differently.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 01. What is the stapes bone known as?**
A. Anklebone
B. Stirrup
C. Jaw
D. Funnybone
- 02. The 2008 British film "Slumdog Millionaire" directed by Danny Boyle is an adaptation of what 2005 novel?**
A. "The God of Small Things" by Arundhati Roy
B. "Q & A" by Vikas Swarup
C. "Kim" by Rudyard Kipling
D. "Baumgartner's Bombay" by Anita Desai
- 03. Dodge Morgan, who became famous in 1986 at age 54 when he sailed solo around the globe without stops in 150 days (breaking the record of 292 days), had become a millionaire by operating a company that manufactured what from 1971 to 1983?**
A. Hula Hoops
B. Frisbees
C. Radar detectors
D. Turbochargers

Answers: 1.A 2.D 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

N	C	L	S
P	S	U	S
K	E	P	A
O	G	H	A

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

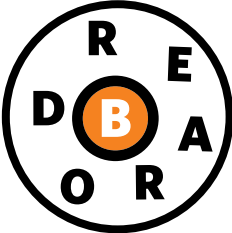
SOLUTION
20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

REAL HUMBLING

Lewandowski double helps Barcelona thrash Madrid

Madrid, Spain - Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski scored a quick-fire second-half double to set the leaders on course for a 4-0 thrashing of Real Madrid that handed the hosts their first defeat in 42 LaLiga games in a sensational Clasico encounter on Saturday.

The Polish striker pounced with two goals in three minutes early in the second half before Lamine Yamal at 17 years and 106 days old became the youngest Clasico scorer and captain Raphinha wrapped up a comfortable win late on at a stunned Bernabeu.

Barca stretched their lead at the top with 30 points, six above Real who saw their unbeaten LaLiga run come to a bitter end after 13 months, leaving them one tantalising positive result away from equalling the Catalans' league record of 43.

After four consecutive Clasico defeats, Barcelona claimed their first triumph over Real since March 2023 in style with a clinical performance in which they were true to coach Hansi Flick's ideas of gambling with an aggressively high defence.

The visitors were more than comfortable playing on the counter-attack, exploiting the



Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski celebrates his goal against Real Madrid on Saturday

lightning speed of Raphinha and Yamal to help feed LaLiga top scorer Lewandowski.

Real were on top at the start but became frustrated as they wasted several chances, mainly through off form Kylian Mbappe who missed four clear opening from close-range and was caught offside nine times, including having two goals ruled out.

Despite Real dominating proceedings, Barca kept playing their risk-taking tactics and the gamble paid off when Lewandowski silenced the

ever dangerous Raphinha six minutes from time.

"We are very happy, very happy. To win here like this is a great victory," Lewandowski told DAZN.

"The season is long, but this victory can help us with a lot more, with confidence and football ... so far we haven't won anything, but the important thing is that we have a clear idea, we know where we want to go on."

Mbappe's off key performance will have increased the growing concern in the Spanish

This victory can help us with a lot more, with confidence and football ... so far we haven't won anything, but the important thing is that we have a clear idea

ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI

crowd with a two-goal blitz in the 54th and 56th minutes to reach 14 goals in 11 league games.

The hosts tried to get back into the contest but their batch of missed opportunities continued with Vinicius Jr, Jude Bellingham and Mbappe wasting clear openings that infuriated their fans, who started booing the players.

Barcelona kept playing their game and it was a matter of time until they ended the contest with two more goals on the counter through the precocious Yamal after 77 minutes and the

capital over the France captain's slow start at Real since he arrived from Paris St Germain in June.

Three of the eight goals he has scored for Real in his first 13 games were penalties and he has found the net only once in the last five matches in all competitions.

Mbappe has struggled to connect with Vinicius Jr, Bellingham and Rodrygo up front, raising questions over how he fits into a Real team who have just enjoyed a successful season without him, having won a Champions League and LaLiga double.

'We have played a fantastic game and I am so proud'

Madrid, Spain - Barcelona manager Hansi Flick said he was proud of his players after they earned a stunning 4-0 win at Real Madrid on Saturday, handing their bitter rivals their first defeat in 42 LaLiga games and grabbing Barca their first Clasico triumph since March 2023.

Flick said that he was delighted with a victory that wrapped Barca's remarkable week beating two European powerhouses in commanding fashion as they also thrashed

Bayern Munich 4-1 in the Champions League on Wednesday.

"I'm delighted to be working at Barcelona and to live in Barcelona. It's a fantastic job, I'm very happy... We have played a fantastic game and I am so proud," Flick, who has been living an outstanding start at the helm of the Catalonia giants with 10 wins from 11 LaLiga games, told a press conference.

Despite Real dominating proceedings early, Robert Lewandowski scored a quick-fire



Hansi Flick

We pressed better with and without the ball. We had more possession and that's why the game changed.

HANSI FLICK

second-half double to set the leaders on course for a 4-0 thrashing, before Lamine Yamal

and captain Raphinha wrapped up a comfortable win late on at a stunned Bernabeu.

"We pressed better with and without the ball. We had more possession and that's why the game changed," Flick said.

"The defensive effort was key. We have trained a lot how to defend with a high line and on how we want to press on the ball. It's also important not to leave spaces when you play Real Madrid because they have incredible players."



Álex Muñoz of Las Palmas celebrates his goal against Girona

Girona lose at Las Palmas

Las Palmas, Spain - Girona suffered a 1-0 defeat at lowly Las Palmas as a first-half goal from Alex Munoz proved decisive in LaLiga on Saturday.

Monuz put Las Palmas ahead three minutes before the break with a first-time strike, capitalising on a cross that sailed over the box to find him unmarked.

The visitors showed little urgency in chasing an equaliser, allowing Las Palmas to control most of the match and the home side came close to doubling their lead.

As the clock ran down, Girona intensified their efforts to find a leveller but their momentum was disrupted by injury stoppages and Las Palmas secured the victory.

After defying expectations to finish third last season, Girona now sit 13th with 12 points, while Las Palmas are just outside the relegation zone in 17th with nine.

Ancelotti rues missed chances

Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti lamented his side's missed opportunities in their stunning 4-0 home defeat to bitter rivals Barcelona in a LaLiga Clasico on Saturday but said it was not all doom and gloom despite the result.

"It was an evenly played match, until they scored their first goal. We played with intensity in the first half but lacked a bit of accuracy. We had chances to take the lead but they scored two goals, which sapped our energy. That's when another game started," Ancelotti told a press conference of Robert Lewandowski's quick-fire double early in the second-half to set the LaLiga leaders Barca on course for a 4-0 thrashing.

Prior to that, the home side had dominated possession and missed various chances, mainly through off-form Kylian Mbappe. Lamine Yamal and Raphinha wrapped Barca's win later.

"We are hurt, it's a tough moment, but I want to thank the fans for their support. We don't have to throw everything away, because there is nothing to throw away," added a down-



Carlo Ancelotti

hearted Ancelotti.

"We have to forget the last 30 minutes. The season is very long, we must not give up. We have to learn from it. It's time to bounce back. The season is long. We must not throw everything away. The team can do

better and we will."

Ancelotti said he thinks Real Madrid deserved better and that he didn't believe the result told the true story of the match, but acknowledged that his team paid the price for missing so many chances.

Napoli made to struggle but Conte happy with the show

Naples, Italy - For the second successive week Serie A leaders Napoli laboured to a 1-0 win, but manager Antonio Conte said on Saturday that he had little reason to reprimand his players after they did enough to earn their fourth successive victory.

Last weekend Napoli overcame Empoli thanks to a penalty and it took a second-half goal from Giovanni Di Lorenzo to see off Lecce this time around, as Conte's side struggled to break-down a team second from bottom in the standings.

"I have little to reproach the team today. I look at the statistics that can mean all or nothing, but today we had great ball possession and 16 corners," Conte told DAZN.

"They defended in an organised way, but we attacked. When you attack and don't score, then a bit of nervousness can take over. I calmed them down, because you have to have the maturity and patience to keep going, move the ball around and create chances to score."

Calmness is what is required according to Conte, especially



Napoli's Giovanni Di Lorenzo celebrates his goal

against teams who come to play on the counter, like a Lecce side which came into the game on the back of a 6-0 thumping by Fiorentina and in need of points.

"We did what we had to, we dominated from start to finish. I can't ask more of the players

looking at the statistics from the game," Conte told a press conference.

"I can ask that when the teams close down you have to have patience and calm. I'm happy because they are very difficult games."

Last-gasp Beto goal helps Everton draw against Fulham



Everton's Beto celebrates his goal against Fulham

Liverpool, England - Everton substitute Beto headed a stoppage-time equaliser to earn a 1-1 home draw with Fulham in the Premier League on Saturday after the Londoners had been seemingly easing to a deserved victory courtesy of a goal by Goodison Park old boy Alex Iwobi.

Striker Beto scored in the fourth minute of added time to stretch Everton's unbeaten run to five games, but Fulham were furious after dominating and had barely looking like conceding.

"We were a long way short of where we could be but we ended up getting the point and I'm really pleased with it," said Everton manager Sean Dyche.

"On a day when we weren't close to where we wanted to be the mentality was good and we stayed strong. We've had to grind, find a way, and sometimes that's what you have to do in the Premier League."

Everton have a poor recent record against Fulham, losing five and winning one of their previous eight meetings, and despite a recent upturn of form that had brought two wins and two draws, they were tentative from the start.

Some ragged defending gifted Fulham two good chances back to back in the 27th minute, but Adama Traore and Emile Smith Rowe failed to take advantage.

Everton had barely mustered an attack in the first half, but briefly came to life when

Idrissa Gana Gueye crashed a 25-yard dipping shot against the bar. Dominic Calvert-Lewin knocked in the rebound but was offside and it was chalked off.

Fulham continued to be the more positive team and took a deserved lead after 61 minutes when Smith-Rowe carried the ball purposely past three defenders and fed Iwobi, who stepped inside to make space before neatly slotting past Jordan Pickford.

Everton resorted to route one in the final 10 minutes,

pushing centre back Michael Keane up front alongside Beto and slinging in deep crosses.

Ashley Young deserves plaudits for his calm and skilful side-foot volleyed cross back into the danger area, after Ilman Ndiaye's initial cross had sailed beyond the back post, and Beto did the rest.

"For me this goal means too much," Beto said. "To be able to help the team, for me it's emotional. Even if I don't play I still work hard. I put my head up every week and try to get better."

"The supporters always sing my name and as a player you just want to pay it back. I always put it in my mind to be ready as the day may come and today it came. I'm happy to help the team."

Dyche was full of praise for his super-sub, who was born and raised in Portugal but plays for Guinea-Bissau.

"We knew he was raw and still has a lot to learn," he said.

We were a long way short of where we could be but we ended up getting the point and I'm really pleased

SEAN DYCHE



Goal Palmer Again

Jackson also on target as Chelsea beat Newcastle

London, England - Goals by Nicolas Jackson and Cole Palmer earned Chelsea a 2-1 home win over Newcastle United in the Premier League on Sunday in the latest sign of progress for the Blues under coach Enzo Maresca.

Jackson opened the scoring in the 18th minute when he rounded off a sweeping Chelsea counter-attack involving Palmer and winger Pedro Neto, taking the Senegal striker's league goal tally to six this season.

Newcastle equalised against the run of play when Alexander Isak converted a cross by former Chelsea defender Lewis Hall in the 32nd minute.

Barely a minute into the second half, Palmer restored Chelsea's lead when he picked up a pass from Romeo Lavia close to the halfway line, raced to the edge of the box and fired a low shot past Nick Pope.

West Ham beat Man United

Jarrod Bowen converted a controversial last-gasp penalty to lift West Ham United to a 2-1 victory over Manchester United in a fluctuating clash on Sunday.

Crysencio Summerville scored his first goal in a West Ham shirt as they climbed past their visitors to 13th in the table on 11 points after nine games, level with 14th-placed Manchester United.



Chelsea's Cole Palmer scores against Newcastle United on Sunday

Although Man United's loss was only their second in 10 matches across all competitions, it will put manager Erik ten Hag under pressure again.

"Three times this season we feel injustice," Ten Hag told the BBC. "We have to score, we created so many chances. We should've been two or three up."

"Second half we were forcing it but we allowed them into the game. When you are losing 1-0

you need big personality and character of the team and showed resilience to get back into it. Unfair and unjust the way we conceded the penalty."

Bowen netted in the 92nd minute, stepping up to the penalty spot after a lengthy VAR review showed Matthijs de Ligt had clipped the leg of Danny Ings, a decision that left Ten Hag shaking his head. "I spoke with (the officials)," Ten Hag said. "But the

decision is made. There's no way back and that's football."

Bowen launched a low penalty just inside the post, beyond the hands of Andre Onana who dived the right way.

Palace beat Spurs

Crystal Palace beat Tottenham Hotspur 1-0 thanks to a Jean-Philippe Mateta goal to finally claim their first win of the season and climb out of the relegation zone.

The victory eased the pressure on manager Oliver Glasner as Palace moved up to 17th with six points, two points clear of the drop zone, while Spurs remain in eighth spot with 13 points.

Palace started the game with much more intensity and their high press yielded the opening goal when Spurs shot themselves in the foot trying to pass the ball out from the back.

Leverkusen drop points in 2-2 draw against Bremen

Bremen, Germany - Bayer Leverkusen twice took the lead but conceded a 90th-minute equaliser to draw 2-2 at Werder Bremen on Saturday despite striker Victor Boniface, back after being involved in a car crash last week, getting on the scoresheet.

Boniface, playing with a bandaged hand, flicked in a Jeremie Frimpong cutback in the 30th minute to put the champions in the driving seat.

He had missed Wednesday's Champions League 1-1 draw at Brest after suffering minor hand and foot injuries as a passenger in a car crash on Sunday, a day after he had scored the winner in their victory over Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday. Boniface, who has now scored six league goals this season, had a chance to add another on the hour but Werder keeper Michael Zetterer pulled off a stunning save.

Instead it was Werder who



Bayer Leverkusen's Victor Boniface celebrates his goal against Werder Bremen on Saturday

Leverkusen are third on 15 points, two behind second-placed Bayern Munich, in action at VfL Bochum on Sunday

scored with Marvin Ducksch's powerful header in the 74th to level.

Their joy only lasted three minutes as teammate Felix Agu, under pressure, spectacularly miskicked for an own goal.

Werder, however, came back again and Romano Schmid fired in a 90th minute equaliser to snatch a point.

Leverkusen are third on 15 points, two behind second-placed Bayern Munich, in action at VfL Bochum on Sunday.



Herve Renard

Renard returns as Saudi Arabia coach

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia have reappointed Frenchman Herve Renard as manager to replace Roberto Mancini, the country's national team announced on Saturday.

The 56-year-old, who was in charge of the Saudis from 2019 to 2023, takes over from Italian Mancini who left the position on Thursday by mutual agreement after 14 months in the job. "I am back," Renard, clad in Saudi traditional costume, said in a video published on the Saudi national team's X social media account. His contract runs until the end of 2025 with an option to extend through the 2027 Asian Cup, the team said in a statement.

Renard had left his job with the Saudis to lead France's women's team at the World Cup and the Paris 2024 Olympics.

"I did not intend to leave. But when your country knock on your door, you have to respond," he said. During his first spell, he led Saudi Arabia to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, where they surprisingly beat eventual champions Argentina in their opener.

Dortmund coach Sahin expects team to stay together in tough situation

Berlin, Germany - Borussia Dortmund will need to work their way out of a tough situation following their 2-1 loss at Augsburg in the Bundesliga on Saturday, and must create more scoring chances to be rewarded for their possession, said coach Nuri Sahin.

Dortmund's loss comes after Tuesday's 5-2 reverse away to Real Madrid where Sahin's team squandered a 2-0 lead in the Champions League.

The coach was sharply criticised for his substitutions at 2-0 in that game with Dortmund then conceding five goals in the

second half.

Dortmund, Champions League finalists last season, have not won any of their four away games in the Bundesliga this season and remain in seventh place on 13 points after two defeats and a win in their last three league games. "80% possession does not necessarily mean more chances. We just did not get into the danger area often enough," Sahin told a press conference.

Dortmund had more than 70% possession throughout but hardly had any scoring opportunities for more than an hour after their 1-0 lead in the fourth



Nuri Sahin

minute.

"Fact is for 80% possession we had far too few chances. We need to work on creating more chances," Sahin said. "Our squad is not without experience and I expect all of us together, players and coaches, to face this current situation and go through it together."

Dortmund are in action against VfL Wolfsburg in the German Cup on Tuesday but will likely be without defenders Julian Ryerson and Waldemar Anton and midfielder Marcel Sabitzer, with all three taken off injured in Augsburg.



Rohit Sharma with Virat Kohli

I don't want to think we've done a lot wrong, says Rohit after defeat

Pune, India - India skipper Rohit Sharma refused to heap pressure on his batsmen following the team's 113-run loss to New Zealand in the second test on Saturday but said individuals had to trust in and execute their own plans to improve.

The hosts were bundled out for 156 in their first innings in response to New Zealand's 259 and managed only 245 while chasing 359 to crash to a humbling defeat in three days as the tourists won their first test series in India. Rohit's side were skittled for 46 in the first innings of their opening defeat in Bengaluru and Saturday's result meant they lost a home series for the first time since 2012.

"It (the failure) has happened in two test matches. We've won 18 (straight) series in India, so it means we've done a lot of good things," Rohit told reporters.

"In this series, we might not have been able to bat the way we wanted but such things happen. We've made runs consistently

on challenging pitches in India. I don't want to think we've done a lot wrong.

"Two of our batting matches were bad, two or three innings were bad, but it happens. Sometimes you consistently win matches and do well but in one or two series it doesn't happen.

"I can't doubt anyone's ability... I don't want to do a post mortem, but yes we see what we should do differently in such situations. All the batters should come with their own plan, all the batters should trust their plan."

India head to Australia for a challenging five-match tour next month and will need victories to improve their chances of reaching a third consecutive World Test Championship (WTC) final.

"I think it's too early to think about the WTC. I'm just hurting because we lost the game, that's what I'll say, I can't think about what lies ahead," Rohit said.

"I think we didn't play well enough in these two games and that is hurting."

Rizwan Pakistan captain

Babar Azam, Shaheen Afridi back in team for Australia tour

Lahore, Pakistan - Pakistan appointed Mohammad Rizwan as captain of their white-ball teams on Sunday, and Babar Azam, Shaheen Afridi and Naseem Shah were all named in their one-day international and Twenty20 squads for next month's tour of Australia.

All-rounder Salman Ali Agha will serve as Rizwan's deputy, the Pakistan Cricket Board said.

"I'm deeply honoured to be appointed as Pakistan's white-ball captain," Rizwan said in a statement.

"Representing Pakistan on the global stage is the greatest privilege and to now be entrusted with leading such a talented and exciting group of players is a tremendous honour.

"I'm committed to giving my absolute best in this role and look forward to working closely with the selectors, coaches and my immensely talented teammates. Together, we aim to meet and exceed the expectations of our fans and supporters."

The 32-year-old Rizwan has played 74 ODIs and 102 T20Is since making his white-ball debut in 2015, scoring a combined 5,401 runs.

Babar stepped down as skipper in all three formats last year after Pakistan failed to make the knockout stage of the 50-overs World Cup, before returning as



Mohammad Rizwan

white-ball captain in March for the T20 World Cup where the team did not make the Super Eight.

He quit the role again this month, saying he needed to reduce his workload.

The batting mainstay as well as pace bowlers Afridi and Naseem were dropped by Pakistan for the last two tests against England due to patchy form and the team secured a 2-1 series win on Saturday.

The trio will not feature in the matches against Zimbabwe which follow the Australian series.

Wicketkeeper-batsman

Rizwan will be available for the Australia games and the Zimbabwe ODIs, but will be rested for the T20Is, with Agha stepping in for him. Pakistan will play three ODIs and three T20Is against both Australia and Zimbabwe. The Australia tour runs from Nov. 4-18, and the games in Bulawayo will be played from Nov. 24-Dec. 5.

I'm committed to giving my absolute best and look forward to working closely with the selectors, coaches and teammates

MOHAMMAD RIZWAN

ZIMBABWE TOUR:
ODIs: Aamir Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Ahmed Daniyal, Faisal Akram, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah, Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Hasnain, Mohammad Rizwan, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Shahnawaz Dahani and Tayyab Tahir.
T20Is: Ahmed Daniyal, Arafat Minhas, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah, Jahandad Khan, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Hasnain, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Omair bin Yousuf, Qasim Akram, Sahibzada Farhan, Salman Ali Agha, Sufyan Moqim, Tayyab Tahir, Usman Khan.

China's Zheng wins Tokyo title

Tokyo, Japan - China's Zheng Qinwen produced near-flawless serves to defeat American Sofia Kenin 7-6(5) 6-3 and capture the Pan Pacific Open title on Sunday for her third trophy this season.

Zheng hit 33 winners and fired off 16 aces as she took the victory in an hour and 52 minutes under a closed roof after heavy rain interrupted the first set.

The 22-year-old adds the Tokyo title to her wins in Palermo and the Paris Olympics this year.

The first set was a tightly fought encounter without a single break of serve, with Zheng failing

to convert five breakpoints, but she was much more clinical in the tiebreak and clinched it with a vicious forehand winner.

The second set played out much differently as Zheng held to start and broke for 2-0 when Kenin netted a backhand, before consolidating that break to go 3-0 up.

Kenin, playing with her right thigh strapped, refused to go quietly and forced Zheng to defend her first breakpoint of the match, but the power and precision of the Chinese world number seven's serve proved too much for the American.

Zheng's win improved her

record at the Pan Pacific Open to 8-1, with the 22-year-old having lost in the 2022 final to Liudmila Samsonova in her only previous appearance in the tournament.

It also ensured her a first hard-court title since her Zhengzhou Open win last year and will give her a boost in confidence ahead of next month's season-ending WTA Finals in Saudi Arabia.

"I want to say congratulations to you. You did a great job, I saw you were taped up and played though you were hurt, I know this feeling. You fought so hard on the court," Zheng said of Kenin.

Despite the loss, 2020 Australian Open champion Kenin can

take plenty of positives from her performance in Tokyo, where she dropped just one set en route to the final and beat world number nine Daria Kasatkina.

Kenin, 25, also finished runner-up at the French Open in 2020 and reached a career-high number four that season, before injuries, illness and off-court issues saw her drop down the rankings.

"I would like to thank the tournament director for giving me the wild card. I really appreciate it," Kenin said.

"Unfortunately, I couldn't get the title today, but I'm very happy with the week I had."



Zheng Qinwen celebrates with the trophy

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Yours Kanishka & Kalaivani (Mom)

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BIRTHDAY WISHES

PAUL

Belated Happy Birthday to you! I wish you abundant happiness and love. May all your dreams turn into reality.
From Geze

ARUBA

One Happy Island

ARUBA, IS DUBBED ‘ONE HAPPY ISLAND’ FOR ITS YEAR-ROUND SUNSHINE, WHITE-SAND BEACHES AND WELCOMING LOCALS

Aruba, a tiny Dutch country is a mere 20 miles long and eight miles wide, surrounded by the South Caribbean Sea in turquoise blue. Its closest neighbours are Curaçao and Venezuela, 50 and 18 miles away respectively.

In 1986, Aruba became a constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and acquired the formal name the Country of Aruba. With a population of around 110,000, it is home to about one-third of the population of the Dutch Caribbean.

Initially, the oil factories were the source of income in Aruba, but when they closed, the government turned to tourism by marketing its sandy shores, hot sunny days, and the glorious breeze that tempers the heat. Holidaymakers subsequently flocked as quickly as the resorts and timeshares appeared.

Aruba’s defining feature is the easy vibe. Aruba has a mash-up of 110 nationalities, all Dutch citizens. They are as warm as Aruba’s 365 days of sunshine and welcoming tourists is encouraged at school.

Paula Ochoa from Aruba Tourism says, “We are taught Dutch, English, Spanish and the local dialect Papiamentu from nursery so that we can communicate with tourists

and holidaymakers.”

Aruba has earned the moniker – One Happy Island. For many, it’s the beaches, the best being Palm, Eagle and Baby Beach yet there is a host of charming and adventurous activities to do when you can tear away from the beach,

On the southwestern coast of Aruba is its compact capital, Oranjestad (Orange City) named after King William I of the Netherlands. It is bright and colourful with colonial architecture dressed in pastel hues and quaint churches of various denominations acting as landmarks.

Sights and shopping are mainly by the marina, especially on L G Smith Boulevard. Nearby is 18th-century Fort Zoutman and the Willem III Tower, formerly a lighthouse, the Historical Museum and the Archaeological Museum displays.

Every so often a Blue Horse statue appears, an installation of eight created by Aruban artist Osaira Muyale. They represent strength, nobility, grace, beauty and freedom and talk of the collaboration in the 1700s during Aruba’s horse-trading industry. The story goes that the first horses jumped from the ship deck into the Caribbean Ocean to Aruban Bay ‘Paardenbaai’ – Horse Bay.

(Inputs: thetravelmagazine.com)

ATTRACTIONS

Oranjestad

Oranjestad is the capital of Aruba and is named after ‘Huis van Oranje’ (Orange House), the name of the Dutch Royal Family in 1824 during the Dutch colonization. Most of Aruba’s government buildings are located in Oranjestad.

Spanish Lagoon

The Spanish settlers used this bay as their main entry point to Aruba in the 15th century. Nowadays Spanish Lagoon is known because it’s the only inner bay with such a diverse marine and bird life.

Fontein Cave and Freshwater Pond

Fontein Cave is located in the National Park near Boca Prins and is the only cave that has the drawings of Arawak Indians on the ceilings, providing a real sense of island history to this cave.

Ayo Rock Formations

About 3km away from the Natural Bridge you can visit the Ayo Rock formations. You

can stroll through loads of massive boulders of different shapes and sizes shaped by the forces of nature.

The Donkey Sanctuary

Donkeys have been a part of the island’s culture for 500 years and are extremely affectionate creatures with a gentle nature. Aruba’s donkeys that have found a safe and protected new home at the sanctuary.

Bushiribana Ruins

Discover the Fascinating History of Bushiribana Gold Smelter Ruins in Aruba. Aruba’s natural beauty and warm climate are not the only reasons why the island is a popular tourist destination.

Fisherman’s Huts

Hadicurari, better known as the Fisherman’s hut, is a very popular beach for windsurfing and kitesurfing fanatics. The beach is also well-known for the many sporting events that are being organized throughout the year.





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ART AND DIPLOMACY

On October 6, the prestigious French Arts-Sciences-Lettres Academic Society (ASL) held its 109th Grand Palmariès Ceremony in Paris, where Omani artists were honoured as part of the second milestone of the Bridging Nations initiative.

This landmark event brought together 700 selected guests, including over 250 artists from around the world, to celebrate achievements in arts, sciences, and literature. For the first time in the Academy's century-old history, fifteen Omani artists were recognised for their outstanding contributions, underscoring Oman's growing influence on the international stage of intercultural dialogue and artistic excellence.

Madeleine ImKey, founder of Bridging Nations and the Swiss and GCC delegate to the French Academy, played an instrumental role in curating a diverse and highly qualified group of artists. Through her exceptional skills for forging connections, developing synergies and identifying talent, she brought more than two dozen artists to the ceremony, including representatives from Switzerland, the UAE, and Egypt. These artists were praised and honoured with prestigious awards, with two receiving the coveted platinum medals. Madeleine's ability to foster collaborations and build bridges between cultures was evident throughout the weekend, highlighting the impact of the Bridging Nations initiative and further solidifying her reputation as a leading force in cultural diplomacy.

This month in Paris marked a proud milestone for Omani talent, with the presence of Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, a prominent humanitarian, art collector, philanthropist, and lead figure in the Bridging Nations editions in both, Muscat and Paris.

"It was a profound honour to

BRIDGING NATIONS CELEBRATES ITS SECOND MILESTONE IN PARIS AT THE ARTS-SCIENCES-LETTRES GRAND CEREMONY



represent the Omani artists' delegation as a special envoy at the Bridging Nations initiative in Paris," Lujaina said. "Showcasing the richness of Omani culture at the Académie's Grand Palmariès ceremony - one of the world's most esteemed cultural stages - was a truly remarkable experience."

Having played a key role in the inaugural edition of Bridging Nations in Oman, she continues to participate and praise the initiative's growing influence, particularly in its strong workforce of empowered women and commitment to young artists with special needs - values she deeply embraces and reflects in her ongoing work.

The festivities began the previous night, on October 5, at a special evening hosted by the Oman Embassy in Paris. H E Ahmed bin Mohamed bin Nasser al Arai, the Omani Ambassador to France, welcomed guests to this exclusive event, celebrating Omani culture and its growing role in fostering artistic collaboration between nations.

The presence of Fernand Girard, president of the Académie, added significant stature to the gathering. Reflecting on the strong cultural ties between Oman and ASL, Fernand Girard

expressed his admiration for the partnership, stating, "Such affinity with Omani artists, as well as with the authorities of the sultanate, is a vector of peace - a rare and invaluable treasure - expressed in May in Muscat, today at the Embassy of Oman in France, and tomorrow at our grand Arts-Sciences-Lettres ceremony. Thanks to each person for their involvement, which has led to the success of an entire community."

Charm Majolica, director of the Diplomatic Club Oman, who joined the Omani delegation in Paris to showcase the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' support for Bridging Nations, emphasised the significance of the occasion and the cultural ties it fosters.

"We are honoured to represent the Oman Diplomatic Club in France, celebrating the artistic achievements of Omani individuals at this prestigious award ceremony. This event not only highlights our rich cultural heritage but also reinforces the bonds of friendship and collaboration between Oman and the international community," Majolica remarked.

The evening at the Oman Embassy was a true moment of intercultural exchange, with the Swiss delegation also joining in the celebration of Omani culture in Paris. A particularly memorable highlight of the Omani night in Paris was the stunning performance by opera singer Laura Ansaldi, who dedicated her performance to His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, to the people of Oman, and to the women who represent a powerful, effortless force in our societies.

The following day, on October 6, the prestigious Academy's Grand Palmariès ceremony unfolded in the stunning Salon Opéra of the Intercontinental Hotel Le Grand in Paris, an architectural gem inaugurated on May 5, 1862, by Empress Eugénie. The ballroom's rich history



and grandeur added to the prestige of honouring Omani artists and others from around the world in a ceremony that was nothing short of a modern-day fairytale.

Opera singer Laura Ansaldi captivated the audience once again at the ASL ceremony. This time, she was accompanied by renowned pianist Alexey Botvinov, originally from Odessa, Ukraine and now residing in Switzerland. Together, their performances enchanted the audience, and both artists were awarded Platinum medals for their outstanding contributions to the evening's celebration of artistic excellence.

Bridging Nations is an international initiative that promotes inclusivity, intercultural, and sustainability through artistic collaboration, with a strong focus on empowering young talents

with special needs. The initiative aligns with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, using art to foster understanding across diverse cultures. Looking ahead, Bridging Nations is set to expand its impact in 2025 through an exciting partnership with Bait Al Zubair which will play a crucial role in identifying new Omani artists and hosting the Bridging Nations events and workshops.

With the second milestone of Bridging Nations now completed, the event has not only spotlighted Oman's contribution to global peace and sustainability but also solidified the initiative's role in promoting cross-cultural understanding. Through this collaboration, Oman continues to strengthen its position as a bridge between nations, using art as a medium to unite people and promote a shared future.