

BELGIAN RIDER VERVAEKE TAKES STAGE 2 OF TOUR OF OMAN



Belgian rider Louis Vervaeke of Soudal-Quickstep took his first pro-victory in the stage 2 of the Tour of Oman 2025, which began at Rustaq Fort and concluded in Yiti Hills in Muscat on Sunday. Completing an excellent day for Soudal-Quickstep, Vervaeke's teammate Valentin Paret-Peintre took the sprint for second place ahead of Sean Flynn of Picnic-PostNL

New guidelines set for acquiring Omani citizenship

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Royal Decree on the Omani Nationality Law issued last week has introduced a new set of conditions for foreign nationals seeking Omani citizenship, requiring a minimum of 15 years of continuous residence in the country, proficiency in Arabic, and a record of good conduct. Applicants must also demonstrate financial independence, maintain good health, and renounce their previous nationality to qualify.

The updated Omani Nationality Law, outlined in Royal Decree No 17/2025, builds on the original Nationality Law enacted in 2014 and aims to streamline the citizenship process while prioritising national interests.

Under the new regulations, the Ministry of Interior will oversee all nationality applications and has the authority to reject any application without providing an explanation. Disputes over nationality decisions will no longer be subject to court rulings.

The decree also establishes clear guidelines for revoking citizenship. Omani nationality can be revoked if an individual engages in activities considered harmful to the sultanate's inter-



KEY REQUIREMENTS

- Minimum of 15 years of continuous residence
- Proficiency in Arabic
- Record of good conduct
- Financial independence for self and dependents
- Renunciation of previous nationality

CITIZENSHIP MAY BE REVOKED FOR

- Activities harmful to Oman's interests, such as insulting the country or the Sultan
- Working for foreign states or hostile organisations against Oman's interests

ests, such as insulting the country or the Sultan, or working for foreign states or hostile organisations against Oman's interests.

However, provisions for the restoration of citizenship are included, allowing individuals to regain their nationality if the reasons for revocation are resolved.

Harsh penalties have been introduced for those found sub-

mitting false information or fraudulent documents in their citizenship applications. Offenders face up to three years in prison and fines ranging from RO5,000 to RO10,000.

The reforms reflect Oman's commitment to a regulated citizenship process that upholds its sovereignty and ensures that applicants meet the country's standards for nationality.

Oman affirms solidarity with Saudi

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman along with other Arab states have slammed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's remarks that a Palestinian state should be established in Saudi Arabia.

The sultanate expressed its full solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, strongly condemning the statement made by Prime Minister Netanyahu regarding Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity.

In an official statement,



Oman's Foreign Ministry reaffirmed the sultanate's unwavering support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital,

based on the 1967 borders.

Commenting on the statement, H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, wrote on social media platform X, "The ill-considered and unwise speculations of the Israeli Prime Minister regarding the establishment of a Palestinian state outside the sovereign borders of Palestine serve no purpose other than an agenda of extremism, instability and violence. We reject such speculations and assert our full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia."

Netanyahu suggested earlier this week that Palestinians should be moved to Saudi Arabia which has "a lot of land", calling a Palestinian state a "security threat" to Israel.

Riyadh quickly rebuffed the Israeli leader's comments in a foreign ministry statement, reiterating that normalisation with Israel would only be possible if an independent Palestinian state was established.

Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates also condemned the Israeli statement.

814 firms participate in Festival of Discounts

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has on Sunday informed that altogether 814 commercial establishments are taking part in the 'Festival of Discounts and Offers', which opened on January 9 to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Accession Day of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The month-long festival, which will continue until Tuesday, is aimed at promoting commerce, encouraging public-private partnerships, while commemorating the Accession Day.

The event is being held in collaboration with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT), the Ministry of Information, Muscat Municipality, and the Consumer Protection



Authority, among others.

Ali bin Hamad al Maamari, Director of the Licensing Department at MoCIIP, said that the festival presents a great opportunity to support the retail sector by allowing stores to offer special deals on local products and services. "These offers contribute to stimulating sales and creating a positive economic environment in the sultanate."

Maamari added that the ministry continuously organises

The festival presents a great opportunity to support the retail sector by allowing stores to offer special deals on local products and services

ALI BIN HAMAD AL MAAMARI

events and programmes aimed at fostering the growth of local markets by supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The event has drawn wide participation across various sectors, including retail, tourism, healthcare, hospitality and automotive services. Participating businesses are offering discounts on a range of products and services such as clothing, shoes, perfumes, electronics, hotel stays, healthcare services, food and beverages, and

car maintenance. Shopping malls are also hosting interactive competitions and exclusive offers.

Raiya Salim bin Hamoud al Maskari, Assistant Director of the Tourism Marketing Department at MHT, highlighted the significance of the festival in supporting Oman's growing tourism sector.

"These efforts have strengthened Oman's position as a leading tourist destination," she said, adding that the festival offers a unique opportunity to support the national economy by getting more hotels, which can in turn develop the country's tourism. "Special focus has been given on the SME sector to add value to the tourism industry and attract both local and international visitors."

The 'Festival of Discounts and Offers' asserts Oman's commitment to fostering economic activity and supporting the retail and tourism sectors.

Oman's first electric SUV from Mays Motors hits the road



08 Trump says Russian leader wants Ukraine war to end



15 Best digital nomad destinations in Europe

Our Correspondent Muscat

Mays Motors has achieved a historic milestone with the launch of Oman's first electric vehicle (EV), an SUV named Mays Alive. The delivery of the first batch of these electric SUVs has begun, marking a significant step forward for the country's automotive sector.

"Our first batch of Mays Alive e-SUVs has been delivered to customers this month," said Haider bin Adnan al Zaabi, co-founder of Mays Motors, in an exclusive interview with Muscat Daily. "We are proud to have reached this achievement. The journey has been both challeng-

ing and rewarding, and achieving this with limited resources feels like a miracle."

To encourage the adoption of electric mobility, Mays Motors has reduced the price of the vehicle to RO11,000 for companies and RO12,000 for individuals. Ten units from the initial batch have already been delivered.

Explaining the name, Zaabi shared that 'Mays' was inspired by Maysore, a horse owned by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said. He added that the Mays Alive boasts a driving range of 610km and a battery that can be charged at home. The SUV also features a large dashboard with multiple displays and advanced controls.



The batteries are sourced from China Aviation Lithium Battery (CALB), while the motor is provided by Germany's Bosch. Zaabi emphasised the car's use of artificial intelligence (AI) to en-

hance the driving experience. "The AI acts like a real companion inside the car, engaging in conversations, recognising the driver's outfit and facial expressions, and offering interactive re-

sponses. This makes driving safer and more enjoyable."

This SUV has a carbon fibre body, which Zaabi described as "loaded with technology comparable to international brands".

He highlighted Mays Motors' focus on integrating locally available parts to reduce manufacturing costs and accelerate market entry. Zaabi acknowledged the financial challenges faced by the company, which were overcome with investments of US\$1.5mn from local investors.

"Our partner in Shanghai also played a crucial role in helping us enter the market professionally," he said. Mays Motors also enlisted ten Omani engineers and

technicians to contribute to the manufacturing process. Zaabi revealed that the specifications and design of Mays Alive were finalised after visits to car manufacturing hubs in Italy, Germany, China, the USA, and India.

Looking ahead, the company plans to showcase the Mays Alive at an exhibition hosted by the Oman Automobile Association on February 24. The event will give the public an opportunity to test-drive the vehicle and explore its features. "We believe electric vehicles represent a promising market in Oman. Our goal is to deliver between 300 and 500 electric vehicles by the end of this year," Zaabi said.

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OCCI holds workshop to drive economic growth in sultanate



Our Correspondent Muscat

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), under the guidance of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, on Sunday launched a three-day workshop for members of various government entities for improving the country's business environment through integrated economic development.

The workshop's inauguration was attended by Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI, along with several dignitaries and representatives from key government departments. The event also welcomed a distinguished group of experts, business owners, and specialists from various sectors of the economy.

According to officials, the workshop has been designed with a focus on three key areas - improvement of Oman's business environment, supporting partnerships for holistic economic development, and broadening the base of economic diversification in the sultanate.

With the participation of 20 governmental and private entities, the workshop seeks to establish actionable mechanisms for implementing the chamber's development strategy, alongside a series of carefully planned initiatives and projects, officials added.

Zakaria Abdullah al Saadi, CEO of OCCI, stated that the chamber's strategic directions aim to strengthen sectoral strategies and align them with the country's five-year development plans. He emphasised the importance of improving the business environment, forming economic partnerships, and diversifying Oman's economy.

Saadi noted that the workshop builds on a participatory approach that OCCI embraced and has been pursuing for the past 120 days, involving over 180 employees across Oman. This collaborative effort includes in-person meetings as well as periodic video calls to ensure input from all relevant sectors.

Looking ahead, Saadi expressed confidence that the workshop's outcomes will lead the country to formulate programmes and initiatives aligned with the chamber's strategic directions, that underline private sector's central role in driving Oman's economic growth.



Oman's diverse landscape offers an ideal setting for camping. However, with the rise in tourism, the demand for camping areas grew manifolds - which gave rise to illegal campings in non-designated areas in various parts of Oman. To counter this, authorities recently dismantled 16 illegal tourist camps in Muscat as part of efforts to regulate tourism and protect the environment. This has sparked discussions on whether more official camping zones should be introduced. If so where? Here is what *Muscat Daily* readers said:

Said al Harthi
Businessman

Yes, authorities should designate more legal camping areas with proper facilities. This will help prevent illegal camps while promoting eco-friendly tourism. I suggest areas such as Seeb coastline, and near Yiti for controlled camping experiences.

Arti Luthra
Teacher

Camping is a popular outdoor activity enjoyed by all. Authorities can even think of installing barbecue facilities at designated camping sites in future. Additionally, it will help in promoting tourism. Some of the ideal locations could be near Bimmah Sinkhole, Quriyat Beach, Al Bustan Hills and many others as country has diverse landscape - from mountains to beaches and deserts.

Ali al Ghafri
Photographer

Yes, more areas should be designated to ensure accessibility for businesses and event sponsorships. We should start with areas like Yiti and Shatti al Qurm and add more places in the future.

Rashid al Siyabi
University student

Yes, but authorities should also focus on awareness campaigns about responsible camping. Many people don't follow clean-up rules. I suggest areas for camping such as Jabal Shams, and Sifah beach.

Ali Ekak
Environmental activist

Yes, but these areas should have strict guidelines to protect nature. Unregulated camping activities harm wildlife and disrupt natural habitats. Wadi al Arbaieen, Jabal Sifah, and Quriyat coastline with designated eco-friendly spots will be good areas for camping.

Khalid al Rawahi
Adventurer

Absolutely! Muscat has many great outdoor locations that can be developed into safe, legal camping areas with facilities such as restrooms and waste disposal systems. I think Bandar al Khairan, Jebel Akhdar foothills, and the areas near Ras al Hamra will be good suggested areas for camping.

Salim al Balushi
Small business owner

More designated camping zones will boost tourism and local businesses. Properly managed areas can attract more visitors and improve the economy. Ras al Hadd, Masirah Island, Jabal Hafeet can be developed for premium camping experiences.

V K Suresh
Engineer

Families need safe and accessible camping zones with basic amenities. This will encourage responsible tourism and outdoor activities. Al Ashkara in South Shriqiyah, outskirts of Qurum Park, and Yiti Beach are good spots for camping.



صندوق مزون الأول The First Mazoon Fund

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Invitation for Annual General Meeting

The First Mazoon Fund takes the pleasure in inviting all the unitholders to attend the Annual General Meeting which will be held on Wednesday February 26, 2025, at 3 pm via the electronic platform to hold general meeting which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository (www.mcd.om). If the quorum to convene the annual General Meeting is not complete the second general meeting will be held on Thursday February 27, 2025, at 3 pm via the electronic platform to hold general meeting which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository (www.mcd.om). to decide on the following:

Agenda of Annual General Meeting (AGM):

- To consider and approve the Fund Management Body's Report for the financial year ending on 31 December 2024.
- To consider and approve the auditor's report on the fund's audited financial statements for the financial year ending on 31 December 2024.
- To approve the sitting fees paid to the Fund Management Body for the financial year ending on 31 December 2024 and to determine their sitting fees for the next financial year.
- To consider and approve the proposal to distribute remuneration fees to the Fund Management Body's for an amount of RO (15,000) for the year ending on 31 December 2024.
- To consider and approve the related party transactions entered into by the Fund during the year ending on 31 December 2024.
- To consider and approve the proposed related party transactions entered into by the Fund during the financial Year ending on 31 December 2025.
- To appoint auditors for the financial year ending on 31 December 2025 and approve their fees.

According to the Fund Article of Association, and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by Financial Services Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- A legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the general meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCD.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than 3 days before the date of the general meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meetings. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the general meeting.

For any inquiries please contact on telephone No 24949043 / 24949014

Ministry of housing to showcase developments in Haitham City

Muscat - The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is preparing for a series of events to be launched in Sultan Haitham City on Thursday.

The three-day City Season events will feature a diverse range of entertainment, sports and cultural activities, offering visitors a glimpse into the city's vibrant future.

A ministry official stated that the events will create an engaging atmosphere to adequately display the spirit of Sultan Haitham City, showcasing its modern infrastructure and promising prospects.

Visitors can look forward to an exciting lineup of activities, including sports marathons, mountain bike races, a padel championship, paragliding shows, esports competitions, a football league, besides several theatrical performances. A dedicated children's area will offer recreational and educational activities suitable for all ages.

In addition to entertainment, City Season will serve as a platform for visitors to explore the latest residential projects and modern facilities in the city.

Six real estate developers will participate in those three-day activities, providing insights into integrated residential communities.



NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Oman is hosting the Tour of Oman cycling championship, showcasing the sultanate to the world. What other kinds of events should Oman host and why?

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by Muscat Daily.

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Industry Day marked with focus on global supply chains

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman celebrated its annual Industry Day on Sunday - under the theme 'Oman at the Heart of Global Supply Chains' - reaffirming its commitment to economic diversification and sustainable growth.

The event, organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), was held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Dr Fahad bin al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University.

Attendees included H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, alongside dignitaries, officials, and business leaders from the industrial sector.

H E Dr Saleh bin Saeed Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry at MoCIIP, presented the latest data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information, noting that Oman's manufacturing sector grew by 8.5%, reaching



RO2.686bn at constant prices by the end of September 2024, compared to the same period in 2023.

He also announced that 100 new industrial projects, with investments totalling nearly RO1.5bn, were launched across sectors such as renewable energy, food and medical industries, construction materials, metals, and plastics.

These projects, spread across Oman's industrial, economic, and free zones, underline the sultanate's growing role as a global manufacturing hub.

The industrial sector continues to make significant contribu-

tions to Oman's economy, achieving key milestones under the Industrial Strategy 2040 for the period 2022 and 2023.

It contributed RO3.44bn to the county's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2022 and created approximately 26,000 jobs for Omanis since 2020, reflecting a 79% increase in employment compared to 2020.

Non-oil commodity exports also grew significantly, reaching RO7.5bn by the end of 2023, compared to RO3.4bn in 2020, showcasing the sector's expanding global reach.

During the celebration, three Memoranda of Understanding

(MoUs) were signed with different international organisations.

An agreement with the International Centre for Industrial Transformation in Singapore seeks to encourage Omani factories to adopt Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies.

Another MoU with the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting focuses on establishing an Advanced Automation Centre, while the third, with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), proposes to strengthen partnerships in industrial development.

The ministry also launched several initiatives to bolster the

industrial sector. The 'Made in Oman' platform was introduced to promote national industries and products.

Additionally, an Advanced Automation Centre is being established to enhance industrial capabilities, while the Certified Assessor Qualification Programme will train professionals to evaluate industrial transformation readiness through a structured certification system.

These efforts align with Oman's long-term vision for a diversified and sustainable economy, reinforcing the nation's growing role as a critical player in global supply chains.



Jabal Akhdar attracts over 200,000 visitors in 2024

Our Correspondent
Jabal Akhdar

Jabal Akhdar in Dakhliyah welcomed 203,629 visitors in 2024, according to data from the National Center for Statistics and Information.

The report revealed that 96,856 Omanis visited the popular mountain destination last year, making them the largest group of visitors. Among foreign tourists, 83,509 people from various nationalities explored the area, highlighting its growing appeal among the international travellers.

In terms of Arab visitors, the number of Saudi tourists stood at 12,007, followed by 7,734 visitors from other Arab nationalities. The UAE contributed 1,175 visitors, while Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar recorded 612; 1,083;

and 653 tourists, respectively.

Jabal Akhdar remains a favourite destination for both local and international travellers, thanks to its moderate climate during summer and its cold winter weather. It is known for its eco-tourism and adventure tourism opportunities, offering activities such as trekking through valleys, cave exploration, and mountain climbing. These activities provide visitors with the chance to engage with the region's natural beauty and gain insights into the local culture.

The wilayat is home to a variety of hotel facilities, further enhancing its appeal as a year-round destination. Jabal Akhdar's unique blend of adventure and cultural experiences continues to solidify its position as Oman's top tourist attractions.

Omani woman elected VP of ME's sports education body

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a remarkable achievement showcasing Omani excellence on the international stage, Dr Badriya bint Khalfan al Hadabi has been elected as the vice president of the International Federation of Physical and Sport Education (FIEPS) Middle East for the term 2025-28.

This milestone was achieved during the 34th FIEPS World Congress, held in Brazil, turning a new leaf in Oman's contributions to the development of physical education and sports both regionally and globally.

Founded in 1923 in Brussels, Belgium, FIEPS grew to become a leading international non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting physical education and sports worldwide.

With its headquarters now based in Brazil, the Federation operates in over 142 countries, working through a comprehensive structure that includes the General Assembly, Executive



Dr Badriya bint Khalfan al Hadabi

Committee, Continental and Technical Committees, and National Representatives.

FIEPS collaborates closely with global organisations such as Unesco and the International Olympic Committee, focusing on promoting physical education in schools, universities, and communities, supporting academic research, and fostering international cooperation.

Dr Badriya has been a prominent figure in Oman's sports landscape, serving as a National Delegate for FIEPS since 2015. Her leadership has been instrumental in advancing numerous

initiatives aimed at developing physical education across the Middle East. Her election reflects not only her expertise and dedication but also Oman's growing influence in international sports governance.

Expressing her gratitude, Dr Badriya stated, "This role is both an honour and a significant responsibility. It offers a valuable platform to strengthen collaboration among Middle Eastern countries in physical education and sports."

She emphasised the importance of developing innovative training programmes, promoting research, and organising events that align with FIEPS's mission.

"Her appointment is expected to reinforce Oman's presence in global sports forums, contribute to the enhancement of physical education standards in the region, and inspire future leaders in the field. This achievement highlights Oman's continued progress and commitment to excellence on the international stage," stated a press release.

Oman convenes meeting to focus on strengthening local content policies

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The National Office for Local Content, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, is set to review the progress of various local content initiatives and discuss strategies for implementing performance indicators and measurement methods.

The meeting, scheduled for Monday, has been convened to underscore the country's ongoing efforts to maximise the economic benefits of government spending.

Operating under the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, the National Office for Local Content has introduced institutional excellence indicators to improve governance. This initiative, undertaken with the Institutional Excellence Team at the Ministry of Labour, aims to establish a regulatory framework for assessing compliance with



Ghalib bin Amer al Hinai

local content policies and identifying areas for improvement.

Ghalib bin Amer al Hinai, Chairman of the National Office for Local Content, said, "The office remains committed to enhancing the local content governance, guided by the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, which highlight the importance of a robust national system for local content as a key driver of economic growth."

Hinai added that the office is developing legislation and guidelines to support the implementation of local content policies.

A significant focus has been placed on digital transformation, with the introduction of the Esnad electronic platform to streamline government contracting and procurement processes, enhancing efficiency and transparency.

Local content indicators target three main areas: Government procurement, operational contracts, and development projects. These are further categorised into three core elements - employment and training of Omani nationals, support for small enterprises and freelancers, and the promotion of local products and goods.

The indicators are measured through 11 sub-categories, assessing the level of adherence to local content policies by government entities.

Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Nonrefundable) OMR	Tender Purchase deadline	Clarification deadline	Tender Submission Date
TENDER/2025/02/ENG/004	Revamping of Al Wadi Al Kabir Filling Station at Muscat Governorate	OMR 150	16/02/2025	19/02/2025	25/02/2025
TENDER/2025/02/ENG/006	Design, Fabrication & Erection of Canopy Steel Structures at Al Maha Filling Stations at Various Locations in The Sultanate of Oman	OMR 200			
TENDER/2025/02/FIN/005	1. Group Life Insurance	OMR 200			
	2. Medical Insurance	OMR 30			
	3. Workmen Compensation				
	4. Money				
	5. Fidelity				
	6. Comprehensive Motor Insurance	OMR 50			
	7. Third party Motor Insurance				
	8. Contractor's plant & Machinery Insurance				
	9. Comprehensive Public Liability Insurance	OMR 100			
	10. Directors & Officers Liability Insurance				
	11. Property All Risks Insurance				
12. Aviation Liability Insurance	OMR 60				
13. Cyber Insurance	OMR 55				

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The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments who are grade 3 and above (in the C.R) with minimum of 3 years experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om The tender documents will then be sent by email. Working hours 08:00 AM – 03:00 PM.
- Bank Guarantee (Applies to TENDER/2025/02/ENG/004, TENDER/2025/02/ENG/006 & 1,2,9,10,11,12 of TENDER/2025/02/FIN/005):** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted a sealed envelope and addressed to the Chairman of Tender Committee, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.
- For any enquiry email us at (procurement@almaha.com.om) or by calling 24610289/24610287/24610355



OPAZ explores stronger economic ties with India

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A delegation from the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) last week visited India to strengthen economic cooperation between the two nations in the fields of special economic zones, free zones, and industrial areas. The visit also aimed to attract investments and facilitate the exchange of expertise and best practices between the two countries.

The Omani delegation, led by H E Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of OPAZ and Undersecretary at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, included CEOs from key industrial and logistics sector entities such as Madayn (the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates), Salalah Free Zone, and Khazaen Economic City.

During the visit, the delegation toured Indian industrial and economic institutions, including Jindal Iron and Steel Group's project in Angul, Odisha, where they ob-

served steel manufacturing operations. They also visited OP Jindal Global University to learn about its academic programmes, research centres, and facilities.

Coinciding with the 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Oman and India, the

The business forum was attended by representatives from more than 80 Indian companies across various sectors, including pharmaceuticals, food, medical products, and energy

Embassy of Oman in India, in cooperation with OPAZ, hosted a business forum on February 6. The event was attended by representatives from more than 80 Indian companies across various sectors, including pharmaceuticals, food, medical products, and energy.

During the forum, the Omani

delegation presented a detailed working paper highlighting investment opportunities in the regions under OPAZ's oversight. The presentation outlined incentives available to investors and priority sectors within the special economic zones and free zones. Oman Law House also provided an overview of the country's legislative and regulatory frameworks.

Addressing the forum, H E Dheeb emphasised the significance of Oman-India relations, noting that India is one of Oman's most important investment partners. "Special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities play a vital role in attracting investments and enhancing economic cooperation between the two countries. We encourage Indian investors to explore the opportunities available in the sultanate," he said.

The Omani delegation's visit and the business forum reaffirmed the commitment of Oman and India to deepening bilateral trade ties and fostering collaboration in sectors critical to their economic growth.

Development Bank grants over 7,000 loans worth RO235mn during 2024

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Development Bank provided 7,398 loans across various sectors in Oman's governorates in 2024, with total financing exceeding RO235mn. The funding aimed to drive industrial growth, support small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and strengthen key economic sectors in line with the sultanate's development goals.

The industrial sector received a significant share of the financing provided by Development Bank. The bank issued 1,318 loans for industrial projects in Oman during 2024, supporting industrial activities across different governorates with a total value of RO91.2mn.

This initiative is part of Development Bank's ongoing efforts to support the industrial sector by providing essential financing to achieve self-sufficiency, enhance local production, localise industries, and support SMEs. The bank also places great emphasis on empowering promising entrepreneurs and expanding industrial production to enable the sector to play a vital role in diversifying the national economy.

Development Bank aims to provide support and attractive facilities to the manufacturing sector in alignment with the government's strategy to strengthen national industries and generate



Development Bank issued 1,318 loans for industrial projects in Oman during 2024, supporting industrial activities across different governorates with a total financing of RO91.2mn

in-country value. The manufacturing sector remains a top priority for financing as part of Development Bank's annual plans.

According to statistics issued by Development Bank, the bank financed 14 projects in the food security sector and four projects under the category of foreign direct investment. Additionally, it funded 13 projects aimed at achieving self-sufficiency and nine projects supporting exports.

These projects contributed to the creation of 1,330 job opportunities, with an Omanisation rate of 43%.

Industrial loans were distributed across various Omani governorates. The North and South Al Batinah governorates topped the list, receiving 369 loans worth RO45.8mn, followed by Muscat governorate with 156 loans worth RO22.6mn. The North and South Al Sharqiyah governorates ranked next, secur-

ing 313 loans worth RO6.9mn.

Several industrial sectors received significant funding from Development Bank. The food products industry led the list, receiving over RO12mn through 259 loans. It was followed by the coke and petroleum products industry, which secured RO11.7mn through 75 loans. Funding for the manufacture of mineral products and other metals totalled approximately RO11.3mn through 35 loans.

The pharmaceutical and medical products industry received RO11mn in funding through four loans. Additionally, Development Bank provided financing to several other industrial sectors, including chemicals, motor vehicles, fabricated metal products, plastics and rubber, wood, beverages, and basic metals.

India achieves 100GW solar power capacity, on track for 2030 target



New Delhi, India - India has achieved a historic milestone by surpassing 100GW of installed solar power capacity, reinforcing its position as a global leader in renewable energy. This remarkable achievement marks a significant step toward realising India's ambitious target of 500GW of non-fossil fuel-based energy capacity by 2030 set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a Ministry of New and Renewable Energy release said.

Union Minister of New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi said India is becoming self-reliant in green energy. "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's energy journey over the past ten years has been historic and inspiring. Initiatives like solar panels, solar parks and rooftop solar projects have brought about revolutionary changes. As a result, today India has successfully achieved the target of 100GW of solar energy production," he said.

Joshi said that this achievement is powered by the relent-

less commitment to clear and greener future. The minister added that PM SuryaGhar Muft Bijli Yojana is making rooftop solar a household reality and is a game-changer in sustainable energy, empowering every home with clean power.

The release said that India's solar power sector has witnessed an extraordinary 3450% increase in capacity over the past decade, rising from 2.82GW in 2014 to 100GW in 2025.

As of January 31, 2025, India's total solar capacity installed stands at 100.33GW, with 84.10GW under implementation and an additional 47.49GW under tendering. The country's hybrid and round-the-clock (RTC) renewable energy projects are also advancing rapidly, with 64.67GW under implementation and tendered, bringing the grand total of solar and hybrid projects to 296.59GW.

Solar energy remains the dominant contributor to India's renewable energy growth, ac-

counting for 47% of the total installed renewable energy capacity. In 2024, record-breaking 24.5GW of solar capacity was added reflecting a more than two-fold increase in solar installations compared to 2023.

Last year also saw the installation of 18.5GW of utility-scale solar capacity, a nearly 2.8 times increase compared to 2023. Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh are among the top-performing states, contributing significantly to India's total utility-scale solar installations.

The rooftop solar sector in India witnessed remarkable growth in 2024, with 4.59GW of new capacity installed, reflecting a 53% increase compared to 2023. A key driver of this growth has been the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, launched in 2024, which is now nearing 900,000 rooftop solar installations, enabling households across the country to embrace clean energy solutions.

ANI



Musandam Power Company SAOG

P.O. Box: 228, PC 134, Al Qurum,
Jawharat Al Shatti, Muscat, Sultanate Of Oman.
web: www.musandampower.com

THE COMPANY REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Musandam Power Company SAOG (the "Company"), I have the pleasure to present the Annual Report of the Company for the year ended 31st December 2024.

Musandam Power Company SAOG (the "Company") was registered and incorporated as a closed joint stock company in the Sultanate of Oman on 18th November 2014. Subsequently, the Company was converted to a joint stock company ("SAOG") and was listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange ("MSX") on 5th December 2019.

The Company is engaged in the design, construction, ownership, financing, operation, and maintenance of a dual fuel power plant (the "Plant") with natural gas as the primary fuel and diesel oil as the alternative fuel with a capacity of 120 Mega Watt (MW) located in Wilayat Bukha in the Musandam Governorate, Sultanate of Oman. The Company is selling the electrical energy generated to Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOG (the "OPWP"). Before listing, the Company was a subsidiary of Oman Oil Facilities Development Company LLC ("OOFDC") which is owned by OQ SAOG ("OQ"), a closely held joint stock company incorporated in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Company commenced commercial operations on 17th June 2017.

Corporate Governance

The Company has a comprehensive system of internal controls in place with a clear structure, delegated authorities, and accountabilities.

During 2024, the Company continued to review key internal policies and procedures to ensure the highest standards of corporate governance and to ensure compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance and applicable circulars issued up to 31st December 2024 by the Financial Services Authority.

Operational Results

The operational performance of the plant during the year continued to exceed, with 99.9% plant reliability as against 98.00% planned (2023: 99.9%). The plant handled a high plant load of 79.81 MW during the year (2023: 85.55 MW). The peak load on MIPP is less than previous year due to OETC availing dispatch from Khasab Power Station in parallel to MIPP as per their revised operation philosophy. The total energy generated and delivered was 366,801 MWH (2023: 414,560), a decrease of about 11.5% over the previous year.

To enhance diesel fuel system reliability to address the concerns faced during the year 2023, the company is actively pursuing two further activities such as

- Physical cleaning, inspection & repainting of diesel storage tanks
- Implementing necessary fuel system design modifications.

Above ongoing efforts are aimed at providing an added layer of assurance regarding the reliability of the system and expected to complete during the year 2025.

The Company continued to maintain plant reliability and meet OETC load demand with a continued focus on excellence in Health, Safety, Environment, and Quality Management. The Company duly met all the stringent environmental permit conditions promulgated by the Environmental Authority. All HSE activities planned were completed and all key performance indicators were achieved.

Integrated Gas Company (IGC) through OQ supplying gas from Musandam Gas Plant (MGP), and also supplying gas from Dolphin Gas to compensate for the gas shortage from MGP. Due to this additional gas availability, dependency on diesel is reduced. During the year 2024, the plant predominantly operated with 89% on gas fuel and 11% on diesel fuel. The company expects this positive trend of high gas availability to persist in future years despite occasional reliance on diesel prompted by gas supply shortage.

Financial Results

The plant showed outstanding availability, leading to power generation levels that surpassed planned expectations. This was accomplished even as OETC strategically opted to partially take power from the Khasab Power Station while simultaneously operating MIPP in line with their revised operational strategy. As a result, there was a revenue decrease of RO 265 million (1.4%).

Furthermore, in 2024, a decrease in operating costs was noted compared to the prior fiscal year. As a result, the gross profit margin improved by RO 0.143 million (2.2%) compared to the figures reported in 2023. Overall, the profit before tax for the company rose by RO 0.592 million (26.0%) compared to 2023, primarily due to reductions in general and administrative expenses as well as finance costs. The company reported a net profit of RO 2.388 million in 2024, reflecting a 22.8% increase from the RO 1.945 million recorded in 2023.

The company has fulfilled all its commitments under the facilities agreement. Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOG (OPWP) continues to pay all invoices raised by the company in accordance with the payment terms outlined in the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). In 2024, the company received all outstanding amounts from Integrated Gas Company SAOG (IGC) that were due as of 2023 and continues to pay all invoices raised by the company in accordance with the payment terms outlined in the Natural Gas Sales Agreement (NGSA).

Finally, the company's operational and commercial performance in 2024 allowed it to declare and pay an aggregate dividend of 27.6 Baiza per share (with a nominal value of 100 Baiza per share). This dividend corresponds to 27.6% of the company's paid-up capital and is in line with the Business Plan for 2024.

As of December 31, 2024, the company's share price stood at 276 Baizas per share.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The company has actively fulfilled its societal responsibilities in Musandam, demonstrating efficiency and commitment. In accordance with the directive from the Capital Market Authority, the company allocated RO 4,000 of its CSR budget to the Oman Charitable Organization (OCO).

Additionally, the company contributed to the Directorate of Education in the Governorate of Musandam in purchasing devices for students, and equipment for special needs students to support them during their education.

In the stream of health sector, the company contributed to Al Wafa Medical Centers under the Ministry of Social Development by purchasing medical equipment for people with special needs.

In recognition of the importance of maintaining a healthy environment and sustainable development, the company has contributed to the plantation of Al-Mizra Trees project under the Environmental Authority of Musandam.

Medium-term & Outlook

The Company continuously endeavors to identify and implement areas of improvement in plant operations. All reasonable measures are being taken by the management to maintain commendable operational performance during the year 2024. Any change in the power supply and demand landscape in the Musandam Governorate has a limited impact on the financial performance of the Company since its profitability is mainly derived from the plant's availability and reliability and the fact that the plant is performing in the isolated grid.

The Company and its Operation & Maintenance Contractor are making all efforts to steadily increase Omanisation while ensuring the smooth and reliable operation of the plant. Currently, the Company is on track to meet the Omanisation commitment made to the Authority for Public Services Regulation and the Ministry of Labour. The company has achieved 93% (2023: 93%) of Omanisation at the end of the year 2024.

The Company's Power Purchase Agreement with OPWP and Water Procurement Company SAOG expires in 2032. The spot market implemented by OPWP shall have no impact on the revenue stream of the Company until the expiry of the Power Purchase Agreement.

The Company is closely following OPWP's "spot market" arrangements for the future procurement of power from independent

Statement of financial position as at 31 December 2024

	31 December 2024 RO '000	31 December 2023 RO '000
ASSETS		
Non-current assets:		
Property, plant and equipment	64,199	66,102
Current assets:		
Inventories	2,064	3,204
Trade and other receivables	1,308	1,300
Cash and bank balances	818	508
	4,190	5,012
	68,389	71,114
Total assets		
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity:		
Share capital	7,039	7,039
Legal reserve	1,947	1,709
Retained earnings	3,148	2,941
Total equity	12,134	11,689
Non-current liabilities:		
Senior facility loan	45,674	49,232
Provision for asset retirement obligation	201	192
Lease liability	94	97
Deferred tax liability	4,491	4,007
Employees' end of service benefits	12	10
	50,472	53,538
Current liabilities:		
Senior facility loan	3,621	3,458
Short term loan facility	1,000	1,500
Lease liability	3	3
Trade and other payables	1,159	926
	5,783	5,887
Total liabilities	56,255	59,425
Total equity and liabilities	68,389	71,114
Net assets per share	0.172	0.166

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Year ended 31 December 2024 RO '000	Year ended 31 December 2023 RO '000
Revenue	18,466	18,731
Operating costs	(11,851)	(12,259)
Gross profit	6,615	6,472
General and administrative expenses	(846)	(1,110)
Finance costs	(2,897)	(3,082)
Profit before tax	2,872	2,280
Tax expense	(484)	(335)
Profit and total comprehensive income for the year	2,388	1,945
Basic and diluted earnings per share for the year	0.034	0.028

Big Tech to invest \$325bn into AI in 2025

Meta, Microsoft, Amazon, and Google parent Alphabet are expected to spend a combined \$325bn in 2025, a 46% increase from the approximately \$223bn they reported spending in 2024

Laura Bratton

Meta, Microsoft, Amazon, and Google parent Alphabet are expecting to spend a cumulative \$325bn in capital expenditures and investments in 2025 driven by a continued commitment to building out artificial intelligence infrastructure.

Taken together, this marks a 46% increase from the roughly \$223bn those companies reported spending in 2024. Tech giants contend all this spending will pay off in the long run. Investors haven't been so sure of late.

Uncertainty surrounding the timeline for the payoff – along with ongoing debates about whether such high levels of spending are truly justified – has fueled concerns during recent earnings periods.

And the companies' higher-than-expected investments for the upcoming year come just as investors are scrutinizing Big Tech's hefty artificial intelligence spending.

Case in point: DeepSeek

The Chinese startup rattled markets last week after it debuted open-source AI models competitive with OpenAI's for a fraction of the price. Tech stocks sold off across the board as the model cast doubt on the rationale be-

hind tech giants' mammoth spending on artificial intelligence infrastructure.

But the DeepSeek surprise didn't seem to impact tech companies' big spending plans.

Amazon is by far the biggest spender on capital investments of the group, with its \$78bn for 2024 far eclipsing Microsoft's \$56bn and Alphabet's \$53bn.

Looking ahead, Amazon said in a post-earnings call Thursday evening that its spending of \$26.3bn in its most recent quarter is "reasonably representative" of its 2025 investment plans, suggesting investments will total roughly \$105bn this year.

"The vast majority of that capex spend is on AI for Amazon Web Services, Amazon's cloud division," Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said. "AI represents, for sure, the biggest opportunity since cloud and probably the biggest technology shift and opportunity in business since the internet."

Late last month, Meta confirmed that it would spend \$60bn-\$65bn in 2025, a massive bump from its prior guidance to investors of \$38bn-\$40bn in investment for the year.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg said the company would ultimately spend "hundreds of billions of dollars" to "invest in AI infras-



tructure over the long term." That includes investments in building massive data centers, such as the construction of a new facility in Louisiana nearly the size of Manhattan.

Google said on Tuesday that it expects to spend \$75bn this year, about 30% higher than Wall Street expected, per LSEG data.

Investors also expressed some wariness toward Microsoft's spending as its AI services struggle to gain momentum.

The company's nearly \$56bn in spending during its fiscal year 2024 (ended June 31), fueled by AI – coupled with lower-than-expected revenue linked to artificial intelligence – sent shares

tumbling following the results last summer.

Microsoft recently announced its fiscal second quarter results, which showed the tech heavyweight has already spent \$42bn of its expected \$80bn in capital expenditures so far in 2025. The company's stock fell 6% following these results.

Spend now, worry later

Why are investors skittish? Because the revenue generated directly from the companies' AI features remains unclear.

When asked about how Meta is monetising AI, the company's response was more or less "spend now, worry later."

Meta CFO Susan Li said in post-earnings call on January 29, "Our initial focus for Meta AI is really about building a great consumer experience, and that's frankly where all of our energies are kind of directed to right now."

"There will, I think, be pretty clear monetization opportunities here over time, including paid recommendations and including a premium offering, but that's really not where we are focused in terms of the development of Meta AI today," she added.

On its earnings call, Google CFO Anat Ashkenazi said the company's Cloud segment "is generating billions in annual revenue from AI infrastructure and generative AI solutions" but did not give specifics. Ashkenazi added that demand for Google's Cloud AI products outpaced capacity. The company declined to respond to Yahoo Finance's questions about its AI revenue.

Amazon's Jassy said in regards to the company's \$105bn in expenses for the year ahead, "Both our business, our cus-

tomers, and shareholders will be happy, medium to long term, that we're pursuing the capital opportunity and the business opportunity in AI," but didn't get specific about how much AI has or will contribute to revenue.

Meanwhile, Microsoft said in its most recent quarterly earnings report that its total AI business, which includes Azure AI services as well as other Copilot and generative AI offerings, surpassed an annual revenue run rate of \$13bn in the period ended December 31.

Microsoft said that AI contributed 13 percentage points to its growth in Azure revenue, which increased 31% from the prior year. Microsoft AI revenue is partially driven by commitments from OpenAI. OpenAI's own path to monetization is fuzzy, as the AI startup estimated that it lost \$5bn in 2024 while only generating \$3.7bn in revenue.

Despite investor scrutiny of AI spending, Wall Street analysts remained positive on Big Tech stocks. Raymond James analysts in a February 3 report wrote that while "monetisation questions linger," there is "evidence building towards [companies] closing the gap."

Morgan Stanley analysts said the growing expenditures from tech firms are "bolstering the bull case for AI/cloud capex stocks." (Source: Yahoo Finance)

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

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

Sr.No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Floating Date	Last date for obtaining the documents	Bid Submission Date	Requirements from participants	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT)(RO)
1	11/2025	Supply and Installation of Chain-Link Fence for Power Transformers at Muscat Governorate Grid Stations.	10/02/2025	24/02/2025	25/03/2025	Local Companies with Experience in Same Field,Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	26/250
2	13/2025	Supply, installation, testing and commissioning of 110 Volts DC System at OETC Gris Stations	10/02/2025	24/02/2025	25/03/2025	Local Companies with Experience in Same Field,Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	105/-

Participation:	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity Apply on E-tendering.
Buying the Tender:	By E-Tendering System.
Fees:	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of documents. (Payment Through Bank Transfer), SMEs are exempted from tender's fees.
The deadline for clarification:	Before (21) Days from bid submission date.
Submission:	The submission of hard copy will be only for Bid Bond & other documents by E-Tendering
Terms and conditions:	- Specifying the name of the Company or whatever refers to in the Bid Guarantee Envelope. - The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from the bid submission date. - The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from bid submission date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). Small & Medium Enterprises are exempted from the submission of 1% of the bid bond. - Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted. - OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.
Offer:	The bid bond should be submitted in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.
Company Address:	Muscat - Al Mawaleh Road No: 2153 - Building No. 4230 Block No: 321 - Contact Details: 92217856, 91491551
Email Website:	tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com / link of E-Tendering System https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx

إعلان طرح مناقصات

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصات التالية:

م	رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	تاريخ الطرح	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	ثمن الوثيقة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (ر.ع.)
١	٢٠٢٥/١١	توريد وتركيب سياج حديدي للمحولات الكهربائية بمحطات محافظة مسقط	٢٠٢٥/٢/١٠	٢٠٢٥/٢/٢٤	٢٠٢٥/٣/٢٥	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها سجل تجاري ساري المفعول.	٢٦/٢٥٠
٢	٢٠٢٥/١٣	توريد وتركيب واختبار شواحن وبطاريات جهد ١٠٠ فولت تيار مستمر في المحطات الرئيسية التابعة للشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء	٢٠٢٥/٢/١٠	٢٠٢٥/٢/٢٤	٢٠٢٥/٣/٢٥	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال ولديها سجل تجاري ساري المفعول.	١٠٥/-

الإشتراف	يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة بعد تقديم الطلب عن طريق نظام التنافس الإلكتروني.
طريقة الشراء	من خلال نظام التنافس الإلكتروني.
الرسوم	مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة. لا ترد. [الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي]، تُغف المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة من دفع ثمن الوثيقة.
آخر موعد للاستفسارات	قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات
تقديم العرض	يتم تسليم النسخة الأصلية فقط من الضمان البنكي للعطاء في الصندوق، أما العرض فيتم تسليمه من خلال نظام التنافس الإلكتروني.
الشروط والضمائم	- تحديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على المظروف. - أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء. - إرفاق تأمين في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (١٠%) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء. - وعنوان باسم الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء، تُغف المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة من تسليم الضمان المصرفي. - كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه. - الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مقبولة بقبول أي عروض أو أي عطاء آخر.
العرض المقدم	يجب وضع الضمان البنكي للعطاء فقط في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بمبنى الشركة قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات
عنوان الشركة	عنوان الشركة : محافظة مسقط - الموالح رقم السكة ٢١٥٣ مبنى رقم: ٤٢٣ - تفاصيل التواصل: ٩٢٢١٧٨٥٦, ٩١٤٩١٥٥١
البريد الإلكتروني	tenders@omangrid.com
الموقع الإلكتروني	www.omangrid.com link of E-Tendering System https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx



OETCOMAN



OETCOMAN





RAM launches special programme for Municipal Council members

The Royal Academy of Management (RAM), in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, has launched a specialised programme for municipal council members from across Oman.

The innovative programme was recently inaugurated under the auspices of Sayyid Khalifa bin Al Murdas al Busaidi, secretary general of the Ministry of Interior. The initiative aligns with the vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, which aims to cultivate national leadership and enhance the skills of future-ready leaders to meet the goals of the

Oman Vision 2040, a press release said.

Fathiya al Rashdi, vice president for Programme Affairs at the Royal Academy of Management, said, "The launch of the Municipal Council Members Programme is part of our ongoing efforts to enhance the capabilities of national talent further, this time by fostering administrative and economic decentralisation in Oman's governorates. It explores the best practices in local public governance while focusing on positively impacting the development and competi-

tiveness of the governorates. It also represents a fundamental step towards empowering municipal council members to innovatively and effectively perform their role and emphasises the importance of leveraging available resources to achieve sustainable development."

Dr Rashdi disclosed that the Municipal Council Members Programme incorporates interactive workshops, dialogue sessions, and case studies. It also features practical models for operational plans and projects that enhance local development, im-

prove the efficiency of national leadership, and advance administrative performance, all contributing to the growth of Oman's economy.

The programme aims to fine-tune the leadership skills of municipal councillors and expand their ability to propose and implement innovative initiatives. It also seeks to boost their competencies in monitoring developmental and public service projects and build their capabilities in data analysis, strategic planning, performance evaluation, and infrastructure develop-

ment, which are all key areas that drive sustainable local development in alignment with national priorities.

A key objective of the programme is to strengthen the role of municipal councillors within the local governance framework. This includes equipping them with leadership expertise, enhancing their ability to evaluate proposals and initiatives, and deepening their understanding of administrative procedures for public service projects. The programme encourages active community engagement, ensuring

members contribute effectively to local decision-making processes.

The significance of fine-tuning skills of the municipal council members to deliver even more efficient public services and make more informed decisions that serve the greater good cannot be overstated. An important objective of the programme is to foster collaboration between council members and young Omanis, encouraging the development of innovative community initiatives and public service projects that support sustainable

development and improve the quality of life of citizens across the governorates.

The Municipal Council Members Programme follows a structured learning approach, including a comprehensive overview of the responsibilities of the municipal council and the role of members in reviewing proposals, overseeing service projects, and engaging with local communities. Running for five days per group, it will accommodate five groups, comprising a total of 148 municipal councillors from across Oman.

MGM unveils new enhancements

Following an exhilarating unveiling press event on January 29, Muscat Grand Mall announces the successful launch of its latest enhancements to enrich the shopping experience for all visitors.

The event showcased exciting developments, solidifying the mall's status as a premier shopping destination in Oman, a press release said.

Muscat Grand Mall opened its doors in March 2012 with its Phase 1 zone, which included the MGM shopping mall, Tilal offices, and Tilal residences. Since then, the establishment has expanded its assets through the addition of more retail shops, offices, and residential flats in its Phase 3 zone in 2017.

MGM now boasts approxi-



mately 150+ brands, multiple offices, and 379 residential units. Conveniently located in the heart of the capital, Muscat Grand Mall is the largest mixed-use property in the city, featuring easy access from all corners of the city. The mall is surrounded by vibrant attractions, including

the luxurious Millennium Hotel, the Tilal Residential Area, and Tilal Office Spaces.

Among the highlights was the partnership with 'Seraj', which introduced state-of-the-art LED screens that enhance outdoor advertising. This upgrade not only modernises the visual land-

scape of the mall but also provides dynamic advertising opportunities, ensuring that visitors are engaged and informed.

Additionally, attendees were introduced to a new parking management system developed in collaboration with 'Hayak', designed to improve traffic flow.

Takatuf Oman invites scholarship applications from Grade 11 students

Takatuf Oman announced that applications for the 2025 Oman Scholars Enrichment Programme has opened on February 5.

The Oman Scholars Programme, formerly known as the Takatuf Scholars Programme, invites applications from Grade 11 Omani students who have achieved a minimum score of 75% in English and a 75% overall average in the first semester of Grade 11, or equivalent scores in international education systems, a press release said.

Eligible students are encouraged to submit their applica-

tions, which will include the applicants' personal information, family details, academic information and parents/guardians consent.

Qualified applicants will receive an email outlining the next phase of assessments to be conducted at various locations across the sultanate. The top 180 students from the assessment phase will be invited to embark on the prestigious 14-month Oman Scholars Enrichment Programme. It includes a three-week Summer Residential Programme, an Independent Learning Phase during the first semester of Grade

12, and a Winter Workshop.

Of the 180 candidates, 40 exceptional students will be awarded International Scholarship at one of the top 100 QS World Ranked Universities.

The Oman Scholars Enrichment Programme is said to be an exercise to build leaders who embody Omani values and pride. Participants will gain a deeper appreciation of Omani culture and heritage, besides professional and personal development.

Applications for the 2025 programme will close in early March. (For more information: www.takatufscholars.om.)

Dubai to host summit on Justice, Love and Peace

Dubai is set to host the world's largest summit focused on Justice, Love, and Peace, welcoming over 2,800 peacekeepers from across the globe.

The Global Justice, Love and Peace Summit - 'One Planet, One Voice: Global Justice, Love and Peace', will take place at the Dubai Exhibition Centre (DEC), Expo City, Dubai, on April 12-13, a press release said.

Organized by the I am Peacekeeper Movement, the landmark event will feature an extraordinary lineup of 72 renowned speakers, including 10 Nobel Laureates, global thought leaders, policymakers, entrepreneurs, cultural icons, sports champions, and advocates of peace and justice, under the patronage of Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak al Nahayan, cabinet member, minister of Tolerance and Coexistence,



the chief guest.

Announcing the launch of the summit, Dr Huzaifa Khorakiwala, chairman of the I am Peacekeeper Movement, said, "Our goal is to bring together global visionaries on a common platform to cultivate a world driven by justice, love, and peace. Under the powerful theme 'One Planet, One Voice: Global Justice, Love and Peace' and 28 Peace Gems, this epoch-making summit will unite global influencers.

Oman Post, Al Madina Takaful sign insurance services pact

Oman Post and Al Madina Insurance Company (Al Madina Takaful) signed an agreement to enhance service accessibility by offering Al Madina Takaful's insurance services through the Oman Post's website.

The agreement was signed by Sheikh Ibrahim bin Sultan al Hosni, acting CEO of Oman Post, and Shakaib Mahmood, deputy CEO of Al Madina Insurance Company, at Oman Post headquarters, a press release said.

This strategic agreement facilitates customer access to a comprehensive suite of insurance products, encompassing both personal and corporate through Oman Post's website. The initiative is aligned with the government's overarching vision of modernising service delivery through the expansion of electronic service offerings.

Sayyid Nasr bin Badr al Busaidi, postmaster at Oman Post,



The initiative is aligned with the government's overarching vision of modernising service delivery through the expansion of electronic service offerings

said, "Oman Post is committed to expanding its portfolio of services offered to customers

through various channels in order to meet diverse needs. This is reflected in our collaboration

with Al Madina Takaful, which aligns with our goal of providing a comprehensive customer experience."

Commenting on the partnership, Usama al Barwani, CEO at Al Madina Insurance Company (Al Madina Takaful), said, "This agreement reflects our commitment to delivering innovative and comprehensive insurance ser-

vices that cater to our customers' needs. We believe our collaboration with Oman Post will significantly expand our reach and enable us to serve a wider segment of the community."

At the signing ceremony, Mahmood said, "This strategic partnership will ensure that Al Madina Takaful reaches to every corner of Oman and be better equipped to serve customer's requirement, allowing them to access our insurance products through the online platforms of Oman Post."

Oman Post, part of Asyad Group, through this collaboration, reflects its dedication to serving the community by offering value-added services that simplify daily life for citizens and residents alike. It also aligns with Al Madina Takaful's ambition to innovate and reach a broader audience through strategic partnerships.

Bank Muscat invites Green Sports applications till Feb 15

Bank Muscat is still accepting submissions from local sports teams for the 14th edition of its landmark CSR programme ‘Green Sports’ until 15 February 2025.

Teams can complete the application form electronically through the website: <https://www.bankmuscat.com/greensports/> In case of any queries or doubts on the submission process, teams may email GreenSports@bankmuscat.com, a press release said.

The scope of Green Sports support for sports teams include greening of football fields with natural or synthetic turf, floodlights or water desalination equipment in areas facing problems of water salinity. The bank has encouraged all interested teams to commence the process at the earliest and ensure that applications are submitted well ahead of the deadline.

Local sports teams play a vital role in engaging young people of all ages. The landmark Green Sports Programme is one of Bank Muscat’s CSR initiatives, which draws from the values of leadership and partnership so as to create a positive impact on Omani society. The programme aims to develop and provide a sustainable infrastructure for sports fields in Oman.



The scope of Green Sports support for sports teams include greening of football fields with natural or synthetic turf, floodlights or water desalination

The facilities developed as part of the programme are often used as a venue for other social activities by local communities, leading to stronger social bonding and positive behaviour

among young people. It is a matter of great encouragement that Bank Muscat’s Green Sports programme has so far benefitted 203 teams with over 70,000 team members across the Sultanate since its launch in 2012. In recognition of the bank’s efforts in this vital sector, it has received the North Batinah Award for Social Investment for its ‘Green Sports’ annual programme. The award was organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the North Batinah Governorate. Such awards reaffirm the Bank’s social responsibility.

BP Oman, Outward Bound Oman wrap up ‘Sustainable Future’ programme

Outward Bound Oman concluded the ‘Sustainable Future’ programme, in partnership with BP Oman, which aimed to overall enhance environmental awareness among Omani youth and the role of each individual in contributing towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The ‘Sustainable Future’ programme is an outdoor training course for university/college students specialised in environmental studies, as well as job seekers interested in the environment. It aimed to raise awareness among Omani youth about critical global issues such as climate change, environmental sustainability, and the transition to green energy, a press release said.

The programme benefited more than 128 participants in eight training courses held in the Sharqiyah Desert and Jabal Akhdar. The courses included various activities and group discussions, as well as hiking and camping outdoors for three days. The programme was further enhanced by hosting specialised

mentors working in the environmental field to share real-world experiences with the participants.

Mohammed al Zadjali, COO at Outward Bound Oman, added, “At Outward Bound Oman, we are committed to our responsibility towards the environment which is the classroom hosting our training programmes. We are proud of our collaboration with BP Oman in the ‘Sustainable Future’ programme as a true reflection of this commitment by inspiring the next generation of youth about the importance of environmental sustainability.”

Ibrahim al Hinai, social investment manager at BP Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar, commented, “Holding the courses in the natural environment, away from distractions, created the perfect environment to achieve the programme’s objectives and foster a positive relationship between participants and the environment, helping them think of solutions to environmental problems and take steps toward positive personal change.”

MRO Middle East and AIME 2025 opens tomorrow in Dubai

Leaders from across the global aviation supply chain are gearing up for the largest-ever editions of MRO Middle East and Aircraft Interiors Middle East (AIME) 2025, opening tomorrow at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC).

Taking place from 10 – 11 February, the event will bring together 260+ exhibitors, 100+ airline operators, and over 60 approved airline purchasers as part of the exclusive Buyer Programme, alongside 50+ industry-leading speakers, to explore cutting-edge technologies, trends, and solutions shaping the future of commercial aviation in the region, a press release said.

Free to attend for pre-registered attendees, the two action-packed days will be a unique platform to network with regional leaders, while the Go Live! Theater spotlights key strategic



themes, including workforce and supply chain challenges, sustainability, fleet management optimisation and the latest technological advancements, with regional insights on India and the cargo market also featured. AIME sessions will focus on advanced cabin technologies, AI, IFEC platforms, cabin retrofitting, and discussions on geopolitics and sustainability.

As the largest MRO event in the region, MRO Middle East exhibitors represent all levels of the supply chain, including maintenance providers, airframe and engine manufacturers, parts distributors, supply chain and logistics providers, specialists in components, engineering, landing gear, lighting, painting, tear-downs, test equipment, tooling and more.

Indian School Wadi Kabir holds farewell for Class XII of 2024-25

Indian School Wadi Kabir (ISWK) hosted a graduation ceremony for the outgoing batch of Class XII at Majan Heights auditorium on February 6.

The event was graced by Giridhar S Varadachari, general manager and CFO of National Bank of Oman, who presided over the ceremony as chief guest. Other dignitaries included Anil Khimji, chief patron, Rajendra Ved, executive director of ISWK and ISWK Cambridge management committees, Sachin Toprani, honorary president of the School Management Committee of ISWK and others.

The event commenced with a traditional lighting of the lamp by Varadachari and the other dignitaries followed by a prayer song sung by the teachers. A potted plant was presented by



Master Isaan Mahadevan, deputy head boy, and Anagha Prasad Nair, deputy head girl to the chief guest while the Western Music choir presented a soulful rendition of ‘I Have a Dream’.

Toprani read out a message

from the principal, D N Rao, encouraging students to cultivate adaptability, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills - qualities that go beyond academic excellence. He emphasised that success is not just measured by personal achievements but also

by the positive impact one makes on the world.

Varadachari also emphasised the importance of time, adaptability, and change, reminding the students that those who embrace change would thrive in an ever-evolving world.

World of Coffee exhibition to begin tomorrow

The fourth edition of World of Coffee Dubai will be held from February 10-12 at the Dubai World Trade Centre with a record 1,980 participating companies.

The exhibition space has increased by a third with a 50% rise in exhibitor numbers, a 15% expansion in participating brands, and global participation exceeding 75%, a press release said.

Besides over 250 international exhibiting companies and trade visitors from over 78 countries, the event will also host 10 national pavilions, with Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Rwanda, Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Ethiopia, and India which has tripled its pavilion’s size, all returning, while Morocco and Mexico make their debut appearances.



Indian School Bousher holds Aarunya Art and Culture Fest

Indian School Bousher (ISB) hosted the much-anticipated Aarunya Art and Culture Fest between February 3 and 5, providing a prestigious platform for students to showcase their artistic talents.

The event was graced by Dr Hafsa Banu Abid, a distinguished dentist and acclaimed artist, who was the chief guest on the inaugural day, a press release said.

The art exhibition featured an impressive collection of over 550

artworks and 30 sculptures, displayed in the Art Studio and Multi-Purpose Hall (MPH). It was open to students and visitors and attracted an enthusiastic audience of parents, students, and art aficionados, all of whom

were captivated by the students’ creativity and technical finesse.

Dr Hafsa lauded the event as a vibrant celebration of artistic talent, acknowledging the students’ dedication, innovation, and hard work. She also com-

mended the educators for their crucial role in fostering creative growth. Adding a personal touch to the event, she exhibited her own Japanese Tree of Life painting—a profound representation of interconnectedness, balance,

and the cyclical nature of existence. The Cultural Fest also served as an invaluable opportunity for those students who had yet to showcase their creative talents in inter-school and intra-school events.

Incumbent Albin Kurti favoured as Kosovo votes to elect parliament

Pristina, Kosovo - Voters in Kosovo began casting their ballots on Sunday as parliamentary elections kicked off.

About two million citizens are able to make their voices heard in the election, with many Kosovars returning from abroad to vote. Polling booths opened at 7am (0600 GMT) and will close 12 hours later.

The election will determine who fills the 120 seats of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. As per Kosovo's constitution, 20 seats are reserved for minority ethnic groups such as Serbs, Bosniaks, and Turks.

Kurti unlikely to win majority

Prime Minister Albin Kurti's Vetevendosje (Self-Determination) party is expected to receive the most votes in the election. However, the left-nationalist party is unlikely to land a majority as it did four years ago.

Kurti's government has sought to strengthen Kosovo's



The election can have an impact on the Kosovo's relationship with Serbia

institutions and enact economic reforms such as a higher minimum wage and subsidies for women and children.

Vetevendosje has also sought to stamp out Serbian institutions in ethnic Albanian-majority Kosovo, such as closing down Serbian post offices and effectively banning the dinar.

These moves have angered ethnic Serbians in northern Kosovo, and have also escalated tensions between Kosovo and Serbia. The US and EU have also criticised Kurti for taking unilateral actions in the north, sparking fears of destabilisation in the Balkans.

Opposition parties

Led by prime minister candidate Bedri Hamzahe, the centre-right Democratic Party of Kosovo (DPK) is the top opposition party in the election and has focused on boosting the economy. The DPK has sought to repair Kosovo's ties with the US and EU. The centre-right Democratic

League of Kosovo (LDK), another opposition party, has also called for boosting relations with the US and EU and urged more dialogue with Serbia. Its prime minister candidate is economist Lumir Abdixhiku.

The Serb List party, led by Zlatan Elek, has vowed to protect the rights of ethnic Serbians. The party has close relations with the Serbian government and Serbian President Aleksander Vucic.

DW

Trump calls Putin, says Russian leader wants Ukraine war to end

Washington, D.C., US - US President Donald Trump said he had held a phone call with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, discussing efforts to end the Moscow-Kyiv war, according to *The New York Post*.

Speaking to *The Post* on Friday, Trump declined to specify how many times the two leaders had spoken but insisted that Putin is eager to see an end to the conflict.

"He wants to see people stop dying," Trump said. "All those dead people. Young, young, beautiful people. They're like your kids, two million of them - and for no reason."

Trump asserted that the war, now in its third year, 'never would have happened' if he had been the president in 2022. He contrasted his foreign policy approach with that of his predecessor Joe Biden, saying: "Biden was an embarrassment to our nation. A complete embarrassment." The president expressed urgency in resolving the war and emphasised he has a concrete plan to bring it to a close. "I hope it's fast. Every day people are dying. This war is so bad in Ukraine. I want to end this damn thing."

Along with National Security Adviser Mike Waltz aboard Air Force One, Trump pressed for diplomatic talks. "Let's get these meetings going. They want to meet. Every day people



Trump declined to specify how many times the two leaders had spoken but insisted that Putin is eager to see an end to the conflict

Let's get these meetings going. They want to meet. Every day people are dying. Young handsome soldiers are being killed. Young men, like my sons. All over the battlefield

DONALD TRUMP

are dying. Young handsome soldiers are being killed. Young men, like my sons. On both sides. All over the battlefield."

Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters in Moscow on Sunday that he could 'neither confirm

thing, be unaware of something. Therefore, in this case, I can neither confirm nor deny it," he said.

'Nobody wants to die'

Vice President J D Vance is scheduled to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the Munich Security Conference next week.

Trump has proposed a US\$500mn deal with Ukraine to secure access to rare-earth minerals and gas in exchange for security guarantees in any potential peace agreement.

Turning to Iran, Trump signalled openness to a non-nuclear agreement, preferring negotiations over military action. "I would like a deal done with Iran on non-nuclear. I would prefer that to bombing the hell out of it. ... They don't want to die. Nobody wants to die."

He suggested such an agreement could deter Israeli military action. "If we made the deal, Israel wouldn't bomb them." However, he remained vague on potential negotiation details. "In a way, I don't like telling you

what I'm going to tell them. You know, it's not nice."

"I'd tell them I'd make a deal," Trump added, though he declined to specify what concessions he might offer. "I can't say that because it's too nasty. I won't bomb them."

Meanwhile, Trump has revoked security clearances of key figures of the previous administration, including former Secretary of State Antony Blinken and former National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, White House officials confirmed on Saturday.

The decision follows Trump's move a day earlier to revoke the security clearance of Biden, effectively cutting off his access to daily intelligence briefings.

The Biden administration's Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco, who played a central role in the Justice Department's response to the January 6, 2021 Capitol attack, was also stripped of her clearance.

Additionally, Trump revoked the clearances of New York Attorney General Letitia James and Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, both of whom pursued legal cases against him. The move signals deepening tensions in Washington, where former presidents have historically been allowed intelligence briefings to offer counsel on national security matters.

Anadolu Agency



Sam Nujoma

Namibia's 'founding father' Sam Nujoma dies

Windhoek, Namibia - Sam Nujoma, the activist and guerilla leader who went on to become Namibia's first elected president, died on Saturday at the age of 95.

The Namibian Presidency made the announcement via social media on Sunday.

"It is with utmost sorrow and sadness that I announce this morning of the 9th of February 2025 to the Namibian people, our African brothers and sisters and the world at large, about the passing of our revered freedom fighter and revolutionary leader," the statement read. "The foundations of the Republic of Namibia have been shaken."

Nujoma had been admitted to a hospital in the Namibian capital of Windhoek three weeks ago, where he underwent treatment and was kept under observation. However, he succumbed to his illness, according to the statement.

He is survived by his wife Kouvambo (91), and children.

DW

Leaders across Africa call for end to conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania - History will judge leaders in Africa who fail to end the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, President Samia Suluhu Hassan of Tanzania warned her counterparts at the start of an emergency summit over the weekend.

"For the last couple of weeks, we have witnessed the spread of violence that has caused massive harm to human life, massive displacement and insecurity which affected economic activities and disrupted cross-border trade," Hassan said.

The East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) convened a brief joint summit in Tanzania on February 8 as the conflict escalated.

DRC President Felix Tshisekedi did not join the meeting in person, but appeared via video link from the capital, Kinshasa.

Presidents Paul Kagame of Rwanda, Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe, William Ruto of Kenya and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda were among those who travelled to Dar es



Leaders from east and southern Africa are seen at an emergency meeting on the conflict in eastern DRC, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on Saturday

Salaam.

Ceasefire, dialogue, peace

Tshisekedi and Kagame, who is accused of fuelling the conflict, did not deliver speeches. Mnangagwa and Ruto spoke only briefly as chairpersons of the EAC and SADC respectively.

A few hours after the talks opened, the blocs issued a joint statement in which the leaders said they had asked security chiefs to provide a road map towards peace.

"The joint summit directed the EAC and SADC chiefs of defence forces to meet within five days and provide technical direction on immediate and unconditional ceasefire and cessation of hostilities," it read.

Mnangagwa, the chairperson of SADC, and Ruto both said the conflict could not be resolved by military means.

"The leaders also called for resumption of all forms of dialogue to end the crisis," accord-

ing to the joint statement.

Rwanda told to 'disengage'

The EAC-SADC talks opened on ministerial level on February 7, with leaders of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) holding an emergency meeting in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

In a statement, the ECCAS bloc urged the M23 rebels to stop their offensive in order to help address the dire humanitar-

ian crisis, saying: "We strongly condemn the M23 armed group supported by Rwanda and call upon them to immediately end their offensive."

The bloc also called for the immediate withdrawal of Rwandan armed forces. The EAC-SADC statement also urged the 'lifting of Rwanda's defensive measures and disengagement of forces from DRC'.

'Major starting point'

A Tanzania-based political ana-

lyst, Paternus Niyegira, told DW that the Dar es Salaam summit was a major starting point toward ending the war.

"In the short term, the parties must consider the humanitarian activity to take course in eastern DR Congo. But in the long term is to work with all parties (including M23 rebels) to ensure that they have a stable state," he said.

Observers of the Great Lakes region say the deep tensions between Tshisekedi and Kagame

has complicated the conflict.

"When the two personalities don't see eye to eye, sitting around the negotiating table is always difficult," Fidel Amakye Owusu, a Ghana-based security and international relations analyst, told DW. That also poses a constant risk of armed conflict that escalates.

Ruto told the summit that the conflict in DRC can't be resolved militarily. "Only a diplomatic approach, one that addresses the root causes of the crisis, secures the historic integrity and territorial integrity of DRC and affirms the sovereignty of the people and the aspiration of freedom justice and development, that is what would establish peace," the Kenyan leader said.

Mnangagwa called on the summit to come up with a realistic resolution to the conflict and asked his counterparts to sustain their commitments toward bringing relief to the millions of Congolese in distress.

Niyegira said African leaders could deliver an effective outcome from the summit 'only if there would be a level of political honesty in their discussions'.

DW

Egypt to host emergency Arab meet to discuss Palestine on February 27

The summit to discuss ongoing developments in Palestinian territories is scheduled to take place in capital Cairo

Ankara, Turkey - Egypt announced on Sunday that it will host an emergency Arab summit on February 27 to discuss the ongoing developments in the Palestinian territories.

In a statement, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry reported that the summit, scheduled to take place in the capital Cairo, came after coordination with Bahrain and the current president of the Arab League. The decision to hold the summit came 'after consultations and coordination by Egypt at the highest levels with brotherly Arab countries in recent days, including the State of Palestine, which requested the summit, in order to address the latest and critical developments regarding the Palestinian cause', according to the statement.

On Thursday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu suggested that Palestinians should establish their state in



Last week, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu suggested that Palestinians should establish their state in Saudi Arabia rather than in their own homeland, dismissing any notion of Palestinian sovereignty

Saudi Arabia rather than in their own homeland, dismissing any notion of Palestinian sovereignty.

"The Saudis can create a Palestinian state in Saudi Arabia; they have a lot of land over there," he said.

Earlier, on February 4, US President Donald Trump said Washington would 'take over'

Gaza and resettle Palestinians elsewhere under an extraordinary redevelopment plan that he claimed could turn the enclave into 'the Riviera of the Middle East'. His proposal was met with wide condemnations from the Palestinians, Arab countries, and many other nations across the world, including Canada, France,

Germany, and the UK.

Saudi condemns Israeli PM's remarks

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia on Sunday strongly condemned the recent statements of Netanyahu, who had called for the displacement of Palestinians to the kingdom. In an official statement, the

Saudi Foreign Ministry reaffirmed its 'categorical rejection' of such rhetoric, emphasising that 'the Palestinian people have a right to their land, and they are not intruders or immigrants to it who can be expelled whenever the brutal Israeli occupation wishes'.

The kingdom also stated that 'this extremist, occupying men-

talities does not understand what the Palestinian land means to the brotherly people of Palestine', and asserted that Israel 'does not think that the Palestinian people deserve to live in the first place'.

"The proponents of these extremist ideas are the ones who prevented Israel from accepting peace," the ministry said, empha-

sising that Israel has been 'systematically practicing injustice towards the Palestinian people for more than 75 years'.

Reiterating its commitment to a peaceful resolution, Saudi Arabia asserted that 'the right of the Palestinian People will remain firmly established and no one will be able to take it away from them no matter how long it takes'.

"Lasting peace will not be achieved except by returning to the logic of reason and accepting

Saudi Arabia on Sunday strongly condemned the recent statements of Netanyahu, who had called for the displacement of Palestinians to the kingdom

the principle of peaceful coexistence through the two-state solution," it added.

Jordan also condemned Netanyahu's statements, deeming them 'incendiary calls' and a 'violation of international law'. "The Israeli government continues its provocative policies and statements that undermine the sovereignty of nations and the principles of international law," Foreign Ministry spokesman Su-fian al-Qudah said in a statement.

Modi to visit US on Feb 12-13

New Delhi, India - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US will provide an opportunity to build on the strong India-US Global Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and set an ambitious agenda for a mutually beneficial and trusted relationship across all sectors, an official statement said on Sunday.

Modi will visit the US on February 12-13 at the invitation of US President Donald Trump.

This is the first meeting between the two leaders after President Trump assumed office for his second term.

Previously, Modi visited the US in June 2017 and hosted President Trump for a state visit to India in February 2020.

The two leaders have also spoken on the phone twice since November 2024 (on November 6, 2024 and January 27, 2025).



Indian PM Narendra Modi

In early engagement with the new administration, India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar represented the PM at the inauguration ceremony of Trump in January. During the visit, Jaishankar also met Secretary of State Marco Rubio and participated in the QUAD Foreign Ministers' meeting.

During the first Trump administration, the Indo-Pacific re-

gion gained significant attention as a key strategic area in US foreign policy.

In concert with Japan, Australia, the US and India reinvigorated the Quadrilateral Dialogue. Trump administration took the lead in promoting QUAD from a senior-official level dialogue to a ministerial-level dialogue. Under the Biden administration QUAD was elevated to a Leaders summit.

India-USA ties were elevated to Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership during President Trump's visit to India in February 2020.

India has contracted for more than US\$20bn US-origin defence articles since 2008. Major US-origin platforms in use include C-130J, C-17, Apache, Chinook and MH60R helicopters.

ANI

Pregnant Palestinian woman killed by Israeli fire in West Bank

Ramallah, Palestine - An 8-month pregnant woman was killed by Israeli army fire in the northern West Bank on Sunday, the Health Ministry said.

Her husband was also seriously injured during an Israeli military raid on the Nur Shams refugee camp east of Tulkarem city, the ministry added in a statement.

The ministry said the woman's foetus also lost life in the attack.

According to witnesses, Israeli forces opened fire on the family as they were displaced from the camp by the Israeli assault.

The Israeli army raided the camp early on Sunday and forced several families out of their homes and converted them into military outposts.

The military claimed that the



offensive targeted what it called 'disruptive activities' in the camp.

The Israeli escalation follows a broader Israeli military offensive that began on January 21 in Jenin and its refugee camp, as well as surrounding towns, killing at least 25 people, according to the

Palestinian Health Ministry.

The army expanded its assault into Tulkarem on January 27, killing five more people. On February 2, another assault was launched in the town of Tammun and the Far'a refugee camp in the Tubas city.

The escalation follows a ceasefire and prisoner exchange deal in Gaza on January 19, after more than 15 months of Israel bombardment, which has killed nearly 48,200 Palestinians and devastated the enclave.

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TRADITIONAL FISHING IN CAMBODIA



A man casts his fishnet during a traditional fish-catching ceremony in a lake in Siem Reap province, Cambodia on Sunday (Xinhua)

25 gold miners killed in Mali

Lagos, Nigeria - At least 25 gold miners were killed and 13 injured when their vehicles were ambushed by terrorists near Mali's northeastern city of Gao, the army said late on Saturday night.

At least 19 terrorists were killed when the army launched retaliatory attacks, according to a statement issued by the General Staff of the Malian Armed Forces.

The heinous incident occurred on Friday afternoon when a convoy of vehicles carrying gold miners working for a foreign company in military escort was ambushed by a group of terrorists between Gao and Ansongo, near Kobe, approximately 30km (19 miles) from Gao.

"Terrorists deliberately targeted civilian passengers fleeing in panic. Despite the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) prompt response, three civilian vehicles



were hit, killing 25 civilians and injuring 13 others, the majority of whom were young gold miners working for a foreign firm on their way to the N'Tahaka gold mine in the Gao region," it read. The statement did not name the terrorist group responsible, but both ISIS (Daesh) and al-Qaeda-linked militants have previously carried out attacks in the region.

Over the years, there have

been deadly attacks in Gao, prompting the military to arrange daily escorts for civilians.

In recent years, violence in the region has killed thousands of people and displaced millions in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger.

Meanwhile, the military has assured civilians that security operations, particularly along the RN-17 axis with civilian vehicle escorts, will proceed.

Afrikaners turn down Trump's offer

Trump had offered to resettle them as refugees in the US, following claims of racial discrimination

Johannesburg, SA - South Africa's Afrikaner community on Saturday turned down an offer by US President Donald Trump to resettle them as refugees in the US, following claims of racial discrimination.

"We don't want to move elsewhere, and we are not going to ask our children now to move to another country. We have interests of future generations and to make sure our culture is passed down to future generations; that cannot be done abroad," Kallie Kriel, CEO of Afriforum, a group that promotes the interests of Afrikaans speakers, said at a media briefing in the capital, Pretoria.

Kriel said Afrikaners, who are descendants of European settlers, see a future in Africa. "We are not European. We are indigenous to this country and are going nowhere," he told a joint media briefing with the trade union Solidarity Movement.

Their briefing comes after US President Donald Trump issued an executive order on Friday freezing Washington's aid to Pretoria, citing the country's recently passed land appropriation law and its genocide case against Israel. The order also included a provision to help Afrikaners, a South African ethnic group made up of descendants of Dutch settlers and other Europeans, resettle in the US as refugees fleeing alleged government-sponsored race-based discrimination.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa signed a bill into law last month that allows the state to expropriate land without compensation if it is 'just, equitable, and in the public interest'. The law aims to address apartheid's past injustices, Ramaphosa said.

Pretoria has said it has only received US aid for HIV/AIDS prevention in the country.

Kriel praised Trump and the US government for recognising and identifying the discrimination that Afrikaners face in South Africa through racial legislation and property rights.

He, however, added: "We are committed to finding solutions locally. Afrikaners want recognition as a group, not privilege in their country of birth," he said.

Solidarity Movement Chairman Flip Buys, for his part, said Afrikaners are connected to South Africa and the continent. "We disagree with the African

We are not going to ask our children now to move to another country. We have interests of future generations and to make sure our culture is passed down

KALLIE KRIEL



US President Donald Trump recently issued an executive order with a provision to help Afrikaners, a South African ethnic group, resettle in the US

National Congress (ANC)," he said, referring to the ruling party led by President Ramaphosa. "But we love our country," he remarked. "Repatriating Afrikaners as refugees is not an option for us," he said.

He said Afrikaners want to build a future in South Africa and will establish and strive for minimum living standards.

"If the international commu-

nity helps us to create an environment in which Afrikaners can sustainably stay in South Africa, we can make a lasting contribution to the well-being of the country and all its people," he said.

Buys also said they are not involved in the push for sanctions against South Africa. "We have not, or will not, call for sanctions against South Africa or that funds for vulnerable people be cut off

by the US government," he added.

He said he would request a meeting with Ramaphosa and travel to the US to talk with White House representatives.

Land is a sensitive issue in South Africa, where the majority of natural resources are concentrated in the hands of a few white people. During apartheid, racist policies forced Black and non-

white people to leave their homes.

Even after apartheid ended, white people, particularly Afrikaners, continued to own the vast majority of the country's commercial farms, which produce the majority of food.

Trump's executive order also cites South Africa's involvement in bringing Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and

Pretoria's closer ties with Iran as reasons for cutting aid.

"The United States cannot support the government of South Africa's commission of rights violations in its country or its undermining United States foreign policy, which poses national security threats to our Nation, our allies, our African partners, and our interests," it said.

South Africa on Saturday expressed concern over US 'propaganda' and 'misinformation' after Trump froze Washington's aid to the country.

"We are concerned by what seems to be a campaign of misinformation and propaganda aimed at misrepresenting our great nation. It is disappointing to observe that such narratives seem to have found favour among decision-makers in the United States of America," South Africa's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The statement further said, "It is ironic that the executive order (of Trump) makes provision for refugee status in the US for a group in South Africa that remains amongst the most economically privileged, while vulnerable people in the US from other parts of the world are being deported and denied asylum despite real hardship," the ministry added.

Anadolu Agency

New Lebanese government non-partisan, says president

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanese President Joseph Aoun confirmed on Saturday that members of the new government are not affiliated with political parties and will work to serve all Lebanese to achieve the country's interests.

Aoun expressed satisfaction with the formation of the government, congratulating its head, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, and the ministers, wishing them success in their new roles.

He pointed out that the formation of the 'Reform and Rescue Government' was based on the criteria agreed upon with Salam.

"One of the most important of these criteria is that the government does not include ministers affiliated with political parties," said Aoun.

He highlighted that the selection of ministers was based on 'competence, experience, and



Lebanese President Joseph Aoun

specialisation, in addition to their good reputation'.

He added that the criteria were meant to ensure that government members 'are cohesive, united, and work as a strong team to achieve the hopes placed on them by the Lebanese for a better tomorrow'.

Aoun reiterated that 'govern-

ment members are non-partisan, and they will undoubtedly serve all Lebanese because their goal is only the interest of Lebanon'.

Aoun signed a decree for the formation of the new government earlier on Saturday, which includes 24 ministers, including Salam.

Aoun expressed satisfaction with the formation of the government, congratulating its head, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, and the ministers, wishing them success in their new roles

Aoun was elected president on January 9, ending more than two years of a presidential vacuum in Lebanon due to political disagreements.

Days after his election, Aoun invited Salam, a judge with the International Court of Justice, to form a new government.

Anadolu Agency

Over 30 Naxal rebels killed in India

New Delhi, India - At least 31 Naxals and two police officers were killed and two others wounded in a fierce gunfight on Sunday in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh, the police said.

The gunfight between Naxals and joint contingents of police and paramilitary forces broke out in the forests of Indravati National Park in the Bijapur district, about 236km south of Raipur, the capital city of Chhattisgarh.

According to officials, the search operation was underway in the area until the last reports poured in.

The state-owned broadcaster All India Radio said additional reinforcements have been sent to the area. "A large number of arms and ammunition have also been recovered from the spot," the broadcaster said.



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un

North Korea's Kim reaffirms policy to 'further' develop nuclear forces

Seoul, South Korea - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un reaffirmed his country's policy to 'further' develop its nuclear forces, accusing the US of being behind the world's disputes, state media reported on Sunday.

He made the remarks on Saturday in a speech at the Ministry of National Defence in celebration of the 77th anniversary of the founding of the Korean People's Army, according to the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

Referring to plans to bolster 'all deterrence', he reaffirmed Pyongyang's 'unshakable policy of more highly developing the nuclear forces'.

Kim, however, did not elaborate on the details of his plans.

He claimed that US nuclear strategic assets deployed on the Korean Peninsula, the Washington-led nuclear war simulation exercises and the US-Japan-South Korea military cooperation are 'inviting military imbalance' on the peninsula and in Northeast Asia, causing 'a new conflicting structure', posing a grave challenge to North Korea.

Kim said North Korea does not want 'unnecessary tension' in the region, however, it will take

'sustained countermeasures to ensure the regional military balance' to prevent the outbreak of a new war and ensure peace and security on the peninsula.

He accused the US of 'standing unflinchingly behind the world's big and small disputes and tragedies of bloodshed', stating that it proves the regime's line of seeking 'an unlimited defence capability' is 'most just'.

Kim heaped blame on Washington for the Russia-Ukraine war, expressing 'serious concern' that the US and the West are prolonging the war with the 'unrealisable dream to deal strategic setbacks' to Moscow.

North Korea's army and people, he added, will 'invariably support and encourage the just cause of the Russian army and people to defend their sovereignty, security and territorial integrity', referring to a mutual defence treaty he signed last year with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Besides, Pyongyang said on Saturday that its nuclear force is not for negotiations but for combat use, after the US said Washington would seek 'complete denuclearisation of North Korea'.

Anadolu Agency

Bangladesh detains 33 Rohingya for illegal crossing

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Bangladesh's border force has detained 33 Myanmar Rohingya, including women and children, on charges of infiltrating through the Alikadam border zone in the southeastern Bandarban district.

The Bangladesh Border Guard members said the detainees include nine women, 10 men, and 14 children. A patrol team of the border guard conducted an operation on Saturday based on intelligence, and 33 Rohingya from Myanmar were detained while searching the office of a shelter project in Alikadam, official Badruddin Kamal confirmed to Anadolu on Sunday.

These Myanmar nationals were trespassing Bangladesh through various brokers in the hope of a safe life due to the war situation inside Myanmar, said the border guard, adding that the



process of pushing back the 33 detained Rohingya was underway. Earlier, on January 11, the border guard detained 53 Rohingya from the Alikadam town.

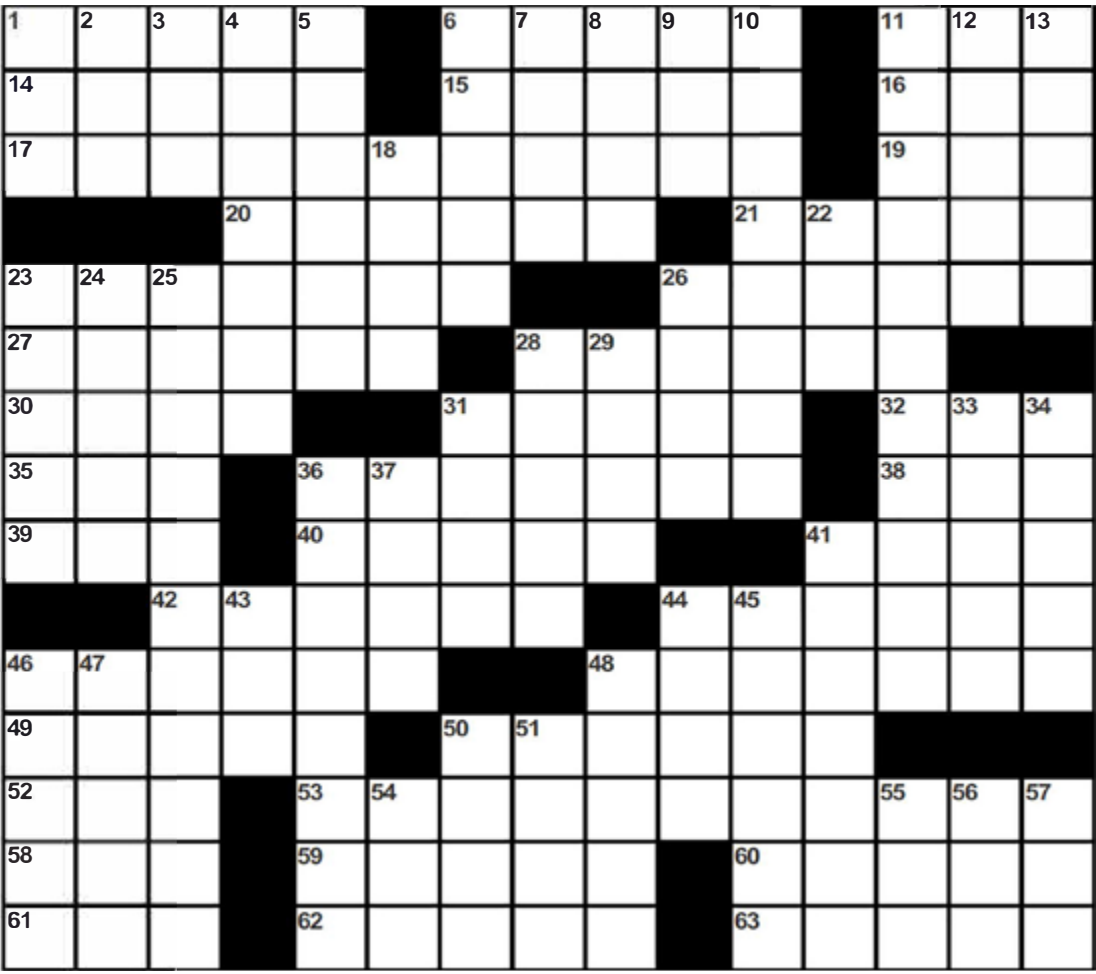
Bangladesh is facing a growing refugee burden at the border district of southeastern Cox's Bazar. The conflict between the Myanmar junta government and the rebel Arakan Army has been causing a new rush of displaced Rohingya toward the Bangladesh border and the largest refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

Cox's Bazar has already been hosting over 1.2mn Rohingya since they fled a Myanmar military crackdown in August 2017.

Bangladeshi transitional government's head Muhammad Yunus last month said around 100,000 more Rohingya crossed the country's borders.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Bartender's supply
 - 6) Disconcert
 - 11) Nancy, in Nancy
 - 14) Flooded
 - 15) Go (along)
 - 16)_Wan Kenobi
 - 17) Desperately hungry
 - 19) Affirmative action
 - 20) Clamorous
 - 21) Gets up in the morning
 - 23) Trigonometric ratios
 - 26) Part of a biblical plague
 - 27) Final transport
 - 28) Inadequate
 - 30) Blows it
 - 31) Bequeath
 - 32) African antelope
 - 35) "Women's" or "ad" follower
 - 36) Turn harsh
 - 38) Lithium_- battery
 - 39) Romanian currency
 - 40) Circle
 - 4 1)B oat with an open hold
 - 42) Least cooked
 - 44) Fuel gas

- 46) City near San Francisco
 - 48) Smashed
 - 49) Indian policeman's club
 - 50) Acre's acres?
 - 52) Big deal
 - 53) Meeting of minds
 - 58) Madam's mate
 - 59) Provide, as with some quality
 - 60)_ manual
 - 61) Belonging to a man
 - 62) Train-schedule listings
 - 63) Basin for holy water
- DOWN**
- 1) St. Anthony's cross
 - 2) Hold title to
 - 3) Bobsey girl
 - 4) Lines on weather maps
 - 5) Makes buttermilk
 - 6) Awry
 - 7) Big cheese
 - 8) Far from ruddy
 - 9) "Get it?"
 - 10) Element in water
 - 11) Type of "procedure"
 - 12) Orchestra group
 - 13) Central position

- 18) Miles per hour, e.g.
- 22) Rocks in a glass
- 23) Beach souvenir
- 24) Like ghost stories
- 25) Parts of '69 Mustangs
- 26) Cleanse
- 28) Raise criterion
- 29) "_ of Eden"
- 31) Research rooms
- 33) Not you, I or them
- 34) Like a spinster
- 36) Some wall moldings
- 37) DoubleStuf, e.g.
- 41) Hardest, as bread
- 43) Baseball bat wood
- 44) Big pig
- 45) Starter home?
- 46) Jiffy
- 4 7) Pie cuts, essentially
- 48) Aligns
- 50)_-European
- 51) Atlantic fish
- 54) Can. province
- 55) Classic introduction?
- 56) Fine-wine-producing vineyard
- 57) "I know what you're thinking" claim

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
The heavens have arranged for some major-league changes. Happily, this time you'll actually be able to appreciate the outcome. The steps along the way might not be great fun, especially if you have to say goodbye to someone or something, but the ends will definitely justify the means. Fortunately, you've never been afraid of hard work or extra work, so you'll come through this transition with flying colors.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
You're not usually the type to overspend, at least, not on a regular basis. But when something catches your fancy, the impulsive side of your nature takes over and you let go. Prepare yourself, because that's exactly what's coming your way right now. If you can't afford it, you'd better place your plastic under the lock and key of a frugal friend who's telling you to watch it.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
You've got a lot of living to do, and you may have been going a little overboard lately, but knowing impulsive you, it's probably surprising that you haven't gone further than you have! It's time now to sit down and look things over, though, with an eye toward creating and sticking to a nice, stable budget. Now stop giggling. You can do it. Besides, aren't you trying to save up for a vacation?



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. The Nazca Plate, part of the earth's lithosphere, lies under which ocean?

- A. Pacific
- B. Indian
- C. Atlantic
- D. Antarctic

02. What is a person who studies objects and matter in the universe outside Earth's atmosphere known as?

- A. Astronomer
- B. Horologist
- C. Hopeful
- D. Horoscoper

03. Which animal appeared in the opening credits of the British TV series "Coronation Street"?

- A. Rabbit
- B. Badger
- C. Hamster
- D. Cat

Answers: 1.A 2.A 3.D



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
You're not usually the sappy type, but you'll need to get past that now, especially if you're already with someone you consider delectable. Because the heavens have seen fit to arrange a veritable buffet of romantic interludes, and you'll certainly be able to partake of at least one. In fact, you'd better confine yourself to just one. Jealousy isn't pretty, especially yours.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You woke up this morning with the urge to cry for absolutely no reason. No conscious reason, at least. You're not sad. You're just feeling extremely sentimental. Now that can be good or it can be bad, and if you're not in a situation where you feel comfortable expressing your feelings, it can be awkward. Oh, well. When all is said and done, no one will ever accuse you of being a phony. And think of the sympathy!



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
You're not all that tough to talk into keeping the peace, even if you feel strongly about something, mainly because you always prefer being cooperative to causing contention or, heaven forbid, confrontation. At this particular moment in time, however, that won't be the case. Not at all. You'll stand your ground no matter what type of conflict your antennae tell you it could create.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
You've been so good for so long, worthy, even, of outright adoration, that you're not sure who you are any more. After recent days, it's easy to see how your partner might think they couldn't live without you now that they've seen what living with you would be like. It's all right. Let them stay for a while and be yourself at all costs. Give them a day or two and you'll be off that pedestal.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
There's no easy way to solve this situation, especially since you're not seeing things quite as clearly as usual. Your heart is involved, and that's when things get tricky. All you can do is ask a loved one who tends to be objective for their take on the situation. And you can speak honestly. The good news is that once the nonsense is over, romance is on the agenda.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
The changes you've been waiting for are coming fast and hard. Luckily, you'll have plenty of energy to get the job done. So when you're suddenly asked to step up to the plate and take on a bit more responsibility, you'll be only too happy to agree. Oh, and don't worry about being compensated either. You'll likely be very pleased with the package on the table, and they'll be thrilled with your results!



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Just after you wake up, you'll realize that the romantic roll you've been on isn't just good; in fact, it's about to get better. In addition to luring all kinds of attractive options your way, you'll be able to have your pick, and the pickings will be quite fine. But how will you know that? Simply by checking your messages. But sit down and get comfy first. It'll be a while.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
That certain someone you've been exchanging long, lingering glances with at work? They're preparing to ask for a bit more of your time. Now, if this is a potential relationship, be sure it won't interfere with your career before you take the next step. It's a lot easier to stop glancing than to explain why you won't be accepting the invitation to date number three.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You're famous for loving freedom, but a little-known secret is that you're also an extremely devoted partner, and that goes double if you've found an intellectual equal that you're also attracted to. If you're away from your friends for a few days, they'll just have to understand. If they're really good friends, they will, especially when you show up wearing a big grin and actually admit that it might be love.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

S	Z	C	N
T	T	I	L
A	S	T	R
A	P	I	E

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



Manchester City's new signing Nico Gonzalez was injured during his side's 2-1 win at Leyton Orient

Manchester City's Gonzalez endures nightmare debut

London, England - Manchester City's new signing Nico Gonzalez lasted only 22 minutes on his debut as the midfielder was injured during his side's 2-1 win at Leyton Orient in the FA Cup on Saturday.

Gonzalez was given a bruising introduction to English soccer and is now a doubt for his side's Champions League clash against Real Madrid on Tuesday.

City paid 50 million pounds (\$62 million) to bring the 23-year-old Spaniard from Porto as they try to plug the hole left by the absence of long-term injury Rodri.

"I think Nico got to understand immediately what England is and the referees,"

Guardiola said. "I know without VAR it is more difficult because they are not used to it but there were one or two actions. It's a pity because I don't know how hard the kick is but he could not continue."

Guardiola was taunted by the Orient fans while his side trailed and was clearly relieved that his side turned it around with substitute Kevin de Bruyne scoring a late winner.

"Outside the first 10 minutes, we played a really good game," Guardiola said.

"It's my ninth season in England. I played many times in this incredible competition. The vibe and the smell of the crowd, you don't find it in other competitions."

MITOMA MAGIC FLOORS CHELSEA

Japanese winger scores the winner as Brighton reach FA Cup fifth round

Brighton, England - Kaoru Mitoma sealed Brighton & Hove Albion's 2-1 comeback home victory over Premier League rivals Chelsea to send the south coast club into the FA Cup fifth round on Saturday.

Brighton keeper Bart Verbruggen gifted Chelsea a fifth-minute lead when he bundled a cross by Cole Palmer into his own net under no pressure.

The hosts were not behind for long, however, as Georginio Rutter equalised seven minutes later with a glancing header.

Palmer should have restored eight-times Cup winners Chelsea's lead before halftime but Brighton were superior after the break and Japanese winger Mitoma sealed the tie in the 57th minute with a flicked finish over Chelsea keeper Robert Sanchez.

Defeat means Chelsea have not won away in any competition since early December and their only realistic chance of silverware in manager Enzo Maresca's first season at the helm is in the UEFA Conference League.

Brighton have been inconsis-



Kaoru Mitoma of Brighton & Hove Albion celebrates his goal against Chelsea

tent in the league under their 31-year-old manager Fabian Hurzeler but they provided a great response to last week's 7-0 drubbing by Nottingham Forest, especially after such a calamitous start.

"It's good that everyone rallied around and showed their fighting spirit," Brighton winger Tariq Lamptey said.

"We showed that we are together and we turned it around."

Things looked bad for the hosts when Palmer volleyed a

It's good that everyone rallied around and showed their fighting spirit. We showed that we are together and we turned it around

TARIQ LAMPTHEY

cross towards goal and Verbruggen spilled the ball into his goal. Rutter spared his blushes soon after though as Joel Veltman's cross from the right evaded two Chelsea defenders and the Frenchman guided his header beyond Sanchez.

There was a hint of controversy about Brighton's winner with a suspicion of handball in the build-up before Mitoma showed a cool head to lift his finish over Sanchez.

Newcastle survive early scare to edge Birmingham

Birmingham, England - Joe Willock bagged a brace as Newcastle United battled back from a goal down after 40 seconds to beat third tier Birmingham City 3-2 at St Andrew's on Saturday and reach the English FA Cup fifth round.

League One leaders Birmingham shocked their Premier League opponents, who made nine changes to the side who beat Arsenal in midweek to reach the League Cup final, when Ethan Laird opened the scoring from the first corner of the game.

You could see a few of the players were on the edge today. I thought it was going to be a difficult night before the game, and we conceded within a minute

EDDIE HOWE

The shot, nodded on to Laird, took a deflection off Callum Wilson following the first corner.

In a fast and frantic first half, Willock levelled the scores in controversial fashion. Goalkeeper Bailey Peacock-Farrell parried his

shot but the assistant referee flagged that the ball had crossed the line and, with no VAR, the goal stood.

Wilson stabbed home five minutes later to send Newcastle 2-1 up but Birmingham equalised

in the 40th minute through a long-range Tomoki Iwata strike.

Italian midfielder Sandro Tonali then came on for Newcastle after the break and helped calm things down after a scrappy ending to the first 45 minutes.

Man-of-the-match Willock grabbed the winner in the 82nd minute with an angled shot through the keeper's legs to see the Magpies through.

The 12 minutes of extra time gave Birmingham a chance but Newcastle held firm, bringing on rested top scorer Alexander Isak

for the final seconds when William Osula came off after a clash of heads.

"It was a tough game for us, mentally, physically. You could see a few of the players were on the edge today," Newcastle manager Eddie Howe told BBC Sport.

"I thought it was going to be a difficult night before the game, and we conceded within a minute. We knew that made it double difficult because the atmosphere in the stadium totally changed, it was electric at the start"



Newcastle United's Joe Willock celebrates his goal

No goal for Donley, but youngster writes his name in FA Cup folklore

London, England - Sadly for Leyton Orient's on-loan youngster Jamie Donley, he was not credited with his side's shock opening goal against Premier League champions Manchester City on Saturday, but he was still the talk of the town and way beyond.

The 20-year-old, on loan from nearby Tottenham Hotspur, produced a moment of astonishing skill to send a 50 metre shot arcing over the head of flailing City keeper Stefan Ortega in the 16th minute.

It crashed against the underside of the bar and then off the back of the keeper to spark delirium in the stadium.

"It is a shame it has gone down as an own goal," third-tier Leyton Orient boss Richie Wellens told reporters.

"It is not deserved and I am sure Ortega doesn't want it. It is one thing seeing it, it is another executing."

Donley's audacious shot was also praised by City manager Pep Guardiola who described the youngster as an "incredible left-footed player" who scored a "fantastic goal."



Leyton Orient's Jamie Donley celebrates after beating Manchester City goalkeeper Stefan Ortega with a stunning long-range shot on Saturday

Former Blackburn Rovers, Chelsea and Celtic forward Chris Sutton, a BBC pundit, said the goal was one of the most remarkable he had seen scored in the Cup.

"What a spot," he told BBC Radio 5 Live.

"What a story. It's absolutely sensational. It will go down as an own goal but it is one of the greatest FA Cup goals."

For Donley, who made four

substitute appearance for Tottenham before being loaned to Orient, it was a moment that could be career-changing and his manager Richie Wellens predicted he has a big future ahead of him.

Wellens would love to keep him beyond the end of the season but he says that would only happen if Orient can continue their recent surge and gain promotion to the second-tier Championship.

Leao, Gimenez on target in Milan's win

Empoli, Italy - AC Milan won 2-0 at relegation-threatened Empoli on Saturday thanks to second-half goals from Rafael Leao and Santiago Gimenez in a Serie A clash that ended with both sides down to 10 men.

Milan rose to seventh place with 38 points, four away from European spots while Empoli remain 17th with 21 points, one above the drop zone.

The first half had few scoring opportunities, with Milan's Joao Felix shooting wide after 20 minutes before Lorenzo Colombo struck the woodwork in the closest chance to put the hosts ahead past the half-hour mark.

Milan coach Sergio Conceicao sought to spark some life into his attack with the introduction of Gimenez, Leao and Christian Pulisic after the break, and his decision paid off with the three substitutes key in turning the game.

"The three points are the most important thing. We had difficulty in the first half, but did well after the two red cards," Pulisic told DAZN. "This is the spirit we need, we have a lot of quality in the squad, now even more with



AC Milan's Rafael Leao celebrates his goal against Empoli on Saturday

the new signings."

The visitors were reduced to 10 men after Fikayo Tomori received a second yellow card in the 55th minute.

But the disadvantage was short-lived as Empoli's Luca Marianucci was shown a straight

red card following a VAR review for kicking out at Gimenez 10 minutes later.

Leao then opened the scoring in the 68th minute with a towering header off a Pulisic cross and Milan's new signing Gimenez made it 2-0 with a superb curling

effort after cutting inside a defender in the box 14 minutes from time.

"Games are always difficult in Serie A, so we had to push really hard, but we made it," Gimenez said.

Milan next play at Feyenoord in the Champions League knockout playoffs on Wednesday.

"It's going to be really tough, it's a lot of emotion because Feyenoord gave me a lot, they are like family," the 23-year-old Gimenez added on facing his former team.

Retegui scores four for Atalanta

Earlier, Atalanta thrashed lowly Hellas Verona 5-0, with Italian striker Mateo Retegui scoring four times including a hat-trick before the break.

Retegui, the league's leading marksman, put Atalanta in front with a quick-fire double in four minutes before Ederson made it 3-0 following a smooth solo run.

Retegui completed his hat-trick just before halftime on a rebound and netted again in the 56th minute, converting a neat pass from Marten de Roon.

TALE OF TWO HALVES

Mbappe on target as Real and Atletico share derby honours

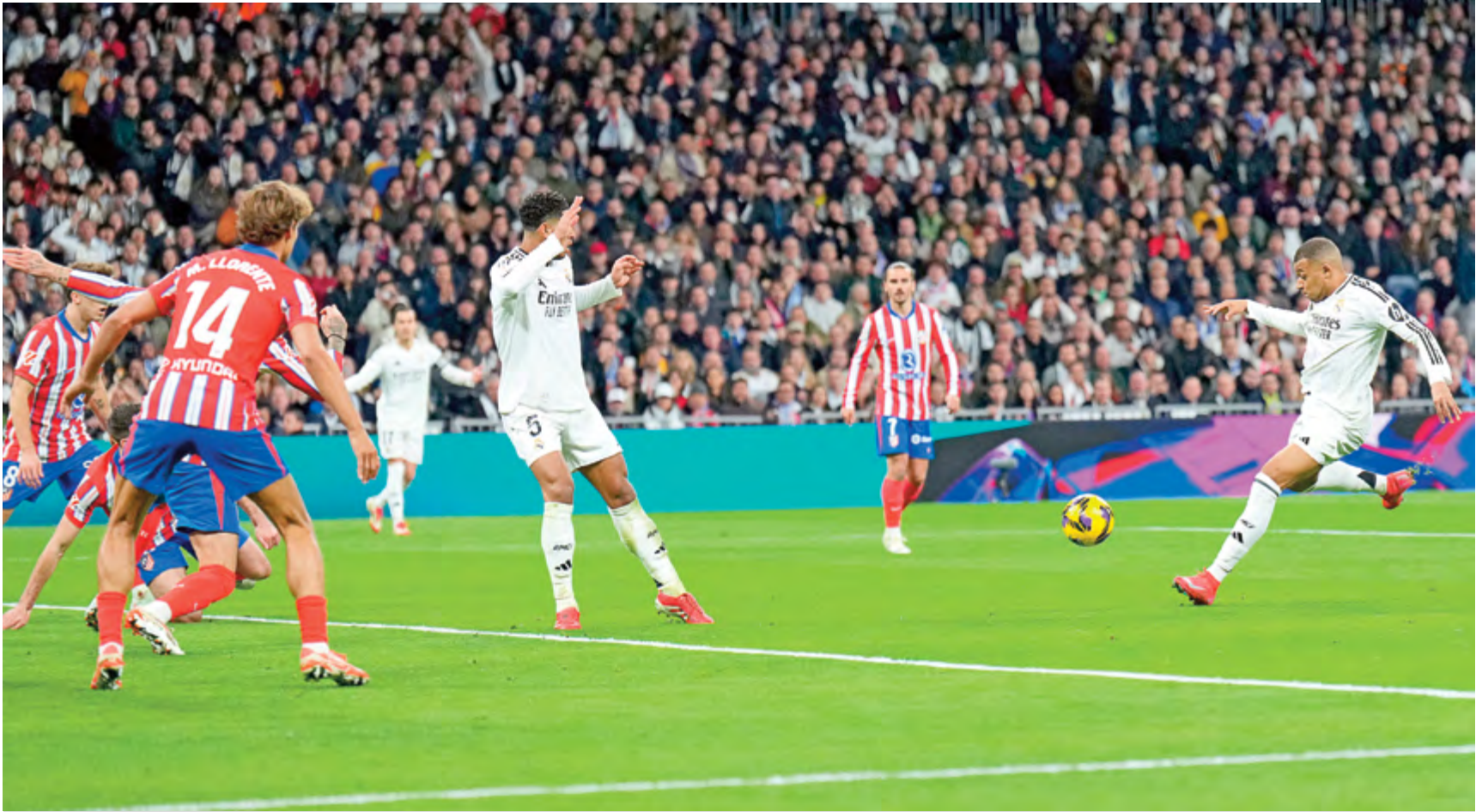
Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid salvaged a 1-1 draw against city rivals Atletico Madrid in LaLiga on Saturday with Kylian Mbappe scoring a second-half goal to cancel out Julian Alvarez's first-half opener for the visiting side.

That kept Real top of LaLiga on 50 points, one ahead of Atletico in second who missed a chance to leapfrog them. Barcelona, third on 45 points, visit Sevilla on Sunday with a chance to close the gap in the title race.

In a tale of two halves at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium, Atletico dominated the first 45 minutes and took the lead when Alvarez struck a 35th minute penalty after Aurelien Tchouameni had fouled Samuel Lino inside the box.

Real roared back after the break, with Mbappe striking home a rebound in the 50th minute to level the game. But they were frustrated in their attempt to grab a win by an imperious Jan Oblak, who made a string of stunning saves.

Diego Simeone's Atletico arrived in fine form, having won 19 of their previous 21 games in all competitions and they showed



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe scores against Atletico Madrid on Saturday

Real are on top of LaLiga on 50 points, one ahead of Atletico in second who missed a chance to leapfrog them. Barcelona, third on 45 points, visit Sevilla late on Sunday with a chance to close the gap

why they have the best defence in Europe's top five leagues with 15 goals conceded in 23 games.

On Saturday, despite missing defensive stalwart Robin Le Normand to suspension, Simeone's side was once again rock-solid at the back, frustrating Real's stellar

attack who were unable to create a single shot on target in the first half.

Winger Lino and forward Alvarez were a constant menace up and down the left channel, often exposing the deficiencies of Lucas Vazquez and Tchoua-

meni who got the start in a depleted Real defence without their top four defenders due to injuries.

In the 25th minute, Atletico's players complained forcefully to the referee over a studs-up challenge on Pablo Barrios by Dani Ceballos, asking for a straight red. But Cesar Soto Grado gave only a yellow.

Five minutes later, Atletico had their complaints heard when Tchouameni left a foot in on Lino as the ball came into the box in a quick counter-attack. At first, the referee did not spot the foul but

after he was called to review the play in the VAR booth, he pointed to the penalty spot.

Cold-blooded Alvarez held his nerve under deafening booing from the sold-out Santiago Bernabeu crowd to brazenly chip his penalty down the middle as Thibaut Courtois dived low.

Lino and Alvarez wasted golden opportunities that should have given the visitors a more comfortable lead and they paid a heavy price as Real came back livelier after the break, with Vinicius Jr and Rodrygo impressing in the channels.

It took them five minutes to find the equaliser when Rodrygo ran past two opponents on the right wing and crossed to Jude Bellingham who sliced his first touch strike from close-range. Gimenez managed to block the rebound which fell to Mbappe, who fired home the loose ball.

Real went all out for the three points but ran into Oblak, who denied close-range efforts by Vinicius, Rodrygo, Mbappe and Bellingham, who also had a strike off the crossbar, to secure Atletico's point.



Diego Simeone

‘We did not take advantage of the chances’

Madrid, Spain - Atletico Madrid manager Diego Simeone said his team paid the price for missed opportunities in a heated LaLiga derby at Real Madrid on Saturday after Kylian Mbappe cancelled out Julian Alvarez's opener for the visiting side.

Atletico were unable to make the most of the chances they created during a dominant start to the game.

"We played a very good first half but we didn't have the clarity to take advantage of the chances we created," Simeone told a press conference.

"We could have managed those opportunities better. That led to a draw despite the feeling that in many parts of the game it looked like we could have won it.

"With them scoring early in the second half, they hit play on the crossbar and played with a higher intensity after that. After 20 minutes or so we got the game a little more in control and had our chances too... It ended in a draw a match in which maybe both teams were left thinking they deserved more."

Simeone praised referee Cesar Soto Grado following controversy surrounding the build-up to the derby after Real Madrid lodged a letter of complaint against the Spanish league's match officials.



Bayer Leverkusen's Granit Xhaka and VfL Wolfsburg's Tiago Tomás battle for the ball during their Bundesliga match on Saturday

Wolfsburg hold Leverkusen to goalless draw

Wolfsburg, Germany - Champions Bayer Leverkusen stumbled to a goalless draw at VfL Wolfsburg on Saturday to drop eight points behind Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich as coach Xabi Alonso equalled the all-time coach record for the league's longest unbeaten away run.

Alonso's team, who needed extra time on Wednesday to beat second-tier Cologne and reach the German Cup last four, are in second place and face Bayern in the league's big game next week.

The Spaniard rotated heavily ahead of their ninth game in 26 days, leaving attacking midfielder Florian Wirtz on the bench initially.

Next week we play against Bayern at home. There is this eight-point lead in the table but we focus on what we can achieve... I don't think too much about those eight points

XABI ALONSO

They clearly missed his attacking spark as Wolfsburg got more shots on target. The hosts even hit the woodwork with Kilian Fischer's powerful drive in the 74th.

Despite some late pressure and a golden chance in stoppage time by substitute Wirtz, Leverkusen could not find a winner.

"It is easy to analyse things

after the game but Florian's effort after 120 minutes (in the Cup game) was big," Alonso told a press conference. "But he still came close with an almost penalty and that last chance today."

The draw means Alonso equalled late coach Udo Lattek's all-time league record of 27 consecutive away games without de-

feat.

"For us things remain the same," Alonso said. "Next week we play against Bayern at home. There is this eight-point lead in the table but we focus on what we can achieve."

"We have a bit of time to recover after four weeks with three matches. I don't think too much about those eight points.

"If we beat Bayern then it's five points. We play at home, with our fans and with good energy. We have the whole week to train."

Leverkusen are in second place on 46 points. Bayern are on 54 after Friday's 3-0 win over Werder Bremen.

Colidio double propels River Plate to victory against Independiente

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Facundo Colidio netted twice to give River Plate a 2-0 win over Independiente in the Apertura tournament of the Argentine Primera Division on Saturday.

River, who were previously held to a goalless draw by San Lorenzo on Sunday, sit third in Group B on eight points. Independiente missed out on the top spot and remain second on nine points, behind leaders Rosario Central.

Both teams had chances to break the deadlock in an exciting first half, with the visitors coming closest when Ivan Marcone's deep pass found Lautaro Millan, but the midfielder was unable to connect with Gabriel Avalos after a poor exit by River goalkeeper Franco Armani.

River Plate broke the deadlock six minutes into the second half. Gonzalo Montiel's pinpoint pass into the box was met by Colidio's superb header, much to the de-



Facundo Colidio of River Plate scores against Independiente

light of coach Marcelo Gallardo in the sweltering conditions at the Mas Monumental stadium.

The striker had the chance to double his side's lead minutes later, but failed to connect with

Alvaro Angulo's through ball. But he was resolute, and in stoppage time he converted a fine pass from Milton Casco to seal victory.

"We had some good moments and others that we know

we have to improve. As the matches go by, we are picking up pace. We have to go down that road. The header was the most beautiful goal I've scored," Colidio told ESPN after the match.

Kovac starts with defeat as Dortmund lose to Stuttgart

Dortmund, Germany - Ten-man Borussia Dortmund slumped to a 2-1 defeat to visitors VfB Stuttgart on Saturday in a disappointing debut for new coach Niko Kovac that dropped his team further away from the Champions League qualification spots.

Kovac took over last week after Dortmund, who face Sporting in a Champions League play-off next week, sacked coach Nuri Sahin in late January.

Last season's Champions League finalists Dortmund are on 29 points in 11th place in the Bundesliga. Stuttgart are on 35 in fourth place.

"We did it well over 90 minutes with our commitment," Kovac told a press conference. "This defeat hurts us because it was unnecessary. I want to congratulate my boys because they gave their all."

Stuttgart took an unexpected lead when Dortmund defender Waldemar Anton turned a cut-



Jeff Chabot of VfB Stuttgart celebrates his goal against Borussia Dortmund

back into his own goal in the 50th minute. They doubled it with Jeff Chabot's header at the far post just past the hour.

The hosts, who were dominant after the break, cut the

deficit with Julian Brandt's low drive from a tight angle in the 81st but their efforts to get an equaliser were derailed when defender Julian Ryerson was sent off with a second booking.



Usman Khawaja and Marnus Labuschagne celebrate after steering Australia to victory in the second Test against Sri Lanka

Australia thrash Sri Lanka in Galle Test to sweep series

Galle, Sri Lanka - A clinical Australia took a little over three days to pound Sri Lanka by nine wickets in the second Test and complete a 2-0 series sweep in Galle on Sunday.

Australia's first series victory in Sri Lanka since 2011 is a timely boost for a team that will be defending their World Test Championship (WTC) title in the final against South Africa in June.

Australia were in the box seat having taken a decisive lead of 157 in the spin-dominated contest at the Galle International Stadium.

When the fourth day's play started, the touring side needed 25 minutes to claim the last two Sri Lankan wickets and bowl out the hosts for 231 in their second innings.

Steve Smith's men returned to chase down the 75-run target, losing the lone wicket of opener Travis Head.

Usman Khawaja (27) and

Marnus Labuschagne (26) guided Australia to victory with Sri Lanka opener Dimuth Karunaratne, who bowed out after playing his 100th Test, bowling the last over.

"We played really well from the outset," Australia captain Smith, who struck his second hundred of the series to pocket the player-of-the-series award, said.

"The plans that the batters came with and were able to adapt to the conditions here, it was amazing."

"And then I thought all our bowlers did a tremendous job."

"Since coming here in 2016, the guys have developed so many different plans and it's been great to see a constant improvement."

Smith's 259-run stand with Alex Carey (156) powered Australia to a commanding 414 in reply to Sri Lanka's first innings 257.

'I AM HAPPY WITH THIS PERFORMANCE'

Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi finishes third in Qatar Rally after Al Kuwari handed time penalty

Muscat - Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi was delighted to have won the final spot on the podium of the Qatar International Rally in Lusail on Saturday after Abdulaziz Al Kuwari was handed a time penalty of five seconds.

Al Kuwari and Lorcan Moore were able to fend off a fierce late challenge from Al Rawahi and Ata Al Hmoud in their Skoda Fabia RS Rally 2 to claim the final place on the podium and a vital haul of MERC points in their Citroën C3 by just 3.3 seconds. But the Qatari was handed a five-second penalty on Saturday evening, dropping him to fourth place.

Al Rawahi expressed his happiness at finishing third. He said the race was not easy due to the intensity of the competition and the tough stages.

"We were quite good on the first stage," said Al Rawahi, pleasantly surprised to gain third place after the finish. "Then we tried to push on the second one and there was a place with a lot of dust coming to a hairpin. I tried to take it flat so I don't lose time and I lost the track and around 15 seconds. That was a pity. We started the last stage and tried to push again and managed to get 10 seconds on Abdulaziz.

"We pushed like crazy, just three seconds away (before the penalty for Al-Kuwari). Unfortunately, we lost some time on one stage and we had a lot of punctures on the first day. Anyway, I



Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi and his co-driver Ata al Hmoud celebrate on the podium after finishing third in the Qatar International Rally in Lusail on Saturday; (below) Al Rawahi in action



am happy with this performance. The pace is there but I got some penalties and I was quite unlucky with the punctures," said the Omani.

Meanwhile, another Omani, Zakaria al Amri and his co-driver Mohammed al Mazroui won the MERC2 category and finished 10th overall.

Abdullah al Zubair and his co-driver, Taha Soomar, had a strong start and was able to lead the MERC2 category. He continued to put up impressive performances, but he was unable to finish after a sudden mechanical failure in the gearbox led him to withdraw from the rally.

Rohit hits sparkling century as India beat England in second ODI to win series

Cuttack, India - India claimed an unassailable 2-0 lead against England after captain Rohit Sharma's rapid hundred secured their four-wicket victory in the second one-day international in Cuttack on Sunday.

Not even a floodlight failure that stopped play for half an hour could affect Rohit, who hit seven sixes and 12 fours in his 119 off 90 balls as the hosts chased down a 305-run target in 44.3 overs.

Earlier, England's 304 all out,

with one delivery left in their innings, appeared a strong total also vindicating their decision to bat first at Barabati Stadium.

Ben Duckett (65) and Joe Root (69) smashed half-centuries and England looked poised for a big total when cruising at 219-3 in the 39th over.

They already had a flying start after Duckett and Phil Salt (26) combined in a rollicking 81-run opening stand.

Duckett raced to a 36-ball



India's Rohit Sharma celebrates his century

ifty but Ravindra Jadeja struck in his first over dismissing the opener.

Harry Brook (31) could not capitalise on the start but with Root and skipper Jos Buttler (34) in the middle, England looked primed to launch a late assault.

India, however, fought back with the ball removing both the set batters and England suddenly slumped to 272-7 in the 48th over.

Liam Livingstone (41) produced a 32-ball cameo to take England past the 300-mark before he and Mark Wood were run out in successive deliveries.

For India, Jadeja claimed 3-35, took a catch and fired a throw from the deep that led to Adil Rashid being run out.

Rohit, who has been struggling for runs both in tests and ODIs, led India's reply with a barrage of boundaries - the sweet sound of bat whacking the ball announcing

his return to form.

Rohit began with a streaky four against Gus Atkinson before finding the middle of his bat and racing to a 30-ball 50.

At the other end, Shubman Gill (60) took the aerial route only once and hit nine fours in his fluent knock.

Jamie Overton yorked Gill to end the rapid 136-run opening stand and Rashid dismissed Virat Kohli caught behind for five, but Rohit went on a rampage.

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DIGITAL NOMAD EXPERIENCE

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PORTUGAL, GEORGIA, HUNGARY ARE BY FAR THE MOST POPULAR DIGITAL NOMAD DESTINATIONS FOR 2025

The digital nomad (those using digital technologies to hang out and work from any part of the world) experience is easier than ever to try out as dozens of countries have introduced dedicated visas and tax exemptions. But with so many enticing destinations on the table, it can be tough to choose where to go.

Studies are frequently published on the best remote working locations, and some cities and countries consistently make it to the top of the ranking. Here are the European destinations that have been highlighted by recent research:

PORTUGAL – A hot favourite

Portugal is rarely missing from a digital nomad destination ranking. Lonely Planet placed it first out of 10 countries in its classification published at the end of January and website Nomad Capitalist also included the country in its 14-long list of global digital nomad countries.

The capital Lisbon is raved about as a remote working hub, ranked top spot by rental site Flatio for its 'old-world charm and modern amenities [that] makes it a magnet for digital professionals seeking inspiration and convenience'. Out of Flatio's list of 20 cities across the world, that's high praise indeed.

Lonely Planet writes that 'young entrepreneurs and artists from around the world are currently congregating on [Lisbon's] charming, hilly streets and in its adorable bars'. The guide highlights that the city is affordable compared to other Western European countries, has attractive cafes and coworking spaces, and offers frequent meetups and parties for digital nomads.



Portugal

Unfortunately, however, the influx of remote working foreigners to the capital is now putting a strain on the local population who have been priced out of property and squeezed out of community services.

There are plenty of other 'sleepier towns' in Portugal that could use an investment boost, so why not be a trendsetter instead of following the pack.

SPAIN - Cultural diversity, supportive networks are big lures

Spain is another regular entry in remote working rankings. Nomad Capitalist notes that the country's digital nomad visa has an attractively low minimum income requirement.

Digital nomads have spread throughout the country. From Barcelona to Madrid and all the way up to Bilbao, Spain is home to a thriving expat community, the website writes.

Madrid and Barcelona, specifically, but even Valencia and Mallorca, are all peppered with dynamic coworking spaces, startup events, cultural diversity

and supportive networks.

Lonely Planet, which ranked Spain fifth, adds that 'off the mainland and close to Africa, the Canary Islands are a burgeoning hub for digital nomads, particularly Tenerife, which is known for its wine and surfable waves'.

While some cities like Barcelona are becoming overloaded with remote workers, there are plenty of communities in Spain that are welcoming more foreign investment.

GEORGIA - International hub for remote workers

Fringed by the Caucasus Mountains to the north and the Black Sea to the west, Georgia is a rising digital nomad destination. Nomad Capitalist recently named it one of the best countries for remote working, thanks to its business-friendly environment, tax-friendly regime and liberal immigration policies.

The site also highlights that nationals of over 90 countries can enter and stay



Georgia

visa-free in Georgia for up to a year. Digital nomads tend to hone in on the capital Tbilisi - its charismatic vibe boasting a unique mix of modern and ancient architecture, aesthetically built coworking spaces and a thriving expat community are a big draw.

Lonely Planet placed Georgia eighth

in its recent ranking. The guide also describes Tbilisi as an 'international hub' but adds, 'if you're looking for sea access and a chiller vibe, base yourself in Batumi', a resort city on the Black Sea.

HUNGARY - Low living costs a big draw

Budapest, the Hungarian capital, is also enjoying a moment as a digital nomad hotspot.

Travel insurance company insuremytrip ranked the city third out of its 10-long global list for its unique architecture, highlighting that it has more than 590 attractions to explore, from beautiful landscapes to exquisite churches.

Flatio placed the city in its top five ranking, highlighting that its stunning architecture, buzzing social scene, and affordability make a stay in Budapest perfect for remote workers in 2025.

'From its iconic thermal baths to its dynamic co-working spaces, Budapest provides an ideal balance of work and leisure, catering to professionals seeking both productivity and inspiration,' it adds.

Courtesy: euronews.com

Hungary



Spain



INDIA ART FAIR 2025



For its 16th edition, the India Art Fair in New Delhi clamped down on the number of invites it extended for its ultra-VIP preview, from 11 am to 3 pm on Thursday. This attempt to avoid the overwhelming rush witnessed at last year's edition was forgotten just minutes after the clock struck 3, the tent becoming overcrowded.

The buzz all day seemed optimistic, a sign of India's maturation of a leading art market hub. The day's clear blue sky, in a city that tends to be smoggy, seemed especially a good omen for commerce.

Long a flagbearer for the local market, the India Art Fair set its ambitions high at the end of 2024, with the unexpected announcement that it would expand to Mumbai. But a successful edition of recent rival Art Mumbai in November, and its commitment from major galleries for its 2025 edition, forced IAF to call off those plans. Now, back on its home turf, IAF had a point to prove.

"Our plans are about building a stronger collector base in India... to grow the market," Scott Gray, CEO of IAF's parent company Angus Montgomery Arts, told ARTnews. Part of that strategy includes engaging in cities across India.

While a Mumbai fair might be off the table for the time being, the company has eyes to announce a new program in the southern city of Hyderabad once this edition wraps up. With ownership stakes in fairs in Singapore, Taipei, Tokyo, and Sydney, Gray added that this global network of fairs gives IAF an edge in its ability "to bring international clients to Delhi that way is quite promising."

International draw

One reason the energy at this year's IAF was so buoyant was the return of major blue-chip, international galleries like David Zwirner and Lisson Gallery. Lisson director Ellie Harrison-Read said the gallery decided to return after a 13-year hiatus because the Venice Biennale and major institutional exhibitions for gallery artists like Otobong Nkanga and Olga de Amaral were "a significant point of connection as the source of new conversations with our Indian contacts" over the past year.

At Zwirner's booth, several works sold on the first day, including paintings by Portia Zvavahera, Oscar Murillo and Sosa Joseph, as well as a sculpture by Huma Bhabha; many of these went to collectors from the region. (A date conflict with the opening of Sharjah Biennale was likely a reason for lower attendance of collectors from the Middle East.)

A long-time IAF participant Galleria Continua, which operates in seven cities around the world, had on offer works by Indian artists Subodh Gupta, Shilpa

Confluence of cultures

THE 16TH EDITION OF INDIA ART FAIR IN NEW DELHI THIS WEEK SAW A VIBRANT TURNOUT OF ART ENTHUSIASTS, COLLECTORS AND INTERNATIONAL GALLERIES



Gupta and Nikhil Chopra paired with a major orange plexiglass sculpture by Julio Le Parc, which sold for 340,000 euros to an Indian collector, according to co-founder Maurizio Rigillo.

During the VIP preview, Kiran Nadar, one of India's top collectors and founder of an eponymous museum in New Delhi, was seen in both Zwirner and Lisson's booths. She bought works from both galleries.

New York-based Aicon Contemporary, which primarily shows artists from South Asia and its diaspora, was also a beneficiary of Nadar's collecting appetite, with purchases including works by Alice Kettle, Avishek Sen, and L N Tallur. Projlal Dutta, a partner at the gallery, said Nadar has been a client since it first started exhibiting at IAF in 2019, adding that she "buys secularly across the board in terms of price points, from our well-established and mid-career artists [to] the emerging end of the market."

From Modern to Contemporary

The Indian art market in terms of high-value transactions remains driven by the country's modern masters. "To have access to the top collectors, it is necessary to also have a portfolio of modern masters," Somak Mitra, founder of Kolkata's Art Exposure gallery, told ARTnews.

At the fair, the gallery's booth focused on younger contemporary artists like Buddhadev Mukherjee, whose six works sold for \$44,000 in total, with three going to Nadar, one to another Indian collector, and the final two to a US-based collector. But works by octogenarian artist Jogen Chowdhury were available for sale, just not on display.

DAG (formerly Delhi Art Gallery), the leading gallery for modern art, curated a large presentation of 40 such artists, including M F Husain, whose works were recently seized by an Indian court from an exhibition at the gallery.

Ashvita's, a gallery from Chennai, had on view work by artists associated with the Madras Art Movement of the 1960s. Five works by on the movement's early exponents, DP Roychowdhury, sold to a Mumbai-based collector for \$69,000.

However, the prices for Indian modern art have risen so high that many younger collectors have begun to explore the work of emerging and mid-career artists who still do not have an international profile, the prices for which remain accessible.

"Younger Indian collectors are certainly more independent in their choices of artists, and more engaged with the works they buy," Peter Nagy, founder of Delhi's Nature Morte, said. "It's not so much everyone running after a few established names, like it was 20 years ago."

Courtesy: artnews.com