



OMAN IN 26TH GULF CUP FINAL

Arshad al Alawi (4) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Saudi Arabia in the 74th minute of the semi-final match in Kuwait on Tuesday. Ali al Busaidi extended Oman's lead in the 84th minute despite the Red Warriors playing with ten men for most of the match after a red card for Al Mandhar al Alawi in the 34th minute. Oman will play the final on Saturday

Report on Page 14

OIA earns 50% return on Italian investment exit

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Investment Authority has made a successful divestment from one of its assets in Italy, which generated an investment return exceeding 50% of the original value reflecting OIA's strategic efforts in maximising financial returns through global investment opportunities.

The latest issue of OIA's quarterly newsletter *Enjaz* and *Eejaz* reported that the authority began this investment in 2007, involving a standalone office building known as RCS, located on the outskirts of Milan.

Spread over 22,000sqm of leasable space, the property is designed to meet local market needs, making it highly attractive to a broad range of tenants. The building was fully leased to a major media group, RCS Media, under a 20-year lease agreement (2011-2031) with option for a six-year extension. This arrangement ensured financial sta-



bility for the asset and significantly enhanced its market value over the years.

Continuing its strategy of expanding international investments and consolidating partnerships with global stakeholders, Uzbek-Oman Investment Company - a strategic joint venture of OIA - has pursued a landmark investment in the Uzbek capital Tashkent. It involves establishing an American university in collaboration with Arizona State University as academic partner. The university, designed to meet global academic standards, is set to transform higher education in

Uzbekistan with capacity to accommodate over 4,000 students in technical and finance programmes. Plans are under-way to expand the campus's capacity to 9,000 students.

Established in 2010 with capital of US\$200mn, OIA owns 75% of Uzbek-Oman Investment Company. Its portfolio currently includes ten diverse investment projects spanning textiles, food products, pharmaceuticals, retail, technology, real estate and foreign currency markets, reflecting focus on diversifying investments in promising and vital sectors.

The newsletter also highlighted a new digital initiative of OIA subsidiary Omantel in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and its objectives, as well as supporting the digital economy. By developing an artificial intelligence-powered electronic platform, Omantel seeks to enhance local advertising expenditure while reducing financial outflows.

H M the Sultan issues three Royal Decrees

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued three Royal Decrees reading as follows on Tuesday:

Royal Decree No 70/2024 promulgates the Supplementary Tax Law on entities affiliated to multinational groups.

Article 1 states that the Supplementary Tax Law on entities affiliated to multinational groups attached to this decree will be enforced.

Article 2 stipulates that the Chairman of Tax Authority will

issue the Executive Regulation of the law attached to this decree, as well as the regulations and decisions necessary for the implementation of its provisions.

Article 3 cancels all that contradicts the law attached to this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article 4 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from January 1, 2025.

Royal Decree No 71/2024 ratifies the Framework Agreement

for Establishment of Private Sector Operations between the Sultanate of Oman and OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) signed in Washington DC on October 23, 2024.

Article 1 states that the abovementioned agreement will be ratified in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

Article 2 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No 72/2024 en-

dorses an concession agreement for extraction and processing of sea salt between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and Naqa Salt Company for Area No (51-K) signed on December 11, 2024.

Article 1 endorses the abovementioned concession agreement for extraction and processing of sea salt.

Article 2 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

ONA



THERE IS NO EDITION OF MUSCAT DAILY ON JANUARY 2 ON ACCOUNT OF OUR OFFICES BEING CLOSED ON JANUARY 1



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CHILDREN'S PARADISE

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Nights Festival has transformed evenings in the capital into a celebration of culture, adventure and entertainment since it began last week. Festival grounds across seven locations come alive in the evenings with laughter, music and the aroma of delectable treats drawing families from in and around Muscat.

One of the key highlights of the festival is the blend of activities tailored for all age groups, children in particular. From cartoon characters, video game lounges to thrilling adventure sports, the festival is a paradise for children.

The adventure zone in Rose Garden, Qurum Natural Park has a ropes course allowing children to test agility and con-

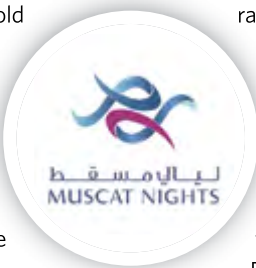


fidence under the watchful eyes of trained professionals. "I felt like I was flying!" said an excited 12-year-old Rashid, dusting his dishdasha after completing the course, as his younger sister Rania played with balloons on the grass.

Adjacent to the adventure zone, a gaming area pulses with excitement. Children in bean-

bags have their eyes glued to screens as they compete in football matches and car races. "I love it here. It feels like a big gaming party!" said 11-year-old Aakash Kumar, who was visiting the festival with his family from Al Khuwair.

For movie buffs, Qurum Natural Park has open-air screenings under the stars organised by Lunar Cinemas.



Families huddle together on blankets munching popcorn while watching classics like The Lion King. Nine-year-old Mariam loves movies but "watching outdoors in the open air feels magical".

Parents praised the festival's variety, which keeps toddlers to teens engaged for hours. "It's wonderful to see the kids so happy. There's something for everyone," said Khalid al Rawahi, a father of three.

Neha Verma highlighted the festival's cultural aspect, noting how the Global Village at Qurum Natural Park enriched her children's understanding of diverse traditions.

As drones lite up the night sky, a collective exclamation of amazement is heard across the festival grounds from where families and friends are taking back unforgettable memories.

Survey on impact of digital economy on GDP launched

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoCIIP), in collaboration with National Centre for Statistics and Information, launched 'Digital Economy's Contribution to GDP Survey' on Tuesday. Set to continue till May 2025, the survey aims to estimate the contribution of the digital economy to the country's gross domestic product and evaluate the added value of the information and communications technology sector. It will also assess the contribution of digitally provided financial and insurance services.

The first of its kind, the survey will target establishments in various ICT sector activities - ranging from large to small businesses - as well as digitally provided financial and insurance services. It will involve a sample of approximately 1,300 establishments across all governorates using 2023 data as reference.

H E Dr Ali al Shidhani, Undersecretary in MoCIIP, highlighted the significance of the survey emphasising that it will provide essential indicators to gauge progress towards the objectives of the National Digital Economy Programme which aims to increase the digital economy's contribution to GDP to 10% by 2040. The survey will offer policymakers and decision-makers accurate data to guide decisions based on systematic methodologies.



(Supplied photo)



The survey will offer policymakers and decision-makers accurate data to guide decisions based on systematic methodologies

H E DR ALI AL SHIDHANI

The survey's results will enable comparisons - locally, regionally and internationally - of the digital economy's contribution to GDP. Additionally, it will lay the foundation for reliable economic studies, providing researchers with vital statistics for academic and economic analysis.

H E Shidhani further explained that the survey will focus on key indicators, including the added value of ICT activities, employee

numbers, spending on salaries and wages, operational expenses, investment in assets, and revenues.

Dr Yousef bin Mohammed al Riyami, Director General of National Statistics at National Centre for Statistics and Information, reassured participants that all data collected would remain confidential in accordance with the Statistics Law issued via Royal Decree No 55/2019. This law guarantees confidentiality of individual data, ensuring it is only published in aggregate form. No individual, governmental or non-governmental entity may access the data, nor can it be used for non-statistical purposes.

"We urge all targeted establishments to cooperate with the survey teams, as this project supports national goals to enhance the digital economy," Riyami said.

The data collection process will employ three methods - telephone interviews via a dedicated contact centre, an online self-completion link for establishments to provide required data, and field visits.





الاحتفال بمرور ٥ عقود من الخدمة
CELEBRATING 5 DECADES OF SERVICE

Celebrating 50 Years of Excellence and Commitment in Oman

Since 1975, Al Ansari has been dedicated to building a legacy of trust, innovation, and exceptional service. As we celebrate five decades of operations, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our valued customers, partners, and employees who have been an integral part of our journey. Together, we look forward to a future filled with new opportunities and continued success.

"This milestone is a testament to the unwavering trust and support of our community. Thank you for being part of our journey. Here's to shaping the next 50 years together."

KIRAN ASHER
FOUNDER & GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR



alansariglobal



TENDER NOTICE

The Internal Tender Committee of Port of Duqm Company SAOC., hereby announces the following Tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of receiving Specifications	Date of Bid Submission	Suppliers	Tender Fee OMR (Inclusive of VAT 5%)	Place of Submission
ITC/T/020/2024	Provision of Geotechnical investigation works for Future basin location	06 th January 2025	14 th January 2025	Only Specialized Companies	75/- Non-Refundable	Port of Duqm Company 3rd floor, Al Mushraq Building, Azaiba
ITC/T/021/2024	Provision of Catering service for Port of Duqm Employees in Duqm	07 th January 2025	15 th January 2025	Only Specialized Companies	160/- Non-Refundable	

Taking into consideration the following:

11 specialized companies that wish to participate in the tender must deposit the tender amount into the bank account of the Company (details of the bank account is set out hereunder) and send the payment receipt of the tender along with a copy of the Commercial Registration Certificate and the contact details of the authorized individual (business card) to the following e-mail address: tenders@portofduqm.om

From 07:00 – 15:00 (Sunday – Thursday).

Payment Information:

Account Name	Port of Duqm Company S.A.O.C.
Account Number	0423047518510013
Bank Name	Bank Muscat
Branch	Ghala Corporate Branch
Bank ID Code	BMUSOMRXXX

Complete Tender documents should be submitted in sealed envelope with red wax with tender number and title and addressed to the "Chairman of Internal Tender Committee". The envelope should not make any reference to the bidder's details. All applicants are required to submit the Tender in the Tender box in the main office of Port of Duqm Company at or before 15:00 PM on the assigned date for submission of the Tender. Tenders submitted after the above-mentioned date and time shall not be considered.

* All participating SME's holding Riyada card are exempted from tender fees.
* The company is not obliged to accept the lowest offer or any other offer without any justifiable reasons.
* The company reserves the right to issue the order either in part or full for the quoted items without any justifiable reasons.
* The company reserves the right to reject the tenders not complying with the tender documentation requirement. For any clarification, please contact us through procurement@portofduqm.om

Port of Duqm Company S.A.O.C.
PO Box: 2409, PC: 111, Sultanate of Oman,
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EA unveils initiatives to support ecotourism in Ghaf Tree Reserve

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Environment Authority (EA) has announced a series of initiatives to promote ecotourism within the newly established Ghaf Tree Reserve in South Sharqiyah. The authority has designated the reserve spread over 130,592sqkm as a protected site for a period of 30 years.

An EA official stated that the reserve is designed to encourage ecotourism while safeguarding the environment. Special pathways will be created to allow visitors to explore the reserve without harming the natural surroundings. Tourism programmes such as educational tours, bird-watching trips and sustainable camping events will be introduced. Local communities will play an integral role by providing tourism services, including guiding visitors and selling traditional products, fostering sustainable development in the area.

The reserve was established to protect ghaf trees and other native plant species such as sidr and samr, alongside various annual and seasonal plants. The reserve also aims to safeguard local wildlife, including red foxes, rabbits, wild cats, mongooses and reptiles. It will also protect



(Supplied photos)



important bird species such as the Arabian partridge, Egyptian vulture and steppe eagle.

The official added, "Efforts will also focus on combating desertification and supporting resettlement of endangered species such as the Arabian gazelle."

However, the reserve faces potential long-term challenges, including urban expansion, population growth and human activities that could exert pressure on



its boundaries. Overgrazing, intensive agriculture and climate change also pose significant risks to its ecosystem.

"To address these challenges," the official explained, "the authority plans to promote community awareness, enforce strict laws against illegal activities and establish protected zones within the reserve to minimise human impact. Alternative programmes will encourage sus-

tainable economic activities among residents."

EA will implement strategies to boost the ghaf tree population through planting initiatives and establishment of specialised nurseries for ghaf seedlings and other native plants. Collaboration with local communities will further expand tree planting efforts on farms and rehabilitate degraded land.

"At the end of the 30-year protection period, EA will conduct a comprehensive assessment to evaluate the reserve's success in achieving its goals. If further protection is deemed necessary, efforts will continue, with plans to convert the reserve into a permanent model," the official said.

Muscat to host General Assembly of International Science Council in 2025

Muscat - Represented by Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Oman will host the third General Assembly of International Science Council (ISC) and Muscat Global Knowledge Dialogue Forum from January 26 to 30, 2025. The event will take place at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

This global event aims to bring together a select group of scientists, policymakers and global partners from diverse scientific fields to address critical international challenges and explore future priorities for scientific cooperation.

The event will feature distinguished figures, including Nobel laureates, leading researchers from renowned universities and research centres, as well as influential decision-makers and business leaders.

Muscat Global Knowledge Dialogue Forum will be a key public-facing element of ISC's third General Assembly. It will facilitate cross-disciplinary discussions focused on three central themes - the future of science systems, including emerging technologies like AI and open science; the role of science in driving sustainable environmental and societal transformations; and fostering trust in science while addressing issues of equality and social cohesion.

The dialogue is expected to attract over 500 participants from various scientific fields, in-



The event will feature distinguished figures, including Nobel laureates, leading researchers from renowned universities and research centres, as well as influential decision-makers

cluding representatives from ISC member countries, senior scientists, researchers, policymakers, academics, and industry leaders from major tech companies and institutions dedicated to scientific innovation.

The ISC General Assembly meets every four years and serves as the highest platform for members and partners to discuss strategic issues and explore new pathways for international scientific collaboration. Past assemblies have addressed urgent global challenges, such as climate change, food security, global health and technological innovation.

The upcoming General Assembly in Muscat will be the first

in-person meeting since the ISC's establishment in July 2018. The first two meetings were held virtually due to global circumstances.

ISC was formed through the merger of International Council for Science (ICSU) and International Social Science Council (ISSC) and now represents over 140 countries. It brings together scientific academies, research councils and international organisations committed to advancing science and utilising it to tackle global challenges and promote societal development.

Oman has been an active member of ISC, contributing significantly to global scientific progress and innovation.

Fatal crash in Birkat al Mouz leaves 3 dead, raises alarm over road's safety

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A tragic accident in Birkat al Mouz on Tuesday left three dead and nine injured sparking widespread public concern.

A statement issued by Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) said, 'Rescue teams from Dakhliyah responded to a serious collision between a bus and a truck in Birkat al Mouz, approximately 130km from Muscat on the Muscat-Nizwa-Jabal Akhdar highway.'

The accident claimed the lives of three individuals, while nine others sustained injuries ranging from moderate to critical. The injured were immediately transported to hospital for treatment. Authorities have commenced an investigation into the accident to ascertain the cause.

The accident prompted voices of concern and frustration. Many citizens called for immediate action from the authorities to prevent accidents on the Muscat-



(Supplied photo)

Jabal Akhdar road, particularly around Birkat al Mouz.

Nizwa resident Khaled al Yaqoubi expressed his concern about the road's safety, pointing out that it has been a significant route since 2001. He emphasised the fact that the area has seen sharp increase in traffic, especially due to its role in connecting towns like Mudhaibi and Ibra. According to Yaqoubi, the road is frequently congested and

the number of accidents is alarmingly high. He urged the authorities to find a quick solution, including dualisation of the road which would help alleviate congestion and improve safety.

Abu Nasser, another Nizwa resident, echoed Yaqoubi's concern. He specifically called for expedited implementation of the Izki-Farq dual carriageway project, a long-discussed proposal to widen and upgrade the road. It

would reduce risk of accidents like the one on Tuesday; the current single-lane road is not adequate for the high volume of traffic passing through.

Regarding the movement of trucks on the road, particularly during peak hours, Salem al Kalbani suggested authorities impose restrictions on truck movement during morning and afternoon hours when the road is most congested due to proximity to schools, colleges and government offices. Kalbani attributed significant risk to students, teachers and other road users from heavy trucks on this route.

In response to the accident, CDAA urged motorists to adhere to traffic regulations and prioritise road safety.

Authorities are conducting an investigation to determine the cause of the collision, which could lead to further safety measures being implemented. Public concern, however, remains high with many demanding swift and decisive action.



SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

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

Tender No.	Project Category	Tender	Last day to purchase tender documents	Last date of tender submission
43/2024	Construction & maintenance	Construction of Sur Equestrian Club	13/01/2025	10/02/2025
Re - tender 4/2024	Construction & maintenance	Rehabilitation Work for Aisdam Club - Shinas	05/01/2025	20/01/2025
Re - tender 41/2024	Consulting Offices	Master Plan, Concept Design and Detailed Design for Sports Complex at Al Duqm	05/01/2025	20/01/2025

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

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

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

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

MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,551.63
SENSEX	78,139.01

FOREX RATES
(RO1 equals)

India	222.28
Pakistan	728.96
Bangladesh	310.34
Philippines	150.78
Sri Lanka	761.41

*Rates as on December 31

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Oil prices up over strong China data, weakening US dollar

Oil prices continued to rise on Tuesday buoyed by strong economic data from China and a weakening US dollar, while expectations that the US Federal Reserve will adopt a more cautious approach to quantitative easing have capped further price increases.

The international benchmark Brent crude rose by 0.6% to \$74.48 per barrel, up from \$74.04 at the close of the previous session. The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) increased by 0.6% to \$71.34 per barrel, compared to its prior session close of \$70.92.

China, the world's largest oil importer, announced measures to stimulate economic activity in the region supporting upward price movements by fueling expectations of stronger demand.

News that Chinese authorities have approved a record fiscal stimulus package worth 3tn yuan (approximately \$411bn) to boost the economy contributed to market optimism about future oil demand.

MSX issues regulations for securities lending and borrowing, short selling

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) and Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD) have announced the issuance of new regulations governing dual securities lending and borrowing (SLB) activities, as well as covered short selling (CSS). These regulations are designed to enhance market efficiency and improve liquidity, providing market makers, liquidity providers, and liquidity funds with new tools to bolster trading stability and create new investment opportunities.

The issuance of these regulations forms part of ongoing efforts to develop and update capital market systems and legislation, keeping pace with global advancements while addressing local market needs, MSX said in a statement.

Haitham al Salmi, CEO of MSX, explained that the introduction of these regulations will reshape investment strategies by providing innovative methods for market makers and liquidity funds to diversify their portfolios and effectively manage risks.

He said: "This will contribute to enhancing liquidity and provide all market participants with a more dynamic trading environment, while ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements for greater security. These activities will create new opportunities, enabling the implementation of hedging strategies and benefiting from market efficiencies, ultimately boosting investor confidence and supporting the



These regulations will reshape investment strategies by providing innovative methods for market makers and liquidity funds to diversify their portfolios and effectively manage risks

HAITHAM AL SALMI



sustainability of the market."

Regarding the Dual SLB regulations, Mohammad al Abri, CEO of Muscat Clearing & Depository, emphasised that these regulations are a strategic step towards improving market efficiency, increasing liquidity, and

trust in the Omani market," he said.

The importance of these new regulations lies in their potential to elevate MSX from a Frontier Market to an Emerging Market status. By introducing new financial services activities, these regulations aim to increase the size and scope of financial companies' operations, enhancing their ability to offer diverse investment alternatives. This, in turn, will promote the trading of otherwise dormant securities and help boost overall trading volumes.

Both SLB and CSS will offer investors new tools to manage their investments, positioning MSX among advanced markets and attracting global institutions and investors seeking a diversified investment environment.

In terms of Dual SLB, the regulations allow borrowers to temporarily transfer or sell securities outside the market on a deferred payment basis, with a commitment to return or repurchase the securities at the lender's request during the agreed period. This activity is intended to increase market liquidity, improve efficiency through continuous buy and sell offers, and provide market makers with an emergency reserve of securities when stockpiles are depleted.

MCD plays a central role in ensuring the smooth and transparent operation of these lending and borrowing activities. It is responsible for managing the collateral and overseeing the transfer of securities between lenders and borrowers. MCD will also publish periodic reports detailing the total amount of borrowed securities from each issuer, which will be made available on MCD's official website.

Licensed entities, such as SLB agents, will manage regulatory activities between borrowers and lenders. This process ensures transparency, governance, and compliance with applicable regulations. Furthermore, a contract must be signed between the lender and borrower, outlining the rights and obligations of both parties.

Regarding eligibility, lending is open to state institutions, licensed financial institutions, insurance and reinsurance companies, and investment funds with assets exceeding RO1mn, or individuals whose assets exceed RO500,000, excluding their primary residence.

As for the CSS activity, it will allow sophisticated investors to sell borrowed securities, with the obligation to settle the transaction by the settlement date. Regulations require these transactions to be executed at or above the last traded price, with additional restrictions if the price drops by 5% from the previous closing price. In such cases, the transaction will be suspended for two trading days.

To engage in CSS, sophisticated investors must obtain approval from MSX and demonstrate their technical, administrative, and financial capabilities. They must also show that they have systems in place to manage and segregate orders for CSS and submit reports regarding their internal control and compliance systems.

شركة ضيافة الصحراء ش.م.ع

Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.)

P.O. Box 311, Muscat, Postal Code 100, Sultanate of Oman.

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED ON NOVEMBER 30, 2024

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to submit an unaudited financial statement of the company for the financial year ended on November 30, 2024, along with related reports.

Revenue is RO 13,326,450 as against RO 11,814,029 in the corresponding period of the previous year whereas net Profit after taxes for the period is RO 2,890,191 as against RO 2,562,469 in the last year.

The total shareholders fund increased from RO 27,732,589 at the end of November 2023 to RO 28,641,956 at the end of November 2024 and as a result of this growth, the net assets per share has recorded R.O.3.615.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express the most sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimour Al Said for his wise leadership and generous support to the private sector. Furthermore, I would extend our gratitude to his government for their cooperation and assistance with special mention to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion, Muscat Stock Exchange, and Financial Services Authority.

I conclude this report by expressing appreciation to our shareholders, Petroleum Development Oman, our bankers, and customers for their valued support and cooperation.

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors,

TALAL BIN QAIS AL ZAWAWI
CHAIRMAN

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Financial Position

as at 30 Nov, 2024

	30th Nov, 2024	30th Nov, 2023
	RO. '000	RO. '000
Fixed Assets	14,664	15,153
Current Assets		
Inventories	39	28
Trade & Other Receivables	6,272	5,157
Receivables from Related Party	41	71
Bank and Cash	11,368	10,806
	17,720	16,062
Total Assets	32,384	31,215
Current liabilities		
Trade and other Payables	661	1,234
Payables to related parties	2,341	1,583
Lease liability	23	22
Tax liability	304	419
	3,329	3,258
Long-term liabilities		
Lease liability	24	23
Deferred Tax liability	389	183
Employees' end of service benefits	-	19
	413	225
Total Liabilities	3,742	3,483
Net Assets	28,642	27,732
Shareholder's Fund		
Share Capital	7,923	7,923
Legal Reserve	2,641	2,641
Retained Earnings	18,078	17,168
Total Shareholders' Equity	28,642	27,732

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income

For 12 months ended 30 Nov, 2024

	30 th Nov, 2024	30 th Nov, 2023
	12 months ended	12 months ended
	RO. '000	RO. '000
Turnover/Revenue	13,326	11,814
Gross Profit	3,470	3,241
Other Income	444	235
Administration & General Expenses	(507)	(453)
Operating Profit	3,407	3,023
Finance Charges	(7)	(8)
Profit before taxation	3,400	3,015
Taxation	(510)	(452)
Net Profit attributable to ordinary shareholders	2,890	2,563
Net profit margin	22%	22%

The complete accounts in either Arabic or English will be delivered to any shareholder within 7 days of receipt of the request. Such request may be sent to the Board Secretary, Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.), P.O.Box: 311, Postal Code -100, Muscat.

Oman's Ijarah sukuk issuance oversubscribed by over 3 times

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's recently launched Ijarah sukuk issuance, initially aiming to raise at least RO100mn, has been oversubscribed more than three times.

On behalf of the Ministry of Finance, Oman Sovereign Sukuk Company announced the results of the auction for the 8th issue of Ijarah sukuk, valued at RO286mn.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, the company confirmed that total subscription requests for the 8th issuance surpassed three times the announced value, reaching approximately RO326.87mn.

Oman Sovereign Sukuk Company had opened the eighth issuance of its Ijarah sukuk for public subscription, with a green-shoe option to increase the size of the issue. Public subscription closed on December 25, 2024.

The average acceptable return was set at 4.75%, with the maximum acceptable return at

Total subscription requests for eighth issuance of Ijarah sukuk surpassed three times the announced value, reaching approximately RO326.87mn

4.85% and the minimum at 4.6%. The statement also confirmed that the bonds were issued on December 30, 2024.

The new sukuk issuance will offer an annual profit rate of 4.8% with a maturity period of seven years. Investors will receive biannual profit payments on June 30 and December 30 each year, with the final payment due on 30 December 2031.

The sukuk issuance was open to investors of all nationalities, both domestic and international.

Sukuk are Sharia-compliant financial instruments issued by the Omani government to fund development projects and support the country's general budget.

A recent report by Fitch Rat-

ings highlighted a significant surge in Omani sukuk issuance, which now constitutes 21% of Oman's total debt capital market mix. Sukuk issuances in 2024 have risen by 86% year-on-year to \$2bn in the first nine months, surpassing the growth in Omani bond issuances, which increased by 53% to \$5.6bn, according to Fitch.

As of Q3 2024, Oman's debt capital market stood at \$45bn in outstanding debt, up 0.8% year-on-year. Fitch rates \$6.5bn in outstanding Omani sukuk, with an even split between government and corporate issuers.

Proposed Qatar-Turkey gas pipeline gains attention

Istanbul, Turkey - The Qatar-Türkiye Natural Gas Pipeline holds potential not only as a solution to energy challenges but also as a means to foster regional cooperation, said Imraan Minty, a global energy expert on Monday.

Minty told that while the proposed Qatar-Türkiye natural gas pipeline could theoretically align with Europe's energy diversifica-

tion goals, it is crucial to avoid making the project overly reliant on European demand.

He said that Europe has already made significant strides in diversifying its natural gas supply through LNG imports and alternative pipelines. Instead, the focus should be on the growing regional demand in the Middle East, where countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and

Egypt face increasing energy needs due to industrial growth and population expansion.

The Qatar-Türkiye Natural Gas Pipeline could help solve energy problems and promote regional cooperation, Minty said and added, "By structuring the pipeline to deliver shared economic benefits to all stakeholders, it could act as a catalyst for reducing geopolitical tensions."

Key transit countries, such as Syria and Iraq, could benefit from transit fees, employment opportunities, and increased energy access, thereby aligning their interests with those of Qatar and Türkiye, he said. Minty noted that several challenges would need to be addressed to make the project feasible such as geopolitical obstacles.

Anadolu Agency

How Fed and Trump could collide in 2025

Jennifer Schonberger

US President-elect Donald Trump and Federal Reserve Chair Jay Powell have clashed before, and there is a chance they will do so again in 2025. Their collision could unfold in multiple ways.

If Trump's economic policies cause more inflation, it could force the Fed to tap the brakes and pull back any expected interest rate cuts. The new administration could make some new noise about limiting the Fed's independence. Or Trump cost-cutter Elon Musk — who recently said the central bank is "absurdly overstaffed" — could seek to overhaul the Fed's workforce.

The tensions between Trump and Powell were on display for much of 2024. On the campaign trail, Trump regularly criticised Powell, offering that the president should "have a say" in Fed decisions and that Powell has "gotten it wrong a lot."

After Trump's reelection win in November, Powell himself aggressively rebuffed the possibility of being removed before his term is up in May 2026.

"Not permitted under the law," the central bank chair said on November 7 to reporters who asked about his views on any legal authorities Trump might have in terms of firing or demoting him.

Trump and Powell appear to be trying to sound more conciliatory as Inauguration Day draws closer. The president-elect said earlier this month on NBC's Meet the Press that he has no plans to remove Powell before the Federal Reserve chair's term is up in May 2026.

That came just days after Powell said that he hoped for a good relationship with the new Trump White House and Trump's nominee for Treasury



In this file photo US President Donald Trump looks on as Jerome Powell takes to the podium during a press event at the White House in 2017

On the campaign trail, Donald Trump regularly criticised Jerome Powell, offering that the president should 'have a say' in Fed decisions and that Powell has 'gotten it wrong a lot'

Secretary, Scott Bessent, who earlier this year suggested in an interview that Trump could appoint a "shadow chair" to undermine Powell's influence.

'Not concerned'

Whether this recent détente can last is still an open question, especially if the Fed reaches a point where it decides it has to start

raising interest rates again.

Powell and his colleagues this month said they expect inflation to remain more elevated than previously thought — predicting it will end 2025 at 2.5% instead of a prior forecast of 2.2%. That revision caused the central bank to scale back the number of rate cuts it expects to make next year to two from four previously.

If Trump's proposed policies, from tariffs to tax cuts, cause more inflation, that could force the Fed to pull back even more on any easing — or even consider rate hikes.

That likely wouldn't make Trump happy. During his first term, then-President Trump attacked Powell with regularity (even though it was Trump who

had elevated him to his current role) for not lowering rates far enough, even once suggesting negative interest rates.

Trump also wasn't afraid to talk about firing Powell, saying bluntly in a 2020 news conference that "I have the right to remove" him. The then-president added that he could also demote Powell from his position as chair, "put him in a regular position, and put somebody else in charge."

Powell this month acknowledged having these prior clashes with Trump that were aired pub-

licly and said the comments didn't change in private settings. "The president said the same things to me privately as he said publicly," Powell said on December 4.

But Powell said he is "not concerned" that the central bank could lose its independence during a new Trump administration.

Powell has argued the Fed was created by Congress to be independent so it can make decisions for the benefit of Americans and not a particular political party. He has said there is "very

broad support" for that concept from both Republicans and Democrats.

'Absurdly overstaffed'

Even if Trump doesn't try to remove Powell, the relationship with the White House could be tested in other ways. One could involve the Fed's staffing.

The action could start with Musk and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, who are set to lead the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) and expect to propose sweeping cuts in government spending to create a more efficient government.

Some of those cuts, Musk has hinted, could involve the Fed. He said on X recently that the Fed is "absurdly overstaffed." The Federal Reserve Board in Washington and its 12 regional reserve banks across the US employed about 24,000 people last year.

The vast majority — more than 86% — of staff work out of the reserve banks and branches located throughout the country. The Federal Reserve Board, located in Washington, DC, employs about 3,000 staff members.

But unlike most of the federal government, the Fed is not funded through the taxpayers or the congressional appropriations process. The central bank funds its own operations — primarily from the interest on government securities that it gets through open market operations.

The Fed's net operating expenses for 2024 are budgeted to be \$7.1bn, which amounts to roughly 0.1% of the federal government's budget.

The Fed's revenue has often covered its expenses, allowing the Fed to send its excess earnings to the US Treasury. Between 2012 and 2021, the Fed sent nearly \$1tn to the Treasury.

(Source: Yahoo Finance)

UAE to expand trade deals in 2025, says minister

Abu Dhabi, UAE – Dr Thani bin Ahmed al Zeyoudi, UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Trade, has affirmed that the UAE will continue to increase its Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs) in 2025, targeting additional countries to maximise benefits for the UAE and its global trade partners.

Zeyoudi said that these agreements will strengthen rules-based international trade, drive sustainable development, increase investments, and enhance opportunities for trade in goods, services, and re-exporting.

In statements to the Emirates News Agency (WAM), Zeyoudi explained that the UAE's CEPAs programme is designed to expand the country's commercial and investment partnerships worldwide, positioning the UAE as a key gateway for non-oil goods and services and a global hub for business and investment.

He emphasised that these agreements reflect the UAE's vision, which recognises the vital role of free trade based on clear rules in driving sustainable economic growth and inclusive development. The agreements' diversity and the UAE's ability to form valuable partnerships across five continents significantly increase opportunities for various sectors and open new markets.

Zeyoudi pointed out that the CEPAs have already had a positive effect on various areas of the UAE's foreign trade, partic-



CEPAs programme is designed to expand UAE's commercial and investment partnerships worldwide, positioning the country as a key gateway for non-oil goods and services and a global hub for business and investment

DR THANI AL ZEYUODI

ularly non-oil trade, re-export services, logistics, clean and renewable energy, technology, financial services, green industries, advanced materials, agriculture, and sustainable food systems.

He explained that CEPAs continue to have a tangible and direct impact on the country's foreign trade data, positively affecting various vital sectors, including the advanced technology sector.

Since the programme's launch in September 2021 until early December 2024, the

UAE has signed 24 CEPAs with countries and international blocs, covering approximately 2.5bn people – about a quarter of the global population.

In the first half of 2024, UAE foreign trade reached a historic milestone, surpassing AED1.395tn, reflecting an 11.2% growth compared to the same period in 2023. The growth rates reached 28.8%, 54.7%, and 66%, compared to the same periods in 2022, 2021, and 2019, respectively.

WAM

Oil prices post second annual loss in row

London, UK – Oil prices were on track to end 2024 with a second consecutive year of losses on Tuesday, but were steady on the day as data showing an expansion in Chinese manufacturing was balanced by Nigeria targeting higher output next year.

Brent crude futures rose by 42 cents, or 0.6%, to \$74.41 a barrel as of 1430 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude gained 38 cents, or 0.5%, to \$71.37 a barrel.

At those levels, Brent was down around 3.4% from its final 2023 close price of \$77.04, while WTI was down around 0.4% from where it settled on Dec. 29 last year at \$71.65.

In September, Brent futures closed below \$70 a barrel for the first time since December 2021, while their highest closing price of 2024 at \$91.17 was also the lowest since 2021, as the impacts of a post-pandemic rebound in demand and price shocks from Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine began to fade.

Oil prices are likely to be constrained near \$70 a barrel in



2025 as weak demand from China and rising global supplies are expected to cast a shadow on OPEC+-led efforts to shore up the market, a Reuters monthly poll showed on Tuesday.

A weaker demand outlook in China in particular forced both the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) to cut their oil demand growth expectations for 2024 and 2025.

With non-OPEC supply also

set to rise, the IEA sees the oil market going into 2025 in a state of surplus, even after OPEC and its allies delayed their plan to start raising output until April 2025 against a backdrop of falling prices.

Investors will also be watching the Federal Reserve's rate cut outlook for 2025 after central bank policymakers earlier this month projected a slower path due to stubbornly high inflation.

Lower interest rates generally incentivise borrowing and fuel

growth, which in turn is expected to boost oil demand.

Markets are also gearing up for US President-elect Donald Trump's policies around looser regulation, tax cuts, tariff hikes and tighter immigration, as well as potential geopolitical shifts from Trump's calls for an immediate ceasefire in the Russia-Ukraine war, as well as the possible re-imposition of the so-called "maximum pressure" policy towards Iran.

Prices were supported on Tuesday by data showing China's manufacturing activity expanded for a third straight month in December but at a slower pace, suggesting a blitz of fresh stimulus is helping to support the world's second-largest economy.

However, that was balanced out by potential for higher supply next year, as Nigeria said it is targeting national production of 3mn barrels per day (bpd) next year, up from its current level of around 1.8mn bpd.

(Source: Investing.com)

China's manufacturing continues expansion

Beijing, China – China's manufacturing sector continued to expand in December as market sentiment improved, official data showed Tuesday.

The purchasing managers' index (PMI) for the manufacturing sector was 50.1 in December, down from 50.3 in November but exceeding the boom-bust line of 50 for a third consecutive month, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said.

A reading above 50 indicates expansion, while a reading below

50 reflects contraction.

NBS statistician Zhao Qinghe said the steady expansion of the PMI suggested that the combination of macroeconomic policies continued to take effect during the month and China's economic prosperity level continued to rebound and improve.

The data showed that the production and new orders sub-in-

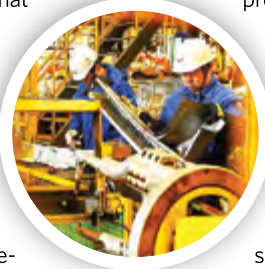
dices came in at 52.1 and 51, respectively. This indicates momentum in the sector's production and market demand.

Driven by the country's consumer goods trade-in program and the upcoming traditional holiday season, the PMI for the consumer goods sector came in at 51.4, up 0.6 points from the previous month.

The PMI for the equipment manufacturing sector remained above 50 for a fifth straight month, with its December reading at 50.6.

Tuesday's data also showed that the non-manufacturing PMI came in at 52.2 in December, up from 50 in November, while the composite PMI rose to 52.2 from a month ago, indicating accelerated expansion in production and business activities of Chinese enterprises.

Xinhua



Zubair EDC concludes Azm programme

Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC), a social initiative by The Zubair Corporation, has successfully concluded the empowerment and development programmes under the Azm initiative.

Designed to enhance business innovation and marketing skills, the programmes were delivered in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and Al Jisr Foundation for the first cohort of participants.

As part of its efforts to elevate the Azm brand, the Zubair EDC conducted comprehensive research on the participating entities, including four rehabilitation centres for individuals with special needs. The initiative engaged 17 participants, including stakeholders, in a thorough process of data collection and analysis to identify gaps affecting workflow. This analysis informed a tailored training plan aimed at bridging skills gaps in business and entrepreneurship.

Field visits to the participating rehabilitation centres enabled Zubair EDC consultants to meet with supervisors, caregivers, and service providers. These engagements facilitated the assessment of training needs and the development of a comprehensive entrepreneurship training programme.



ment of a comprehensive entrepreneurship training programme.

The module included practical applications of business models for participants, comprising both rehabilitation centre affiliates and entrepreneurs with special needs. Consultants also provided personalised guidance and commercial and marketing consultations to enhance product quality and market readiness.

Ali Shaker, Head of Business and Partnerships at the Zubair EDC, highlighted the significance of this initiative, "Through this partnership, we aim to economically empower individuals with disabilities by offering special-

ized training programmes that build their entrepreneurial skills. This enables them to produce high-quality products under the 'Azm' brand, bolstering their societal role and contributing to sustainable development."

Dina al Khalili, General Manager of Al Jisr Foundation, echoed this sentiment. "We at Al Jisr Foundation believe in supporting initiatives that create positive and sustainable impacts on vulnerable groups. By equipping them with essential skills and knowledge, we help them achieve self-sufficiency and contribute to the national economy."

Azm is dedicated to promoting high-quality products crafted by individuals with disabilities, aiming to economically empower them and build consumer trust. Products bearing the Azm logo are positioned as reliable, high-quality options, strengthening awareness and sales while supporting inclusion.

The Zubair Center for Enterprise Development is a key initiative of The Zubair Corporation, reflecting its commitment to social responsibility and the belief in the pivotal role of small enterprises in driving the national economy. Known for its professionalism, extensive knowledge base, and diverse experience, the centre fosters small enterprises through its vast network.

Sea traditions committee discusses development projects

The Quriyat Sea Traditions Committee held a meeting under the chairmanship of Sheikh Talal bin Saif al Hosani, wali of Quriyat and the committee's chairman, with the attendance of members.

Several development projects to enhance the fisheries sector were discussed, a release stated.

The tendering process for the Fens landing pier project, which is expected to improve fish landing services and facilitate traditional fishing was discussed at the meeting. Additionally, the pier project's start at the fishing port in Quriyat, to enhance the port's infrastructure and provide an integrated service environment for fishermen was highlighted.



The committee confirmed that fishermen must renew the licences of fishing boats, according to the regulations that organize the maritime fishing to regulate the sector and ensure the maritime activities' continuance. These meetings reflect the

committee's efforts to develop the fisheries sector. Thus, it improves the local economy and fishermen's livelihoods.

Al Maha celebrates National Day Ford Territory winner

Al Maha Petroleum is thrilled to announce the winner of our National Day 54 promotion! Congratulations to Said Bin Shambeh Bin Khamis, who has won a brand-new Ford Territory SUV.

Our promotional campaign, which ran from November 1 to December 17, allowed customers to participate by purchasing M91 or M95 petrol and redeeming entry coupons through the Al Maha PLUS app.

The grand draw, held at our Head Office and live-streamed on YouTube, also awarded fantastic prizes, including helicopter tours over Muscat, Onsor TURS laptops, and e-Rial fuel cards.

A heartfelt thank you to all participants for making this promotion a success. Stay tuned for more exciting opportunities and promotions from Al Maha Petroleum.



National Finance involves Thawani Pay to promote SMEs

In a significant stride towards innovation and community empowerment, National Finance, the leading finance company in the Sultanate, has forged a strategic alliance with Thawani Pay, a prominent fintech company offering smart and innovative payment solutions, to launch a special offers and discounts card for National Finance employees.

The partnership was formalised during an exclusive signing ceremony between Tariq Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, and Majid al Amri, Founder and CEO of Thawani Pay.

With the Card, National Finance employees gain exclusive access to a range of services and offers curated by Oman's dynamic SME sector.

Simultaneously, this initiative supports the nation's entrepreneurial ecosystem, contributing to the growth and vitality of local businesses.

Commenting on the collaboration, Tariq al Farsi said, "We believe that SMEs are pivotal to driving national economic resilience, while employees serve as the foundation of organisational success. This initiative harmoniously brings together these two critical pillars, offering a unique platform that not only enriches the lives of our employees through exclusive benefits but also invigorates the local SME sector."



"Our partnership with Thawani Pay demonstrates National Finance's unwavering commitment to creating innovative synergies that stimulate sustainable growth. By fostering a thriving ecosystem where employees and SMEs can mutually benefit, we are reinforcing our dedication to building a stronger, more inclusive community."

Majid al Amri expressed his enthusiasm about the partnership, highlighting its significance for the SME ecosystem and Thawani's commitment to such ventures. "We deeply understand the importance of initiatives that empower local businesses while providing added value to end users. National Finance's visionary approach to integrating employee benefits with SME support is truly inspiring," he remarked.

"By leveraging Thawani's expertise in digital payment solutions, we strive to deliver a seamless experience for both employees and businesses, fostering stronger connections and driving growth across the ecosystem," he added.

ahli islamic holds gathering for customers

ahli islamic, ahlibank's Islamic banking window, hosted an esteemed event for its premium 'Al Shumookh' customers at the bank's head office in Wattayah.

The event took place on December 18, wherein the customers were welcomed to join the occasion organised by the ahli islamic team.

Al Shumookh Premium Banking was designed so that customers can enjoy a range of designed services especially curated to meet their current and future needs. Of the many privileges offered to Al Shumookh account holders are dedicated relationship manager to meet all customers' banking needs, premium lounges provided in selected branches, and branded cheque books, as well as branded debit and credit cards. Discounts and exclusive offers from premium merchants are also provided, including 24/7 concierge service. Upon completing different banking transactions, customers can earn redeemable Pearl Points, and credit card holders gain 1% cashback on their spends. Moreover, complimentary chauffeur service is made available, alongside access to more than 1,000 airport lounges across the globe, 12 times a year.

Speaking on the event, Noora Sultan, AGM - Head of Retail Banking at ahli Islamic, said, "We remain committed to serving our Al Shumookh customers with enhanced efficiency, reflecting our dedication to meeting their evolving financial needs. Our journey to this point has been marked by numerous initiatives aimed at delivering exceptional value, and we take immense pride in these accomplishments."



"At ahli islamic, we are dedicated to tailoring our premium solutions that align with our clients' individual needs and aspirations. We endeavour to offer unparalleled opportunities and services, reinforcing our commitment to fostering enduring relationships that support the long-term financial well-being of our clients. We believe connecting with them is key, as we continue to enhance our ties and build a solid foundation on which we can grow and expand exponentially," she added.

ahli islamic's continued focus on innovation in product and service delivery has ensured customer satisfaction at every level of its operations. Bolstered by its new Al Shumookh Center, it will continue to provide ease of access, privacy, and comfort to all.

MoCIIP hosts Sanad Service Centres Forum, introduces four new services

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) on Tuesday organised the Sanad Service Centres Forum and its accompanying exhibition, themed 'Empowerment and Sustainable Growth', at the JW Marriott Hotel, Madinat Al Irfan.

The event was held under the patronage of H E Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, in the presence of H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, and Sheikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, President of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones.

The forum witnessed participation from distinguished officials, including H E Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry and H E Ibtisam bint Ahmed al Farooji, Undersecretary for Investment Promotion. The event was also attended by prominent CEOs, specialists, representatives from both public and private sectors, and owners of Sanad Service Centres. The two-day forum aims to achieve strategic objectives of developing and supporting Sanad Service Centres.

Nasra bint Sultan al Habsi, Director General of Commerce at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, emphasised the significance of Sanad Service Centres, stating that these centres represent one of the nation's key initiatives. Since their inception, they have played a pivotal role in supporting the government's digital transformation journey and creating job opportunities for Omani youth, he noted, adding that "the growth figures we witness today for these small enterprises underscore the importance of continuing to support them."

Habsi underlined the fact that Omani youth are the true wealth of this nation. "Investing in their skills and capabilities is an investment in a brighter future. The ministry is dedicated to providing an appropriate environment that enables them to achieve their aspirations and actively contribute to the country's



development."

The opening ceremony included a visual presentation about the Sanad Service Centres, highlighting their importance, the services they provide, and the ministry's vision to embed the importance of these centers in the minds of the public and the community. The programme also featured the signing of six agreements and cooperation programmes with private entities, the launch of four new services through Sanad e-portal, and the recognition of outstanding

Sanad Service Center owners and their employees for their exceptional contributions.

Mohammed bin Salem al Mashaikhi, Director of Sanad Service Centres at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, delivered the ministry's speech during the forum. "In line with the attention His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik - may Allah protect and preserve him - places on entrepreneurs in the Sultanate of Oman, and his encouragement for them to embrace self-em-

ployment, as well as his belief in their pivotal role in the Omani economy and their integration with large corporations, the ministry has ensured special attention is given to Sanad Service Centres. These centres are vital for creating job opportunities and contributing to facilitating a more seamless business environment for citizens and residents alike."

Mashaikhi pointed out that the Ministry seeks to make this forum serve as a platform for exchanging experiences and successful practices, as well as

exploring ways to improve performance and enhance efficiency in service delivery.

He emphasised that these efforts align with the objectives and aspirations of Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to improve the quality and efficiency of public services and promote digital transformation across all sectors.

The ministry has signed six agreements and cooperation programmes with various public and private entities to introduce new services through Sanad Service Centres.

These agreements and programs aim to further develop the Sanad Service Centers system, empower Omani youth, and entrust them with the responsibility of maintaining the achievements made during the previous phase. The goal is to ensure continued high efficiency during the next phase, which will contribute to increasing job opportunities within these centres.

The agreements were signed on behalf of MoCIIP by H E Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Indus-

try in the ministry, and by the CEOs of the other involved entities.

These agreements span various sectors, including: Awassr and Vodafone Oman from the telecommunications sector; Dhofar Integrated Services Company from the public services sector; Oman Credit and Financial Information Center (Mala'a) from the financial sector; Al Madina Takaful from the insurance sector; and Bank Sohar from the banking sector.

These agreements include the integration of their services with the e-portal of Sanad Service Centres.

During the opening ceremony of the forum, a set of new services was launched, further strengthening the role of Sanad Service Centres as a key driver of local development and an essential partner in facilitating services for both citizens and residents.

MoCIIP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, launched the service of certifying medical reports issued by private medical centers in Oman. Additionally, several insurance services were introduced in partnership with SuperJet platform from Gulf Travel Company.



Indian School Bousher marks annual day

Indian School Bousher proudly celebrated its annual day, Finesse Fest, held on the school grounds and honoured by the distinguished presence of Al Sayyid Hamoud bin Sultan al Busaidi from the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers.

Dr Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman of the Board of Directors for Indian Schools in Oman, presided over the event, joined by Ashwini Sawrikar, Chairperson of the Academic Committee, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, Director in Charge for Indian School Bousher, and M P Vinoba, Education Advisor and Senior Principal, Board of directors, Indian Schools in Oman.

Esteemed guests, Khalid Zayid Mohamed al Hina'i, Mohammed Yosuf al Tamtami, Sheikh of Miswa, Mansoor Naseer al Raqadi, Sheikh of Ansab, were also a part of the event.

The event's grandeur was elevated by the presence of the esteemed members of the School Management Committee, including Dr Sayed Fazlur Rahman, Piyush Agarwal, Dr Vinod Pachigalla, Shanmugam Purnashothaman, Samkumar,



Soumya Parameshwaran, Remya Damodharan, and Rushit Sanghvi. Principals from various Indian Schools also attended, extending their best wishes.

The programme commenced with a respectful rendition of the Royal anthem of Oman and National anthem of India, marking a solemn start to the evening's celebrations. Master Vaishnav Bineesh, the Head boy from Grade 12 extended a warm welcome to the audience.

Principal P Prabhakaran, in his annual report, highlighted the various scholastics and co-scholastics activities undertaken

across the preparatory, foundation, middle, and senior stages of the school. He emphasised how these initiatives are in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP), focusing on equipping students with the essential skills required for their holistic development and future success. The Principal emphasised the significant role of parents and the community as valuable stakeholders in the school's activities and development, highlighting their active involvement and meaningful contributions to the institution's growth and success.

The Chief Guest Al-Sayyid

Hamoud bin Sultan al Busaidi graciously received a welcome token from Dr. Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman of the Board of Directors, and the other dignitaries, representing the school's heartfelt appreciation for his presence. The chief guest shared his delight in witnessing the vibrant talent and achievements of the students and emphasised the positive energy he felt from the school community.

Dr Sivakumar Manickam, presiding over the function, expressed his deep gratitude to the Indian diaspora and the Ministry of Education, Oman, for their

steadfast support for all the endeavours. He conveyed his heartfelt wishes to the school on achieving five years of impressive progress and growth. He also extended his appreciation to the vibrant parent community, acknowledging their valuable role in the school's success from its inception. He underscored the school's dedication to fostering robust, confident, and holistic learners through a stress-free learning environment. He also shared his Children's Day wishes with the students, celebrating their role in the school's lively community.



Sohar Islamic's new branch operational

In its ongoing effort to make Sharia-compliant financial solutions more accessible to the local community, Sohar Islamic - the dedicated Islamic banking window of Sohar International - has commenced operations in its new branch at Souq Al Haffa in Dhofar Governorate on Sunday.

This marks the third branch in Dhofar and the 20th in Sohar Islamic's growing network, demonstrating the bank's commitment to providing ease and accessibility to its customers. Located in a key hub in Dhofar, the new branch aligns with Sohar Islamic's strategic objective to ex-

pand its network of branches, and support Oman Vision 2040 goals of enhancing financial inclusion.

As a full-fledged branch combining both retail and corporate services, the new branch offers a diverse range of sharia'a-compliant products and services tailored to the unique needs of its clientele. In addition to day-to-day banking services, clients can access personalised financing solutions, various deposit accounts, cheque and card processing, and remittance services, ensuring an efficient and seamless banking experience.

North Korea’s Kim calls Russia’s Putin his ‘dearest friend’

Seoul, South Korea - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Tuesday called Vladimir Putin his 'dearest friend and comrade' in his letter to the Russian president praising the close ties between the two countries.

Kim sent New Year greetings 'to the fraternal Russian people and all the service personnel of the brave Russian army on behalf of himself, the Korean people and all the service personnel of the armed forces of the DPRK', the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported, using an acronym of the North's formal name.

He also expressed his readiness 'to design and push ahead with new projects' after their 'meaningful journey in 2024'.

In a possible reference to Russia's war in Ukraine, Kim wished that 2025 would be the year 'when the Russian army and people defeat neo-Nazism and achieve a great victory'.

Seoul and Washington have accused Pyongyang of sending tens of thousands of troops to help Russia fight Ukraine.

North Korean troops are experiencing mass casualties on the frontlines of Russia's war against Ukraine, the Biden ad-



Pyongyang and Moscow have strengthened their political, military, and cultural ties since Russia's invasion of Ukraine

ministration said last week.

At least 1,000 North Korean troops have either been killed or wounded last week alone in Russia's Kursk region - where Ukrainian troops have been holding territory since this summer - White House spokesperson John Kirby told reporters.

The two nations have strengthened their political, military, and cultural ties since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

In June, Putin and Kim signed a landmark defence pact during the Russian leader's visit to North Korea.

The pact calls for each side to provide immediate military aid if the other is attacked.

Xi ready for 'close exchanges'

Meanwhile, China's President Xi Jinping, in a separate New Year message to Putin said he was 'ready to maintain close exchanges' with Putin and maintain the general direction of China-Russia cooperation, 'so as to continue consolidating and deepening China-Russia ties'.

This, he added, would 'feature permanent good-neighbourly friendship,

comprehensive strategic coordination and mutually beneficial cooperation'.

Xi noted the two sides 'always move forward hand in hand along the right path of non-alliance, non-confrontation, and not targeting any third party'. "The political mutual trust and strategic coordination between the two sides have continuously marched to a higher level under the strategic guidance of the two leaders," said the 71-year-old Chinese leader, according to Chinese state media.

Agencies

Yoon becomes 1st South Korean president to face arrest warrant

Seoul, South Korea - A South Korean court on Tuesday issued an unprecedented arrest warrant against President Yoon Suk Yeol, who was impeached on December 14 over his short-lived martial law.

The arrest warrant is valid until Monday. Yoon defied at least four summons from investigators to appear for questioning over charges of insurrection and treason.

The arrest warrant was issued by Seoul Western District Court on a request from the Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials (CIO) on charges of masterminding the botched December 3 martial law declaration, orchestrating the insurrection and abusing power, the Seoul-based Yonhap News reported.

Yoon became the first sitting president to face charges of insurrection and treason, as well as travel ban, after his move which shocked the nation on the night of December 3.

Investigators, including members of the police, the Defence Ministry, and the prosecution, were also authorised to search Yoon's presidential residence in the Yongsan district of the capital.

Sitting presidents are immune from arrest in South Korea except for charges such as insurrection and treason.

Earlier, Yoon's security blocked the entry of investigators to search his office and related places.

Separately, the parliament approved its own investigation on Tuesday into Yoon's alleged in-



Yoon, whose fate would be decided by Constitutional Court, had defied at least 4 summons by investigators

surrection attempt and the probe may take up to 45 days.

The 18-member parliamentary committee consists of 10 opposition and seven ruling party lawmakers, besides one independent parliamentarian, and the probe may last until February 13.

Yoon denies accusations

Yoon, himself a trained prosecutor, has denied the accusations, calling the martial law declaration an 'act of governance' meant to caution the opposition party against what he described as an abuse of legislative power.

His legal team said it 'cannot

Investigators want Yoon Suk Yeol arrested after the impeached president failed to report for questioning over his short-lived martial law decree

accept the detention warrant', calling it 'illegal and invalid'.

It said the request for warrants was made by an investigative body with 'no effective jurisdiction'.

However, the court rejected Yoon's claims that the CIO lacks jurisdiction over insurrection cases.

It remains unclear if the investigators would take steps to detain Yoon, who could be detained at the Seoul Detention Centre in Uiwang, the south of the capital.

Yoon's presidential security service said it would 'take measures to handle the warrant in accordance with legal process'.

The court also dismissed Yoon's claims that he could not attend the previous summons 'because arrangements for his personal safety and security detail, as the president, had not

been made'.

Yoon remains suspended from office after the parliament voted to remove him over the martial law decree, which was the 17th in South Korea's history.

A constitutional court is conducting the trial of Yoon's impeachment which may take up to six months.

If the top court backs the parliament impeachment motion, Yoon will be removed from the presidential office and the fresh elections will be due within two months from that date.

In case the judges decide against the parliament, Yoon will be immediately reinstated to his office.

Currently, the state affairs are run by Yoon's Cabinet, led by Finance Chief Choi Sang-mok, who was appointed the acting president last week after the parliament impeached Prime Minister Han Duck-soo for not appointing special counsels to probe Yoon and his wife, as well as his refusal to appoint judges to the Constitutional Court.

Han had taken up the charge after Yoon was suspended from duties.

Separately, Choi on Tuesday appointed two judges to the Constitutional Court, possibly ending tensions with the opposition-dominated parliament.

The top court has a total capacity of nine judges but it is currently holding the trial with only six judges in attendance.

At least six sitting judges of the top court must uphold a successful impeachment motion to remove a president.

Anadolu Agency



The hack is being treated as a 'major cybersecurity incident'

China denies accusations of cyberattack on US Treasury

Beijing, China - China on Tuesday denied accusations that a Chinese state-sponsored actor was behind a cyber breach at the US Treasury Department.

The Treasury Department said on Monday China hackers broke into its systems earlier this month.

In a letter informing lawmakers of the breach, the department said Chinese hackers remotely accessed Treasury workstations and stole unclassified documents.

The hack is being treated as a 'major cybersecurity incident'.

The Foreign Ministry in Beijing said China 'has always opposed all forms of hacker attacks, and we are even more opposed to the spread of false information against China for political purposes'.

"We have stated our position many times regarding such groundless accusations that lack evidence," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said.

What do we know about the breach?

The department did not say how many workstations were accessed or what documents the hackers might have taken.

However, it informed lawmakers that a Chinese state-sponsored group compromised BeyondTrust, a third-party software provider, and accessed the Treasury workstations.

"There is no evidence indicating the threat actor has continued access to Treasury systems or information," the department's spokesperson said.

The department said it was working with the FBI and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to assess the exact scope of the hack.

Several countries, notably the US, have expressed concern over alleged hacking activities linked to the Chinese government in recent years.

Beijing, however, has denied these accusations.

DW

Japan PM to meet Trump after Jan 20

Tokyo, Japan - Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has planned to postpone his meeting with US President-elect Donald Trump until at least February, against the latter's willingness to meet with him ahead of his inauguration on January 20.

"But Ishiba thought it would be desirable for both sides to hold a first formal bilateral summit when he visits the United States in February or possibly later," the Tokyo-based Kyodo News reported, citing Japanese officials.

The US and Japan are among the oldest allies of the post-World War II era. Japan hosts more than 50,000 American troops.

Anadolu Agency

Ex-US President Jimmy Carter to receive state funeral on Jan 9

Washington, D.C., US - Former US President Jimmy Carter, who passed away at the age of 100 on Sunday, will receive a state funeral before being buried beside his wife, Rosalynn, in their hometown of Plains, Georgia.

President Joe Biden has scheduled a state funeral for January 9 and declared it a National Day of Mourning.

The funeral arrangements

The 39th president will be honoured with public observances in his southern home state of Georgia and in Washington in the coming days.

A motorcade will take Carter from his hometown of Plains, Georgia, to Atlanta, where he will lie in repose on Saturday and Sunday, the Carter Center said in a statement.

His body will then be flown to Washington on January 6 where it will lie in state in the Rotunda of the US Capitol.



A state funeral for Jimmy Carter, who died at 100, will be held at Washington National Cathedral on January 9

"This will allow an opportunity for the American people to pay their respects to President Carter," the Carter Center said.

A national funeral service will be held at the Washington National Cathedral on January 9

where Biden will deliver a eulogy.

Afterwards, Carter will be buried in a private ceremony in his hometown of Plains, the Carter Center said.

Tributes to 'a statesman and a humanitarian' pour in

Carter, a Democrat, became president in January 1977 and his one-term presidency was marked by the 1978 Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt, bringing some stability to the Middle East.

He spent his long post-presidential career devoted to humanitarian work, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

"America and the world lost an extraordinary leader, statesman and humanitarian," Biden said in a statement on Sunday.

to live on.

Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi praised Carter as 'a symbol of humanitarian efforts' for his role in brokering the historic 1978 Camp David Accords, which established peace between Egypt and Israel.

A motorcade will take Carter from his hometown of Plains, Georgia, to Atlanta, where he will lie in repose on Saturday and Sunday, the Carter Center said

Tributes from world leaders and US politicians continued to pour in on Monday.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said with the death of Carter, 'the US has lost a committed fighter for democracy. The world has lost a great mediator for peace in the Middle East and for human rights'.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called for Carter's 'noble legacy'

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Carter would be remembered for the deal, calling it 'a peace treaty that has held for nearly half a century and offers hope for future generations'.

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas said he was mourning 'the first American president to recognise the Palestinian people's right to self-determination'.

DW

Healthcare destroyed in Gaza: WHO

WHO said that the healthcare system in northern Gaza has been deliberately destroyed by Israel

Geneva/Gaza City - World Health Organization said that the healthcare system in northern Gaza has been deliberately destroyed by Israel amid intense attacks and siege.

"We've seen the systematic dismantling of the health system in northern Gaza. It's been under siege, really, for 80 days, and this is putting the lives of, we estimate, 75,000 Palestinians who remain in the area at great risk," WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris told Anadolu.

Emphasising the alarming conditions, she noted that the last major medical facility in northern Gaza, the Kemal Adwan Hospital, is now out of service.

The WHO official highlighted that in other parts of Gaza, people are also grappling with inadequate shelter and food, making access to medical care increasingly difficult.

Harris also reported that other hospitals in Gaza are also under attack, with two facilities in central Gaza hit recently, further exacerbating the situation.

Harris lamented the tragic reports of children dying from the cold in Gaza, describing the situation as 'unbearably sad'.

"This is the cruelest thing you can do to parents not able to provide the most basic things for their child and to watch their little ones die," she added.

"We said a year ago; we predicted that because people were forced out of their homes and not provided with adequate shelter and adequate services," she further added.



The last major medical facility in northern Gaza, the Kemal Adwan Hospital, is now out of service

We've seen the systematic dismantling of the health system in northern Gaza. It's been under siege, really, for 80 days, and this is putting the lives of 75,000 Palestinians in the area at great risk

MARGARET HARRIS

"If the bombs didn't kill them, the diseases and the deprivation would...I couldn't believe that this would actually come to pass,"

she stressed.

Harris also confirmed that the Kemal Adwan Hospital is now empty, with critically ill patients

transferred to the Indonesian Hospital, which is itself struggling due to a lack of essential equipment and supplies.

On the detention of Kemal Adwan Hospital Director Husam Abu Safiyeh by Israeli authorities, Harris said they had no information on his status.

"The reality is there is no real health care available for people in the northern Gaza right now," she concluded.

'Ethnic cleansing'

Israel's destruction of hospitals in northern Gaza is part of a campaign of 'ethnic cleansing' against Palestinians, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* said in a recent editorial.

The editorial criticised the Israeli army's actions in northern Gaza, saying they are aimed at preventing displaced Palestinians from returning to their homes and effectively depopulating the region.

lating the region.

The newspaper said the destruction, particularly the demolition of hospitals, is also forcing residents to relocate to the south for essential medical care.

It emphasised that such a large region cannot be left without hospitals, especially during wartime, recalling that the Fourth Geneva Convention grants hospitals special protection during wars.

The piece also criticised the justifications provided by the Israeli military for its attacks, saying the presence of small arms or ammunition in a hospital, or even of armed individuals receiving treatment, does not warrant such an assault.

The editorial pointed out that the northern part of Gaza has been destroyed and that the military is now working to complete the demolition, emphasising that this is an illegal act and should in no way include hospitals.

It also condemned the Israeli military's attempt to show just cause for its actions by publishing photos of two pistols and a knife allegedly found in the hospitals.

It underscored that such evidence does not support the military's claims and cannot justify the humiliation of forcing dozens of patients and doctors to evacuate the hospital dressed only in their undergarments.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army continued to demolish homes and shell several areas across the Gaza Strip on Tuesday.

Witnesses said Israeli forces blew up several homes and residential buildings in the northern city of Beit Hanoun.

Israeli artillery also shelled the Tel al-Hawa neighbourhood in southwestern Gaza City, but no information was yet available about casualties.

Israeli forces opened gunfire on the neighbourhoods of Al-Sabra and Zeitoun in the city's southern and southeastern areas, according to witnesses.

Anadolu Agency



Israel continues ceasefire violations In Lebanon: Officials

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanese authorities on Monday night recovered a body from the rubble of a home in the Khayam town of southern Lebanon, as they continue to accuse Israel of violating a ceasefire reached last month to end 14 months of fighting between Israeli forces and Hezbollah.

The Lebanese Civil Defence said in a statement that its rescue teams removed 'body of a martyr'. The statement, however, did not specify whether the recovered victim was killed before the ceasefire or after.

The Civil Defence added that its rescue teams continue to search in the area for more missing people. Five bodies were also removed from under the rubble in Khayam on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the official Lebanese news agency NNA said the Israeli army carried out a demolition operation in the town of Taybeh. The Lebanese army said it destroyed quantities of unexploded ordnances and explosive remnants of the Israeli aggression in the towns of Aynata, Taybeh and Majdal Zoun.

Anadolu Agency

Gulf bloc to offer political support to Syria

Damascus, Syria - The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) said on Tuesday said it plans to provide support to Syria in the political, economic and developmental fields.

GCC Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi and Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah al-Yahya, whose country is the current chair of the Gulf bloc, visited Damascus on Monday and met with the head of Syria's new administration Ahmed al-Sharaa.

The visit was part of a series of regional and international delegations arriving in Syria to meet with the new leadership following the ousting of the Bashar al-Assad regime.

In a post on his X account, Budaiwi said he affirmed the GCC's commitment to supporting efforts aimed at achieving the aspirations of the Syrian people for development and peace and rejection of all forms of foreign interference. He said the Gulf bloc supports Syria's unity, sovereignty and stability 'in a way that enhances the security and prosperity of its people'.

The GCC chief stressed that Syria's security and stability are a



The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) also plans to provide support to Syria in the economic and developmental fields

'cornerstone' of the entire region's stability. Assad, Syria's leader for nearly 25 years, fled to Russia after anti-regime groups took control of Damascus on December 8, ending the Baath Party's regime, which had been in power since 1963.

Meanwhile, in his New Year's message, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday reiterated Turkey's commit-

ment to foster peace and stability in Syria, its own borders, and the Palestinian territories.

"We will provide all necessary support to ensure that the new era opens the door to lasting peace, tranquillity, stability, and economic prosperity in Syria," Erdogan said. The message, shared via the Turkish presidency's official X account, outlined the administration's priorities for the

coming year.

Erdogan also addressed the protracted crisis in Gaza and Palestine, calling for an end to violence and the establishment of peace. "We are making intense efforts to end the massacres that have been ongoing in Gaza and other Palestinian territories for 15 months and to establish peace there as well," he said.

The president reaffirmed

Turkey's intent to play a pivotal role in regional reconstruction and peacebuilding.

First highlighting domestic and regional security, he promised unwavering efforts to combat terrorism. "In the coming period, we will take determined steps to realise our vision of a terror-free Turkey and a terror-free region," he said.

Anadolu Agency

'Forget your name': Syrian prisoner 49 recounts his life in torture cells

Damascus, Syria - A survivor of the Syrian regime's notorious prisons has spoken out about the brutal treatment he endured during nearly 1.5 years of captivity, shedding light on systematic torture, starvation, and coerced confessions under Bashar al-Assad's rule.

Motasem Kattan, a father of one, was among thousands of Syrians detained during Syria's civil war, which began in 2011.

Many detainees faced abuse and death in facilities operated by the regime. Kattan, freed after

the Assad regime's collapse in November, shared his harrowing story with Anadolu.

'Remember number 49'

Kattan said he turned himself in September 2023 to benefit from a regime amnesty, expecting to be released after processing. Instead, he was taken to the 'Palestine Branch', a facility infamous for torture.

"The director (of the prison) told me: 'Now you will go inside and forget your name. Just re-



member the number you are given.' They gave me the number 49. My name remained 49," Kattan said, recounting how detainees were stripped of their identities to break them mentally as well as physically.

The Palestine Branch, he said, was known for its brutal torture. "We had heard that those who left were either dead, broken, or had lost their memories."

In his six-hour-long first interrogation, Kattan was handcuffed, suspended from a wall, and beaten up to force a false

confession.

"By the third session, they accused me of financing terrorism," he said. "I told them, 'I'm 25; how could I fund terrorism when I can't even afford diapers for my child?' They didn't believe me and tortured me again, pulling out my nails."

Eventually, Kattan said he could no longer endure the abuse. "I told them, 'I'll confess to whatever you want'. They made me sign a document under duress."

Kattan described his cell,

about two square meters, as 'catastrophic'. He said prisoners were given little food or water, often surviving on half a piece of flatbread a day.

"That small portion of bread felt like a feast," he said.

After two months, Kattan was moved to another ward with 150 prisoners crammed together. The lack of air, sunlight, and sanitation caused diseases, leading to many deaths. Guards ignored the dead, mocking the prisoners instead.

Anadolu Agency

Bangladesh: Are human rights eroding under Muhammad Yunus?

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Bangladesh's interim leader, Muhammad Yunus, spoke with US national security advisor Jake Sullivan last week amid growing international concern over reports of attacks on minority Hindus and their temples in the predominantly Muslim nation.

"Both leaders expressed their commitment to respecting and protecting the human rights of all people, regardless of religion," according to a White House statement.

Rising violence

Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh say they are being oppressed under the interim government that was installed after former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled to neighbouring India in August 2024 following her ouster by a student-led uprising.

In one of the latest incidents, 17 houses belonging to the Christian Tripura community in south-eastern Bangladesh's Bandarban district were reportedly set on fire on Christmas Eve. In response, Yunus' office condemned the attack, stating that such actions are 'deplorable and unacceptable'.

While security measures have been increased in Bandarban, the Rights and Risks Analysis Group (RRAG), a human rights watchdog, has criticised Yunus for his failure to address the escalating violations of the rights of indigenous peoples and religious minorities. RRAG identified serious violations, noting that more than 272,000 individuals - primarily political opponents - have been implicated in 1,598 criminal cases within the first 100 days of Yunus' administration. The organisation reported that between September 19 and October 1, at



Protests have been held in parts of Hindu-majority India to denounce attacks on Hindus in neighbouring Bangladesh

least four Indigenous people were killed, and more than 75 others were injured.

Nur Khan Liton, a human rights activist and member of the Commission of Inquiry into Enforced Disappearances, which was set up by the interim government, told DW that individuals implicated in criminal cases often face physical assault during their detention.

In response to the growing concerns, Yunus asserted that the reports of rights violations were widely exaggerated, the AP news agency reported.

During a visit to Dhaka by Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram

Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh say they are being oppressed under the interim government that was installed after former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled to neighbouring India in August 2024 following her ouster by a student-led uprising

Misri earlier this month, his Bangladeshi counterpart, Mohammad Jashim Uddin, said that Bangladesh's internal matters should not be subject to foreign interference.

Uddin told reporters that Bangladesh asked India not to interfere in its internal affairs, the Dhaka-based *Daily Star* reported.

"We said people of all religions

in Bangladesh freely practice their faiths. This is our internal affair. It is not expected (of other countries) to make comments on our internal affairs. We don't do it for other countries," the daily quoted him as saying.

Custodial deaths

Several leaders of Hasina's Awami League (AL) have died in

custody during the interim government's rule, sparking serious concern and controversy.

Within just 29 days, four AL leaders reportedly died of 'heart attacks' while detained in Bogura prison, bringing the total number of AL members and activists who have died in police custody over the last four months to at least ten. Family members of the lead-

ers who died while incarcerated said that there were tell-tale signs of torture on some of the victims.

Bangladesh's former Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mohammad Ali Arafat told DW that the truth behind these deeply suspicious and unnatural deaths - whether homicides or not - would eventually come to light. "Moreover, none of the family members could file a case and their access to justice has also been denied," he added.

Upholding free press

Journalists aligned with the former Hasina government say they are facing increasing persecution

under the Yunus administration, which has been accused of systematically suppressing independent media. There have been more than 354 journalists harassed, 74 cases of violence reported, 113 criminal charges filed, and press credentials revoked for 167 journalists, according to the RRAG report.

The Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) have urged the interim government to ensure fair trials and uphold procedural rights for reporters. The interim government has previously vowed to restore democracy and uphold the free press.

In an October interview with the country's largest newspaper, *Prothom Alo*, Yunus advocated for media freedom.

"Write as you please. Criticise. Unless you write, how will we know what is happening or not happening?" he said.

Masood Kamal, a senior news editor, told DW that journalists aligned with Hasina's government are losing their jobs under the interim government.

"The supporters of the new regime are targeting journalists aligned with the previous administration by implicating them in various cases," he stated.

Lawyers have also encountered restrictions, with legal cases being initiated against those who speak out against the interim government. Eminent lawyer and rights activist ZI Khan Panna expressed grave concerns over the deteriorating legal environment. He revealed that lawyers defending individuals accused in these allegedly fabricated cases are reportedly being assaulted inside court premises.

DW



A child is vaccinated against polio during a polio mobilisation campaign in Kandahar, Afghanistan

Afghanistan: NGOs ordered to stop employing women

Kabul, Afghanistan - Taliban has announced it will close all national and foreign nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) employing women in Afghanistan. In a letter shared on X, Taliban-led Ministry of Economy warned that failure to comply with the order would result in NGOs losing their licence to function in Afghanistan, Al Jazeera reported.

The Taliban announced the latest decision two years after they asked NGOs to suspend the employment of Afghan women, allegedly as they did not follow Taliban's interpretation of the Islamic dress code for women.

The Taliban-led Economy Ministry said that it was responsible for the registration, coordination, leadership and supervision of all activities conducted by national and foreign organisations.

The Taliban has once again ordered the women to stop working in institutions not controlled by Taliban, according to the letter. It said, "In case of lack of cooperation, all activities of that institution will be cancelled and the activity licence of that institution, granted by the ministry, will also be cancelled."

Restrictions have been imposed on Afghan women since the Taliban seized power in August 2021, prompting the United Nations to denounce the 'gender apartheid' the authorities have established, according to Al Jazeera report.

Taliban has banned girls from studying beyond sixth class, restricted employment and blocked access to parks and other public places. While announcing the decision, Taliban had said that the ban was a 'temporary suspension' that would be

resolved after creating a safe environment for girls to attend school. However, no change in decision has been announced yet.

Earlier this month, the UN Security Council was informed about that the rising number of female Afghan humanitarian workers being stopped from carrying out their duties, despite the critical need for relief work, Al Jazeera reported.

A senior UN official, Tom Fletcher, said that there was a rise in the number of humanitarian organisations that have had female or male staff blocked by Taliban, according to Al Jazeera report. The group has denied hindering work of aid agencies or interfering with their operations and defends its decisions necessary to uphold Afghanistan's law, social norms and public safety.

ANI

India launches space docking mission

New Delhi, India - India launched its first space docking mission on Monday on an Indian-made rocket, successfully testing the advanced capability.

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) launched the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDex) mission atop a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket. SpaDex involves deploying two small spacecraft, each weighing about 220kg (around 485 pounds), into a low-Earth circular orbit.

Completing mission will make India 4th country ever to have achieved the feat

"I'm really happy to announce the successful accomplishment



India hopes to be the 4th country with space docking technology

of the launch of PSLV 60 for the SpaDeX mission," ISRO Chairman S Somanath said shortly after the launch.

"The rocket has placed the

satellites in the right orbit." If all goes according to plan, the first docking attempt could occur by January 7, he added.

If India is able to complete an

unmanned docking, it will become the fourth-ever country to have achieved the feat - alongside the US, Russia and China - seen as pivotal for future space endeavours.

SpaDex lifted off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh state at 1630 GMT.

The technology is essential for 'India's space ambitions such as Indian on Moon, sample return from the Moon, the building and operation of Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), etc.', ISRO authorities wrote in a mission overview, using the official name for India's planned space station.

DW

Crashed plane flew 13 times in 48 hours

Seoul, South Korea - The South Korean aircraft that crashed on Sunday, killing 179 people, had completed 13 flights within the 48 hours preceding the tragedy, local media reported.

The Jeju Air Boeing 737-800 had operated routes between Muan, Jeju Island, and Incheon, west of Seoul, before the fatal incident, according to Seoul-based Yonhap News.

The aircraft likely experienced a landing gear malfunction during its descent at Muan International Airport, 288km (179 miles) southwest of Seoul.

"It was also found to have travelled to international destinations, including Beijing, Bangkok, Kota Kinabalu, Nagasaki, and Taipei," Yonhap said.



The South Korean aircraft crashed on Sunday, killing 179 people

"The aircraft served as a charter flight for group tours mostly organised by a Gwangju-based travel agency, which offered a 5-day package trip to Bangkok for the Christmas season."

Charter flights, scheduled

based on demand, are often filled with passengers selected by travel agencies.

Regional airports in South Korea depend heavily on such operations, mostly run by low-cost carriers like Jeju Air.

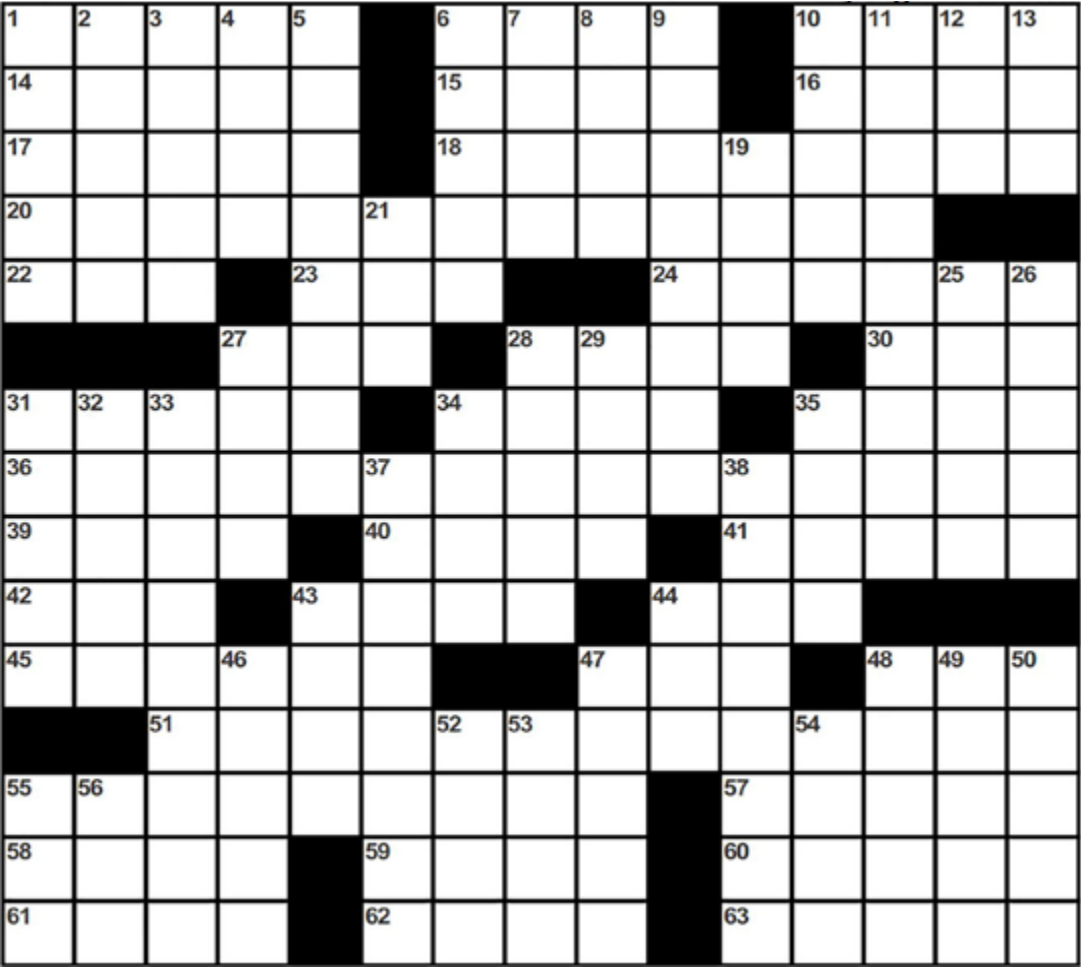
"In the case of regional airports, there are very few regular flight routes, so they often rely on charter operations. Since most airlines operating at regional airports are low-cost carriers, the majority of charter flights are run by these airlines," a travel industry official told Yonhap News.

"According to the company's data, the average monthly flight time per Jeju Air aircraft was recorded at 418 hours in the July-September period, the longest among the six domestic low-cost carriers."

Another Boeing 737-800 operated by Jeju Air, which departed from Gimpo International Airport, faced a similar landing gear issue recently.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Cinematic turkeys
 - 6) William the Conqueror's burial place
 - 10) Nasty guy
 - 14) Farewell
 - 15) Fashion magnate
 - 16) Gucci
 - 16) Manitoba tribe
 - 17) "Blue" singer Rimes
 - 18) Ticket for a makeup game
 - 20) Start of a woman-approved quip
 - 22) Singer DiFranco
 - 23) Shipping co.
 - 24) Made uniform
 - 27) Dude kin
 - 28) Elroy Jetson's mom
 - 30) Caesar's 1,011
 - 31) Negatively charged particle
 - 34) Shoots the breeze
 - 35) Adam's boy
 - 36) Middle of a woman-approved quip
 - 39) Cosmetics giant
 - 40) Air freshener scent
 - 41) Ship of fuels?
 - 42) Prohibit, as a pesticide
 - 43) Monthly expense, for some
 - 44) Larry King worked
 - there
 - 45) Fainting
 - 47) "In" thing
 - 48) Weight-loss locale
 - 51) End of a woman-approved quip
 - 55) Put in order
 - 57) "Nancy" rich kid
 - 58) Create
 - 59) Masked men in parks
 - 60) John of music
 - 61) Former world power
 - 62) Cancun coin
 - 63) Accomplishing
- DOWN**
- 1) Model-maker's wood
 - 2) Music hall
 - 3) City on Biscayne Bay
 - 4) "Well done!" in Italy
 - 5) Overexposed, in a way (Var.)
 - 6) Marathoners' prerace intake
 - 7) Jai _ (court game)
 - 8) Falco of "The Sopranos"
 - 9) "You must be kidding!"
 - 10) Earthy hue
 - 11) Anti-takeover maneuver
 - 12) Kind of center
 - 13) Cartoon squeal
 - 19) Hibernation site
 - 21) Mil. address
 - 25) Drive out
 - 26) Thanksgiving guest
 - 27) Beethoven's birth-place
 - 28) Pleasure trip
 - 29) Having the necessary power
 - 31) Addis_ (Ethiopia's capital)
 - 32) Some old Chevy models
 - 33) Smelting locale
 - 34) Winner's look
 - 35) It can be doubled on a face
 - 37) Unfolded
 - 38) Pondered
 - 43) Architect Mies van der _
 - 44) Subway unit
 - 46) Seal's kin
 - 47) Corpulent 1980 Dom DeLuise comedy?
 - 48) Longtime Chicago Symphony conductor
 - 49) Air-race marker
 - 50) For_ (cheaply)
 - 52) "Julius Caesar" setting
 - 53) Eats late
 - 54) Type of tie or knife
 - 55) Mustangs school, briefly
 - 56) Western defense grp.

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

There's quite a mixed bag of astrological energies on board, so prepare yourself. The stars emphasize peace and relationships, urging you to place yourself bravely between any warring factions, and with your reputation for courage, there's no doubt you can pull it off. However, it could well be jealousy or resentment you're dealing with, and neither of those situations is easy to handle.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

If a loved one happens to bring up an uncomfortable topic, you won't shy away from it, but they'll be sorry they didn't let it lie right where it was. It's all about love, love, love for you. You're the current astrological equivalent of a magnet. In short, there will be no refusing you (as if there ever was), and no possibility of winning an argument. It's only fair that you warn your opponents first.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Big revelations are coming your way, and they probably won't all be about you. Don't look now, but you're about to get stuck in the middle of a potentially touchy situation. If there's a big conflict brewing, you hold some information that could either extinguish this potential fire or make it an inferno, so to play it safe and hold your tongue. You aren't responsible for the happiness of other people.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- The opening of the 2012 Summer Olympics had echoes of what event at the 1984 Olympic Games opening?
A. The US Army Band formed the Olympic rings
B. A flight over the stadium by someone in a one-man jetpack
C. Children held balloons that burst simultaneously
D. Balloons were released, to carry a set of Olympic rings and a camera up to the mid-stratosphere
- What is the name for a mixture of clay, sand and silt?
A. Peat
B. Loam
C. Gravel
D. Sludge
- Who wrote the poem "O Captain! My Captain!"?
A. Alan Ginsberg
B. Walt Whitman
C. Robert Frost
D. Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Answers: 1.B 2.B 3.B

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Jealousy and resentment are in the air, but not because of anything you've done. So put aside your famous ability to blame yourself for every single thing that's ever happened and listen up. The stars bring up issues around relationships and obsession. It's the perfect recipe for making every encounter an intense, possessive one. Yes, that goes for even the most casual ones. If a friend has a problem along these lines.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You just can't be too careful when it comes to the feelings of a dear one, a family member in particular. So if you get the impression that you're being just a bit too blunt and honest (based on the look on their face, that is) try to rein it in just a little. After all, there's definitely something to be said for discretion and for being kind to folks who aren't as well equipped to do verbal battle as you are.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Scheduling conflicts may seem insurmountable today. Take a break now and things may free up, making a compromise possible. Be prepared to give a little bit more than everyone else. Your willingness to be flexible will be remembered by people who can make things happen down the road. One of your most ambitious goals feels like it's getting tougher today. It's time to swallow your pride and ask for the help you know you need.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Ready to actually make travel plans? Good, because you've definitely earned the time off. Now, this doesn't mean you need to jump into anything (as if you ever needed any help in that department), but you should know that you're right about ditching the hesitations and moving forward. If this is a romantic tryst, so much the better. Not only will the plans go well, the trip promises to be steamy.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Today, you'll get a lot closer to answering the questions you've been wrestling with. Before the day is through, you'll be taken to the right place and given all the right tools to contemplate your situation and think through your options. There's no such thing as bad answers, just right answers. Don't be afraid to dig deep into your subconscious and face some nagging fears.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Whatever you're feeling, it's going to show quite easily, and the more people you're surrounded by, the more fun it will be to let it fly. So when a friend asks you to help dig into their current situation, whether it's to help them out of it or help them to find their own way, you won't hesitate, but you may end up wishing you had if you're not discreet. You're already busy trying to stay out of trouble. Why look for more?

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Go easy on your family, friends, coworkers, and the other people you see on a daily basis. The stars are turning up your powers of charming manipulation, convincing you that no matter what you want, you can have it (as long as you're willing to dangle a very attractive carrot in front of someone's nose). You'll do it nicely, however, so not only will it work, but no one will mind.

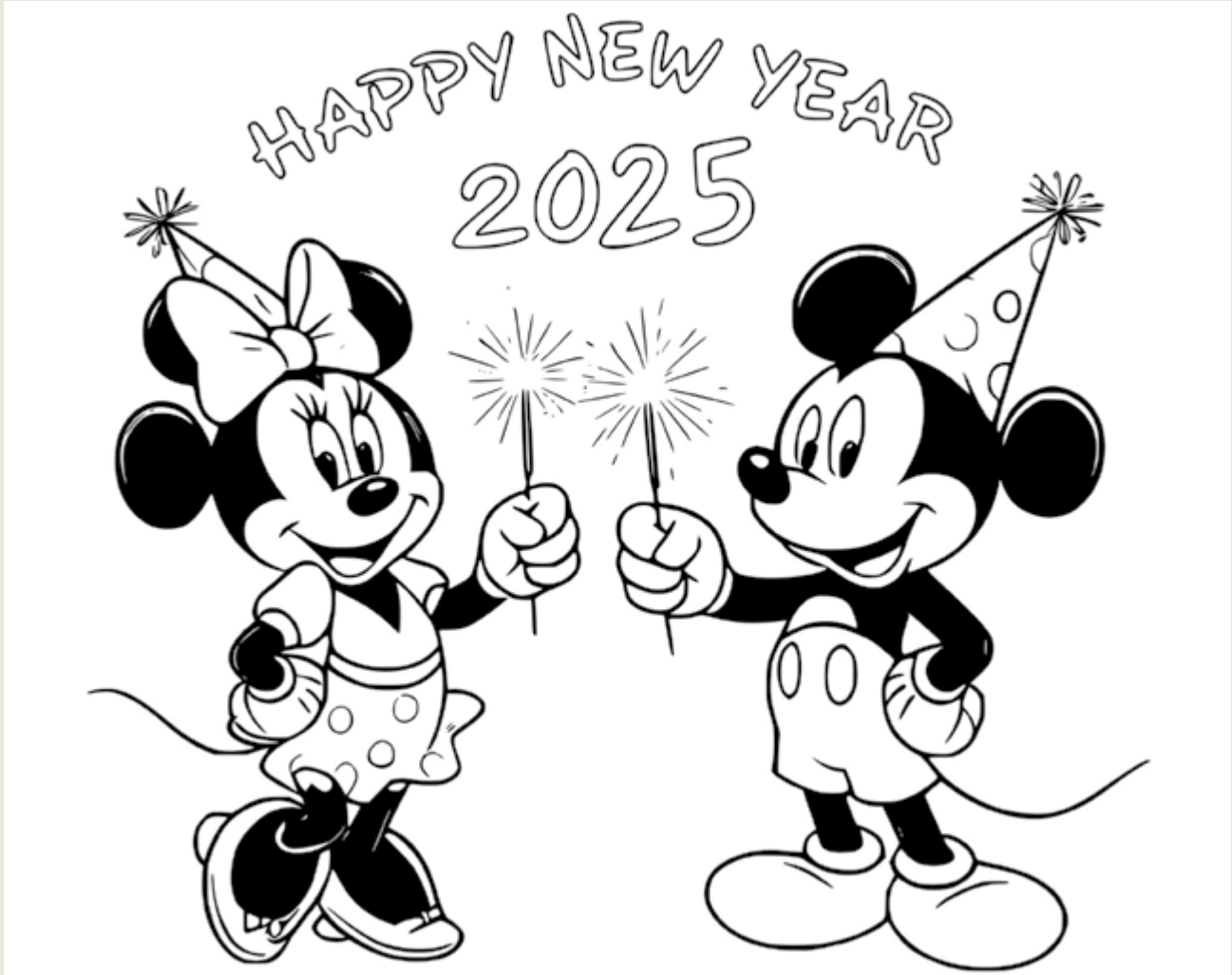
SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Now is a good time to reevaluate your public persona. A recent awkward moment left you feeling out of your element, and that could be because you aren't completely aware of how people see you. The disconnect between who you feel you are inside and who people think you are doesn't have to slow you down, though. As long as you stay true to what you feel in all situations.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Someone is telling you to push ahead, but your innately stubborn nature comes to your rescue and balks. You just go at your own pace, and you get where you're going in your own sweet time. You know you're absolutely right this time, so stick to your guns no matter how frantic everyone else seems. Just because they're in a panic, it's no reason to join them. You should soon see the wisdom of your choice.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

U	N	S	E
I	W	H	E
M	L	I	T
S	C	L	N

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

THE TWILIGHT SAGA

Pressure mounts on Rohit and Kohli to perform or exit Test arena after defeat in Melbourne

New Delhi, India - Speculation that India captain Rohit Sharma and batting stalwart Virat Kohli are set to call time on their Test careers has snowballed as the veteran pair continue to struggle in the five-test series in Australia. India, who won their last two Test tours in Australia, went 2-1 down in the series after their stunning defeat in Melbourne on Monday, with the hosts needing only a draw in Sydney to reclaim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy (BGT). Opener Rohit has just one fifty and 10 single-digit scores in his last 15 Test innings, and even a move down the order failed to pay dividends for the 37-year-old. Under his captaincy, India have lost five Tests this season, equalling their unwanted record from 1999-2000 under Sachin Tendulkar. Kohli, one of the greats of the modern game, has not fared much better. The 36-year-old struck a century in the opening Test in Perth but had a wretched season overall with nine single-digit scores in 17 innings this Test season. Both New Zealand and Australia have exploited his vulnerability to left-arm spin and outside the off-stump line, rendering him a walking wicket at times. "Is it time to take a call on se-



India captain Rohit Sharma and superstar Virat Kohli both endured an alarming dip in form in 2024

niors Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli?" the Hindustan Times newspaper asked on its front page after the defeat in Melbourne, where India lost seven wickets after tea on day five. That sentiment was echoed among fans in the cricket-mad country where Rohit and Kohli are practically worshipped, with the term "happy retirement" trending on Monday. Both players quit Twenty20 Internationals immediately after

guiding India to their second 20-overs World Cup title in June. "Is the Rohit-Kohli retirement announcement round the corner?" asked the Indian Express. "The curtain is beginning to slide down from above; will they give themselves one more Test at Sydney with BGT still open and out there for the taking or ...?" The Times of India called for an immediate changing of the guard, saying the senior batters

Rohit has just one fifty and 10 single-digit scores in his last 15 Test innings, and even a move down the order failed to pay dividends for the 37-year-old. Under his captaincy, India have lost five Tests this season.

were "in danger of being termed as liabilities". The Melbourne defeat not only dented India's chances of retaining the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, it effectively ended their hopes of reaching the World Test Championship final for the third time in a row. Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar said another failure in Sydney could prompt Rohit to quit Test cricket and that India should draft in new faces for their England tour next year. "The next cycle of the World Test Championship will be the cycle for 2027. You should see new faces for that," Gavaskar told Sports Tak.

India need a win in Sydney to stay in WTC final contention

South Africa's nail-biting two-wicket win against Pakistan in Centurion has confirmed their place in June's World Test Championship (WTC) final, while Australia's win at the MCG makes them the frontrunner to take the second spot, though India and Sri Lanka are still in contention. Here is a look at what each team in contention needs to do to qualify.

AUSTRALIA
Per cent: 61.46; matches remaining: India (1 home Test), SL (2 away)

If Australia win the Sydney Test against India, they are through to the WTC final regardless of results in Sri Lanka - if Australia were to win in Sydney but lose both Tests in their upcoming series in Sri Lanka, they would finish on 57.02 percentage points to India's 50 and Sri Lanka's 53.85.

A draw in Sydney will keep them ahead of India, but it would leave the door open for Sri Lanka to sneak through; if Australia were to draw in Sydney but lose both Tests in Sri Lanka, they would finish on 53.51, while Sri Lanka would climb up to 53.85.

If Australia were to lose in Sydney, they would need one win in Sri Lanka to qualify. A 1-1 verdict in Sri Lanka after losing in Sydney would leave Australia on 57.02 to India's 55.26.

If Australia draw both Tests in Sri Lanka after losing in Sydney, India and Australia will be level on 55.26, but India will qualify on the basis of having

won more series in this WTC cycle.

INDIA
Per cent: 52.78; matches remaining: Australia (1 away)

India need to win in Sydney to stay in contention for the WTC final. A win would take India to 55.26, which would be enough for them to finish second if Australia were to achieve no more than two draws in Sri Lanka. As mentioned above, if Australia draw both Tests, they will finish level with India on percentage, but India will qualify with more series wins in this cycle. If Australia lose 1-0, they will drop to 53.51, and Sri Lanka will finish with 48.72 (with a 1-0 win).

However, if India only manage a draw, they will drop to 51.75 and will be out of the WTC final race. That is because even if Australia were to lose both Tests in Sri Lanka after drawing in Sydney, they would finish on 53.51, while Sri Lanka would climb up to 53.85.

SRI LANKA
Per cent: 45.45; matches remaining: Australia (2 home)

The only way Sri Lanka can qualify is if the Sydney Test ends in a draw and they then beat Australia 2-0. In that case, Sri Lanka, on 53.85, would finish above Australia (53.51) and India (51.75). If India win in Sydney, they will knock Sri Lanka out. Australia, also, will certainly finish ahead of Sri Lanka if they go to 3-1 in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.



Captain Hashmatullah Shahidi scored 246 to reclaim the record Test score for an Afghanistan batsman

Afghanistan set records galore, but Bulawayo Test ends in a draw

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - Afghanistan amassed their highest score of 699 on Monday before the first Test against Zimbabwe ended in a draw at the end of the final day at the Queens Sports Club. Captain Hashmatullah Shahidi, batting for a third successive day, scored 246 to reclaim the record Test score for an Afghani batsman after Rahmat Shah was dismissed for 234 late on the fourth day on Sunday. Hashmatullah held the record with his unbeaten 200 against Zimbabwe in Abu Dhabi in 2021 but Rahmat bettered it in Bulawayo before Hashmatullah claimed his record back in the same innings. Afghanistan resumed on the last day on 515-3 and saw Afsar Zazai score a maiden Test century before being caught for 113. That wicket set off a slump in

Hashmatullah Shahidi scored 246 to set the record Test score for an Afghani batsman

their batting as they lost their last seven wickets for 60 runs with part-time offspinner Brian Bennett claiming 5-95. Zimbabwe were 65 without loss at tea as they began their second innings but, amid a rain delay, then lost four quick wickets but rallied to 142-4 when the two captains shook hands and agreed to end play shortly before the scheduled close. Zimbabwe's first innings score of 586 was also a record Test tally for them, bettering the 563-9 which they made against West Indies in Harare in 2001.

Djokovic and Sabalenka start season with easy victories, Kyrgios loses

Brisbane, Australia - Novak Djokovic and Aryana Sabalenka began their season with straight set wins but Nick Kyrgios' return to singles action did not go according to his plans at the Brisbane International on Tuesday. Djokovic tamed local favourite Rinky Hijikata 6-3 6-3 in what was the top seeded Serbian's first tour-level singles match since October. A day after his doubles victory alongside Kyrgios, Djokovic was precise with his serve and groundstrokes as he outclassed Hijikata to set up a second round clash with Gael Monfilis. "I always expect myself to do well on the court," Djokovic said in an on-court interview. "To start off the new season with a win, it's very important." Earlier, Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard fired 36 aces to beat Kyrgios 7-6(2) 6-7(4) 7-6(3) in a battle of big servers at the Pat Rafter Arena. The 21-year-old struck eight forehand winners in the first set alone and served a



Novak Djokovic celebrates after defeating Rinky Hijikata

game of aces to go 5-4 ahead in the third in what was Kyrgios' first tour-level match since a wrist surgery in September 2023. Mpetshi Perricard claimed two

mini-breaks in the decisive tie-break to claim victory showing tremendous poise under pressure. Women's world number one

Sabalenka sent an ominous warning on her season debut with a 6-4 6-0 demolition of Renata Zarazua. The Belarusian has been working on her new groundstrokes and Mexican Zarazua found herself on the firing line as Sabalenka reeled off 23 winners and won 71% of her service points. "The first match is always a tricky one," said Sabalenka, who is coming off a stellar season and will begin her quest for a third Australian Open title later this month. Ons Jabeur of Tunisia battled through a first-set tiebreaker before taking down China's Saisai Zheng 7-6 (5), 6-4 in opening-round action. The former World No. 2 and three-time Grand Slam finalist opened her season by hitting six aces and going 3-for-5 in both saving break points and breaking her opponent's serve.

US, Italy march into United Cup quarters

Sydney, Australia - Inaugural champions the United States and Italy handed out identical 3-0 thrashings to Croatia and France respectively, to top their groups and sail into the quarter-finals of the United Cup on Tuesday. Taylor Fritz's 6-3, 6-2 win against Borna Coric in men's singles ensured the U.S., who meet China in the quarter-finals, topped Group A regardless of the outcome of the tie in the mixed team tournament. The big-hitting American converted his only break point of the first set in the seventh game and then served out the opener to surge ahead.

He capitalised on a double break to go 4-0 up and went on to secure his maiden win against Coric in 91 minutes. Coco Gauff was equally dominant in her 6-4 6-2 win over Donna Vekic in women's singles. Vekic upset Gauff at the Paris Olympics and went on to win the silver medal, but in Perth the American dictated terms as she secured the tie for her team even before the mixed doubles rubber. After racing to a 4-1 lead in the first set, former U.S. Open champion Gauff never really took her foot off the pedal. "I'm really happy with how I played today," Gauff said. "She's a great player, and the Olympics loss hurt, so I definitely was thinking about it today as motivation to do better." Gauff and Fritz were equally impressive in their mixed doubles win. Earlier, Italy's Flavio Cobolli saved a match point to get the better of Frenchman Ugo Humbert 3-6 7-6(8) 6-2 in Group D in Sydney. Humbert won his first 17 service points in the second set and was serving for the match at 6-3 5-4 before Cobolli produced a stunning comeback. "It was a great battle to start the season. I'm really happy about the match," Cobolli said.



Coco Gauff of United States in action against Donna Vekic of Croatia



Ruben Amorim

Relegation ‘is a possibility’ for Man United, says Amorim

Manchester, England - Ruben Amorim called it ‘embarrassing’ as a Manchester United manager to be discussing the threat of relegation, but after Monday’s miserable 2-0 Premier League loss to Newcastle United he conceded that is the reality his team are facing.

Newcastle’s Alexander Isak and Joelinton headed early goals to hand Amorim’s team their fifth loss in their last six league games. They go into the new year 14th in the table, much closer to the relegation zone than the Champions League positions.

‘I think (relegation) is a possibility and we have to be

Ruben Amorim,’ former United defender Gary Neville said on Sky Sports. ‘He came in as a young manager and knew it was going to be a big job, but it is far bigger than he could have ever imagined.’

Neville called United ‘the worst pound for pound team in the country.’

There have been questions over Amorim’s commitment to his tactical 3-4-3 approach, and there were even more after Monday’s loss. The defensive issues that plagued former manager Erik ten Hag have haunted Amorim as well, with both goals on Monday coming largely thanks to blun-

We have to change something but this season will be really hard on everybody. So it’s a hard moment. It can make us stronger and we have to fight.

RUBEN AMORIM

clear with our fans. We have to change something but this season will be really hard on everybody. It can make us stronger and we have to fight,’ Amorim said.

‘It’s also my fault in this moment, because I think the team is not improved, I think it is a little bit lost in this moment. So it’s a little bit embarrassing to be much as United coach and to lose a lot of games. But we have to cope with that, difficult moments in the life of everybody. So it’s a hard moment.’

Amorim has had anything but a dream start to his United career, suffering five defeats in his first eight league games -- the worst record for a Manchester United manager in 103 years.

‘Worrying times for Manchester United and

ders in the back line.

‘Of course, I didn’t choose the players specifically for that position, but that I already knew,’ Amorim said, when asked if he has the talent to play his formation. ‘I have to sell my idea, if I’m going to change all the time it is going to be even worse.’

‘But I understand that they have a lot of difficulties, because they spend two years playing one way, and then they are playing another, and with a lot of losses, is really tough on them, and you can feel it during the game.’

‘I have to sell my idea. I don’t have another one.’

One of the game’s ugliest moments came when Amorim took struggling Joshua Zirkzee off in the 33rd minute to boos from the Old Trafford crowd.

RUBEN AMMO MISFIRES AGAIN

Manchester United lose to Newcastle for their third straight league defeat

Manchester, England - Newcastle United beat Manchester United 2-0 in the Premier League on Monday thanks to early headed goals from Alexander Isak and Joelinton at Old Trafford, an ugly culmination of one of the most miserable months in the home side’s recent memory.

With five losses in their last six league games, Manchester United languish 14th in the standings on 19 points, their worst placing to end a calendar year since they were 15th in 1989. Newcastle are fifth on 32 points.

‘One of the more difficult moments in the history of Manchester United,’ said manager Ruben Amorim, who called the team’s position in the table embarrassing.

‘It’s a very difficult moment, but we have to fight to win the next game.’

Isak got the visitors on the scoresheet in the fourth minute when he leapt to head home a pinpoint cross from Lewis Hall with both Harry Maguire and Lisandro Martinez failing to pick him up.

It was the 11th goal in 11 games for Isak, who has scored more Premier League goals in Decem-



Alexander Isak (L) and Joelinton (C) were both on target for Newcastle United at Old Trafford on Monday



ber than any other player with eight.

Newcastle doubled their lead in the 19th minute in near carbon copy fashion with Anthony Gordon sending in a cross that Joelinton headed in.

The win marked Newcastle’s second victory at Old Trafford in 40 league visits, dating back to 1972.

‘We know the hurt this fixture has had for us historically, it wasn’t lost on us,’ Newcastle boss Eddie Howe said. ‘We didn’t necessarily use that with the players, but it was a big step forward for

us today. I think we need to win games like this to achieve what we want on a regular basis.’

It is also the first time since 1979 that Manchester United have lost three consecutive league games at home. Their 18 goals conceded in all competitions in December is their most in a single month since March 1964 (also 18).

The score could have been more lopsided, with Isak lashing a shot past keeper Andre Onana in what would have made it 3-0 in the first half before the offside flag went up to the relief of

United fans.

Soon after, Sandro Tonali missed an absolute sitter when he ran onto a flick from Gordon but clattered it off the woodwork.

‘It feels great. We haven’t won in a long time here, it was a great performance and the perfect way to end the year,’ Isak said. ‘The challenge was to have the same intensity here as we do at home - the first half paid off.’

While the home side, who were playing without captain Bruno Fernandes, who was serving a suspension, struggled to get out of their end in the first half,

Rasmus Hojlund and Casemiro both squandered chances just before halftime.

Hojlund was played in by Martinez but sent his shot across the face of goal, inches from the far corner, while Casemiro unleashed a shot that sailed wide, burying his head in his hands.

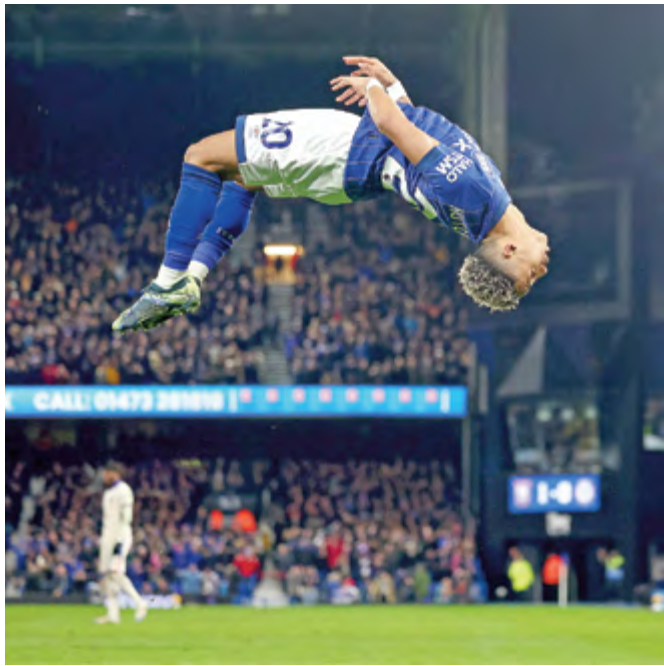
Amorim’s men were better after the break and Maguire’s diving header that goalkeeper Martin Dubravka grabbed at least had the Old Trafford crowd - who had booed their squad off the pitch at the break - cheering their effort.

Ipswich Town stun Chelsea for first home win in Premier League since April 2002

Ipswich, England - Liam Delap and Omari Hutchinson scored either side of the break as Ipswich Town finally ended an almost 23-year wait to win a Premier League match at Portman Road with a 2-0 victory over Chelsea on Monday.

Not since April 2002, and a 1-0 win over Middlesbrough, have Ipswich celebrated home success in the top flight but on Monday hauled themselves one place up the standings to 18th with a tenacious triumph and handed Chelsea’s title hopes another blow.

Delap’s 12th minute penalty and a fine finish in the 53rd minute from former Chelsea product Hutchinson made for the perfect finish to an exciting year



Ipswich Town’s Omari Hutchinson celebrates his goal against Chelsea

for the club, who were promoted at the end of last season.

Defeat for Chelsea, on the other hand, left them with one point from their last three outings and down to fourth spot, 10 points behind Liverpool and having played one game more than the leaders.

Home hopes were raised early with the penalty award, as Leif Davis’ searching pass found Delap, who slid in to try and reach the ball and had his dangling leg caught by Chelsea goalkeeper Filip Jorgensen as he came rushing off his line.

It was Ipswich’s first penalty of the league season and Delap fired it underneath Jorgensen to the delight of the home crowd.

Soon thereafter followed a

strong save from Jorgensen as Delap struck a firm effort across goal from a tight angle before Chelsea took control of the encounter and did almost everything but score. Joao Felix had the ball in the back of the net after coming in at the back post with a 24th minute effort that was ruled offside after a VAR check.

Cole Palmer struck the woodwork twice, first with a quickly taken and curling freekick where the rebound fell to Christopher Nkunku, who hit it straight at Christian Walton.

The Ipswich keeper also denied Palmer with a sharp stop near the end of the first half. But the expected equaliser never came, with Ipswich instead going 2-0 up early in the second half.

Lamprey’s late goal rescues Brighton in 2-2 draw against Aston Villa

Birmingham, England - Brighton & Hove Albion’s Tariq Lamprey drove home a late equaliser to earn his side a point in a lively 2-2 draw at Aston Villa in the Premier League on Monday.

Villa had come from behind to lead with an Ollie Watkins penalty and a Morgan Rogers effort just after the interval but Brighton deservedly left with a share of the spoils.

Lamprey was played in by Joao Pedro’s clever flick and volleyed home first-time in the 81st minute.

Villa remained in ninth place with 29 points from 19 games with Brighton’s second draw of the festive period leaving them two points behind in 10th spot.



Brighton & Hove Albion’s Tariq Lamprey celebrates after scoring against Aston Villa on Monday

We reacted and came back with 2-1. I have to accept it but I am a little bit frustrated with it. The table is very tight but we are in the race for the second part of the season

UNAI EMERY, ASTON VILLA MANAGER

Both sides will enter the new year with aspirations of qualifying for Europe and there was plenty of evidence to suggest both could realise that ambition in 2025 although Brighton are now on a seven-match winless streak.

A game of 33 goal attempts made for great viewing and a point apiece was about right in the end, even if both managers

will feel they could have bagged all three points.

‘We reacted and came back with 2-1. I have to accept it but I am a little bit frustrated with it. The table is very tight but we are in the race for the second part of the season,’ Villa manager Unai Emery said.

‘We are ninth in the table and we have to try to start again against Leicester (City).’

Brighton went ahead in the 12th minute when Lewis Dunk launched a pass forward and Joao Pedro did well to knock the ball into the path of Simon Adingra who curled home a beauty.

Villa then had two penalty appeals in quick succession analysed by VAR. The first was when Rogers weaved his way into the area and fell under a challenge by Jan Paul van Hecke with the defender just getting enough of the ball to escape trouble.

Moments later Villa were again appealing for a penalty again as Rogers again went down in the area, this time after a stretching tackle by Joao Pedro. This time referee Craig Pawson,

after a lengthy stare at the pitch-side monitor, awarded a penalty and Watkins thumped in the equaliser.

Two minutes after the restart, Villa went ahead as Watkins, back in the starting line-up after being dropped to the bench for the last three games, dinked a superb pass for Rogers to dispatch a superb shot past Brighton keeper Bart Verbruggen.

Villa appeared to be edging towards a victory that would have put them seventh but Lamprey had other ideas.

Even then there was still time for Villa to win and Watkins had a glorious chance from a corner but fired over the bar.

HEROIC VICTORY

Ten-man Oman defeat Saudi Arabia to enter Gulf Cup final

Muscat - Oman players ran tirelessly from the first whistle to the last, fought like their lives depended on it and emerged as heroes soaked in sweat and glory after playing almost two-thirds of the match one man short.

Rasheed Jabir's men will take on the winners of the second semifinal between hosts Kuwait and Bahrain to be played later in the evening. But in this form, with this confidence and fighting spirit, Oman will feel they can conquer the world.

Oman were down to 10 men in the 34th minute when Al Mandhar Rabia Said al Alawi got marching orders for a foul on Saudi Arabia's Salem Aldawsari which looked like a harsh decision.

But Oman continued with their attacking ways and minutes later a teasing cross from the right had Saudi goalkeeper Mohammed Alowais scrambling. Though he deflected the cross, Oman's Ali Al Busaidi still managed a shot which hit a crowd of legs and went out for a corner. Oman had another bright moment when they broke through the left and opened up the Saudi defence only for Alowais to make a fingertip save to deny Harib al Saadi.

In between, Oman goalkeeper Faiz al Rushaidi made a brave stop to deny Aldawsari from close range.



Oman's Arshad al Alawi scores against Saudi Arabia on Tuesday

Saudi Arabia though they took the lead just before the hour mark when Abdullah al Hamdan put the ball in Oman net but the goal was ruled out for offside in the build up after a VAR check.

Saudi had another chance after a quick throw in form the left freed Marwan al Sahafi but Al Rushaidi stood tall and cut the angle, forcing the Saudi attacker to hit his shot wide.

Oman took the lead in the 74th minute after a foul on

Ahmed al Khamisi on the edge of the area by Saudi forward Musab Fahz Aljuwayr, who also got a yellow card.

Arshad al Alawi's low and powerful freekick took a slight deflection off Aljuwayr's left foot and went past a diving Alowais in Saudi goal.

It was every bit Oman deserved and in the 78th minute, they came close to increasing their lead when Issam Al Sabhi's glancing header off Ali al Busaidi's corner sailed inches wide.

Oman were down to 10 men in the 34th minute when Al Mandhar Rabia Said al Alawi got marching orders for a foul on Saudi Arabia's Salem Aldawsari which looked like a harsh decision.

But Oman scored their second in the 85th minute after quick throw in found Abdulrahman al Mushaifri whose perfect cutback was emphatically finished by Al Busaidi.

Saudi Arabia came roaring back into the game when Mohamed Kanno's shot from outside the box flew past Al Rushaidi's

outstretched hands into Oman goal just two minutes later.

Though the Saudi Arabians bombarded Oman penalty box in the closing moments the men in red fought for each and every ball. And despite having to play more than 10 minutes of added time, they bravely held on for a famous win.



Thailand's Suphanat Mueanta celebrates after scoring against Vietnam on Monday

Thailand edge Philippines to reach Asean final

Bangkok, Thailand - Thailand will face Vietnam in the final of the Asean Championship after Suphanat Mueanta's extra-time header earned the defending champions a 3-1 win over the Philippines in Bangkok on Monday to register a 4-3 aggregate victory.

Trailing 2-1 from the opening encounter in Manila on Friday, Suphanat's 116th minute header secured victory for Masatada Ishii's side and sets up a re-run of the 2022 decider, which Thailand won 3-2 on aggregate.

Peeradon Chamratsamee had put the Thais ahead on the night in the 37th minute when he shot past Quincy Kammeraad and Patrik Gustavsson gave the title-holders the aggregate lead nine minutes after the restart with a first-time angled finish.

But with seven minutes remaining the Philippines' Norway-born striker Bjorn Kristensen bent a low shot from 20 yards into the bottom corner of Patiwat Khammai's goal to take the game into extra-time.

Proceedings looked destined to go to penalties until Suphanat rose highest to meet Worachit Kanitsribampen's cross from the right and his downward header gave Kammeraad little chance as the seven-times champions prevailed.

Vietnam secured their place in the final on Sunday when two goals from Nguyen Xuan Son helped Kim Sang-sik's side to a 3-1 win over Singapore on the night in Viet Tri and a 5-1 victory on aggregate having won the first leg 2-0 on Thursday.

Vietnam will host the first leg of the final in Viet Tri on Thursday with the return in Bangkok on Sunday.

Conceicao 'proud to take on Milan adventure'

Milan, Italy - New AC Milan manager Sergio Conceicao said he is prepared for the tough job ahead as he aims to turn the team into a side worthy of the club's heritage, and his first task will bring him up against his son at Juventus.

Conceicao was appointed on Monday after the club sacked Paulo Fonseca, with the club eighth in the Serie A standings and already out of the title race, after seven wins from their opening 17 games leaves them 14 points off leaders Atalanta.

"I'm proud to take on this adventure. The emotions are temporary because we need to work," Conceicao said.

"We need to have a warm heart and cool head to work as hard as we can and win the matches. That's what we want because we represent a great club on a global level and we need to be worthy of this great club."

Conceicao will depart with his players for Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, as his first game in charge comes in Riyadh on Friday when Milan take on Juventus in the



Sergio Conceicao

semi-final of the Italian Super Cup.

"We don't have much time but that's absolutely not an excuse," the new manager said.

"With the time at my disposal, I have to work as hard as I can so that the players understand what they have to do, first as individuals and then be a strong team in every game we have."

Conceicao, who played with Lazio, Inter Milan and Parma in Italy, will have good memories of the Super Cup, and playing against Juventus.

In his first ever game in Italy, Conceicao scored an added time winner on his Lazio debut to defeat Juventus in the 1998 Super Cup Final, so Friday's game may feel like a date with destiny, as

well as being a family affair.

Conceicao's son Francisco joined the Italian club in August on loan from Porto, where he played under his father.

That move came shortly after Conceicao brought an end to his seven-year spell as manager at Porto, despite having signed a four-year contract extension in April.

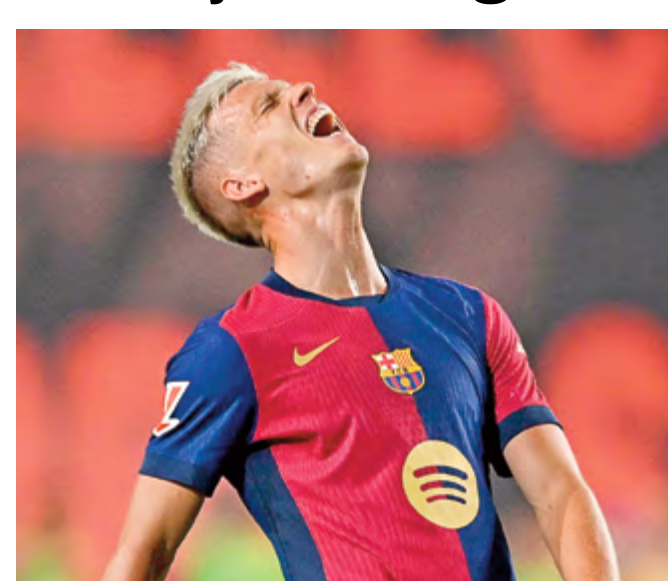
Setback for Barca as appeal to register Olmo rejected again

Barcelona, Spain - Barcelona have lost another appeal for the precautionary registration of Dani Olmo for the rest of the season on Monday, one day before the deadline to register the Spanish international.

Barcelona signed Olmo in August for around 55 million euros (\$57.22 million) but with the club unable to meet LaLiga's wage cap, the attacking midfielder was registered for the first half of the season only.

The four-month allowance is set to expire at the end of the month. The club managed to register Olmo after long-term injuries kept first team players out of the squad for months, allowing Barca to allocate a portion of their wages to register the 26-year-old, along with forward Pau Victor.

On Friday, the Commercial Court number 10 of Barcelona rejected the club's request to provisionally register Olmo, and the Court of First Instance number 47 of Barcelona has agreed with that ruling on Monday.



Dani Olmo

According to LaLiga, the court rejected the precautionary registration of Olmo, since none of the necessary prerequisites for the adoption of the precautionary measure were met.

LaLiga also defended the competence of its Delegate Commission to approve its budgeting rules, and that this has never been questioned by any

club, including Barcelona.

The initial decision to not register Olmo was taken by LaLiga's Budget Validation Body.

That decision was then confirmed in three separate appeals by its Financial Fair Play Committee, its Social Appeals Committee and by the UEFA Second Instance Licensing Committee of the Spanish Football Federation.

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BIRTHDAY WISHES

YUVAN KRISHNAN

Happy second birthday to our little Star! On this special day, January 1, 2025, as we welcome a new year, we also celebrate the joy you've brought into our lives. Your laughter, love and innocence light up our world. Wishing you endless happiness, good health and a future as bright as your smile. With all our love, Amma and Appa.

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STATEMENTS

2025

STYLE
INSIGHT



In 2024, copious amounts of couture concepts surfaced and waned. It was the year when the Bottega Veneta Drop Earrings topped every fashion insider's wishlist and The Row's Half Moon bag took its crown as the quiet icon of refined luxury. But as the year's chicest moments faded into the rearview, 2025 is all decked to usher in a new wave of style – and some comebacks. And, the Sun is letting you in on the latest aesthetic currents as a new, polished chapter is ready to strut the sartorial scene.

BOLD MAXIMALISM

Vogue's December issue blowhorned the era of maximalism with Kaia Gerber gracing the cover in an over the top ensemble and big hair as edited by Marc Jacobs. The age of maximalism is escorted by bold 80s shoulders, corsets and animal prints as seen on the summer-spring 2025 runways by designers such as Vivienne Westwood, Louis Vuitton and Schiaparelli.

SUITED POWER

The 2025 Met Gala's theme, inspired by Columbia University's professor (Africana Studies) and author Monica Miller's 2009 book Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity, foreshadowed the arrival of fine tailoring and suave suits. This year is the comeback of suit style suits such as Black Dandyism and Zoot suits, which were once political statements of defiance, resilience and of course, fabulousness.

BLOOMING GARDENS

Sprouting into 2025, floral chic was popular on the runways of Chloe, Erdem and Loewe. A print that never actually left, best believe it is making a grand revival following its prophesied renaissance in the 2024 Met Gala Gardens of Time, where celebrities predictably (one might argue, lazily) donned the motif. With fairy tale core being the moodboard for poseurs, florals are making their way to being a staple in every style maven's wardrobe.



ELEVATED ATHLEISURE

Sporty chic is a steady fashion trend that will see new heights this year. With brands such as Sporty & Rich, Alo and Lululemon taking over armoires, spandex and nylon are the new linen. Even high fashion brands such as Miu Miu and Balenciaga were witnessed acclimating their collections, appealing to a fitness, on-the-go consumer base.

LAYERS AND MORE LAYERS

Layering is defining this year. Seen on runways for the 2025 summer, winter and fall collections, designers have chosen to style their muses in layers. Whether it is a skirt over trousers or chokers layered with necklaces, layering is tailored for the fashionably brazen.

CUFFS AND FRAMES

It is all about bone cuffs as seen on the Spring/Summer 2025 runways and sold. Oval frames for glasses such as Le 01 by Gentle Monster are all the buzz this year and funky futuristic glasses (think cyberpunk), with statement pieces of jewellery also seeing a revival.



FUNCTIONAL FLAIR

As Louis Vuitton revives its LV x Murakami collaboration from the vault, bags are no longer boring. Vibrant colours and prints, such as Cos's Leopard Fold Micro Tote, are seeing the light of day. And the one thing we are taking into 2025 from the past year - is the functionality of bags. Tote bags are here to stay for another year.

ANATOMICAL FOOTWEAR

Having debuted in 1989, Maison Margiela's tabi shoes were the it-shoes last year. Inspired by Japanese tabi socks and Jikatabi, the tabi exudes avant-garde with a cultural note. These anatomically-aligned shoes may have inspired the surge of shoes that are seemingly moulded to the shape of the feet as seen on runways such as Coperni Spring/Summer 2025. Honourable mention: Ballet flats are also making a swift comeback with designers such as Louboutin leading the runway with its Balletina Heels.





Rihanna's RESOLUTION

RIRI - THE BARBADIAN SINGER OPENS UP ON NEW YEAR'S BEAUTY RESOLUTION, AND TOP BEAUTY ADVICE



and we meant it! So, when it comes to makeup, skin, fragrance, or hair, I really wanted everyone to be able to get in on it and see themselves in our brand. I wanted to make sure that we not only offered universal products, like our Hydra Vizor Invisible SPF Moisturizer, but also offered more targeted solutions that were more skin type specific. Because everyone's skin is a little different and can often change depending on the time of year or where you are or what you're doing. With the launch of Cherry Dub Pore Purify'r Gel Cleanser, we now have a cleansing solution for oily days, dryer days, and those makeup-heavy days. And, to be honest...this cleanser is just something that I personally wanted and needed in my routine.

Why is Barbados cherry a star ingredient for Fenty Skin?

Everything about Fenty Skin is a reflection of my personal skin care journey and all the lessons and experiences I've had with my skin over the years. It was important to use gold-standard ingredients like niacinamide and hyaluronic acid, but I also wanted to bring some new ingredients into Fenty Skin, especially ones that I had a personal connection to. Barbados Cherry is not only an homage to my hometown, but it actually has 10 times more vitamin C in it than orange! So, it's great for brightening and delivering antioxidants.

What is your relationship to oiliness and/or acne, and how was that factored into the creation of the new Fenty Skin cleanser?

My skin has been through it all over the years! I definitely have my more oily days, particularly around my T-Zone, but my skin is always evolving. I travel a lot, so my skin is exposed to so many different environments, climates, and elements all the time. So having a kit that really caters to everything is key for me. Growing up in Barbados, dealing with humidity and sun exposure were the two biggest factors I considered when it came to skin care. I'm always gonna give you solutions that will protect, nourish, and cleanse your skin with those factors in mind. Even our makeup is tested to be humidity-proof, too!

What are your different secrets for achieving and maintaining 'snatched pores'?

Cleanser, toner, moisturizer. Never miss a step! On days when I need a little more, I give myself 1-minute mini facials with Fenty Skin Pre-Show Glow. Gently exfoliate, and never be too harsh with your skin.

The holidays and wintertime supply extra downtime for self-care. How are you taking care of your hair during this time?

It's all about repair and strengthening my hair. I'm always switching up my hair - the colour, the length, the style - so making sure my hair is nourished is really the key for making any look work. So whether it's downtime or it's just in between switching up my hairstyle, I always make sure to really go in with Fenty Hair The Comeback Kid, our bond-building product, and swap out my normal conditioner for The Richer One.

As a mom to two young children, why is it important for you to still get that "me" time, especially on the beauty front?

Finding that "me" time never seems to get easier, but it's also never been more important. I try to do it whenever I can - it's never the same time or the same day. Becoming a mom has definitely made me become more flexible and patient when it comes to myself. But being the best version of myself helps me be the best mom, so self-care has still gotta be a priority, even if it looks a little different these days. If you feel good, you'll look even better.

What are your New Year's beauty resolutions, and why?

Sleep! I feel like I say that every year.

What's your top piece of advice for feeling confident?

Find Those lil' tricks that are just yours—like a red lip, a short haircut, or even a bare face. Beauty is there for you to have fun with, to express yourself with. Find your place and rock it.

To bask in the golden glow of Rihanna is to know that her skin is preternaturally flawless. You can hardly believe your eyes, at least in my experience. But the Grammy-winner, designer, and Fenty Beauty founder will be the first to tell you that achieving 'snatched pores' - her forever skin-care goal - is hard work. Yes, even for her. "I'm obsessed with my pores; ask anyone!" she tells me. "If your pores are tight, you'll get a smooth canvas for makeup; if you're going makeup-free, you'll look fresh and photo-ready."

RiRi tells no lies, and you can trust that her lifelong preoccupation with pores is the driving force behind her latest Fenty Skin launch: the Cherry Dub Pore Purify'r gel cleanser, dropping on January 2nd. Developed for oily skin, the bright red foaming gel gently whisks away oil and instantly brightens skin with Vitamin C-rich Barbados Cherry, pore-refining niacinamide, and soothing aloe. It also boasts Fenty's unmistakable (and irresistible!) Barbados Cherry-inspired scent. "It just makes the whole skin-care experience super sensory - you get this juicy red colour and uplifting tropical scent," she says. "It smells like home to me!" And making it a feast for the senses is more than just a treat; it's a strategy. "It's fun to look at and smells amazing, which I think is the key for consistency in skin care. You gotta love the whole experience to be able to do it all the time and get those results." Preach!

Ahead of the holidays, Rihanna speaks about her latest drop, finding "me" time as a mom of two young kids, and her top piece of beauty advice.

Why was it important to you to create a cleanser that caters to oily skin?

One of the things I love most about the beauty world and the beauty community is that it's a space where everyone can - and should - be able to get involved. From the start when we launched Fenty Beauty back in 2017, we said our brand is about 'Beauty For All', -



Beauty is there for you to have fun with, to express yourself with.
Find your place and rock it

Rihanna



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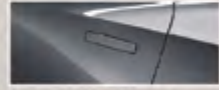
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