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Unified strategy for tourism coming soon

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman will implement an integrated governance framework for its heritage and tourism sectors by the end of 2025 aiming to align the planning and development efforts of ministries and governorates under a single system.

The decision was announced following a four-day national workshop, titled 'Addressing the Challenges of Governance of Heritage and Tourism Development Management with Governorates', held from May 26 to 29. The event was organised by Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) in cooperation with Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

The proposed framework will focus on institutional coordination, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and preparing development plans at the governorate level. It also seeks to build consensus on land allocation for heritage and tourism projects while encouraging private sector and civil society involvement.

Speaking at the conclusion of the workshop, H E Salim bin Mohammedi al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, said the



ministry is halfway towards meeting its targets, but the growing role of governorates demands enhanced coordination.

"The governorates have become integrated tourist destinations in their own right due to their heritage and tourism as-

sets," he stated. He called for a unified environment that supports joint efforts between government entities, particularly at the municipal level.

H E Mahrouqi identified key challenges hindering sectoral development, including limited

funding, inadequate infrastructure, centralised administrative processes and restricted local authority. He stressed the need to reduce bureaucracy and promote decentralisation.

"The ministry is committed to maintaining open channels of

ASMED urges stronger centre-governorate coordination for tourism growth

Our Correspondent
Muscat



Halima bint Rashid al Zaria

vision.

"Our work must be based on coordinated plans, not on emergency reactions," she said, underlining the importance of strategic alignment between the central government and regional administrations.

Halima noted that the ef-

fectiveness of ASMED's support depends on the clarity of development plans at the governorate level. "The more governorates have a clear plan for initiatives and events, the more effective and prepared we can be as an institution."

She said a key challenge is the lack of shared annual planning among government entities. "We submit our annual plan to the Council of Ministers early, and so do the governors, but these plans are rarely shared between us. Exchanging and harmonising plans at the beginning of each year will significantly accelerate achievement and improve responsiveness to local needs."

MEM to launch first renewables storage project

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman will soon announce its first renewable energy storage project as part of ongoing efforts to expand clean energy capacity and reduce dependence on conventional power sources.

H E Salem bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, has confirmed that five to six new wind and solar projects are scheduled to begin this year, with particular focus on wind power due to the sultanate's strong potential in this area. These pro-



jects are expected to begin generating more than 2,000MW of electricity by the end of 2027.

A majority of the wind projects will be located in Al Wusta

Five to six new wind and solar projects are scheduled to begin this year, with particular focus on wind power

and Dhofar, where long-term wind measurements have confirmed viable generation capacity.

"Ministry of Energy and Min-

erals (MEM) is working with Nama Group and the Authority for Public Services Regulation to identify the most suitable solutions for energy storage, whether through conventional or emerging technologies," H E Aufi said. "The first storage project will be announced soon."

He added that the projects support Oman's energy transition strategy and create opportunities to develop industries powered by clean energy.

Oman Vision 2040 targets renewable energy to make up around 30% of the country's

total electricity generation by 2030. In line with this, the Manah 1 and Manah 2 solar plants have been launched, with a combined capacity of approximately 1,000MW.

MEM is also working in coordination with Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Petroleum Development Oman to establish a hydrogen corridor. The initiative aims to set up hydrogen production and supply stations in concession areas, enabling the fuelling of trucks operating between these.

Ancient tombs unearthed along Oman-UAE railway route

Our Correspondent
Suhar

An Omani-Italian archaeological team found 28 ancient tombs during an excavation in Suhar along the route of the planned Oman-UAE railway line.

The excavation carried out in Suhar Free Zone was jointly conducted by Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Sapienza University of Rome as part of a salvage operation aimed at protecting heritage sites potentially affected by the railway connecting Suhar to Abu Dhabi.

"We identified around 28 graves in the route of the railway," said Francesco Caputo, an archaeologist from Sapienza University. "One of the tombs contained a substantial collection of human bones. We also recovered a variety of grave goods,



including stone and shell beads, bronze rings and bangles, and fragments of ancient glass vessels."

The artefacts provide insight into burial practices and social structures of ancient communities that once inhabited the region, adding to growing evidence

of continuous settlement in Oman since prehistoric times.

Ismail Salim al Mutrafi, Head of Archaeological Survey Department at the ministry, noted the collaborative nature of the project. "A large number of ministry staff are actively involved in this excavation, working along-

side our Italian counterparts," he said. "This effort is not just about discovery - it's about skills transfer and building national capacity in the field of archaeology."

According to the ministry, it is currently working with archaeological teams at 68 sites across the sultanate. Findings con-

tribute to efforts to protect Oman's cultural heritage and support its tourism sector.

"The ministry is committed to protecting archaeological sites and maximising the value of these resources as key elements of our tourism product," said Mutrafi. "Findings from excavations like this one help enrich the collections of National Museum and other regional museums under the ministry's umbrella."

He also emphasised the role of such artefacts in promoting international cultural exchange, citing their inclusion in exhibitions abroad.

"This is a reminder that beneath our modern infrastructure lies an ancient world waiting to be rediscovered," Mutrafi added. "Each find is a story, a memory and a connection to people who walked this land long before us."

Region has highest youth smoking rate in the world: WHO

Cairo, Egypt - The Eastern Mediterranean Region has the highest youth smoking rate in the world, according to World Health Organization Regional Director Dr Hanan Balkhy.

"We must act to protect the next generation. Let us stand together and make it crystal clear. No more tricks. No more traps. Let's unite for a tobacco-free future," she said on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day 2025, held on Saturday under the banner 'Bright Products. Dark Intentions'.

This year's theme sheds light on the tobacco industry's tactics to lure women and young people into addiction through flavoured and colourful products.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death globally, with the Eastern Mediterranean Region bearing a significant burden. The region has the highest smoking rates among adolescent boys, with countries like Jordan, Lebanon

and Egypt ranking among the highest globally. The promotion of new nicotine products, such as e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products, has led to higher dependency rates among vulnerable groups, WHO stated.

Globally, 37mn children aged 13-15 years use tobacco. In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, smoking rates in some areas have reached 43% among adolescent boys (aged 13-15 years) and 20% among adolescent girls. The highest prevalence of tobacco use among boys is recorded in the occupied Palestinian territory (West Bank) at 43.3%, followed by Jordan at 33.9% and Syria at 31.6%.

Alarmingly, the gap in tobacco use between men and women is narrowing, with more women and girls taking up smoking, exposing them to health risks such as cervical cancer, osteoporosis and fertility issues.

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Students battle exam stress amid heatwave

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Thousands of students across Oman in government schools will begin their final exams on Sunday amid searing summer temperatures that have crossed 45°C in some parts of the sultanate compounding the pressure of an already demanding academic period.

The exams, which run for more than two weeks, will cover students from grades five to 11. While classrooms are air-conditioned, the extreme heat has raised concerns among educators and health professionals, who are urging families to prioritise students' physical and mental well-being.

Ali Hamad al Shiyadi, a school teacher, said parental support is critical during this high-stress period. "They must create a calm and encouraging environment, ease anxiety, and provide emotional reassurance before and after exams," he told *Muscat Daily*.

Many students say the high

temperatures are affecting their concentration and energy levels. "I feel tired quickly, especially in the afternoon," said Mohammed al Shukaili, an 11th grade student. "I wake up early and study in the morning or after sunset to avoid the heat."

For ninth grade student Kholoud al Saadi, emotional support makes a significant difference. "Just having my mother near me while I study, even if she's not helping, makes me feel more at ease."

Parents are also adjusting their routines at home. Saeed al Maawali, father of two students, said his family has scaled back social activities and screen time to help his children focus. "We've postponed visits and limited TV time. I make sure they stay hydrated with water and fresh juices and avoid caffeine," he said.

Educational psychologist Dr Maryam al Busaidi said managing exam-related stress is essential. "Students should break study sessions with regular breaks and get adequate sleep.



Parental support is critical during this high-stress period for students. They must create a calm and encouraging environment, ease anxiety, and provide emotional reassurance before and after exams

ALI HAMAD AL SHIYADI

Lack of sleep affects memory and focus."

Nutritionist Mona al Jaberiya advised students to stay hy-

drated and eat light meals. "Consume fruits like water-

melon and cantaloupe. Avoid heavy and fatty meals, especially during extreme heat, as these can cause lethargy."

Ministry of Education has confirmed that all exam centres are equipped with air-conditioning and other essential facilities. It urged students to adhere to exam regulations to maintain fairness across the system.

Oman's student population has grown significantly in recent years. According to the ministry, the number of students in government schools rose from 678,000 in the 2020/2021 academic year to 817,000 in 2024/2025 - an increase of 20.5%. The number of schools is set to increase 10.4% from 1,182 in 2020/2021 to 1,306 in 2025/2026.



Omani inventors win three medals at ITEX in Malaysia

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman won one silver and two gold medals at the International Invention, Innovation and Technology Exhibition (ITEX 2025) held in Kuala Lumpur that concluded on May 31.

Badr bin Salim al Muqbali received a gold medal for his invention - a remote controlled device to operate a ring-bonding unit. Earlier, he won the Best Innovator Award presented by the Bunyan Foundation in Saudi Arabia.

The second gold for Oman was claimed by Malak bint Khalifa al Harthi for her project involving a Portland cement composite reinforced with carbon nanoplates, proposed for use as dental filling.

The silver medal was won by Yusra bint Yousef al Ghadani for her project titled 'Squid ink water filter'.

Amna bint Ali al Siyabi, Research and Innovation Capac-

ity Building Specialist at Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, described ITEX is a major international platform that allows young inventors to develop their ideas, connect with peers worldwide, and present their innovations to investors across sectors including medicine, agriculture, biotechnology, construction and energy.

According to al Amna, the ministry received 59 applications for participation in ITEX this year. Twenty projects were shortlisted and assessed by a specialised jury, with the top three chosen to represent Oman based on creativity, feasibility and potential global impact.

ITEX is held annually and brings together inventors, startups, investors and entrepreneurs from across Asia and Europe. This year's event featured over 1,000 inventions from more than 20 countries, offering opportunities for funding and industry exposure.

Omran earns RO25.2mn profit; RO156mn FDI in 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) has reported net profit of RO25.2mn and revenues exceeding RO58.3mn for 2024, driven by increased operational efficiency and investment activity. The figures reflect the group's growing impact on Oman's tourism sector and its broader contribution to economic diversification.

The performance update was shared during a recent Board of Directors meeting, where members reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening Omran's role as a leading force in tourism investment and development.

Omran secured over RO156mn in foreign direct investment (FDI) last year, under-



scoring its ability to attract strategic global partnerships. The inflow of capital supports national efforts to increase the contribution of non-oil sectors to the GDP, a press release stated.

A total of 820,365 guests stayed across Omran's hotel portfolio in 2024 - a 6% increase

from the previous year. The average occupancy rate reached 45%, up by 2.6 percentage points year-on-year. A key milestone was the official opening of JW Marriott Muscat, adding to the sultanate's luxury hotel offerings.

The group announced several new projects to strengthen

Oman's position in high-end tourism. These include the Middle East's first Club Med Resort in Musandam and a partnership with Santani Wellness Resorts to develop wellness tourism in Dakhliyah.

Omran also reported a 40% In-Country Value Index in 2024,

with RO19mn directed towards small and medium enterprises. SME spending accounted for 34.7% of total procurement.

Additionally, the group created 370 new jobs for Omani nationals.

As part of its corporate governance goals, Omran introduced an Environmental, Social and Governance Framework to align with international sustainability standards and improve transparency across its operations.

'Omran's results underline its role as a key driver of tourism and investment in Oman. Through strategic partnerships, large-scale projects and a focus on sustainability, the group continues to position itself at the centre of the sultanate's economic diversification strategy,' the press release added.

140kg of ghost nets, iron debris cleaned up off Dimaniyat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Environment Authority (EA) conducted its first coral reef cleanup campaign of 2025 recently, clearing 140kg of abandoned fishing nets and iron debris from the Dimaniyat Islands, a protected marine reserve off the coast of Barka.

The campaign in South Batinah began with an underwater cleanup at Lumiyh Island, one of several islands in the Dimaniyat archipelago. Specialised divers removed entangled ghost nets and rusted metal fragments from the reef, which marine experts



say pose serious threats to coral ecosystems and marine species.

'This campaign reflects our commitment to safeguarding Oman's marine biodiversity and underscores the urgent need to address pollution threats in ecologically sensitive areas,' EA stated.

The Dimaniyat Islands, part of nature reserve named after it, are Oman's first marine sanctuary and are listed on Unesco's tentative list of World Heritage sites. The area attracts local and international visitors for diving, snorkelling and wildlife observation, and is home to coral reefs, nesting sea turtles and migratory birds.

Marine scientists warn that ghost nets can persist for many years in the ocean, trapping fish

The Dimaniyat Islands, part of a nature reserve named after it, are Oman's first marine sanctuary and listed on Unesco's tentative list of World Heritage sites

national visitors for diving, snorkelling and wildlife observation, and is home to coral reefs, nesting sea turtles and migratory birds.

Marine scientists warn that ghost nets can persist for many years in the ocean, trapping fish

and turtles while damaging coral structures. Iron debris, once corroded, release harmful substances that degrade the marine environment.

EA stated that this operation was part of a broader effort to promote environmental awareness and sustainable marine tourism. The authority plans several cleanup dives this year in co-operation with local diving teams, volunteers and environmental organisations.

"This is just the beginning," an EA official said. "Through collaborative efforts and continued monitoring, we aim to restore the health of our reefs."

Omani British Society hosts workshop on advancing sultanate's food security

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Omani British Society hosted a workshop on Wednesday titled ‘Harvesting Oman’s Resilience: Advancing Food Security Through Innovation’. The event brought together a diverse group of experts from Oman and the UK – including government officials, agri-tech pioneers, policy strategists, and business leaders – to explore innovative solutions to the sultanate’s food security challenges.

Saleh Zakwani, Chairman of the Omani British Society, stated that the workshop reflects the Omani British Society’s commitment to facilitating dialogue on issues of strategic national importance. “Food security is a key component of Oman’s long-term vision, with a clear goal of increasing self-sufficiency and building a resilient, sustainable food system. By bringing together experts, policymakers, and industry leaders, we aim to support the national agenda through collaboration and knowledge exchange. We are proud to serve as a platform for these vital conversations that shape Oman’s future.”

In addition to individual presentations, the workshop featured a dynamic panel discussion with five distinguished participants. The panel comprised Andrea Di Lello, Senior Director, Alvarez & Marsal; Eng Asma al Hinai, Manager of the Oman Vision 2040 Office at the Ministry



Eng Asma al Hinai shared updates on the government’s ongoing efforts and strategic initiatives to strengthen national food security, attract investment, and increase self-sufficiency in key food commodities

of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources; Edward Gilbert, Regional Agriculture and Food Counsellor for the Gulf, British Embassy Riyadh; Sameer Ul Haque, Chief Investment Officer, Tawoos Group; and Shepard (Colie) Spink, Managing Director, Alvarez & Marsal.

The engaging panel discussion was moderated by Jesal Asher Rajda, Executive Director, Al Ansari Group. Panellists shared

insights into the complex challenges facing Oman’s food systems – from water scarcity to supply chain optimisation and investment in agri-tech.

Eng Asma al Hinai shared updates on the government’s ongoing efforts and strategic initiatives to strengthen national food security, attract investment, and increase self-sufficiency in key food commodities.

She noted that, as part of its



Vision 2040 objectives, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources adopted Food Security Labs as a core mechanism to implement its five-year plan. “The outcome of the first phase, launched in 2021, has already resulted in over 340 investment projects across the agriculture, fisheries, and water resources sectors. We are currently preparing for the final session of the Food Security Lab in

October this year to conclude the first phase.”

These Food Security Labs, she said, are aligned with the pillars of Oman Vision 2040. More than 40 enabling initiatives have also been launched to support long-term sustainability and investor confidence in the agriculture sector.

Eng Asma also highlighted the ministry’s support for entrepreneurs and investors through a range of incentive packages. She emphasised Oman’s strategic focus on increasing production of food commodities where self-sufficiency is currently below 75%. “We have established a National Food Basket that includes 25 commodities across eight food crop categories. These strategic crops are the focus of a national plan to raise

sufficiency levels to at least 75% by 2028.”

“To guide these efforts, we developed a comprehensive investment map, which analyses crop composition, soil texture, and groundwater availability across Oman’s governorates. This will help optimise agricultural production based on regional strengths.”

Looking beyond primary production, Eng Asma said that the ministry is also working to enhance value-added processing capabilities for various food commodities. Success stories include Oman’s growing industries in date processing, fish canning, and dairy by-products – many of which have already surpassed 75% self-sufficiency due to domestic value addition.

Haifa al Khaifi, General Secre-

tary of the Omani British Society, expressed deep appreciation for the insightful dialogue held during the workshop. She said, “Under the esteemed leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Oman has charted a clear path towards sustainable agricultural development. Convening experts from both Oman and the UK – from government officials to agri-tech pioneers – demonstrated the power of collaboration, innovation, and strategic investment in bolstering national food security.”

She acknowledged the critical role of public-private partnerships, the water-energy-food nexus, and coordinated supply-demand planning, and extended gratitude to all speakers, partners, and attendees for their valuable contributions.

ADNOC Drilling to acquire 70% stake in SLB’s Oman and Kuwait rig operations

Our Correspondent
Muscat

ADNOC Drilling Company, a subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), announced on Thursday that it has signed an agreement to acquire a 70% stake in SLB’s land drilling rigs business in Oman and Kuwait. The transaction includes eight fully operational land rigs under contract with the respective national oil companies of both countries.

Through this partnership, ADNOC Drilling will gain immediate access to earnings, cash flow, and returns via six operating land rigs in Oman and two in Kuwait, accelerating its expansion into key GCC markets, the company said in a statement on its website.

The acquisition will enhance the company’s capacity to deploy cutting-edge technologies, integrated drilling services, digital solutions, and AI-driven efficiencies – optimising performance, reducing environmental impact, and delivering greater value to customers across the region.

Abdulrahman Abdulla al Seiai, Chief Executive Officer of ADNOC Drilling, said,

“This acquisition is a natural next step in ADNOC Drilling’s growth journey and reinforces our position as one of the leading companies in drilling and integrated services. Our partnership with SLB will provide ADNOC Drilling with a strong operational and financial platform to further expand in the region.

“This business is well-established, profitable, and operating



Through this acquisition, ADNOC Drilling will gain immediate access to earnings, cash flow, and returns via six operating land rigs in Oman and two in Kuwait, accelerating its expansion into key GCC markets

under long-term contracts, making it a highly complementary and value-accretive addition to our portfolio. Our focus remains on disciplined expansion that drives performance, returns, and growth.”

Jesus Lamas, President for the Middle East and North Africa at SLB, said, “This partnership reflects the strong collaboration between SLB and ADNOC

Drilling, and our shared commitment to delivering value through cooperation across the region. We are confident that, working in partnership with ADNOC Drilling, the business will continue to grow and achieve outstanding performance for our clients.

“We look forward to expanding our broader strategic partnerships with key regional leaders across the energy value chain, in alignment with SLB’s focused regional growth strategy.”

The formation of the joint venture and the acquisition of the 70% stake, as well as the completion of the transaction, remain subject to the necessary and customary regulatory approvals, which are expected in the first quarter of 2026. Upon closing, and subject to final assessment by the company’s auditor, ADNOC Drilling anticipates fully consolidating the newly acquired business into its financial reporting from 2026 onwards.

Hafeet Rail, Itaminas sign deal to develop logistics solutions

Abu Dhabi, UAE – Hafeet Rail, the developer of the cross-border railway project between Oman and the UAE, has signed a cooperation agreement with Itaminas Comércio de Minérios, one of Brazil’s leading iron ore producers.

This agreement marks a strategic step toward establishing an integrated and sustainable shipping system leveraging Hafeet Rail’s network to connect major ports and industrial zones, enhancing logistical efficiency and supporting the iron and steel industry in both countries.

The collaboration aims to develop a reliable and efficient transport network utilising Hafeet Rail’s modern infrastructure while capitalising on the pivotal role of Sohar Port in importing and processing iron ore.

Construction of the Hafeet Rail project is progressing rapidly along the railway route between Oman and the UAE, with ongoing



groundwork, leveling, and site preparation. Major bridge and tunnel construction have also commenced, paving the way for seamless connectivity between the two nations. This progress reflects close coordination between relevant authorities and local governments, ensuring the achievement of the objectives set for this vital cross-border project.

Itaminas specialises in producing high-quality iron ore, with a current annual production capacity of 6.5mn tonnes and envi-

ronmental permits allowing expansion to 15.5mn tonnes annually. The company plans to export a significant portion of its production to the Middle East via Brazil’s Sudeste Port, as part of its efforts to strengthen its presence in the region’s iron and steel sector.

Itaminas is also exploring the possibility of establishing parts of its value chain in GCC countries, leveraging the region’s advanced infrastructure, energy resources, and strategic geographic location.

This cooperation underscores the deepening integration between Oman and the UAE and highlights the potential of the Hafeet Rail network to support future industrial projects in both countries. By creating an integrated logistics corridor linking ports to industrial and commercial hubs, the network will serve global and regional steel companies seeking efficient, sustainable, and scalable logistics solutions in the region.

ONA

Investments in Buraimi Industrial City hit RO274mn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Al Buraimi Industrial City, affiliated with the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), successfully signed 16 investment contracts in 2024, with a total value of RO7.97mn. These agreements cover projects across more than 165,000 square metres, spanning sectors such as automotive oil manufacturing, paper and cardboard, food, water, and cosmetics.



Said bin Abdullah al Balushi

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Said bin Abdullah al Balushi, Director General of Al Buraimi Industrial City, stated

that the city has demonstrated exceptional performance in 2024, with the total cumulative investment now exceeding RO274mn. “This achievement is the result of Madayn’s ongoing efforts to create a competitive and attractive business environment for investors, while focusing on job creation, supporting small and medium enterprises, and promoting economic diversification and sustainable industrial growth in line with Oman Vision 2040,” he said.

Balushi highlighted that the

dualisation of the Al Buraimi-Mahdah Road, currently under implementation by the relevant authorities in coordination with Madayn, is a strategically significant project. It will serve as a major artery linking the Wilayat of Mahdah with Al Buraimi Governorate. The road will connect to both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of Al Buraimi Industrial City, offering key solutions for managing entry and exit points, ensuring smooth internal access, and ultimately saving time and effort for investors.

Trump plans to double steel tariffs to 50%

Washington, US – US President Donald Trump on Friday said he plans to double steel tariffs to 50%.

Speaking at US Steel's Irvin Works in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, the president said the move would help protect American steelworkers and "further secure the steel industry."

Since March 12, 25% tariffs on steel imports have been in place. The US imports roughly 25mn tonnes of steel each year, which accounts for 23% of all the steel used domestically. Canada, Mexico, Brazil and South Korea sending the most steel to the US.

Friday's announcement came in the wake of a flurry of legal actions in cases that challenged some of Trump's tariffs. A court initially blocked the order, but the administration was given a reprieve while further appeals work their way through the court. The block would not have applied to the steel tariffs.

In a post, published later on his Truth Social platform, the US president added that duties on aluminium will also increase from 25% to 50%. Trump said both increases will come into effect on Wednesday, June 4.

The announcement comes after confusing days during which the judiciary gave opposing rulings on Trump's customs policy, first blocking it with a decision by the US Court of International Trade and finally giving it the green light again, pending a new decision by a federal appeals court.

Investment coming from Japan

Trump spoke on Friday at US Steel's Mon Valley Works-Irvin



US President Donald Trump tours US Steel Corporation's Mon Valley Works-Irvin plant on Friday, in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania

"We are here today to celebrate an extraordinary deal that will ensure that this historic American company will remain an American company," Trump said during a rally at one of US Steel's warehouses, "you will remain an American company, you know that, right?"

The US president said that the import duties on steel and aluminum will increase from 25% to 50%. Trump said both increases will come into effect on Wednesday, June 4

The United Steelworkers union said it was very concerned "about the impact this merger of US Steel with a foreign competitor will have on national security, our members, and the communities where we live and work."

According to the US government's producer price index, steel prices have risen 16% since Trump became president in mid-January.

As of March 2025, steel cost \$984 per metric tonne in the US, far more than the price in Europe (\$690) or China (\$392), according to the US Department of Commerce.

Among the partners most affected by the possible increase in duties on these materials are the EU, which had just obtained a July postponement of the increase in general duties on exports to the US, and Canada. Agencies

EU 'strongly regrets' 50% increase in steel and aluminium tariffs

US President Donald Trump's announcement to double tariffs on steel and aluminum imports is likely to hit Europe hard.

In a swift reaction to the

move, a European Commission spokesperson said in an emailed statement: "We strongly regret the announced increase of US tariffs on steel imports from

25% to 50%," the news agency Reuters reported, adding: "This decision adds further uncertainty to the global economy and increases costs for con-

sumers and businesses on both sides of the Atlantic".

Also referring to the ongoing transatlantic trade talks, the spokesperson said that "the tar-

iff increase also undermines ongoing efforts to reach a negotiated solution" and stated that "the EU is prepared to impose countermeasures.

plant on the outskirts of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he also discussed details of a deal being finalised for investment by Japan's Nippon Steel in the iconic American steel mill.

Trump clarified to reporters after his return to Washington, however, that he has yet to approve the deal. "I have to approve the final agreement with Nippon and we haven't seen the

final agreement yet, but they've made a very big commitment and it's a very big investment," he said.

Although Trump initially promised to block the Japanese

steelmaker's bid to buy US Steel, he changed course and last week announced an agreement for a partial sale to Nippon Steel.

The Japanese company never claimed to have changed its pre-

vious offer to buy and fully control US Steel, for \$14.9bn, although it did increase the amount it promised to invest in American plants and guaranteed it would not lay anyone off.

EIA paints bearish picture for US oil market with record supply, low demand

Julianne Geiger

US crude oil production surged to an all-time high in March, reaching 13.488mn barrels per day, according to newly released monthly data Energy Information Administration (EIA). That edges out the previous monthly record of 13.450mn bpd set in October 2024, and an increase over the 13.153mn bpd in February.

The increase reflects steady momentum from the Permian and Gulf Coast operators – even as drilling activity slows elsewhere. But while the supply side flexed its muscle, demand told a different story.

Total petroleum product supplied – a broad proxy for US oil demand – fell to 19.95mn bpd, the lowest in a year and down from 20.225mn bpd in February, which was a decrease from January. The soft patch in consump-



tion raises red flags for refiners and exporters heading into the summer driving season, especially with inventories climbing.

US crude imports for March clocked in at 178.4mn barrels, according to EIA's Petroleum Supply Monthly, slightly higher than February in total barrels, thanks to the longer month – but still lower on a daily average basis. Finished product imports came in at 17.8mn barrels, led by gasoline

blending components and jet fuel.

Despite record output, US drillers are pulling back. The rig count fell for the fifth straight week in May, dropping to 563, the lowest since late 2021. Oil-directed rigs fell to 461, with losses in both the Permian and New Mexico. Capital discipline remains the mantra as producers focus on debt reduction and shareholder returns.

(Source: Oilprice.com)

China's manufacturing activity continues to improve as market sentiment strengthens

Beijing, China – China's manufacturing activity continued to show signs of improvement in May as production accelerated and market expectations strengthened, official data showed Saturday.

The purchasing managers' index (PMI) for China's manufacturing sector came in at 49.5 in May, up 0.5 points from April, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

A PMI reading above 50 reflects expansion, while a reading below 50 suggests contraction.

NBS statistician Zhao Qinghe said the improvement reflects accelerated production and

more positive business expectations. The sub-index for production rose to 50.7, up 0.9 points from the previous month, indicating faster manufacturing output. The new orders index also climbed by 0.6 points to 49.8.

Notably, the PMI for large enterprises returned to expansion territory at 50.7, up 1.5 points from April, pointing to improving conditions for major firms.

High-tech manufacturing continued its expansion for the fourth consecutive month, reaching 50.9. The sub-indices for the equipment manufacturing and consumer goods sectors rose to 51.2 and 50.2, respec-

tively.

Market expectations also improved over the period. The production and business activity expectation index rose to 52.5, up 0.4 points from the previous month, indicating that manufacturing enterprises maintain steady confidence in near-term growth prospects, Zhao said.

The continued recovery in the manufacturing PMI suggests that the effects of intensified macroeconomic policy measures are beginning to emerge, with improving business expectations and signs of recovery in production activity, analysts say.

Xinhua



NATIONAL BISCUIT INDUSTRIES LTD. SAOG

DIRECTORS REPORT

Revenue and Profits

The company recorded a Net Revenue of RO 19,688,739 in the financial year 2024-25 compared to RO 17,210,901 in the financial year 2023-24. The growth in Net revenue is 14% as compared to the previous year.

The company has recorded a gross profit of RO 3,082,025/- for the financial year 2024-25 as against the previous year gross profit of RO 2,584,020/-. The growth over previous year gross profit is 19%.

The Company continues to deliver strong performance by maintaining its leadership in the biscuits segment in Oman and scaling up offerings in snacks, wafers, and confectionery. With an aggressive export growth strategy in place, we are focused on increasing global market share while enhancing margins and streamlining manufacturing and supply chain efficiencies.

Thus, the company has achieved a net profit of RO 915,508/- for the financial year 2024-25 as compared to RO 723,033/- in the financial year 2023-24. The growth over previous year is 27%.

Dividend

The Board of Directors proposes a cash dividend of 50% on paid up share capital of 1,000,000 amounting to RO 500,000. There are no other appropriations.

Compliance with FSA

Your Company has been constantly monitoring and upgrading its internal control procedures and systems in compliance with local laws and regulations. As a part of this process, the internal controls, procedure manuals and guidelines as recommended by the Financial Services Authority, have been implemented from 2003 onwards. The Board through a process of internal audits, audit committees' regular involvement in the review process, ensures that the internal controls and procedures adopted by your company are effective.

Corporate Governance

Your company confirms its compliance with the code of corporate governance for Public Listed Companies issued in July 2015, as updated in December 2016 and a separate note on Corporate Governance forms a part of this report.

Future Outlook

The Company will continue to consolidate and grow its market share in Oman while actively pursuing opportunities in existing and new export markets. This will be achieved through a well-curated product mix tailored to the unique preferences of each market, coupled with a flexible and market-responsive pricing strategy. We will work closely with the right channel partners to enhance our reach across various distribution channels, with the objective of driving sustainable and profitable growth.

As part of our strategic expansion, the Company is placing greater emphasis on penetrating promising new markets, where demand for high-quality and affordable products is high. Our goal is to establish a strong initial presence through targeted product offerings, competitive pricing, and strategic partnerships.

To further strengthen our domestic position, the Company is focused on increasing shelf share in Oman through improved in-store visibility, promotional activities, and enhanced retail partnerships. Special emphasis is placed on appointing dedicated channel partners for the Oryx range of products, ensuring better market penetration and brand recognition across priority retail segments.

To further enhance efficiency, the Company is exploring, evaluating, and integrating advanced technologies and automation across manufacturing operations. These initiatives aim to reduce operational costs, enhance product consistency, and increase overall productivity.

Acknowledgement

The Board extends its deepest gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq, May Allah protect and guide him in his continued service to Oman and its people. We also express our sincere appreciation to the various Ministries and Government Departments for their steadfast support and collaboration, which continue to play a vital role in the Company's progress.

The Board wishes to convey heartfelt thanks to the shareholders of National Biscuit Industries Limited SAOG for their continued trust and confidence in the Company and its leadership.

Lastly, the Board acknowledges and thanks the Management and all Staff Members for their dedication and contributions during the financial year 2024-25. We look forward to building on this momentum and achieving continued growth and success in the years ahead.

Nooh Bin Mohammed Al- Zidjaly
Chairman

Statement of financial position as on

	31 Mar 2025 RO	31 Mar 2024 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	6,320,264	6,379,077
Intangible assets	127,557	156,456
Right-of-use assets	616,214	641,112
Total non-current assets	7,064,035	7,176,645
Current assets		
Inventories	3,261,827	2,894,246
Trade and other receivables	4,706,207	4,892,252
Wakala deposits	900,000	–
Bank balances and cash	1,119,928	138,673
Total current assets	9,987,962	7,925,171
Total assets	17,051,997	15,101,816
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Share capital	1,000,000	1,000,000
Legal reserve	333,333	333,333
Retained earnings	7,322,614	6,657,106
Total equity	8,655,947	7,990,439
Liabilities		
Non-current liabilities		
Non-current portion of lease liabilities	721,684	719,258
Employees' end of service benefits	537,835	516,794
Deferred tax liability	88,816	104,678
Total non-current liabilities	1,348,335	1,340,730

Current liabilities		
Current portion of lease liabilities	2,107	2,247
Trade and other payables	6,855,802	5,452,626
Bank borrowings	–	192,363
Taxation	189,806	123,411
Total current liabilities	7,047,715	5,770,647
Total liabilities	8,396,050	7,111,377
Total equity and liabilities	17,051,997	15,101,816
Net assets per share	8.656	7.990

Statement of comprehensive income for the year ended

	31 Mar 2025 RO	31 Mar 2024 RO
INCOME		
Revenue from contracts with customers	19,688,739	17,210,901
Cost of sales	(16,606,714)	(14,626,881)
Gross profit	3,082,025	2,584,020
Other income	34,313	33,313
	3,116,338	2,617,333
EXPENSES		
General and administration	972,217	815,080
Selling and distribution	1,003,957	889,996
Finance charges	62,429	61,800
	2,038,603	1,766,876
Profit before tax	1,077,735	850,457
Tax charge	(162,227)	(127,424)
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the year	915,508	723,033
Basic earnings per share	0.916	0.723

St Regis Al Mouj host blood donation

As part of its commitment to the community, The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort recently hosted a blood donation drive and an awareness session, ‘A Drop of Giving Creates Hope’, a heartfelt initiative organised in partnership with the Central Blood Bank of Oman and Oman Blood Donation Group.

The event brought together residents of Al Mouj Muscat, representatives of the Alfardan Group along with the dedicated hosts of the resort. The turnout was positive and served as a reminder of the continuous demand for blood donations and the importance of turning one-off campaigns into sustained efforts.

Guided by the timeless St Regis spirit of generosity and the Marriott International Serve 360 strategy, this initiative underscores the resort’s unwavering commitment to making a meaningful and sustainable impact.

The event is a reflection of Marriott’s 2025 Sustainability and Social Impact Goals and resonates with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, demonstrating The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort’s dedication to both global progress and local community enrichment.

At the heart of this initiative is the belief that every drop of



blood donated carries the promise of hope, a sentiment echoed by all who participated. The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort extends its deepest gratitude to everyone involved for their generosity and support, and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to fostering compassion, unity, and well-being through such meaningful community initiatives.

The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, located in Oman’s capital, is a prime example of exquisite living, reflecting the local culture and the brand’s legendary Rituals. Part of Marriott Bonvoy’s collection, the resort combines Omani hospitality with global luxury.

The resort boasts 250 elegant guest rooms and suites with private balconies offering stunning

views. Its design draws inspiration from Oman’s maritime history, incorporating a yachting theme that harmonises with its coastal location. Guests can unwind at the renowned Guerlain Spa or venture out to explore the nearby marine, golf course and shopping options.

A variety of dining experiences await at Em Sherif, Novikov Café, Coya, Roberto’s,

Hakkasan, along with Zorba, Karibu, The Stage Bar & Lounge, and The Lobby Lounge each offering unique flavours and atmospheres to suit every mood and occasion. The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort is dedicated to creating unforgettable experiences that connect guests with the local culture. It exemplifies the St Regis brand’s commitment to exceptional service and inno-

vative hospitality, inviting guests to immerse themselves in the captivating charm of Oman.

Combining classic sophistication with a modern sensibility, St. Regis Hotels & Resorts, part of Marriott International, Inc., is committed to delivering exceptional experiences at over 40 luxury hotels and resorts in the best addresses around the world. Since the opening of the first St.

Regis hotel in New York City over a century ago by John Jacob Astor IV, the brand has remained committed to an uncompromising level of bespoke and anticipatory service for all of its guests, delivered flawlessly by signature St. Regis Butler Service. For more information and new openings, visit stregis.com or follow Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. St. Regis is proud to participate in Marriott Bonvoy, the new name of Marriott’s travel program replacing Marriott Rewards®, The Ritz- Carlton Rewards®, and Starwood Preferred Guest (SPG).

The programme offers members an extraordinary portfolio of global brands, experiences on Marriott Bonvoy Moments and unparalleled benefits including earning points toward free hotel stays and nights toward Elite status recognition. To enrol for free or for more information about the programme, visit MarriottBonvoy.marriott.com.

Marriott International, Inc is based in Bethesda, Maryland, USA, and encompasses a portfolio of more than 6,900 properties in 30 leading hotel brands spanning 130 countries and territories. Marriott operates and franchises hotels and licenses vacation ownership resorts all around the world.

Porsche Centre, Shell Oman to expand EV charging infrastructure

Porsche Centre Oman has announced a partnership with Shell Oman Marketing Company (Shell Oman) to significantly increase the roll-out of electric vehicle (EV) chargers across Oman.

The agreement will see at least eight co-branded Porsche and Shell DC high performance charging stations installed in the Sultanate.

Porsche Centre Oman and Shell Oman will also cooperate to install 125 AC Porsche Destination Chargers at convenient locations, allowing Porsche customers to top up, free-of-charge.

“Today marks a significant step forward in our commitment to a more sustainable future. Through this collaboration with Shell Oman, we are proud to lead the charge – quite literally – in building the infrastructure needed to support electromobility in the sultanate,” said Samir Abdul Rasool Qassim al Zadjali, Chief Executive Officer, Porsche Centre Oman.

“By introducing both high-performance and destination chargers, we are not only meeting the evolving needs of our



Porsche Centre Oman and Shell Oman will also cooperate to install 125 AC Porsche Destination Chargers at convenient locations

customers but also supporting Oman’s broader vision for electromobility and sustainable progress. Our collaboration with Shell marks a major milestone in accelerating EV adoption in Oman.”

Porsche Centre Oman customers who purchase their new EV model from 1 June 2025 will receive a two-year subscription package, which includes 2,250

kWh worth of charging at Porsche-branded DC high performance charging sites at no additional cost. Additional charging is then available at a preferential rate thereafter.

Customers will also have the possibility to purchase a subscription package separately. The AC Porsche Destination Chargers will remain free of cost for Porsche owners.

Fahad Express renews pact with Sabre to drive growth

Sabre Corporation, a leading global travel technology company, announced the renewal of its long-standing partnership with Fahad Express Travel & Tourism, one of the top travel agencies in Muscat, Oman.

Under the renewed multi-year agreement, Fahad Express will continue using Sabre’s technology, including Sabre Red 360, Automation Hub, Automated Exchange and Refund, and Sabre APIs with e-ticket Reports to help boost its operational efficiency, unlock new revenue opportunities, and reduce costs.

The agency will also retain access to Sabre’s global marketplace of over 400 airlines, 750,000 hotel properties, and hundreds of other travel providers, enabling it to deliver personalised, end-to-end travel experiences.

“With the ongoing transformation of the travel landscape across the region, our focus remains firmly on enhancing the customer experience,” said Ramzi al Qassab, Managing Director of Sabre Travel Network Middle East.

“Fahad Express is a major



player in Oman’s travel industry, and we are excited that their renewed commitment reflects the trust they place in Sabre.”

By extending this partnership, Qassab said, “Fahad Express is utilising Sabre’s technology to elevate and evolve their corporate travel business towards the customer journey. We are proud to continue supporting their vision with innovative technology and consultative services.”

A trusted Sabre partner for more than 13 years, Fahad Ex-

press relies on Sabre’s technology and expertise to support its day-to-day operations and future growth strategy.

“We are proud to continue our partnership with Sabre, which has played a key role in our success and growth over the years,” said Juliet Irwin, General Manager, Fahad Express Travel & Tourism. “With Sabre’s ongoing support and technology, we are well-positioned to deliver even more value to our customers and advance our strategic goals.”

Oman Air, Amouage take Omani Rock Rose to the skies

Continuing to redefine in-flight dining, Oman Air has partnered with long-term collaborator Amouage to introduce an exclusive sweet creation for Business Class guests.

In a shared celebration of artistry and tradition, the national airline and iconic fragrance house have unveiled a bespoke dessert featuring the treasured Omani Rock Rose, grown on the slopes of Jabal al Akhdar.

Available for a limited time only, this exquisite floral dish, created by Michelin-starred Chef Peter Gast and inspired by Amouage’s Guidance Eau de Parfum, brings a new di-

mension of storytelling and sensory delight to the airline’s award-winning Business Class menu, offering guests a refined taste of Oman at 30,000 feet.

The carefully crafted, seven-petal creation is a refined balance of delicate textures and layered depth, revealing unexpected contrasts with every bite. Beneath its soft pink exterior and crisp chocolate shell, its petals part to unveil a velvety cream and a delicate crunch that lingers on the palate.

Flavour is never static and evolves with its surroundings. During flight, this delicacy is designed to hold its integrity.

Nepal Embassy marks Mt Everest’s first summit day

The Embassy of Nepal in Muscat hosted a tourism promotion event on May 29 to mark Sagarmatha Day, commemorating the historic first ascent of Mt Everest (Sagarmatha) by Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary on the day in 1953.

This year’s event also coincided with Republic Day of Nepal, adding further significance to the celebration.

The event was graced by guest of honour Dr Jamal bin Hasan al Moosawi, Secretary General of the National Museum of the Sultanate of Oman, and Abdullah al Riyami, Director General of the Cultural Cooperation Department, Foreign Ministry of Oman.

The event was attended by Ambassadors, Diplomats, a



Sagarmatha Climber, prominent business leaders and media professionals, making the evening a rich gathering of diplomatic and cultural exchange.

The ceremony formally began

with the lighting of the traditional Panos lamp by H E Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of Nepal to the Sultanate of Oman.

In his welcome address, Ambassador Aryal highlighted the

symbolic, ecological and geopolitical significance of Sagarmatha.

Ambassador Aryal also spotlighted Nepal’s initiation in climate dialogue through the first edition of the Sagarmatha Sam-

baad (Everest Dialogue), held in Kathmandu from May 16 to 18.

Centred on the theme ‘Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of Humanity’, the international conference welcomed many national and international delegates, and concluded with the issuance of a 25-point ‘Sagarmatha Call for Action’.

H E Aryal concluded his remarks with a warm invitation for all attendees to visit Nepal, praising its stunning natural beauty and rich cultural heritage.

Nadhira al Harthy, Sagarmatha summiter, shared inspiring and engaging presentation of her Everest expedition.

Nadhira also recounted her experience as a panelist during the recent Sagarmatha Sam-

Taageer, Muscat Private Hospital enters into strategic partnership

In reaffirming its commitment to empowering communities through innovative financial solutions, Taageer Finance Company SAOG has announced a strategic partnership with Muscat Private Hospital (MPH) - one of the sultanate's most premier healthcare providers.

This collaboration enables patients to access premium planned and elective healthcare services through flexible financing and easy EMI (Equated Monthly Installment) options from Taageer Finance.

The tie-up makes world-class treatments and diagnostic procedures more financially accessible and just an EMI away, to a wider segment of the population, reinforcing both organisations' vision of putting patient wellbeing and empowerment at the forefront. From specialist consultations and elective surgeries to advanced diagnostics and wellness programs, eligible patients at MPH can now avail financing support that brings life-changing healthcare a step closer.

This financing facility is designed to benefit a wide demographic, encompassing both Omani citizens and expatriate residents. Eligibility is deter-



mined based on the specific financial assessment and approval criteria set by Taageer Finance, ensuring that individuals facing financial constraints can access the healthcare services they need, provided they meet the necessary requirements. By offering this inclusive solution, the partnership aims to remove economic barriers and extend the reach of quality medical care to a larger segment of the community.

Fahad Khamis al Bulushi, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Taageer Finance Company SAOG, said: "Healthcare is a

solutions.

"This initiative allows us to extend our reach beyond traditional sectors, playing a more active role in enhancing lives and supporting Oman's healthcare transformation journey."

Founded on shared values of quality, compassion, and accessibility, the partnership reflects the evolving expectations of

partnership with Taageer Finance, we are taking a significant step toward removing financial barriers that often delay or deter timely treatment. By offering convenient and accessible EMI options, we are empowering our patients to make informed healthcare decisions without compromise - because at MPH, we believe that everyone de-

This financing facility has been designed to benefit a wide demographic, encompassing both Omani citizens and expatriate residents

today's healthcare consumer - where affordability and excellence go hand in hand.

For Taageer, it is an extension of its diversified approach to supporting Oman's key sectors. For Muscat Private Hospital, it represents a new chapter in delivering high-quality care with enhanced financial convenience.

Hassan al Lawati, CEO, Muscat Private Hospital, commented: "At Muscat Private Hospital, we are committed to delivering exceptional medical care that is both patient-centric and world-class. Through this

serves access to the best care, when they need it most."

Through this collaboration, individuals and families in Oman can now plan and prioritize their health with greater confidence and peace of mind, knowing that a range of flexible payment solutions are available. This initiative also underlines both institutions' role in supporting Oman Vision 2040's pillars of health and wellbeing, financial inclusivity, and socio-economic development.

Taageer Finance offers a diverse range of financial and leasing solutions for businesses.

Bank Muscat launches Visa Platinum Card

Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, recently announced the launch of the Visa Platinum Business Credit Card for its 'Najahi' Business Banking customers, consisting of Micro, Small, Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and entrepreneurs. The new credit card has seen significant demand from customers who avail various features of the credit card that enable them to manage and complete their business purchase transactions efficiently.

The new credit card provides customers a card limit of up to RO5,000. The card comes with a range of benefits for customers, including a 0.5% cashback on all purchases, access to airport lounges worldwide, and various other business-related benefits and offers. Furthermore, the card offers an interest-free repayment period, providing enhanced financial flexibility and reducing the financial burden on customers. The Najahi Visa Platinum Business Credit Card is a significant addition to Bank Muscat's diverse portfolio.

Chevrolet Captiva: Full value seven-Seater SUV

Designed for families who refuse to settle for less, the new Chevrolet Captiva delivers everything you need - and more - in a stylish, well-equipped, and affordable seven-seater SUV.

Now available in Oman starting from an incredible RO7,999, the Captiva is the no-compromise, full-value choice for smart buyers looking to upgrade.

Built to meet the demands of modern family life, the Captiva brings together generous interior space, advanced technology, and a premium driving experience - all without the premium price tag. Whether it's school runs, road trips, or weekend getaways, this SUV is designed to fit your life seamlessly.

From the outside, the Captiva commands attention with its



sleek lines, LED daytime running lights, roof rails, and 18" alloy wheels. Step inside to discover a surprisingly refined cabin with seating for seven and thoughtful touches like a panoramic sunroof, ventilated front seats, and rear air conditioning vents - ensuring every passenger travels in comfort. At the heart of the

dashboard is a 10.4-inch touchscreen infotainment system supporting wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, paired with a 6-speaker audio system that makes every drive more enjoyable. It has convenience features such as a hands-free power liftgate, keyless entry, push-button start, beside others.

Al Injaz holds KG Graduation Ceremony 2025

The Kindergarten Graduation Ceremony 2025 was held with great joy and enthusiasm on Wednesday, at the Al Injaz Auditorium. The event marked a significant milestone in the young learners' educational journey and was celebrated in the presence of proud parents, staff, and distinguished guests.

"We were honoured to welcome Saada bint Salim al Ismaili as the chief guest for the occasion," the school stated.

Saada is a distinguished figure in Omani sports administration and a leading advocate for promoting women's participation in sports across Oman and the Gulf region. Her presence inspired both students and parents alike.

The ceremony began with a warm welcome to the chief guest by the Kindergarten Band, followed by the presentation of a bouquet as a token of appreciation. The young graduates then



took center stage to showcase their talent and confidence through a series of delightful performances.

Highlights of the event included a graceful ballet performance, an energetic Arabic song presented by the boys, and a vibrant display of Kindergarten classroom work reflecting the learning and creativity nurtured throughout the year. The girls performed an engaging Arabic

action song, while the children captivated the audience with their English dance number - 'I Am a Robot', drawing enthusiastic applause. The most awaited moment was the distribution of graduation certificates, as the little graduates received their certificates with beaming smiles and pride. The event concluded with a heartwarming graduation group photo, capturing the joy and success of the day.

The atmosphere was filled with pride and celebration as parents expressed immense happiness in witnessing their children's performances and the remarkable confidence they had developed over the academic year. Many parents extended their heartfelt thanks to the school and the teachers for their dedication, nurturing, and commitment to early childhood education.

Indian School Al Ghubra organises Investiture Ceremony for leaders

The Investiture Ceremony of Indian School Al Ghubra for the academic year 2025 -26 was held on Tuesday (May 27). It marked the induction of its newly elected members of the Prefectorial Body.

The event was also graced by the presence of H E G V Srinivas, the Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman and the members of the School Management Committee.

Faris bin Abdullah al Kharusi, an innovation strategist, transformation architect, Net-Zero Pioneer was the chief guest for the occasion.

The event commenced with the singing of the School Song. Principal Papri Ghosh accorded a warm welcome to the chief guest Faris al Kharusi and administered the oath to the newly elected council members.

Students pledged to sincerely fulfil the duties towards the school. The elected leaders were conferred with badges by the chief guest and Ahmed Rayees, the president of the School Management Committee assisted by vice-principal G Sreeakumar and



Dr Hussaina Asgar - the vice principal of the Elementary and Primary Section.

The Head Girl and the Head Boy of the academic year are Diya Krishna and Anshul Rohit

Date. The Vice Head Girl- Aarushi Manikandan, the Vice Head Boy-Brijesh Chowdary Mupparaju, the President of the Student Council - Joshua Abe Samson, Vice President of the

Student Council - Aanya Goyal, the Speaker of the Student Council - Bhoomi Sachin Toprani, President of Round Square International Services - Niranjana Sunil were also inducted. Nihaarika

Manikkoth and Jonah Viju took charge as the Sports Captain for Girls and Boys respectively.

The Prefects who were officially inducted were Aadil Fatah Salam, Aarav Bharmoria, Advait

Kappil, Anaya Fernandes, Aqeeth Khanum, Atul Sanjeev, Behag Srikanth Iyer, Gouri Renjith, Hitesh Kishore Gurnani, John Arun Kalliathi, Joshua Joe Pandarakalam, Kanaka Devdatta

Deshmukh, Mark Mathews Muthalali, Mridul Sancheti, Neo Samson, Nieve Damian Pinto, Roheth Ramachandran, Sunakshi Singla, Tarun Venkatesh, Vaishnavi Sarang Joshi, Vedanth Nayak and Vinaya Sudarshan Kovil Kandadai.

The House Captains are Jabez Samuel Asir and Brinda Dhavalakumar Nimavat - Muscat House; Aaditya Shibu and Aditi Amarnath Bhakat - Nizwa House; Luke Mithul Abraham and Akshita Sai Ravikumar - Sohar House; Affan Riaz and Seethalekshmi Kishore - Sur House.

The members of the Student Council from classes 6 to 12 also took the oath of office.

In his address, chief guest Faris al Kharusi quoted Dr B R Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution by stating that a great man or woman ready to be a servant of society is the kind of leader a country needs. He inspired the student leaders by sharing the personal experiences of his family members where they donned the mantle of leadership.

US orders extra visa screening for Harvard-bound travellers

Washington, D.C., US - The US State Department has instructed embassies and consulates worldwide to begin heightened vetting procedures for anyone seeking a visa to visit Harvard University, according to an internal directive obtained by CBS News.

The order, issued May 29 from Secretary of State Marco Rubio's office, mandates that consular officials conduct a thorough review of the online activity

of all non-immigrant visa applicants traveling to Harvard 'for any purpose'. This includes not only students and faculty but also guest speakers, contractors, staff, and even tourists. The new procedures require applicants to potentially make their social media profiles public. Those with no online presence or private accounts may be flagged as evasive, according to the email.

The directive is part of a broader pilot programme to ex-



Harvard University holding a graduation ceremony on May 29

pand social media screening for US visa applicants and follows a separate State Department cable issued earlier this week that suspended all new student visa appointments as embassies prepare for the changes.

The move comes amid heightened tensions between the Trump administration and US universities. Harvard, in particular, has faced increased scrutiny. The administration has accused the university of failing

to address antisemitic incidents on campus and cited these concerns in the visa directive. The email also referenced executive orders signed by President Donald Trump aimed at strengthening visa scrutiny and combating antisemitism.

The federal government has already taken aggressive actions against Harvard, including freezing its federal funding and threatening to revoke international student visas over minor

infractions. A previous effort to block the university from enrolling international students was temporarily halted by a federal court.

The visa directive adds to a growing list of measures targeting US academic institutions as the White House escalates its stance against campus protests supporting Palestine and programmes focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Anadolu Agency



US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaks at the Shangri-La Dialogue security summit in Singapore

US Defense Secretary Hegseth warns of 'imminent' China threat

Singapore - United States Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth on Saturday cautioned that China was 'credibly preparing to potentially use military force' in a bid to reorder the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific.

Hegseth was speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue, Asia's premier defence forum, being held in Singapore.

China's army is 'rehearsing for the real deal', the Pentagon chief said, highlighting how the Indo-Pacific region was a priority for President Donald Trump's administration.

"We are not going to sugarcoat it - the threat China poses is real. And it could be imminent," he said.

Call to boost defence spending

Hegseth reassured Washing-

It's hard to believe a little bit... that I'm saying this, but thanks to President Trump, Asian allies should look to countries in Europe for a newfound example

PETE HEGSETH

ton's allies in the Indo-Pacific region that they would not be abandoned to tackle the growing military and economic pressures from Beijing.

He called on the Asian allies to bolster their own defence spending, adding that 'deterrence doesn't come on the cheap'.

"It's hard to believe a little bit... that I'm saying this, but thanks to President Trump, Asian allies should look to countries in Europe for a newfound example," said Hegseth, pointing to pledges

by NATO members including Germany to move toward Trump's spending target of 5% of GDP, which is a higher percentage of GDP than the US currently spends on defence.

Hegseth on China's ambitions

Hegseth on Saturday said any attempt by China to invade Taiwan 'would result in devastating consequences for the Indo-Pacific and the world'.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered the People's Libera-

tion Army to be able to take Taiwan by 2027, a deadline which experts view more as an aspirational goal than a hard war deadline. Beijing claims Taiwan as its own territory.

The US defence secretary reiterated Trump's remark that China would not conquer Taiwan under Trump's watch.

Hegseth also called out China for its power designs in Latin America, particularly its efforts to step up its influence around the Panama Canal.

No top Chinese official at summit

Beijing, which sends its defence minister to the annual conference, put forth a lower-level delegation this year, snubbing Washington over Trump's tariff war.

"We are here this morning.

And somebody else isn't," Hegseth remarked, with the US delegation saying that they intended to capitalise on China's absence.

The Chinese delegation, which was composed of lower-level officers from the National Defence University, asked the US Defence Secretary how committed his country would be to regional alliances. China has a stronger influence in some nations of the region.

Hegseth said the US was open to engaging with nations willing to work with it.

"We are not going to look only inside the confines of how previous administrations looked at this region," he said. "We're opening our arms to countries across the spectrum - traditional allies, non-traditional allies."

DW



US appeals court blocks Trump's mass layoff plans

Washington, D.C., US - A US federal appeals court on Friday blocked President Donald Trump's attempt to implement widespread layoffs across federal agencies, ruling that the executive order authorising the cuts exceeds the president's constitutional authority, CNN reported.

In a 2-1 decision, the US 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a lower court injunction that halted the layoffs - officially termed reductions in force (RIFs) - which had been on hold since May 9. The court found that Trump lacked the necessary congressional approval to carry out such broad personnel changes.

Senior Circuit Judge William Fletcher, writing for the majority, stated that the executive order 'far exceeds the President's supervisory powers' and emphasised that 'the kind of reorganisation contemplated by the order has long been subject to Congressional approval'.

The lawsuit, brought by a coalition of federal employees and labour groups, challenged the administration's efforts to restructure nearly every Cabinet-level department, including the departments of Defence, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice, Interior, Labour, State, and Treasury.

The coalition praised the

court's decision, calling it 'a victory in our efforts to pause these harmful actions while our case moves forward'.

In response, White House spokesman Harrison Fields criticised the ruling, saying: "A single judge is attempting to unconstitutionally seize the power of hiring and firing from the Executive Branch." He pledged that the administration would continue its legal fight. The ruling follows an earlier decision by US District Judge Susan Illston, who also found that Trump lacked the authority to carry out mass layoffs without legislative backing.

The Trump administration had appealed to the 9th Circuit after the district court's injunction, and earlier sought intervention from the Supreme Court, which declined to take up the case.

Meanwhile, US-based Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) filed a lawsuit on Friday against the Trump administration following an executive order to cut all federal funding for public radio and television.

"The executive order makes no attempt to hide the fact that it is cutting off the flow of funds to PBS because of the content of PBS programming and out of a desire to alter the content of speech," according to a *New York Times* report.

Anadolu Agency

Moscow could be within range if Germany sends Taurus missiles to Ukraine

Ankara, Turkey - During peace efforts in the Russia-Ukraine war, claims that Germany is considering sending Taurus missiles to Ukraine for attacks on Russia have brought the missile system into the spotlight.

Following recent statements by German officials, Ukraine's hopes of acquiring Taurus missiles have increased.

If Germany provides Taurus missiles to Ukraine, Kyiv could strike important cities and facilities, especially Moscow.

Former German Chancellor Olaf Scholz had emphasised during his term that he would not take action that could endanger his country's security, stressing that he would not provide Taurus cruise missiles - long-range weapons capable of striking deep in Russian territory.

In contrast, current Chancellor Friedrich Merz, even before taking office, had expressed that



Germany could supply Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine in coordination with European partners. "We want Ukraine to access long-range weapons. We also want to enable joint production. We will not discuss details in public, but we will intensify co-

operation," he said.

Merz said range restrictions on weapons supplied to Ukraine have been lifted. "There are no more range restrictions on weapons provided to Ukraine. Not from the British, not from the French, not from us, nor from the

Americans," he said after assuming office. But after taking office, Merz has avoided explicitly mentioning Taurus by name, instead delivering veiled messages.

'A dangerous step'

According to the Kremlin, the

Russian officials argue that if West allow Ukraine to carry out long-range attacks on Russia, NATO could become a party to the war

possible lifting of range restrictions on weapons supplied to Ukraine is a dangerous step.

Moscow describes those efforts as attempts to sabotage peace talks.

Russian officials argue that if Western powers allow Ukraine to carry out long-range attacks on Russia, NATO could become a party to the war.

Since the beginning of the war, Germany has declared its support for Ukraine.

Berlin is the second-largest provider of military aid to Ukraine after the United States.

The German-Swedish-made Taurus air-launched cruise missiles, currently under discussion, are noted for their effective range of up to 500km (310 miles).

If Ukraine deploys the missiles, it could gain the capability to strike deep into Russian territory, including Moscow.

The range of the missiles would cover key Russian regions such as Belgorod, Kursk, Voronezh, Smolensk, Kaluga, Bryansk and Rostov-on-Don, which holds military significance.

Taurus stands out with its low flight path, long-range technology, powerful warhead and high strike effectiveness. Weighing approximately 1.4 tonnes, it is difficult to detect by radar.

Taurus is also known for its ability to neutralise a wide variety of targets, including bunkers.

Use of Western weapons

The UK announced on May 11, 2023, that it would supply Ukraine with 'Storm Shadow' air-to-surface cruise missiles.

International media reported that Storm Shadow/SCALP-EG missiles were used in Ukrainian strikes on the Zaporizhzhia region on June 12, 2023, and on the Sevastopol port on September 13 and 23, 2023. British media reported that in 2024, Ukraine used the UK-supplied cruise missiles for the first time.

Ukraine targeted Russia's Black Sea Fleet and dockyard in Sevastopol, Crimea, using Storm Shadow, damaging several warships. France announced in August 2023 that it had supplied SCALP missiles to Ukraine.

Russia, in turn, has continued to claim it has destroyed various weapons launched by Ukraine.

Anadolu Agency

Caught between chaos and protests for democracy, Libya at crossroads again

Tripoli, Libya - It may be comparatively calm this week but Libya's western capital Tripoli remains in turmoil.

Earlier in May, violence broke out between armed groups and pro-government forces after Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah issued a decree ordering the dismantling of armed militias, including the influential Stabilisation Support Apparatus, or SSA, militia. The head of the SSA was killed.

According to the UN, the resulting violence killed eight civilians in Tripoli. Later another 58 bodies were found in a hospital under the SSA's control,

"The latest fighting in Tripoli that resulted in civilian casualties is a strong indication of the fragility of the situation," Hanan Salah, Libya researcher and associate director in the Middle East and North Africa division at Human Rights Watch, told DW. "The sheer recklessness of the warfare that Human Rights Watch documented in the middle of civilian neighbourhoods shows the blatant disregard these armed groups have for the life and livelihoods of civilians," she said.

Country split in half

Since 2014, Libya has been split into two, with opposing governments located in the east and west of the country. A United Nations-backed administration known as the Government of National Unity is based in Tripoli in the west and headed by Dbeibah.



Forces loyal to western Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah in Tripoli sit in an army vehicle

Recent violence in western Libya brought back the specter of renewed civil war. But observers say the ensuing protests may also offer a renewed chance to break the country's political gridlock

Its rival, known as the House of Representatives, is based in the east, in Tobruk and headed by Prime Minister Ossama Hamad. He is supported by former warlord-turned-politician Khalifa Haftar.

In the east, Haftar has managed to consolidate control over various armed militias under his command, ruling with an iron fist. In the west, Dbeibah has toler-

ated different militias competing. Observers say the recent fighting in Tripoli indicates that Dbeibah is now trying to do the same as Haftar and consolidate control over militias in the west too.

In mid-May, the fighting ended after a few days with an undisclosed agreement between the militias and Dbeibah's administration. It was followed by popular protests. People demanded

national elections as well as a return to the drafting of a constitution: Both were halted when a peace process under UN leadership failed in December 2021. Thousands also called for a Dbeibah's resignation.

Dbeibah did not address those calls. In a televised speech he said: "We will welcome all those who choose to stand with the state... and we will sideline those

who resort to blackmail and corruption. Our goal is a Libya free of militias and corruption." Observers agree that Dbeibah's key objective is likely to consolidate power and influence.

Unsolved problems

"In recent years the conflict (in Libya) has been frozen as the spoils have been divided among the various actors," Tim Eaton, a senior research fellow with the Middle East and North Africa programme at London-based think tank Chatham House, said.

Over time, 'these groups had been competing against one an-

other to grab ever greater parts of the Libyan state', he told DW.

In a recent piece for the think tank's website, Eaton wrote that the contest had been exacerbated this May over 'a dispute over control of a state institution, the Libyan Post, Telecommunications and Information Technology Company, which operates valuable monopolies in the telecommunications sector'.

In his view, the current situation is very perilous. "There clearly is a threat of a slide into another bout of civil war," he told DW. But, Eaton and other experts say, there's also some hope.

"There is a real shot for the UN to capitalise on this moment to make some political progress," Eaton told DW. "This set of actions also seems to present an opportunity to reinvigorate the political track. When there were other outbreaks of significant conflict in Tripoli in 2014 and 2020, political change did follow," he pointed out.

In 2014, fighting in Tripoli ended with the country splitting in half. In 2020, a UN-led political process to appoint a new government was started.

"So there is clearly an opportunity for such an occurrence to happen again," Eaton suggested.

This month's crisis could well 'represent a significant opportunity to begin changing the course of events by moving toward holding parliamentary and presidential elections', agrees Mohammed al-Dairi, a former foreign minister for the Tripoli-based government in the east. "The first step in this direction is the formation of a unified government that ends the institutional division currently plaguing our country," he told DW.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, or UNSMIL, first launched in 2011 to help facilitate a political process that would lead to democratic elections in Libya, has published a new report that outlines four options which could serve as a roadmap towards ending the country's difficult transitional phase. DW



Death toll from floods in Nigeria passes 150

Abuja, Nigeria - The death toll from widespread floods in central Nigeria rose to more than 150 people on Saturday, local emergency services reported.

After torrential rains earlier in the week, flood waters have swept away more than 50 homes in the market town of Mokwa in the central Niger state. More than 3,000 people have been displaced. "I extend my heartfelt condolences to the affected families and the good people of Niger State at this difficult time," Nige-

rian President Bola Tinubu said in a statement on X.

"Search-and-rescue operations are ongoing, and all relevant federal agencies have been mobilised to support the state government's efforts," he added.

"Relief materials and temporary shelter assistance are being deployed without delay."

Mokwa is a key local hub for traders from the south of the country and farmers from the north.

DW

Gaza: 12 more Palestinians killed

Gaza City, Palestine - At least 12 Palestinians were killed on Saturday as Israeli forces continued their genocidal war on Gaza, according to medical sources.

In the Al-Shanti area of Gaza City, four members of the same family were killed overnight when an Israeli strike targeted their tent, the sources told Anadolu.

They added that three more Palestinians were shot dead while trying to reach a US-backed aid distribution point in western Rafah.

Since Tuesday, Palestinians desperate for food have been killed almost daily by Israeli fire while trying to collect aid from distribution points run by the newly formed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, a body supported by Israel and the US.

In Khan Younis, two Palestinians were killed in an Israeli airstrike on Bani Suheila town, where Israeli forces have reportedly been conducting widespread demolitions of buildings and in-



frastructure, including in the neighbouring town of Al-Qarara, eyewitnesses said.

Rescue teams also retrieved the bodies of two Palestinians killed in a previous Israeli strike on Al-Qarara, though the exact timing of the attack was not specified.

In the central part of Khan Younis, one Palestinian was killed and several others injured when an Israeli drone strike hit the Al-

Safi neighbourhood in the Al-Sikka area.

Death toll rises to 54,381

At least 54,381 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's genocidal war since October 2023, the Health Ministry said on Saturday.

A ministry statement said 60 bodies were brought to hospitals over the last 24 hours.

It said that 284 more people

were also injured, taking the number of injuries to 124,054 in the Israeli onslaught.

Many victims are still trapped under the rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them, the statement added. Israel resumed its assault on the Gaza Strip on March 18, abandoning a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement that took hold in January.

Anadolu Agency

Egypt: Severe storm batters Alexandria

Cairo, Egypt - The northern Egyptian city of Alexandria was struck by sudden and severe weather on Saturday, including strong winds, heavy thunderstorms, and hail, prompting local authorities to declare a state of emergency and delay school exams.

In an official statement, Alexandria Governorate reported widespread disruption across the city. The storm brought down trees, damaged streetlights, and left several roads flooded. Emergency teams were deployed to remove debris and drain rainwater in a bid to restore normalcy.

Footage shared on social media captured scenes of waterlogged streets, lightning strikes, toppled utility poles, damaged vehicles, and torrential downpours, triggering panic among residents.

Mahmoud Shaheen, director of forecasting and early warning at Egypt's Meteorological Authority, attributed the storm to a low-pressure system that dropped temperatures and produced thunderclouds close to the ground. He described the storm as a fast-moving weather front, ruling out the presence of destructive cyclones.

These conditions are typical during the winter and spring seasons, Shaheen said, explaining that the storm's severity was due to downbursts and low-altitude storm clouds.

Anadolu Agency

Limited aid to Gaza 'mockery' amid humanitarian crisis: UNRWA

Istanbul/Jerusalem - The head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) has warned that current aid deliveries to Gaza fall drastically short of what is needed, calling them a 'mockery' of the immense humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in the besieged enclave.

"There are reports that 900 trucks were sent in the past two weeks. That's just over 10 per cent of the daily needs of people in Gaza," UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said in a statement on X.

"The aid that's being sent now makes a mockery of the mass tragedy unfolding under our watch. We are back to the



Displaced Palestinians receive food in Al Mawasi district of Khan Yunis, Gaza on Friday

blaming game while the people of Gaza are starving and trying to survive heavy bombardments," he added.

"We are not asking for the impossible," Lazzarini said. "Allow the UN including UNRWA and humanitarian partners to do our work: assist people in need and preserving their dignity."

He recalled that during the previous ceasefire, the UN was able to deliver 600 to 800 aid trucks per day, successfully preventing famine at the time. "The current mass starvation can be stopped. It takes political will," he emphasised.

Since March 2, Israel has kept

all border crossings shut, cutting off the entry of food, medicine, fuel, and other essential supplies for Gaza's 2.4mn residents.

Meanwhile, Israeli officials have confirmed that Tel Aviv prevented a scheduled visit by a delegation of Arab foreign ministers to Ramallah, where they intended to discuss support for the establishment of a Palestinian state, according to the daily Yedioth Ahronoth.

"The planned meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Ramallah to promote the creation of a Palestinian state is unacceptable," the daily quoted an unnamed Israeli official as saying.

Anadolu Agency

How does Switzerland predict landslides?

Geneva, Switzerland - The destructive landslide in the Swiss village of Blatten is the latest natural disaster to hit valley communities in the Alpine nation.

While Blatten was engulfed by a slick of icy sediment this week, early warnings of a potential landslide gave residents time to evacuate. Only one person - who chose to remain in his home - is currently unaccounted for. The search for him has been suspended. Switzerland is an early warning success story.

Government agencies there use a broad range of technologies and methods to assess risks that could threaten lives and property. This includes terrain mapping and continuous monitoring of rainfall, permafrost melt, groundwater levels, tectonic shifts and ground movement.

This data allows authorities to maintain hazard risk maps across the country.

"Every community in Switzerland that's affected by a hazard has a hazard map. They're federally mandated for the areas where people live," said Brian McArdell, a geomorphologist at the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL).

In Blatten's case, officials issued alerts after a nearby rockfall destabilised the Birch Glacier.

Combined with warming summer temperatures, the glacier fractured. A slurry of ice, sediment and mud then roared down the mountain to the village below.

"When you slam rock over ice, what you do is liquefy part of the ice," Daniel Farinotti, a glaciologist at ETH Zurich, told DW. "The ice melts, and that lubricates whatever you have."

The Blatten landslide was par-



A small Swiss village is seen flooded and covered by sediment following a landslide

Switzerland is a success story in predicting landslides - but more must be done to help the rest of the world prepare for these deadly, unpredictable disasters

ticularly rare.

"The sheer size, the amount of material that has been moved there, that's not something you see every day, not every year, not every decade in Switzerland," said Farinotti. "It's kind of a historic event."

Mountainous regions most at risk
Steep slopes, unstable terrain

and exposure to high rainfall or permafrost melt put mountain regions more at risk of landslides and avalanches.

For valley communities in Switzerland, the potential for a landslide can mean entire towns need to be evacuated.

Following the Blatten landslide, several nearby communities remain on alert, including for potential flooding.

Brienzen, a village around 25 miles (41km) north of Blatten, is also preparing for possible evacuation. The town has faced repeated warnings and 'near miss' rockslide events since 2023.

"In general, debris flow is a mixture of coarse and fine sediment - so everything from boulders, to mud, to very fine sediments and water," said McArdell.

"These events can occur quite suddenly and they're quite, quite dangerous."

Regions with the highest landslide-related fatalities globally include the Himalayas, parts of Central and South

America, Italy and Iran.

Predicting landslides remains a challenge

While landslides can be forecast, predictions tend to be 'probabilistic' rather than precise, Fausto Guzzetti, a now-retired geomorphologist formerly with Italy's Institute for Applied Mathematics and Information Technologies (IMATI), told DW.

"We can predict in (a) general area, it could be in a municipality, it can be a catchment," Guzzetti said.

Unlike earthquakes and floods, monitoring landslides is far more difficult.

While earth tremors can be registered using seismic instruments, and floods can be quickly detected visually, most landslides are unnoticed.

"Tens of thousands of landslides simply go unreported," Guzzetti added. "We don't know where they are, and this complicates the ability to forecast them."

Even small slides - just a few metres in length - can be deadly, especially if they carry large debris or occur near homes or roads. "A cobble that hits a car or hits a person walking along a road can kill," said Guzzetti, "That's significant."

Climate change is also ex-

pected to increase rainfall in mountain regions, which in turn is predicted to cause more frequent small-scale landslides.

Global call for action

Efforts are being made to strengthen international monitoring and preparedness for landslides and glacial melt.

The International Conference on Glaciers' Preservation is currently being held in Tajikistan, where Farinotti expects the release of a 'Glacier Declaration' urging greater action to protect ice masses from the effects of climate change.

"(It will) call for various actions and, among others, it will call for increased preparedness against risk deriving from cryospheric hazards, so avalanches," he said.

Guzzetti also highlighted the UN's Early Warnings for All initiative, which aims to establish a global early warning system by 2027. If achieved, this could be a major step toward saving lives from natural hazards.

While wealthy nations like Switzerland have reliable infrastructure to warn communities of potential disasters, many others are still playing catch-up. According to UN figures, only 108 countries had the capacity for 'multi-hazard early warning systems' last year though that is more than double the number from 2015.

The benefits are clear, said Guzzetti, pointing to the Blatten evacuation: "It seems that they were very good at evacuating the town in time, so that fatalities were nil, or very small."

"I think it points to the fact that we are moving in the right direction."

DW



A disaster response worker rescues residents from a flooded area after heavy rainfall in Guwahati, Assam

India: Landslides kill 5 in Assam amid rains, floods

New Delhi, India - At least five people were killed in India's northeastern state of Assam as torrential monsoon rains triggered landslides and floods, disaster management officials said on Saturday.

A red alert warning has been issued for 12 districts across the state with incessant rains over the last few days leading to urban flooding.

Situation not good, says chief minister
The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) released a report saying that urban flooding in three districts has affected a total of 10,150 people.

The five deaths occurred in a landslide in the Kamrup Metro district, which was caused by the monsoon rain.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told the media on Friday that the situation in the state is not good.

He said that rescue teams have been deployed.

"We have been reviewing the

impending situation for the last three days," Sarma said in a statement, adding that supplies of rice had been dispatched as food aid.

Safety advisory issued
Schools and colleges in some of the affected areas have been shut.

The ASDMA has also issued advisories asking residents to remain indoors.

The annual monsoon season in India begins in June and lasts till September.

It offers respite from scorching summers, however, it also causes damage to life and property. Scores of deaths have been reported in the past during the rainy season, across the world's most populous country.

Red alert in Sikkim
Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a red alert on Saturday following heavy rains and rising water levels in the Teesta River and warned of possible floods and landslides in Mangan, Gyalshing,

and Soreng districts in Sikkim.

The District Magistrate of Gangtok issued an urgent public notice, stating: "The general public is requested not to panic but to stay alert. The concerned authorities will continue to provide timely updates as the situation evolves."

The administration highlighted that the red alert for Mangan District could impact the Teesta River belt from Dikchu to Singtam, located within Gangtok district, especially in case of a flood-like situation in North Sikkim.

"All Nodal Officers for Disaster Management from the line department under Gangtok District were asked to remain on high alert and keep in touch with your field functionaries stationed at this Teesta river belt," the DM's message said.

Meanwhile, in North Sikkim, landslides were reported in the Theeng and Chungthang areas, causing damage to multiple properties, according to the district administration.

Agencies

US to cut funding for HIV vaccine research

Washington, D.C., US - The Donald Trump administration is ending funding for several key HIV vaccine research programmes, according to CBS News.

Researchers were informed that the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has decided to focus on existing HIV prevention methods rather than continuing to invest in vaccine development, the broadcaster reported on Friday.

The move affects prominent research centres, including the Duke Human Vaccine Institute and the Scripps Research Institute, both of which received National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding since 2012.

A spokesperson for Moderna confirmed that clinical trials sup-



ported by the NIH's HIV Vaccine Trials Network have also been paused.

According to a senior NIH official, the agency was directed by HHS not to approve new funding for HIV vaccine research in the upcoming fiscal year, except for

a few limited cases. Additionally, a new budget accounting rule targeting HIV vaccine grants will make it harder for these projects to secure funding by counting the full cost of multi-year grants within a single fiscal year.

HHS spokesperson Emily

Hilliard defended the cuts, citing the complexity and overlap of HIV/AIDS programmes. She said the agency aims to maximise the impact of federal spending and ensure oversight, noting that 27 separate HIV/AIDS programmes have spent US\$7.5bn.

Hilliard added that 'critical HIV/AIDS programmes will continue' under a new agency proposed by HHS Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr, called the Administration for a Healthy America.

However, Dennis Burton, an immunology professor at Scripps Research, called the timing 'terrible', noting promising progress in ongoing clinical trials. "This is a setback of probably a decade for HIV vaccine research."

Anadolu Agency

German-Greek ties face crisis over refugees

Berlin, Germany - When the Greek prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, visited Germany in mid-May, it was a welcome break from the difficult time he has been having at home.

The Economic Council of the conservative Christian Democrats (CDU), the party of Chancellor Friedrich Merz, awarded him the Ludwig Erhard Foundation Gold Medal, which gave the conservative politician the opportunity to highlight his successes in growing the Greek economy by 2.3% in 2024 and reducing unemployment by 9.5% in the same year.

However, Mitsotakis' meeting with Merz also had its downside, especially with regard to refugees and migration. In theory, the two conservative governments are in agreement: both



are determined to stop irregular immigration to Europe.

Both have appointed known hard-liners as ministers responsible for migration: the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU) politician Alexander Dobrindt in Berlin, and Makis Voridis, a politician with a far-right background, in Athens. And both have decided that

from now on there will be strict controls on who can and cannot come to Europe.

Geographical distinctions
In practice, however, the two countries have very different interests. Greece lies on the EU's external border. It is a first reception country for refugees and mi-

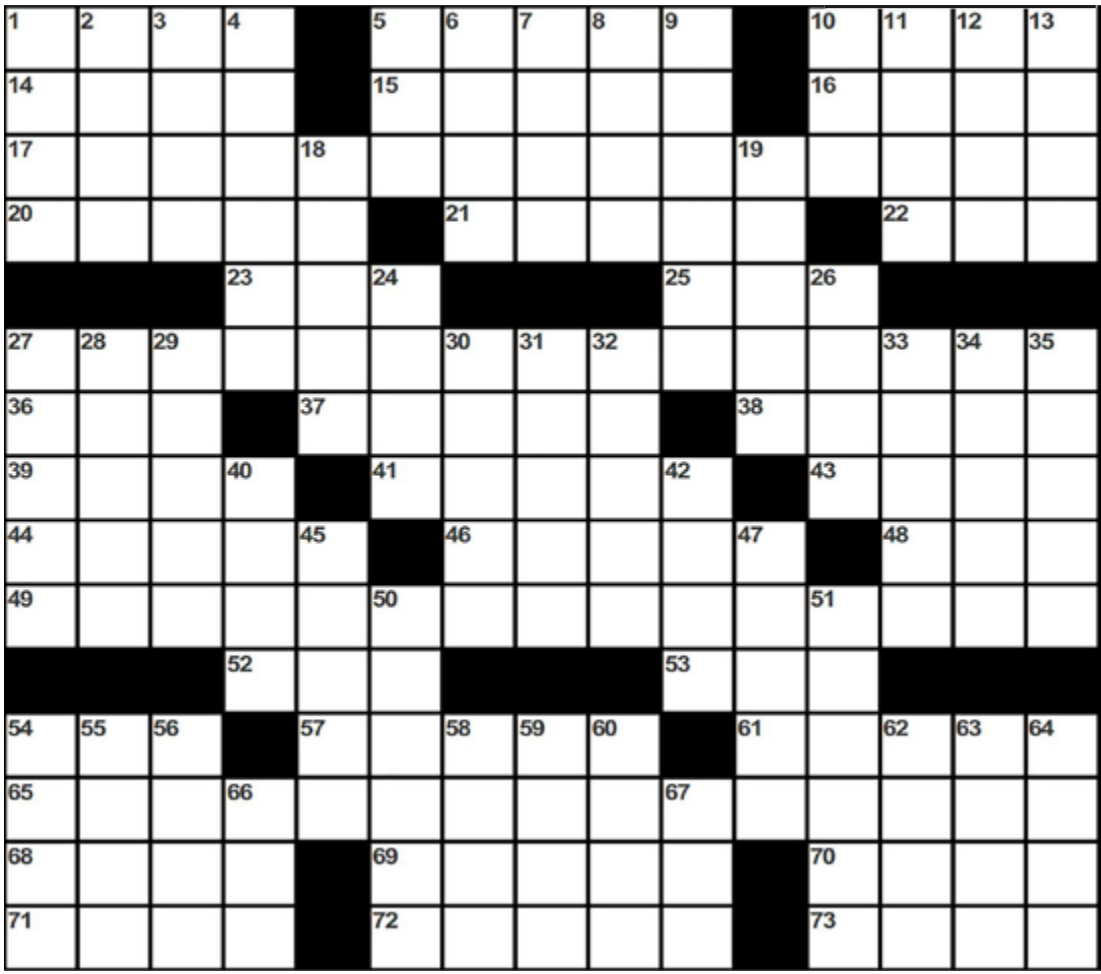
grants dreaming of a better life in the richer countries of northern and western Europe.

Consequently, asylum seekers already registered or recognised in Greece have for years been traveling on from there to Germany, France, or Scandinavia. So far, very few of these migrants have been sent back to Greece. However, the Merz government intends to facilitate their deportation.

There is now a legal basis for this, after the Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig ruled in mid-April that migrants did not face any extreme hardships in Greece. The presiding judge, Robert Keller, said the yardstick for assessment was whether the migrants had access to 'bread, bed and soap'.

DW

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1) Lightbulb unit
5) Oscar or Tony
10) Pull a fast one?
14) Audio effect
15) Hoglike animal
16) Lotion ingredient
17) Pound-foolish quip (Part 1)
20) Philbin of TV
21) City in Alabama
22) Food scrap
23) Rapa_ (Easter Island)
25) Magazine revenue source
27) Pound-foolish quip (Part 2)
36) "Put another_ on the fire"
37) "... coffee?"
38) Fife player's percussion
39) Author Murdoch
41) "The Lion King" hero
43) Blue shade
44) Close, as friends
46) Come up with, as money
48) "Do the Right Thing" character
49) Pound-foolish quip (Part 3)
52) Take to court
53) Eisenhower's WWII command

54) Certain digit
57) King's land
61) Not in dreamland
65) Pound-foolish quip (Part 4)
68) Telecasts
69) Jagged, as a leaf's edge
70) General standard
71) Santa_ Calif.
72) Caught, as a doggie
73) Emulate a bull
DOWN
11) Small dam
2) Workout consequence, sometimes
3) Hired muscle
4) Gym activity (with "up")
5) Banking device, in brief
6)_ and Means Committee
7) Church alcove
8) Small stream
9) Theater fare
10) Talk and talk
11) "Let's not forget ..."
12) Film_ (movie genre)
13) Daily Planet reporter
18) Outer space outerwear
19) Citadel student
26) Boardwalk coolers
26) Ollie's comedy partner

27) "I was elsewhere" excuse
28) An Einstein he's not
29) Fee for grazing cattle
30) "The Purple Rose of_" (1985 film)
31) Willy, in "Death of a Salesman"
32) Celestial circuit
33) Bring shame to
34) Blazing stars
35) In a bland way
40) Scatters, as seed
42) Legendary Arthur of the courts
45) Opposite of celebrate
4 7) "Como_?"
50) Less assertive
51) Service-station service
54) Russian head, once
55) "Birthplace of Aviation Pioneers"
56) Makes a mistake
58) Hairstyle many picked?
59) Chicago's downtown
60) Erato or Clio
62) "We Bought_" (2011 movie)
63) Deborah of "From Here to Eternity"
64) Salinger story subject
66) "Home of the brave"
67) Checkers selection

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You've got to free your mind for the rest to follow. You've been putting up too many rules to govern your life, but now you might find them more burdensome than helpful. If so, you need to examine what's so important that caused you to build these real and imaginary fences. You need to spread your wings, but first you need to unlock your cage.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Try making it up as you go along! Getting everyone to follow a strict plan just closes off options rather than helping you get to the point. Shouldn't you enjoy the journey on your way to the destination? Loosen your grip and go with a more laid-back approach, especially when it comes to big plans. Serendipity can devise far more creative solutions than even you can!



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Your earning potential and your love life are both powered up, and it's almost too much activity for you to handle! You're actually loving the frenetic pace and the endless opportunities for exploration right now. Just make sure not to bite off more than you can chew, and (most importantly) don't do anything just because it seems like the thing to do. Pay attention to your instincts.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
You've got to drop the nice guy act. There's a big difference between being nice and being kind. Nice people usually just try to get everyone to like them. Kindness, on the other hand, is doing or saying what is genuinely in the best interests of all parties involved even though it may not be the easiest route. You're nice when you want to appease people, but when you're kind you're true to yourself.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You might need a big crew to pull off this next scheme of yours. Think big, but make sure you've got all the resources it takes to get this enterprise off the ground. It'd be awful to make these big plans only to have them fall flat due to lack of planning! You may actually be better off taking inventory and then making your plans from there.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Your financial worries should subside for a time when you get wind of a surprising new development. It's a relief, of course, but there might be a few extra complications, so err on the side of caution and make contingency plans just in case. Don't act on that backup plan unless you must, or you undermine the good fortune that just landed in your lap. Just make sure it's safely tucked away in case you need it.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Some close friends are tussling and making your emotions their arena! Walk away and refuse to let them target you with their schemes, or just remind them that this doesn't concern you. They need to settle this among themselves, and they also need to learn not to involve you in their drama. Don't let yourself be a captive audience. Keep your eyes open and your chin up, and it will all be over soon enough.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You're quite sensitive and attuned to the needs of others. Those are awesome traits, of course, but make sure that others aren't taking advantage of your good-natured ways. Are you feeling like someone relies a little too heavily on you? Listen carefully to that feeling. Those alarm bells are going off for a reason, you know. It might be time to speak up and set this person straight.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Your assertive instincts are telling you to make your move, but your equally powerful insecurity has you doubting what you hear. Heed what your heart and gut are telling you, especially if a sluggish relationship or work project looks like it's heading south. Once it gets an infusion of your special know-how, all should be well. Commit fully and it may show new signs of life that wipe out any doubt.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
A seemingly innocuous encounter or unimportant feeling could end up tying you in knots when it triggers an emotional issue, one with deep roots! Turn to someone close for assistance, whether it's a friend, family member, or trained professional. You have to speak your mind to the person at fault, but it's a good idea to check first with someone who can help you organize your thoughts.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Someone needs your help, but they're far too proud and delicate to come out and ask for it directly. You need to be a Good Samaritan and do some behind-the-scenes work. Don't let them know what you did any time soon. There may be a few people out there who would try to take advantage of the situation. Act discreetly and swiftly and things should go well for both of you.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
If you start to feel irritable, just take a deep breath (or two or ten) and tell yourself it's all temporary. When you acknowledge that you're in a crabby mood, you shouldn't find yourself lashing out at others who count on you. Things should soon take a turn for the better and you ought to find yourself on the sunny side of the street, and not a moment too soon!



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01 "Million Dollar Quartet" is a stage musical by Floyd Mutrux & Colin Escott that opened on Broadway on 11 April 2010. Who are "the quartet"?
A. Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis & Carl Perkins
B. The Beatles
C. George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin & Jerome Kern
D. Muhammed Ali, Sonny Liston, George Foreman & Joe Frazier

02. Which of these states of the USA has the largest area of land?
A. Rhode Island
B. Maine
C. Texas
D. Hawaii

03. On July 13 2005 remote controlled robotic jockeys were raced for the first time on the backs of what?
A. Cockerels
B. Horses
C. Greyhounds
D. Camels

Answers: 1.C 2.C 3.A

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

R	I	I	P
O	K	O	Y
I	N	L	L
B	A	S	L

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

BRAVE FIGHT, CRUEL LUCK

Oman’s Al Rawahi finishes second behind Al Attiyah in Jordan Rally after punctures derail his title challenge; Al Zubair wins MERC2

Dead Sea, Jordan - Qatar’s Nasser Saleh al Attiyah won all but one of the 12 gravel special stages on his way to a comfortable 17th victory in the Jordan Rally on Saturday.

Abdullah al Rawahi and his Jordanian co-driver Ata al Hmoud maintained the pressure on the Qatari throughout day one but a time-consuming puncture delayed the Omani on Saturday’s opening Panorama stage and a second issue on stage 10 proved too much for the 2023 regional champion. He finished second overall.

Al Rawahi said: “It was a long two days for us. The first day was quite good, especially with the pace and we were very close to Nasser. Unfortunately, today we had some punctures and we lost some time. Overall, we are very happy with our performance. It has been the closest we have been to him in the battle.

“We don’t really have enough seat time in the car. After this rally I have three months off not really driving my car. My car is also an older generation and there is experience difference between me and Nasser. That is why it is good that he is in the championship. He helps us to push and get closer to him. It is still good. We wanted to win but we are still happy.”

Al Rawahi also earned victory

in the second round of the Jordan National Championship with Shaker Jweihan claiming second place ahead of Sheikh Bader al Fayeze.

Oman had plenty more to celebrate as Abdullah al Zubair led the MERC2 field at Jordan Rally from start-to-finish with co-driver Taha al Tadjali to strengthen his push for the overall title.

Fellow countryman Zakariya al Aamri had arrived in Jordan with a 15-point lead over Al Zubair but his rival’s success and fifth place overall has thrown the battle wide open with two rallies remaining. Al Aamri finished



Oman’s Abdullah al Rawahi (L) finished second best after a thrilling battle with Nasser al Attiyah for Jordan Rally supremacy; Oman’s Abdullah al Zubair (top) won the MERC2 ahead of compatriot Zakariya al Aamri

second in the category and eighth overall.

Al Zubair said: “We are happy with this result, it is a very difficult race. It is also very hot. It was our first time here. The first day we were flat out and won every stage. Today, we took it slow. We had a good lead and the strategy paid off.”

For Al Attiyah, the Jordan win took him to a record 90th career MERC rally win, as he closes in on an unprecedented 20th regional title since 2003. The new partnership with his Spanish co-driver Candido Carrera has a 100% winning record with the duo now taking victories at the opening four rounds of this year’s FIA Middle East Rally Championship in Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and now Jordan.

“I am so happy to win again here in Jordan for the 17th time. This means a lot to me,” said al Attiyah.

“This year we have won every



Al Ittihad players celebrate with the trophy

Benzema stars as Al Ittihad win Saudi Cup to complete double

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - Al Ittihad’s Karim Benzema scored twice to lead his side to a 3-1 victory over Al Qadsiah in the Saudi Cup final on Friday as they completed the domestic double.

Laurent Blanc’s side dominated the game to win the cup for the 10th time, while Al Qadsiah finished the game with 10 men after Ezequiel Fernandez was sent off in the 81st minute.

Al Qadsiah’s former Spain defender Nacho escaped conced-

Benzema opened the scoring for the Saudi Pro League champions, using his chest to convert Bergwijn’s precise cross in the first half

Aubameyang reduced the deficit from the penalty spot in first-half stoppage time.

Benzema, who won the SPL Player of the Season, hit the bar after the break, but Al Ittihad were more cautious as they looked to maintain their lead.

Al Ittihad keeper Predrag Rajkovic saved Aubameyang’s shot in the 80th minute and Al Qadsiah suffered a big blow when Ezequiel Fernandez received a second yellow card, forcing them to play with 10 men for the final minutes.

Ajax appoint former player Heitinga as new coach

Amsterdam, Netherlands - Ajax Amsterdam have named John Heitinga as their new coach, with the former Netherlands defender signing a two-year deal, the Eredivisie club confirmed on Saturday.

Heitinga, who grew up in the club’s youth ranks and was part of Ajax’s senior squad for seven and a half seasons, was one of Arne Slot’s assistants at Liverpool in their Premier League-winning season.

Former club manager Marcel Keizer will serve as Heitinga’s assistant and has signed a contract of the same duration, Ajax added.

“John knows the club well,” Technical Director Alex Kroes told the club website. “We are convinced that he, together with Marcel, will help improve our players and build on the progress made since last summer in terms of, for example, elite sporting culture and discipline.”

Heitinga replaces Italian Francesco Farioli, who resigned earlier this month after a year in charge.

Record 36-time champions



John Heitinga

Ajax finished the season second after blowing a nine-point lead as they were pipped to the league title by PSV Eindhoven on the final day. Ajax last won the league in 2021-22.

“It’s good that it’s decided early on in the summer break that they will be in charge from the end of June. (We) can now continue working with John and the other parties involved on the squad composition for the coming season,” Kroes added.

Former Atletico Madrid and Everton defender Heitinga coached youth and reserve teams at Ajax after he retired from playing, following his return to Ajax, in 2016.

Real most valuable football team for fourth straight year: Forbes

Madrid, Spain - LaLiga side Real Madrid topped the list of the most valuable football teams in the world for the fourth year in a row with a valuation of \$6.6 billion, business magazine Forbes has said.

Real became the first football club to bring in a billion dollars in a single year after they posted a record \$1.13 billion in revenue for the 2023-24 season, the magazine added in a report published on Friday.

The Spanish club, the second sports team in history to hit the 10-figure threshold after National Football League side Dallas Cowboys, are the first soccer team to register one billion euros in revenue in a single season, Deloitte had said earlier this year.

Liverpool sign Frimpong from Leverkusen

Liverpool, England - Premier League champions Liverpool have signed defender Jeremie Frimpong from Bayer Leverkusen on a long-term contract, both clubs announced on Friday.

Financial details were not disclosed by either club, but British media reported that Liverpool triggered a 35 million euros (\$39.73 million) release clause for the Dutch international, whose deal with Leverkusen was valid until 2028.

The transfer was announced hours after Trent Alexander-Arnold joined Real Madrid on a six-year deal, with Frimpong set to replace the England defender as he becomes manager Arne Slot’s first signing after they won the Premier League title.

“It went quite easy,” the 24-year-old told the club website. “Liverpool came and said they had interest, and obviously for me it was a no-brainer.

“For me, it was like, ‘Whatever you guys do, just get this done.’”

Frimpong, who will officially join on June 1, signed a five-year contract, media reports said.

The right back, who can also



Jeremie Frimpong

play as a winger, played a key role in the Leverkusen side that won the German domestic double in 2023-24, chipping in with 14 goals and 12 assists across all

competitions.

Frimpong also recorded 12 assists this season, adding five goals, from 48 appearances in all competitions for the Bundesliga

Liverpool fans, I’m going to give my all, my energy, my work-rate and hopefully we can win together, we celebrate together

JEREMIE FRIMPONG

runners-up.

A product of Manchester City’s academy, Frimpong joined Leverkusen in 2021 from Scottish side Celtic. He has represented the Netherlands on 12 occasions, scoring one goal, since making his debut with the senior squad in October 2023 in a Euro 2024 qualifier against France.

“Liverpool fans, I’m going to give my all, my energy, my work-rate and hopefully we can win together, we celebrate together, get everything together,” Frimpong added. “I’m just excited to be here. Thank you guys for accepting me and I won’t let you guys down and I’ll give you the energy that you guys want.”

RUTHLESS IN PARIS

World No. 1 Sinner destroys Lehecka to reach French Open fourth round

Paris, France - World number one Jannik Sinner delivered a flawless performance to pulverise Czech Jiri Lehecka 6-0 6-1 6-2 in little more than 90 minutes on Saturday, to burst into the French Open fourth round and issue an ominous warning to other title contenders.

The 23-year-old Italian, who returned to tennis in May after a three-month-doping ban, won the first 11 games in a row, and has so far found no resistance en route to the last 16.

He has yet to drop a set in his second tournament back, after reaching the final in Rome earlier in the month.

"Today I was playing really, really well," Sinner said. "He was serving very well and brave. But I am very happy. My coach had (his) birthday yesterday and usually when he has birthday I don't play good. Luckily I was not playing yesterday.

"This morning I said to my team I feel well," he added. "I warmed up feeling really well, trying to go on court with a good focus. My team gave me the right tactics. It is a combination also being happy on court."

Sinner exploded into action, racing through the first set with a bagel in 25 minutes.

The Czech was left stunned, wondering how to counter such power and precision, but before he came up with

any answer he was already trailing 3-0 in the second set.

Pinned to the back, Lehecka could only watch how Sinner's shots flew past him, including a sensational baseline forehand winner that earned the Italian a 4-0 advantage.

The 23-year-old world number 34 earned a big cheer when he finally got onto the scoreboard at 5-1 but his ordeal was far from over.

Sinner served out the second set before proceeding to break shell-shocked Lehecka at the very start of the third. Running his panting opponent ragged, Sinner earned another break and put him out of his misery with his first match point.

The top seed has now stretched his winning streak at Grand Slam events to 17 matches, after winning the titles at the 2024 U.S. Open and the Australian Open in January prior to his doping ban. He will next face 17th-seed Andrey Rublev, who advanced after his opponent Arthur Fils of France withdrew with a back injury.

Meanwhile, Jessica Pegula took a longer route with a battling victory over 2019 runner-up Marketa Vondrousova. Vondrousova won the opening set of her match on Court Philippe Chatrier but American Pegula proved too good when it mattered to close out a 3-6 6-4 6-2 win.



World number one Jannik Sinner was in imperious touch against Jiri Lehecka on Saturday

Carlos Alcaraz overcomes Dzumhur test to reach last 16

Paris, France - Defending champion v Alcaraz suffered a mid-match stumble but recovered just in time to beat Bosnian veteran Damir Dzumhur in four sets on Friday and move into the French Open fourth round.

The world number two was supreme in the opening two sets but then inexplicably took his

foot off the gas before bouncing back from 3-1 down in the fourth set to subdue his 33-year-old opponent for a 6-1 6-3 4-6 6-4 victory.

"Today I didn't enjoy it that much. I suffered quite a lot today but happy to have played a good match with him," the Spaniard said.

"Doing a good Grand Slam is difficult, you have to play good tennis for three, four hours and maintain the focus. The first two sets were under control, playing great, feeling great."

"He then played more aggressively. I got down on my energy and it was difficult to push myself. I had to fight but in the end I am proud to get the win," Alcaraz said.

The Parisian crowd that had filled the Philippe Chatrier stadium in the hope of a lengthy and entertaining night session initially thought they had got the abridged version, with Alcaraz near flawless in the opening two sets.

The 22-year-old four-time Grand Slam champion pumelled the Bosnian into submission, breaking him twice to race through the first set in 27 minutes.

Dzumhur, looking to become the first Bosnian to reach the fourth round of a Grand Slam, had a break point at the start of the second set but was again quickly overrun as Alcaraz opened up a 3-1 lead.

Carlos Alcaraz celebrates a point against Damir Dzumhur on Friday

Andreeva thanks 'lucky charm' as she storms into Roland Garros

Paris, France - Mirra Andreeva had her lucky charm on her bench for her third-round clash against Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva, but left her opponent no chance in a 6-3 6-1 victory on Saturday.

The sixth seed, who won the Indian Wells and Dubai top-tier tournaments this year, set up a meeting with Australia's Daria Kasatkina.

"I knew Yulia is a very tricky player, she has an interesting game and it's uncomfortable for me. She likes to cut the rhythm a lot, I knew it would be tough," the 18-year-old said on Court Suzanne Lenglen as umbrellas popped open in the stands on a grey Parisian morning.

"I kind of knew what to expect I knew I had to play at 100% and fight for every ball and get those drop shots. I'm happy with the way I play today."

Andreeva, who reached the semi-finals here last year, also attributed her win to a present she received.

"When I was walking on court a little girl put a drawing on my bench, I kept it. It's my lucky charm," she said. "Wherever that little girl is, I want to thank her because it is my lucky charm."

Despite an inconsistent serve



Mirra Andreeva

When I was walking on court a little girl put a drawing on my bench, I kept it. It's my lucky charm. I want to thank that little girl

MIRRA ANDREEVA



with four double faults, Andreeva bagged the opening set with a blistering forehand winner for her third break of serve.

Putintseva tried to mix it up with drop shots but Andreeva's baseline power proved too much to handle and the Russian broke for 2-1 after a brief rain interruption.

It was game over effectively as she went on to win the remaining four games.

Swiatek shines light on inequality in French Open night sessions

Paris, France - Amid criticism of the French Open's scheduling decisions, Iga Swiatek pointed to the Mexican waves rippling around Court Suzanne Lenglen during her compelling match against Jaqueline Cristian as evidence of women's tennis's entertainment value.

The claycourt major features only one match daily during the primetime evening session that begins after 8.15 p.m. local time (1815 GMT), but has so far not featured a women's match in that slot in the opening six days of action.

The last time a women's singles match was played under the lights of Court Philippe Chatrier was the fourth-round meeting between Aryna Sabalenka and Sloane Stephens on June 4, 2023.

Defending women's champion Swiatek, who overcame Cristian of Romania 6-2 7-5, said she usually adjusts to the schedule she is given but added that it should be "equal".

"Women's matches can be entertainment the same way (as men's matches). As you could see today on my match, they (fans) were doing the Mexican waves and everything. So people



Iga Swiatek

like it," Swiatek said. "We can put on a nice show. That's why I think it should be equal. That's it."

Women's governing body WTA said that it encourages all combined tournaments to provide a balanced match schedule that showcases the best of both women's and men's tennis in premium scheduling slots.

Three-time Grand Slam runner-up Ons Jabeur reignited a debate that has raged since night

sessions were introduced at Roland Garros four years ago, saying this week that women's matches were being sidelined.

The Tunisian added in a post on X on Friday that "honouring one side of the sport shouldn't mean ignoring the other".

Night sessions are exclusively broadcast by Amazon's Prime service in France.

French Open tournament director Amelie Mauresmo said

that women's matches, played over a maximum of three sets as opposed to the five on the men's side, could finish "really fast" and having an extra match in that slot was unfeasible.

"If we have two matches in the night session it doesn't work in terms of how late players are going to finish," said Mauresmo in a press conference on Friday, explaining that earlier starts would not work as well.

Piastri fastest as McLaren dominate Spanish GP practice

Barcelona, Spain - Formula One leader Oscar Piastri was fastest in final Spanish Grand Prix practice on Saturday with McLaren teammate Lando Norris making it a dominant one-two at the top of the timesheets.

Piastri's fastest time of one minute and 12.387 seconds completed a sweep of practice for the reigning champions and

was a strong statement of intent for later qualifying.

The Australian was also fastest in Friday's second session while Norris, winner in Monaco last Sunday, set the pace in the first.

Norris, three points off the lead after eight of 24 races, was 0.526 slower than the Australian as McLaren shrugged off

tighter front wing flex tests introduced at the Circuit de Catalunya. The Briton made a mistake on one quick lap that would otherwise have put him much closer to Piastri.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc was third fastest, ahead of Mercedes' George Russell and Red Bull's reigning champion Max Verstappen.

Rookies Isack Hadjar and Kimi Antonelli were sixth and seventh for Racing Bulls and Mercedes respectively with local hero and double world champion Fernando Alonso eighth for Aston Martin but 1.027 slower than Piastri.

Ferrari's seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton, winner a record-equalling six times

in Spain but complaining on Friday that the car was 'not driveable', was ninth after another difficult session. "Downshifts are not working properly, mate. Something's wrong with the gear shift," the Briton complained over the team radio.

Liam Lawson completed the top 10 for Racing Bulls ahead of qualifying for Sunday's race.



Oscar Piastri

DIE ANOTHER DAY

Mumbai oust Gujarat in playoff to set up Qualifier 2 with Punjab

Mohali, India - Strip away everything else, and you can more often than not reduce T20 contests to a simple count-off: who hit more sixes? Mumbai Indians (MI) hit 17 in the IPL 2025 Eliminator, and Gujarat Titans (GT) hit eight.

Rohit Sharma top-scored for MI with 81 off 50 balls; B Sai Sudharsan top-scored for GT with 80 off 49. The difference lay in MI's hitting depth. Five of their batters cleared the boundary at least three times each.

This hitting depth took MI to the second-highest total in any IPL playoff game, and ensured that GT's target always remained just out of reach, even though their chase, advantaged by dew, was alive almost until the end.

And there was one other difference between MI and GT, a difference MI can call on against every other team in the tournament: Jasprit Bumrah. His raw figures were impressive enough - 1 for 27 in four overs - and he also produced the moment of the match, a pinpoint leg-stump yorker to bowl Washington Sundar between his legs, and end an 84-run fourth-wicket stand with Sai Sudharsan.

Bumrah followed up with an 18th over that went for just nine runs - despite containing a six - and that left GT with 36 to get off the last 12 balls. It became 24 off six after Trent Boult's 19th over, and while it was possible - especially with Rahul Tewatia and M Shahrukh Khan at the crease - it's an equation that usually favours the bowling team.



Rohit Sharma (L) of Mumbai Indians celebrates a shot with his opening partner Jonny Bairstow

MI's total was built on the back of a blazing start from their new opening pair. Jonny Bairstow, replacing Ryan Rickelton who has left for international duty, smashed a 22-ball 47 on his debut for his third IPL team. Rohit, meanwhile, made his fourth fifty and highest score of the season. MI chose to bat a day after Punjab Kings (PBKS), sent in, had been bowled out for 101 at the same venue the day before. This was a different pitch, however, with even bounce and none

of the seam movement of Qualifier 1. Even so, GT could have had MI in trouble early, only for Gerald Coetzee and Kusal Mendis - the latter making his IPL debut - to put Rohit down on 3 and 12. Within minutes, GT were firmly on the back foot, with Bairstow tonking Prasidh Krishna for 26 runs - though two of his boundaries came off the edge - in the fourth over. Bairstow fell in the eighth over, but MI kept punching. Rohit's use

of the sweep against GT's spinners was particularly noteworthy, bringing him 27 runs - the most he's scored with variants of the sweep against spin in any IPL innings for which shot data is available - off just six balls. He slowed down after reaching his half-century, only scoring 31 off his last 22 balls. Here was another parallel with Sai Sudharsan's innings: he scored 28 off his last 21. And just like Sai Sudharsan and Washington, Rohit and Bairstow put on 84

Bairstow smashed a 22-ball 47 on his Mumbai debut while Rohit made his fourth fifty and highest score of the season

off 44 balls. The most ominous thing about MI's innings was the steadily rising frequency of their six-hitting. Even though Bairstow and Suryakumar Yadav - who made his 15th successive 25-plus score in T20s - were out by then, they cleared the rope nine times in the last six overs.

Punjab brace for Bumrah storm in Qualifier 2

Mohali, India - After 72 matches and two gruelling months of play-travel-play, with a break in between, only three teams are left standing in IPL 2025: Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), Punjab Kings (PBKS) and Mumbai Indians (MI). While RCB have already qualified for the final, MI will meet PBKS in another crunch game on Sunday to identify the other finalist.



Jasprit Bumrah

Five-time champions vs a team that is in quest for its first title. Hardik Pandya vs Shreyas Iyer. Jasprit Bumrah vs Arshdeep Singh. Suryakumar Yadav vs Josh Inglis. Trent Boult vs Kyle Jamieson. It promises to be a mouth-watering knockout.

Both teams have had contrasting paths to Qualifier 2. Around mid-April, MI were second from bottom, with just a solitary win in five games. But they went on to do MI things to storm into the playoffs and knock out Gujarat Titans (GT) on Friday. As for PBKS, they were the form team in the league phase, topping the points table before they suffered a rude jolt in Qualifier 1 against RCB in New Chandigarh.

The reward for finishing in the top two is another crack at the final. PBKS had earned that reward after beating MI in Jaipur earlier this week. Another win against MI on Sunday will guarantee a first-time IPL champion.

It's quite unusual for an IPL team to have four uncapped Indian batters in their top seven, but Ricky Ponting and Iyer have unlocked their potential, trans-

forming PBKS into an explosive batting line-up that has posted 200 in seven of their 15 innings. While their style of play fell flat on a New Chandigarh surface that offered substantial seam movement and variable bounce, it could work on the truer pitches in Ahmedabad.

In contrast, MI's batting revolves around battle-hardened internationals, with just one uncapped player in their top seven. After Ryan Rickelton's departure, Jonny Bairstow seamlessly slot- ted into the opening slot on his franchise debut, his salvo setting the base for a 200-plus total on Friday. Suryakumar Yadav and Pandya have been reeling off the big hits in the middle order, but it is Bumrah who continues to be their potent point of difference, turning 20-over innings into 16.

In the Eliminator, MI were without Deepak Chahar and were even hindered by dew, but nothing could stop Bumrah from yorking Washington Sundar. Can PBKS find a way to stop him on Sunday?

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Module 6: Containers, Baskets & Other Cargo Carrying Units
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BIRTHDAY WISHES

SUKHMEET SINGH

Happy Birthday, Paaji! Age is just a number.. in your case, a big one Wishing you a day full of laughter, fewer grey hairs and unlimited cake! Lots of love, Ishvita



CULTURAL CAULDRON

THE RISING STARS CONCERT 2025 OVER 90 PERFORMERS PARTICIPATED IN THE RISING STARS CONCERT 2025, INCLUDING YOUNG MUSICIANS, VOCALISTS AND DANCERS, AT AL BUSTAN PALACE HOTEL AUDITORIUM IN MUSCAT ON MAY 17



(From left) Thanae Pachiyannaki, Maya Sultan and Jane Jaffer

The Rising Stars Concert 2025, held at Al Bustan Palace hotel auditorium on May 17 was yet another example of the flood of young cultural talent that thrives in Oman, holding great promise for themselves as well as the sultanate in future years.

The concert featured more than 90 young performers under the age of 21 and was organised by the Dar Al Atta'a Let's Read Programme and the Play Tunes Institute of Music. H E G V Srinivas, the Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, was the guest of honour at the colourful event which showcased the abilities of children in varied genres of music and dance.

In view of the astounding success of the event last year as well as this year, Let's Read and Play Tunes have now decided to make this concert an annual event.

On the popularity of entries for the concert, Thanae Pachiyannaki, general manager of Play Tunes Institute of Music, said, "Once the request had gone out to schools and music institutes, the Play Tunes Institute received more than one hundred and ten video auditions online. Due to the enormous amount of talent, it was extremely difficult to choose which acts would participate in the concert. Live auditions were held and, ultimately, more than 90 children were involved in the show. This was the

second Rising Stars show and it just seems to be getting bigger and better every year."

Jane Jaffer, founder of the Dar Al Atta'a Let's Read Programme, said, "The Rising Stars Concert not only gives children an opportunity to showcase their great musical talents and perform in a professional environment, in front of a large audience, it also helps raise funds for the Maktabati Mobile Library Bus.

She further said, "The money raised from the concert will enable Let's Read to buy children's books, in English and Arabic, for the mobile library."

Jane went on to express gratitude to Play Tunes for putting on such a great show, to Al Bustan Palace hotel for hosting the concert, and to the generous sponsors of the event.

"As part of our Community

Footprints programme, Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, was honoured to host the Rising Stars Concert for the second time, supporting the Let's Read Program by Dar Al Atta'a," Talal Al Hashmi, director of Operations said.

"Rooted in The Ritz-Carlton's founding commitment to being supportive members of our communities. This event reflects our dedication to creating a brighter future for children - a core focus of our Education Pillar. By opening our doors to this inspiring initiative, we helped nurture young musical talent and encourage a love for reading. Through genuine care for our community, we strive to be a catalyst for positive change - making the places where we live, work, and visit better for future generations."

The show was presented by Maya Sultan, a TAISM student, who was the emcee. She said, "It was exciting to be the emcee for

the Rising Stars Concert. This is a great event that fundraises for a cause that is very close to my heart. I remember my 7th birthday, having the Maktabati Mobile Library Bus at my birthday party and asking all the children to donate books to Maktabati instead of buying me a gift. It was one of my favourite birthdays."

Dana al Balushi, aged 12 years, opened the show, with a fabulous vocal performance. She was accompanied by the Tunes Jazz Band. Dana said, "I'm so grateful to have the chance to perform in the Rising Stars Concert every year. It's honestly the most special and honourable part of my singing journey. I love being able to share my passion for music on stage, and it means so much to perform alongside so many other talented kids. Every time I step on that stage, I feel inspired to grow and do my best!"

Zain Hakim, an accomplished pianist, wrote, "The second I heard about the Rising Stars Concert, I knew directly that I wanted to be a part of it. So, I worked every day on my song. I just wanted to perform and shine on stage, to be a rising star for a few minutes. It was an amazing experience and for sure I will do it again next year."

One of the star performers, Mariam Ascona, sang an operatic piece from Carmen by the composer, Bizet. She said, "Despite starting my singing career as a classical singer at the age of seven, I didn't think I would be able to perform before a huge crowd, much less in a nerve-wracking setting surrounded by talented students, especially in a style requiring years of practice. Something about this event has taught me something I can never forget - everyone around the world possesses a unique magic in their culture, talent and themselves. Positivity is a strong force."

Safia Mawany, a parent of one of the singers in the Royal Flight School Choir, which performed at the show, said, "Congratulations for the roaring



Mariam Ascona

success of a concert! What talent and what a delight to be part of the audience. Thank you for a wonderful, inspiring evening and feeding the children with ambition and drive to be creative and showcase their talents!"

One of the singers in the Royal Flight School Choir, Sariya al Lawati, aged 10 years, said, "It was a great experience. I loved singing with the Royal Flight School Choir. Next year I hope

to sing a duet with my best friend. I am really excited!"

Thanae added, "Another successful year for the Rising Stars. It was an honour to see such young, talented children perform and for them to be given the opportunity to take music as a career. Their passion and hard work was showcased, and I am so glad that Tunes and the Dar Al Atta'a Let's Read Programme gave them the opportunity they deserve."

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AI IN ART

Not the real thing...

Artificial intelligence (AI) offers varied possibilities for artists to explore different styles, generate new ideas, and even create art collaboratively with machines. In general, the introduction of AI tools is seen to kill creativity on one hand, and enhance artists' work on the other

The emergence of AI-image generators, such as DALL-E 2, Discord, Midjourney, and others, has stirred a controversy over whether art generated by artificial intelligence should be considered real art — and whether it could put artists and creators out of work...

This can involve AI tools generating images, text, audio, or video based on user prompts or learned patterns. AI can also be used to enhance existing art, such as by applying different artistic styles or generating variations.

Mixed-media artist Matt Saunders, professor and director of undergraduate studies, Department of Art, Film and Visual Studies, Harvard University, asserts, "To the question of whether AI can be a threat or collaborator, I might respond that every new technology upends conventions and delivers not only new possibilities but a new kind of material intelligence.

"I am sure many artists will be intrigued by the 'agency' of AI and seek ways to grapple or collaborate with it. Many already are. And we should be grateful to be challenged

and knocked out of our habits and assumptions! Most of the things that worry me about this fall into the realm of the social and ethical. I hope there are great artists to help us imagine around and work with this new reality."

Architect and urban planner Moshe Safdie, design critic in architecture, Graduate School of Design, points out. "If you ask AI to make a garden with hideaways, clearings, and planting arrangements for all the seasons, I think it'll do that very well. But if you want to have a garden arranged in a way that is magical and pleases you, I'm not sure it can do that."

He further asserts (in The Harvard Gazette), "I'm not frightened of AI at all. I'm intrigued. I think AI will be able to create graphic presentations of extraordinary beauty and interest, but that leads us to the question of 'What is art?'. Art has an element that is spiritual, emotional. It is something that happens when you look at Picasso's 'Guernica' and makes you think of the cruelty of humans to humans, or when you look at a Monet piece, and you feel the unity with nature. In terms of art created by AI, I don't think we can call

it art. I don't see AI yet doing the kind of creative things we do. I can see that it composes a piece of music, but I don't think it could create Beethoven's last sonatas on its own. AI can imitate something that's already been created and regurgitate it in another format, but that is not an original work."

Another article which looks at 'AI in art' as 'the end of creativity' (bbc.com) states that plagiarism is a legitimate concern for many artists as their work is used to train algorithms but also can then be copied in the works that generative AI tools produce. "There are also artists who see AI as a new outlet for their own creativity - a fresh medium they can wield much like a brush or palette knife. Some artists, such as Sougwen Chung, are now exclusively training algorithms on their works alone in an attempt to push their own creative boundaries."

Limitations of AI in art

While AI has undoubtedly made remarkable strides in art generation, it is essential to acknowledge its inherent limitations. These constraints, shaped by the current state of AI technology, provide insights into the challenges artists and developers grapple with.

Lack of creativity

One of the primary limitations lies in the AI's inability to possess true creativity. While AI models can analyse vast datasets and produce outputs that mimic artistic styles, they lack the profound understanding, emotional depth, and innate creativity that defines human artistry.

Overreliance on data

The quality and diversity of the training data significantly influence the results of AI-generated art. The AI model may struggle to produce unique or culturally diverse artworks if the training dataset is biased or limited.

Interpretation

AI lacks the subjective interpretation and nuanced understanding of contextual elements that human artists bring to their work. Art often carries cultural, historical, or personal significance that eludes the comprehension of AI models.

Ethical concerns

AI-generated art can inadvertently

perpetuate biases present in training data. If the data used to train the model contains biases, these biases may manifest in the generated artworks. The challenge for artists and developers is to navigate ethical considerations.

Replication

AI excels at replicating existing styles but encounters difficulties to produce truly innovative and ground-breaking artworks. The reliance on learned patterns may result in outputs that closely resemble known artistic genres but fall short of pushing the boundaries of artistic expression.

It is, hence, crucial for both, artists and AI developers, to understand these limitations. It serves as a compass to navigate the delicate balance between leveraging AI's capabilities and preserving the irreplaceable aspects of human creativity in art.

HANDLE AI WITH CARE...



AI may produce images, but not the 'aha!' feeling that comes from true human creation. AI can mean different things to different artists - an inspiration, a collaborator, a mere tool or a competitor. It depends on how you use it. For me, AI is more like a buffer or support, not the main medium.
Sheffy Tattarath
Portrait artist



Whether AI enhances or limits human creativity, it really depends on how the creative process is controlled. I am not against it, but I can't trust it, and from my point of view, AI can kill the creativity of an artist. Relying too much on any tool can gradually make skills fade with time.
Shima Amia
Ceramic artist



My first reaction to the arrival of AI in art was...O boy! It was an expression of wonder. Now I have gotten used to it. And someday soon, it will become my playmate
Sushmita Gupta
Self-taught artist



I find it useful as a tool to streamline certain aspects of the creative process, especially planning and spatial experimentation. Occasionally, I use AI to help formulate ideas within the context of an exhibition space. AI has to also follow certain ethical values, just as we have copyright laws to protect human creativity.
Hajer al Harrasi
Visual artist

(Inputs: Jeslin Joby)

