

Surge in domestic tourism with 12.9mn visitors

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Domestic tourism in Oman experienced remarkable growth in 2023 with the total number of visitors reaching 12.9mn, according to Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT).

Official data shows that the number of tourist nights touched 29mn and total spending amounted to RO829mn, reflecting a significant boost to the local economy.

Additionally, an MHT official informed that the sultanate attracted 4mn international tourists in 2023, underscoring the growing appeal of Oman as a global tourist destination. To further enhance the tourism sector, the sultanate has been engaging in strategic promotional campaigns and partnerships with global travel firms. The introduction of a 14-day visa-free entry for tourists is expected to trigger further growth in international tourism.

MHT is also working to meet its ambitious targets set in Oman Vision 2040 with plans to increase the number of international tourists to 11mn by 2040, thereby making tourism a key pillar of the nation's economic development.

Speaking about the growing role of adventure activities in boosting domestic tourism, Ali al Hajri, owner of Oman Desert Private Camp in Bidiyah, said his facility witnessed a 90% increase in bookings in December 2023, a surge he attributed to the popularity of adventure tourism. He emphasised the fact that Oman's rich cultural heritage and stunning landscapes, particularly Dhofar during khareef, have positioned the country as a sought-after destination for both local and international visitors.

While praising MHT for its efforts, Hajri called for a unified national plan to attract more tourists and suggested coordinating efforts so that the sultanate can further capitalise on its natural beauty and heritage to attract visitors.

Sheikh Suleiman bin Saeed al Abri, owner of Bait al Safah Heritage House in Al Hamra, echoed Hajri views, while also noting the rapid development of tourism services in the sultanate. He said establishment of Oman Tourism Association would play a key role in promoting Omani tourism,



Winter festivals are attracting tourists and promoting lesser-known destinations in Oman

SHEIKH SULEIMAN AL ABRI

benefiting not only major cities but also smaller towns and the country's UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Abri also highlighted the importance of winter festivals in attracting tourists and promoting lesser-known destinations in the sultanate.

Calling for broader tourism

development, Abri urged tourism companies to diversify their offerings by focusing on underexplored areas in Dhahirah, Buraimi, North Batinah and South Batinah.

One of the key infrastructure projects Abri highlighted was construction of a bridge to connect Masirah Island to the mainland, which he believes would have a transformative effect on tourism, social connectivity and economic growth. Additionally, he proposed transforming the Safa Sands in Ibri into a premier tourist destination with upscale camps offering comprehensive services similar to the popular Bidiyah Sands.

MHT is currently working on long-term strategies to boost tourism's contribution to the GDP. The sector's contribution of 2.4% in 2021 is expected to rise to 5% by 2030 and eventually 10% by 2040, as part of the broader goals set in Oman Vision 2040.

Our sprits are soaring high...

It's now time we celebrate your trust. Stay tuned

CONSUMER EXPERIENCE IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS



‘Oman’s Renewed Renaissance’ emblem to mark His Majesty’s 5th anniversary of leadership

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of the celebrations of the day His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik took the reins of power in the sultanate on January 11 five years ago, the Secretariat General for National Celebrations has announced the launch of an emblem of ‘Oman’s Renewed Renaissance’.

The emblem depicts features denoting the five years in which His Majesty the Sultan established the five basic pillars of the country - social development, youth, economy, decentralisation and governance.

The emblem depicts overlapping circles that reflect the vitality of decision-making and implementation. The top line indicates constant implementation through plans characterised by flexibility and commitment to improvement while symbolising the harmony of all vital sectors. It also



The emblem depicts five basic pillars of the country - social development, youth, economy, decentralisation and governance

indicates the fruitful outcome of national action influenced by the Royal Vision that takes centre stage among the five pillars.

The emblem features several colours, each having symbolic connotations. Dark purple sym-

bolises nobility and Royal Splendour, as well as the rich cultural heritage of Oman and the sultanate's prestigious position among nations. It embodies originality, uniqueness and the spirit of authentic cultural heritage.

The greenish blue colour symbolises innovation and modernisation. It embodies the country's constant pursuit of progress, while at the same time evoking the unwavering commitment to sustainability.

The gold colour manifests excellence and achievement. It portrays a deep-rooted heritage, a bright future envisaged to bring about a solid economy and prosperity and reflects the country's sky-high aspirations.

The greyish yellow colour symbolises stability and warmth. It embodies elegance and hospitality and reflects the strong bond between man, land and the biosphere, as well as the people's appreciation of simplicity.



03 Families enjoy thrills and traditions



09 Gaza children freezing to death: UNRWA chief



16 2024's biggest art controversies

National survey to tackle non-communicable diseases begins today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ministry of Health (MoH) will launch the National Survey of Non-Communicable Diseases on Sunday, a nationwide initiative covering all governorates of the sultanate.

In a statement, MoH said, 'The survey, aimed at citizens and residents aged 15 years and older, will be conducted in two phases.'

The survey is part of the ministry's efforts to enhance the health of both current and future generations. MoH em-

phasised the fact that success of the national initiative depends on the trust and participation of residents and encouraged everyone to actively take part.

In light of certain rumours circulating regarding the health teams carrying out the survey, the ministry urged the public to disregard misinformation and seek accurate details from official sources.

The National Committee of Non-Communicable Diseases Prevention has declared 2026 as 'Year of Non-Communicable Diseases' with a comprehensive



plan to address the rising health challenges posed by these conditions.

The committee has outlined a series of initiatives focusing on prevention, awareness and policy development for 2026. These include updating the National Plan for Non-Communicable Diseases, forming specialised work teams, and conducting a nationwide survey to understand the prevalence and impact of these conditions. The committee also plans to amplify Omani Day for Physical Activity to promote healthier lifestyles and

highlight the benefits of regular exercise.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including diabetes, cardiovascular illnesses and cancer, are among the leading causes of mortality globally and in Oman. The committee aims to develop policies and preventive measures to address these conditions and minimise their impact on individuals and the healthcare system.

NCDs lead to the death of more than 4,800 Omanis every year with nearly one in five adults dying from an NCD before the age of 70.

Terms and conditions apply



We help your deposits grow for a brighter future!

Higher returns on deposits for customers of the Ladies account at BankDhofar.

Scan to learn more







bankdhofar

 2479 1111

 www.bankdhofar.com

GCC ministers address key regional issues

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Sultanate of Oman took part in the 46th extraordinary meeting of the GCC Ministerial Council held in the State of Kuwait with H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, representing the country. The meeting addressed key regional issues, including sovereignty of Syria, Israeli attacks on Syrian and Lebanese territories, and the stability of Lebanon.

The Ministerial Council emphasised the importance of respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. It condemned foreign interference in Syria's internal affairs while expressing satisfaction with efforts aimed at ensuring the safety of civilians, halting bloodshed and achieving

national reconciliation. The council condemned the repeated Israeli attacks on Syrian territory, including its occupation of the buffer zone along the Syrian border, and urged the international community to take action to stop

these attacks and secure Israel's withdrawal from occupied Syrian territories.

Regarding Lebanon, the council reiterated its strong support for Lebanon's sovereignty, security and stability. It condemned

the ongoing Israeli attacks on Lebanon, which have resulted in civilian casualties and extensive damage to infrastructure, including health facilities. The council also called for adherence to ceasefire agreements and the

protection of civilian lives.

In addition to discussions on these pressing issues, the meeting saw Sheikh Sabah Khalid al Hamad al Mubarak al Sabah, Crown Prince of Kuwait, receiving H E Sayyid Badr and his GCC

Oman condemns Israeli attack on Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital

Muscat - Oman has strongly condemned the ongoing Israeli military aggression in Gaza, particularly the recent assault on Kamal Adwan Hospital. In a statement, Oman condemned the Israeli forces' actions of setting fire to the

hospital and forcibly evacuating patients and medical staff. The sultanate called for an immediate end to the violence and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting a just and lasting resolution to the Palestinian cause.

counterparts. On the sidelines of the meeting, the Crown Prince expressed his appreciation for the collective efforts to enhance GCC cooperation in various fields, emphasising the importance of continued progress and prosperity for the people of the GCC states. All sides agreed on the need to intensify efforts to address regional challenges and

enhance economic and developmental integration among GCC countries.

The meeting was attended by key Omani officials, including Sheikh Ahmed Hashel al Maskari, Head of GCC Department at Foreign Ministry, H E Dr Saleh Amer al Kharousi, Ambassador of Oman to Kuwait, and several other ministry officials.





إعلان مناقصة

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

SOHAR Port and Freezone invites Tenderers to the following tender

تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة الموردين للمشاركة في المناقصة أدناه

Ref رقم	Tender Ref الرقم المناقصة	Tender Title عنوان المناقصة	Tender Fee OMR الرسوم
1	SIPC 2024 - 047	Provision of Consultancy Services for SOHAR Port Organizational Customer Journey Mapping	52.5

- The above-mentioned tender fees including the VAT 5%.
- Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00 am on Sunday, 29/12/2024 until 4:00 pm on Wednesday 29/01/2024.
- Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:
- Step 1: Interested Tenderers should remit the stated tender fees as per the below bank details:

- تتضمن رسوم المناقصة المذكورة أعلاه ضريبة القيمة المضافة وضرفها ٥٪.
- بإمكان مقدمي العطاءات طلب استلام وثائق المناقصة إلكترونياً ابتداء من يوم الأحد الموافق ٢٩/١٢/٢٠٢٤ (الساعة ٩:٠٠ صباحاً) وحتى يوم الأربعاء الموافق ٢٩/٠١/٢٠٢٤ (الساعة ٤:٠٠ مساءً).
- على مقدمي العطاءات اتباع الإجراءات والخطوات التالية للحصول على مستندات المناقصة إلكترونياً.
- الخطوة الأولى: يجب على مقدمي العطاءات سداد رسوم المناقصة وفقاً للتفاصيل المبينة أدناه.

Account Name اسم الحساب	SOHAR Industrial Port Co شركة ميناء صحر الصناعي
Account Number رقم الحساب	3101-007970-500
Bank Name اسم البنك	Oman Arab bank SAOC - Main B بنك عمان العربي، فرع رئيسي - شارع الرئيسي
SWIFT رمز التحويلات	OMABOM33XXX

Note: Bank transfer is the only mode of payment accepted
ملاحظة: التحويل البنكي هو الطريقة الوحيدة المقبولة للدفع

الخطوة الثانية:

Tenderers to send the following documents:

- A request for the electronic tender documents
- A scanned copy of bank transfer
- The firm's commercial registration documents

All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address:
sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

الخطوة الثالثة:

Tenderers will receive the electronic Tender Document by e-mail.

- SOHAR reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reasons
- All SME's are requested to provide their RYADAH Card along with the required documents to exempt them from tender fees.
- For any clarification regarding the tenders please send an e-mail to:
sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

It all starts here

+968 2685 2700 | soharportandfreezone.om

N Sharqiyah sets up development awards

Our Correspondent Ibra

North Sharqiyah has introduced prestigious development awards aimed at fostering innovation and promoting sustainable growth throughout the governorate. The awards were unveiled on Thursday under the patronage of H E Dr Mahad bin Saeed Baowain, Minister of Labour, in the presence of Mahmoud bin Yahya al Dhahli, Governor of North Sharqiyah.

The awards are set to position the governorate as a regional hub for creative development, reflecting its commitment to advancing economic and cultural infrastructure.

Zubaida Salim al Shidhani, Spokesperson for the governorate, underscored the significance of these awards in strengthening North Sharqiyah's long-term growth. She emphasised that the awards would leverage local talent to cultivate a competitive environment, stimulate collaboration across sectors and create opportunities for innovation. The awards aim

to build a foundation for sustainable development by inspiring both public and private sectors to contribute to the governorate's prosperity.

In line with the vision of an 'Innovative Economy', the development awards will focus on three key areas. The Architectural Innovation Award is aimed at revi-

The awards in three categories are set to position the governorate as a regional hub for creative development

talising vital sites in the wilayats of Ibra, Bidiya, Al Mudhaibi and Sinaw. This award seeks to transform these areas into attractive tourist destinations by blending traditional heritage with modern architecture, while also boosting the local economy through the use of underutilised land.

The second category - Institu-

tional Excellence of Government Institutions - seeks to motivate public sector organisations to improve service delivery and implement innovative projects that enhance efficiency and productivity. This category aims to elevate the performance of government institutions, ensuring these contribute effectively to the governorate's development goals.

The third category - Community Contribution and Volunteer Work - will encourage individuals and volunteer groups to create and implement sustainable initiatives that strengthen social ties and foster collaboration across various sectors. This category aims to inspire community-driven projects that promote social cohesion and contribute to the overall well-being of the governorate.

Launch of these development awards marks a significant milestone in North Sharqiyah's vision to become a leader in innovation, sustainability and economic growth, aligning with broader national goals for progress and prosperity.

MUSCAT NIGHTS FESTIVAL 2024

Families enjoy thrills and traditions



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Nights Festival, the much-anticipated event that opened its doors on December 23, has quickly become a highlight of the city's festive season. Featuring a diverse range of activities, the festival is attracting citizens and residents from across the country, drawing families, tourists and culture enthusiasts to explore its vibrant offerings.

Muscat Daily visited several festival sites to gather feedback from attendees, showcasing the wide range of experiences the event offers.

Sharing his excitement, Badr al Siyabi from Amerat said, "Muscat Nights Festival offers a variety of events. We visited Amerat Public Park and the Heritage Village, which vividly showcases Oman's cultural diversity and legacy." He informed that



the Heritage Village has detailed displays of bedouin tents, farming tools and coastal exhibitions, reflecting Oman's rural and seafaring traditions. Visitors can also witness artisans demonstrating traditional crafts - weaving textiles, making silver jewellery, and crafting wooden doors and daggers.

"The event has something for everyone - hybrid shows, thrilling amusement rides, acrobatic per-

formances, a lively carnival and even consumer stalls," Siyabi added, highlighting the festival's all-encompassing entertainment appeal.

Khalid al Habsi, from Mudhaibi, was delighted to visit. "I brought my children to Al Naseem Public Park, where they enjoyed a variety of activities, in-

cluding a heritage village, electric rides and fireworks. The event is full of excitement for families visiting from different parts of the sultanate."

Qurum Natural Park is also a big attraction, where visitors marvel at drone shows, laser displays and a colourful flower show. In addition to these visual

spectacles, the park is hosting a food festival and a global village celebrating international cultures and traditions.

For families with young children, Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) has a dedicated children's village where the young ones can interact with popular characters, including Batman, Superman, Tom and



Jerry. "My children had a wonderful time at OCEC. They were thrilled to meet their favourite characters," said Badr al Rawahi from Seeb.

"Muscat Nights Festival has truly brought the city alive, offering a memorable mix of culture, entertainment and family-friendly fun that is drawing visitors from far and near," Rawahi said.

Muscat Municipality has chosen seven strategic locations to host various Muscat Nights Festival activities, ensuring there is something for everyone to enjoy. These locations are Qurum National Park, Amerat Park, Naseem Park, Oman Automobile Association, OCEC, Seeb Beach (Sur al Hadid) and Wadi al Khoudh.

Promotional programme for North Batinah, Buraimi

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), in collaboration with Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, has launched a four-day programme for Gulf tourism companies in North Batinah and Buraimi. The programme, which began on Friday, will run till Monday.

An official from OCCI informed that the initiative aims to showcase these governorate's most significant tourist and heritage sites, including castles, forts and cultural landmarks. The goal is to attract a larger number of tourists from Gulf countries by familiarising tourism companies with these governorates' unique offerings.

Twenty tourism companies from Gulf Cooperation Council countries are participating in the programme which aims to provide an opportunity for GCC tourism companies to explore the sultanate's adventure tourism offerings, especially since the natural terrain and geographical and climatic diversity qualify Oman to be a significant destination for this type of tourism.



Meanwhile, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism concluded a mountain hiking event in Wadi Bani Khalid in North Sharqiyah on Saturday. The two-day event attracted over 150 hikers from many parts of the country.

The first day of the hike began at a scenic pond in Wadi Bani Khalid. Participants followed a mountainous route, passing through several villages including Al Sahf, Al Safa, Al Maysem and Hayl al Naqa. The day's hike culminated in the village of Haloot, covering a total distance of 20km

and reaching an elevation of 2,050m above sea level.

On the second day, hikers departed from Haloot village, descending a 10km dirt track before embarking on a 21km mountainous trail. The route included the village of Seema in Tiwi in the wilayat of Sur, South Sharqiyah. The final leg of the event was a 9km stretch along a paved road, which ended under Tiwi Bridge. In total, participants covered a challenging and rewarding distance of 51km over the course of the event.

Muhannad al Balushi wins 100km endurance race

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Rider Muhannad bin Suleiman al Balushi secured the first place and gold medal in a 100km endurance race for youth organised by Oman Equestrian Federation at Al Mahamed Endurance Village in Barka on Saturday.

The race was divided into four stages with 49 horses participat-

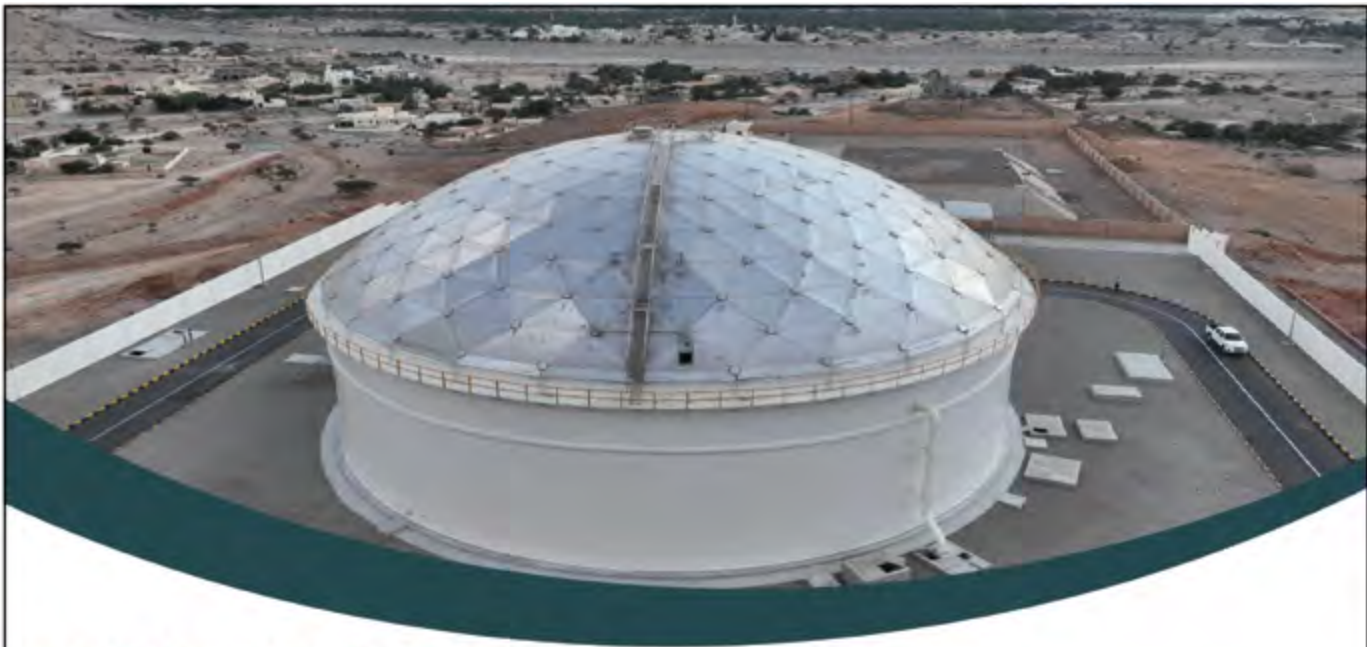
ing. All horses underwent a veterinary examination one day prior to ensure safety and readiness.

The event also included qualifying races of 40km and 80km. Oman Equestrian Federation has set strict participation criteria for races, requiring horses to be at least six years old and registered with the federation.

Expressing his pride in the

achievement, Balushi said, "This victory reflects the hard work and dedication put in by the whole team. We aim to participate in various championships to represent the sultanate on the international stage and raise its flag high."

He added, "Equestrian sports are helping promote the country's presence in international competitions."



TENDER NOTICE

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) hereby announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No	Description	Eligibility	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date of Sale Tender Documents	Bid Submission Date
T/2678059/2024	Construction of Water Distribution Networks and House Connections in (Dafiyat - Al Eygah - Shanazy) in Masirah Wilayat- Al Sharqiyah South Governorate - Package 3	Small and Medium Enterprises (Riyada Card Holder) registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	Free	9/1/2025	3/2/2025
T/2678058/2024	Construction of Sewer System and TE Networks for Al Amerat (A10) - Area (A11 & A6)	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	RO 2,500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	9/1/2025	10/2/2025
T/2577959-2/2024 Re-float	Commissioning and Connecting New Emergency Wells in Nuber Well Field at Wilayat Liwa in AL Batinah North	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 50/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	9/1/2025	3/2/2025

The tender documents can be obtained from the e-tendering page (Supplier Login) from this announcement date. The applicants shall pay the tender fee by logging into their (I-supplier Page).

Applicants who are not registered shall register through the following link: <https://owwsc.nama.om/Business-with-Us/Vendor-Registration> in order to receive the login credentials of the Supplier portal.

All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through Nama Water Services e-tendering page (Supplier Login <https://nws.nama.om/en-us/Business-with-Us/Supplierlogin>).). All participating companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value in a sealed envelope. Bid Bonds must be obtained from a local Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman addressed to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) Chairman of Tender Committee not later than 2:00 pm on the bid submission date.

The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page not later than 2:00 pm on the date specified above. For more details refer to Tender Page of our website www.owwsc.nama.om & in case of general queries you may contact us through the email ID of tender@owwsc.nama.om



Oman's gas consumption up 4.8% in January-November

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's natural gas consumption rose by 4.8% year-on-year in the first 11 months of 2024, reaching a total of 51,831mn cubic metres (mncm), compared to 49,444 mncm in the same period of 2023, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

This increase in overall gas consumption was largely driven by a significant uptick in demand from the power generation sector. While power plants saw a sharp rise in their natural gas usage, the industrial sector and oilfields experienced a decline in consumption during the same period.

To meet the higher demand, Oman produced and imported a combined total of 51,831mncm of natural gas during the January-November period of 2024. This marks an increase of nearly 5% compared to the total gas produced and imported during the same 11-month period in 2023.

The power generation sector played a pivotal role in driving up overall consumption. Gas usage in this sector surged by a remarkable 77.1%, reaching 14,074mncm during the first 11 months of 2024, compared to just 7,951mncm during the same



To meet the increased demand, Oman produced and imported a combined total of 51,831mn cubic metres of natural gas during the January-November period of 2024

period in 2023. This sharp increase can be attributed to increased energy demand as Oman continues to expand its power generation capacity to support economic growth and population needs.

However, the industrial sector, which remains the largest consumer of natural gas in

Oman, saw a decline in consumption. Industrial projects consumed 26,517mncm during the first 11 months of this year, a decrease of 8.2% from the 28,893mncm used in the same period in 2023.

Similarly, gas consumption in the oilfields dropped by 10.9%, reaching 11,010mncm in the first

11 months of 2024, compared to 12,363mncm in the corresponding period last year. This reduction could be linked to a combination of factors, including changes in oil production strategies and the increased use of alternative energy sources within the oil extraction process.



GCC debt set to stabilise at 28% of GDP: GCC-Stat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The total public debt of the GCC countries is expected to stabilise at 28% of GDP over the next two years, according to a new report from the Muscat-based GCC Statistical Centre (GCC-Stat).

This follows a GCC region's peak debt-to-GDP ratio of 40.3% in 2020, with the ratio declining in subsequent years to approximately 29.8% by the end of 2023.

The Centre suggests that the financial risks in the region will remain low in the short term, as local and global interest rates are expected to either stabilise

or decline. Credit rating agencies have also signalled an improvement in the sovereign bond ratings of GCC countries in 2023, with a continued trend towards stronger creditworthiness.

'This enhanced attractiveness is expected to provide GCC governments with the opportunity to refinance public debt at more favourable terms, thereby reducing borrowing costs', GCC-Stat added in a statement.

The Centre attributes this debt reduction to ongoing fiscal reforms across the GCC, saying, 'The emphasis on improving public spending efficiency and stimulating growth in non-

oil sectors will help balance economic growth with fiscal sustainability. These measures are expected to support long-term stability while ensuring that public spending remains within sustainable limits.'

GCC-State noted that the region's fiscal outlook has improved notably since 2021. Public revenues across the GCC have surged, reaching \$641bn in 2023, with oil revenues accounting for 62% of the total.

Public spending, meanwhile, also reached a record high, totalling \$639bn in 2023. Of this, 85% was allocated to current spending, while just 15% was directed towards investment.

Russia starts using Bitcoin for payments to international firms

Moscow, Russia – Russian companies have started using Bitcoin and other digital assets in international payments, the Russian finance minister said.

In a statement to the Russian state channel Rossiya-24, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said that Bitcoins mined in Russia can be used in the experimental process for international payments, and such payments have begun.

Siluanov noted that this payment method should be developed and expanded.

While there are no restrictions on the purchase of cryptocurrencies in Russia, the use of these cryptocurrencies as a form of payment within the country is prohibited. With the decree signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin on August 8 this year, the experimental use of cryptocurrencies in international payments and foreign exchange transactions was legalised.

Anadolu Agency



Oil prices rise on China demand optimism

London, UK – Oil prices settled higher in the last week of 2024 amid thin trading volume during Christmas holiday.

The International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$73.35 per barrel on Friday, up by around 0.98% relative to the closing price of \$72.64 a barrel previous week.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI), the American benchmark, traded at \$70.04 a barrel at the same time on Friday, a rise of about 0.82% from previous Friday's session, which closed at \$69.47 per barrel.

Oil trading volume thinned during the holiday-shortened week.

On Friday, oil prices were supported by demand optimism in China, the world's largest crude oil importer following the World



Bank's upward revision of the country's growth forecast. The World Bank on Thursday raised its forecast for China's economic growth in 2024 and 2025.

On Thursday, China's government also revised upwards the size of its economy by 2.7% to 129.4tn yuan.

However, a strengthening US

dollar limited price gains in oil markets, as a stronger dollar makes oil more expensive for holders of other currencies.

Prices supported following

news of China's plan to issue 3tn yuan (\$411bn) in special treasury bonds to boost its economy.

Rising supply and demand expectations for fossil fuels supported prices as incoming US President Donald Trump prepares to take office on January 20.

The majority of global markets remained closed on Wednesday due to the Christmas holiday break.

Oil prices initially rose early in the week on lower-than-expected US inflation data and were later supported by strong US growth data boosting demand optimism.

Higher supply and demand expectations for fossil fuels also supported prices as US President-elect Donald Trump will take office in January 2025.

Anadolu Agency

Dr Manmohan Singh: Architect of India's economic transformation

New Delhi, India – India's economic growth post-liberalisation cannot be hailed without recognising the significant contribution of former Prime Minister late Dr Manmohan Singh. His journey began long before he assumed charge as the 13th Prime Minister of India.

Singh passed away on Thursday night in New Delhi at the age of 92 due to age related medical conditions.

When India was facing a balance of payments crisis, Singh, along with the then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, steered the economy onto the path of development through liberalisation and served as the Finance Minister in Rao's government.

As Finance Minister under Prime Minister Rao from 1991 to 1996, Singh played a pivotal role in liberalising India's economy. He reduced the License Raj and streamlined regulations, significantly reducing government interference in industries.

He also introduced trade reforms, cutting import tariffs and moving towards an open-market economy. The major reforms in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which India continues to benefit from, were initiated under his leadership, allowing FDI in key sectors.

The devaluation of the rupee, which Singh



Dr Manmohan Singh, India's Former Prime Minister, passed away on Thursday night at the age of 92 due to age related medical conditions

oversaw, helped make Indian exports more competitive, boosting export potential. He also introduced tax reforms that simplified the tax structure and widened the tax base. These efforts led India through a period of economic growth and policy transformation during his

tenure.

Presenting the first budget as Finance Minister on July 24, 1991, Singh said in Parliament, "I am confident that, after a successful implementation of stabilisation measures and the essential structural and policy reforms, our

economy would return to a path of high sustained growth with reasonable price stability and greater social equity."

When he assumed charge as Prime Minister, the country experienced sustained economic growth. India achieved an average growth rate of 7% during his first term. According to IMF data, India's GDP from 2004 to 2014 averaged a growth rate of around 6.7%.

During the 2008 global financial crisis, Singh successfully steered the Indian economy with minimal damage. The crisis, triggered by cheap credit and lax lending standards that led to a housing price bubble, left financial institutions holding trillions of dollars in worthless mortgages when the bubble burst.

Under Singh's leadership as Prime Minister, the government took aggressive countercyclical measures. The Reserve Bank of India sharply relaxed monetary policy, and the government introduced fiscal stimulus to boost domestic demand.

Singh is also hailed as a socialist for his reforms like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which aimed to provide employment and reduce rural poverty. This scheme guaranteed

work to a person from rural households for 100 days, it significantly improved the livelihoods.

The success of today's Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system and reduced leakages in welfare schemes can be traced back to Singh's initiative to launch the Aadhaar project. This project later became a cornerstone for financial inclusion and welfare distribution.

He also played a critical role in negotiating the India-US Civil Nuclear Agreement, opening up nuclear energy for civilian purposes. On August 1, 2008, the IAEA Board of Governors approved India's safeguards agreement, paving the way for India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Speaking about nuclear energy, Singh remarked, "The civil nuclear initiative is good for India and good for the world. As we move forward towards our goal of sustainable development and energy security, the peaceful uses of atomic energy will play an increasingly important role."

Dr Manmohan Singh's tenure as both Finance Minister and Prime Minister marked a transformative era in India's economic landscape. His visionary policies laid the foundation for modern India's economic rise.

ANI

Global coal demand is set to plateau through 2027: IEA

IEA report finds that strong deployment of renewables is set to curb growth in coal use even as electricity demand surges, with China – the world’s biggest coal consumer – remaining pivotal



Paris, France – After reaching a new high in 2024, global demand for coal is set to level off in the coming years as a surge in renewable power helps to meet soaring demand for electricity around the world, according to an International Energy Agency (IEA) report.

Coal 2024 – the new edition of the IEA’s annual coal market report, which analyses the latest trends and updates medium-term forecasts – shows that global coal use has rebounded strongly after plummeting at the height of the pandemic. It is poised to rise to 8.77bn tonnes in

2024, a record.

According to the report, demand is set to stay close to this level through 2027 as renewable energy sources play a greater role in generating power and coal consumption levels off in China.

The electricity sector in China is particularly important to global coal markets, with one out of every three tonnes of coal consumed worldwide burned at a power plant in the country. In 2024, China continued to diversify its power sector, advance the construction of nuclear plants and accelerate its huge expansion

sion of solar PV and wind capacity. This should help limit increases in coal consumption through 2027, according to the report, though it also highlights a number of key uncertainties in its analysis.

Electricity use in a number of countries, including China, is growing at a strong pace due to a combination of factors, including the electrification of services like transport and heating, rising demand for cooling, and increasing consumption from emerging sectors such as data centres. Additionally, weather patterns could drive fluctuations in coal

consumption in the short term.

According to the report, coal demand in China by 2027 could be up to 140mn tonnes higher or lower than forecast due to weather-related variability in renewable generation.

“The rapid deployment of clean energy technologies is reshaping the global electricity sector, which accounts for two-thirds of the world’s coal use. As a result, our models show global demand for coal plateauing through 2027 even as electricity consumption rises sharply,” said IEA Director of Energy Markets and Security Keisuke Sadamori.

“However, weather factors – particularly in China, the world’s largest coal consumer – will have a major impact on short-term trends for coal demand. The speed at which electricity demand grows will also be very important over the medium term.”

In most advanced economies, coal demand has already peaked and is expected to keep decreasing through 2027. The pace of decline will continue to depend on the enactment of strong policies, such as those implemented in the European Union, and the availability of alternative power sources, including cheap natural gas in the United States and Canada.

Meanwhile, demand for coal is still increasing in some emerging economies where electricity demand is rising sharply along with economic and population growth, such as India, Indonesia and Viet Nam. In emerging economies, growth is mainly driven by coal demand from the power sector, although industrial use is also going up.

Coal prices today remain 50% higher than the average seen between 2017 and 2019. Coal production reached an all-time high in 2024, though growth is expected to flatten through 2027 as structural changes take hold.



US oil stockpiles drop significantly, surpassing forecasts

Washington, US – The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) has reported a substantial decrease in the country’s crude oil inventories, indicating an increased demand for the commodity.

The actual number, released recently, came as a decline of 4.237mn barrels, a significant drop compared to the forecasted figure of -0.700mn barrels. This decrease in inventories is a bullish signal for crude prices, suggesting a stronger demand than was initially anticipated.

Comparing the actual figure to the previous number also reveals a noteworthy trend. The previous figure stood at -0.934mn barrels, meaning the current decrease in inventories is over four times greater. This suggests an acceleration in the rate of demand, which could potentially exert upward pressure on crude oil prices.

The EIA’s crude oil inventories data measures the weekly change in the number of barrels of commercial crude oil held by US firms. The level of inventories

can influence the price of petroleum products, which in turn can impact inflation.

A greater-than-expected increase in crude inventories implies weaker demand and is bearish for crude prices. Conversely, if the increase is less than expected, or if there is a decline in inventories that exceeds expectations, it signals greater demand and is bullish for crude prices.

In this instance, the decline in inventories was significantly more than expected, indicating a robust demand for crude oil. This could potentially lead to an increase in the price of petroleum products, which may contribute to inflationary pressures.

This latest data release from the EIA has a three-star importance rating, indicating its significant potential impact on the market. Investors and market analysts will be closely watching the upcoming data releases to gauge the ongoing demand for crude oil and its potential impact on prices.

(Source: Investing.com)

Japan approves record \$730bn budget for 2025

Tokyo, Japan – Japan’s government on Friday approved a record 115.54tn yen (\$730bn) draft initial budget for fiscal year 2025, driven by rising social security and national defense spending, fueling concerns about Japan’s fiscal health.

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, while expressing hope that the spending plan will help support an economy burdened by higher prices, appears cautious about advancing his policies after a shocking defeat in October’s general election, which bolstered the opposition’s influence in a hung parliament.

Ishiba voiced his desire for the swift passage of the budget in the upcoming Diet session starting next month, telling reporters at his office, “We will provide thorough explanations and foster an environment that encourages opposition parties to lend their support.”

The general-account budget for the year starting in April next year exceeded the previous record of 114.38tn yen set in fiscal 2023.

While projecting a record-high 78.44tn yen tax revenue for fiscal 2025 due largely to robust corporate earnings, the government will also issue new bonds worth 28.65tn yen to help finance the budget.

The issuance falls below 30tn yen for the first time in 17 years on an initial budget basis as Ishiba struggles to restore the soundness of state finances, the worst among major developed countries. But a quarter of the total expenditures will be covered by issuing new bonds, highlighting the government’s continued dependence on debt.

After the Cabinet approved the draft budget, Ishiba reaffirmed the government’s commitment to restoring Japan’s fiscal health, saying, “We must ensure that both economic recovery and fiscal consolidation are achieved.”



Japan’s Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba

About a third of the budget, or a record 38.28tn yen, will be used to cover social security costs that have been swelling as Japan grapples with a rapidly aging population and tries to enhance child care support amid a declining birthrate.

Defense spending totaled 8.70tn yen, topping 8tn yen for the first time, as the country is

About a third of the budget will be used to cover social security costs that have been swelling as Japan grapples with a rapidly aging population

aiming to enhance its capabilities to address regional threats amid China’s rapid military buildup and North Korea’s growing ties with Russia.

The defense budget, which marked the 13th consecutive year of increase, includes expenditures for mass production of long-range missiles with standoff defense capabilities, or targeting adversaries from outside their strike range.

To stimulate the economy, the initial budget also includes state funding in the semiconductor, ar-

tificial intelligence and other sectors, with 100bn yen going to domestic chip venture Rapidus Corp.

Interest payments and other debt-servicing costs also reached a record 28.22tn yen, reflecting rising long-term interest rates as the Bank of Japan is looking to continue tightening monetary policy.

The total amount of outstanding central and local government bonds is projected to reach 1,330tn yen at the end of fiscal 2025, equivalent to more than twice the size of Japan’s GDP.

The Finance Ministry set an assumed rate to calculate interest payments at 2%, up from 1.9% for fiscal 2024. The BOJ ended its negative rate policy in March with the first-rate hike in 17 years, followed by another increase in July.

Ishiba, who took office in October, now leads the minority government after the ruling coalition led by his Liberal Democratic Party lost a majority in the powerful House of Representatives in the general election.

The drafting of the fiscal 2025 budget comes after the government managed to have parliament pass a supplementary budget for fiscal 2024 last week, with the backing of key opposition parties.

Kyodo News

US expected to reach new debt limit in mid-January, Treasury chief says

Washington, US – The US Treasury Department will take measures in mid-January to prevent the US from defaulting on its obligations, Secretary Janet Yellen said Friday.

“As a result, the debt is currently projected to temporarily decrease, and accordingly, Treasury does not expect that it will be necessary to start taking extraordinary measures on January 2 to prevent the United States from defaulting on its obligations.”

“Treasury currently expects to reach the new limit between January 14 and January 23, at which time it will be necessary for Treasury to start taking extraordinary measures,” Yellen said in a letter to lawmakers.

Yellen said US’ debt is expected to decrease by about \$54bn on January 2 “mostly due to a scheduled redemption of nonmarketable securities held by



Janet Yellen

a federal trust fund associated with Medicare payments.”

She also urged Congress to act to protect the full faith and credit of the US.

The debt limit is the total amount of money that the United States government is authorised to borrow to meet its existing legal obligations, including Social Security and Medicare benefits,

military salaries, interest on the national debt, tax refunds, and other payments.

The debt limit does not authorise new spending commitments. It simply allows the government to finance existing legal obligations that Congresses and presidents of both parties have made in the past.

Failing to increase the debt

limit would have catastrophic economic consequences. It would cause the government to default on its legal obligations – an unprecedented event in American history. That would precipitate another financial crisis and threaten the jobs and savings of everyday Americans – putting the United States right back in a deep economic hole, just as the country is recovering from the recent recession.

Congress has always acted when called upon to raise the debt limit. Since 1960, Congress has acted 78 separate times to permanently raise, temporarily extend, or revise the definition of the debt limit – 49 times under Republican presidents and 29 times under Democratic presidents. Congressional leaders in both parties have recognised that this is necessary.

Agencies

China’s industrial firms see higher revenue in 2024

Beijing, China – The performance of major Chinese industrial enterprises continued to recover in November as a series of government policies came into play.

From January to November, the operating revenue of major industrial enterprises reached 123.48tn yuan (about \$17.18tn), up 1.8% year on year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on Friday.

In November alone, the operating revenue of China’s major industrial enterprises has reversed from a 0.2% decline in October to a rise of 0.5% year on year, NBS data showed.

NBS statistician Yu Weining attributed the improvement to the implementation of existing policies and a package of incremental measures, noting that industrial production in November



registered steady growth.

During the first 11 months, the combined profit of major industrial enterprises topped 6.66tn yuan, down 4.75 year on year.

However, supportive policies, including large-scale equipment upgrades and consumer goods trade-in pro-

grams, continued to show effectiveness in November, and the profits of related industries grew rapidly.

For instance, the profit of the special equipment manufacturing industry increased by 36.7% year on year, while that of industries related to home appliances, home decoration,

and products for kitchens and bathrooms also saw rapid growth.

Besides, profits of high-end, intelligent, and green manufacturing industries witnessed rapid improvement in November. Optoelectronic device manufacturing and aerospace-related equipment manufacturing saw their profits increase by 41.1% and 14.3% year on year, respectively. The profit of the wearable smart device manufacturing industry increased by 90.3%. The lithium-ion battery manufacturing industry also saw higher profits.

Yu said that in the next stage, efforts must be made to ensure policy implementation, boost development vigor, and promote the stable recovery of the industrial economy.

Xinhua

Omantel celebrates graduation of Omani talents in future technology



Omantel celebrated the graduation of the fourth batch of its flagship training program, 'Generation Z', aimed at equipping young Omani talents with the skills needed to excel in future technologies. This programme included 32 young Omani graduates who had the unique opportunity to refine their skills and prepare for their professional journeys.

Since its inception in 2020, the 'Generation Z' programme has been committed to developing a new generation of innova-

Empowering the next generation of innovators to drive digital transformation in Oman

tors capable of keeping pace with global technological advancements and contributing to building a sustainable future in technology and digitalisation.

The 'Generation Z' training programme is designed to enhance participants' skills and provide them with in-depth knowledge in future-focused sci-

ences while immersing them in a practical environment. This enables trainees to develop the capabilities required to address the challenges of today's dynamic world.

The fourth programme participants worked on projects related to artificial intelligence to support digital transformation,

internal and external system development, cybersecurity solutions to mitigate and combat cyberattacks, and innovative systems to enhance existing consumer streaming services.

Dr Ghalib bin Saif al Hosni, Chief People Officer at Omantel, said, "As the 'Generation Z' program completes its fourth year, we are proud of the significant achievements we have made in developing young Omani talents with future-ready skills. Today, we celebrate the graduation of 32 young men and women from

the fourth program, bringing the total number of graduates from this one-of-a-kind programme to 153 since its launch in 2020."

He pointed out that the programme aligns with national efforts to build the capabilities of Omani youth by providing them with real-world project management experiences during their training period.

"This approach instills confidence and equips them with the skills necessary to handle the responsibilities assigned to them. During the training, participants

were entrusted with real tasks to help them understand how to perform various roles and contribute to developing services and proposing practical, alternative solutions for ongoing projects within the company."

Dr Hosni also highlighted the programme's transformational impact on the career paths of its graduates.

"The 'Generation Z' programme has been a game-changer for many graduates, enhancing their employment opportunities within Omantel and

beyond. Omantel has employed a significant number of programme graduates, and the company has also adopted several projects and initiatives proposed by participants, with plans to implement them."

These include tech-based solutions aimed at enhancing the customer experience.

"We are excited to announce that registrations for the fifth batch of the programme will open soon, with details shared through Omantel's official social media platforms," he added.

National Finance stands by people with disabilities

National Finance, Oman's leading finance company, reaffirmed its steadfast dedication to fostering inclusivity and empowerment by acting as the main sponsor of a pivotal panel discussion on empowering individuals with disabilities.

Organised by the Ministry of Social Development, the event was held under the esteemed patronage of Faisal al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry, at the Kempinski Hotel in Muscat.

The event brought together prominent representatives from various sectors to exchange insights, share best practices, and discuss strategies for integrating individuals with disabilities into key societal pillars.

Acknowledging its vital role in supporting the event, National Finance also received an award, which was accepted on behalf of the company by Saam al Habsi, General Manager - Chief Operating Officer.

Commenting on National Finance's support for the event,



Tariq al Farsi said, "At National Finance, we believe inclusivity is the cornerstone of sustainable progress.

Empowering individuals with disabilities enriches not just their lives but also strengthens the cultural, social, and economic fabric of our society. Their active participation in education, workforce, and public life drives resilience and collective prosperity."

Farsi added that this event of-

fered a crucial platform to foster awareness, inspire collaboration, and implement meaningful solutions. "By supporting initiatives like this, we reaffirm our commitment to creating an environment where individuals with disabilities are empowered and recognized as essential contributors to the nation's success. Community-driven efforts like these nurture empathy, build partnerships, and champion a future where everyone has the

opportunity to thrive. Through our efforts, we aim to set a benchmark for meaningful corporate action, inspiring others to embrace their social responsibility."

The panel discussion served as a crucial platform to raise awareness about the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities while exploring the untapped potential of empowering them. It emphasised the importance of adopting collaborative

approaches to build an inclusive society, where governments, private enterprises, and community organisations unite as a cohesive force, aligning resources and expertise to drive meaningful change.

The discussions underscored the pressing need for synchronised efforts to achieve tangible progress and inclusive growth. National Finance's active participation highlighted its enduring role as a catalyst for social transformation, championing initiatives that bridge societal gaps and empower individuals with disabilities to contribute as vital members of the community and drivers of economic prosperity.

The event also featured an exhibition showcasing projects led by individuals with disabilities, highlighting their achievements and the impact of providing equal opportunities.

This not only celebrated their talents and contributions but also served to inspire greater understanding and support within the community.



NBO launches digital complaint tracker

As part of its digital strategy and migration efforts, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) has introduced a new feature on the NBO app that allows customers to register and track complaints digitally anytime, anywhere, without needing to visit a branch or contact the call centre.

This innovative feature provides a convenient and transparent way to address customer concerns by enabling the submission of essential details such as complaint type, account number, and attachments, while also offering real-time progress tracking.

Commenting on the initiative, Dr Ali Salim al Shekaili, Assistant General Manager and Head of Digital Banking & E-Channels at NBO, said: "At NBO, we are committed to enhancing our customers' experiences by providing exclusive services that cater to their needs and expectations. This digital initiative simplifies the process of registering and tracking complaints, ensuring faster and more transparent resolutions. It underscores our ongoing efforts to deliver exceptional service and foster a positive banking experience for all customers."

Bank Muscat honoured for inclusive initiatives, financial accessibility efforts

Bank Muscat, a leading financial service provider in Oman, recently took part in a celebration organised by the Ministry of Social Development to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

The event, hosted at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center, was held under the patronage of H E Dr Madiha bint Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education, and attended by numerous dignitaries, government and private sector officials, and NGO representatives.

During the ceremony, Bank Muscat was honoured by the Ministry of Social Development

for its commitment to social responsibility initiatives and programmes that enhance the participation of people with disabilities, as well as for its support and successful implementation of initiatives benefiting this important segment of society. Zuwaina Abdullah al Sharji, Assistant General Manager Central Operations & Change Management, received the award on behalf of the bank.

The celebration aimed to emphasize the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities, aligning with the visionary goals of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Oman Vision 2040,



which promotes the creation of a more inclusive society in Oman, ensuring the rights and well-being of all citizens.

The bank is keen to collaborate with the Ministry of Social Development and other government and private sectors entities and civil associations concerned with the disabled through its CSR initiatives and programmes. This commitment is evident in providing necessary equipment to help them easily perform their daily life tasks in partnership with different NGOs.

Also, earlier this year, Bank Muscat organised the 'Himam Marathon', a pioneering sports

event in Oman for individuals with physical, visual, and hearing disabilities, as well as those with autism spectrum disorders and Down syndrome.

The marathon seeks to empower and integrate participants into society, reflecting the principles of Oman Vision 2040, which advocates for dignified and sustainable living for all.

To advance financial inclusion, Bank Muscat is implementing a comprehensive development plan to offer diverse services and facilities tailored to all customers, including those with hearing, visual, and physical disabilities.

Oman nationals, residents encouraged to vote in nation brand campaign today

Following a widespread response to the Oman Nation brand visual identity voting drive, campaign organisers are now encouraging all Omani citizens and residents who haven't yet cast their vote to do so during the fourth and final day of voting, which takes place on Sunday.

Today will mark the last opportunity for the people of Oman to cast their vote for one of three Oman Nation brand visual identities - which will subsequently be used as the official logo for the sultanate's long-term nation branding strategy, after the winning logo is revealed to the public in early-2025.

To-date, the visual identity voting campaign has achieved a widespread, positive response, and enjoyed representation from Omani citizens and residents, country-wide.

Eng Aisha Mohammed al Saifi - Director of Oman's Unified Promotional Nation Brand Project, and Vice President for the National Programme for the Development of Private Sector and Foreign Trade (Nazdaher) stated: "Today is the final day to take part in this exciting Oman Nation brand voting campaign. For Omani citizens and Oman-based residents, the process is very easy. All you have to do is visit the official voting website



www.omanbrand.om - where you can cast your vote for the brand logo which you feel best represents our nation's authentic values and aspirations, and national story."

"A distinct, authentic, and positive Oman Nation brand shapes how we're perceived globally as a highly attractive country for foreign investment, tourism, and trade; and as an ideal working and lifestyle location for both Omanis and foreign nationals; along with many other factors that support the growth and development of our economy and society. Today is our last chance to vote, and I encourage everyone to do so - because this is a wonderful opportunity to play a part in bringing to life an exciting new chapter in Oman's national story," Saifi added.

The visual identity voting campaign forms part of the sultanate's long-term nation branding strategy, which plans to positively impact how Oman is perceived globally, and leverage this perception for the benefit of the country's economy and society. Each of the Oman nation brand visual identities takes the form of a branded logo that unites both traditional and contemporary Omani design elements in a visually appealing way.



Omran to sponsor 'Oman Adventure Tourism Book'

As part of its ongoing efforts to promote Oman's natural beauty and enhance tourism initiatives, Omran Group has signed an exclusive sponsorship agreement to support the issue of the second edition of the *Oman Adventure Tourism Book*. This collaboration underscores Omran's commitment to showcasing the sultanate's rich tourism offerings.

Authored by Omar Ahmed al Busaidi, the book reflects a seven-year endeavour to create a comprehensive archive of over 40 adventure tourism destinations across Oman.

Designed for adventure enthusiasts and explorers, it highlights breathtaking natural sites through engaging content that combines entertainment and education.

Speaking about the initiative, Sultan bin Suleiman al Khudoori, Asset Manager at Omran and Acting CEO of the Najm Project, said, "Omran's support for the *Oman Adventure Tourism Book* aligns with our mission to advance the promotion of Oman's diverse adventure tourism potential. This initiative reinforces our role as a leader in sustainable tourism development and highlights the natural and cultural di-

versity of the sultanate, strengthening its position as a premier global tourism destination."

Author Omar Ahmed al Busaidi added, "This project caters to Oman's adventure tourism sector, focusing on activities like hiking, wadi exploration, and caving. It documents various sites across Oman's governorates through a comprehensive suite of resources, including guides and maps, spotlighting the unique natural attractions and activities available."

As the author highlighted, this project represents a comprehensive initiative to document and enhance the adventure tourism sector. It encompasses a range of printed and visual publications. The printed materials include a main book that catalogues the most significant tourist destinations for adventure enthusiasts and explorers.

In partnership with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the project will produce a series of guidelines targeted at companies and professionals in the adventure tourism sector. Additionally, detailed maps covering mountain trails and caves will be produced.

The visual publications will include the production of 20 doc-

umentary videos that offer a unique visual perspective of adventure destinations in an artistic manner.

Additionally, documentary content utilising augmented reality (AR) technology will be produced to provide an innovative and interactive experience for the audience.

Adventure tourism is a vital pillar in enhancing Oman's global tourism profile. The sultanate's geographical diversity - ranging from vast deserts and towering mountains to stunning beaches and awe-inspiring wadis - makes it a prime destination for activities such as mountain climbing, caving, camping, and diving.

This sector also supports sustainable development by promoting responsible tourism, creating job opportunities, encouraging entrepreneurship, and driving positive socio-economic impacts within local communities.

Moreover, adventure tourism offers visitors an authentic experience of Oman's natural beauty and cultural heritage, further solidifying the sultanate's reputation as a sustainable tourism destination that caters to travellers seeking exceptional and thrilling experiences.

OQ8's 'Science of a Refinery' inspires future of energy sector

OQ8 is proud to announce the successful completion of its 'Science of a Refinery' initiative, which took place earlier this month with workshops held in Duqm and Mahout.

The programme, aimed at fostering awareness and excitement about the energy sector, brought together students from grades 3, 6, and 7 to learn about renewable energy, refinery operations, and the role of sustainability in shaping Oman's future.

The initiative, a key part of OQ8's commitment to community empowerment, engaged over 300 students in hands-on learning activities. As part of the program, students in grades 6 and 7 constructed Energy Trees, which will be proudly displayed in their schools, symbolising the future of energy in Duqm.

Grade 3 students built wooden popsicle windmills and participated in the planting of the Energy Trees.

Nas'ha Mohammed al Fallahi, Chief of People, Technology & Culture, reflected on the success of the initiative, said, "At OQ8, we are dedicated to building long-term, positive relationships



with the Duqm community. Through programs like Science of a Refinery, we are nurturing the future of Oman's energy sector by encouraging young people to explore STEM careers. This is a long-term investment in the future of both our country and its people."

Since its inception in 2016 the Science of a Refinery program

has benefitted over 3000 youth, fostering an enduring interest in STEM fields and helping to shape the next generation of leaders in Oman's energy sector.

Jasim Hassan al Ajmi, VP of Corporate Affairs at OQ8, added, "The Science of a Refinery programme has become an important event for OQ8, aligning with our broader strategy to empower

the next generation of Omani professionals. Through our ongoing investment in STEM education, we are building a sustainable future where young Omanis lead the way in the energy sector. This initiative is just one example of our commitment to inspiring and educating Omani youth, ensuring they play a pivotal role in shaping the nation's energy future."

Ooredoo strengthens ICT solutions, customer-centric business services

Ooredoo has enhanced its business sales team to provide tailored telecoms and ICT solutions to B2B customers across various sectors, including corporate, SME, SoHo (small office/home office), government, education, and healthcare.

Designed to address sector-specific needs, the teams focus on seamless service delivery and personalised support, empowering businesses to navigate and thrive in a rapidly evolving digital landscape, the company stated.



Strategic industries such as finance and oil & gas benefit from Ooredoo's customised solutions, designed to foster innovation, improve operational efficiency, and support sustainable business growth. By integrating pre-sales technical expertise and optimised sales operations, Ooredoo ensured smooth service activation and ongoing support for all of its clients. This initiative reflects Ooredoo's commitment to customer-centricity and advancing Oman's

digital transformation, enabling businesses to improve connectivity, and boost productivity.

Abdul Aziz al Abri, Director of Business Sales at Ooredoo, said, "By prioritising innovation, personalisation, and seamless service delivery; our business sales teams are empowering businesses to navigate and succeed in Oman's digital economy. This effort reflects our commitment to enabling growth and aligning with Oman's vision for economic and digital transformation."

US identifies 9th telecom breach linked to Chinese hackers

Washington, D.C., US - The White House confirmed on Friday that a ninth US telecommunications company was breached as part of an extensive Chinese hacking campaign targeting critical infrastructure in the US and other nations.

The cyber-espionage group referred to as 'Salt Typhoon', also known by aliases such as Earth Estries, FamousSparrow, Ghost Emperor and UNC2286), has been active since at least 2019, specialising in infiltrating government and telecom networks globally.

White House Deputy National Security Adviser Anne Neuberger disclosed the new breach during a news conference, emphasising vulnerabilities in the private sector's cybersecurity practices.

"The reality is that China is targeting critical infrastructure in the United States. Those are private sector companies, and we still see companies not doing the basics," Neuberger said, according to Bloomberg.

"That's why we're looking forward and saying, 'Let's lock down this infrastructure'. And



The White House said the breach was part of hacking campaign targeting critical infrastructure in the US

frankly, let's hold the Chinese accountable for this."

The latest victim was identified after the Biden administration issued new guidance to help organisations detect Chinese cyberactivity. Neuberger assured that 'at this time, we don't believe any classified communications have been compromised'.

CISA urges encryption

A senior official from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), however, noted that the agency could not

confirm whether the attackers had been fully removed from affected systems.

In response to the breaches, CISA has urged senior government officials to adopt encrypted messaging platforms like Signal to mitigate interception risks and released technical guidance for telecom operators to fortify their defences against Salt Typhoon's tactics.

The Biden administration is also intensifying measures against Chinese entities linked to cybersecurity threats.

Anadolu Agency

Azerbaijani plane crash: Kazakhstan president cautions against fake news

Astana, Kazakhstan - Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Saturday urged people against relying on disinformation and fake news regarding the Azerbaijani airlines plane and asked authorities to complete a foolproof investigation into Wednesday's incident.

Tokayev instructed the Prosecutor General's Office and the government commission at a meeting in Kazakhstan's capital of Astana to conduct a thorough investigation into the incident, his press service said in a statement.

The president emphasised the importance of working to prevent disinformation and fake information intended to 'provoke', the statement said. "The Government Commission and the Prosecutor General's Office, together with other authorised bodies, have been instructed to ensure a comprehensive and objective investigation of the crash," it added.

The Azerbaijan Airlines flight J2-8243 crashed on Wednesday in a field near Aktau, in western Kazakhstan. Of the 67 passengers onboard, 38 died and 29 were hospitalised, some with severe injuries.

The plane wasn't supposed to land in Aktau. The aircraft had taken off from Baku, in Azerbaijan, on Wednesday morning and was due to land in Grozny, Russia, an area that has recently been heavily targeted by Ukrainian drones, when some-



The Azerbaijan Airlines flight J2-8243 crashed on Wednesday in a field near Aktau, in western Kazakhstan

The Government Commission and the Prosecutor General's Office, have been instructed to ensure a comprehensive and objective investigation of the crash

KASSYM-JOMART TOKAYEV

thing happened to it that some survivors later described as a collision with a bird.

Videos of the emergency landing near Aktau show the plane gaining altitude, then

sharply descending before crashing to the ground and catching fire. Other videos showed the wrecked aircraft lying in the field.

While Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan launched investigations, Azerbaijani officials attributed the crash to a Russian missile system.

The crash occurred amid Russian air defence activity against Ukrainian drones, and GPS jam-

ming was detected in the region.

Authorities of all interested countries urge awaiting official findings before drawing conclusions. Meanwhile, the US has seen 'early indications' suggesting that the crash may have been caused by Russian air defence systems, the White House said on Friday.

"We have seen some early indications that would certainly

point to the possibility that this jet was brought down by Russian air defence systems," White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby told reporters. He said the investigation is still ongoing and is being jointly conducted by authorities in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, adding that the US had offered assistance with the probe.

Agencies

Norovirus cases surge in the US

Washington, D.C., US - Norovirus cases appear to be increasing in various parts of the US, ABC News reported, citing data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

More than 90 norovirus outbreaks were reported during the week of December 5, the most recent week for which data is available. Previous years' data for the same December week shows a maximum of 65 outbreaks, according to the CDC.

The number of norovirus outbreaks reported by state health departments within a week of illness onset increased significantly in December, from 69 cases in late November to 91 in early December, CDC data shows.

Earlier this month, at least 80 people became ill with norovirus, which was linked to raw oysters, the media outlet reported on Friday.

Norovirus is the leading cause of vomiting and diarrhoea, a highly contagious virus that is the most common cause of viral gastroenteritis, which is an inflammation of the inside lining of the gastrointestinal tract, making it the leading cause of foodborne illness in the US.

Anadolu Agency

Germany's FM warns of Russian 'shadow fleet'

Berlin, Germany - German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has issued a warning about the 'decrepit Russian shadow fleet' of ships after recent damage to undersea cables in Europe.

"Almost every month, ships are currently damaging important undersea cables in the Baltic Sea," Baerbock told the German Funke group of newspapers on Saturday.

"Ship crews lower anchors into the water, drag them for kilometres across the seabed for no apparent reason and then lose them when they pull them up."

Baerbock said it was unlikely that multiple incidents occurring in recent months was a coincidence. "This is an urgent wake-up call for all of us. In a digitalised world, undersea cables are the communication arteries that hold our world together," she said.

She called for tougher sanctions against Russia and greater investment in national security.



Annalena Baerbock

On Wednesday, the Estlink 2 undersea power cable linking Finland and Estonia was damaged.

Finnish authorities believe the incident may have been an act of sabotage and detained the Cook Islands-flagged oil tanker Eagle S, a ship that the EU believes could belong to the so-called Russian 'shadow fleet'.

The 'shadow fleet' refers to ships that are used by Russia to circumvent sanctions, for example to sell oil.

DW

Senegal's Sonko says foreign military bases to close

Dakar, Senegal - Senegal's Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko spoke for hours in parliament on Friday, laying out the new government's plans barely a month after the decisive parliamentary election victory cementing the authority of President Diomaye Faye, elected earlier in the year.

He touched on multiple domestic issues, not least a contentious plan to waive amnesty rules passed by the previous government, potentially with a view to prosecuting rivals like former President Macky Sall.

Sonko also declared all foreign military bases in the country should be closed, saying this idea had first been put forward by President Faye.

"The President of the Republic has decided to close all foreign military bases in the very near future," Sonko said, to applause from the chamber.

Western footprint fading fast

Faye, who dissolved parliament and called snap elections during his first months in office, last month expressed the desire to close French military bases in



Sonko also pledged to introduce more English into Senegal's education system, which is dominated by French

Senegal.

"Senegal is an independent country, it is a sovereign country, and sovereignty does not accommodate the presence of foreign military bases," he said during a rare media interview.

Western powers have been struggling to maintain their presence in the Sahel region amid a series of coups in countries like Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, with the military governments all subsequently turning to Russia

for assistance instead.

They've ramped up diplomatic efforts with countries like Senegal and the Ivory Coast in response, but the change of government in Dakar looks set to pose further challenges.

France has now left Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso entirely, and on Thursday said it had also pulled its last troops out of a base in Chad. It is believed to have around 350 troops in Senegal.

Sonko's other plans

The Senegalese prime minister told the lawmakers that the government was working to repeal a mass amnesty law that was one of the last major acts of former President Macky Sall. A project aimed at revoking the initiative would be put forward 'in the coming weeks', Sonko said.

Sall passed the law amid mass protests in the run-up to the presidential election, seemingly in a bid to calm tensions, releasing

hundreds of people imprisoned on charges connected with stoking public violence.

This amnesty ultimately allowed both Faye and Sonko to run for public office, and win power, though Sall's critics claim it was also designed to shield him in the future.

"This is not a witch hunt, much less revenge," Sonko told parliament. "It is about justice, the pillar without which no social peace can be built."

Sonko said his government would change its visa policy with a number of European countries, including France, as well as the US, saying it would demand 'free visas for Senegalese nationals on the basis of the principle of reciprocity'. Senegal had scrapped its visa fees in 2015 in a bid to boost tourism.

Sonko said his government would seek to bolster public finances by 'broadening the tax base' while gradually lowering the average tax rates. He defined the goal as to 'make all Senegalese pay less, but make all Senegalese pay' to 'achieve effective and equitable taxation'.

DW

Gaza children freezing to death amid Israeli blockade, says UNRWA chief

Philippe Lazzarini urged for ‘an immediate flow of much-needed basic supplies, including for winter’

Gaza City, Palestine - The commissioner-general of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) has warned that children in Gaza are freezing to death due to the cold weather and a severe lack of shelter.

“Gaza babies are freezing to death due to cold weather and a lack of shelter,” Philippe Lazzarini wrote in a post on X late on Friday.

“Blankets, mattresses, and other winter supplies have been stuck in the region for months waiting for approval to get into Gaza,” he said, referring to Israel’s inhumane blockade of the coastal enclave, which launched a genocidal war in the first week of October last year.

The UN official reiterated his call for an immediate ceasefire, urging ‘an immediate flow of much-needed basic supplies, including for winter’.

On Thursday, Gaza’s Health Ministry Director-General Munir Al-Barsh told Anadolu that three Palestinian children died in makeshift displacement camps over the past week due to freezing temperatures.

Two-week-old Sila Mahmoud Al-Faseeh died from exposure to cold in a displacement camp in Al-Mawasi, Khan Younis, on Wednesday. She was the second infant to die in the same camp, following the death of Aisha Adnan Al-Qassas on December 20.

Israel has killed more than



Gaza babies are freezing to death due to cold weather and a lack of shelter, Philippe Lazzarini wrote in a post on X late on Friday

45,400 people in Gaza since an October 7, 2023, cross-border attack by Hamas, reducing the enclave to rubble.

Last month, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against

humanity in Gaza.

Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its war on the enclave.

11 more killed in Gaza

At least 11 Palestinians were killed and scores more injured early on Saturday in Israeli airstrikes on civilians in northern Gaza, a

house in the central part of the coastal strip, and displaced people’s tents in Khan Younis, with the death toll feared to rise.

Medical sources told Anadolu that an Israeli strike on a group of civilians in Sarari Street in Jabalia, northern Gaza, killed two Palestinians and injured several others.

Nine more Palestinians, including children, were killed in an Israeli airstrike targeting the Naami family’s home in the Maghazi refugee camp in central Gaza, medical sources also confirmed.

In another attack in southern Gaza, Israeli drones targeted displaced people’s tents in Al-

Mawasi, west of Khan Younis, causing multiple casualties. Shelling also struck areas east of Khan Younis and northwest of Rafah.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army has intensified its demolition of buildings and residential blocks in Rafah and northern Gaza, leaving behind widespread devastation.

According to Gaza’s Health Ministry, three Palestinian children died in makeshift displacement camps over the past week due to freezing temperatures

Separately, the Palestinian Civil Defence on Saturday condemned the arrest of its northern Gaza director, Ahmed Hassan Al-Kahlout, by Israeli forces late on Friday.

In a statement, the Civil Defence described the arrest as part of ‘Israel’s deliberate targeting of humanitarian and relief operations’.

Israel launched a large-scale ground offensive in northern Gaza on October 5 to allegedly prevent the Palestinian group Hamas from regrouping. Palestinians, however, accuse Israel of seeking to occupy the area and forcibly displace its residents.

Since then, no sufficient humanitarian aid, including food, medicine, and fuel, has been allowed into the area, leaving the remaining population on the verge of imminent famine.

Anadolu Agency

Taliban strike targets inside Pakistan

Kabul, Afghanistan - Afghanistan’s Taliban government said on Saturday that it struck ‘several points’ inside neighbouring Pakistan.

The attacks comes days after Pakistani aircraft launched airstrikes inside Afghanistan.

“Several points beyond the hypothetical line, serving as centres and hide-outs for malicious elements and their supporters who organised and coordinated attacks in Afghanistan, were targeted in retaliation from the southeastern direction of the country,” the Taliban’s Ministry of Defense said in a post on social media platform X.

The statement did not specifically reference Pakistan, instead saying the strikes took place ‘beyond the hypothetical line’ - a term used by Afghan authorities to refer to a long disputed border with Pakistan. This week, Pakistan launched aerial bombardments inside Afghanistan with reports that dozens of people were killed.

The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) expressed concern that at least 20 children were among those reportedly killed in the airstrikes in Paktika province.

DW

Mozambique’s cities paralysed by post-election unrest

Maputo, Mozambique - Major cities in Mozambique were without key human and business activities on Friday as post-election violence in the country spread. Some businesses, including banks, were closed in the capital, Maputo.

Transportation and trading were both halted as opposition-led demonstrations continued amid looting and vandalism.

Maputo and its largest suburb, Matola, have experienced chaos since the Constitutional Council, Mozambique’s highest court, confirmed the results of the disputed October presidential election, extending the ruling Frelimo party’s grip on power into a 50th year. The court’s seven-judge bench ruled that Frelimo candidate Daniel Chapo had secured 65% of the vote, revising down the initial results of nearly 71%. Frelimo has governed Mozambique since 1975.



As the chaos escalates, disrupting daily life, the United Nations has called for calm and a peaceful resolution

The Constitutional Council’s announcement triggered opposition protests that often turned into clashes with police, with buildings burned and supermarkets ransacked.

A female resident in Maputo

told DW that she witnessed looting in Maputo’s Praca dos Combatentes neighbourhood. “The people I saw ran away and broke glass. I saw everything that was happening. They took microwaves, televisions, beds. This

should not happen because they are ruining many things, and they cannot behave like this,” she said.

In the George Dimitrov neighbourhood, also known as Benfica, at least 11 people died inside a food warehouse when a fire

broke out after it was attacked and looted.

In the Polana Canico neighbourhood, residents also set up barricades to prevent road traffic.

“We are willing to organise this. We are tired, after all, what is democracy for? We don’t want Frelimo anymore and we will fight. We only want the best for our country, we are tired of wars, of blood, we are tired,” a resident told DW.

Police chief Bernardino Rafael described the people who broke into warehouses and stores as criminals.

“What we are witnessing is an assault on the Matola industrial complex, which houses various industries and warehouses,” Rafael told reporters. “This was caused by a group of criminals, making it difficult to maintain control.”

Venancio Mondlane, the opposition leader who has con-

tested the election results, blamed the police for the vandalism and deaths of protesters. He called for more protests from his supporters but cautioned them against looting and damaging infrastructure.

“It’s the police men who are prepared to rob the stores, set fire to the banks, break into the warehouses,” he said during a live broadcast on Thursday. “You saw the images of policemen telling the population to come in to get food. People come in because they are hungry.”

The violent protests that have rocked Mozambique have resulted in the deaths of 248 people, including 33 in a prison break on Wednesday. Mondlane has claimed widespread vote rigging and called on his supporters to continue to protest, vowing to install himself as president on January 15.

DW

Syrians in Kabun struggle to rebuild lives amid destruction

Damascus, Syria - In the Kabun neighbourhood of Damascus, Syrians are struggling to rebuild their lives after the regime’s devastation.

The most visible scars of the 13-year civil war are found in Kabun, where Syrians fought for freedom against the Bashar Assad regime. Located six kilometres from central Damascus, Kabun was once home to a thriving Tailors Bazaar with a population of nearly 100,000.

Today, much of Kabun is reduced to rubble, with remnants of the Ba’ath regime’s oppression evident in the ruins. Some debris has even become mass graves, said residents. In the nearby Tishreen neighbourhood, returnees are living without ser-



Residents in war-torn neighbourhood endure hardships, reflect on heavy toll of 13-year conflict under Assad regime

vices like electricity or water, surrounded by buildings scarred by shrapnel, bullets and fires.

The remnants of bombs used by Assad and his allies are found on the roofs of the few houses left

standing. Amid the destruction, children playing symbolise hope for a better future.

The Al-Merri family - father, son and grandson - is holding on in the last remaining house in Kabun. Samir al-Merri, 58, has lived in Kabun since the 1980s. Before the war, the neighbourhood was home to people from across Syria, Iraq and Yemen, with a bustling Tailors Bazaar.

“The Tailors Bazaar used to be busy. Now, nothing is left. It’s completely destroyed,” Samir noted.

He shared the pain of losing his son in 2012, who was detained by the regime. “I stayed here under bombardment until 2015, hoping to find him. I saw nearly 300 bodies in the streets, executed with shots to the head,” he said. “In the end, I lost hope. We had four houses, but now

only one remains.”

Samir received confirmation that his son, Faris, died in 2016 in the Sednaya Prison, known as the ‘human slaughterhouse’.

His other son was killed in an Israeli airstrike during mandatory military service near a base housing Iranian forces.

Samir’s son, Ahmed, 40, fled the bombings in 2016 and returned to Kabun in 2021. Before the revolution, they avoided politics, but after the uprising, Ahmed realised the oppression they had been living under.

“We were living on a farm. The regime’s men controlled everything - our house, car, property - they all belonged to them,” said Ahmed.

Anadolu Agency

Education denied: Rohingya refugees in India struggle for children's future

New Delhi, India - Aisha, a 7-year-old Rohingya girl, wakes up every morning chasing her elder sister Asma as the latter gets ready for school in Khajuri Khas, a locality in northeastern Delhi.

Aisha pleads with her elder sister to take her along most days, but her wish is never met. She was denied admission to the same school where her sister studies in seventh grade.

Their father, Hussain Ahmad, a Rohingya refugee who fled Myanmar with his family in 2017, struggles to explain to Aisha why the school authorities have refused her enrolment. It pains him to see her plead - a constant reminder of the hurdles they face.

"I have been running from one public school to another to get my daughter admitted, but she has been denied everywhere," said Ahmad, a construction worker. "They are depriving her of education. I feel very helpless."

Ahmad said he had submitted all the necessary documents, including United Nations documentation, required for refugee children's enrolment in school. However, the school authorities have stopped considering these papers for admission.

Barriers to education

For the past two years, Ahmad said, 'authorities have started demanding Indian documents like Aadhaar (a biometric identity card), which we, as refugees, don't possess. Our UNHCR card has become useless', referring to the document issued by the UN refugee agency.

Ahmad's experience resembles those of other Rohingya fam-



In Delhi's Khajuri Khas locality, Rohingya children who are unable to attend regular schools have joined a religious seminary

In Khajuri Khas, in northeastern Delhi, 17 children have been denied admission in the last two years, according to a petition filed with India's Supreme Court

ilies in Khajuri Khas. A few metres from his home, Sarwar Kamal, another Rohingya refugee who works as a mobile repair technician, has been making rounds of government schools in the area to secure admission for his 10-year-old daughter. "I couldn't get a proper education,

and I don't want the same fate for my children," Kamal told DW. "I am worried they are shattering the dreams of our children."

Around 40 Rohingya families have lived in this colony ever since they fled persecution in Myanmar. Most of these families stay in small, rented rooms in the

narrow alleys of the densely populated area of Khajuri Khas. In this locality, 17 children have been denied admission in the last two years, according to a petition filed with India's Supreme Court.

An estimated 40,000 Rohingya people live in India, with 20,000 of them registered with the UNHCR. Most fled Myanmar in 2017, when the Southeast Asian nation's military unleashed a violent crackdown in what many describe as a genocide against the Rohingya Muslims in western Rakhine state. India does

not have a national policy on refugees and considers the Rohingya to be 'illegal foreigners'. India is one of the few countries that is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention.

Anti-Rohingya sentiment growing

Meanwhile, the anti-Rohingya sentiment is growing in the South Asian nation. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) is often associated with the anti-Rohingya narrative, it is by no means alone.

The Aam Aadmi Party, which has governed Delhi for over a decade, has also used anti-Rohingya rhetoric to bolster its support ahead of elections.

Atishi Marlena, the chief minister of Delhi, has accused the BJP-led government of settling 'a large number of illegal Rohingyas' across the capital.

Sabber Kyaw Min, the founder of the Rohingya Human Rights Initiative, is alarmed by the politicisation of the Rohingya issue.

Min said this kind of political narrative targeting Rohingyas is

adding to the fears of an already marginalised community.

"This education ban is politically motivated. The leaders of different political parties are portraying us as an enemy for their politics," Min told DW. At least 676 Rohingya people are currently being held in immigration detention centres across India, according to a 2024 report by Azadi Project and Refugees International. Half of them are women and children, the report said.

Children find alternative schooling

In Khajuri Khas, children who are unable to attend regular schools have joined an alternative school - a small religious seminary established by Mohammad Syed, a Rohingya refugee. The seminary, supported by the local Muslim community, operates out of a small rented room where Syed provides religious education, including lessons on the Quran. The students also learn Urdu, which helps them to communicate with the locals in the area.

"I stepped in when I learned our children are being denied education. These Rohingya students have dreams of having a good life but they are being discriminated for who they are," said Syed. Vinod Kumar Sharma, the principal of the school that refused admission to 7-year-old Aisha, said his school cannot be blamed, as the authorities have set the rules for admitting refugee children. "I can't give admission to the students. I don't have the authority to do it," Sharma told DW.

DW

Trump asks Supreme Court to delay law that could ban TikTok

Washington, D.C., US - President-elect Donald Trump asked the US Supreme Court on Friday to delay a law that would ban TikTok or force its sale by its Chinese owner ByteDance.

The law, set to take effect on January 19 - one day before Trump's inauguration - requires ByteDance to sell the platform to an American company or face a ban. Trump's legal team asked the court to allow the incoming administration the time 'to pursue a political resolution'.

President Joe Biden signed the law in April in a bid to address TikTok's potential national security risks, including its ties to China. The Supreme Court will hear arguments in the case on January 10.



Trump recently said TikTok has a 'a warm spot' in his heart for helping him connect with young voters

Trump finds 'a warm spot'

Trump's latest stance marks a reversal from his first term when he sought to ban the app over national security concerns.

US officials then had voiced

concern over the popularity of the video-sharing app with young people.

Last week, Trump said TikTok has a 'a warm spot' in his heart for helping him connect with young voters, just ahead of his

meeting with TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew at his Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida.

TikTok, which has over 170mn US users, and its parent company have sought to have the law struck down arguing that the legislation violates US First Amendment rights.

If the court does not rule in their favour, the app could be effectively banned in the US on January 19, one day before Trump takes office.

Officials claim Chinese authorities could force ByteDance to share data on US users or manipulate the spread of information. However, the platform has denied sharing data with Chinese officials.

DW

ENJOYING THE FIRST SNOWFALL



Tourist enjoys snow after the first snowfall of the season, at Patnitop in Udhampur, J&K, India on Saturday (ANI)

India: Former PM Manmohan Singh cremated with full state honours

New Delhi, India - Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday was cremated with full state honours at Nigambodh Ghat in Delhi's Kashmere Gate in the presence of his family, friends, colleagues and government dignitaries.

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh paid their last respects to the former PM by placing a wreath near his mortal remains earlier on Saturday.

The rituals for the cremation ceremony were performed for the former Prime Minister. The last rites were carried out at the VIP Ghat as per the Sikh rituals.

Dr Singh's mortal remains were placed on a pyre of sandalwood sticks. Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge along with Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi were also present for the cremation ceremony after they paid tribute to the former PM.

The mortal remains were brought to the All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters in Delhi from his residence early on Saturday morning for party workers to pay their respects. Several people also gathered outside his residence in Delhi to pay their tributes.

Congress leader Madhusudan Mistry said that he made lifelong laws that benefited crores of people. "His demise is a loss for



Indian President Droupadi Murmu accords the last salute to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, at Nigambodh Ghat in New Delhi, India on Saturday (ANI)

everyone," he added.

Congress leader Murtaz Patel said: "Today, India has lost a great man. He was not just a good leader but also a very good human being. People called him a weak Prime Minister but it was wrong. He always worked for the country, he was a strong and kind person."

Congress MP Manish Tewari said: "Today is a very poignant moment. A very fine person, a renowned economist, a world statesperson is not with us today...It is a sad day not only for India but for the world...He lived a very noble and simple life...May his soul rest in peace..."

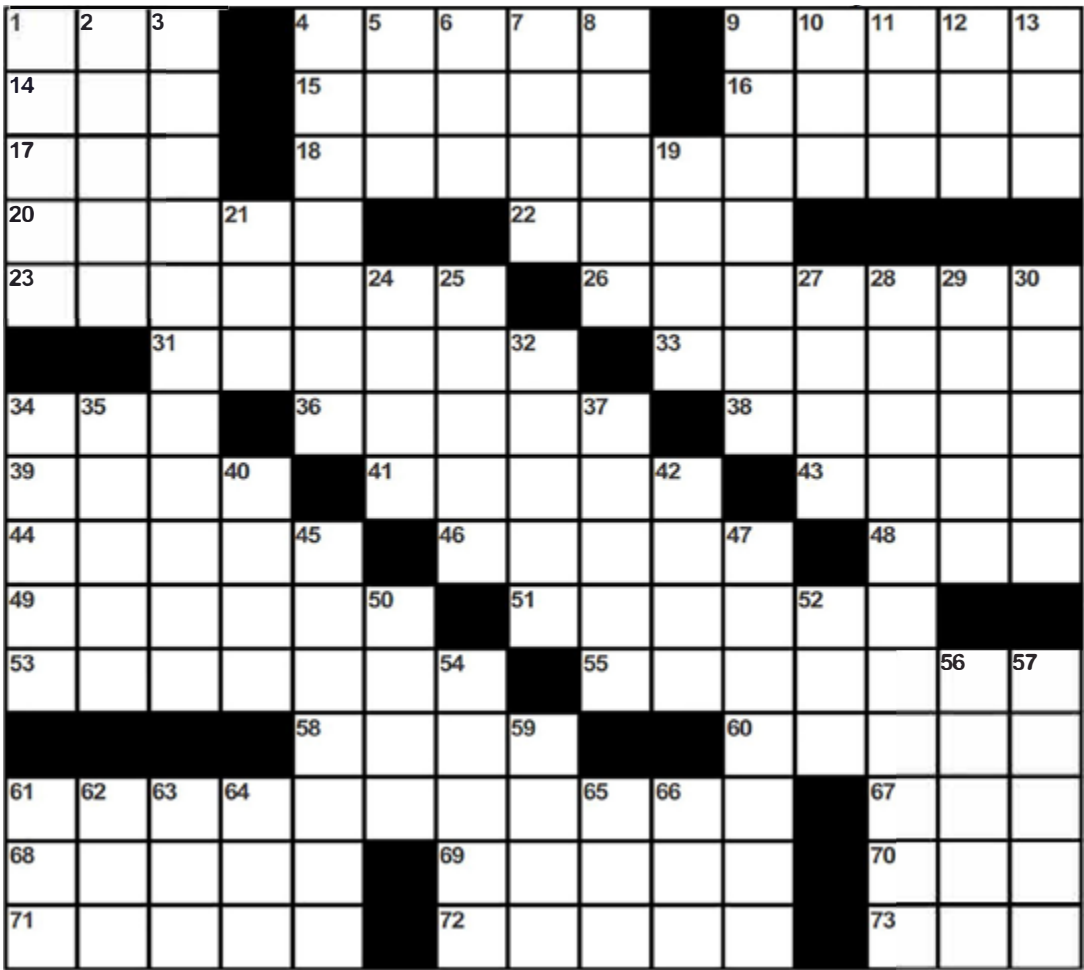
Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar praised

Manmohan Singh for bringing many 'revolutions' during his tenure as the Prime Minister of India. He reiterated the words spoken by the former PM, saying that the media and opposition will have to remember him.

Singh's political career spanned several decades, with notable positions including Finance Minister from 1991 to 1996, during which he spearheaded economic reforms that transformed India's economy. He served as the 13th Prime Minister of India from 2004 to 2014, succeeding Atal Bihari Vajpayee. His tenure is particularly remembered for his steady leadership during economic crises.

ANI

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Amiss
- 4) Construction girder
- 9) Born in Cardiff, e.g.
- 14) Ace
- 15) Like Erik the Red
- 16) Nebraska metropolis
- 17) A human need
- 18) Premeditation
- 20) Jewish man of God
- 22) Husk
- 23) Sewing machine pedal
- 26) Painter Georgia
- 31) Ancient
- 33) Encompass or envelop
- 34) Attorneys passed it
- 36) Pre-delivery time
- 38) Noted back-breaker
- 39) Historic times
- 41) Golfers' shouts
- 43) Tractor-trailer
- 44) Common ground cover
- 46) Skid row habitues, stereotypically
- 48) Animal house
- 49) Accompany
- 51) Masonry finish
- 53) A way the wind blows
- 55) Remove, as shoes

- 58) Money in Milan, once
- 60) Pago Pago locale
- 61) In view of the fact that
- 67) Sick
- 68) Egg-shaped
- 69) _-Roman
- 70) Zilch
- 71) Beta's follower
- 72) Rats' hangout
- 73) Interstate sign
- DOWN**
- 1) Eyeball-bending drawings
- 2) Frock wearer
- 3) Restraint
- 4) Unbeliever, to some
- 5) Frightening sound?
- 6) "To _ is human ..."
- 7) Aboard a liner
- 8) Paris railway
- 9) Winter warmers
- 10) Australian big bird
- 11) Delay
- 12) "Pipe down!"
- 13) Covering for the head
- 19) Go backpacking
- 21) Something to tote
- 24) Bread unit
- 25) Macaroni variety
- 27) Salamanders, early on

- 28) Condemning
- 29) Heartthrob
- 30) Astronomer Hubble
- 32) Roberts of "Everybody Loves Raymond"
- 34) Cut at an angle
- 35) Come to mind
- 37) Monopoly fees
- 40) Boat with an open hold
- 42) Essence
- 45) Shrinking body of water
- 47) Buy-one-get-one-free item?
- 50) Barber's job
- 52) Bean counter, for short
- 54) What dispensaries dispense
- 56) Thin layers of rock
- 57) Collapses
- 59) Field measure
- 61) Befuddle
- 62) Egg cells
- 63) Barnyard butter?
- 64) Banking machine, briefly
- 65) Make cutting blows
- 66) Pitching star

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

People around you may intend to harm you and will try their best to break your patience level. This could be a form of their frustration towards you. But do not let them bother you and focus on your goals. Great opportunities are coming your way and each of them has the potential to grant strength to your love life. Health-wise, conditions can be seen working in your favour.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Those who were looking for an opportunity in their career field may get it today. Watch out for your tongue today and avoid uttering offensive words. Tensions might arise at the workplace. So, be wise enough and react only if required. In financial terms, it is a great day to reshuffle your investments. Health-wise, your cards look promising. Your Lucky color is Red. Your Lucky number is 46.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

The chemistry between lovers may deepen. This will help you strengthen the bond with each other. Avoid travelling in the West today as there is a probability that you might meet with an accident. Part your time in spending some quality time with your friends and family. Health-wise, you will feel great today as all health issues will end. Your Lucky color is Brown. Your Lucky number is 12.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What field of work is Alessandro Volta (1745-1827) best known for?

- A. Study of rivers
- B. Electricity
- C. Sports science
- D. Theory of evolution

2. Where are the Balearic Islands?

- A. Caspian Sea
- B. Caribbean Sea
- C. Tasman Sea
- D. Mediterranean Sea

3. Who would use an inkblot or Rorschach Test?

- A. Chemist
- B. Butcher
- C. Psychologist
- D. Astronomer

Answers: 1.B 2.D 3.C



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Try to be honest and open with your partner and embrace what you have. Financially, you may seek help from an old friend to improve your present conditions, but it's hard to find an escape. Children may ask for the moon today. Workload may give you a headache and you may resort to some medications. Health-wise, conditions might not be well so take precautions to avoid any issues arising in future.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Professionally, a colleague may come up with an opportunity that would play a vital role in enhancing your income. You may get kudos for your work quality from your boss, which will motivate you to work to the best of your abilities. An acquaintance may play an important role in framing some career-oriented decisions. Workload seems to overtake your happiness.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You may plan a trip with your near and dear ones this evening. Support from family members in rough times can be seen. Arguments with partners are in sight, so take the required precautions to avoid them. If you are leading a project or something then try to portray the character of a good leader at the workplace and motivate your employees to work to the best of their abilities. The Gala affair may keep you occupied today.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Students are likely to receive some good news for their academic fields. Some health issues might trouble you today, but an inflow of money from an unexpected source will balance out the stress. Those who are seeking justice in judicial matters may end up in disappointment as the time is not favourable for you in this respect. Your Lucky color is Black. Your Lucky number is 6.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

This is that phase of your life when you can't question the dominance people are showing to you because you know that this will help you grow in future. You will find yourself celebrating the completion of a project. This will give you a sense of relief and will make you burden-free. Your income is likely to soar which will give you financial stability and a sense of relief.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Refrain from lending money to strangers today as they might have an intention to cheat you. Avoid driving two-wheelers today and if it is unavoidable, just be a little careful. You are likely to add some physical activities to your daily routine, which will help you in achieving your fitness goals. Overload at the workplace is likely to give you mental pressure so take the required precautions to avoid such a situation.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You will prefer being isolated and would not prefer being socially active. Your determination and integrity will help you achieve your goals. Good news from a family member can be expected. This shall make you feel over the moon. Financially, conditions can be seen improving. While, health-wise, some acute diseases may have a hold on you.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

It's time to plan things and prioritize the outstanding tasks. Professionally, growth can be expected but remember god helps those who help themselves. There are probabilities that you might receive kudos from your superiors which will boost and uplift your confidence levels. You will be busy coining money today. Be careful with the paperwork and keep confidential documents under the lock and key.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Talking about your personal life, your love life can be seen as gaining strength as partners will develop a new dimension in their lives. Due to peer pressure, do not drag yourself into a relationship if you are not ready for it. People around you who claim to be your friends and well-wishers might not be so. So, watch out! Unexpected monetary gains are on the card, adding to your pleasures. Health-wise, conditions will be in your favour.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

D	O	N	K
D	E	U	I
S	D	E	C
C	E	L	A

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

REDDY STEADY

Young batsman hits sparkling century to lead India’s fightback in Melbourne Test

Melbourne, Australia - In an electrifying Boxing Day clash led by youngsters, rookie all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy celebrated a stirring, maiden century to give India hope against Australia on day three of the fourth Test on Saturday.

The 21-year-old sent Indian fans into delirium as he strode forward to thump Scott Boland over mid-on for four to raise his hundred late in the day, bringing

was two not out but enjoyed one of the day’s biggest cheers when he blocked out Australia’s pace-man-captain Pat Cummins for three balls.

That allowed righthander Reddy, stranded at the non-striker’s end on 99, to complete his ton in the next over.

Playing in his fourth test, Reddy planted his bat in the turf, put his helmet over the handle and saluted the sky as a huge



India's Nitish Kumar Reddy celebrates his century against Australia on Saturday

The 21-year-old sent Indian fans into delirium as he strode forward to thump Scott Boland over mid-on for four to raise his hundred late in the day, bringing tears to the eyes of his overjoyed father in the MCG crowd.

tears to the eyes of his overjoyed father in the Melbourne Cricket Ground crowd.

Reddy strode off unbeaten on 105 when bad light and rain brought stumps an hour early, with India 358 for nine, still trailing Australia’s first innings 474 by 116 runs.

Tailender Mohammed Siraj

crowd of 83,073 gave him a standing ovation.

The MCG fans have now seen two young stars rise this test, with Australia’s 19-year-old opener Sam Konstas producing a thrilling knock of 60 on day one of his debut.

India’s 25-year-old number eight Washington Sundar also

produced an important 50 as he and Reddy combined for a 127-run partnership and defied the Australia’s bowlers for more than a session.

Nathan Lyon broke the partnership by having Sundar edge to Steve Smith at slip before Jasprit Bumrah fell for a duck, edging Cummins to Usman Khawaja in

the slips. Australia developed an injury concern before tea, with paceman Mitchell Starc pinching at his back with an apparent muscle strain.

A team physio attended to Starc as he fielded in the deep.

India had resumed on 244 for seven after lunch, still 31 runs short of avoiding the follow-on,

after wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant holed out for 28 with a poor reverse scoop in the morning.

Nathan Lyon then broke a 30-run partnership between Reddy and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja by dismissing the latter lbw for 17.

Sundar was dropped on 18 early in the middle session when he attempted a leg-side glance

that sent an inside edge flying behind the wicket. Smith lunged across from second slip but grassed the one-handed chance.

Reddy brought up his first Test fifty in style with a lofted square drive which despatched a loose Starc delivery to the ropes for four.

He later brought up the 100-

partnership with Sundar with a sumptuous cover drive. It was made all the more sweet for Indian fans in a huge day three crowd when Lyon stumbled at the boundary to concede a four.

While his senior teammates fell by the way-side, Reddy continued to impress in his debut Test series.



Swiatek thankful for support after failed doping test

Sydney, Australia - Poland’s five-times major winner Iga Swiatek feared a far greater public backlash after she accepted a one-month suspension for failing a doping test, the world number two said ahead of the United Cup in Australia.

The 23-year-old Swiatek tested positive in an out-of-competition sample in August for trimetazidine but the ITIA, which runs tennis’s anti-doping programme, accepted that it was caused by contamination of her sleep medication. She was provisionally suspended from Sept. 12 until Oct. 4, missing three tournaments, and served the last eight days of the ban after playing at November’s WTA Finals in Riyadh.

“The reaction in Poland basically - because this is mostly what I read - has been pretty supportive. I really, really appreciate that because even, you know, when I missed the China swing and nobody knew why it wasn’t so easy,” she said.

Sinner, Swiatek doping cases disgusting for our sport: Kyrgios

Brisbane, Australia - Nick Kyrgios said the recent doping incidents involving Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek were “disgusting” for the sport, as the Australian slammed authorities on Saturday over what he saw as lenient treatment in their cases.

World number one Sinner failed two drug tests in March for trace amounts of the anabolic androgenic steroid clostebol but was cleared of any wrongdoing by an independent tribunal that accepted his explanation of unintentional contamination.

World number two Swiatek accepted a one-month ban after a positive test for hormone and metabolic modulator trimetazidine, which she said was the result of contamination of her sleep

medication.

“I just think that it’s been handled horrifically in our sport. Two world number ones both getting done for doping is disgusting for



our sport. It’s a horrible look,” Kyrgios told reporters in Brisbane, where he is making his injury return. “The tennis integrity

right now, and everyone knows it, but no one wants to speak about it, is awful. It’s not okay.

“I know that people don’t like when I just speak out about things, be honest about things. For a kid that grew up playing tennis, I enjoyed the competition, I enjoyed playing.

“I can get emotional, I can throw a racket, but that’s nothing compared to cheating and taking performance-enhancing drugs. That’s ridiculous in my opinion.”

The International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) maintains that all doping cases are dealt with based on facts and evidence and not a player’s name, ranking or nationality, but has not been able to completely see off allegations of double standards.

Bencic helps Switzerland beat France in United Cup

Sydney, Australia - Former Olympic champion Belinda Bencic sparked on her return to the elite circuit after her maternity break, leading Switzerland to a 2-1 win over France in the United Cup mixed team tournament on Saturday.

The 27-year-old beat Chloe Paquet 6-3 6-1 in her first WTA Tour level match since giving birth to daughter Bella in April. She later combined with Dominic Stricker to down the pair of Elixane Lechemia and Edouard Roger-Vasselin 6-1 7-6(4).

Bencic, who will compete in the Jan. 12-26 Australian Open with a protected ranking, said she was playing at a higher level than she expected.

“The whole comeback went much faster than I anticipated and expected. It’s great,” said



Belinda Bencic and Dominic Stricker of Switzerland celebrate a point against Elixane Lechemia and Edouard Roger-Vasselin of France

Bencic, who first returned to action in October and played in the Billie Jean King Cup, apart from lower level tournaments. “I didn’t rush things. I was super careful with starting again. I didn’t really want to put time pressure on my comeback. I just wanted to see

how it goes every day.

Ugo Humbert had earlier pulled France level at 1-1 with a 6-3 7-5 win over Stricker in the Group D contest, battling back from 2-5 down in the second set to prevail and force a mixed doubles rubber.

South Africa quick bowler Jansen rattles Pakistan



Marco Jansen took five wickets to pin Pakistan down to the mat

Centurion, South Africa - South Africa fast bowler Marco Jansen helped put the brakes on Pakistan’s attempted fight-back on the rain-delayed third day of the first Test at Centurion as the tourists were 212 runs for eight wickets at tea, with only a slim 122-run lead.

Jansen took three wickets in four overs to complete a five-wicket haul while Dane Paterson and Kagiso Rabada grabbed a wicket each on Saturday to hand the hosts the advantage after Pakistan had made a positive start to the day’s play.

Saud Shakeel and Babar Azam both scored fifties to overturn a two-run deficit at the start of play, which was delayed until after lunch because of a passing rainstorm. Shakeel was 66 not out at tea but left with only the tailenders as South Africa moved close to dismissing the tourists before beginning their chase.

Babar scored his first fifty in

Jansen took three wickets in four overs to complete a five-wicket haul while Dane Paterson and Kagiso Rabada grabbed a wicket each on Saturday

his last 20 Test innings in a much-needed return to form while Shakeel continued where he left off from their last Test against England as Pakistan overhauled South Africa’s 90-run first innings lead and looked to set their hosts a testing target.

They were 153-3, and beginning to unnerve their hosts, before a raft of injudicious shots saw them lose wickets, as well as momentum. Babar had moved from 16 overnight to 50 but was then tempted into

swinging at a short and wide delivery in Jansen’s first over and caught by Corbin Bosch on the boundary.

Afghanistan’s Shah unbeaten on 231

Rahmat Shah registered a Test record score for an Afghanistan cricketer with an unbeaten double century on Saturday to see his team to 425 runs for two wickets at stumps on the third day of the first Test against Zimbabwe at Queens Sports Club.

Afghanistan, who were 95-2 overnight, took full advantage of a raft of dropped catches and saw Rahmat and his captain Hashmatullah Shahidi bat through the entire day, keeping their respective wickets intact through an astonishing 95 overs. Rahmat was 49 not out overnight and broke Hashmatullah’s record of 200 not out, set against Zimbabwe in Abu Dhabi in 2021, as he finished the day unbeaten on 231.

KAI HIGH!

Havertz strikes as Arsenal beat Ipswich to go second in Premier League

London, England - Arsenal moved up to second in the Premier League and within six points of Liverpool after a largely trouble-free, if slightly pedestrian, 1-0 win at home to struggling Ipswich Town on a chilly night in north London on Friday.

A first-half goal from Kai Havertz, who pounced on a smart pull-back from Leandro Trossard, proved the winner although the hosts should have scored more as the Gunners' performance failed to provide many pre-New Year fireworks.

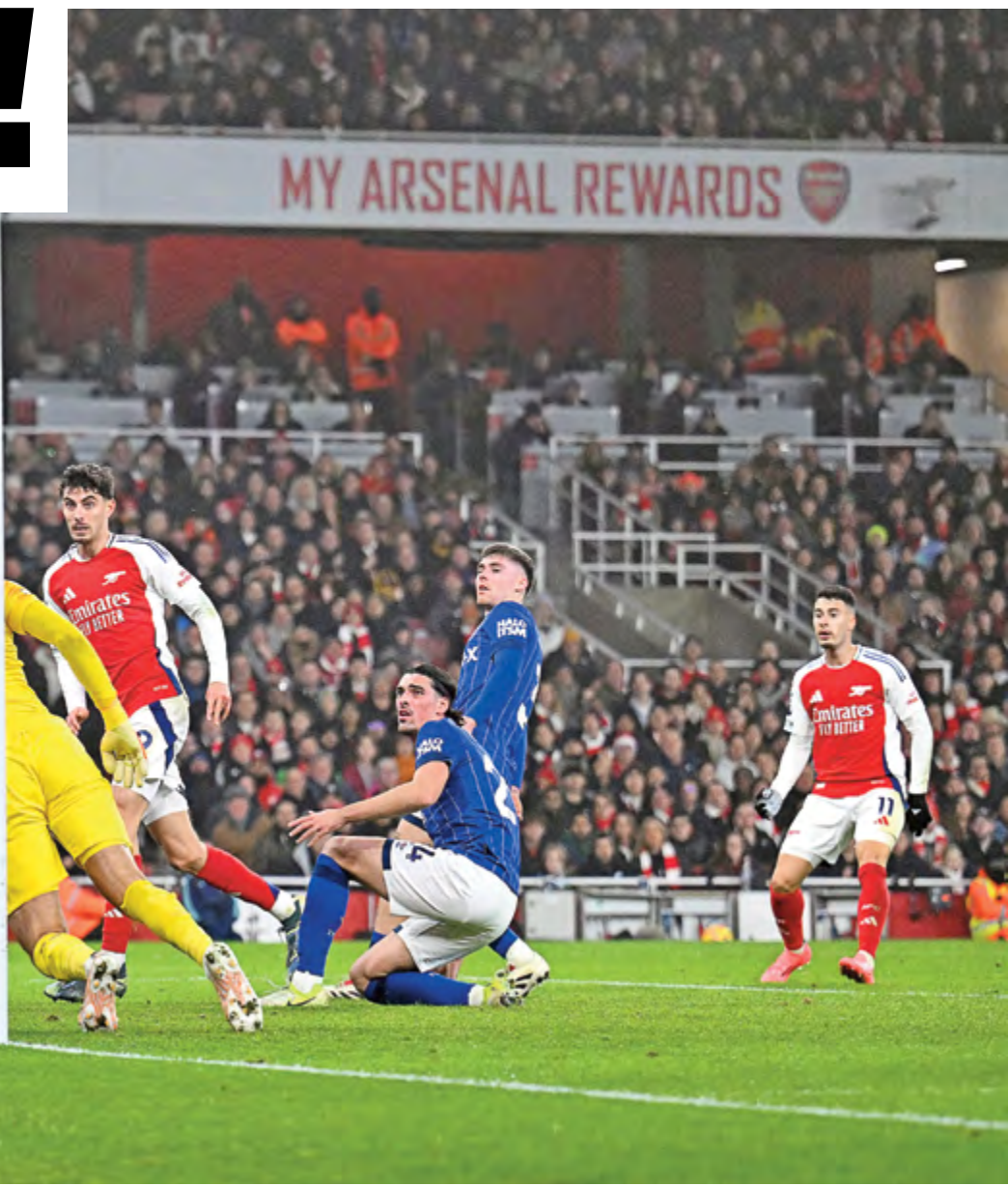
Lacking the creativity of the injured Bukayo Saka, it took 19 minutes before Arsenal mustered their first shot although four minutes after that Havertz netted his sixth of the season in all competitions by tapping in Trossard's whipped cross.

Ipswich had a spell of pressure after 10 minutes of the second half but it proved fleeting and Arsenal should have comfortably put the game to bed after that.

Defender Gabriel Magalhaes missed a golden opportunity to extend his run of scoring from corners when he headed just wide when completely unmarked. Captain Martin Odegaard then blazed over after he danced from midfield into the visitors box. The win lifted Arsenal



Arsenal's Kai Havertz scores against Ipswich Town on Friday



Considering all the circumstances we had this season, the amount of times we had to play with 10 men, all the injuries that we had, it's good to be in the position that we are

MIKEL ARTETA

to 36 points behind Liverpool, who have 42 and a game in hand, and meant the Gunners leapfrogged both London rivals Chelsea, who have 35 points, and Nottingham Forest fourth on 34.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta told reporters he was "very happy

with the victory, with the clean sheet and with large parts of the game. We should have scored more but it is the consistency, the team conceded nothing again.

"Considering all the circumstances we had this season, the amount of times we had to play with 10 men, all the injuries that we had, it's good to be in the position that we are but it's not where we want to be. We want to be first."

The Gunners next visit Brent-

ford on New Year's Day and Brighton & Hove Albion on January 4 before playing two domestic cup games and hosting local rivals Tottenham Hotspur on January 15.

Friday's match started slowly as Arsenal kept the ball effortlessly early on, although it was mostly in non-threatening areas until Trossard burst to the byline after 23 minutes and fired the ball across for Havertz to prod in.

Arsenal forward Gabriel Jesus

thought he had added to his recent run of goals later in the half when he poked the ball through the Ipswich keeper Arijanet Muric's legs from an unfathomably tight angle but it was ruled out for offside.

The home side created a handful of good chances in the final 20 minutes too with Odegaard, Havertz and Trossard all getting shots in but if Arsenal are to keep up their challenge on Liverpool they will need to demonstrate more clinical finishing.



Eddie Howe

Newcastle look to pile pressure on Man United

Manchester, England - Newcastle United continue their chase of a Champions League berth when they visit Manchester United in the Premier League on Monday in a battle between teams heading in opposite directions in the table.

Eddie Howe's Newcastle climbed to fifth in the table with their feisty 3-0 thrashing of Aston Villa on Boxing Day. They are unbeaten in five of their last six matches, outscoring their three most recent league opponents -- Leicester City, Ipswich Town and Villa -- by a combined 11-0.

"We're shooting for whatever we can shoot for," Howe said about a Champions League berth. "We'll take small steps, we'll go game-by-game, but I'm really heartened by how the team is playing."

"I think we're winning strongly at the moment, we're not winning by luck. I think there's been a definite upturn in our general performance. We look good defensively and we look good in attack - but of course we need to keep our standards very high."

United are languishing in 14th place in the table, closer to relegation than the top four, having lost four of their last five games.

Along with their crisis on the pitch, there has been controversy off it with new manager Ruben Amorim has left striker Marcus Rashford out of the squad for the last four matches.

"We have to be the same professionals, the same guys, winning or losing. Losing, I have to be stronger. I will continue with my idea until the end," Amorim said.



Bukayo Saka

Saka to be 'out for more than two months' after hamstring surgery

London, England - Arsenal forward Bukayo Saka is set to be sidelined for more than two months after an operation on a hamstring injury, manager Mikel Arteta said on Friday.

"He had a procedure, everything went well but unfortunately he will be out for many, many weeks," the Spaniard told reporters after Arsenal beat Ipswich 1-0 to go second in the Premier League table.

Pressed on a more precise

timeline, Arteta added: "I think it will be more than two months. It will depend on how the scar tissue starts to heal, the first week or so of mobility ... let's see, it's very difficult to say."

Saka has scored five goals and had 10 assists in the league this season as one of Arsenal's creators-in-chief.

The 23-year-old was forced off in their match against Crystal Palace earlier this month. In October and November, the Eng-

land international missed three Nations League games as well as Arsenal's league defeat at Bournemouth and their Champions League win over Shakhtar Donetsk due to an injury to the same leg.

Arsenal, though, have been handed a welcome fitness boost over Raheem Sterling, with the forward expected to return quicker than expected.

"Yes, we have to see this week how he evolves," added Arteta.



Bo Svensson

Union Berlin axe coach Svensson

Berlin, Germany - Union Berlin parted ways with coach Bo Svensson and members of his staff, the Bundesliga club said on Friday, after the club's recent poor run of form.

Union have been winless for more than two months and, having lost five of their last seven Bundesliga games, are in 12th place on 17 points from 15 games.

"After a thorough analysis of the season so far, we are convinced that a significant change is necessary to reverse the trend," Managing Director Horst Heldt said in a club statement.

"We have therefore decided not to continue the cooperation with Bo Svensson, Babak Keyhanfar, Kristoffer Wichmann and Tijan Njie."

Brentford hold Brighton goalless

Brighton, England - Brighton & Hove Albion were held to a 0-0 draw by Brentford after dominating the mid-table Premier League clash but lacking a finishing touch despite having 24 shots at a misty American Express Stadium on Friday.

Fabian Hurzeler's hosts extended their winless run to six games and are 10th in the table with 26 points after 18 games, two points ahead of 11th-placed Brentford who are still without an away victory this season.

Hurzeler rued the two points lost.

"It's a disappointing feeling. In the locker room it's not a great atmosphere," he said. "But in the end it's our responsibility, we have to learn to win these games."

"In the end it's a business where you need to get results, we need to learn how to win these games."

Brighton peppered Mark Flekken's goal with shots all night after Julio Enciso set the tone in the fifth minute when Joao Pedro, with his back to goal, laid the ball off for the Paraguay international, who clattered his shot off the woodwork.



Brighton & Hove Albion dominated the game against Brentford on Friday but had nothing to show for their superiority

It was a sign of things to come for the 20-year-old Enciso, whose eight shots in the first half were the most by a player in the first half of a Premier League game since Luis Suarez's eight

latched onto Mads Roerslev's through ball on the counter and fired into the top corner but it was ruled out for offside.

Flekken limped off late in the first half with a hamstring injury, which could have been costly with Brighton having had 15 shots to the visitors' two. However, back-up Hakon Valdimarsson and a resolute defence limited Brighton to a point.

Brentford fans shouted for a red card when Joao Pedro threw an elbow near Yehor Yarmoliuk's head in the second half after the Ukrainian dragged him back. But a lengthy VAR check ruled there was no violent conduct as Joao Pedro made no contact.

"As I understand the rules if you swing your arms to hit someone, if you hit someone or not it's a red card," frustrated Brentford manager Thomas Frank told Amazon Prime.

Brighton fans sang Solly March's name during an emotional standing ovation when the 30-year-old wing-back was brought on as a late substitute in his long-awaited return from a serious knee injury suffered in October 2023.



Mohamed Salah

Salah dreams of winning title

Liverpool, England - Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah said he senses something different about the way the club are performing as Premier League leaders this season after they secured a 3-1 win over Leicester City to move seven points clear. Leicester took a shock sixth-minute lead but goals from Cody Gakpo, Curtis Jones and Salah turned the tide at Anfield.

Liverpool are now firm title favourites but have faltered before from similar positions, most notably in the 2018-19

season when they had a sizeable lead but eventually finished behind Manchester City.

"It feels different but the important thing is we need to stay humble," Salah, who leads the league with 16 goals, told Amazon Prime.

"We had a few injuries when we were ahead (previously) and we lose it in the end. Hopefully we carry on like that with no injuries and we go on and win it. This one is very special. Hopefully we win the Premier League for this club - it's something I dream of."

OMAN ENTER SEMIS

Rashid Jaber's men draw with UAE to progress as group champions

Kuwait City - Oman marched into the semifinals of the Gulf Cup as Group A winners after playing out a 1-1 draw against United Arab Emirates on Friday.

Rashid Jaber's men, who started with a 1-1 draw against Kuwait, stunned Asian champions Qatar 2-1 in their second encounter to finish their group campaign on five points.

UAE, needing a win for a spot in the semifinals, took the lead through Yahya al Ghassani in the 20th minute. Abdulrahman al Mushaifri drew Oman level in the 79th minute with Fabio Lima's missed penalty in stoppage time costing UAE dearly.

Kuwait also have five points following their 1-1 draw against Qatar on Friday, but they had to settle for second place because of their inferior goal difference.



Oman's Abdulrahman al Mushaifri (L) celebrates with Ali al Busaidi after scoring against UAE on Friday

River Plate women players freed in Brazil after alleged racist taunts

Sao Paulo, Brazil - Four women football players with River Plate, one of Argentina's top professional clubs, were released by Brazilian authorities on Friday following their detention last week after allegedly targeting a ball boy with racist slurs.

The four Argentine players were competing in the Ladies Cup - a usually friendly international tournament created to promote women's football. The organisers later said River Plate had been eliminated from the tournament and suspended from participating for two years.

River Plate condemned the players' alleged gestures and said in a statement the club were taking appropriate disciplinary measures.

Brazilian football has for decades dealt with issues of racist behaviour, including past incidents involving players and fans from neighbouring Argentina.

Last week in Sao Paulo, police arrested Candela Diaz, Camila Duarte, Juana Cangaro and Milagros Diaz after their match against Brazil's Gremio. The Brazilian club accused the four players of making racist remarks and gestures.

Sao Paulo state judicial officials ordered the Argentine players be released provided they remain in Brazil until investigations into the incident conclude.

The officials also ordered the players to pay 25,000 reais (\$4,038) to compensate the ball boy if the investigation decides they did taunt him with racist slurs.

Vinicius deserved to win Ballon d'Or, says Ronaldo

Dubai, UAE - Cristiano Ronaldo on Friday weighed in on the decision to hand the men's Ballon d'Or award to Manchester City's Rodri, saying Brazil and Real Madrid forward Vinicius Junior deserved to win instead.

Vinicius, 24, scored 24 goals in 39 appearances across all competitions to help Real clinch the LaLiga and Champions League double last season, and he also netted in their Champions League final win over Borussia Dortmund.

However, he was pipped to



Vinicius Junior was chosen the best player at the Globe Soccer Awards

He (Vinicius) deserved to win the golden ball. It was unfair, I say it here in front of everybody. Rodri deserved it too but I think they should have given it to Vinicius because he won a Champions League.

CRISTIANO RONALDO

the award by Rodri in October, after the midfielder led City to a fourth straight Premier League title last season before inspiring Spain to Euro 2024 success.

The awards ceremony was not attended by Vinicius' club Real, who decided to boycott it in anticipation of him not winning the men's award.

"I really love the way they do their career, (Jude) Bellingham, Lamine (Yamal) now, this young generation, Vinicius, they do a fantastic job," Ronaldo said at the Globe Soccer Awards.

"In my opinion he (Vinicius) deserved to win the golden ball. It was unfair, I say it here in front of everybody," added the Portuguese captain, who has won the award five times. "They gave it to Rodri, he deserved it too but I think they should have given it to Vinicius because he won a Champions League."

Barca's appeal to register Olmo rejected by court, LaLiga welcomes decision

Madrid, Spain - LaLiga welcomed a court's decision on Friday to reject Barcelona's appeal for the precautionary registration of Dani Olmo for the rest of the season, which means the Spain international may not play for the club from Jan. 1.

Barcelona had signed Olmo in August for around 55 million euros (\$57.39 million) but due to the club being unable to meet LaLiga's wage cap, the attacking midfielder was registered for the first half of the season only.

The club had managed to register Olmo after long-term injuries kept first team players out of the squad for months, which



Dani Olmo

allowed Barca to allocate a portion of their wages to register the 26-year-old.

But the four-month allowance

for Olmo is set to expire at the end of the month and the Commercial Court number 10 of Barcelona rejected the club's request to provisionally register him.

"LaLiga has today learned of the ruling... rejecting the request for the provisional registration of Dani Olmo until June 30, 2025, on the grounds that none of the necessary conditions for the adoption of an interim measure have been met," it said.

"The ruling also stresses that: 'The purpose of allowing additional spending is so that a long-term injury does not weaken the team's competitiveness, not to use a long-term injury to allow the registration of players whose salaries exceed the limit, which is what FC Barcelona is attempting'."

Carlsen quits FIDE tournament after being told to change jeans

New York, US - Chess great Magnus Carlsen quit the World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships in New York on Friday after governing body FIDE barred the Norwegian from participating in a round at the tournament for wearing jeans.

In a statement, FIDE said its dress code regulations were designed to "ensure professionalism and fairness for all participants".

The body added that it had issued Carlsen a \$200 fine and given him an opportunity to change into the correct attire, which the world number one rejected.

Carlsen, world champion between 2013 and 2023, said he had a lunch meeting before the round and had to change quickly.

"I put on a shirt, jacket and honestly like I didn't even think about jeans, even changed my shoes," Carlsen told Take Take Take. "I didn't even think about it... First of all, I got a fine which



Magnus Carlsen

is fine, and then I got a warning that I would not be paired if I didn't go change my clothes. They said that I could do it after the third round today.

"I said 'I'll change tomorrow if that's OK, I didn't even realize it today', but they said, 'Well you have to change now'. At that point it became a bit of a matter of principle for me."

The 34-year-old added that he would not appeal the decision, saying: "Honestly, I am too old at this point to care too much. If this is what they want to do... I guess it goes both ways, right - nobody wants to back down - and this is where we are. It's fine by me."

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Financial Controller/Sr. Accountant ACCA, CA Inter, MS Finance, 12 years Gulf experience seeks new opportunity. Ready to join immediately. NOC & D/L available. Mob # 77258382

Administration Executive, Post Graduate, 14 years experience in relevant field with accounts. Have Oman Driving License. Visa released. Immediately Joining. E-mail: joby021@gmail.com Mob: 94415466

GM/Restaurant /Hotel /Outlet Manager; well qualified, 20 years experienced professional with valid Oman driving license seeks suitable job in Oman. Contact: 91989424

Indian, Production Manager 10 years GCC experience in facade industry with valid Oman driving licence looking for job. Immediate joining. Available in Sohar. Mob: 78026010

CLASSIFIED LISTINGS

MUSCAT DAILY offers a variety of classified listings for individuals and establishments:

Situations Vacant/Wanted, Accommodation Wanted or Available, Sale of Household Items, Cars for Sale or Wanted, Matrimonial Alliances, etc

Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call: 99104346

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

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

أوربت ORBIT

Car Rental & Lease



One of the main observers of the art of the Kadiwéu, an Indigenous people from South America, was French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. In the early 20th century, he visited Indigenous villages in what is today Brazil's Mato Grosso do Sul state and photographed the inhabitants' traditional ceramics and elaborate body paintings made with ink from the genipap fruit.

The guardians of this rich artistic tradition are the women of the Ejiwajegi people, as the Kadiwéu call themselves, who preserve their cultural memory while also generating an income from their creations.

Like other Indigenous peoples throughout Brazil, the Kadiwéu have for centuries suffered from colonial exploitation. And the most recent manifestation of this centred around their art: A book featuring the never-before-seen art of their ancestors was about to be published half a world away, and no one had thought to consult them about it.

In 1935, in the Indigenous village of Nalike, near what's now the village of Alves de Barros in the municipality of Porto Murinho, Claude Lévi-Strauss stayed with the Kadiwéu and received several drawings as gifts from the Indigenous women.

These artworks remained in the anthropologist's personal archive for decades, until his wife, Monique Lévi-Strauss, found the folder containing more than 30 original drawings. French publisher Éditions du Seuil took an interest in the works and prepared to publish a new book around them: *Peintures caduveo - Suppléments à Tristes Tropiques (Caduveo Paintings - Supplement to Tristes Tropiques)*. It would be released to commemorate Lévi-Strauss's 1955 classic *Tristes Tropiques* (Sad Tropics), which gained international prominence for its relevant structural analyses of Brazilian Indigenous peoples.

The problem was that no one consulted the Kadiwéu themselves before embarking on the project.

They only found out about it by chance, when a researcher mentioned that the publisher was having a prelaunch promotion of the book on its website, at €21, or US\$22, ahead of the launch in Paris in November.

In response, the Kadiwéu mobilised Indigenous leaders, researchers and anthropologists, and wrote an open letter addressed that sought to expand the debate around the recognition and appreciation of their culture and identity. The publication of the drawings raised pertinent questions about who benefits from the sales of reproductions of these works of art.

'The material and immaterial cultural heritage of Ejiwajegi/Kadiwéu women must be respected as collective intellectual property, and due authorisation from the community is imperative for its use,' the letter says.

It reached Le Seuil, which contacted a Kadiwéu representative and subsequently decided to suspend the book's launch and sales indefinitely. The link to the book has been removed from the publisher's site, and negotiations are currently underway for the Indigenous people to participate in the work.

Speech as a place of experience

Indigenous rights activists say the lack of prior consultation by Le Seuil shows disregard for the voices and rights of Indigenous peoples, illustrating how their art is often treated as an exotic object without due consideration for the profound cultural meaning it carries. When books are published without the artists' consent and Indigenous peoples' involvement, the authenticity of the narrative is compromised, perpetuating native peoples' invisibility and silencing, activists say.

Brazil's Kadiwéu force

INTERNATIONAL DEBATE ABOUT AUTHORSHIP OF INDIGENOUS ART



lencing, activists say.

"This is a crucial demand that reflects the ongoing struggle of indigenous peoples to value their cultures," says Benilda Vergilio, a Kadiwéu designer, fashion stylist and anthropology postgraduate student at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS).

"The intellectual property of graphics, drawings and paintings is an extension of the Kadiwéu's collective identity and memory, and it is vital that this cultural heritage be respected and protected. Prior consultation is a right guaranteed by Brazil's Constitution and must be respected in projects involving Indigenous culture. It is essential that indigenous communities' voices be considered fairly and authentically."

Vergilio says her people aren't interested in the money from the sales of the book, but rather in the inclusion of Indigenous people in its conception.

The open letter reads, in part, "We, the Ejiwajegi Kadiwéu people, who are descendants of the women who made the drawings given to Lévi-Strauss, were shocked by the lack of dialogue with our people during this process. At no time were we consulted about our opinions regarding this publication."

It adds, "Considering that these drawings are part of the heritage of the Ejiwajegi Kadiwéu and are the fruit of knowledge passed down from generation to generation, we believe that our views are essential for launching a publication about these drawings."

"Perhaps we are less important to the Brazilian state," Pires says. "We should play a larger role in the construction of opinions, and the surrounding society should disassociate itself from the old image of schools from the past, which taught that, in order to be Indigenous, you had to wear a loincloth and a feather on the back of your neck, and make that ridiculous little scream. We need to teach about the importance of Indigenous people to the construction of Brazil. They fought against several invaders who wanted to occupy the country by any means necessary. Until the consolidation, the soldiers used to be Indigenous people."

Vergilio says the sense of indignation and emotion when recalling the memories of her ancestors is understandable. It evokes the pain of loss and the importance of these people to the history of the Kadiwéu. It's a moment of reflection about and celebration of their lives, even in the face of injustices such as the present one. When asked whether the book project perpetuates cultural appropriation, she says the mobilisation of external voices on behalf of Indigenous communities can distort the stories and silence legitimate actors. "The fight for autonomy and fair representation is essential to appreciate and preserve Indigenous cultures," Vergilio says.

Art and identity

This is only the latest instance of Indigenous peoples in Brazil facing the appropriation and disrespect of their cultural, intellectual and artistic production. But as anthropologist and Federal University of Mato Grosso professor Maria Raquel Duran points out, the country's colonial history of Indigenous erasure, theft and usufruct without the participation of those involved have made such practices commonplace in interactions with the various Indigenous and ethnic groups living in Brazil.

According to Duran, the Ejiwajegi spoke out assertively in their letter against the use of their art for the benefit of non-Indigenous people, without due recognition, compensation or proceed-sharing.

Indigenous knowledge and practices have owners; and what Indigenous peoples like the Ejiwajegi want is more respect for their artistic and cultural expressions

MARIA RAQUEL DURAN



"This practice, which is common in the context of Indigenous art in general, both in Brazil and internationally, creates outrage precisely because it uses these cultural expressions and knowledge as if they had no owners, as if they were in the public domain and did not require authorisation from the artists, because they are not registered under narrow Western knowledge regimes such as cultural heritage or copyright," she said.

"Even though they are not part of that logic, Indigenous knowledge and practices have owners; and what Indigenous peoples like the Ejiwajegi want is more respect for their artistic and cultural expressions."



For Kadiwéu anthropologist Gilberto Pires, it's 'horrifying' to realise that, in the 21st century, there are still people who don't care about Indigenous narratives, especially the memory of their ancestors - something that should be a source of pride for all Brazilians, as it's part of the country's history. Unfortunately, he says, this isn't the case.

Duran says that what we're seeing is the repetition of an outdated colonial pattern that affects not only the Indigenous people in question but also the anthropology produced in Brazil. She emphasises the need for Indigenous people and their supporters to take a stand against these occurrences, so that they cease.

2024'S BIGGEST ART CONTROUERSIES

Divisive royal portraits and a \$6.2mn banana: Art is too serious to be taken seriously



Big money, big ideas and big egos - the art world has all the necessary ingredients for a juicy controversy.

This may be why eye-rolling and schadenfreude emerge so virulently whenever said controversies occur. After all, as the American painter Ad Reinhardt once quipped: "Art is too serious to be taken seriously."

The year in art included plenty of snark over new depictions of the British royal family that were perceived as too aggressive or too generic, as well as an infamous banana that returned to auction with a shocking hammer price. Works were accidentally thrown out, smashed or intentionally forged; and legal dramas unfolded thanks to badly behaved dealers and museum-targeting protestors.

Here are some of the controversies that CNN found entertained, shook and shaped the art world in 2024:

One person's trash...

For some, the line between modern art and trash is vanishingly thin. Among them was the elevator technician at a Dutch museum who mistakenly threw away part of an artwork that had been made to resemble two empty beer cans.

According to LAM Museum, in the Netherlands, the hand-painted work (*All the good times we spent together*) symbolised French artist Alexandre Lavet's "cherished memories shared with dear friends". The museum also said, in a statement, that it bore 'no ill



will' towards the technician - after all, the replica cans had intentionally been displayed in a glass elevator shaft as though they'd been left behind by construction workers.

The items were later recovered intact from a trash bag before being cleaned and returned to display.

No stopping 'Just Stop Oil'

The vandalism of cultural heritage in the name of protest, by Just Stop Oil and other activist groups, continued apace. The Magna Carta, the *Mona Lisa* and Stonehenge were among the targets in 2024.

But this was also a year of differing fortunes for the assailants. In the Netherlands, three Belgian climate activists who targeted Johannes Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* escaped unpunished, after an appeals court overturned their two-month prison sentences. (They spent 23 days in detention). In September, however, a British judge handed the two young demonstrators who attacked Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers* with tomato soup long custodial sentences of two years, and 20 months, respectively.

Whether this will serve as a deterrent remains to be seen. Some museums aren't taking any chances: London's National Gallery, the target of several attacks in recent years, was among the institutions to step up their security by restricting liquids and large bags.

Viral banana returns (and now it's worth millions)

Anyone outraged that a banana duct-taped to a wall sold for US\$120,000 in 2019 was in for a shock this year. In November, an edition of Maurizio Cattelan's controversial artwork *Comedian* - which made headlines around the world when it first sold for six figures - re-emerged at auction with an estimate of US\$1mn to US\$1.5mn.

The valuation proved to be conservative: After a bidding battle, Chinese billionaire Justin Sun paid US\$6.2mn for the viral work. For his money, the

cryptocurrency entrepreneur received a roll of duct tape and one banana (not the original), as well as a certificate of authenticity and installation instructions. Sun also enjoyed a brief moment in the spotlight after he called a press conference in Hong Kong and promptly ate the banana for the cameras.

"I want to eat it to become part of the (artwork's) history," he said.

Award-winning AI

In January, a Japanese author admitted that her award-winning book, *The Tokyo Tower of Sympathy*, had been written with the help of ChatGPT. Shortly after receiving the Akutagawa Prize, Rie Kudan revealed that around 5% of the work was generated, word-for-word, by AI.

"I plan to continue to profit from the use of AI in the writing of my novels, while letting my creativity express itself to the fullest," the author told a press conference.

Kudan's admission stoked ongoing existential questions about the threat AI poses to the creative industries. But in June, photographer Miles Astray got revenge for team human by sneaking his very real photo of a flamingo into the AI category of the 1839 Awards' Color Photography Contest - and winning the competition's People's Vote award. He wrote in an Instagram post that he'd wanted to "prove that human-made content has not lost its relevance" and that "Mother Nature and her human interpreters can still beat the machine".

Smashing art

There was plenty of sympathy for the four-year-old boy who accidentally smashed a Bronze Age jar at an Israeli archeological museum - not least because the artifact, which experts say was at least 3,500 years old, had been put on display without a glass case.

The Hecht Museum in Haifa defended its decision to present the object without protective glass, saying that its founder emphasized the importance of making history accessible to the public. The museum also welcomed the boy and his parents back for a special tour.

Curators at Palazzo Fava in Italy, however, were somewhat less understanding toward the man who shattered a porcelain sculpture by dissident artist Ai Weiwei. CCTV footage showed him aggressively pushing the sculpture over and then holding a piece of it above his head.

The Chinese artist, who heard the smashing noise from an adjacent room, described the man's actions as 'unacceptable', telling the Art Newspaper: "Such acts not only undermine the museum's role as a public space but also pose potential physical threats, beyond merely damaging the meaning an artwork carries."



Lisa Schiff

Schiff defrauded at least 12 clients - including art collectors, an artist, the estate of another artist and a gallery - by not disclosing that their art had sold, or by not purchasing works they had paid for

Welsh town's 'odd' inflatable

A small town in Wales welcomed an unexpected visitor in June: A large, pink, inflatable man on all fours. But the 43-foot-tall sculpture - a laughing self-portrait of the Chinese contemporary artist Yue Minjun - divided opinion in Ruthin, where it was displayed on the front lawn of a local school.

The school's principal Frances King told CNN that Yue's work has a "deep philosophical understanding" but admitted there had been "mixed responses". Locals spoken to by CNN meanwhile described the inflatable man as everything from 'absolutely wonderful' to 'a bit odd'.

Perhaps most importantly, though, the students 'love it' King said, adding that the children were 'really quite fond' of the installation.



Hannah Uzor was 'intolerably bad' and "shows no flicker of resemblance to its subject".

Dealers behaving badly

In October, Manhattan-based art advisor Lisa Schiff pled guilty to wire fraud and agreed to forfeit the US\$6.5mn she was accused of making through the sale of (or, in some cases, the failure to buy) 55 artworks.

According to the US Department of Justice, Schiff defrauded at least 12 clients - including art collectors, an artist, the estate of another artist and a gallery - by not disclosing that their art had sold, or by not purchasing works they had paid for. She used the funds for business and personal expenses, in what authorities called "half a decade of deceit". Schiff will be sentenced in January.

This year also marked the release of disgraced art dealer Inigo Philbrick, four years into his seven-year prison sentence - also for wire fraud. Philbrick's US\$86mn scheme, the largest art fraud in American history, saw him fake documents, conceal ownership interests and invent a fictional art collector as he collateralised and resold shares in blue-chip contemporary art.





Luxury in every detail



2.0L Turbo Engine, 233 hp, 8-Speed AT, 4WD
SUPER WARRANTY 6 YEARS / UNLIMITED MILEAGE*

EMI
OMR 194
for 6 years





3.5" TFT + 10.25" TFT cluster



Wireless Charging



21" Alloy Wheels



Hidden Door Handles



Front Airbags, Side Airbags, Curtain Airbags



360" Camera



Forward Collision Warning & Intelligent Adaptive Cruise Control



Lane Change Assist

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC

Showrooms : Qurum 94641010, Mawaleh 97888180, Nizwa 96628940
Sohar 95351200, Salalah 96629050, Ibbi 96628930
Sales Centers : Barka 96629010, Sur 96628920

800 50800
9662 8909

changanoman
www.changanoman.com

MUSCAT DAILY
www.muscatdaily.com

Executive Chairman & Editor-in-Chief
Saleh Zakwani
Apex Press and Publishing.
Printed at Apex Printing Press, Jiffnain

PO Box 2616, Ruwi 112, Muscat,
Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24799388.
Toll Free No. 80076000

EDITORIAL
Mohammad Najmuz Zafar
Tel: +968 24799388
Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

ADVERTISING
Sajir CP
Mobile: +968 99474314
Email: sajir@apexmedia.co.om

SUBSCRIPTION
Toll Free No. 80076000
Email: customercare@apexmedia.co.om
Annual subscription offer: RO24

DISTRIBUTION
Shamshad Khan
Toll Free No. 80076000
Email: shamshad@apexmedia.co.om